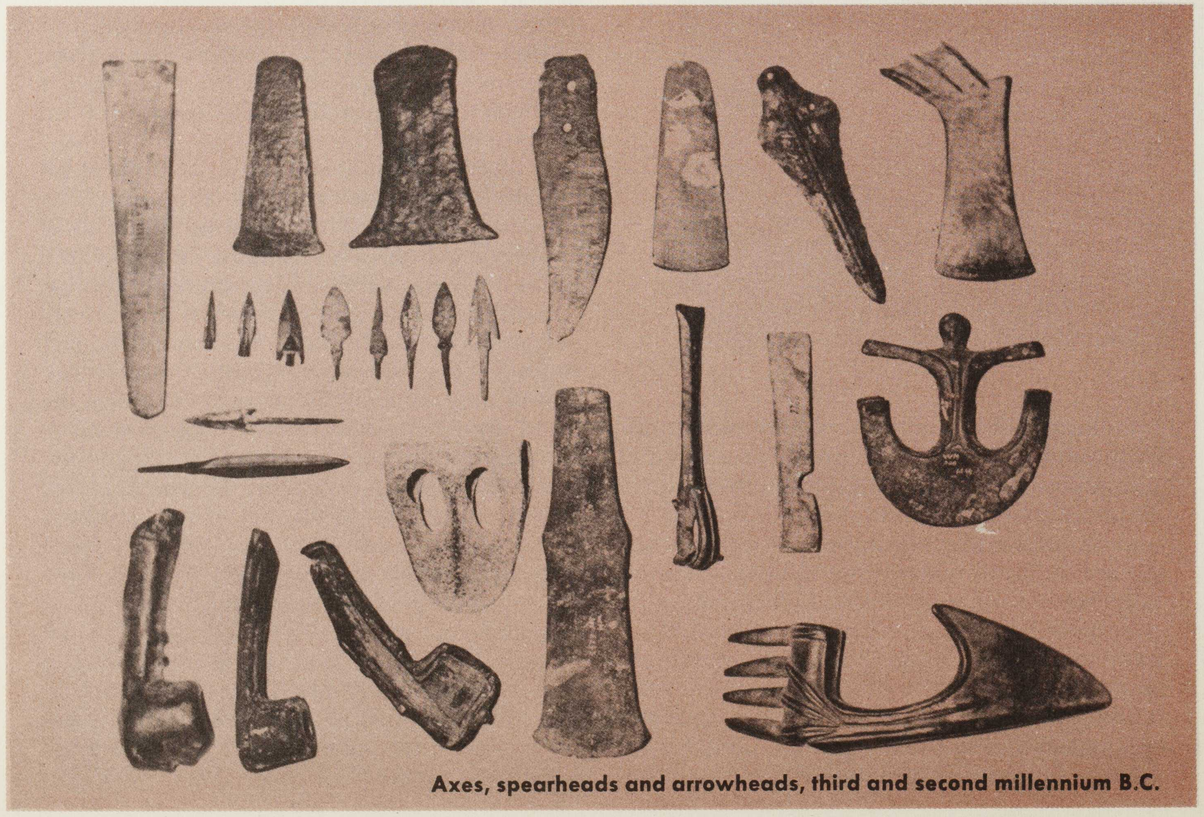
Mosaic of a fish, from the Church of Loaves and Fish at Tabgha, 4th Century A.D.



Axes, spearheads and arrowheads, third and second millennium B.C.

UNEARTHING THE PAST

FROM a small section of land sacred to three great religions—Christianity, Judaism and Mohammedanism—archeologists have unearthed rare treasures of the past. Hundreds of these priceless art and historical objects are now on display, for the first time in the United States, at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, in their current exhibit, "From the Land of the Bible."

The exhibit, presented by the American Fund for Israel Institutions, is arranged chronologically. It begins with a collection of objects from prehistoric times and ranges through a dramatic panorama of events: the Age of the Patriarchs, the destruction of the First Temple, the Persian conquest, the invasion of Alexander the Great, the Roman period, and on through the Byzantine era to the 6th century A.D.

Among the fascinating displays is a slingstone of the kind that David used to slay Goliath. There is the jawbone of an ass, sharpened into a sickle, of the kind Samson used against the Philistines. There is a tiny seal of the time of Moses, showing Pharaoh slaying a captive. The precious Biblical "Dead Sea Scrolls" are there.

A marvelous collection of lamps tells the story of prehistoric times to the third century. Among them is a beautiful bronze lamp marked with symbols of the Jewish religion, and beautiful pottery lamps marked with Christian symbols.

The spectator will notice that pagan art influenced early Jewish art, and that Judaic art, in turn, influenced early Christian art, in its shift from pagan naturalism to mystical subjects and forms. The whole heart of man is here, a moving record of his search through all ages for the beautiful and the good.

The Israeli government has long been aware of their country's rich historical potential for archeologists. Consequently, great care has been taken to safeguard as yet undiscovered treasures. Areas believed to harbor historical treasures are protected by law. A representative of the Department of Antiquities accompanies every road gang! The people of Israel, too, show great interest and pride in their country's hidden treasures: the farmer is watchful as he breaks the ground, the soldier or hiker often brings back some curio he has found in the fields, exhibits are eagerly attended. As Abba Eban, Israel Ambassador to the U. S. and permanent delegate to the U.N., explained in his statement for the exhibit's opening, "The people of Israel are deeply conscious of their Biblical heritage and of the great moral and spiritual responsibilities which it imposes on them."

The present exhibit has world-wide significance, according to Professor William F. Albright, of Johns Hopkins University, because it is a "vivid illustration of the fact that the Bible is a living human document as well as a Divine revelation."

Bust of a Roman emperor, 3rd Century A.D.