



INTRODUCTION TO

BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

FROM c.2000BC TO c.100BC



Writer: Peter C.T. Lim

Consultant Editor: Dr Elaine Wei-Fun Goh



INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

From c.2000 BC to c.100BC

Writer:
Peter C.T. Lim

Consultant Editor:
Dr Elaine Wei-Fun Goh

Copyrights



First published in Malaysia in 2024 by
Pristine World Sdn Bhd

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Scriptures taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION © Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan.
All rights reserved.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my gratitude to the individuals whose support and contributions were instrumental in the creation of this book. Firstly, I am grateful to my wife, Ee Jin, for helping me with the ground work research on several archaeological artifacts.

I am also indebted to the visitors of our museum who generously provided feedback, serving as a source of inspiration for the compilation of this book. Special thanks to Dr Elaine Goh, the Dean of the Centre of Postgraduate Studies at Seminari Theoloji Malaysia, for graciously editing my work and for including me as a guest speaker in the Bible and Archaeology subject at STM. I am grateful to the Bible Archaeology classes of 2023 and 2024, whose engaging discussions provided an additional drive to shape this book for those seeking a basic understanding of biblical archaeology.

I extend my thanks to Mr. Chai Cheng Sheng for his patient consideration of my ideas and valuable feedback. Lastly, my sincere appreciation goes to Ms. Eva Hew for proofreading our book.

Your collective support has been indispensable, and I am truly grateful for each contribution to this endeavour.

Contents

Credits		6
Chapter 1	Introduction	7
	1.1 Why Study Bible History	7
	1.2 The Role of Archaeology	8
	1.3 Objective and Approach of this e-Book	9
Chapter 2	Rosetta Stone – Breaking the Hieroglyphics Code	11
	2.1 Introduction	11
	2.2 The Rosetta Stone	12
	2.3 The French Military Campaign in Egypt	12
	2.4 The Discovery of the Rosetta Stone	15
	2.5 The Race to Decipher Hieroglyphics – Between Britain and France	16
	2.6 The Significance of the Deciphering of the Rosetta Stone	18
Chapter 3	Breaking the Cuneiform Code	20
	3.1 The Trilingual Inscription of Xerxes I at the slopes of Van	20
	3.2 Sir Henry Rawlinson and the Behistun Inscription	21
Chapter 4	The Nuzi Tablets	24
	4.1 Introduction	24
	4.2 What are the Nuzi Tablets?	25
	4.3 Digging up the Nuzi Tablets	26
	4.4 How the Nuzi Tablets help shed light on the Stories Found in Genesis	26
Chapter 5	The Great Flood	31
	5.1 The Gilgamesh Epic	32
	5.2 Comparing the Genesis and the Gilgamesh Accounts of the Great Flood	34
	5.3 The Atrahasis Flood Epics	36
Chapter 6	The Code of Hammurabi and the Law of Moses	38
	6.1 What is the Hammurabi Code?	38
	6.2 How was the Stele of Hammurabi’s Code discovered?	39
	6.3 Similarities of the Hammurabi Code with the Mosaic Law	40
	6.4 Differences between the Law of Moses and Hammurabi’s Code	42
	6.5 Significance of the Hammurabi Code	44
Chapter 7	Discovering Israel in Egypt	46
	7.1 The Significance of Egypt in Bible History	46
	7.2 The Ibscha Relief	47
	7.3 The Merneptah Victory Stele	48

Contents

	7.4 Brickmakers, Tomb of Rekhmire	49
	7.5 The Brooklyn Papyrus Slave List	51
	7.6 The Ipuwer Papyrus – Parallels with the Exodus	51
	7.7 Proto-Sinaitic Inscriptions	54
	7.8 Egyptian Words in the Hebrew Text	55
	7.9 Dating the Exodus	56
	7.10 Conclusions	57
Chapter 8	Discovering David – Tel Dan Inscription and the Moabite Stone	58
	8.1 Introduction	58
	8.2 The Tel-Dan Stele	59
	8.3 Understanding the Tel-Dan Inscription in reference to 2 Kings 8 and 9	61
	8.4 Further Reading on the Tel Dan Stele Discovery and Translation	62
	8.5 The Moabite Stone – Mention of the Kings of Israel and the “House of David”	62
	8.6 What does the Moabite Stone Say?	63
	8.7 Significance of the Moabite Stone	64
	8.8 How was the Stele Discovered?	65
	8.9 Summary of Moabite Stone comparison with the Biblical Record	66
Chapter 9	Digging in Assyria - The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III	69
	9.1 Introduction	69
	9.2 What is the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III?	70
	9.3 What was the purpose of the Black Obelisk?	73
	9.4 What does the inscription say and how does it compare with the biblical narrative?	73
	9.5 Who discovered the Obelisk?	74
	9.6 Conclusions	75
	9.7 The Sargon II Barrel a.k.a. Sargon II Foundation Cylinder	75
	9.8 What is the Significance of the Sargon II Barrel?	76
	9.9 What does the Sargon II Barrel tell us?	77
Chapter 10	Discovering the Assyrian Invasion of Judah	78
	10.1 Historical Overview	78
	10.2 The Lachish Relief	79
	10.3 What we learn from the Lachish Reliefs	80
	10.4 What is the significance of the discovery of the Lachish Reliefs to Biblical scholars?	81
Chapter 11	Discovering Hezekiah and the Assyrian Siege of Jerusalem	82
	11.1 Hezekiah’s Tunnel	82
	11.2 The Siloam Inscription	83

Contents

	11.3 King Hezekiah's Royal Seal	85
	11.4 The Isaiah Seal	86
	11.5 Sennacherib's Annals – Taylor's Prism	87
	11.6 Sennacherib's Desire to conquer Jerusalem	90
	11.7 Direct Correspondence Between Sennacherib's Annals And the Bible Record	90
Chapter 12	Israel in Babylon	92
	12.1 The Ishtar Gate	92
	12.2 The Babylonian Chronicle	94
	12.3 What does Tablet 5 talk about?	94
	12.4 The Nabonidus Chronicle	96
	12.5 What is the Significance of the Nabonidus Chronicle?	96
	12.6 Comparison of the Babylonian Chronicles and the Bible	98
Chapter 13	The Persians - The Cyrus Cylinder	99
	13.1 Background Historical and the Biblical Narrative	99
	13.2 The Bible Narrative	100
	13.3 What is the Cyrus Cylinder?	100
	13.4 Discovery of the Cyrus Cylinder	101
	13.5 Global interest in the Cyrus Cylinder	103
	13.6 Comparison of the Cyrus Cylinder and the Bible	104
	13.7 What is the significance of the Cyrus Cylinder?	104
Chapter 14	The Dead Sea Scrolls	106
	14.1 Introduction to the Dead Sea Scrolls	106
	14.2 Discovery and Contents of the Dead Sea Scrolls	107
	14.3 Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls	110
Chapter 15	Epilogue	111
Appendix 1	Bibliography	114
Appendix 2	Timeline of Empires and Kingdoms	115
Appendix 3	Ancient Syria-Israel-Mesopotamia Archaeological Periods	116
Appendix 4	Summary of Selected Key Biblical and Related Archaeological Events and Timeline	117
Appendix 5	Egyptian Texts Relating to the Bible Interpreted with the Knowledge of Hieroglyphics	121

Credits



Written by: Peter Lim Cheong Thye

(B. Ec, Comp Sc; Dip O.R., Monash; MBA, AGSM- NSW, Sydney)
Peter Lim is the author and producer of Pristine World's Visual Bible Explorer Series. He is also the General Editor and publisher of the Family Church History Series of books. He has travelled extensively in the Bible countries and is a history enthusiast. Prior to being a publisher he worked for 20 years in the I.T. industry. He is a member of the Damansara Utama Methodist Church.



Consultant Editor: Dr Elaine Wei-Fun Goh

Elaine Wei-Fun Goh (ThD, SEAGST/ATESEA Theological Union) is the Dean of Postgraduate Studies and Director of Centre for Bible Engagement in Seminari Theoloji Malaysia where she teaches Old Testament studies. She is also the Director of Centre for Bible Engagement in the seminary.

Introduction

1.1 Why Study Bible History? _____

Much of the Bible is written in a narrative form, telling stories about how God deals with people. The historical narratives in the Bible are based on real characters and set in a geographical space in a specific timeline. The characters and events described did not take place independently of the culture and socio-political setting of its time and place.

While we uphold the fact that the lessons in the Bible are complete, and

God's word to humanity is relevant throughout history, our appreciation of its stories can be enriched if we understood the social, cultural, political, and spiritual context in which those events took place.

Understanding the historical settings and geo-political landscapes during biblical times helps in interpreting the motivations, actions, and interactions of biblical characters.



The Siege and Destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans Under the Command of Titus, A.D. 70

Artist: David Roberts
c. 1850 via Wikimedia Commons

For example, we know that the Jewish rulers were jealous of Jesus' popularity and were afraid that if He started a rebellion, the Romans would crush it and take away their powers. It is one thing to understand this lesson if we see it as an independent phenomenon, thinking that nothing had happened in Israel in the previous 400 years.

But if we knew the history of the inter-testament period, the rise of the Maccabees and how they were hailed as messiahs, giving independence to Israel for about 80 years before the Romans ended it, then we would appreciate that the Jews wanted a repeat of their past glory.

Independence was something that really happened and the Jews believed it could be achieved; hence the threat was real and present, in their time. The Jewish rebellion of AD 66 and destruction of the Temple by the Romans in AD 70 proved that their fears were not unfounded.

Other examples include the practices described in Genesis about how Sarah had suggested that she and Abraham have a child via a surrogate child-bearer. These were customs quite commonly practiced in Mesopotamia, the country of origin of Abraham and Sarah.

1.2 The Role of Archaeology



The Library of Nineveh a.k.a. the Library of Ashurbanipal c. 680 BC Imagined
© Pristine World

Archaeology plays a crucial role in the study of history by providing tangible evidence and insights into past human civilizations, cultures, and socio-political background. In cases where written records are scarce, or still waiting to be discovered, or biased, as they often are dependent on who was the author, archaeology can help fill the gaps and provide more fact-based evidence of history.

Bible archaeology often uncovers artifacts, inscriptions, structures, and ancient sites that align with

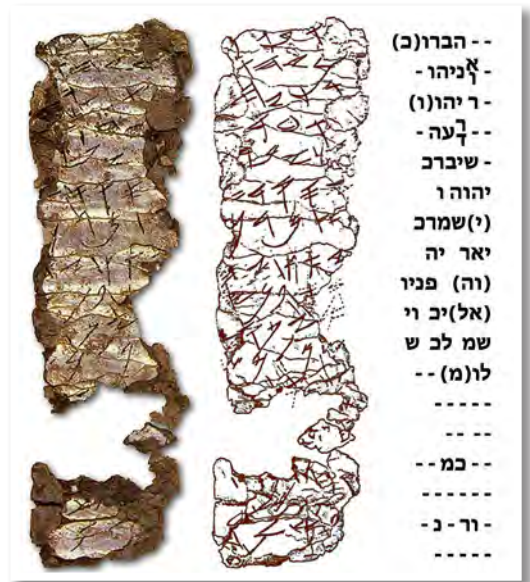
or corroborate the events, places and people mentioned in the Bible. Example, findings such as ancient cities, ruins of buildings, and artifacts can support the historical accuracy of biblical narratives.

Unearthing archaeological artifacts, objects or text can help shed light on the customs, traditions, religious rituals and daily life of biblical times and places. This knowledge provides a deeper understanding of the cultural background against which biblical stories are told.

1.3 Objective and Approach of this e-Book _

The objective of this compact book is to give the readers a brief overview of the world of archaeology, how it developed, some of the key players, and how in many cases, it has helped to corroborate the stories in the Bible. Through these discoveries, the book endeavours to contextualize events depicted in Biblical stories within the broader scope of historical timeframes and geographic locations.

As the focus of the book is on archaeological findings that support events from the Bible, we will be looking at discoveries that include structures, architecture, artifacts, and



*Ketef Hinnom silver scroll, unrolled, reveals the priestly blessing from the book of Numbers.
Photo Credit: Tamar Hayardeni / Wikimedia Commons*

most important of all, ancient text and inscriptions.

The flow of this book will take the following approach:

A. How the ancient languages were deciphered

Text and inscriptions can give us the intricate details about lifestyle and culture of the period we are studying. As these texts are important, we will begin our story with a chapter on how some of these ancient inscriptions were discovered and how the languages were deciphered.

B. Understanding socio-cultural background

Next, our focus will shift to significant archaeological discoveries that help us better understand the socio-cultural context of the Bible narratives. These findings serve to deepen our appreciation of the behaviours and actions of the characters depicted in Scripture.

C. Extra-Biblical evidence of historical events

Following that, in the third section, we will explore substantial extra-biblical evidence that support the Bible. This encompasses events outlined in the historical books of the Bible.

As this book is only intended to give a brief introduction to biblical archaeology, it is purposed to act as a primer for those who have an interest in finding out more about the subject. References will be provided for the reader to delve deeper into the subject.

Rosetta Stone – Breaking the Hieroglyphics Code

2.1 Introduction

The Bible narrative begins with the stories of creation, the great flood and the tower of Babel. Then it delves into a more detailed historical portrayal of how Abraham travelled from Ur to Haran and then to the Promised Land. All these events unfolded within the expanse of Syria-Mesopotamia and the Eastern Mediterranean, commonly known as the Levant. The narrative then transitions to Egypt, where it recounts events pertaining to the Exodus and the subsequent migration to Canaan.

A wealth of ancient texts have been unearthed, offering insights into the socio-cultural lifestyle of people in that region and era. The primary languages prevalent in ancient Mesopotamia were recorded in cuneiform script, while Egyptian texts were inscribed in hieroglyphics. Our book commences by exploring the discovery of artifacts crucial

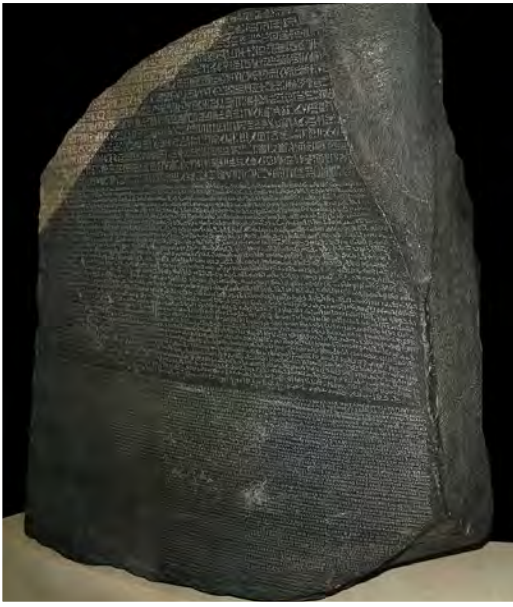
to modern archaeologists' decipherment of these ancient languages.

Two pivotal discoveries stand out:
a. The Rosetta Stone: This monumental discovery facilitated the comprehension of hieroglyphics, unlocking understanding of the ancient Egyptian language, which dates back as early as 2800 BC.

b. The Behistun Inscriptions of Persia: These inscriptions proved instrumental in deciphering Babylonian Akkadian. Their discovery subsequently aided in the comprehension of numerous Mesopotamian languages which dates to the time of Abraham, around the early second millennium BC.

2.2 The Rosetta Stone

Have you ever wondered how archaeologists can read the funny symbols and figures, called hieroglyphics, used by the ancient Egyptians for writing? How was a language, once lost and forgotten for nearly two millennia, now, rediscovered within numerous papyrus texts written in a script dating back 5,000 years, and now potentially decipherable.



The Rosetta Stone

The Rosetta Stone was found in 1799 built into the foundation of an older structure on the west bank of the Nile as Lt. Pierre Bouchard was preparing the foundation for Ft. Julian. Source: Public Domain

In 1799, a stone was discovered in the town called Rashid, or Rosetta by the French, along the Nile River. Since then, we have been able to read hieroglyphics, which has given us a wealth of information about life and historical events recorded by the ancient Egyptians. This includes the Merneptah Stele, which gives us the earliest mention of a people called Israel, and many other accounts that link Egyptian and biblical history.

How was the stone found and how was the language decoded? Here is the remarkable story of the Rosetta Stone and how it helped us understand much of ancient history.

2.3 The French Military Campaign in Egypt

In 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte initiated a military campaign in Egypt, with the intention to break the British dominance of trade with India and the Far East and to establish 'scientific enterprise' in the region. At that time Egypt had been an Ottoman province since 1517 but was now in a vulnerable state, being

out of direct Ottoman control and ruled by dissenting Mamluk chiefs.



Bonaparte and his chief of staff in Egypt
Painting by: Jean-Leon Gerome, 1863
Source:Wikimedia Commons

Napoleon proposed to the French government that he would lead an expedition to bring Egypt under French control and create a competing trade route to weaken the British commercial ties with the East. In the campaign, Napoleon proceeded to defeat the Mamluks at the Battle of the Pyramids and control northern Egypt momentarily from 1798 to 1800.

However, his ambition to follow in the footsteps of Alexander the Great in creating an empire with trade



Battle of the Pyramids - 21 July 1798.
Painted by: Francois-Lois-Joseph Watteau.
Source:Wikimedia Commons

links to India was thwarted when his navy was comprehensively defeated by the British navy led by Admiral Horatio Nelson at the Battle of the Nile.

Without a navy to supply and transport reinforcements, the French army was weakened and was practically under siege. Napoleon returned to France, leaving his Mediterranean army in the hands of his generals.

An unusual aspect of the Egyptian expedition was the inclusion of a large contingent of scientists, historians and scholars, or 'savants', 167 in total, that followed the invading French army.



The Battle of the Nile on 1st August 1798

Painted by: George Arnald c.1825

Source: National Maritime Museum via Wikimedia Commons

The scientific group founded the Institute d'Egypte with the aim of propagating Enlightenment values in Egypt through interdisciplinary work, which included studies of agriculture and architectural techniques. They inadvertently also started modern archaeology as they went about discovering ancient artifacts from the era of the Pharaohs and Pyramids.



Napoleon in Egypt illustration c.1919

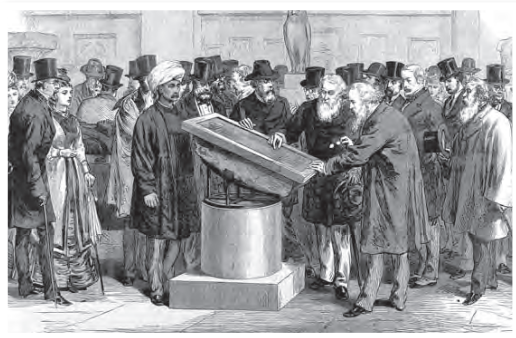
Source: James Harvey Robinson via Wikimedia Commons

2.4 The **Discovery** of the Rosetta Stone _____

It was during the French occupation of northern Egypt, in 1799, a young engineering officer, Pierre-Francois Bouchard, discovered the Rosetta Stone while they were digging around in the town of Rosetta. The stone originally written in 196 BCE was an official message from a council of Egyptian priests, in the name of Ptolemy V Epiphanes, in three written codes: Ancient Greek, Egyptian Demotic and Egyptian Hieroglyphics. Stelae similar to the Rosetta Stone with identical inscriptions, were supposedly placed in every temple in Egypt at that time but until today, no other similar stone has been found.

The stone was 3.78 feet tall, 2.5 feet wide and almost a foot thick, and weighted about 1,675 pounds.

After the Battle of the Nile in 1798, Napoleon left Egypt for France in 1799, leaving his Egyptian army in the hands of his generals. In March 1801,



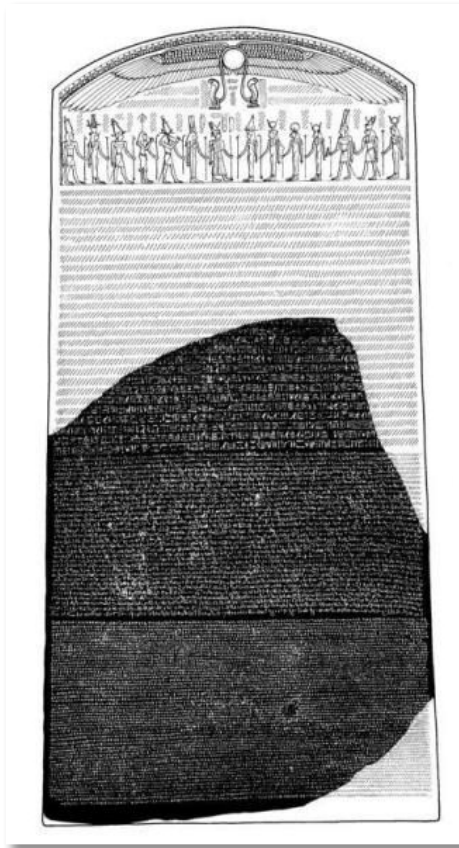
the French were defeated by the British in the Battle of Alexandria and in the treaty that followed, all artifacts of antiquity were to be handed over to the British. The Rosetta Stone was so highly valued that the French governor was said to have kept it secretly in his residence, in violation of the Treaty of Alexandria.

However, Britain, having learnt of the discovery and significance of the stone, sent special instructions to the British commanding general to make sure that they acquired it. Troops were sent to the French governor's residence and 'liberated' the stone into British hands. The stone was eventually sent to London and presented to King George III in February 1802. Because of its weight, a special gallery had to be built to house the stone and eventually it was kept in the British Museum where it remains until today. However, it took another 22 years before the Stone revealed its greatest treasure and that was the deciphering of the ancient Egyptian written language of hieroglyphics.

A drawing of a 19th-century International Congress of Orientalists examining the Rosetta Stone.

Source: Wikimedia Commons

2.5 The Race to **Decipher Hieroglyphics** – Between Britain and France _____



What is believed to be how the original Rosetta stone would have looked like, and the broken piece that was discovered.

Source: American Research Centre in Egypt (ARCE).



The Rosetta Stone contained a decree from the priests to the people of Egypt in 196 BC, praising the virtues of their Greek rulers the Ptolemies. The Ptolemies were descendants of the General Ptolemy who ruled Egypt after Alexander the Great had died. The decree was written in hieroglyphs, demotic and ancient Greek. Hieroglyphics was the language of ancient Pharaohs and

priests; demotic was the language of the common people. Both these written codes had long been lost and forgotten by 1799. However, ancient Greek was still understood by some people, and it was the key to breaking the code to understand hieroglyphics.

The first person to make serious headway in deciphering the Rosetta



Thomas Young (1773-1829)
By: Henry Perronet Briggs c. 1822
Source: Wikimedia Commons

Stone was Thomas Young (1773-1829). He was a British physicist and Egyptologist. He realised that some pictographs in hieroglyphics, like some Chinese characters, are used as phonetics to make up Western names and had no meaning on its own, he made the first breakthrough in understanding hieroglyphics. However, some words still defied all the patterns and rules he had noted.

Meanwhile, the French had not given up on understanding the Rosetta stone, which they felt, actually belonged to them by virtue of them discovering it first. Before the British had seized the stone from

the French governor's residence in Cairo, they had made a detailed imprint of the Stone with all its text and kept it from the British. A young French linguist, with a penchant for languages and who had passionately studied Coptic, started to study the imprint of the Rosetta Stone.



Jean-Francois Champollion (1790-1832)
By: Leon Cogniet c. 1831
Source: Louvre Museum via Wikimedia Commons

Jean-Francois Champollion was a brilliant young French linguist with penchant for the Coptic language, who never got to see the actual Rosetta Stone. He studied its contents by looking at the imprint made by the French before they surrendered the stone to the British. In 1814 Champollion wrote to the British Royal Society, requesting for

better transcription of the Rosetta Stone so that he could solve their problems. This request was rejected by Thomas Young who was the Secretary of the Society and so began an intense rivalry and race to understanding ancient hieroglyphics.

Even though he suffered from ill-health, non-cooperation from the British and domestic political rivalry which threatened to take away his job, eventually, Champollion broke the code. He identified that hieroglyphic script on the Rosetta Stone was a mixture of ideograms

and phonetic signs. This realization helped him to become the first person to read a language that had been invented five thousand years ago and had been lost for almost two thousand years.

Champollion had used the discoveries made earlier by Thomas Young but added his own discoveries to complete the deciphering process in 1822. Henceforth, the knowledge of hieroglyphics improved rapidly until today, almost all its discovered text can be read.

2.6 The **Significance** of the **Deciphering** of the Rosetta Stone

The understanding of hieroglyphics resulted in the understanding of Egyptian texts, some of which related to the Bible for example, the Stele of Merneptah, son of Ramesses II, who was Pharaoh of Egypt from 1213 to 1203 BC. It contains the earliest record of the description of the people of Israel.

Another example is the Elephantine Papyri and Ostraca which consist of thousands of documents from the Egyptian border fortresses of Elephantine and Aswan. Hundreds of letters

The Merneptah Stela created in c. 1213 BC

Discovered by Flinders Petrie in 1896

Source: Egyptian Museum, Cairo via Wikimedia Commons



spanning a period of the 5th to 4th century BC were discovered here. These records gave a glimpse of how Judaism was practiced in Egypt during the fifth century BC.

In the temples of Luxor and Karnak, archaeologists have uncovered many hieroglyphic records of life in ancient Egypt, their religious beliefs, and their military campaigns. All these texts can now be read and understood because of the breakthrough in the language barrier contributed by the Rosetta Stone. The ability to read hieroglyphics has given modern historians the tools to obtain a much deeper understanding of life and times in ancient Egypt, from the time of the Pharaohs who dealt with Abraham on until Moses.

The process of deciphering the Rosetta Stone also contributed to the deciphering process of cuneiform script. The method with which Champollion had deciphered the Rosetta hieroglyphs gave those working on deciphering Old Persian cuneiform ideas of how to approach their task.

For more information about Egyptian text discovered that relate to the Bible, refer to Appendix 5.

For video summary presentation of the Rosetta Stone click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIwgvrgU4dl>

For reference about the Elephantine papyri, go to <https://armstronginstitute.org/76-elephantine-papyrus-proving-the-book-of-nehemiah>

Breaking the Cuneiform Code

Most of the archaeological text that refer to biblical characters and events of the Old Testament, at least up until King David's time, were recorded in cuneiform. Much of the discoveries relating to culture and lifestyles correlating to the era of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, are recorded in the Akkadian Babylonian language on clay tablets using cuneiform script. How were these tablets, using a language that was almost four thousand years old, understood?

Archaeologists first had to understand that cuneiform was a script which could be chipped and wedged into clay tablets or stone walls and was used as long ago as 3,000 BC. Unlike hieroglyphics which was used primarily to represent the Egyptian language, cuneiform was a script which was used to represent different languages over time, from the early Sumerian civilization, Akkadian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Elamite and Persian empires, until it was replaced by the early Phoenician alphabet.

3.1 The **Trilingual Inscription** of Xerxes I at the slopes of Van

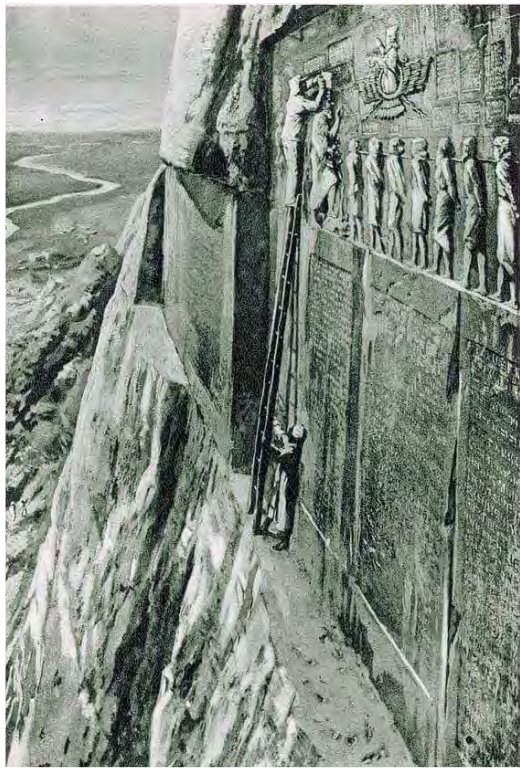
Historians have made attempts to understand cuneiform since the 17th century but without much success. With the discovery of the Trilingual cuneiform inscription of Xerxes I at Van, also known as the XV Achaemenid royal inscription located on the southern slope of a mountain

in present-day Turkey, some progress was made in understanding Old Persian. The inscriptions were a proclamation of King Xerxes I (486-465 BC), in Persian with Babylonian and Elamite to the left and right respectively.



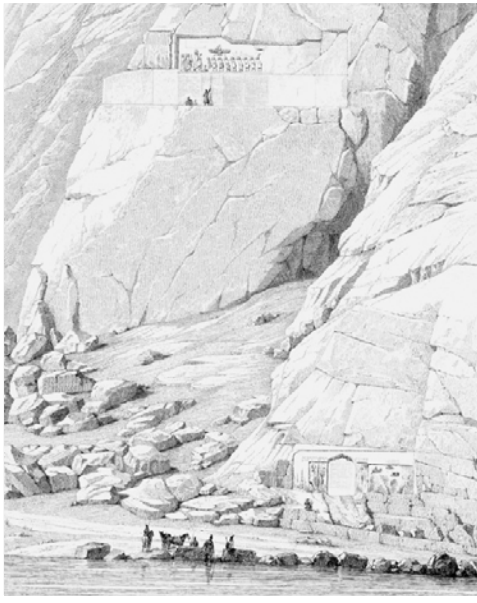
The Trilingual Inscription of King Xerxes the Great c.500 BC discovered in late 17th century on the slopes of Van. Source:Wikimedia Commons

3.2 Sir Henry Rawlinson and the Behistun Inscription



The breakthrough came in 1835, when a British officer of the East India Company, who had a passion for studying ancient languages perched precariously on a narrow ledge above a steep slope to copy the Behistun Inscription. The inscription was carved on a cliff face in Iran and was a royal proclamation in three languages – Old Persian, Elamite and Babylonian, a dialect of Akkadian language.

Sir Henry Rawlinson on the Rock of Behistun. Source:The Archaeologist



*Context Photo of the Behistun Inscription
c.2010 Source:Wikimedia Commons*

*Behistun Rock
Drawing by Pascal Coste c.1840
Source:Wikimedia Commons*



*Close Up of the Behistun Inscription Cuneiform
Source: Wikimedia Commons*



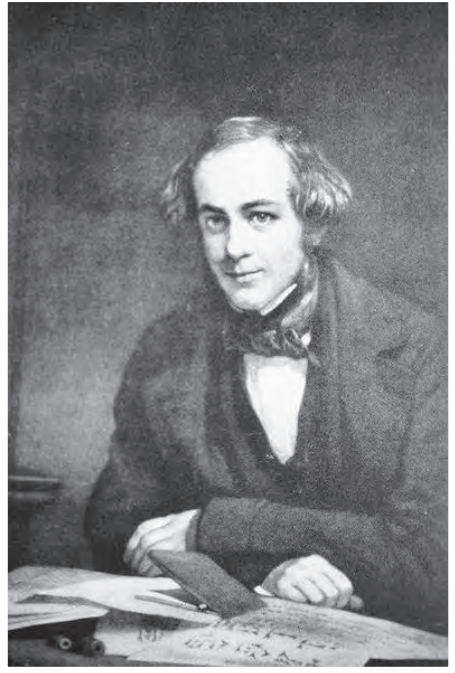
By comparing the Babylonian cuneiform script with known languages and identifying repeated patterns, scholars began to decipher individual signs. As they discovered common words and phrases across different text, they built a basic understanding of the Akkadian language. Previous knowledge of

Old Persian was key to breaking the code.

Similar strategies employed to decode the hieroglyphics on the Rosetta Stone proved beneficial in deciphering the Behistun inscriptions. By 1846, Rawlinson could read the Old Persian and slowly he

and others deciphered cuneiform. In May 1857, under a carefully controlled experiment at the British Museum, four scholars who had been working on Babylonian cuneiform – Rawlinson, Fox-Talbot, Oppert and Hincks – independently translated a cuneiform prism. Their final ‘very remarkably coincidence’ of translation output proved that Akkadian-Babylonian cuneiform had been deciphered.

This breakthrough yielded a wealth of insights into ancient Mesopotamian traditions, daily life, and civilization, encompassing Assyrian and Babylonian cultures. The decipherment significantly enriched our understanding of the world of the Old Testament in its historical context.



Sir Henry C. Rawlinson (1820-1868)
Source: Wikimedia Commons

The Nuzi Tablets

c.2000 BC - c.1700 BC

4.1 Introduction

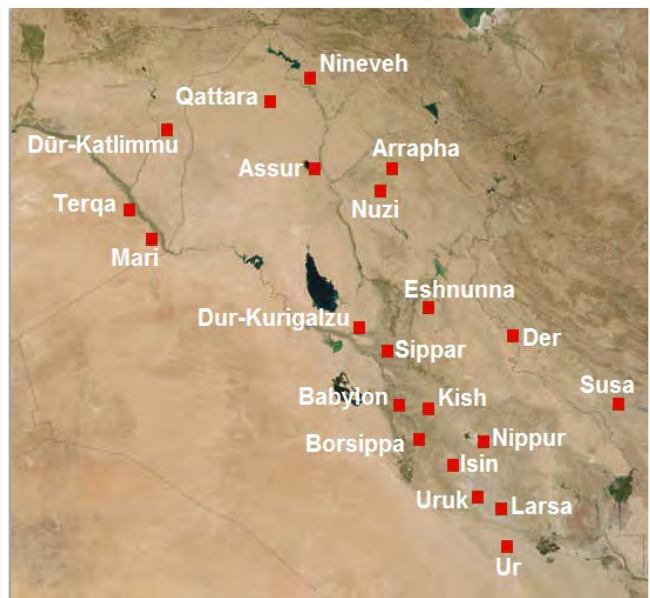
Archaeological discoveries come in different categories:

- Building and architectural ruins
- Objects such as armour, swords, pottery, utensils
- Burial sites, tombs and human remains
- Textual records

All the above give information about the lifestyles, traditions, and culture of the period in which they belong to. But of all the types of archaeological objects that have been discovered, it is items with textual records that give the most detailed information about the life and period in which it was first recorded. These textual records can be words inscribed in clay tablets, stone walls, cliff side faces or papyrus paper.

*Map of Important Bronze Age
Cities of Mesopotamia*
Source: Wikimedia Commons

One of the most important ancient finds, which is often overlooked in archaeological studies, is the discovery of the Nuzi tablets from the ancient city of Nuzi in Mesopotamia, or today's Iraq. These small clay tablets which do not look impressive and are not considered as good photo opportunities for tourists, reveal a vast treasure trove of information that illuminate the life styles and traditions that corroborate with the stories found in Genesis.



4.2 What are the Nuzi Tablets?

The Nuzi texts are ancient documents found during an excavation of Nuzi, an old Mesopotamian city southwest of Kirkuk in modern Iraq. Most of the tablets are from the Hurrian period during the second millennium BC and the remainder date further back to the town's founding during the Akkadian Empire. They dealt with family matters such as inheritance, property rights, slavery and adoption issues. Other tablets dealt with social, economic, religious and legal institutions and customs of the Hurrians in northeastern Iraq, which were similar to those of the Bible patriarchs.



Nuzi Tablet c. 1450 BC
Source: *Wikimedia Commons*

Inscriptions on the Nuzi tablets were written in cuneiform using the Akkadian language. Thanks to the discoveries of the Trilingual Inscriptions of King Darius and later, the Behistun Inscription, the Akkadian cuneiform writings had already been understood. Many of the archive tablets dating to the second millennium, show parallels between the Bible and Hurrian culture and helps illuminate some of the practices described in Genesis.

Nuzi Tablets Reference



For further reading refer to: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuzi_texts and <https://thebiblemadeplain.com/whats-the-evidence-the-bible-is-true/>

4.3 Digging up the Nuzi Tablets

Reports of clay tablets from the ancient city of Nuzi began appearing as early as 1896, but the first serious archaeological efforts to dig and research the site only began in 1925 after Gertrude Bell noticed these tablets appearing in the markets in Baghdad. American archaeologists led by Edward Chiera, Robert Pfeifer and Richard Starr led teams to the excavation site. Under the auspices of the American Schools of Oriental

Research and later the Harvard University and Fogg Art Museum, excavations continued through 1931. Hundreds of tablets were recovered and published in a series of volumes, which continue to this day.

The dig eventually uncovered more than 5,000 tablets which today are mostly held in the Oriental Institute, the Harvard Semitic Museum and the Iraq Museum in Bagdad.

4.4 How the Nuzi Tablets help shed Light on the Stories Found in Genesis

The customs recorded in the Nuzi tablets have a remarkable similarity to those recorded in the book of Genesis. They corroborate the cultural practices described in Genesis showing that the Bible is authentic and not a dramatized version written in a later post exile period (c. 500 BC), as claimed by some critics, because these customs were no longer practiced after the Assyrians had conquered these regions. These practices were lost and forgotten until they were discovered in the 1930s.

Below are 10 customs described in the Nuzi tablets that corroborate with the stories in Genesis:

4.4-1. Practice of Adoption and Inheritance

In Genesis 15:2-3, we read that Abraham and Sarah were childless. Abraham adopts Eliezer of Damascus to be his servant and his heir. The Nuzi tablets, as well as texts from later periods, record similar legal situations and could explain why Abraham adopted Eliezer; a capable slave, to care for him and later to continue on his family name.

4.4-2. **Children by Proxy**

Bearing children by proxy for childless couples is described in the Nuzi tablets, and has a close similarity with Genesis 16 where Hagar, a slave, was selected by the wife, as a proxy to bear a child for Abraham. This son, Ishmael, born by proxy can later be replaced when a son is born from the wife herself. Such situations were also described in the Nuzi tablets.

4.4-3. **Levirate Marriage**

Judah and Tamar's story in Genesis 38 illustrates the levirate marriage concept, which is also described in the Nuzi tablets. According to this practice, a widow cannot re-marry anyone outside her dead husband's family. The dead husband's brother has to marry the widow in order to carry on his brother's line. Levirate marriage is described in different parts of the Bible. For further reading go to: <https://www.gotquestions.org/levirate-marriage.html>

4.4-4. **Sisterhood and Marriage**

The tablets reveal that amongst the Hurrians, a wife had both greater protection and superior position when she also possessed the legal status of a sister. In this situation, one document would be drawn up for marriage and another separate one

for sistership. Parallels to this can be found in Abraham's story in Genesis 20:12. The Nuzi tablets show that a man could bestow greater status on his wife by having her adopted by his father so that she became his 'sister'.

4.4-5. **Marriage Negotiations**

Laban and Jacob: In the Nuzi tablets, when the marriage contract is drawn up by the brother of the woman, she is consulted. But if the contract is drawn up by her father, she is not consulted. This is similar to what happened when Rebekah's brother Laban managed the negotiations

4.2-5A The Meeting of Jacob and Rachel



When Jacob first met Rachel by the well and discovered she was a kinsperson, he "lifted up his voice, and wept" (Genesis 29:11).

*Artist: William Dyce c.mid 19th century
Source: Wikimedia Commons*

of her marriage to Isaac. Rebekah was asked if she consented to the marriage. However, Laban did not consult his daughters when he arranged for their marriage to Jacob. In Genesis 31:50, Laban charged Jacob, with God as his witness, not to take any other women as his wives, apart from his daughters. Such prohibitions were also present in many Nuzi marriage contracts.

4.4-6. Provision of Maidservants

The Nuzi tablets also showed that it was common practice there at that time, to state in a marriage agreement that a father-in-law would provide the bride with a named maidservant. This was in line with Laban providing a named maid to both his daughters.

4.4-7. Origins of the Word Hebrew

The tablets are one of several ancient sources referring to the 'Habiru', who were a landless and wandering people. This term 'Habiru' could be like the word Hebrew. This information makes it less likely that the word Hebrew means a descendant of Jacob or descendant of Abraham.

4.4-8. Payment of Dowry by Service

Payment of dowry by working an agreed period of time have been found in some marriage contracts in the Nuzi tablets. This practice was also described as Jacob negotiated with Laban for the right to marry his daughters.



Teraphim from the Louvre Museum

Link: https://louvrebible.org.uk/oeuvre/104/louvre_departement_antiquites_orientales

4.2-9A Teraphim household Idols



Teraphim – household idols
Source: Wikimedia Commons

The Nuzi tablets described clay figures called teraphim as household idols about 12-14 inches in size and small enough to be placed in a camel's saddle basket, although some could also be larger. The Nuzi texts indicated that the possession of household gods i.e.

teraphim by a son-in-law brought with it the position

of head of the household with all its attendant rights, including ownership of the property of his deceased father-in-law. Upon the father-in-law's death, possession of the household gods by the son-in-law was accepted as proof of him being the principal heir. Possession of the household idol would secure for Rachel and her husband a claim for Laban's property. This sheds light on why Laban was so upset and adamant on searching for the teraphim idols he could not find and later insisted for a boundary stone at Mizpah to keep Jacob from claiming anything from him. (Source: Household gods, (Teraphim) © Dr David E. Graves)

4.4-9. Teraphim Household Idols

The Nuzi tablet inscriptions shed light on the significance and motives of Rachel stealing Laban's household gods (teraphim or clay idols). Before the discovery of the tablets, the episode of Laban becoming angry not just because Jacob had left him with his family and flocks without informing him, but because he could not find the household idols, or

teraphim as described in Genesis 31 was indeed very puzzling.

The Nuzi tablets indicated that it was a Hurrian practice at the time for a man to give his household gods or idols to the son-in-law he has appointed to be his heir, as proof of this appointment. This shows that Rachel had stolen her father's teraphim probably to secure Laban's

property for her husband Jacob. This also explains why Laban was still suspicious when he could not find the teraphim, and asked for a boundary stone to be placed at Mizpah and for Jacob to swear that he would not cross this boundary to harm him and by inference, to claim any property from him (Genesis 31).

4.4-10. The Price of a slave

Genesis 37 tells us that Joseph was sold by his brothers as slave for 20 shekels of silver. The Nuzi tablets showed that the going price of slaves at the time was indeed 20 shekels, and this is also recorded in the inscriptions found in Mari, Hammurabi and the Brooklyn Papyrus which was from this era. By the post-Persian exile period, when some claim that these stories were invented, the price of a slave had risen to over 90 shekels. A fifth century BC writer would not know the price of a slave 1,000 years earlier (Evidence for the Bible pp. 11).

Finally, the discovery of the Nuzi tablets and other similar written documents produced during this period reflects the reality of the biblical contexts.

The Great Flood

The flood story as depicted in Genesis describes an extra-ordinary deluge that encompassed the world. This great flood was not just the annual flooding of the areas between Tigris and Euphrates rivers, but one which had been consistently referred to as

something exceptional and widespread in the records of many nations.

There are many descriptions of a great flood in ancient records, but we have selected two where they bear similarity with the Genesis account.



▲ *Noah's Ark* by Filippo Palizzi c. 1867
Source:Wikimedia Commons



▲ *The Epic of Gilgamesh - The Flood Account*
Source:Wikimedia Commons

5.1 The Gilgamesh Epic



Gilgamesh – The Hero Mastering a Lion - Relief from façade of the throne room, Palace of Sargon II at Khorsabad c. 713 BC. Source: Louvre Museum, Paris via Wikimedia Commons

Gilgamesh was the ruler of Uruk in Mesopotamia around 2800 – 2500 BC.

The Gilgamesh Epic is told in 12 tablets which were discovered by



The great library of the seventh-century B.C. Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, shown in this 1910 illustration, was unearthed in Nineveh in the 1850s, and thousands of tablets found there were transferred to the British Museum. Among these was the Flood Tablet, deciphered by George Smith in 1872, which alerted him to the existence of the ancient Epic of Gilgamesh. Source: Wikimedia Commons

Hormuzd Rassam an Anglo-Assyrian, working for Henry Layard in the library of Ashurbanipal in Nineveh in 1849 – early 1850.

Britain had a treaty with the Ottoman Sultan at that time which allowed Britain archaeological excavations in their province of

modern-day Iran. The sultan even sent an emissary to oversee what the British archaeologists were digging and transporting to their home country.

The tablets themselves were created c. 650 BC, in the mid-neo-Babylonian era, written in the Akkadian language. It was brought to London where it sits until today in the British Museum. The Gilgamesh Epic comprises of 12 Akkadian language tablets in the library of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal who reigned from 668 to 627 BC. The text in the tablet is derived from a much earlier one that possibly pre-dated Moses (Source: British Museum – Evidence for the Bible).

The tablets were in Akkadian an ancient language inscribed in cuneiform script. To decipher the text required expertise, patience, and dedication. The scholars in the department of antiquities heard of the expertise of George Smith, a self-taught Assyriologist language expert. They informed Sir Henry Rawlinson who was the foremost cuneiform scholar of the time. Rawlinson, who had worked with Henry Layard at Nineveh, met up with Smith and was impressed by his knowledge.



*George Smith, Assyriologist for the British Museum (1840 – 1876) Born in England, died aged 36 in Aleppo, Ottoman Empire
Source: Wikipedia Commons*

Smith proved particularly adept at spotting which fragment fitted where when faced with a table strewn with shattered clay tablets. These clay tablet fragments numbering in the thousands, originated from Nineveh's library, built by the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal in the seventh century BC when the Neo-Assyrian Empire stretched from Egypt to Turkey. The tablets were discovered by Hormuzd Rassam, a protégé of Layard. Over the next decade, Smith pored over them and eventually became an expert in the language while translating it.

5.1A Translating the Assyrian Tablets

THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH

Cuneiform

Though the tales of *Gilgamesh* were originally shared through oral communication, the epic was eventually written down using cuneiform.

- first form of writing ever developed
- consisted of wedge-shaped characters that were created using a reed stylus
- characters could represent either words or sounds and were usually carved into clay that was later baked

<http://www.britannica.com/technology/cuneiform>

Pictograms, or drawings representing actual things, were the basis for cuneiform writing.

As shown in the chart, early pictograms resembled the objects they represented, but through repeated use over time they began to look simpler, even abstract.

These marks eventually became wedge-shaped ("cuneiform"), and could convey sounds or abstract concepts.



Simple Cuneiform pictograms

Source: <https://slideplayer.com/slide/13996663/>

5.2 Comparing the Genesis and the Gilgamesh Accounts of the **Great Flood**

The British Museum hired George Smith who worked on the Gilgamesh Tablets from 1872 – 1876 and translated the text for the Society of Biblical Archaeology. There were 12 tablets and 15,000 fragments, which was quite a

challenge in the days without computers, Artificial Intelligence, or even a Word processor. The tablet of greatest interest was Tablet 11 which contained a description of a catastrophic flood similar to the one described in Genesis.

5.2A Comparison of the Genesis and Gilgamesh Genesis

A comparison was made of the flood account found in Gilgamesh Epic Tablet II with the description of the flood in Genesis 6-9. Below is a summary of the comparison.

COMPARISON OF GENESIS AND GILGAMESH

	GENESIS	GILGAMESH
Extent of flood	Global	Global
Cause	Man's wickedness	Man's sins
Intended for whom?	All mankind	One city & all mankind
Sender	Yahweh	Assembly of "gods"
Name of hero	Noah	Utnapishtim
Hero's character	Righteous	Righteous
Means of announcement	Direct from God	In a dream
Ordered to build boat?	Yes	Yes
Did hero complain?	Yes	Yes
Height of boat	Several stories (3)	Several stories (6)
Compartments inside?	Many	Many
Doors	One	One
Windows	At least one	At least one
Outside coating	Pitch	Pitch
Shape of boat	Rectangular	Square
Human passengers	Family members only	Family & few others
Other passengers	All species of animals	All species of animals
Means of flood	Ground water & heavy rain	Heavy rain
Duration of flood	Long (40 days & nights plus)	Short (6 days & nights)
Test to find land	Release of birds	Release of birds
Types of birds	Raven & three doves	Dove, swallow, raven
Ark landing spot	Mountain -- Mt. Ararat	Mountain -- Mt. Nisir
Sacrificed after flood?	Yes, by Noah	Yes, by Utnapishtim
Blessed after flood?	Yes	Yes

Source: *The Flood of Noah and the Flood of Gilgamesh* | The Institute for Creation Research (icr.org)

In the Gilgamesh Epic, Gilgamesh meets a man, Ut-napishti, who tells of how he gained immortality by surviving the flood. Ut-napishti was instructed by the god Ea to build a huge boat and bring his family and representatives of all living creatures into it. The boat, a great six-decker rides out a deluge that destroys the rest of mankind. The storm is so great that even the 'gods were frightened by the deluge'. On the seventh day 'the sea grew quiet, the tempest was still, the flood ceased' and Ut-napishti sends out a dove, a swallow, and a raven. The raven does not return. Ur-napishti then leaves the boat and offers sacrifices to the gods. When the gods 'smelled the

sweet savour', the god Enlil regrets destroying the whole of mankind. As a reward, Ut-napishti and his wife are given immortality (British Museum Evidence for the Bible p.2).

One of the key differences between the two accounts is that in Genesis, there is only one God, Yahweh who is in full control of the flood and uses it to punish the sins of humankind. In the Gilgamesh record, there are many gods, who are angry with the noise made by humans and send a great flood to destroy humans – but later they become afraid of the deluge they created and one of them even regrets having destroyed humankind.

5.3 The **Atrahasis Flood Epics**



The Gilgamesh Epic is not the earliest to record a great flood story. Such a story was recorded in earlier epics such as the Sumerian and the Atrahasis Flood Epics. These epics, written in old Babylonian cuneiform are dated between 1900 to 1700 BC and would predate the record of Moses, which was around 1500 BC (Reference British Museum – Evidence for the Bible p.3).

The Atrahasis tablets were discovered in Dhi Qar, southern Iraq, in the Library of Ashurbanipal, Nineveh in 1899 and translated

The Atrahasis Epic recorded on clay tablet.

Source: British Museum via Wikimedia Commons

by George Smith for the British Museum in 1899.

In these Sumerian and Atrahasis accounts of the flood, it bears similarities to the Genesis account. However, the ark was circular and unlike the biblical ark which was rectangular with dimensions comparable to modern ships. A circular shaped ark would not be capable of withstanding a major catastrophic flood. We will not know for sure if it refers to the same event as the biblical flood, but if it

does, it adds to the vast amount of literature describing a universal flood in ancient times. In fact, a primeval catastrophic flood is embedded in the traditions of countries across the globe, including Egypt, Iran, China, India, Russia, Mexico and others (Reference British Museum – Evidence for the Bible p.3).

Other references include: <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/2271/the-atrahasis-epic-the-great-flood-the-meaning-of/> and <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atra-Hasis>

Similarities Between the Atrahasis and Biblical Flood Accounts

Atrahasis Account	Genesis Account
People multiply and cause trouble (I.i. 353-59; II.i., 2-8)	Wickedness of people brings judgment (Gen 6:13a)
Flood sent to destroy mankind (II.vii., 44-47)	Flood sent to destroy mankind (Gen 6:13b)
One man (Atrahasis) warned of the flood (III.i., 11-23)	One man (Noah) warned of flood (Gen 6:14)
Builds boat; fills with animals, food (III.i., 25-33; ii., 11-42; iv., 24-25; vi., 9-10)	Builds boat; fills with animals, food (Gen 6:17-22)
He is saved while the world perishes (III.iii., 11-18)	He is saved while world perishes (Gen 6:21)
[Damaged text; missing description of the landing]	Boat lands in mountains of Ararat (Gen 8:4)
After departure from vessel makes an offering (III.v., 31-36)	Noah makes sacrifice on an altar (Gen 8:20)
Offering accepted; gods will let mankind continue to live (III.viii., 9-18)	God accepts offering; makes covenant with mankind (Gen 8:21-22)

Source: Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology p.60

The Code of Hammurabi and the Law of Moses

c.1800 BC - c.1700 BC

6.1 What is the **Hammurabi Code**? _____

The Code of Hammurabi contains 282 laws developed in the First Babylonian Empire and carved on a 7-foot-tall basalt monument. The top of the stele contains a carving that depicts King Hammurabi receiving the laws from the ancient Mesopotamian god of justice, Shamash. The laws are noted for their wide-ranging scope, covering commercial, family, property, and criminal areas and for the volume of detail in the inscriptions. These laws were developed during the reign of Hammurabi c.1792 – 1750 BC and stands as the oldest, most comprehensive set of laws discovered from ancient ruins.

Hammurabi was known to be a great conqueror and brought much territory under his rule. Scholars believe that he may have instituted his law code c.1772 BC in order to ensure stability in his territories. He understood a principle of empire

ruling which is that, a king needed the consent of the governed for a stable social base, if he desired to rule a large territory of diverse cultures. The Code of Hammurabi served the purpose of letting the



Hammurabi c.1793 – 1751 BC
Source: Louvre Museum via Wikimedia Commons

people know precisely how they should behave to live in peace under the law (source: <https://www.thecollector.com/code-of-hammurabi/> and <https://www.history.com/news/hammurabi-code-legal-system-influence>).

The code is well-known for the principle of *lex talionis* also known as “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” which was a rule of meting out just and commensurate

punishment, preventing zealous avengers from taking justice into their own hands. It also recognised three class levels in their population: nobles, freedmen and slaves.

These laws were known to have been copied and studied throughout a large region of Mesopotamia and even Egypt. Moses, being brought up as a prince and studied in the royal schools of Egypt, would probably have also read these laws as part of his training.

6.2 How was the Stele of **Hammurabi's Code** discovered?

The Hammurabi Stele was discovered by a French archaeological team under the direction of Jacques de Morgan and Father Jean-Vincent Scheil, during excavations at the ancient Elamite city of Susa in modern day Iran between 1901 and 1902. The Stele was found in three pieces and later reconstructed into a single standing monument. The stele contained about 4,130 lines of cuneiform. The translation of the code was published in France in 1902.

The stele contains the most complete set of code but still, there were over eighty lines missing at the monument's bottom. One theory of



Excavation Site in Susa, Iran
Source: UNESCO World Heritage Convention

why the stele arrived in Susa is that it was brought to the Elamite capital

by king Sutruk-Nakhunte who ruled the region in the 12th century to celebrate his achievements.

The origins of the monument are probably from either Babylon or Sippar, a city under Babylon's control. The French Archaeological Mission found the stele in a workroom,

indicating plans to add scripture by the Elamites. The monument's discovery in the ancient Elamite city reflects an awareness of the code throughout the Middle East, even hundreds of years after Hammurabi's death (source: <https://www.thecollector.com/code-of-hammurabi/>).



Discovery of the Code of Hammurabi Stele c.1898 Source: Louvre Museum via Wikimedia Commons



Excavation of ancient site of Susa c.1898 Source: Louvre Museum via Wikimedia Commons

6.3 Similarities of the **Hammurabi Code** with the Mosaic Law

Hammurabi's code is a very important record in the ancient history of law. 'It represents the most elaborate formulation of a style of law collections that was current throughout the ancient Near East,

a style that also appears in Exodus 20:22 – 23:33, called the Covenant Collection' (Source: Bible Odyssey).

A summary of some of the similarities is as follows:



Code of Hammurabi – Detail
Source: Public Domain

a. Lex Talionis

Hammurabi's Code displays the law of retributive justice known as Lex Talionis, defined by the concept of "an eye for an eye". This was necessary because the population was from a diverse culture and the king wanted them to know exactly how the justice system would work.

b. Bearing False Witness

Hammurabi's code condemns giving false testimonies which is also condemned in the Ten Commandments, found in Exodus 20:13 and Exodus 23:1 (Source: Armstrong Institute of Archaeology).

c. Liberation of slaves after a certain number of years

Hammurabi's Code 117 says: "If any one fail to meet a claim for debt, and sell himself, his wife, his son and daughter for money or give them away to forced labour: they shall work for three years in the house of the man who bought them, or the proprietor, and in the fourth year they shall be set free." This can be compared to Exodus 21:2 which says: 'If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But

6.3A From the Hammurabi Code

If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out.

If he break another man's bone, his bone shall be broken.

If a man knock out the teeth of his equal, his teeth shall be knocked out.

If a builder build a house for someone, and does not construct it properly, And the house which he built fall in and kill its owner, then that builder shall be put to death.

If it kill the son of the owner of the house, the son of that builder shall be put to death.

(Source: https://www.worldhistory.org/Code_of_Hammurabi/)

in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything.^(NIVUK)

d. Provisions for protecting the unborn

Exodus 21:22-225 contains laws that protect a pregnant woman and her unborn child. In Hammurabi's code it says: "If a man strike a free-born woman so that she lose her unborn child, he shall pay 10 shekels for her loss. If the woman die, his daughter shall be put to death" (Source: Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology).

e. Incest forbidden

The Mosaic Law forbids all manners

of incest as described in Leviticus 18:6-7. Hammurabi's code 154, 155 and 157 also forbids incest with prescribed capital punishment of drowning and burning (Source: Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology).

f. Adultery and Kidnapping

Both the Mosaic Law and Hammurabi's Code imposed the death penalty in cases of adultery and kidnapping.

(Leviticus 20:10; Exodus 21:16 and Hammurabi codes 129 and 14.

Source: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Moses-Hammurabi-code.html>)

6.4 Differences between the Law of Moses and Hammurabi's Code



Hammurabi King of Babylon receiving the code from Shamesh, the Babylonian god of justice. From the Hammurabi Stele in the Louvre Museum via Wikimedia Commons

Since the Hammurabi Code pre-dates the Mosaic Law by about 300 years, people then ask the question, did Moses plagiarize Hammurabi's Code? But does it have to be seen that way? For any society to function in an orderly and civil manner, laws must be put in place to ensure equitable rules of living and working; and punishment

that is understood by its populace. Countries throughout the world have similar laws even today. Such parallels do not prove plagiarism. Both Babylon and Israel had laws against murder, but that does not mean that one must have stolen the idea from another. Should one country not punish crime simply because another country has a similar law?

Besides the minor differences in the details of the code and the punishment to be meted out, the Mosaic Law is significantly different from the Code of Hammurabi in several other ways:

1. Hammurabi's code was devised in a polytheistic culture where there were many gods. It is one of their gods, Shamash, the god of justice who hands the code to Hammurabi to be given to his subjects. In the Mosaic Law, Yahweh is the one God who created and rules the Universe.
2. The moral principles in the Mosaic Law are based on a righteous God, who requires that humankind, created in His image, live righteously. It provides a way, for humans who are in a fallen state, to approach God through a ritual of sacrifices but through this, it shows that God desires fellowship with His people. There is nothing of this principle in the Hammurabi Code, which was given to the people as a warning of the punishments they would receive if they broke the rules.
3. Hammurabi's code was written in a way for a king to rule an empire with a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural population. It was devised to keep an empire under control. In that way, the code focussed exclusively on criminal and civil



Moses Breaking the Tablets of the Law
Painted by: Gustave Dore c. 1866
Source: Wikimedia Commons

laws meting out harsh punishments for infractions of the law. There was no spiritual element in the codes itself, except that Hammurabi claimed they were given to him by the god of justice.

The Mesopotamians believed the god Shamash gave them the code so that people could get along with one another. In the Bible, the law code was given so that people could get along with God first, and then with one another.

4. The claim that Moses simply copied Hammurabi's Code has largely been abandoned today due to the fact that similar law codes, before Hammurabi and after Hammurabi have been found in other places. These would include Cuneiform laws written as early as 2350 BC. Laws formulated even today, in atheistic communist countries would have similar criminal and civil codes.
5. The Mosaic Code was written primarily to show a way for humans to approach and be close to God. Its focus was first a vertical relationship with God and secondly, relationship with their community. Jesus emphasised this when He said that the Mosaic Law can be summed up in two basic principles: "To Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind; and to love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-40).

(Source: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Moses-Hammurabi-code.html> and <https://armstronginstitute.org/846-did-moses-plagiarize-hammurabi>)

6.5 Significance of the Hammurabi Code



Hammurabi Code inscription @ Louvre Museum. Photo by: author

The discovery and the understanding of the Hammurabi Code shows the development of laws in Mesopotamia from the earliest codes found, about 600 years earlier. Many of the rules have been in place since 2300 BC and evolved over time. The Hammurabi code was the latest iteration of the laws which were already in place but now carried harsher penalties in some instances because the First Babylonian Empire had extended borders and a larger population. Strict laws were needed to keep the population in place.

The understanding of these laws helps us appreciate the norms of culture and rule in the times of Abraham right until Joshua. It also helps us appreciate the uniqueness of the Mosaic Law. The similarities in the criminal and civil laws and penal code not only show the authenticity of the Old Testament laws, but it also serves to highlight the uniqueness of the Mosaic Law.

The rituals and spiritual aspects of the Mosaic Law show its uniqueness in the sense that they served to demonstrate to the people that God desired for them to walk closely with Him, but because of their sins, sacrifices were required for them to be cleansed and that they were required to live righteously. The Law showed them what was expected of them by their God, Yahweh.

CHAPTER 7

Discovering Israel in Egypt

c.1800 BC - c.1200 BC



Israel in Egypt by Edward Poynter c.1867 Source: Public Domain

7.1 The **Significance** of Egypt in Bible History

Egypt is famous for being the land of the ancient Pharaohs, the great pyramids, the burial chambers, and the colossal temples. Unlike the ruins of Europe, the magnificent temples and pyramids are for the most part, still standing. The giant pyramids of Giza, which were built c.2500 BC, were already 500 years old when Abraham first entered Egypt to escape a famine in Canaan.

In Bible history, Egypt played an important role. Besides Abraham who

made the first visit in c.2000 BC, Joseph brought his father Jacob and his whole family to Egypt to escape a grim 7-year famine. While they were free shepherds at first, we next read of them in the book of Exodus, 430 years later, as slaves who were forced to build cities for the ruling Pharaoh under oppressive conditions.

Then the God of Israel, using Moses to speak for Him, delivered 10 devastating plagues, which forced Pharaoh to free the Hebrew slaves. God gave them instructions on how

to prepare for a Passover meal, just before the last plague descended on Egypt, after which the Israelites were set free. It happened as the Lord had said it would, and since then, the Passover meal has been celebrated not only to commemorate their freedom from Egyptian slavery but also the birth of the nation, for the last 3,500 years till today.

The first Passover meal was performed in Egypt. After they were led out of Egypt, Moses was instructed by God to give them Laws, by which they would maintain a covenant relationship with Him and also to live in harmony with one another. Thus, Moses wrote the Ten Commandments as well as the Mosaic Law which is fundamental in Judaism today.

Yet today, many historians have questioned the historicity of the stories of Hebrews living in Egypt. Outside of the Bible, where is the evidence, they ask, that Jews had been slaves in Egypt or that there was an exodus. Where is the evidence, that Moses lived or that he had the ability to write down the Law? Could these events have been ‘invented’ by some priests during the exile to create a national institution to unite the Jews?

For decades, scholars have deliberated these inquiries, scouring historical records and archaeological findings for validation. In the last century, modern archaeology has unveiled remarkable discoveries, shedding light on compelling evidence. We shall now explore some of these significant revelations.

7.2 The Ibscha Relief

The Bible mentions several “migrations” of the Hebrew patriarchs into Egypt, to escape famine events. While Canaan depended on consistent rainfall and thus was susceptible to droughts, the Nile River and its annual flooding, brought consistent irrigation and mostly alleviated the threat of long dry spells. Egypt was famous as the “bread-basket” of the Levant, even



Ibscha Relief Chnumhotep II a.k.a. Drawing of the Aamu group. Source: Public Domain

to the period of the Roman Empire. The Ibscha Relief is a famous tomb painting discovered at the site of Beni Hasan, an ancient Egyptian mortuary complex on the eastern banks of the Nile River in central Egypt. It is dated to around the mid-19th century BC. Archaeologists have translated the inscriptions to describing a migration of Semitic people, from Canaan, to Egypt. The leaders of the procession are identified with a Semitic name, “Abisha of the Hyksos.” The people themselves are labelled the “Aamu of

Shu.” Some archaeologist identified the title Am as the common Hebrew word for the “people” or “nation” in the Bible. According to archaeologists, the timing of this migration could fit with the time when Abraham moved to Egypt (Source: Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology, March-April 2023).

The Ibscha Relief was discovered by German Egyptologist Ludwig Borchardt at Tel e-Amma Akhetaten in 1902.

7.3 The Merneptah Victory Stele _____



The Merneptah Stele stands out as a significant discovery linked to Moses and the Exodus. Pharaoh Merneptah created this 10-foot-tall victory monument around 1208 BC, boasting

The Merneptah Victory Stele

Source: The Egyptian Museum via Wikimedia Commons

of victories in Libya and Canaan. It was unearthed by Sir Flinders Petrie in Thebes in 1896, and is now housed in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

The stele mentions “Israel is wasted, its seed is not,” referring to a campaign in Canaan. However, despite Merneptah’s claim, Israel was not destroyed, with only a few cities taken. Most scholars consider this inscription as the oldest outside of the Bible mentioning Israel as a nation, providing a clear Egyptian reference to Israel.

Earlier, it was widely accepted that there was minimal archaeological evidence supporting Israelite settlement in Canaan before the 12th century BC. However, the Merneptah Stele has proven this claim to be inaccurate. By 1208 BC, this inscription implies that Israel

had developed as a noticeable group, drawing Egypt's attention, although they did not yet have full control of their territory. This corresponds to the era of the Judges, marked by Yahweh allowing adversaries to oppress the Israelites.

7.3A Support for the earlier BC Exodus Date?



Bust of Merneptah, successor of Ramses II, ruled from c. 1213 to 1203 BC. Source: Egyptian Museum, Cairo via Wikimedia Commons

Some archaeologists say this Stele supports an earlier date for the Exodus (around 1446 BC), challenging the late date proposed by some (around 1270 BC). The short time span between 1270 BC and 1208 BC makes it improbable to accommodate the Exodus, the desert wandering, conquest of Canaan, tribal settlements, and establishing a national presence before Merneptah's supposed conquest. Instead, Merneptah's campaign likely aligns with the time of the Judges, suggesting the Exodus happened in the 15th century BC, as described in the biblical record.

7.4 Brickmakers, Tomb of Rekhmire

Sometime between 1819 to 1822, Frederic Caillaud, a Frenchman and artist, came across the Rekhmire Tomb Scenes. He realised its significance in showing daily Egyptian life of its period, sometime in the

15th century BC, and proceeded to make copies of it.

The Bible talks about how the Israelites had to make bricks as one of their main jobs. A famous



Brickmakers, Tomb of Rekhmire, discovered in early 1800s. Source:Wikimedia Commons

wall painting in the tomb of the 15th-century BC. Rekhmire, vizier of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II, depict light-skinned Semitic slaves making bricks out of mud, water, and chaff. The inscription text next to this painting says that these slaves were skilled at their work and were closely watched by their taskmaster. The taskmaster would tell them to keep working hard, using a rod as a sign not to be lazy. They were building a storehouse as instructed by their official.

The Bible describes records similar stories of how the Israelites were forced by Pharaoh to build store-cities. They were made to work very hard with tough and harsh treatment, using mortar and bricks. The Israelite overseers appointed

by Pharaoh's supervisors were even punished if things did not go as ordered. Pharaoh accused them of being lazy and urged them to work harder. This is found in Exodus chapters 1 and 5 in the Bible. In Exodus 1:13-14 say it says the Egyptians oppressed the Hebrews and ¹³ worked them ruthlessly, ¹⁴ They made their lives bitter with harsh labour in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labour, the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly (NIVUK). In Exodus 5:7 it says, 'You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw (Exod 5:7) The Israelite overseers realised they were in trouble when they were told, 'You are not to reduce the number of bricks required of you for each day.' (Exod 5:19)_(NIVUK).

Another scene in the tomb contains an inscription that reads as follows: "Rejoice, O prince, all your affairs are flourishing. The treasure stores are overflowing." This fits well with the biblical account of the Israelites building treasure stores or "treasure cities," for the pharaoh (Exodus 1:11).

(Source: Summarised from Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology)

7.5 The Brooklyn Papyrus Slave List _____

The Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1446 is an Egyptian document written in hieratic script that names 95 household servants of a noblewoman named Senebtisi. Four of the names are Semitic and several have been identified as Hebrew names. These include Siphrah, the name of one of the Hebrew midwives prior to the Exodus (Exodus 1:15). The papyrus dates to the time of c.1809 – 1743 BC, just after the time of Joseph and does not refer to the Hebrew slaves of the time of Moses. But the question of whether ancient Israelites have ever lived in Egypt, as put forward by some archaeologists, can now be put to rest as the Papyrus Brooklyn clearly shows that they did.



Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1446 records the names of 95 household slaves, including some that are Hebrew. Photo: Brooklyn Museum / CC BY 3.0

(Source: Associates For Biblical Research: Top Ten Discoveries Related to Moses and the Exodus)

7.6 The Ipuwer Papyrus – Parallels with the Exodus _____



The Ipuwer Papyrus is a scroll dated to the 13th century BC. Written in the hieratic text, it is believed to be a copy of an older account of a series of national disasters that Egypt and laid it to waste. Ipuwer

The Ipuwer Papyrus c.1307 – 1196 BC. Source: Public Domain

was the name of a royal Egyptian scribe, and it was a common Egyptian name in the mid-15th century BC. On the papyrus, the scribe describes a series of national disasters that struck Egypt.

Archaeologists still debate on whether the text is describing events that happened, laying the blame on former rulers who allowed ‘troublesome shepherds into the land of Egypt’ or was it a warning to the rulers to rule justly or they would

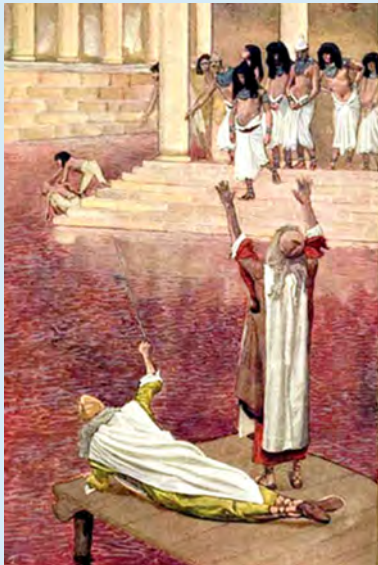
face plagues brought by the gods as punishment. The date of when these disasters happened, or would happen, is also uncertain, with some scholars saying the date is too early for the Exodus events and some saying it could fit in with the earlier Exodus date i.e. the late 15th century BC.

However, what is interesting is the striking similarities of these catastrophes with the Biblical plagues described in the book of Exodus in the Bible.

Comparison between the Ipuwer Papyrus and The Plagues in Exodus

Ipuwer Papyrus

Indeed, the river is blood, yet men drink of it.



*The First Plague – Water is Changed into Blood. By James Tissot c. 1899;
Source: Public Domain*

Ten Plagues in Exodus

Exodus 7:20: ... all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.

Ipower Papyrus	Ten Plagues in Exodus
Indeed, [hearts] are violent, pestilence is throughout the land, blood is everywhere, death is not lacking	Exodus 9:15, 7:19: Surely now I had put forth My hand, and smitten thee and thy people with pestilence [A]nd there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt
Indeed, magic spells are divulged; smw- and shnw-spells are frustrated	Exodus 8:18: And the magicians did so with their secret arts ... but they could not
Indeed, all animals, their hearts weep; cattle moan	Exodus 9:3: behold, the hand of the Lord will be on your cattle in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the oxen, and on the sheep—a very severe pestilence.
Indeed, everywhere barley has perished	Exodus 9:31: And the flax and the barley were struck
The land is without light	Exodus 10:22: And there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt
Indeed, every dead person is as a well-born man Indeed, the children of princes are dashed against walls	Exodus 12:29: The Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the first-born of the captive
Indeed, men are few, and he who places his brother in the ground is everywhere ...	Exodus 12:30: There was not a house where there was not one dead.
Indeed, poor men have become owners of wealth, and he who could not make sandals for himself is now a possessor of riches Indeed, gold and lapis lazuli, silver and turquoise ... are strung on the necks of maidservants	Exodus 12:35, 11:2: And the children of Israel ... asked of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment. ... Every woman [took] of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold.

Ipuwer Papyrus	Ten Plagues in Exodus
Indeed, noblemen are in distress, while the poor man is full of joy	Exodus 14:8: [F]or the children of Israel went out with boldness.
[Behold, he who did not know his god] now offers to him with incense of another	<p>Exodus 6:3 but by My name YHWH I was not known to them.</p> <p>Exodus 10:25 But Moses said, “You must also give [c]us sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.</p>

Source: Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology magazine – Let the Stones Speak, March-April 2023

7.7 Proto-Sinaitic Inscriptions

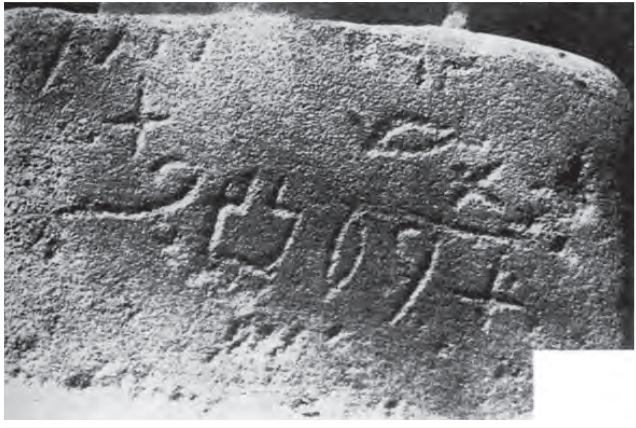
In the 19th century when many questioned the legitimacy of the writings of Moses, claiming that there was no known alphabetic script with which Moses could have used to write the first five books of the Bible.

We now know that an alphabetic script was already available, which Moses could have used, and evidence of it was discovered in Sinai. Having been educated in the royal schools of Egypt, Moses would have been instructed in all the latest knowledge available to Egypt which was an advanced country in its time (Acts 7:22). In 1905, Sir Flinders Petrie discovered examples of alphabetic

writing inscribed on stones at Serabit el-Khadim, an Egyptian turquoise mine in the Sinai. The inscriptions date from 19th to the 15 century BC.

The proto-Sinaitic script, as it was often called, was created by Semitic people working at such turquoise mines. They used Egyptian hieroglyphic symbols as basic letters for their own language. Most experts believe this language was from Canaan, but its specific identity has been a subject of debate.

Douglas Petrovich argues that these writings were made by Israelites, and that Hebrew is the language



Specimen of Proto-Sinaitic script c. 1500 BC, Photo c. 1916 AD
 Source: William Foxwell Albright via Wikimedia Commons

Word	Proto-Sinaitic	Phoenician	Latin
'alp ("ox")			A
mem ("water")			M
'en ("eye")			O

Proto-Sinaitic, Phoenician and Latin alphabets

used. One inscription (Sinai 361) he translated includes the name of Moses. However, not all scholars are convinced, leading to significant debates.

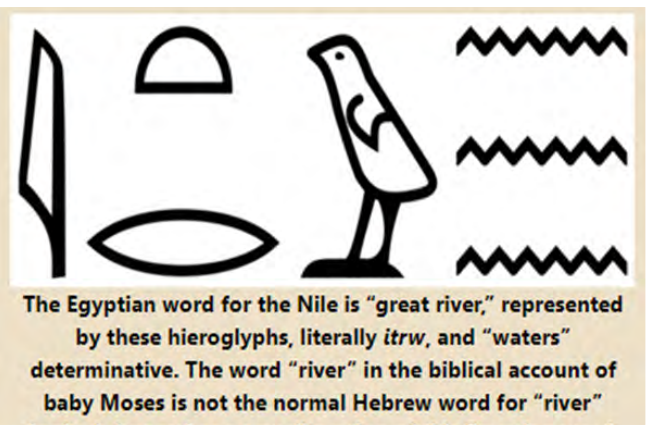
What is fascinating is that this alphabet script emerged around the time the Israelites were in Egypt,

using a language from their place of origin. At the very least, it suggests the existence of an alphabet that Moses might have used to write the first five books of the Bible.

7.8 Egyptian Words in the Hebrew Text

It has been pointed out by Egyptologist James Hoffmeier that there are numerous words in the Exodus account that use words with Egyptian etymologies or origins. For example in the story of baby Moses, in Exodus chapter 2:3, *But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile.* (NIVUK).

Hoffmeier points out that the Hebrew word for basket is “tebat” and derives from the Egyptian word *dbjt* or “tebah.” Similarly, the words “bulrushes” and “pitch” have Egyptian etymologies, and the Hebrew word for “reeds” is from the Egyptian word “*twfy*”. Even Moses’s name is Egyptian, having been given by Pharaoh’s daughter (Exodus 2:10).



Hoffmeier writes, "There is widespread agreement that at the root of the name is the Egyptian word *msi*, which was a very common element in theophoric names throughout the New Kingdom (e.g., Amenmose, Thutmose, Ahmose, Ramose). The Egyptian 'loanwords' in the Hebrew text are difficult to explain unless one acknowledges Moses's Egyptian education, upbringing and authorship of the Pentateuch.

7.9 Dating the Exodus

There are two schools of thought regarding the date of the Exodus. One believes the date to be around mid-15th century BC, based on 1 Kings 6:1, which states that the beginning of the construction of Solomon's temple was 480 years after Israel left Egypt. Bible scholars are agreed that the Temple construction probably began around 967 BC. Going back 480 years will then give us 1446 BC as the Exodus date. This date matches other scriptures, such as Jephthah's speech about how long the Israelites were in the land during the period of the judges (Judges 11:26).

The second school of thought, puts

the Exodus date as occurring in the early 13th century BC. The main evidence for the later date is the Biblical reference to the store cities



Granodiorite head of Pharaoh Amenhotep was once part of a sphinx. It is now housed in the State Museum of Egyptian Art in Munich, Germany
 Source: *Wikimedia Commons*

of Pithom and Ramesses in Exodus 1:11. These cities were built by Ramesses II who ruled from 1279 to 1213 BC. They also use a different interpretation of calculating the years mentioned in 1 Kings 6:1.

Conservative Bible scholars however have argued that the names of Ramesses and Pithom could have been used anachronistically to give an up-to-date contemporary name to an older city which had been built earlier.

Assuming that the earlier date is correct, then there would be a strong case for Amenhotep II to be the Pharaoh of the Exodus as he was reigning in 1446 BC. Amenhotep II was not the firstborn son of his father Thutmose III, nor was Amenhotep's son, who succeeded the throne after him, (all Egyptian first-borns were killed by the angel of death during the 10th plague).

7.10 Conclusions

Although official or royal archives lack written history detailing Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt, there is abundant evidence that supports the presence of Israelites in Egypt during a timeframe aligned with biblical records. This evidence includes written material, the integration of Egyptian words into Hebrew, similarities between described events and individuals in both Egyptian records and the Bible, indicating a period when Israelites resided within Egyptian borders before a sudden and rapid migration to Canaan during the Exodus. Furthermore, the Passover, a national feast, holds historical significance beyond symbolic origins,

reflecting a real event in Israelite history while they were still in Egypt. These archaeological evidences corroborate the Bible account of the Israelite presence in Egypt, their period of slavery followed by the exodus events.

For further reading please refer to <https://armstronginstitute.org/238-evidence-of-the-exodus> and <https://biblearchaeology.org/research/chronological-categories/exodus-era/4919-top-ten-discoveries-related-to-moses-and-the-exodus>

Discovering David – Tel Dan Inscription and the Moabite Stone

c. 1000 BC

8.1 Introduction

We have seen how archaeology began to take a scientific approach around the late 18th century and early 19th century AD starting with the French savants and historians entering Egypt during the Napoleonic campaign. Before that, archaeological discoveries were made by natives who then sold their finds or loot at the local markets or to curios traders.

Starting from the early 19th century, European archaeologists, often accompanying their army or colonising organizations like the British East India Company, would follow the trails when reports of important souvenirs were discovered in a market place. There

was a lot of excitement whenever a discovery was made which highlighted an event that happened within the geographical sphere and timeline covered in the historical narratives of the Bible. In fact much of the spur to archaeological digs was to prove the Bible true.

Around the 1980s some sceptical historians began to become very vocal and were called “minimalists” for their shared view that there is very little in archaeological discoveries that prove the historicity of the Bible narratives. In their view, the historical value of the biblical texts was ‘minimal.’

In this chapter, we will look at some of the significant discoveries made in Israel which corroborates the

historical narratives, especially in the Old Testament. We have covered Genesis, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Exodus in the previous chapters. Now we will focus on the period of the kings of Israel. Yes, many discoveries have been made in Mesopotamia that speak of political, cultural, and spiritual environment of the people at that time. They in-line with the customs and practices that are described in Genesis.

But what about some direct evidence of the kings of Israel? Is there any evidence that directly points to the existence of the kings and prophets and the events described in the books of history in the Bible? Was there really a King David who was the single most important king in Israel's history; granted by God to have a dynasty in his name and would eventually have the Messiah Jesus among his descendants.

8.2 The Tel-Dan Stele

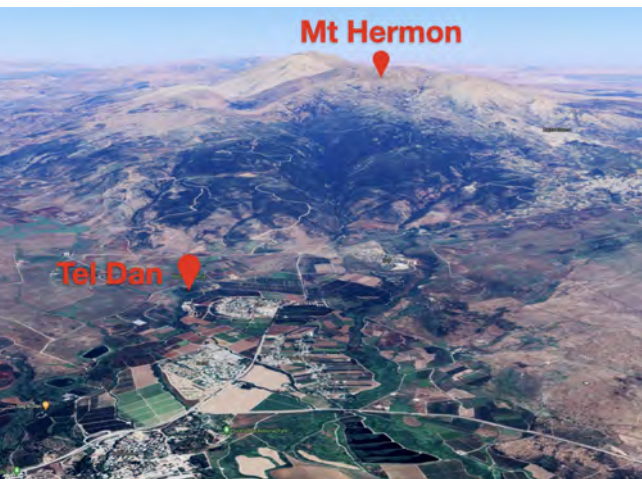
The background to this Stele is found in 2 Kings 8-9. The story is told of how King Hazael of Syria claims victory over King Jehoram of Israel and King Ahaziah of Judah c. 843 BC.

In July 1993, Avraham Biran and his surveyor, Gila Cook discovered the first and largest fragment, Fragment A, of the Tel Dan stela. Biran and Joseph Naveh published an article, "An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan" in the Israel Exploration Journal.

According to Biran and Naveh King Hazael of Syria proclaimed he "killed King Jehoram of Israel the son of Ahab and the King of the house of David, and set their towns into

ruins." The most stunning aspect of the find was because of what was discovered on the 9th line of the inscription. The Stela was dated undeniably to the 9th century BC, around a hundred years after the time of King David. The vast majority of scholars accepted that now here was solid evidence of the existence of a dynasty in the ninth century BC that traced its origin to King David.

Then in June 1994, two additional joining fragments labelled Fragment B, were found. Together Fragment A and B represent only a portion of a much larger inscription. The language of the inscription was Aramaic and it was a victory proclamation of a king of Aram over Israel and Judah.



Tel Dan at the foot of Mt Hermon in northern Israel

Source: <https://biblicalhistoricalcontext.com/beyond-apologetics/tel-dan-stele/>

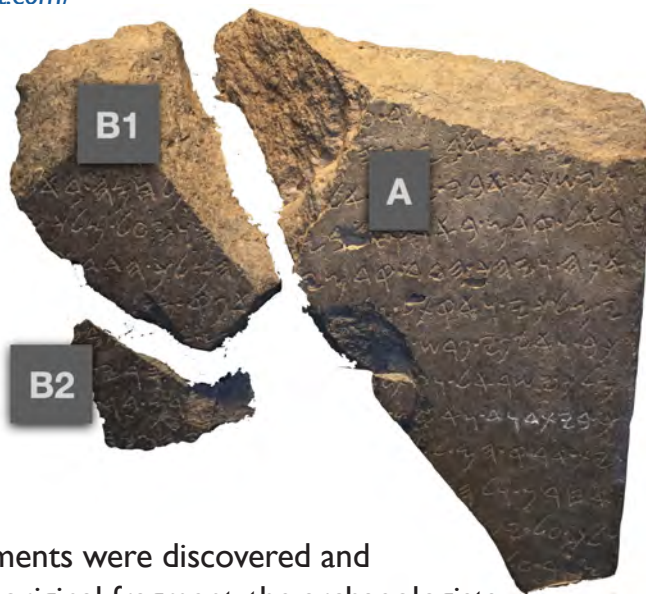


The site where the Tel Dan Stele Fragments were discovered.

Source: <https://biblicalhistoricalcontext.com/beyond-apologetics/tel-dan-stele/>

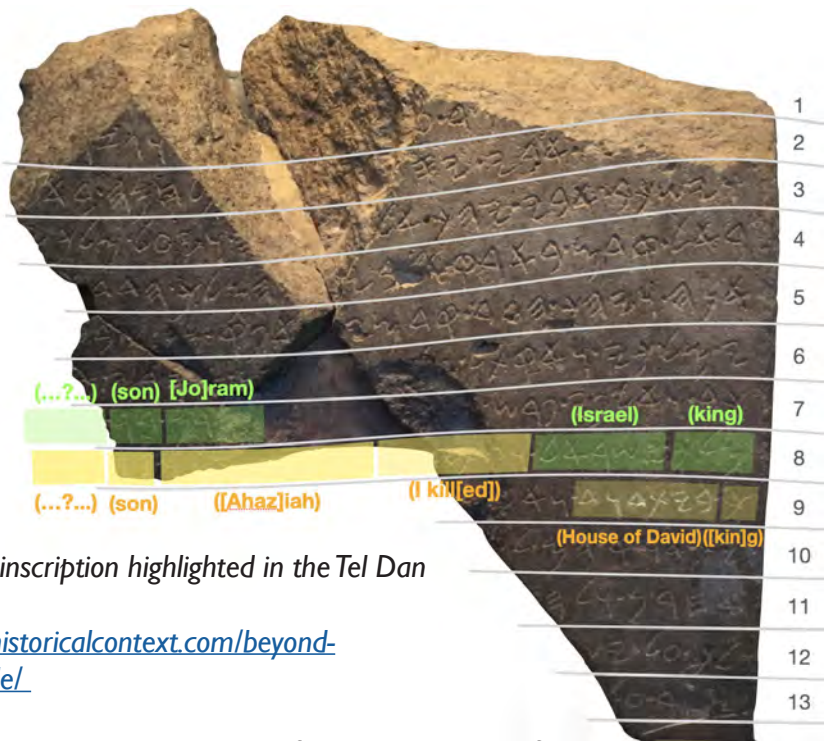
Tel Dan Fragments put together.

Source: <https://biblicalhistoricalcontext.com/beyond-apologetics/tel-dan-stele/>



After the second and third fragments were discovered and pieced together with the larger original fragment, the archaeologists were able to confirm more names on the inscription. Not only was the dynasty of David, or House of David, mentioned, but other kings of Israel like Joram, and Ahaziah also appears.

From the joint pieces one sentence appears: King Hazael of Aram proclaims that he killed King Jehoram, the son of Ahab, the king of Israel and that he killed King Ahaziah, son of Jehoram, king of the House of David.



The “House of David” inscription highlighted in the Tel Dan Stele

Source: <https://biblicalhistoricalcontext.com/beyond-apologetics/tel-dan-stele/>

We now have archaeological evidence of the existence of King David, his dynasty and two other kings mentioned in 2 Kings 8:28 were real historical figures.

8.3 Understanding the Tel-Dan Inscription in reference to 2 Kings 8 and 9

The name of the king who commissioned the inscription is not preserved. However, based on the historical content of the text and other Mesopotamian and biblical sources, most historians accept that the king of Damascus, King Hazael, was the one who commissioned the inscription in the 9th century BC.

After Hazael had usurped the throne of Damascus from Ben Hadad (2 Kings 8:15), he subsequently formed an alliance with (1 Kings 9:17) King Jehu of Israel, who was also a usurper. In 2 Kings 9, the biblical narrative states that Jehu of Isarel killed King Jehoram of Israel and King Ahaziah of Judah. But it

is of no surprise that in the Tel-Dan inscription, King Hazael would boast and claim credit for killing the kings of Israel as well as Judah and destroying many of the towns.

Since these two usurpers, Jehu and Hazael, were working together, there

were some grounds for them both to claim to have been responsible for dealing the final blow to the two kings.

(Sources: <https://blog.bibleodyssey.org/articles/the-tel-dan-inscription/>)

8.4 Further Reading on the Tel Dan Stele Discovery and Translation

To read the full story of how the Stele was discovered and how the text of the inscription corroborates with the Bible and the parts where there are still trying to understand the text, click here –

1. <https://biblicalhistoricalcontext.com/beyond-apologetics/tel-dan-stele/>
2. <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/the-tel-dan-inscription/>
3. <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-artifacts/the-tel-dan-inscription-the-first-historical-evidence-of-the-king-david-bible-story/>
4. <https://biblearchaeology.org/research/topics/amazing-discoveries-in-biblical-archaeology/2233-the-tel-dan-stela-and-the-kings-of-aram-and-israel>

8.5 The Moabite Stone – Mention of the Kings of Israel and the “House of David”

The background history of the Moabite stone is that around 840 BC, King Mesha of Moab made a proclamation, boasting of his successful rebellion against Israel after the death of King Ahab and

inscribed it on a stele or a large stone tablet. The Bible reference is 2 Kings 3:4-5.

The Moabite Stone is a smooth block of basalt about 124 cm (49



*The Moabite Stone a.k.a. the Mesha Stele
Text: Moabite language c. 840 BC,
Discovered in 1868-70 AD
Source: The Louvre Museum via Wikimedia
Commons*

inches) high, 71 cm (28 inches) wide and 36 cm (14 inches) thick, bearing 34 surviving lines of inscription in the ancient Moabite language. It was discovered by Frederick Augustine Klein, an Anglican missionary of German descent in the old city of Dibon, now Dhiban in Jordan. Although the Bedouins already knew about the stone, they could not read its text and did not yet know the full extent of its value.

8.6 What does the Moabite Stone

Say? _____

Essentially, the Moabite Stone was a self-proclamation by King Mesha of Moab, the Dibonite declaring that in days past their god Chemosh had allowed Moab to be subjugated by their enemy Israel because he was displeased with his people. This happened during the time of David until King Ahab who was from the House of Omri, his father. Moab paid tribute to Israel until after the death of King Ahab. Then after Ahab's death Chemosh enabled Mesha to rebel and free Moab from Israel's dominance. In the last two lines of the inscription, it says "And the House of David dwelt in Hauran ... Chemosh said to me. 'Go down, fight against Hauraneni' I went down ... and Chemosh restored it in my days ..."

King Mesha was proudly proclaiming that their god Chemosh had chosen him to rid their country of their oppressors, the Israelites ruled by the House of Omri in the northern kingdom and the House of David probably referring to Judah.

In 2 Kings 3:4-5, it reads, “⁴ Now Mesha king of Moab raised sheep, and he had to pay the king of Israel a tribute of a hundred thousand lambs and the wool of a hundred thousand rams. ⁵ But after Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.” ^(NIV)

The rest of the chapter 3 talks about how Israel defeated the Moabites, but in the Moabite stone which was written by the king of Moab, it talks of a Moabite victory. Archaeologists and biblical scholars are still considering where the description of the historical events differ and whether there are different ways to look at the timeline to resolve the difference. But in both accounts, the reference to Israel, Ahab, Omri, Chemosh, Yahweh of the Israelites and the House of David are clearly stated.

8.7 Significance of the Moabite Stone

What is so significant about the stone is that it is one of the longest inscriptions detailing Moabite history and it mentions several names which are also found in the Bible. The inscription, dated to c. 840 BC provides extra-biblical references to:

- a. King Mesha of Moab and Chemosh their deity
- b. the northern kings of Israel which included Omri and his son Ahab,
- c. one of the earliest references of Israel and Yahweh the God of Israel
- d. the “House of David”

The events mentioned in the Moabite stone matches events described in the Old Testament in the book of 2 Kings chapter 3. More significantly, in recent analysis, using the latest photographic technology, archaeologists believe there is also a reference to the “House of David” in the inscription which could not be read earlier because of damage on the stone.

Put together, the inscription on the Moabite stone makes it one of the most significant archaeological discoveries both for general as well as for biblical archaeologists. It is also one of the few extra-biblical references that prove the existence of King David in the Bible.

8.8 How was the Stele Discovered? _____

In 1868, Frederick Klein, a German missionary of the Anglican church stationed in Jerusalem heard about a stone with ancient inscriptions discovered by Bedouins in Dhiban, east of the Dead Sea. Arabs who discovered ancient artifacts, would typically offer it to the highest European bidders to extract the best value possible. The Moabite Stone was no different.

When Klein first arrived at the scene, he was invited by the Sheikh to view the stone. Realizing the potential importance of the stone although not fully able to understand it, he began to copy and make notes of the inscriptions. He also started making preparations for negotiations to acquire the stone for the Berlin Museum.

When word got around in Jerusalem that a stone of importance had been discovered in Dhiban, Charles Clemont-Ganneau, a scholar and archaeologist based in the French Consulate in Jerusalem, sent two local Arabs to buy it on his behalf at a higher price than that offered by the Germans. One of his Arab



A typical Bedouin campsite in the late 19th century in Jordan



Klein and the Sheikh of the Bani Hamidi tribe

assistants managed to get a “squeeze” or a paper-mache impression of the text which was then handed over to Ganneau.

A tussle began between the Germans, British and the French to obtain the Moabite Stone. Meanwhile the stone was left standing and exposed to the elements. In 1868, the area was part of the Ottoman Empire who then tried to pressure the Bani Hamidi



Charles Clermont-Ganneau
Source: *Wikimedia Commons*

Bedouin tribe to hand over the Moabite Stone to them and the Germans. The Ottomans were good friends of the Germans at that time. In 1869, the Ban Hamidi Bedouins, who hated the Ottomans, decided to break the stone into several pieces to prevent the Ottomans from obtaining it. Some of the pieces were then handed over to different family members.

Ganneau was determined to obtain the stone for France, and together with the British General Charles

Warren, collected about two-thirds of the pieces. Since Ganneau had copies of the full impression of the original, he was able to arrange and put everything together as it was in its original form. With the help of M. de Vogue, who was a paleographer, he produced a copy of the text in the original format and since 1873, the Moabite stone has been on display in the Louvre Museum in Paris. The lighter clay colour is the original stone, and the darker colour is the re-cast made from the “Squeeze” impression.

Later, a French translation of the inscription was made by Professor Scloftman of Halle.

8.9 Summary of **Moabite Stone** comparison with the Biblical Record

Content of the Moabite Stone

Moabite Stone	Biblical Record
<p>King Mesha declares how their god Chemosh allowed Moab to be subjugated by their enemy Israel from the time of David until Ahab who was from the House of Omri his father</p>	<p>2 Kings 3:4 Now Mesha king of Moab raised sheep, and he had to pay the king of Israel a tribute of a hundred thousand lambs and the wool of a hundred thousand rams. (NIV)</p>
<p>Ahab was from the house of Omri, his ancestor, and they both fortified many cities in Israel</p> <p>After Ahab's death, Chemosh enabled Mesha to free Moab from Israel</p>	<p>1 Kings 16:23 Omri built Samaria, on a hill 16:28 Omri rested with his ancestors and was buried in Samaria. And Ahab his son succeeded him as king. (NIV)</p> <p>2 Kings 3:5 But after Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.</p>
<p>The last two lines of the inscription: "And the House of David dwelt in Hauranen... Go down, fight against the Hauraneni.</p>	<p>1 Kings 16:6 So at that time King Joram set out from Samaria and mobilised all Israel.⁷ He also sent this message to Jehoshaphat king of Judah: 'The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to fight against Moab?' 'I will go with you,' he replied. ... (NIV)</p>
	<p>The rest of 2 Kings chapter 3 talks about how eventually Israel has the upper hand</p>

8.10 Summary

For scholars, whether biblical or secular, the Moabite Stone is still considered one of the most important sources of information for ancient Israel for the following reasons.

- a. Although it is written from a different perspective, it is an external source confirming the historicity of several details in the biblical account of an Israelite king's reign
- b. It provides critical data for the reconstruction of the political and religious history of Transjordan
- c. Its script is relevant to the study of ancient writing systems
- d. Its language is very similar to ancient Hebrew and is relevant to the study of Hebrew and its neighbouring Semitic languages
- e. It is one of the few ancient extra-biblical references to names such as the Ahab, Omri, Chemosh, Israel, Yahweh, and the "House of David."

For further reference on the discovery and significance of the Moabite Stone refer to the links below:

<https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/the-mesha-stela/>

<https://bible-history.com/resource/the-moabite-stone>

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-artifacts/inscriptions/the-mesha-stela-and-king-david-of-the-bible/>

or watch the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b05ULhPu9Sk>

Digging in Assyria - The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III

900 - 700 BC

In 841 BC, Shalmaneser defeated Hazael of Syria and received tribute from Tyre, Sidon, and Samaria. Samaria is represented by Jehu.

9.1 Introduction

We can see that while archaeologists treasure any ancient objects they find, such as pottery or relics they discover in a dig site, but it is those with inscriptions that reveal the most information about a certain period or location. The Moabite inscription is a case in example. But what if there was a stone which not only had inscription but had drawings to go with it. That would be considered a bonus for the archaeologists. One of the earliest stones discovered which had a direct relation to biblical history was the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III. It had pictures and cuneiform text engraved on its sides. The text explained the main story of the picture, but the picture itself gave details about how officials and kings were dressed and how they looked like, which normally would not be described in words.



The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III
Source: British Museum via Wikimedia Commons

9.2 What is the **Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III**? _____

The Black Obelisk is a four-sided obelisk shaped pillar made of black limestone and stood at about 1.98 m (6 and a half feet) high and its sides were about 45 cm (about 17.7 inches) wide.

The four-sided obelisk has five vertically arranged panels on each side, a total of 20 panels. Each panel tells a story about one of the subdued kings or rulers from Shalmaneser's conquest. The Akkadian cuneiform inscriptions and carved picture reliefs narrate horizontally around the obelisk in a counter-clockwise direction. To read the story, one must focus on a particular panel and then go around the obelisk counter-clockwise.

To read the narrative, one has to select a panel 1 to 5, from top to bottom. Then walk around the obelisk starting from Side A to Side D.

One of the panels has become more popular than the others. It depicts an Israelite king bowing down before and offering gifts to Shalmaneser III. This king was even named as Jehu, who is mentioned in the book of Kings in the Old Testament. When



Panel 2 Side 1

Source: British Museum via Wikimedia Commons

it was first displayed in the British Museum, crowds of people lined up to see how an Israelite King and people described in the Old Testament looked like. It was like looking at a photo taken 2,800 years ago. It was this panel, the second from the top, that has made the Obelisk itself so famous.

If we just focus on the second from top panel and from Side A to Side D, we will see this relief.

The narrative of the relief shows: Shalmaneser receiving tribute from Jehu of the House of Omri (ancient northern Israel).



The Black Obelisk panel 2 from side A to side D. Source:Wikimedia Commons

Detail from Panel 2

“I received tribute from laua (Jehu), son of Omri: silver, gold, a golden bowl, a golden tureen, golden pails, tin, the staffs ‘of the king’s hand’ and a spear.”

- Side A: Shalmaneser, beneath a parasol, accepts the “tribute of laua (Jehu) of the House of Omri” in 841 BC. This is king Jehu of Israel, who appears in the Bible (2 Kings 9-10).
- Side B: Two Assyrian officials and three tribute-bearers from Israel

with “silver, gold ... gold vessels ... tin ...”.

- Side C: Five more tribute-bearers from Israel with “a gold bowl, a golden tureen, gold vessels, gold pails, tin, the ‘staffs of the king’s hand’ (and) spears”.
- Side D: Five tribute-bearers from Israel with “silver, gold, a gold bowl, a gold tureen, gold vessels, gold pails (and) tin”.

(Refer to: <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/nimrud/livesofobjects/blackobelisk/index.html>)

List of Assyrian Kings Mentioned in the Bible from 745 – 631 BC

Assyrian King and Reign	Bible Reference
Tiglath-Pileser III (Pul): Reign: 745–727 BCE (approx. 18 years)	2 Kings 15:19, 29; 1 Chronicles 5:26.
Shalmaneser V: • Reign: 726–722 BCE (approx. 5 years)	2 Kings 17:3-6.
Sargon II: • Reign: 721–705 BCE (approx. 7 years)	Isaiah 20:1.
Sennacherib: • Reign: 705–681 BCE (approx. 24 years)	2 Kings 18-19; 2 Chronicles 32; Isaiah 36-37.
Esarhaddon: • Reign: 681–669 BCE (approx. 12 years)	Ezra 4:2
Ashurbanipal: • Reign: 668–627 BCE (approx. 18 years)	Ezra 4:10.

9.2A – A Summary of the Inscription and its Translation of all the 20 Panels

Akkadian Inscription
on Black Limestone

Shalmaneser III 827 BC
King of Assyria (858-824 BC)

Black Obelisk: Five four-sided Reliefs
Tribute of Jehu King of Israel (841-814 BC)



Five inscriptions (left to right) above the 5 sets of 4 pictorial reliefs:

- 1 "I received tribute from Sûa, the Gilzânean. I received from him: silver, gold, tin, copper vessels, staffs of the hand of the king, horses, two-humped camels."
- 2 "I received tribute from Jehu, [Jaúa] house of Omri. [Bît-Humrí]: silver, gold, a gold bowl, a gold tureen, gold vessels, gold pails, tin, the staff of the king's hand and spears."
- 3 "I received tribute from Egypt: two-humped camels, a water buffalo [lit. "a river ox"], a rhinoceros, an antelope, female elephants, female monkeys, and apes."
- 4 "I received tribute from Marduk-apla-usur, the Suhean: silver, gold, gold pails, ivory, spears, byssus, garments with multi-coloured trim, and linen garments."
- 5 "I received tribute from Qarparunda, the Patinean: silver, gold, tin, bronze compound [lit. "fast bronze"], bronze casseroles, ivory, and ebony."

www.bible.ca/manuscripts

The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia. Assyrian periods Vol. 3, A, Kirk Grayson, p148, 1996 AD

Context of Scripture 2.113F

Nimrod/Calah, 1848 AD

British Museum # 118885

9.3 What was the purpose of the **Black Obelisk**?

Monument was built c. 841 - 825 BC, to commemorate 31 years of rule and military conquests by the Assyrian King Shalmaneser III. Judging from the relief pictures and inscription, it appears that the obelisk was designed for public display. It was erected in a courtyard outside a large building in the centre of Kalhu, now known as the "Central Building," believed to be a temple. At the time of the Stela's erection, Kalhu was the capital of an Assyrian empire torn apart by civil war, and so it is quite probable that it was intended to remind the king's entourage of the extent of his authority and rule.

9.4 What does the inscription say and how does it compare with the **biblical narrative**?

The inscription identifies Jehu as the king who is shown bowing down and paying tribute. It identifies Jehu

as the successor of Omri, the father of the southern kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 16 and 2 Kings 9-10). The inscription uses the terms "Jehu from the house of Omri." Jehu was not a son of Omri. But in the perspective of the enemy, they see Omri as the predecessor of the kings of Israel.

The inscription confirms the existence of two biblical kings of Israel. But how does the history match with the Bible?

In 841 BC, Shalmaneser had defeated Hazael of Syria and, after failing to capture Damascus itself, marched to the Mediterranean coast where he received tribute from Tyre, Sidon, and Samaria. Samaria is represented by Jehu. (Reference Encyclopaedia Britannica)

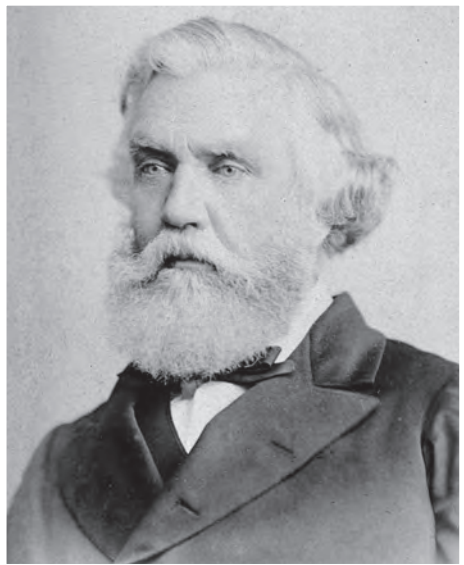
So, the timeframe of Jehu's submission was just after Shalmaneser had defeated King Hazael of Aram (2 Kings 8:7-15).

In 2 Kings 10:32 it says "In those days the Lord began to reduce the size of Israel. Hazael overpowered the Israelites throughout their territory"

(NIVUK)

The time frame lines up perfectly with the biblical account.

9.5 Who discovered the **Obelisk?**



Sir Austen Henry Layard (1817-1894), Politician, Diplomat and Archaeologist
Source: *Wikimedia Commons*

In 1846, Austen Henry Layard, an English diplomat, artist, and archaeologist, working for the British Museum, was digging around the ruins of ancient Nimrud (known as Calah) in northern Iraq. He discovered a huge four-sided pillar made of black limestone which had beautiful carvings on all its sides.

When Layard first discovered this quite spectacular obelisk, he had no way of deciphering

the cuneiform text, but he did notice that it had beautifully carved images on all four sides. He also knew that obelisks were stone monuments in the ancient world, and that they were usually created either to honour someone important or to remember some historical event.

About a year later, other scholars determined that it was a monument of one of the greatest kings of the ancient world, Shalmaneser III who ruled an empire around 850 BC. Later when they determined that one of the carved images represented Jehu, a king of Israel, interest in the obelisk mounted. The huge stone relic was eventually brought back to London where it has been on display ever since.



Marduk the Assyrian deity (left) greeting Shalmaneser III (right). Source: *Wikimedia Commons*

9.6 Conclusions

The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III is a significant archaeological discovery for the following reasons:

a. It provides information about the period in Israel's history when Assyria was on the rise. Not long after Shalmaneser's time, around 722 BC, the Assyrians under Sennacherib invaded the northern kingdom of Israel and captured Samaria. The northern kingdom of Israel was no more and the first batch of exiles were taken and dispersed in the territories of the Assyrian Empire.

b. It provides a definite reference to at least two kings mentioned in the Bible, that of Jehu and Omri

c. The timing of the events match with the historical narrative of 2 Kings 10:32. Thus there is an

extra-biblical source of reference that corroborates the story of the biblical kings.

For further reading on the discovery and significance of the Black Obelisk, go to:

<https://armstronginstitute.org/128-the-black-obelisk-of-shalmaneser-and-the-earliest-depiction-of-an-israelite>

<https://tyndalehouse.com/explore/articles/the-black-obelisk/>

<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/nimrud/livesofobjects/blackobelisk/index.html>

For a 1-minute video summary go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnLEz3bcU8A>

9.7 The Sargon II Barrel a.k.a. Sargon II Foundation Cylinder

c.722 BC Sargon of Assyria describes his conquest of Samaria and the prisoners he deported.

The Sargon II Barrel is a clay barrel cylinder with 67 lines of neo-

Assyrian, Akkadian cuneiform text inscription. The barrel is 22.5 cm by 13 cm and weighs 2.395 kg.

It was discovered in the ruins of the palace of Sargon, in Dur-Sharrukin or



the British pooled their resources together for a big operation: to ship their big discoveries, those that could be transported back to England and France. However, only 28 out of over 200 crates made it to the Louvre Museum, after they were attacked by local river pirates led by Sheikh Abu Saad.

Sargon II Barrel on display in the Israeli Museum. Source:Wikimedia Commons

modern Khorsabad, Iraq, in 1842 by a team of archaeologists led by French Consul General, Paul-Emile Botta while they were digging from 1842-1844.

The Sargon II Barrel, was discovered in the Palace of Sargon in Khorsabad, in modern Iraq. Khorsabad was discovered by a team of Archaeologists led by the French Consul General, Paul-Emile Botta c.1844, who dug at the site until 1852 when a new French consul, Victor Place, took over and continued the excavations.

Rawlinson and Layard were digging for the British Musuem at Kuyunjik, believed to be the ancient Nineveh while the French were digging at Khorsabad. In 1865, the French and

9.8 What is the Significance of the Sargon II Barrel?

Around the early 8th century BC, Tiglath-Pileser's son and successor, Shalmaneser V, discovered that Hoshea of Israel was treacherously making an alliance with the Pharaoh of Egypt, So a.k.a. Osorkon IV. Because of this, Shalmaneser V, sent an army to Samaria to bring them under control. After his death, Sargon II seized power and then took the credit for the final defeat of Samaria in 722 BC after a three-year siege. This event is described in 2 Kings 17:1-6. At one time, the existence of Sargon II, referred to in Isaiah 20:1 as the conqueror of Philistine Ashdod, was questioned. But after the discovery of Dur Sharrukin with all the inscriptions identifying Sargon



Sargon II alabaster bas-relief from Khorsabad c.722 – 705 BC
Source: *The Iraq Museum, Baghdad via Wikimedia Commons*

II, the king's existence has been generally accepted.

9.9 What does the Sargon II Barrel tell us? _____

The Sargon Barrel describes his conquest of Samaria, the capital of Israel and the prisoners he took into exile. Sargon claims, 'I besieged and conquered the town of Samaria, led away as prisoners 27,290 inhabitants of it ... and settled therein people

from countries which I myself had conquered'.

Sargon initiated the process of deporting the people of the northern kingdom of Israel to other parts of the Assyrian Empire and bringing in foreigners to settle in the northern kingdom. These foreigners brought in their own customs and religion and mixed with the people who were left behind. The events described by the inscriptions corroborate with the account in 2 Kings 17 and 18.

From here on, the inhabitants of Samaria were no longer pure Jews, but a mixed race with mixed religions. That was why in the time of Jesus, the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. Sargon spent almost his entire short reign fighting military campaigns. In 710 BC, he defeated the Babylonian king Marduk-apla-Iddina II and entered Babylon as king. To celebrate his victory, Sargon built a new capital at Dur-Sharrukin which is modern Khorsabad.

For further reading:

<https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1979/08/biblical-archeology>
<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/king-sargon-akkad>
<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/sargon/essentials/kings/sargonii/>

CHAPTER 10

Discovering the Assyrian Invasion of Judah

c. 701 BC

c.701 BC Sennacherib invades Judah, defeats, and plunders the city of Lachish. 2 Kings 18:13-17



Siege of Lachish (701 BCE). Inscription: "Sennacherib King of the Universe, King of Assyria, sits on a throne and the spoils of Lachish are paraded before him."

Source: British Museum via Wikimedia Commons

10.1 Historical Overview

In 701 BC, the Assyrian army led by King Sennacherib, invaded the kingdom of Judah. As mentioned earlier, King Hezekiah of Judah had been forming alliances with neighbouring states like Syria, Philistia and Egypt in an effort to throw off the oppression of Assyrian imperial rule, so Sennacherib decided it was time to end their rebellion and show them who is the boss.

Although he destroyed many of Judah's fortresses, he was not able to take the crown jewel i.e. the city of Jerusalem. The narrative is described in detail in 2 Kings 18-19, Isaiah 36-37 and 2 Chronicles 32. This appears to have been a sore spot for Sennacherib, because after returning home to the city of Nineveh, he commissioned a giant pictorial carving to commemorate his military exploits of the invasion.

Sennacherib had carved into stone on the walls of a central room in his palace a gruesome depiction of the siege and capture of one of the large Judean cities – the great fortress city of Lachish in 701 BC.

10.2 The Lachish Relief

The relief was placed as a decoration of the South-West Palace of Sennacherib and discovered by British archaeologist Austen Henry Layard during his excavations of the ancient city of Nineveh between 1845-1847



Figure 1 First section from left to right
Source: <https://tyndalehouse.com/explore/articles/the-lachish-reliefs/>

Moving from left to right, the relief tells the story of the siege – at the start of the siege, the picture depicts



Figure 2 Section from left to right

slingmen and spearmen getting ready to attack the fortress.

Here the Assyrians are making their way up wooden ramps which they have placed against the hill. At the top they have stationed battering rams to breach the stone walls of the city. The defenders are shooting arrows, slingstones, throwing rocks, flaming torches and even their own shields. The Assyrians are prepared, and even have a device to pour water onto the battering rams to stop them catching fire.

Here the picture shows the Assyrian army breaking through the city's defences and plundering the city of Lachish. Many of the surviving inhabitants are forced into exile. The deportees are leaving the city gates carrying their belongings



Figure 3 Third section from left to right over their shoulder and some on camels and wagons. The Assyrian army then carry off the plunder loaded on wagons. Some Judeans suffer punishment for the rebellion. Leaders of the rebellion possibly



Figure 4 Fourth section on the far right

government officials or military commanders are impaled on stakes outside the city while two are being whipped.

In the final scene, the plunder is brought before the King himself who sits in the Assyrian camp. The inscription next to him reads 'Sennacherib, king of the world, king of Assyria, sat on the throne as the plunder of Lachish passed before him'

10.3 What we learn from the **Lachish Reliefs**

It is from this inscription we know this relief depicts the siege of Lachish. The identification supports the historicity of the Biblical accounts of Assyria's invasion of Judah (refer to 2 Chronicles 32:9). If you observe closely, you will see that Sennacherib's face has been hacked out. This was done deliberately to desecrate the image of this arrogant king, probably following his murder, or when Nineveh was eventually captured in 612 BC. In Isaiah 10:12 it says, "When the Lord has finished all his work against Mount Zion and Jerusalem, he will say, 'I will punish

the king of Assyria for the wilful
pride of his heart and the haughty
look in his eyes.” (NIVUK)

10.4 What is the significance of the discovery of the Lachish Reliefs to **Biblical scholars**?___

The Lachish reliefs is an important discovery and its significance can be summarised in the following:

- Historical confirmation – The reliefs corroborate the narrative of the biblical texts such as 2 Kings 18:13-17 and provides visual and historical evidence of the Assyrian military campaigns in the Levant during the 8th century BC, specifically against the fortress city of Lachish
- Cultural, artistic, and military insights – visually depicts the appearance, clothing and equipment of the soldiers of the era, the civilian population and animals
- Contextual Understanding – The relief helps in understanding the broader historical and political context of the ancient Near East during the Assyrian expansion and their interactions with the kingdoms of Judah and

Israel. They visually illustrate the military strategies of the Assyrians, shedding light on their methods of conquest and subjugation.

Overall, the Lachish reliefs offer tangible visual representation of historical events described in biblical texts and also contributes to our understanding of the overall bigger picture of the geography, culture and life in the 8th century BC of the Old Testament.

For further reading on the Lachish Reliefs go to:

<https://tyndalehouse.com/explore/articles/the-lachish-reliefs/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lachish_reliefs

Discovering Hezekiah and the Assyrian Siege of Jerusalem

701 BC

11.1 Hezekiah's Tunnel

We will now look at three very prominent archaeological discoveries that pertain to an individual historical event in Israel's history that is the Assyrian invasion of Israel, Judah, and the siege of Jerusalem. The Assyrian invasion of Israel, comprising the ten northern tribes, began around 722 BC, under King Shalmaneser V and later King Sargon II. They besieged Samaria, the capital and captured it after three years. The conquest resulted in the fall of the northern kingdom and the deportation of many Israelites. This is usually referred to as the Assyrian Exile of 720 BC and not to be confused with the later Babylonian exile which happened later in 586 BC. Judah escaped invasion but had to pay tribute.

When Hezekiah ascended the throne he initiated religious reforms, centralized the worship of Yahweh in Jerusalem. He then joined an alliance with Egypt, Syria and the Philistine city states to rebel against the new Assyrian ruler, Sennacherib, because they thought he was weakened by rebellions in the East. He knew that Jerusalem could be attacked and besieged by the Assyrians in the future and so he strengthened the defence of the city. One of the things he did to strengthen the defence of the city was to build a tunnel from the Gihon spring, which was just outside the city right into the city's Siloam pool. Hezekiah's tunnel, which is also known as the Siloam Tunnel was built to ensure a steady water supply for the city during times of siege. The tunnel

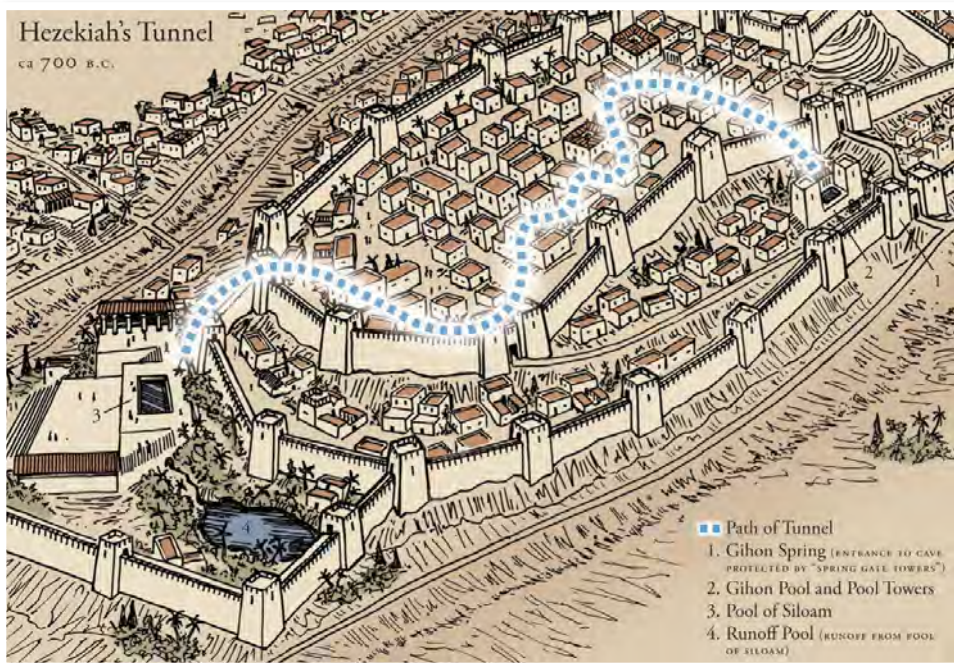
is about 530 metres long. The Syria, Judah, Egyptian alliance had underestimated Sennacherib's ability, who systematically put down all the rebellions in the east and then marched on to Judah. He mocked the Judahites for their reliance on Egypt to save them, conquered many cities of Judah. One of the provinces that put up a fierce resistance was Lachish but it was in vain. Nothing could stop the Assyrian horde as they approached Jerusalem and put it under siege.

Then the unthinkable happens. They return home without conquering the

city. In the chronicles of Sennacherib, he proclaims that he names the king of Judah and proclaims that he had "Hezekiah like a bird in a cage." In the Bible, it says that the Lord protected Jerusalem just as He had prophesied through Isaiah and that 185,000 Assyrians were slain as they were camped outside of Jerusalem.

We now look at Archaeological discoveries that cover the events mentioned in the Bible regarding the conquest of Israel, Judah, and the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrians during the period of c. 715 to 701 BC.

11.2 The **Siloam** Inscription



Hezekiah's Tunnel c.700 BC

Source: <https://biblicalisrael.com/2017/09/hezekiahs-tunnel/>



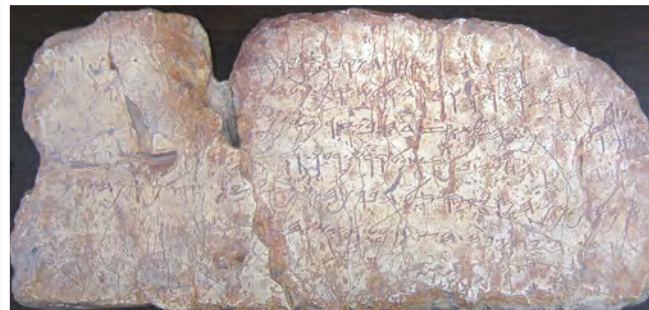
Hezekiah's Tunnel under the City of David in Jerusalem

Source: Biblical Archaeology Society

One of the most remarkable discoveries in Jerusalem was Hezekiah's Tunnel, also known as Siloam Tunnel. This was a water system built by Hezekiah near the end of the 8th century BC in response to an Assyrian military threat. Hezekiah's tunnel sloped gently away from the Gihon Spring to allow water to flow from it to the Pool of Siloam inside the city walls.

The Hezekiah Tunnel was first discovered by Edward Robinson in 1838. The tunnel itself was quite

a remarkable find, but there was very little to describe how it was built, by who and why except from the Biblical record which says it was by Hezekiah. Despite thorough examination by archaeological luminaries such as Charles Wilson, Charles Warren, and Robinson himself, it was not until 1880, that the Siloam Inscription was discovered by Jacob Eliahu Spafford, a 16-year-old pupil of Conrad Schick, a German archaeologist.



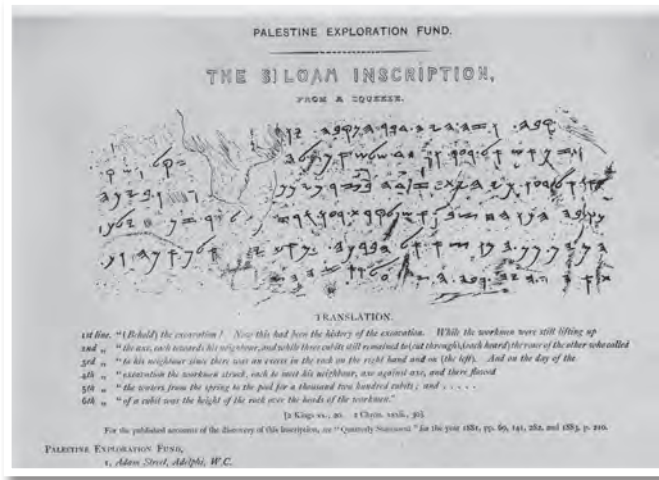
Replica of the Siloam Inscription found inside Hezekiah's Tunnel

Source: Wikimedia Commons

The Inscription was seized by the Ottoman rulers and brought to Istanbul, but not before a copy had been made and kept by some Germans. The text of the inscription was finally translated by Archibald Henry Sayce, a British Assyriologist and linguist from Oxford University.

The inscription celebrates the completion of the remarkable tunnel, that was 530 m long and brought water in from the Gihon Spring to the Pool of Siloam, a man-made reservoir inside the walled area of Jerusalem, as mentioned in 2 Kings 20:20 and 2 Chronicles 32:30.

Siloam Inscription Squeeze and its English translation.
 Source:Wikimedia Commons



11.3 King Hezekiah's Royal Seal

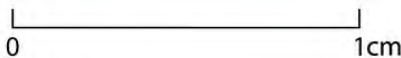
King Hezekiah was king of Judah and his reign was from c. 727-698 BC. During his reign, he implemented significant religious reforms and played a crucial role in resisting the Assyrian invasion led by King Sennacherib.

The royal seal of King Hezekiah in the Bible was found in the Ophel archaeological excavation site, in 2009, led by Dr Eilat Mazar, at the foot of the southern wall of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.



© Eilat Mazar, Photo: Ouvia Tadmor

The clay impression of the seal, called a bulla, measures just over 1 cm and is about 3 mm in thickness. The seal bears an impression depicting a two-winged sun disk flanked by ankh symbols and containing a Hebrew inscription that reads “Belonging to Hezekiah, (son of) Ahaz, king of Judah”



Biblical King Hezekiah Royal Seal found in Jerusalem. Source: <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/news/king-hezekiah-in-the-bible-royal-seal-of-hezekiah-comes-to-light/>



The red-outline shows where the excavation of Ophel took place
Source: <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/12/03/middleeast/king-hezekiah-royal-seal/index.html>

The seal was discovered along with 33 other stamped bullae during ‘wet-sifting’ of dirt from a refuse dump located next to a 10th century BC royal building in the Ophel. In the ancient times, clay bullae were used to secure the strings tied around rolled-up documents. The bullae were made by pressing a seal onto a wet lump of clay.

The stamped bulla acted as both a signature and as a means of ensuring the authenticity of the documents, similar to Roman signet rings on wax and even today, company seals on paper or wax acting as a signature impression.

11.4 The Isaiah Seal



Dr Eilat Mazar (1956-2021)
Source: Bible Archaeology Society

About 10 feet away from where the Hezekiah Seal was found, another important bulla seal was discovered. It turns out to be a broken 2,700-year-old clay seal of Isaiah, its discovery made by the same archaeological team led by Dr Eilat Mazar.

The discovered seal is inscribed with the name “Yesha‘yah[u],” Hebrew for



Isaiah bulla discovered by Dr Eilat Mazar, 2009-2010 Source: <https://armstronginstitute.org/631-seals-of-isaiah-and-king-hezekiah-discovered>

“Isaiah,” followed by the word “nvy.” Part of the seal is broken off, but Mazar believes that “nvy” might be an incomplete word that was once followed by the Hebrew letter aleph. If she is correct, the seal would spell out the Hebrew word for prophet—and provide the first reference to Isaiah outside of the Bible.

The Prophet Isaiah wrote his prophesies on clay tablets as well as on scrolls for the people of his time and also to ensure their preservation “for the time to come” (Isaiah 30:8). Isaiah delivered prophecies against the temple priests in Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel.

He also prophesied about the rise and fall of surrounding nations. In

one prophecy, he even explained in detail the life and work of the Persian King Cyrus. This prophecy is found in Isaiah 44-45—a passage that was written 200 years before the events it describes.

For further reading go to:

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/news/king-hezekiah-in-the-bible-royal-seal-of-hezekiah-comes-to-light/>

<https://armstronginstitute.org/631-seals-of-isaiah-and-king-hezekiah-discovered>

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/seal-prophet-isaiah-180968255/>

11.5 Sennacherib's Annals – Taylor's Prism

Sennacherib's Annals are the chronicles of the Assyrian king Sennacherib. They are found inscribed on several artifacts, and the final versions were found in three clay prisms inscribed with the same text:

- The Taylor Prism is in the British Museum



Taylor Prism
British Museum



Oriental Institute Prism
Oriental Institute of Chicago



Jerusalem Prism
Jerusalem Museum

All photos from Wikimedia Commons

- The Oriental Institute Prism is in the Oriental Institute of Chicago
- The Jerusalem Prism is in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem

The most well known of the three prisms is the Taylor Prism which was found in the 1830s by Col. R. Taylor, Britain's political agent in Basra, Iraq. The British Museum acquired the relic from Colonel Taylor's widow in 1855.

All three prisms basically give an

identical account of Sennacherib's main military campaigns. They each reference Sennacherib's later construction project, the "rear palace," so archaeologists have dated their construction to around 690 BC. All three prisms give an account of his invasion of Judah and siege of Jerusalem during the reign of King Hezekiah. As we have seen above, this event is recorded in the Bible. Sennacherib laid waste to many cities in Judah and Hezekiah offers him a huge tribute in order to turn him away from destroying Jerusalem.

11.5A Direct Correspondence between the Sennacherib Annals and the Bible record

The Assyrian Empire overran the northern kingdom of Israel in campaigns from 721 to 718 B.C.E. Following this victory, Sennacherib continued southward into Judah. The Taylor Prism depicts this incursion as follows:

As for the king of Judah, Hezekiah, who had not submitted to my authority, I besieged and captured 46 of his fortified cities, along with many smaller towns, taken in battle with my battering rams ... I took as plunder 200,150 people, both small and great, male and female, along with a great number of animals including horses, mules, donkeys, camels, oxen and sheep.

This parallels a passage in 2 Kings 18:13 (New International Version): ***In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. (NIV)***

King Hezekiah tried to placate Sennacherib by sending a large tribute, described in verses 14-16 (NIV):

So Hezekiah king of Judah sent this message to the king of Assyria at Lachish: "I have done wrong. Withdraw from me, and I will pay whatever you demand of me." The king of Assyria exacted from

Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. So Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the temple of the Lord and in the treasuries of the royal palace. At this time Hezekiah king of Judah stripped off the gold with which he had covered the doors and doorposts of the temple of the Lord, and gave it to the king of Assyria. (NIV)

Sennacherib boasts of a tribute on the Taylor Prism also:

Fear of my greatness terrified Hezekiah. He sent to me tribute: 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, precious stones, ivory, and all sorts of gifts, including women from his palace.

Thus, we see direct correspondence between the biblical account and Sennacherib's records. Thirty talents of gold were requested (as per 2 Kings 18:14), and that is what he received. However, the Bible states that 300 talents of silver were requested, and Sennacherib's inscription states he received 800. Why the apparent discrepancy? One explanation is that the 800 talents may have referred to the combined weight of the following objects in the sentence—not just silver, but also the precious stones and ivory.

11.6 Sennacherib's Desire to conquer Jerusalem

Such a great tribute offered to Sennacherib may have fuelled his desire for conquest, and he marched onward to Jerusalem.

Although Sennacherib boasted that he had “shut King Hezekiah up like a bird in a cage in his royal city of Jerusalem,” nowhere in the Sennacherib Annals or any of his other inscriptions did he mention that he captured Jerusalem. This is in line with the biblical description that God had intervened and saved Jerusalem from the Assyrian army.

This would be Sennacherib's last campaign. Shortly after returning

to Nineveh, he was assassinated by two of his sons. The Assyrian Empire waned temporarily before being defeated by the Babylonians. Judah remained independent for another century before also succumbing to the might of the Babylonians. The Sennacherib Annals show that the Bible's historical narrative is accurate and can be supported by archaeological evidence.

For further reading refer to: <https://armstronginstitute.org/111-a-trio-of-biblical-prisms>

or <https://www.historyofinformation.com/detail.php?id=2416>

11.7 Direct Correspondence Between Sennacherib's Annals And the Bible Record

Sennacherib's Annals	Bible Record
<p>“As for the king of Judah, Hezekiah, I besieged and captured 46 of his fortified cities and smaller towns ... and took plunder ... “</p>	<p>2 Kings 18:13 In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them <small>(NIV)</small></p>

Sennacherib's Annals	Bible Record
<p>“The fear of my greatness terrified Hezekiah. He sent to me tribute: 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, precious stones, ivory and all sorts of gifts, including women from his palace.”</p>	<p>2 Kings 18:14-16 ... The king of Assyria exacted from Hezekiah king of Judah 300 talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. So Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the temple of the Lord and in the treasuries of the royal palace. ... stripped off the gold with which he had covered the doors and doorposts of the temple of the Lord, and gave it to the king of Assyria. <small>(NIV)</small></p>
<p>Sennacherib boasted he had “shut King Hezekiah up like a bird in a cage in his royal city of Jerusalem” but nowhere in the Annals or any other inscription did he say he captured Jerusalem</p>	<p>2 Kings 19:35-37 the angel of the Lord destroyed the army of Sennacherib as they lay siege around Jerusalem. Sennacherib returned to Nineveh without capturing the royal city and later was assassinated by two of his sons while yet another son, Esarhaddon succeeded him.</p>

Israel in Babylon

c. 600 - 590 BC

12.1 The Ishtar Gate

c.600 – 590 BC in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. The Ishtar Gates, one of the eight gates into Babylon was the grandest and believed to be used for processional entrance into the city.



The Ishtar Gate at the Processional Entrance of Babylon

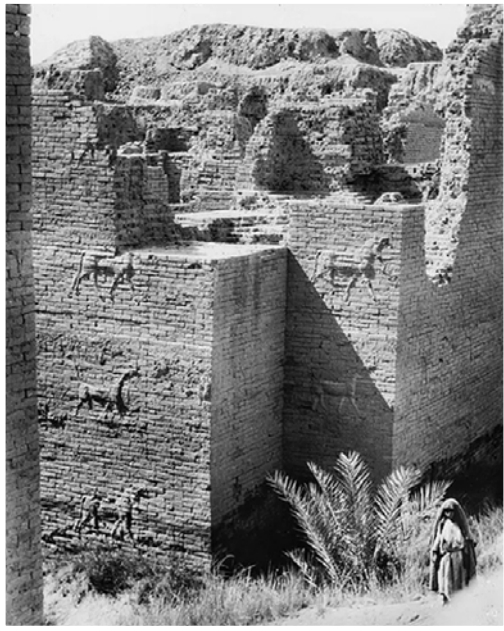
Source: The Madain Project

The German archaeologist Robert Koldewey led the excavation of the site from 1904 to 1914 in the ruins of the ancient capital of ancient Babylon, in modern day Hillah, Iraq, covering

2000 – 3000 acres of land about 100 km south of Baghdad. In 1919, after the First World War, the smaller front wall was re-constructed in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. It was constructed c. 575 BC by order

of King Nebuchadnezzar II on the north side of the city and was part of a grand walled processional way leading into the city.

The Gate was the site of the palace of King Nebuchadnezzar II, who destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC and deported the Jews, bringing many of the younger, able-bodied, learned, and ruling class citizens to Babylon. This was the site of Belshazzar's feast in Daniel chapter 5 where God foretold his downfall with the writing on the wall.



Remains of the Ishtar Gate in the ruins of Babylon, Iraq, 1932

Source: Wikimedia Commons

The discovery of the Ishtar Gate and all the sites in the ruins of



Reconstruction of the Ishtar Gate in Pergamon Museum, Berlin

Source: Wikimedia Commons

ancient Babylon paint a picture of an opulent capital of a great empire in the time of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel in the Bible. No wonder the king of Babylon had become proud and thought so high and mighty of himself, until the Lord punished him, bringing him down to the level of a beast for 'seven seasons' as described in Daniel 4:28 – 36.

Jeremiah wrote that Babylon would be desolate forever (Jeremiah 25:12, 51). The present ruins also echo the prophecy of Isaiah 13:19-20.

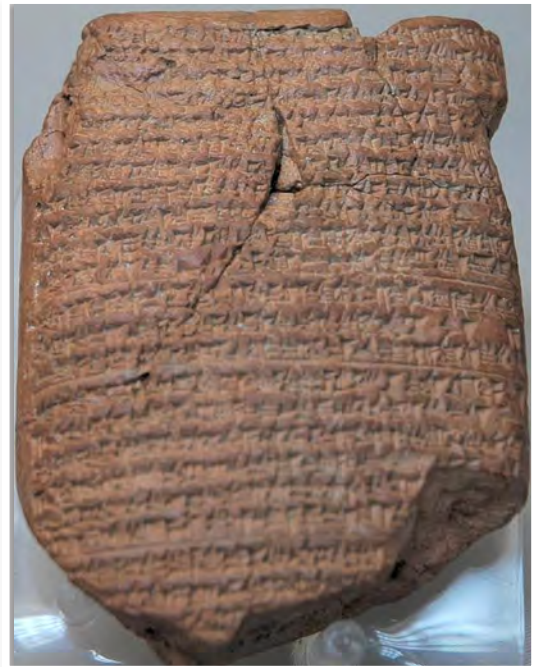
12.2 The **Babylonian Chronicle**

Origin: Babylon 605-595 BC
 Brought to British Museum by
 Hormuzd Rassam and translated by:
 Professor D.J. Wiseman

Some of the tablets contain
 descriptions which overlap with the
 Bible narrative. So we will look at
 some of them.

The Babylonian Chronicles are a series of 45 tablets with inscriptions that chronicle portions of history of the Babylonian Empire. Its script is in the Babylonian dialect of Akkadian cuneiform. When put together, it covers large tracts of the empire's history.

Hormuz Rassam, who worked for Sir Austen Henry Layard sometimes, helped the British Museum acquire many of the tablets. Some of the key tablets such as the Nabonidus Chronicle were sold to the British Museum by antiquity dealer Spartali & Co.



Babylonian Chronicle 5 Early Years of Nebuchadnezzar c. 605 – 595 BC
 Source: British Museum via Wikimedia Commons

12.3 What does **Tablet 5 talk** about?

This tablet tells of the battle of Charchemish in 605 BC where Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Pharaoh Necho of Egypt. In this decisive battle at the Egyptian stronghold of Carchemish, the crown prince Nebuchadnezzar took

command of his army, crossed the river Euphrates, and thoroughly defeated the Egyptians.

The prophet Jeremiah refers to this battle in Jeremiah 46:2² Concerning Egypt:

This is the message against the army of Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt, which was defeated at Carchemish on the River Euphrates by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah:’ (NIVUK)

Shortly after the defeat of Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar heard that his father Nabopolassar had died. He then hurried back to Babylon to secure his throne.

home to rebuild his army. Jehoiachim, king of Judah, who had been paying tribute to Nebuchadnezzar for three years, saw his chance to rebel (2 Kings 24:1). He stopped paying tribute, joined forces with Aram, the Philistines and Egypt again. This enraged Nebuchadnezzar who soon arrived at the gates of Jerusalem where Jehoiachim was captured and probably died on his way to exile (2 Chronicles 36:6). His son, Jehoiachin, who was just three months on

the throne was now forced into exile also. The Bible narrative is corroborated by the Babylonian chronicle. Was this the time when the Ark of the Covenant was taken from the Temple never to be seen again (Jeremiah 3:16)? To punish the Judahites for rebelling against him, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and burnt down the

Temple of Solomon.

The inscriptions were translated by a few Assyriologists: Theophilus Pinches 1887, Sydney Smith 1924 and Professor D J Wiseman 1956.



Destruction of Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple and Start of the Babylonian Exile Painting by: James Tissot c. 1892 Source: Wikimedia Commons

The tablet also chronicles the siege and capture of Jerusalem. After putting down a rebellion by Egypt in 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar returned


12.4 The Nabonidus Chronicle

NABONIDUS CHRONICLE

Inscribed in Akkadian cuneiform

Describes the conquest of Babylon by Persian king Cyrus the Great


provides a rare contemporary account of Cyrus's rise to power



Written late 6th/early 5th Century B.C.

Cyrus is mentioned in multiple OT passages including, Ezra 6 & Isa 45:13

acquired in 1879, Ancient Sippar, Iraq



The Nabonidus Chronicle is another part of the collection of the Babylonian Chronicle tablets that tell of the fall of Babylon c.556 – 530 BC. Nabonidus was the last ruler of the Babylonian Empire. His son Belshazzar who co-ruled as regent with his father is mentioned in Daniel 5. He is mentioned as the king hosted a grand feast and desecrated the Temple utensils which he had captured from Jerusalem. To him was given the ‘writing on the wall’ which Daniel interpreted as a prophecy of coming judgment and the end of the Babylonian Empire (Daniel 5:26-28).

12.5 What is the **Significance** of the Nabonidus Chronicle?

- What we learn from the inscription gives a historical background to Daniel chapter 5. Nabonidus the king was in the city of Tema while the king's son, courtiers and army were in Babylon.
- This explains why Belshazzar, as co-regent, could only offer Daniel third place in the kingdom and not second.

- The chronicle mentions the fall of Babylon during Belshazzar's rule in 539 BC: "The gods of Babylonia entered Babylon from every direction when Cyrus attacked the Babylonian army at Opis..."
- The people of Babylonia revolted .. the troops of Cyrus entered Babylon without a battle"
- Daniel chapter 5 describes the Persian overthrow of Belshazzar and the Babylonians as swift. Another historian Xenophon states that father & son were ruling when Babylon fell and the son was killed, just it was said in Daniel 5.
- The Cyrus Cylinder states that the city was captured without a fight. Historians say the city was taken with little resistance because Nabonidus, the last ruler, had favoured the moon god 'Sin' over 'Marduk' the traditional Babylonian deity.
- Some critics of the Bible have said that the book of Daniel was written centuries later as a propaganda tool to encourage the Israelites in exile. The Nabonidus Chronicles shows that Daniel was written in the 6th

century BC because: the author knew about Nabonidus' son, Belshazzar, who was not mentioned when the Greek historian Herodotus wrote about him a few generations later. The author knew that Babylon had been rebuilt by Nebuchadnezzar another fact that was only discovered recently (Daniel 4:30)

Stela of Nabonidus, 555-539 BCE



Relief showing Nabonidus praying to the moon, sun and Venus

"for the inhabitants of Babylon, Cyrus declared the state of peace"

Source: <https://www.markandjackiephotos.com/the-nabonidus-chronicle-556-539-bc/>

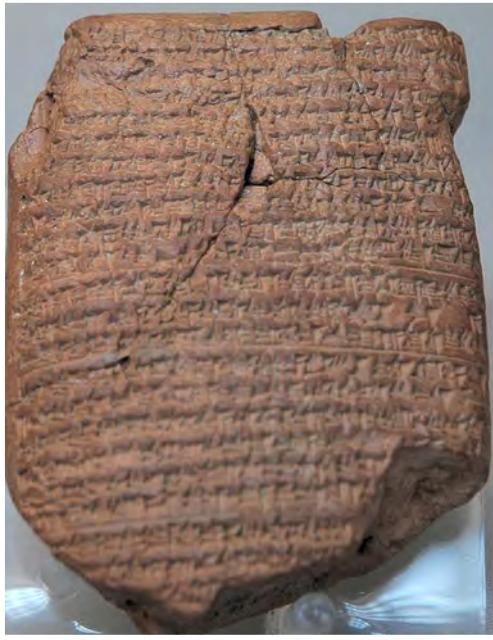
For further reading of the Babylon Chronicles and the Nabonidus Chronicles

<https://www.markandjackiephotos.com/the-nabonidus-chronicle-556-539-bc/>

<https://biblearchaeologyreport.com/2019/10/17/nehuchadnezzar-an-archaeological-biography/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonian_Chronicles

12.6 Comparison of the **Babylonian Chronicles** and the Bible_____



What is the **Babylonian Chronicle**

- Consists of 45+ tablets with inscriptions in Babylonian dialect of Akkadian cuneiform, containing history of Babylonian Empire.
- Acquired for the British Museum by Hormuzd Rassam.

Babylonian Chronicle 5 Early Years of Nebuchadnezzar c. 605 – 595 BC

Babylonian Chronicle Tablet 5	Bible Record
<p>605 BC Crown prince Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh Necho at Battle of Charchemish</p>	<p>Jeremiah 46:2 Concerning Egypt: This is the message against the army of Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt, which was defeated at Carchemish on the Euphrates River by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah: <small>(NIV)</small></p>
<p>Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem, destroyed the city and burnt down the Temple of Solomon</p>	<p>2 Kings 24:1-4 The Bible records that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem because of the sins of Judah</p>

The Persians - The Cyrus Cylinder

c. 539 BC

13.1 Background **Historical** and the Biblical Narrative

We now come to one of the most remarkable discoveries in Persia that even sparked global interest. Following the events chronicled in Daniel chapter 5, the Babylonian Empire succumbed to Persian overthrow. Subsequently, Cyrus the Great, the ruler of the Achaemenid Persian Empire, issued a profound decree. He opted to grant freedom to former exiles from territories previously conquered by the Babylonians, encouraging their return to rebuild their cities and temples.

With the Persian empire having expanded significantly and comprising diverse cultures across its controlled regions, centralized control became challenging. Rather than enforcing stringent regulations on each territory, the Persians encountered difficulties in

maintaining order, productivity, and quelling repeated uprisings. This is probably one of the reasons they chose the more practical approach of permitting the exiles to reestablish their homelands under the condition of allegiance to the Empire, potentially involving tribute or taxes.



Cyrus the Great, replica based on contemporary Wall Relief. Source: Pristine World Bible History Museum, also available from Wikimedia Commons

The above history is well documented by historians such as Herodotus and Xenophon, the renowned Greek historians. However, there is another source which gives a detailed account of the above events. For instance, in Ezra 1:1-4, there is an account of Cyrus's proclamation that allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem. These specific scriptures in Ezra were penned a few decades following the event. Further information concerning King Cyrus is also available in Jeremiah 25 and 2 Chronicles 36, both of which were written after Cyrus's prominence.

13.2 The Bible Narrative

The Bible references become more interesting with Isaiah's writings. In Isaiah 44 and 45, God says He will use Cyrus 'His anointed' to subdue nations and strip kings of their armour. It is the Lord God who will put Cyrus in his position and he will defeat Babylon and free the Jews.

"Who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, 'Let it be rebuilt,' and of the temple, 'Let its foundations be laid.'"

(Isaiah 44:28, NIV)

Isaiah's life and ministry covered the time when King Hezekiah was

on the throne. This means that the book of Isaiah was written about 150 years before Cyrus was born. This means that Isaiah had prophesied the coming of King Cyrus 150 years before he was born. Isaiah had also prophesied the coming of Jesus over 700 years before His birth.

13.3 What is the Cyrus Cylinder?

The Cyrus Cylinder is an ancient clay cylinder, on which is written an Achaemenid royal inscription in Akkadian cuneiform script in the name of the Persian king Cyrus the Great. It is about 21.9 cm (8.6 in) in length, 10 cm (3.9 in) max diameter and 7.8 cm (3.1 in) min diameter at its ends. It was created c. 539 – 538 BC during the rule of the Achaemenid Persian king Cyrus.



The Cyrus Cylinder, c.539 BC. Source: British Museum via Wikimedia Commons

13.3A Who Discovered the Cyrus Cylinder



Hormuzd Rassam (1820-1889) Portrait c. 1854. Source: Wikimedia Commons

Hormuzd Rassam, an Assyrian, was born in 1826, in Mosul in Upper Mesopotamia, now modern Iraq, then part of the Ottoman Empire to a Chaldean Catholic family. At the age of 20, began working for Austen Henry Layard in Nimrud where there was an excavation in progress. Layard provided him the

opportunity to study in the UK and Rassam studied at Magdalen College, Oxford for 18 months before accompanying Layard on his second expedition to Iraq (1849-51).

After Layard left archaeology and began his political career, Rassam continued field work. From 1877 to 1882, Layard, now an ambassador of the British Empire based in Constantinople, made an agreement with the Sultan, who generously allowed the British to “pack and dispatch to England any antiquities they found ... provided, however, there were no duplicates.” A representative of the Sultan was instructed to be present at the dig to examine the objects as they were uncovered. During this time Rassam made many important discoveries for the British museum.

13.4 Discovery of the **Cyrus Cylinder** _____

In March of 1879, during excavations at the Esagila site in Babylon, Rassam unearthed the fragmented pieces of the Cyrus Cylinder. The primary part of the Cylinder, labelled fragment ‘A’, constituting the largest portion,

was initially discovered by Rassam in 1879. Housed in the British Museum, it underwent restoration in 1961, involving re-firing and the addition of plaster filling to preserve its integrity.

A smaller segment, fragment 'B', measuring approximately 8.6 cm (3.4 in) by 5.6 cm (2.2 in), was obtained by J.B. Niles of Yale University from an antiquities dealer. It was not confirmed as part of the original Cylinder until 1970. Subsequently, Yale University lent fragment 'B' indefinitely to the British Museum, the exchange involving a 'suitable cuneiform tablet' from the British Museum's collection.

The Cylinder's origins clearly postdate Cyrus the Great's conquest of Babylon in 536 BC.

Message on the Cylinder establishes beyond doubt that it was Cyrus' policy to return "the exiles to their homelands and make permanent sanctuaries for the gods of the exiled peoples." Captured idols were

returned to the exiles to be placed in their sanctuaries or altars back in their land of origin. In the case of the Jews, since there were no idols, the gold and silver articles taken from the Temple of Solomon were returned. Although there is no direct reference to the Jews, the specific proclamation pertaining to the Jews is recorded in Ezra 6:3-5 and 2 Chronicles 36:22-23.



Cyrus Restoring the Vessels of the Temple to the returning Jews (Ezra 1:1-11)

Artist: Gustave Doré c. 1866

Source: Wikimedia Commons



Close-up of the Cyrus Cylinder

Source: British Museum via Wikimedia Commons

Early scholars had assumed it was unlikely a powerful king of the ancient world would make such a concession to conquered subjects. However, it is now agreed that Cyrus did not just deport people from their native lands, but instead returned

them to their homelands with their treasures and sacred temple vessels as described in the Bible.

13.5 Global interest in the Cyrus Cylinder

The Persian Empire c.550-530 BC was truly a formidable empire, covering vast territories and a large population of diverse cultures. Its wealth was un-matched during its time. Yet Cyrus the Great decided to allow the exiles of his conquered territories to return. The Cylinder confirms the historical records showing that King Cyrus displayed a tremendous and until-then unprecedented respect and tolerance for the religion and customs of the peoples he conquered.

The United Nations has hailed the Cyrus Cylinder as the “world’s first charter of human rights.” Although a large part of the text talks about the greatness of Cyrus, a section of it talks about how the empire believes that their subjects have the right to justice, defending the oppressed, human dignity and recognizing human rights and the right to practice their own religion.

King Cyrus issued his decree releasing the Jews in 538 BC, about a year after he conquered Babylon. Zerubbabel, a leading Jewish figure in Babylon at that time, became responsible for assembling the returning Jews and leading them back to Jerusalem, although a significant number of Jews chose to remain and settle in Babylon.

Many Christians see this Cylinder as archaeological evidence that supports what the Bible says about Cyrus releasing the Jewish exiles. This decision by Cyrus is well known and documented by Greek and Roman historians, as well as by Josephus the Jewish historian. Now, there is an ancient relic that confirms the event.



Replica of the Cyrus Cylinder in the United Nations building in New York. Source: <https://www.un.org/ungifts/replica-edict-cyrus>

13.6 Comparison of the **Cyrus Cylinder** and the Bible

Cylinder text and history	Biblical Record
<p>Cyrus the Persian records that he frees the conquered exiles to return home and build their shrines and temples, although it does not specifically mention the Jews</p>	<p>Ezra 1:1-4 in order to fulfil the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus to free the Jews to return and build the temple of Jerusalem</p>
<p>The Cyrus Cylinder states that the city of Babylon was captured without a fight. Historians say the city was taken with little resistance because Nabonidus had favoured the moon god over 'Marduk' the traditional Babylonian deity</p>	<p>Daniel 5:30 That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain,³¹ and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two. (NIV)</p>
<p>Although no there is no specific mention of the Jews, the cylinder talks about allowing exiles to return and build their temples</p>	<p>Ezra 6:3 ... King Cyrus, the king issued a decree concerning the temple of God in Jerusalem: Let the temple be rebuilt as a place to present sacrifices, and let its foundations be laid. (NIV)</p>

13.7 What is the significance of the Cyrus Cylinder?

The discovery of the Cyrus Cylinder and translation of its text is very significant for several reasons:

1. **Historical Insight:** The cylinder provides valuable insights into the ancient world, specifically regarding the conquest of

Babylon by Cyrus the Great and his subsequent policies toward the conquered territories. It sheds light on administrative practices, governance, and the treatment of diverse populations within the Achaemenid Empire.

2. **Corroboration of the Biblical Text:**

The Cylinder is evidence that the narrative of the Bible with regard to the release of the Jews by Cyrus, the prophecies of Isaiah regarding Cyrus, were true and factual history. The Bible's historical narrative regarding the events of this period is supported by archaeological evidence.

<https://biblearchaeology.org/research/divided-kingdom/2877-the-ongoing-saga-of-the-cyrus-cylinder-the-internationally-famous-grande-dame-of-ancient-texts?highlight=WyJlZGVzc2EilCjJlZGVzc2Encyjd>.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyrus_Cylinder

3. **Influence on Human Rights:**

The text in the cylinder confirms the authority and power of Cyrus the Great as it recounts his conquests and benevolence after he overthrew the Babylonian Empire. The declaration of Cyrus, as recorded on the cylinder, has been widely viewed as an early example of human rights principles, especially about religious tolerance. It has been hailed as a precursor to modern concepts of human rights and cultural diversity.

For further reading:

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/ancient-cultures/ancient-near-eastern-world/the-cyrus-cylinder/>

<https://armstronginstitute.org/206-the-inspiring-history-behind-one-of-irans-greatest-kings>

The Dead Sea Scrolls

c.250 – 100 BC

14.1 Introduction to the Dead Sea Scrolls

In the early morning of November 1946, as the sun was slowly rising over the Judean Desert, three Bedouin cousins embarked on a search for a missing goat among the hills near the Dead Sea. In their pursuit of the wayward animal, they came upon a cave (now known as Cave 1) and thought the animal might have gone inside. They threw some stones in and heard the shattering of a clay jar

which puzzled them. When they investigated further, they stumbled upon a treasure trove—the Dead Sea Scrolls, a collection of some of the most significant religious texts from the ancient world. The discovery has since yielded around 100,000 fragments originating from approximately 900 manuscripts found in 11 caves. The uncovering of new scroll fragments continues to this day.

Cave 1 of the Qumran Caves in which the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered

Source: <https://dqcaas.com/2018/06/05/how-to-find-qumran-cave-1/>



14.1A Big Bucks from Selling Scripture



Fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls

In 2002, a trader claimed he had fragments of the Dead Sea Scroll (DSS) kept in a Swiss vault. A piece of the DSS that had three columns, twenty-two lines to the column and text from Genesis 37 was said to have been negotiated for sale at between USD 42 – 50 million. Fragments about the size of a stamp were rumoured to be sold for USD 1 million apiece.

The fragments were so rare and highly priced; traders would often use famous archaeologists to authenticate their pieces for the buyers. On the other hand, the Israeli government proclaimed that all pieces of the DSS belonged to Israel.

Source: <https://themarginaliareview.com/fragments-for-sale/>

14.2 Discovery and Contents of the Dead Sea Scrolls

Between 1947 and 1956, numerous excavations were made in the 11 caves. In May 1948, Israel became a nation and a War of Independence

followed suit. After the war, the diggers came back to examine the caves looking for what they considered now was their national

heritage. The text of the scrolls and fragments they discovered contained writings describing their commune way of living, some previously undiscovered hymns and prayers, but most importantly it contained every book of the Old Testament except for Esther.

The contents of the scrolls discovered contain a rich and diverse collection of texts, which provide valuable insights into various aspects of Jewish life, beliefs, and practices during the period of 200 – 100 BC.

The contents of the Dead Sea Scrolls can broadly be summarised in the following categories:

(a) Biblical Texts

Almost every book of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) except of Esther. They include some well-preserved fragments and sometimes complete copies of texts like Isaiah and major sections of Genesis, Exodus, and Psalms. They also contained parts of books not in the Hebrew Bible.

There are even multiple copies of some of the books for example:

- The Psalms have 34 different scrolls
- Deuteronomy have 30 scrolls
- Isaiah has 21 scrolls
- Genesis has 20 scrolls
- Ecclesiastes has 2 scrolls
- Others like Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles have one scroll each



The Great Isaiah Scroll, is the best preserved of the Dead Sea Scrolls and contains the entire Book of Isaiah. Source: Public Domain

(b) Jewish Religious but Non-Biblical Texts

Examples include running commentaries on various prophetic texts, psalms of the Old Testament aimed specifically at the Qumran community. Several scrolls were paraphrases on the Torah. This is like a paraphrased version of the Old Testament books. Some of the scrolls contain legal text which are useful for understanding not only the Qumran community, but also the Jewish legal interpretation of the Second Temple Period in general. Some of the scrolls functioned as resources used in worship.

(c) Sectarian Literature

It is widely accepted by most archaeologists that the Dead Sea Scrolls were written by a Jewish sect called the Essenes. Documents found among the DSS provide rules, regulations, and insights into distinctive sectarian practices and beliefs of their community.

(d) Apocalyptic and Messianic Texts – The War Scroll

Some of the DSS scrolls contain apocalyptic and messianic themes. They provide a view into the eschatological beliefs of the period. These documents, example the War

Scroll, talk about the end times, the coming of a messianic figure, cosmic battels between good and evil.

(e) Some of the scrolls include documents that help shed light on the social and political context of the period. These include calendars, letters, and administrative texts that help us to understand the daily life of the community better.

(f) Several scrolls making up legal texts have been found among the DSS. These documents have given historians a better understanding of not only the Qumran Community, but also the Jewish legal system in the Second Temple Period in general.



Dead Sea Scrolls – The War Scroll
Source: Matson Photo Services (Public Domain)

14.3 Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls

The Contents of the Dead Sea Scrolls date from as early as 250 BC to around 100 AD. The community that produced and kept them hidden are assumed to have vanished after the rebellion of AD 66 which resulted in the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. However, a few people still hid out in the caves until the Bar Kokba Rebellion of 135 AD.

The Dead Sea Scrolls helped us understand better about things such as the way of life, the legal systems, language, style of writing and the historical context of the period. However, the most significant aspect of the DSS discovery, to Christianity as well as Judaism, is that we now have a hand-written copy of the Old Testament which is about a thousand years older than the oldest Masoretic Old Testament available today.

Christians and Jews were very interested to see how after a thousand years of copying by scribes and passing down newer hand-written copies to the next generation; whether there had been significant changes in the contents of the Old Testament that we hold today. Before their discovery, the

earliest complete Old Testament manuscript was the Leningrad Codex, dating to around AD 1008.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls allowed scholars to see how much the biblical text had changed after a thousand years of copying and transmission. They discovered that very little had changed and that the Old Testament had been transmitted with incredible accuracy over a millennium.

For further reading:

Source: <https://biblearchaeologyreport.com/2019/02/06/the-three-oldest-biblical-texts/>

https://www.worldhistory.org/Dead_Sea_Scrolls/

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/who-wrote-the-dead-sea-scrolls-11781900/>

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/premium/article/daring-rescue-mission-dead-sea-scroll-finds-other-rare-discoveries>

Epilogue

We stated in the beginning that the objectives of this book were to give the readers an introduction to the world of archaeology, some of the key players, and how in many cases, discoveries have been made that corroborate with the narratives found in the Bible.

Some of these discoveries, give us a good understanding of the historical and cultural background of the stories found in the Bible. While some discoveries may not explicitly reference events in the Bible, they contribute to a richer appreciation of the socio-political and religious landscapes within which these narratives unfold. Conversely, certain artifacts, stones, and inscriptions directly align with biblical history, serving as tangible evidence that corroborates events detailed in the Bible.

Within this concise e-book, we have thoughtfully curated a collection of archaeological findings that have significantly enhanced our

understanding of biblical history. Additionally, we have included discoveries that span various artifact genres, providing readers with a comprehensive overview of the fascinating realm of biblical archaeology.

To summarise where we have journeyed with this book:

- **Chapter 1-3**

In the initial three chapters, we give an introduction and delve into the narrative of deciphering two ancient languages. Our expedition led us to Egypt, where we explored the saga of the Rosetta Stone, from its discovery to the intense competition surrounding its acquisition, followed by the intricate process of translation. The stone ultimately unveiled a wealth of treasures to modern historians, significantly contributing to the understanding of the hieroglyphic language.

Similarly, the Trilingual Inscription of King Xerxes the Great, and the Behistun Inscription found in Iran, played pivotal roles in unravelling cuneiform writings and the Babylonian language.

- **Chapter 4**

Then we looked at the Nuzi Tablets, discovered by the thousands, in ancient Mesopotamia or modern Iraq. These tablets, once translated and understood, thanks to the earlier discoveries of the Behistun Inscription, helped us to appreciate the socio-cultural-religious background of people living in Ur and Haran during the time of the patriarchs in Genesis.

- **Chapter 5**

We summarise the discoveries of the Gilgamesh Epic and the Sumerian Epic, which describe a great catastrophic flood with similarities to the Great Flood record in Genesis chapter 6-7.

- **Chapter 6**

We looked at one of the earliest most comprehensive set of laws, called Hammurabi's Code. We looked at the similarities and differences between the Hammurabi Code and the Mosaic Law. The similarities show that

the Mosaic Law was written at a time, when people had some common understanding of justice and fairness. But the differences between the two codes show that the Mosaic Law is unique in pointing to the one God, Yahweh, who is the creator of heaven and earth.

- **Chapter 7**

We looked at archaeological evidence of Israelites living in Egypt as was described in the book of Exodus.

- **Chapter 8**

We examined evidence of King David. After many years of doubt as to whether there was any evidence of the most important king of Israel, archaeological evidence was discovered in Tel-Dan and in the Moabite Stone of the historical David.

- **Chapter 9**

We explored some significant discoveries in Assyria of biblical events described in the books of Kings and Chronicles. These discoveries give a direct corroboration of the biblical historical records in 2 Kings.

- **Chapter 10**

We looked at evidence of Sennacherib, the Assyrian king's invasion of Judah in 701 BC and how he plundered many cities, all of which are described in the Bible as well.

- **Chapter 11**

We followed the Bible narrative of the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib of the Assyrians. All this is told in the book of 2 Kings and can be dated to around 690 BC.

- **Chapter 12**

We explored evidence of the exile of the southern kingdom of Judah in Babylon c. 605 BC. We also have evidence of the defeat of the Babylonians by the Persians.

- **Chapter 13**

The Cyrus Cylinder is an object, which has been declared by the United Nations as the first comprehensive declaration of human rights. The proclamation made by the Persian king c.536 BC, Cyrus, corroborates the biblical records found in Ezra and Daniel.

- **Chapter 14**

We end our quick tour of the world of biblical archaeology

with the Dead Sea Scrolls. The discovery has been hailed by most historians as one of the greatest archaeological discoveries in the twentieth century.



Assyrian Palace at Nineveh by Austen Henry Layard, 1853.

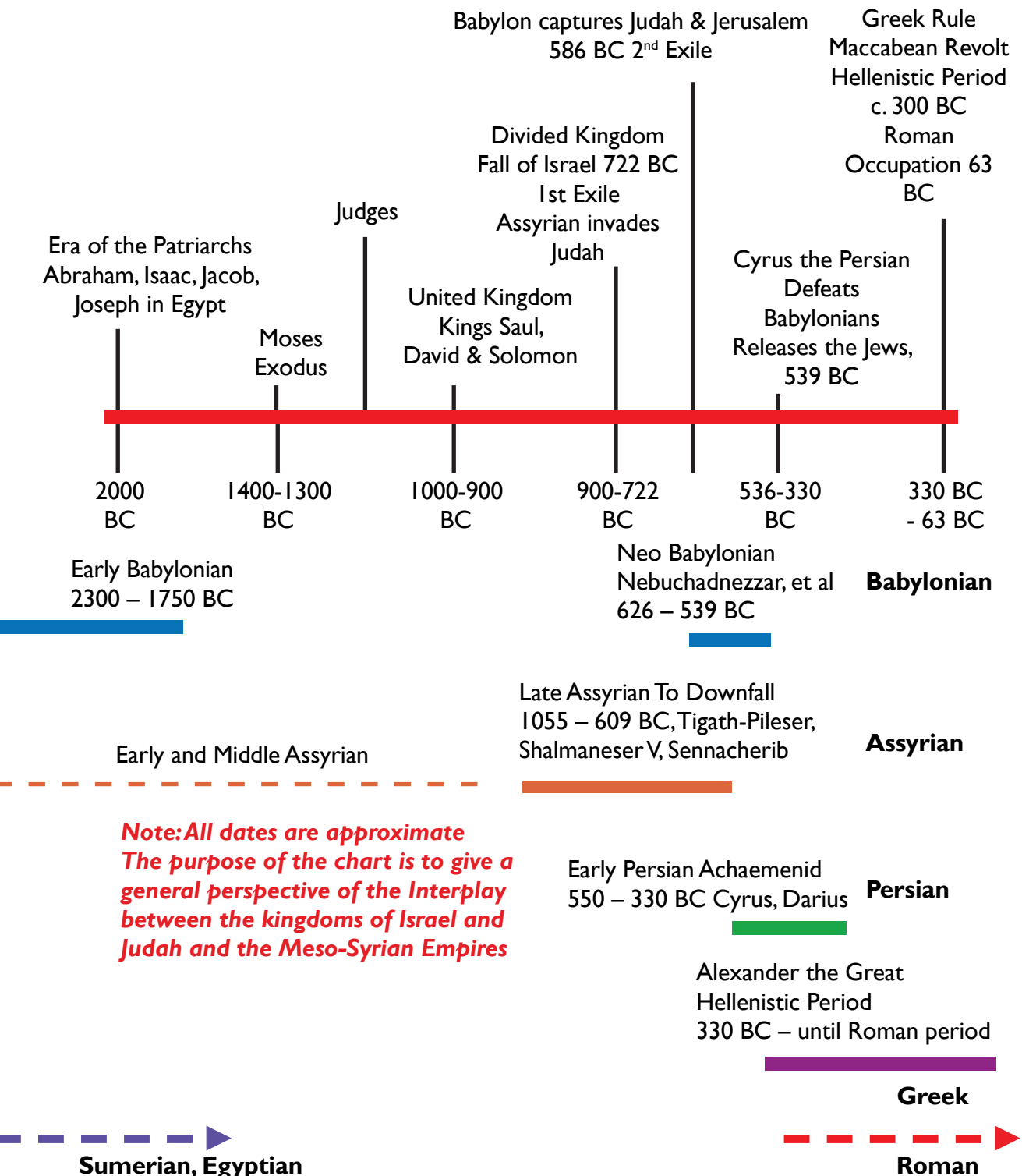
Source: Public domain via Wikimedia Commons

In summary, there is ample evidence of archaeological discoveries and historical text records to support various sections of the Bible's historical narrative. In instances where no archaeological records have been discovered yet, we should remember this maxim: "The absence of evidence is not evidence of absence." More discoveries may yet be found at a later date.

While the focus of the Bible is on righteous living in harmony with God and our fellow humans, its portrayal of past events and characters is grounded in historical reality.

1. Clive Anderson and Brian Edwards, Evidence for the Bible, Published by Day One Publications for British Museum 2014
2. Steven Collins and Joseph M. Holden, The Harvest Handbook of Bible Lands, Published by Harvest House Publishers 2019
3. John JT Thompson, Biblical Archaeology: Past, Present, and Future, Published by Ouachita Baptist University 2003
4. Joey Corbett Editor, Top Ten Biblical Archaeology Discoveries, Published by Biblical Archaeology Society 2011
5. Stephen Flurry, General Editor, Let the Stones Speak, Series of Magazines published by Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology, 2022-2023
6. Rose Book of Bible Charts, Maps and Time Lines, Published by Rose Publishing 2003
7. Bible Archaeology Society <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/>
8. Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology <https://armstronginstitute.org/>
9. Bible Odyssey <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/>
10. Tyndale House <https://tyndalehouse.com/>
11. Bible History <https://bible-history.com/>
12. Randall Price & H. Wayne House. Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archeology, Published by Zondervan Academic 2017

Appendix 2 - Timeline of Empires and Kingdoms From c.2000 BC to c.100 BC



Appendix 3 - Ancient Syria-Israel-Mesopotamia Archaeological Periods

Neolithic Age	Before 4900 BC	Post-Flood era
Chalcolithic Age	4900 – 3900 BC	Chalcolithic means ‘copper’ and ‘stone’ due to the advances in creating objects made of stone and metal. This period ends with Tower of Babel
Early Bronze Age	3900 – 2500 BC	Increased settlements and urbanization that included fortification of outer walls, table of nations, first cities
Intermediate Bronze Age	2500 – 2100 BC	Pre-Abram patriarchs; urban centres had declined and nomadic lifestyle begins. Rain, weather, farming, warfare and other natural factors lead to highly transient culture
Middle Bronze Age	2100 – 1550 BC	Age of Patriarchs; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and brothers
Late Bronze Age	1550 – 1200	Moses, Joshua, and early judges. Period of the Israelite exodus from Egypt and entry into Canaan by Joshua
Iron Age	1200 – 332 BC	Reign of the kings of Israel and Judah from Saul to Zedekiah; building and destruction of Solomon’s temple; conquest of Jerusalem in 586 BC by the Babylonians. Babylonian Empire succeeded by the Persian Empire. Exiles freed to return to Jerusalem
Hellenistic Period	332 – 63 BC	Intertestamental period between the Old and New Testaments. Rise of Greece. Conquests of Alexander the Great. Propagation of Greek Culture
Early Roman Period	63 BC – AD 180	Period of Jesus and the apostles with the spread of early Christianity. Destruction of Jerusalem and temple in AD 70. Dispersion of the Jews. Spread of Christianity to the non-Jewish countries followed by persecution.

Reference: *The Harvest Handbook of Bible Lands* by Steven Collins and Joseph M. Holden
p.34

Appendix 4 - Summary of Selected Key Biblical and Related Archaeological Events and Timeline

Date and Location of Discovery	Discovery	Description
<p>July 1799 Town of Rashid or Rosetta in French</p>	<p>Rosetta Stone</p>	<p>Discovered by soldiers of the French army led by Napoleon Bonaparte. Soldier's name was Pierre-Francois Bouchard. Thomas Young started the process and finally Jean-Francois Champollion deciphered the inscription in 1822. Significance – Egyptian Hieroglyphics was understood Currently on display in British Museum</p>
<p>1835 in Behistun Persia Iran</p>	<p>Behistun Inscription</p>	<p>Henry Rawlinson discovered inscription with 3 languages – Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian Significance – Babylonian Akkadian cuneiform language was understood Currently a tourist site in Behistun, north-west Iran.</p>
<p>1849 Library of Nineveh, near modern day Mosul, Iraq</p>	<p>Gilgamesh 12 Tablets Tablet 11 – Flood story</p>	<p>Austen Henry Layard and Hormuzd Rassam discovered Significance – Story of Gilgamesh which includes in Tablet 11, a flood story which has some similarities with the biblical flood story Currently on display in the British Museum</p>
<p>1849 Library of Nineveh near modern day Mosul, Iraq</p>	<p>The Atrahasis Epic on Clay Tablet</p>	<p>a.k.a. as Royal Library of Ashurbanipal, it was discovered by Austen Henry Layard and Hormuzd Rassam. The Atrahasis Epic Tablet was translated by George Smith c.1899 Currently on display in the British Museum</p>

Appendix 4 - Summary of Selected Key Biblical and Related Archaeological Events and Timeline

1901 – 1902 Elamite city of Susa, Iraq	Hammurabi Stele	The Hammurabi Stele containing the Hammurabi Code was discovered by French archaeological team led by Jacques de Morgan and Father Jean-Vincent Scheil Currently on display in the Louvre Museum, Paris
1902 Tel el-Armana or Akhetaten	The Ibscha Relief	Discovered by a team of excavators led by German Egyptologist Ludwig Borchardt
1896 Thebes	Merneptah Stele	Discovered by Sir Flinders Petrie in Thebes Currently on display in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo
Early 1800s Thebes, Sheikh Abd el-Qurna Tomb	Brickmakers Art, Tomb of Rekhmire	Discovered by Frederic Caillaud, a Frenchman, who copied its scenes of daily life between 1819-1822. The painting dates to c.1479 – 1425 BC Site is a tourist place in Thebes, Upper Egypt
1896 Thebes	The Brooklyn Papyrus Slave List	Discovered in Thebes, it was bought by Charles Edwin Wilbour in Egypt between 1881 and 1896. After the death of Wilbour, the papyrus was given to the Brooklyn Museum by his widow in 1916 Currently on display in Brooklyn Museum, New York
1868 Dhiban, Moab, modern Jordan	The Moabite Stone	First discovered by Bedouins and first European to see it was a German missionary of the Anglican church, Frederick Klein, who was stationed in Jerusalem. After some conflict and competition, acquired by Charles Clermont-Ganneau for the Louvre Museum. Currently on display in the Louvre Museum, Paris

Appendix 4 - Summary of Selected Key Biblical and Related Archaeological Events and Timeline

Nuzi, Mesopotamia, Iraq	Nuzi Tablets	1896 reports of Nuzi tablets, 1925 Gertrude Bell first noticed them in Baghdad markets. American archaeologists led by Edward Chiera, Robert Pfeifer, and Richard Star in 1931 discovered most of the Nuzi tablets. Currently various pieces on display in various Museums including British Museum, Louvre Museum, and Iraq Museum
1846 Nimrud modern Calah, Iraq	Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III	Discovered by Sir Austen Henry Layard working for the British Museum Currently on display in the British Museum
1993 Fragment A 1994 B&C, Tel Dan	Tel Dan Stele	Discovered by Avraham Biran and Gila Cook, Tel Dan Stele inscription has the words "House of David"
1845-47 Nineveh, Iraq	The Lachish Reliefs	Discovered by Sir Austen Henry Layard Currently on display in the British Museum
1842 Palace of Sargon Dur- Sharrukin, Iraq	The Sargon II Barrel	Discovered by Paul-Emile Botta, French Consul General & Archaeologist and his team.
1838 Jerusalem 1880 Jerusalem	Hezekiah Tunnel Siloam Inscription	The Hezekiah Tunnel was discovered by Edward Robinson in 1838 but there was very little known about the tunnel except for a single verse in the Old Testament. In 1880, the Siloam Inscription was discovered inside the tunnel which gave some description regarding the building of the tunnel The Siloam Inscription is currently on display in the Jerusalem Museum

Appendix 4 - Summary of Selected Key Biblical and Related Archaeological Events and Timeline

1830 Nineveh	Sennacherib Annals	<p>Three copies of the Sennacherib Annals which is a hexagonal shaped cylindrical clay jar with cuneiform inscriptions were discovered.</p> <p>The best-preserved copy is the Taylor's Prism discovered by R. Taylor</p> <p>Taylor's Prism is currently on display in the British Museum. The other two are on display in the Oriental Institute of Chicago and the Jerusalem Museum</p>
1904-1914 Babylon	Ishtar Gates	<p>Discovered during excavations led by German archaeologist Robert Koldewey digging in the site from 1904-1914</p> <p>Re-constructed Ishtar Gate on display in Pergamon Museum, Berlin</p>
1896 Babylon	Babylonian Chronicles	<p>Discovered and brought to the British Museum by Hormuzd Rasam</p> <p>Currently on display in the British Museum</p>
1879 Babylon	Cyrus Cylinder	<p>Discovered by Hormuzd Rassam and excavation team in Esagila site. Ancient temple of Marduk in Babylon.</p> <p>Currently on display in the British Museum</p>
1946 Qumran cave, Israel	The Dead Sea Scrolls	<p>Discovered in 1947 by Bedouin shepherds</p> <p>Subsequently more caves were discovered and more scrolls were added to the collection</p> <p>Currently some parts on display in the Jerusalem Museum</p>

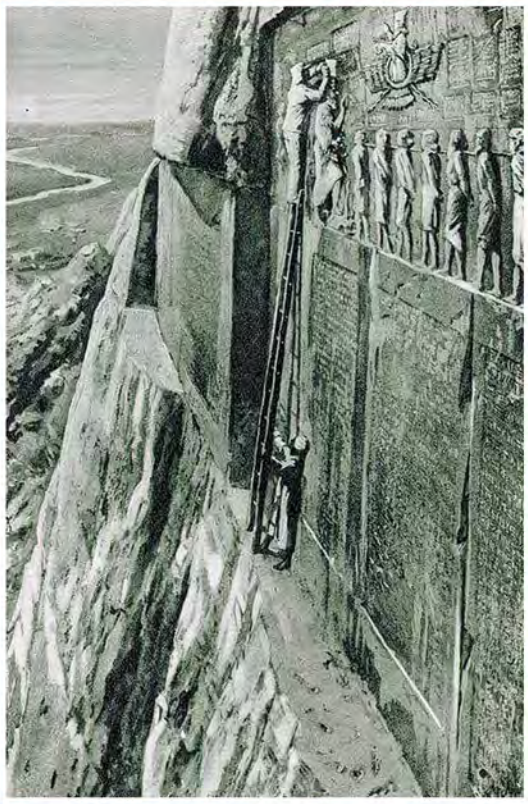
Important Egyptian Discoveries Relating to the Bible

1. **Rosetta Stone** discovered in 1799. This led to the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphics.
2. **Merneptah's Stele.** First mention of "Israel" in Egyptian texts. Stele dates to about 1210 BC.
3. **Amarna Letters** (14th century BC). Letters written from Canaanite scribes in Akkadian to king Akhenaten about the conditions in Canaan, especially the troublesome Hapiru which probably refers to the Hebrews.
4. **Inscriptions at Karnak.** Karnak is the largest temple complex in the world. There also may be the earliest depiction of the Israelites.
5. **Mortuary Temple of Rameses III at Medinet Habu.** It depicts the battle with the Sea People. One of the five groups of Sea Peoples was the Philistines. There are carvings of what the Philistines looked like.

Important Egyptian Texts Relating to the Bible

1. **Tale of Two brothers.** This story is similar to the story of Joseph in Genesis when he is tempted.
2. **Seven Lean Years Tradition in the time of Djoser.** Similar to the seven years of lean in the story of Joseph.
3. **Sinuhe's Story.** Tells of his time in Canaan.
4. **Wenamun's Journey.** Tells of his trip to Byblos in Canaan.
5. **Amenemope's Wisdom.** Similar to Proverbs 22:17-24:22.
6. **Hymn to Aten** which parallels Psalm 104.
7. **Elephantine Papyri.** Letters from Jewish exile.

<https://www.bibleandscience.com/archaeology/discoveries/egyptian.htm> *Institute for Biblical & Scientific Studies Biblical Archaeology Egyptian Hieroglyphics*



Sir Henry Rawlinson on the Rock of Behistun

Is the Biblical narrative based on historical facts? Are there any archaeological pieces of evidence to support the Bible? This book explores the following:

- The top 20 most significant discoveries that corroborate Biblical history.
- Who made these discoveries and how they were made.
- The process of deciphering ancient scripts and identifying those who broke the codes.
- Some of the individual conflicts and even national rivalries that arose during the acquisition of ancient artifacts.
- How ancient artifacts serve as evidence for the reliability of the Bible.