

It can have various kinds of bases or of handles. It can be made in many different shapes. The firing can be done in such a way as to produce a very hard, brittle texture, or to produce a softer grade of pottery. There are so many ways in which it can vary from time to time, that Petrie had been able to work out a "sequence dating" in Egypt, in which he arranged pottery in the order in which it had been used through a number of prehistoric centuries.

Tell el-Hesi was ideal for the attempt to apply the same principles in Palestine. A little stream had eroded one side of the hill, exposing the edge of successive levels, so that Petrie could move up and down the side of the tell, pulling out pieces of pottery at different points and comparing them. He laid down the principle that pottery could be even more important than writing as a means of dating. It was more than thirty years before the scientific world was altogether ready to accept Petrie's conclusions, but now the importance of pottery is universally recognized. Even before excavating, it is often possible to tell the periods at which a city has been occupied, and this information can be invaluable, in determining its identity.

In 1929 the writer was one of a group that was endeavoring to find the site of ancient Ham, mentioned in Genesis 14.5. It had been noticed that the map of eastern Palestine showed a modern village with this name in the general area in which the ancient town might reasonably be sought. Coming to this modern village, we looked around and saw a small hill, not far away, which bore the easily recognizable shape of a tell. We were able to make out a triple line of fortification around it. Going to the hill and walking across it, we found typical specimens of pieces of pottery from every period from the time of Christ back to the time of Abraham, thus establishing a very good case for this being the actual place referred to in Genesis, and also to some extent corroborating the reality