

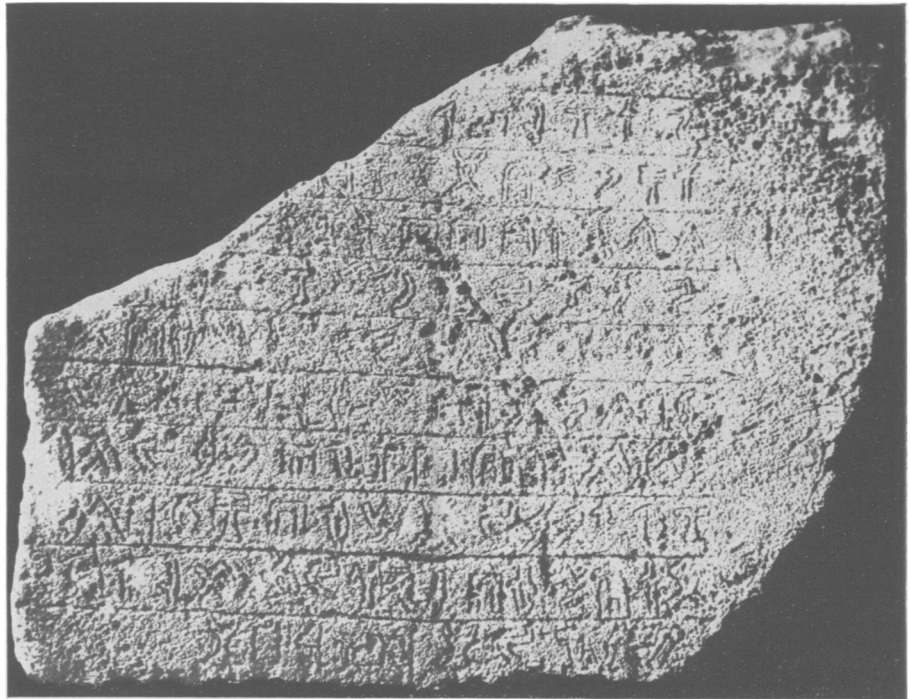
activity on the part of the wearer are being produced. American gas masks are the best in the world, Major General H. L. Gilchrist, chief of the Chemical Warfare Service, believes but he thinks that their weight and bulk are "still greater for foot troops than is desirable."

"The development of gas masks suitable for voice transmission for use with optical instruments such as range finders, field glasses and periscopes is nearing completion," General Gilchrist said. "This mask has a special molded rubber face-piece and is assembled to a canister placed at the back of the head."

Medical attaches to the chemical service are at work, too, officials revealed, on a means of developing a mask which will not give the wearer the headaches experienced by so many soldiers during the last war. Army chemists stoutly assert gas warfare is the most humane type of offensive, and to prove their claims quote from World War statistics to show that gas, while it temporarily disabled an astonishing number of fighters, killed comparatively few.

"A gas casualty has about ten more chances than a high explosive or rifle casualty of coming through whole," Dr. G. A. Rankin, one of the civilian experts employed by the Government for gas experimental work, explained.

Dr. Rankin is one of a number of civilians working in government laboratories to develop chemical warfare. He



#### ALMOST AN ALPHABET

*The alphabet found at Byblos containing 38 different symbols. Below is the third row of letters as a French scholar reconstructs them. Another recent discovery of ancient alphabetic writing is that found at the ruins of the Canaanite royal city of Gezer.*

and his associates have concentrated their equipment at Edgewood Arsenal, near Baltimore, and behind guarded doors are working out new methods for the chemical warfare service.

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Gezer makes it clear that the Sinai alphabet is older than 1600 B. C., probably as old as 1900 B. C. The method of dating the writing, Prof. Butin said, was to ask three experts independently to pronounce upon the age of the pottery fragment. All three said that it belonged to the Middle Bronze Age of Palestine, which was between 2000 B. C. and 1600 B. C.

The three letters on the fragment are the oldest writing ever found in Palestine. The meaning of the letters is said to be "Children of," the rest of the inscription being broken off. The inscription was probably an ownership mark and was similar in character to the familiar title Children of Israel.

The alphabet idea was probably thought of just once, Prof. Butin believes. But after that, it was applied to different forms of script by men who sought to simplify writing.

The Sinai alphabet was one simplification. Two other evidences of the



alphabetizing process have come to light very recently. One is the alphabet found at Ras Shamra, in Syria. The other is a semi-alphabetic writing found at Byblos, in Syria.

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#### ARCHAEOLOGY

## Chance Discovery Shows That Canaanites Used an Alphabet

THREE queer signs cut into a broken scrap of a pottery jar are new evidence of the antiquity of the alphabet, is the conclusion of Prof. Romain Butin, of the Catholic University of America located in Washington.

The jar fragment was found at the ruins of the Canaanite royal city of Gezer. The bit of clay is evidence that alphabet writing existed in the world as early as the nineteenth century B. C. It seems that the Canaanites, who held the Promised Land before the Children of Israel appeared to claim it, were a people who not only knew a system of writing, but had an alphabetic system.

This scrap of writing is now regarded as one of the most important archaeo-

logical discoveries made in Palestine in many years. And, strange to say, when it was discovered some months ago it was set aside with objects a thousand years younger than itself, and thought to be no older than they.

Prof. Butin saw that the letters were like the alphabetic inscriptions that have been coming to light from the Wilderness of Sinai, which lies south of Palestine.

The Sinai alphabet writings show traces of having been evolved directly from Egyptian picture writing, and thus they are looked upon as a real missing link in alphabet evolution. The question about them has been—how old are they? The fragment of pottery from