

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

TEACHING “INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY”

AT ASIA THEOLOGICAL CENTER

A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE

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## ABSTRACT

Many students at Asia Theological Centre (ATC) in Singapore grapple with interpreting the Bible accurately due to a lack of knowledge of the Israel's topography and historical background. This has resulted in misinterpretations and uncertainty about the Bible's authenticity. The original biblical writers were recording stories of real people, real places, and real events. As such, one ought to first step into the writers' worlds, understanding their cultures, languages, and historical contexts, before interpreting the original intent of their writings. Biblical archaeology as a discipline should inform students of the Bible concerning the world of the writer.

This project researched the archaeological sites, inscriptions, and artifacts in their historical and cultural contexts as referenced in the Bible and developed an accredited course for ATC titled, "Introduction to Biblical Archaeology." The course provided students with the essential skills to better understand and teach Scripture through the perspective of archaeology and geography. As a result, students learned how archaeological evidence supports and illuminates Scriptures and the project assessments demonstrated they were more confident in interpreting the Bible with greater accuracy and theological depth.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thank you for intercepting my life. Your divine guidance and presence have been the cornerstone of my journey. I am nothing without you, my Lord and Savior.

The last five years of my doctoral journey have been nothing short of amazing. My decision to participate in the Doctor of Ministry program began with the passionate encouragement of my buddy, Dr. Susan Comiskey, and was sealed after an afternoon tea with Dr. Cheryl Taylor, Vice President of Academics at Asia Theological Center, my Alma mater. Susan and Cheryl, thank you for starting me on this educational adventure!

I was able to conclude this program and project because of esteemed AGTS professors, former and present. Dr. Mark Jenkins, my project advisor, not only guided my project but also gave me free biblical archaeology lessons; Dr. Wave Nunnally, my biblical advisor, inspired my project during a live tour of Israel; Dr. John Battaglia, Director of the AGTS D.Min., provided leadership and constant encouragement; Dr. Cory Shipley, my D.Min. project coordinator, with a stick on one hand and a carrot on the other, consistently spurred me on; Dr. Lois Olena, my editor, waved her magic pen to make my written project remarkable. I sincerely thank all of you and the other AGTS professors who have taught me in the various courses for the past five years. You are part of God's scheme to propel me on this spiritual trajectory, a path of deepening faith, and understanding of God's Word.

To my mentors extraordinaire—the late Ho Jia Hua, Karen Wong, Rev. Dr. Lily Soh, Alice Koh, and Edna Cuyo, you have been the Lord’s instruments when I needed wise counsel and direction. I deeply appreciate your constant vigilance over my spiritual and professional well-being to align me with God’s call.

To my friends—Tham Yee Lian, who introduced me to Christ; Constance Kwee for burning the midnight oil to provide valuable inputs into my assignments; Angela Wong, for her literature sourcing; Cheow Bee Bee, for her artistic touch on my PowerPoint slides; Tang Chee Yong, for his statistical expertise; Ken and Poh Cheng Powell for their warm hospitality; and to Anna Ho, Jason Yew, Florence Lee, Sandra Sng, Grace Chong, Joan Ho, Lydia Ong, Jolene Fong, John Emmanuel, Grace Chee, Miriam Toto, Vivien Chia, Pastor Luis Moya, Darren Wong, Justin Sng, Eunice Wong, Dorothy Lim, and many others—your prayers, active support, and cheerleading energized me on this academic journey.

To my siblings, siblings-in-law, nieces, and nephew whom I cherish deeply—your eternal lives matter more to me than anything in this world.

Finally, to my beloved late papa and my dearest mum, who could not comprehend why I could never finish studying the Bible but supported my D.Min. endeavor nonetheless, I dedicate this project.



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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### **The Context**

I serve as Regional Care Minister in one of the Victory Family Centre (VFC) campuses in Singapore. Founded in 1977 by Rev. Rick Seaward, Victory's call and passion have focused on transformation of lives, discipleship, and raising up Christ followers through church planting worldwide.

My spiritual journey began in VFC when I first became a member in the 1980s. However, it was my inaugural visit to Israel with my church in 1992 that remarkably changed my perspective of the Bible and ignited a profound interest in the Scriptures. Witnessing the Holy Land is akin to reading the Bible in three dimensions. This passion for God's Word not only transformed me spiritually but also led me to pursue part-time studies at Asia Theological Centre (ATC), the Bible training arm of VFC. I graduated from ATC with a Master of Theological Studies in 2004 and in 2019 enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program at AGTS. Undeniably, my academic journey and personal spiritual growth began with that first Israel trip.

I have also taught various Bible subjects for VFC, where I also served as Regional Minister for Teaching for over seven years until 2020. While teaching at the local church, I discovered through interaction with the students that some lack a foundational understanding of the historical and cultural background of the Bible. This deficiency led some students to misinterpret God's Word and to not fully appreciate the authenticity of the Bible. An informed understanding of the historical and cultural background of

Scripture can enhance one's understanding of the text, leading to spiritual growth of believers and effective communication of the gospel.

ATC continues to play a pivotal role in shaping my academic and spiritual journey. I maintain a close relationship with ATC faculty and administration and receive mentoring from some of the faculty members. Established in 1982, ATC is an accredited member of Asia Theological Association (ATA). ATC's overarching vision is to equip individuals for local and global ministry in the power of the Spirit. The institution achieves this vision by providing educational opportunities to holistically nurture students spiritually and academically. The school offers a range of programs in Bible and theology, ministry leadership, missions studies, pastoral care, theological education and special programs in pastoral leadership and church planting. It offers certificates, diplomas, bachelor's degrees, and masters' degrees.

During an immersive study trip to Israel with Professor Wave Nunnally in 2022, I realized the invaluable role that a good understanding of biblical archaeology and topography of Israel play in interpreting God's Word. By sharing the knowledge gained from this trip, I firmly believe that these insights will deepen the faith of many believers and Bible students.

### **The Problem**

Without understanding the topography and the history of biblical places, the context of God's Word is sometimes lost to readers, making it challenging to exegete the text. Other times, those approaching the text take it out of context which has led to incorrect interpretations. Moreover, some Christians and pre-believers doubt the historicity of the Scriptures and question whether the events in the Bible are analogous to

mythology. With the proliferation of social media, God's Word constantly suffers attack and abuse. Some contemporary believers readily feed on misinterpreted Scriptures, while others see God's Word as more myth than reality. A lack of knowledge of the truth causes doubt, which can draw people away from the local church. Contemporary believers often demand evidence to substantiate that the Bible exists as authentic truth before they can entirely put their heart into walking according to God's Word.

While ultimately people require faith to believe in God, biblical archaeology offers the historical context to the biblical writers' world, enabling and enriching proper interpretation of the Scriptures. Biblical archaeology—as well as the study of the topography and geography of the land—unveils important data about biblical places. These disciplines present a much-needed authentication for Bible teachers and ministry workers facing students and people who doubt the Bible as God's truth.

Biblical archaeology studies provide valuable insights into the customs, cultures, and historical events that informed biblical narratives and provide students with a deeper appreciation of their historical accuracy. Such studies encourage critical thinking, research, and scholarly engagement. However, for the past seventeen years, ATC has not offered any courses that address biblical archaeology, the topography of the land of Israel, and the historical context of key places in the Bible. Students in the school must contend with self-learning on these topics. The lack of formal instruction in biblical archaeology limits the students' ability to engage the biblical text in an informed manner.

An educational gap exists for ATC to train students in the topography and archaeology of Israel that would enable them to think critically and develop their analytical and interpretive skills in the study of Scriptures. These foundational skills

would equip the students, both local and international, to impact their communities through more effective teaching and preaching.

### **The Purpose**

To promote a better understanding of the historical context of God’s Word, imbue confidence in the historicity and authenticity of the Bible, revitalize student interest in God’s Word, strengthen personal spiritual growth, and increase confidence in student engagement in preaching and ministering the Word of God, this project will present a college-level biblical archaeology course at Asia Theological Centre in Term 3 of 2024 titled “Introduction to Biblical Archaeology.”

### **Definition of Terms**

*Biblical Archaeology* – “archaeology that sheds light on the stories, descriptions, and discussions in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.”<sup>1</sup>

*Ancient Near East* - The region of modern-day Cyprus, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and parts of Iran and Turkey.

*Epigraphy* – “A primary tool of archaeology when dealing with literate cultures. It is the study of inscriptions or epigraphs that have been engraved into durable materials, such as stone, or cast in metal.”<sup>2</sup>

*Excavation Report* - Detailed publications documenting the process, findings, features of the excavated site, and interpretations of archaeological discoveries.

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<sup>1</sup> Eric H. Cline, *Biblical Archaeology: A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 19.

<sup>2</sup> New World Encyclopedia, “Epigraphy,” accessed June 2, 2023, <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Epigraphy>.

*Ostraca* (singular: Ostrakon) – “Pieces, or shards, of broken pottery that have been used to write or draw on. They were used widely in the ancient world, especially in Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Parthian and Hebrew societies.”<sup>3</sup>

*Tell* - “A ‘tell’ consists of a succession of cities built on top of one another.”<sup>4</sup>

*Temples in Ancient Near East* – “A sacred space devoted to the worship of the deity or deities thought to reside there ... . [A temple s]erved as a contact point between humanity and divinity.”<sup>5</sup>

## **Description of the Proposed Project**

### Scope of the Project

The scope of the project comprises offering an on-site, twelve-hour course on “Introduction to Biblical Archaeology” over two Saturdays at Asia Theological Centre to students, ATC alumni, and any local church members.

### Phases of the Project

#### *Research*

I will complete the research phase for chapter 2 between July 1, 2023 and September 29, 2023 and the research phase for chapter 3 between November 1, 2023 and January 31, 2024.

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<sup>3</sup> Edward J. Bridge, “Ostraca,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Oded Borowski, “How to Tell a Tell: Uncovering Buried Cities of the Biblical World,” *Biblical Archaeology Society*, September 13, 2021, accessed June 2, 2023, <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/how-to-tell-a-tell/>.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel O. McClellan, “Temples in the Ancient Near East,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

The project's research step, a crucial phase, will first involve examining the biblical-theological literature in preparation for writing chapter 2 ("Biblical-Theological Literature Review") in the summer and fall of 2023. This information will provide a biblical-theological foundation for the course, a key element in developing the curriculum and lesson notes. The research for this chapter will provide a comprehensive biblical theology of the Land of Israel, a cornerstone of the course.

The second portion of the research (taking place from November 2023 to February 2024), will review the general literature on biblical archaeology, the topography and geography of Israel, data relating to important places in the Bible, and archaeological discoveries in the last forty years that illuminate the Bible's events. This research will provide the material for chapter 3 of the project, "General Literature Review." I will design a curriculum from the research in the early summer of 2024 to offer the September 2024 ATC course as a general elective.

### *Planning*

I will complete the planning phase between May 7, 2023, and September 14, 2024. By May 7, 2023, the project's initial step will involve securing permission from the ATC President, Jeremy Seaward and ATC Vice President for Academics, Dr. Cheryl Taylor, to teach a course at Asia Theological Centre in Term 3 of 2024 titled "Introduction to Biblical Archaeology." The school will promote the course two months before its start, offering it as a general elective to students and ATC alumni in Singapore. ATC must receive a description of the course and an instructor's report by May 25, 2024, to be included in the e-brochures, which they will send to students and alumni in Singapore by June 1, 2024.

By September 5, 2024, I will design and provide ATC with the course syllabus, which will include the course description, objective, outline, requirements, format, grading information, the textbook, and bibliography. Design of all presentations and videos must be completed September 14, 2024, for a dry run at ATC classroom. I will design two six-hour weekend lectures. The format of the lectures will include PowerPoint, multimedia, quizzes, assessments, and student presentations. The class (seated only) will take place on September 28 and October 5, 2024.

Though this class will not cover all archaeological discoveries or all geographical locations noted in the Bible, it will focus on critical archaeological discoveries. These discoveries are significant as they provide tangible evidence that supports the historicity of the Bible. The course will introduce students to biblical archaeology and these significant discoveries, enhancing their hermeneutical skills and will provide students with tools to research the Bible's historical background further and defend its authenticity.

### *Implementation*

I will complete the implementation of the project by October 5, 2024. From July 1, 2024, I will begin recruiting students through personal invitations. On September 14, with the help of ATC staff, I will hold a dry run in the ATC classroom to ensure the connectivity and compatibility of the laptop with the projector, evaluating the visibility of the slides from all corners of the classroom, sound check of the speakers, and sitting arrangement. The ATC staff's involvement in these preparations is crucial for the smooth execution of the course. By September 24, 2024, based on the confirmed number of



students, ATC will print the student notes and the pre-course and post-course assessments.

The course is designed as interactive, with opportunities for students to engage with the material and each other. Class begins on September 28, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. I will briefly introduce myself and the reasons for offering this course. After the students' self-introduction, I will give each of them the pre-course assessment, which will include questions to gauge their current knowledge of biblical archaeology.

Then, we will have a thirty-minute break at 10:00 a.m. for the students to get to know each other. Lunch will be another thirty-minute break at 1.00 p.m. The following week, October 5, 2024, class starts from 11:00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. with a forty-five-minute lunch break at 12:30 p.m. and a 15-minute break at 3:30 p.m. I will administer the post-course assessment after the conclusion of the lesson, which will include questions to assess their understanding and retention of the course material. The class will end at 5.00 p.m.

### *Evaluation*

I will complete the evaluation of the project by October 8, 2024. To evaluate the project, I will assess student understanding based on pre-course and post-course assessment questions. I will use hard copy surveys after the course for on-site students to obtain feedback on the effectiveness of the course.

### *Writing*

I will complete all the writing pertaining to chapters 1, 4, 5, front matter, and any appendices that go with chapter 4 by Oct 21 for submission to the editor.

## CHAPTER 2: BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

The biblical theology of the land remains a central theme in the theological framework of the Scriptures. God created the earth to bless humankind. The land represents the arena of divine presence and redemption of the people that began with the Garden of Eden and culminates in the eschatological renewed creation. The biblical narratives underscore this deep connection between the identity and destiny of Israel with the physical territory and God's faithfulness and presence.

The term "land" recurs in the Scriptures, with the Hebrew *'ereš* as the most frequently used noun. *'Ereš* translates as "land" around 1620 times in the Revised Standard Version (RSV) and also takes on meanings such as "earth," "ground," and "country."<sup>1</sup> Additionally, *'ādāmā* primarily refers to agricultural land supporting sedentary communities and occurs around 105 times in the RSV, often translated as "ground," "earth," and "soil." Although both terms often translate as "land" in English, they are not always synonymous.<sup>2</sup>

*'Ereš* translates as land when the context represents a specific geographic region (2 Kgs 19:37) or the territory of a particular people (Gen 15:19). At the same time,

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<sup>1</sup> W. Janzen, "Land," in *K-N*, vol. 4 of *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 143-144.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

“earth” is used when referring to the realm of human habitation. The Hebrew word *’āḏāmā* signifies agricultural land often owned by individuals or groups. However, both terms convey God’s ultimate ownership, whether expressed through *’āḏāmā* or *’ereṣ*.<sup>3</sup>

In the Old Testament, *’āḏāmā* and *’ereṣ* are crucial terms supporting the theology of the land. The New Testament also employs the term “land” in various contexts, including referring to the “Land of Israel,” specific locations, and the concept of promise.<sup>4</sup> Despite the carryover of the theme of land from the Old Testament to the New Testament, elements of continuity and discontinuity exist when comparing both testaments.

This chapter demonstrates the Bible’s unfolding of “the land” theme. A biblical theology approach uncovers how the literary, historical, and theological aspects of different sections of the Bible relate to each other within the entirety of Scripture, ultimately revealing a message of salvation of humanity. Doug Oss’s cone-shaped diagram in Figure 1 below, illustrating the interconnections within the canon, effectively represents this approach.

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<sup>3</sup> Janzen, “Land,” 143-144.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

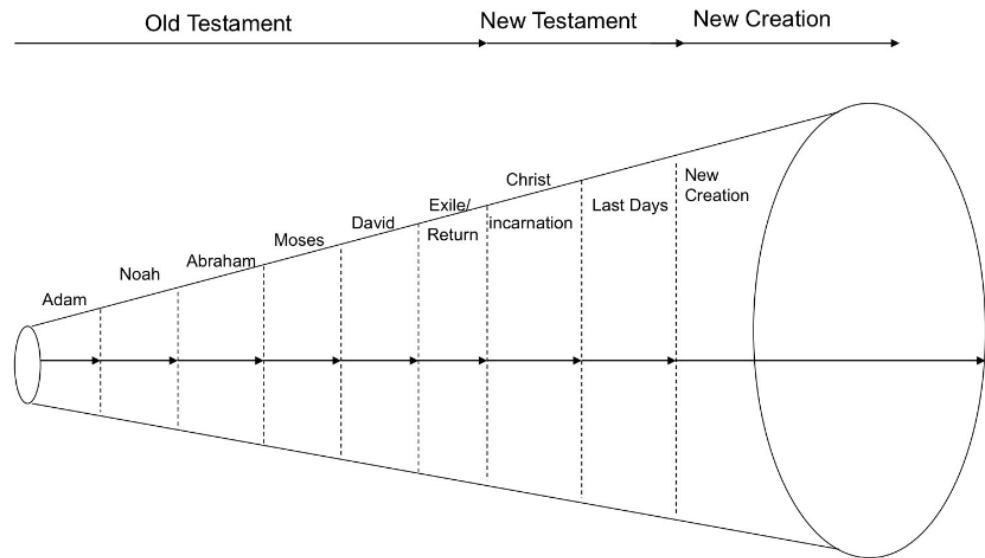


Figure 1. Redemptive-Historical Unfolding<sup>5</sup>

Following the diagram's order, this essay explores the progressive revelation of the land's significance in the following manner:

- Discuss the divine significance of Eden as a sacred place.
- Examine the connection between Noah and the land in the context of the flood narrative.
- Delve into the promises of land within the covenant with Abraham.
- Analyze Genesis 15:18 and its implications for the land promise to Abraham's Descendants.

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<sup>5</sup> Douglas Oss, "Redemptive-Historical Unfolding" (class notes for PTH 902 Theology of Ministry at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, MO, February 2020).

- Discuss the term “everlasting possession” in Genesis 13:15, 17:8, and 48:4, along with “to your descendants after you” in Genesis 35:12, as indications of the eternity of the land promise/covenant.<sup>6</sup>
- Discuss the connection between obedience to the law and the promise of land.
- Analyze themes of conquest, exile, and return to the Land of Israel.
- Discuss God’s promises to the prophets during exile, including the return to the land.
- Examine how Jesus’s ministry and teachings align with the promise of land.
- Discuss the concept of the New Jerusalem as the ultimate fulfillment of the land promise, as described in Revelation 21:2.

Through this structure, the chapter explores the unfolding message of the land throughout the Old and New Testaments. This approach provides a deeper understanding of the theological implications and connections related to the Land of Israel (*eretz Yisrael*), ultimately revealing the overarching theme of salvation woven throughout the Scriptures.

### **Theology of the Land—Creation of Land as God’s Dwelling Place to Coexist and Bless Humankind**

From the biblical account in Genesis, the tripartite relationship between God, humans, and land remains inescapable, even at the start of creation. Adam (*’āḏām*) was created from the dust of *’āḏāmā* (Gen 2:7) to live and fellowship with God on this earth.

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<sup>6</sup> All Scripture references, unless otherwise noted, come from the ESV.

“The motif of ‘land’ remains critical due to the special relationship God established with the first man and the ground as reflected in their respective names *’ādām* and *’ādāmā*.”<sup>7</sup>

The etymology of the Hebrew word for land exhibits a compelling bond with humanity.

### Space of Eden as Primordial Blessing of Humanity

Besides the etymological connection of the land and the first man, God carved out a unique space named Eden where He incarnated His divine presence to commune with the first couple. Eden was a sanctuary for Adam and Eve to cultivate, steward, and enjoy a unique closeness to one another and their Creator.

Adam and Eve related to God on the ground. For the first couple, God’s habitation was not distant in the heavens but firmly rooted in the earthly realm. Their son, Cain, was upset because the punishment of living far from God was too significant a burden (Gen 4:13). T. Desmond Alexander aptly notes that God designed this first earth as a divine residence to coexist with people.<sup>8</sup> The tangible presence of the Creator in Eden provides freedom to the created people.

As God generously empowered the first couple to rule and subdue the earth, Greg Beale observes regarding the original divine plan: “They were to extend the geographical boundaries of the Garden until Eden extended throughout and covered the earth. This meant that God’s presence which was limited to Eden was to extend and ‘fill’ the entire

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<sup>7</sup> T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 19.

<sup>8</sup> Alexander, *From Paradise to Promised Land*, 14.

earth.”<sup>9</sup> God intended to expand the Edenic sanctuary to cover the whole earth eventually with His presence.

Alexander surmises Genesis 2 as the blueprint for God to build a holy garden city out of the whole earth through an increasing population where He would eventually locate His dwelling place. However, the realization of Genesis 2 transpires only in the New Jerusalem in Revelation chapters 21-22.<sup>10</sup> When God declared that the land He created was good, His intent was not to test humanity, as some would believe, but to relate and coexist with them as humans multiplied and populated on the earth.

Tragically, due to the first couple’s disobedience, the blueprint was shattered when God banished them from the Edenic sanctuary. God cursed the *’ādāmā* (Gen 3:17); they had to toil the *’ādāmā* for daily sustenance, and upon death, humankind returned into the dust of *’ādāmā*. The account of Cain and Abel further underscores the sacredness of the land. When Cain murdered Abel, the Bible describes that Abel’s blood cried out from *’ādāmā*, which further alienated Cain from the sanctuary of God. Cain’s anguish arises from his inability to be near God’s habitation (4:13). The punishment for sin involved living in an abode far away from God’s protection.

God’s intent to reside with humanity makes ‘land’ inherently valuable. Restoration of land to its sacred purpose occurs when God realizes His intent in the New Jerusalem.

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<sup>9</sup> G. K. Beale, “Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48, no. 1 (March 2005): 10-11.

<sup>10</sup> T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2008), 26.

### Cleansing of the Land through the Flood to Bless Humankind

In the Flood narratives, sin proliferates as the human population increases, ultimately leading God to cleanse the land through a catastrophic flood that devastates most of humanity, sparing only Noah and his family. This divine judgment befalls the earth as a direct response to its residents' persistent violence and wickedness.

The significance of the land and its connection to abundance and prosperity proves evident in the post-flood world. Lamech, Noah's father, prophetically names him "Noah" because he believes that Noah will bring relief from the painful toil of their hands (Gen 5:29). Noah fulfills this prophecy by working as a "man of the soil" (*ʾădāmā*) (9:20). He plants a vineyard, which implies that Noah "enjoys a greater harmony with the ground than his immediate ancestors."<sup>11</sup> Noah's obedience ushers in an era of abundance. This transformation underscores the close relationship between humanity's well-being and the productivity of the land.

However, God had to reset the polluted and corrupted earth before it could produce abundant crops. Gary V. Smith advances the notion that the Flood narrative and the cleansing of the corrupted earth exhibit striking parallels with the creation account found in Genesis 1, as seen in Table 1 below:

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<sup>11</sup> Alexander, *From Paradise to Promised Land*, 150.



Table 1. Parallel between the Creation Account and Flood Narrative<sup>12</sup>

<i>Creation Account</i>	<i>Flood Narrative</i>
Land separated from sea (Gen 1:9-10)	Flood waters subsiding and dry land appearing (Gen 8:1-13)
Birds, animals, and every creeping thing that appears on the earth to swarm the earth (Gen 1:20-21, 24-25)	Noah to bring out birds, animals, and every creeping thing to swarm the earth (Gen 8:17-19)
God establishes the days and seasons (Gen 1:14-18).	The seasons, day and night shall not cease (Gen 8:22).
God blesses man and animals to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth (Gen 1:28).	God blesses Noah and his sons to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 9:1, 7).
Man has dominion over the animal kingdom. (Gen 1:28).	Man rules over animal kingdom (Gen 9:2).
God provides food for man (Gen 1:29-30).	God provides food for man (Gen 9:3).
Man is made in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27).	Man is made in the image of God (Gen 9:6b).

This parallel between the Creation and Flood narratives highlights the need for a divine reset and renewal of the land for the earth to regain its fertility. In this context, the concept of blessing becomes pivotal. While God had previously cursed the ground following the sin of the first couple, this post-flood blessing represents a significant shift. God blesses Noah and his sons, with the explicit outcome being their fruitfulness, multiplication, and the filling of the earth. God intends to restore the land so humanity can experience His blessings, cultivate it, and enjoy its abundant produce again. Noah's vineyard serves as a tangible example of this renewed prosperity, yielding bountiful fruit.

However, humanity's inclination for evil re-emerges with the construction of the Tower of Babel. This rebellion against God incurs His wrath, leading to the scattering of the people across the entire earth, even further away from the original sanctuary of God. This divine curse underscores the relationship between human actions, God's blessing or judgment, and the land.

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<sup>12</sup> Gary V. Smith, "Structure and Purpose in Genesis 1-11," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, no. 20 (1977): 307-319, 310-312. Note: Smith uses "man" generically for man and woman.

### **Theology of the Land—Call of Abraham to Bless His Descendants and the Nations**

Abraham represents another pivotal point in the unfolding narrative of human existence. When God created Adam, He bestowed a blessing that extended to the land (Gen 1:28). Ten generations later, Noah received a similar blessing, affirming the connection between God's blessing and the land (9:1, 7). Ten generations after Noah, this divine pattern of blessing, land, and human responsibility was replicated with Abraham (12:7). "The number ten is generally seen as constituting a unit."<sup>13</sup> While the Adam-Noah generations ended in judgment before the blessing of the land, the Noah-Abraham generations concluded with the gift of the land. Even though humanity's conditions did not prove ideal during the Noah-Abraham generations, God judged the time as ripe for Abraham to serve as the progenitor of the people of Israel who could embody the image of God.<sup>14</sup>

God called Abraham to leave his homeland in order to bring blessings to all the families of the earth (Gen 12:3). Implicit in this call was the idea that all of humanity would ultimately receive blessings through Abraham. David Frankel comments on the significance of this call: "It is only after making the concerted effort to break away from the old territory and live in the new one that the promise of national greatness can take

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<sup>13</sup> Shubert Spero, "Ten Generations from Adam to Noah versus Ten Generations from Noah to Abraham," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (July 2011): 166.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

place.”<sup>15</sup> Significantly, the scope of blessing expands from the Garden of Eden for Adam, to a fruitful vineyard for Noah, and then to the land of Canaan promised to Abraham.

Abraham’s exceptional willingness to obey God, to the extent of preparing to sacrifice his promised son Isaac, leads to significant blessings. Frankel postulates, “The theme of blessing is also prominent in the divine oath in 22:16–18, which marks the conclusion to the main part of the Abraham narrative.”<sup>16</sup> The inclusion of the divine vow connotes God’s profound desire to bless not only Abraham but all nations and, by extension, all of humanity through Abraham’s descendants.

Abraham’s destiny as the father of a great nation not only entwines obedience with possessing the land that God is calling him to, but it tightly knits God’s promise of blessings to the nations, to Abraham’s descendants (referred to as “offspring” or “seed”). Two pre-requisites must transpire for all the nations to receive these blessings: (a) Abraham must leave his current location to inherit the land God designates, and (b) the existence of a transparent and traceable lineage of descendants from which the promised “offspring” must come.

#### Land As Inheritance to Bless Abraham’s Descendants

In the Old Testament, the theme of inheritance (*nahalah*) plays a significant role, especially where land is involved. “The granting of the land of Canaan to Abraham by Yahweh signifies that He is the ultimate landowner of the entire earth who is more significant than all gods, including those of the Canaanites. The author of Exodus

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<sup>15</sup> David Frankel, *The Land of Canaan and the Destiny of Israel: Theologies of Territory in the Hebrew Bible* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 49.

<sup>16</sup> Alexander, *From Paradise to Promised Land*, 153.

proclaims that God owns *eres* which is the Hebrew word for ‘land’ and the ‘world’ (Exod 19:5).<sup>17</sup> God grants the gift of land to His people as a sign of His commitment to His covenant with them (Gen 13:17; 17:7-8; 35:12; 48:4; Lev 25:23; Deut 4:40; Josh 14:9).

However, God’s blessing of the land inheritance remains contingent upon the individuals’ faith and obedience. God chose Noah and Abraham to execute His divine plan because of their righteous behavior (Gen 6:8; 15:6).

God’s promise of land to Abraham emphasizes the inheritance metaphor which is foundational in the Old Testament. The bequeathing of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants as an eternal possession accentuates the unique bond between God and His chosen people. William Brown maintains that the detailed Jewish inheritance laws in the Old Testament are “theological, not legal.”<sup>18</sup> He adds, “to inherit means to ‘receive an irrevocable gift’ .... Unlike legal inheritance, the benefactor, God does not die....”<sup>19</sup> This material and spiritual inheritance underlines the enduring relationship between God and His people.

In the Old Testament, each family in Israel receives its inheritance as an inalienable possession (Josh 13), with the responsibility to occupy the land (Judg 1:3).<sup>20</sup> “There was no legal method of acquiring land other than inheritance and apportioning to one’s heirs. However, involuntary transfers are excluded (Neh 5:3) although the nature of

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<sup>17</sup> J. G. Millar, “Land,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 623.

<sup>18</sup> William E. Brown, “Inheritance,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 374.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

transfer is irrelevant to the concept of inalienability.”<sup>21</sup> The land God gives cannot be transferred to parties outside the family but must remain in the family’s possession.

As the biblical narrative unfolds, the promised inheritance extends to a righteous remnant who will inherit the world as an everlasting possession, illustrating God’s ultimate plan for His people.<sup>22</sup> Regarding the reciprocity of the relationship between Israel and God, Brown maintains, “The nation is described as God’s inheritance (1 Kings 8:51, 53; Ps 78:71; Isa 19:25; Zech 2:12) whom the Lord will never forsake (Ps 94:14). The Lord is conversely described as the inheritance of the nation (Ps 16:5)”<sup>23</sup> Israel, deemed as God’s inheritance, in turn acknowledges Yahweh as their inheritance underscores God’s resolute commitment to His people and chosen nation.

On the governance of land ownership, Walter Brueggemann posits that covenantal principles, rather than mere royal authority, dictate land management.<sup>24</sup> Ahab’s desire to buy Naboth’s plot characterizes the different views on the land (1 Kgs 21:1-16). Ahab views land as a “tradable commodity,” while Naboth upholds the covenantal tradition of land as an “inalienable inheritance” preserved for future generations.<sup>25</sup> As noted by Brueggemann, Jezebel’s intervention introduces a foreign perspective on kingship and land, challenging covenantal values and the Torah’s

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<sup>21</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *God’s People in God’s Land: Family, Land, and Property in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1990), 56.

<sup>22</sup> Brown, “Inheritance,” 374.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, *Overtures to Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 78, 90, 93.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 93.

demands.<sup>26</sup> Elijah's confrontation with Ahab accentuates the divine perspective on land management, revealing that Yahweh's intentions for the land surpass royal control.<sup>27</sup>

Consequently, 1 and 2 Kings chronicle the consequences of Ahab's actions (1 Kgs 22:37-38) and of Jezebel's appalling deeds against the land (2 Kgs 9:31-37).

Yahweh's involvement and consequent divine judgment on Ahab and Jezebel demonstrate how the relationship between people, land, and His covenantal principles are closely intertwined.

### The Seed of Abraham and the Blessing of the Land

Yahweh promised to give Abram's offspring the land of Canaan (Gen 12:6-7). As the Patriarch had several children from different wives, identifying the line of descendants and the heir/heirs who would inherit the land remains essential. The author of Genesis clarifies that after the debacle with Hagar, Yahweh renews the land promise with Abraham (17:2, 6) and specifies which descendants would receive the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession (35:12, 48:4).

The offspring would come from Sarai's womb and Isaac's lineage, as explicitly directed by God (vv. 19, 21). The Lord again renews the covenant with Isaac (26:3-5, 24). Isaac's wife, Rebekah, conceives a pair of twins, described as two nations. Nevertheless, God renews the promise of the land with Jacob instead of the firstborn Esau (the ancestor of the Edomite nation), who concedes his inheritance for a bowl of stew.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 88-89.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 89-90.

Jacob also renews the covenant with God when he goes from Beersheba to his uncle's house in Haran. He was presumably in Canaan when the Lord appeared and disclosed to him that He would give him the land that he was lying in (Gen 28:13). God renews this covenantal gift of the land again when Jacob returns to Canaan at Bethel and changes his name from Jacob to Israel.

The author of Genesis makes it clear and without ambiguity that God has promised the land of Canaan to the offspring of Abraham—namely, Isaac and Jacob—not to other sons of Abraham or Isaac. At Mount Horeb, all the tribes of Jacob/Israel (Deut 5:3) renew this land covenant. Inherent in the locus of this promise rests God's divine plan for the tribes of Israel, the offspring of Jacob, to possess the land of Canaan (4:40).

In summary, the theme of land inheritance serves as a theological foundation in the Old Testament that underpins the enduring relationship between God and His people and emphasizes the covenantal principles that govern land ownership and management of the designated land for His chosen people.

### The Rights of Yahweh to Canaan

One question that often arises concerns Yahweh's right to bequeath the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants. Understanding the relationship between Yahweh and El (the Canaanite god), their perceived roles in Canaan, and the religious beliefs of the time can shed light on the narratives involving Abraham and his descendants' possession of the land.

According to Exodus, God reveals His name as "Yahweh" for the first time to Moses (3:13-14), a name which He did not disclose to Moses's ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (6:3). However, in Genesis, the author wrote about the early patriarchs

worshipping Yahweh as God even though the name “Yahweh” was not disclosed until the Mosaic theophany at the burning bush hundreds of years later. Consequently, it remains improbable that Abram invoked the name of YHWH in Shechem (Gen 12:6-8).

To address this gap, Mark G. Brett asserts that the ancestors of Israel in the book of Genesis only knew the divine name of El Shaddai (Exod 6:2-3).<sup>28</sup> Genesis 16 records Hagar encountering Yahweh (vv. 5-13). However, after the vision, she proceeds to name the location of the well where the divine encounter took place as *b<sup>e</sup>’ēr laḥai rō’ī* (בְּעַר לַחַי רֹאִי), which refers to El and means “well of the Living One who sees me.”<sup>29</sup> Hagar addresses the deity who appeared to her as *’el rō’ī*, which means the “God of seeing” (v. 13).<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, Jacob encounters Yahweh but calls the place Bethel, which means “House of El” (Gen 28:16-19). Brett postulates, “It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the name of Yhwh has been discovered in a preexisting sacred site that belonged to El.”<sup>31</sup> Given that the theophany to Moses occurred after the early Patriarchs, it follows a priori that subsequent editors to the book of the Torah included the name of Yahweh.

The similarity of how Jacob (Gen 35:1-4) and Joshua (Josh 24:23) exhorted their followers to put away “foreign gods” before entering into a covenant with YHWH at

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<sup>28</sup> Mark G. Brett, “The Canaanites Were Then in the Land’ and Other Shechemite Ironies,” *Harvard Theological Review* 116, no. 2 (April 2023): 184.

<sup>29</sup> John D. Barry et al., eds., “Beer-Lahai-Roi,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), Logo Research System.

<sup>30</sup> Henry O. Thompson, “Beer-Lahai-Roi (Place).” ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:640.

<sup>31</sup> Brett, “Canaanites,” 185.



Shechem is uncanny. Shechem is where Abram first encountered God in the land of Canaan. According to Joshua 24:2, Abraham's family worshipped other gods before coming to Canaan. As Brett notes, "The homeland is Canaan, and the land beyond the river is now foreign. By implication, the migrant ancestors who came from beyond the Euphrates had to leave their kinfolk and gods behind, as Joshua 24:2 makes clear."<sup>32</sup> If the gods are considered foreign gods to Canaan, then the question arises about how they should regard the indigenous gods in Canaan. Brett offers the following insight into the religious landscape of the Canaanites, "Historians are of course unanimous in affirming that they worshiped El, because that name is widely attested as the Canaanite name of the Creator."<sup>33</sup> The name of El remains well-documented as the Creator in the Canaanite community.

Concerning the deity of El, Kurt Backlund posits, "In ancient texts from Ugarit, it was the name for the Canaanite creator god, father of gods and humans, and head of the Canaanite pantheon."<sup>34</sup> However, "worship of the Canaanite god El does not seem to have been widespread in biblical Israel. As a result, the common prophetic polemics directed against the worship of Baal are not found against El in the Old Testament."<sup>35</sup> This enigma underlines the religious complexity of the Canaanites.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>34</sup> Kurt Backlund, "El, Deity," ed. John D. Barry et al., in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), Logos Research System.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

Many descriptions of El appear similar to God the Creator. One of the descriptive phrases applied to El is the Father of Mankind (*ab adm*) with human characteristics.<sup>36</sup> El was also called the “father of years,” the “father of man,” the “father of men and gods.” El lived far away from Canaan “at the source of the two rivers” reminiscent of the source of the four rivers where the Garden of Eden is situated (Gen 2:10-14).<sup>37</sup> The titles bestowed upon El draw parallel imagery with Yahweh.

Brett highlights the ensuing insights that Abram’s acknowledgement of El Elyon Creator of heaven and earth (Gen 14:22) implies “respect for indigenous tradition” and the Israelite name “Yhwh” is a later edit of the Canaanite name.”<sup>38</sup> “One might even conclude that the ancestors of Israel who came from beyond the riverine borders of the Euphrates and the Nile had no clear understanding of Yhwh until they set foot in Canaanite country.”<sup>39</sup> The migrant ancestors learned the significance of Yahweh’s name within the household of El in Canaan, underscoring the theological transition occurring in the region. This transition suggests that El’s role gradually shifted toward the worship of Yahweh, the God of Israel.

If El, the God of Canaan, brought the new people to possess the Land of Israel, the question arises as to what happened then to the indigenous Canaanites. God told Abraham that the time to occupy the land correlates to the Amorites’ sin reaching its full

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Elmer B. Smick, “Canaanite Deities and Religion,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 411.

<sup>38</sup> Brett, “Canaanites,” 189.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

measure (Gen 15:16), underscoring the expiration of His long-suffering patience toward the residents of Canaan.

### **Theology of the Land—Abraham in the Land of Canaan as a Blessing to the Canaanites**

Despite the promise of inheritance from God, Abraham did not take up arms against the Canaanites to possess the land. The exact opposite transpired. Abraham coexisted with the residents of Canaan. As an immigrant, he shared the land through generous grants, peaceful negotiations, or legal purchases. He interceded for Sodom, gave tithes to the Canaanite king, Melchizedek, and fought with other Canaanite kings. Abraham refused gifts from the Canaanites, treated the people fairly, and respected the land.<sup>40</sup> Abraham paid the total price for a plot of land from the Canaanites to bury Sarah. The same happened with Isaac and Jacob.

The only tragic incident occurred at Shechem, after which Jacob grieved and chastised his two sons, Simeon and Levi, for their violence toward the Canaanites. Despite the Shechem episode, God continued to affirm the gift of the inheritance of the land to Abraham's descendants, Isaac (Gen 26:3-4) and Jacob (35:9-12). However, the consequence of this episode is that Simeon and Levi, Jacob's second and third-born sons, forfeited their rights to succeed the firstborn son, Reuben, when he sinned against Jacob. The inheritance of the Promised Land is predicated upon obedience and righteous behavior, as mandated by Yahweh.

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<sup>40</sup> Norman C. Habel, *The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies*, Overtures to Biblical Theology (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 133.

Another blessing Abraham brought to the Canaanites is his witness to the one true God. As a prophet (Gen 20:7) and monotheist (12:1-8; Josh 24:2-14), he pointed the way to the only true God amid Canaanite darkness (Josh 24:2-14).<sup>41</sup> Abraham built altars to demonstrate his public devotion to God (Gen 12:7; 13:18). His obedience to sacrifice Isaac and the divine intervention (22:12-13) not only highlights the disdain of God toward detestable human sacrifices, a practice prevalent among Canaanites (Lev 18:21; 20:2-5; Deut 12:31) but also showcases to the Canaanites that Abraham serves the one true God who provides and determines what constitutes an acceptable sacrifice (Gen 22:12-13).

#### The Land of Canaan as a Blessing of Rest to the Israelites

Not only is the land of Canaan a blessing to the Canaanites but also God desires the land to serve as a blessing to the Israelites. To persuade the Israelites to leave Egypt, Moses provided a vision of the land that God had prepared for them—a land flowing with milk and honey. The vision described the Promised Land as a new paradise. Referring to the description, J. G. Millar conjectures that, “This is a theological rather than an agricultural point; Israel’s land is so good because it is the long-awaited gift of God in fulfillment of his promise. The promise of land guarantees the restoration of intimacy with God in terms which recall the description of Eden.”<sup>42</sup> Yahweh intends to bring the Israelites to a place of blessing as intended for the first couple—where they can enjoy His presence and receive a new identity as the people of God.

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<sup>41</sup> Wave Nunnally, email message, May 28, 2024.

<sup>42</sup> Millar, “Land,” 623.

In the Book of Deuteronomy, the Israelites acknowledge YHWH as the owner of the land in which they reside, with their possession of the land contingent upon their obedience to God's law. Enjoyment of the land is tied to the mandate to follow the Torah, emphasizing the connection between land ownership and obedience to YHWH. This concept of the land as a divine gift is also linked to the observance of the Sabbath, a day of rest and reflection (Deut 1:21, 5:14-15). J. C. Laansma asserts,

In the Old Testament, the thematic treatment of the idea of rest consists of two main strands: the sabbath rest (from routine labor) and the promise of rest (from wandering/journeying or enemy threat) in the land of Canaan. ... Even the weekly sabbath, inasmuch as it compelled the Israelites to stop working the ground, served as a reminder that the land was Yahweh's.<sup>43</sup>

The weekly sabbath mandated the Israelites to cease working the land, serving as a reminder that the land belonged to Yahweh.

Leviticus 26 draws a parallel between the exile of the Israelites and Sabbath rest for the land. It depicts the exile as an opportunity for the land to enjoy the rest, denied by the people while they lived there, disobeying God's command (vv. 33-35). A. G. Shead conjectures, "The breaking of not just the Sabbath laws but the entire law is in view, suggesting that the land is denied Sabbath rest when the people are unfaithful to God."<sup>44</sup> Disobedience of God's laws brings His curse upon the land, reminiscent of God's curse on the land when Cain killed Abel.

Amos, one of the early pre-exilic prophets, further explores the relationship between the land, the Sabbath, and social justice. He emphasizes that the people's

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<sup>43</sup> J. C. Laansma, "Rest," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 727, 729.

<sup>44</sup> A. G. Shead, "Sabbath," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 747.

possession of the land depends on their adherence to the law and their commitment to social responsibility. The connection of the gift of land to the observance of the Sabbath reminds the Israelites of YHWH's ownership of the land and the need for equitable treatment of all, including the poor and needy.<sup>45</sup> The prophets criticized the rich and powerful in Israel for exploiting the land and mistreating the less fortunate, which goes against the principles of Sabbath and social justice. Amos condemned those who abused their wealth and power, emphasizing that the proper use of land and the observance of the Sabbath should prevent the oppression of the poor. Misuse of land and economic injustice leads to societal collapse and disaster.<sup>46</sup> Christopher Wright rightly noted that the prophets vigorously condemned abuses of the poor because they saw them as a direct threat to the relationship between people and God, particularly in how they impacted landowning households (Mic 2:1-3, 8-9; 7:5-6; Isa 5:8-10).<sup>47</sup>

The socio-economic changes that damaged family land units also eroded the nation's relationship with God because He vested His relationship in these household units, just as land ownership ties to family inheritances.<sup>48</sup> Wright further theorizes, "The theological status of Israel was earthed and rooted in the socio-economic fabric of their kinship structure and their land tenure, which was being dissolved by the acids of debt,

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<sup>45</sup> Robert Khua Hnin Thang, "The Theology of the Land in Amos 7-9" (Ph.D. diss., University of Gloucestershire, 2011), 136, 138.

<sup>46</sup> Wright, *God's People in God's Land*, 109.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

dispossession, and latifundism.”<sup>49</sup> God intended for land to serve as a blessing for all people, and oppression by some individuals curtails His blessing on the land and incurs His wrath.

Amos’ message underscores the significance of the Sabbath as a day of rest, a symbol of YHWH’s ownership of the land, and a call for justice and compassion. The prophet’s critique of the wealthy prioritizing personal gain over social welfare reflects the broader theological understanding that the land is a divine gift that the owners should manage responsibly and share equitably among the people.<sup>50</sup>

In the Gospels, Jesus claims that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath (Luke 6:1-10; Mark 2:23-28; Matt 12:1-8), which most commentators refer to as Jesus’s self-proclamation of His messianic role. However, Marc Turnage disagrees: “The idea that the Messiah would proclaim Himself by willfully violating the commandments is a concept foreign to Judaism.”<sup>51</sup> Drawing from a parallel statement within early rabbinic literature—to you the Sabbath is given, and you are not given to the Sabbath (*Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael* on Exodus 31:14), Turnage contends that the “Son of Man” in these passages refers to “a human being.”<sup>52</sup> In other words, as Jesus himself points out in Mark 2:27, the Sabbath was made for humankind rather than humankind made for Sabbath.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Thang, “*Theology of the Land*,” 139.

<sup>51</sup> Marc Turnage, *Windows into the Bible: Cultural and Historical Insights from the Bible for Modern Readers* (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 2016), chap. 27, loc. 5523, Kindle.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

Despite the promise of rest to the Israelites in the land of Canaan, the tribes failed to find rest. However, God's desire for His people to find rest remains. While Psalm 95:7-11 equates the Promised Land to God's rest, Hebrews 4:3b points readers to God's testimony of a place of rest.<sup>53</sup> "God's rest is not a right that He selfishly kept to himself but given to those who are saved."<sup>54</sup> This claim is further substantiated by the writer of Hebrews, who differentiates between spiritual rest and Canaan rest. In Hebrews 4:9,

The description of the rest as a sabbath rest is essential because it introduces a word (*sabbatismos*) that occurs nowhere else ... for it effectively differentiates between the spiritual kind of rest and the Canaan rest (the psalm has the word *katapausis*). Those eligible for this sabbath rest are called the people of God, distinguishing them from the unbelieving Israelites.<sup>55</sup>

Spiritual repose distinguishes the people of God from unbelieving Israelites and characterizes this new and obedient community.

The journey of the Israelites seeking rest in Canaan and their eventual failure to find it due to disobedience becomes a lesson for all of humanity. Their quest reminds people that they can only find genuine rest through faith in Christ, who offers a spiritual and eternal rest that transcends the physical world and provides solace, peace, and salvation for those who believe. The Promised Land, therefore, serves as a profound symbol of this spiritual pilgrimage, where faith in Christ leads believers to the ultimate, everlasting rest.

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<sup>53</sup> Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1993), 245.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>55</sup> Donald Guthrie, *Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 15 of *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 119.



### Testing of God's People before the Blessing of the Land

When the Israelites left Egypt, they imagined a land “flowing with milk and honey,” as promised by Moses. However, what came immediately after the departure from Egypt was a place of destitution and homelessness in the wilderness. Despite the harsh conditions, God provided for them unexpectedly—manna and quail from heaven and water from the rock where necessary. “Yahweh has acted in landlessness to provide there for his people, just enough for life.”<sup>56</sup> The Israelites had sufficient for their needs each day.

The wilderness is a place of testing. Instead of the “land flowing with milk and honey,” the people of God must face the possibility of dying in the desert. However, the landless wanderings reveal several contrasts—those who trust in Yahweh and those who do not. One group looks back to the past and desires to return to Egypt as enslaved people. The other group looks forward to the inheritance of the Promised Land. However, the Israelites must learn that God is their inheritance and that the gift of land comes from their obedience.

The Book of Exodus explores the concept of Yahweh's presence and its significance within the context of Israel's wilderness journey and their pursuit of the Promised Land. Brueggemann proposes, “Presence is the pursuit of the promise. The concern is not cultic Presence, but rather Yahweh's leadership and care on the way to the

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<sup>56</sup> Brueggemann, *The Land*, 41.

word yet to be given as land”<sup>57</sup> Yahweh’s presence is not manifested through religious rituals or forms but rather through his commitment to sustaining and guiding Israel’s survival and journey toward the Promised Land. “Yahweh’s presence is depicted as transformative, bringing forth newness from discontinuity and even allowing for the emergence of a new history and distinct people who trust in the promise.”<sup>58</sup> The Israelites had to demonstrate meekness and trust in Yahweh first. Through the testing process, Yahweh transformed the people so that faith and vulnerability characterized the people after the doubting generation died.

The wilderness served as the place where the Israelites peculiarly experienced Yahweh’s presence in a way never imagined—a setting of extreme precariousness where the tribes of Israel realized their vulnerability and need for Yahweh. Despite the challenges, “Yahweh [could] transform the situation. He displayed his glory and acted decisively to make for landless Israel an environment as rich and nourishing as any landed people had ever known.”<sup>59</sup> He provided manna and quail daily in the wilderness, a place of hunger, death, and emptiness. The wilderness became a space where the wandering Israelites uniquely discerned Yahweh’s presence, revealing His commitment to His people despite the scarcity of resources. “The surprise is that landlessness can become nourishing.”<sup>60</sup> Amidst the harsh conditions of the wilderness, Yahweh demonstrates divine care by turning scarceness into sustenance.

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<sup>57</sup> Brueggemann, *The Land*, 39.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

The passage in Exodus suggests that the conquest of the land was slow, so that the place would not become desolate with wild beasts multiplying against the Israelites (23:29). Yahweh's meticulous planning to displace the residents of Canaan gradually demonstrates His protection and minute care over His chosen people.<sup>61</sup>

### Exile and Landlessness as Blessing for God's People

Despite the repeated warnings from Yahweh through the prophets, the Israelites and their leaders continued to commit evil acts which incurred the wrath of God. As a result, from approximately 732 BC to 722 BC, the Israelites in the Northern Kingdom were deported to Assyria (2 Kgs 15:29; 2 Kgs 17:3-6). In 587 BC, the Southern Kingdom of Judah was exiled to Babylon, leaving behind a small remnant.

God determined the judgment of the Israelites when they still dwelled in the wilderness. Frankel posits that "the eventual exile of Israel from the land" was an overdue punishment already decided for the original sin of "the incident involving the spies (Ps 106:24-27)."<sup>62</sup> When ten of the twelve spies gave a bad report of the pleasant land that God was giving them, they rejected His divine gift and faced God's consequent judgment of exile in a foreign land.

The exile, seen as a crisis for Israel, stripped the Israelites of key identity markers like the land, Davidic kingship, and the temple. This experience affected Israel's relationship with God and the land, as expressed in the lament, "How can we sing the

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<sup>61</sup> David Brown, A. R. Fausset, and Robert Jamieson, *Genesis-Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 of *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments* (London, UK: William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited, 1984), 376-377.

<sup>62</sup> Frankel, *Land of Canaan*, 3.

song of the Lord on foreign land?” (Ps 137:4). Worship of the Lord is so bound up with the land of the Israelites that it would be an impossible self-contradiction to sing his praises in a foreign land.”<sup>63</sup> The Israelites felt abandoned and displaced in the exiled land. Psalm 137 supports the theology of land as a central theme, emphasized by the connection between God’s relationship to the people of Israel and their worship of Yahweh on earth.

The exile forced the Israelites to rethink the intricate connection between their worship of God and their inherited land. Millar posits that when the Babylonians overran Judah, it sparked an urgent reconsideration of the nature of God’s relationship with His people.<sup>64</sup> The exile reduced the Israelites to refugees and undermined their entire theological tradition. However, the reverse proves true. The exile is a blessing, while those who remain behind in the land did not experience blessing. “According to Ezekiel 11:16, the Lord can serve as a sort of spiritual sanctuary (11:16) for the Israelites in exile.”<sup>65</sup> Yahweh goes where His people are, even to exile, which signals a departure from the Israelites’ understanding of God’s presence as tied to the land.

Ezekiel maintains that the people who remained in the land after the devastation of Jerusalem do not inherit the land even though they consider themselves as the remnant and the descendants of Abraham (Ezek 33:24-29). Conversely, regarding the exiles, Ezekiel upheld them as “the true heirs of the promise, who will return to possess the land and the blessings of the covenant, not because they deserve it but through sheer sovereign

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>64</sup> Millar, “Land,” 626.

<sup>65</sup> Frankel, *The Land*, 15-16.

grace (36:24-32).”<sup>66</sup> The invasion of Babylon reversed the roles of the exiles and the remnant. As Ezekiel saw the glory of God depart from Jerusalem (Ezek 1:1), God’s blessings followed the exiles to the new land, from which the Lord would later gather them back to the Promised Land (11:17), but those who remained in Jerusalem faced desolation.

The prophet Jeremiah’s words convey a similar message (Jer 25:8-9, 27:6), as Brueggemann notes: “It is hard enough for landed people to believe that land will be lost. It is harder to imagine Yahweh will do it.”<sup>67</sup> He regards the exiles from Judah as God’s people, like good figs (Jer 24:4-7), while those who remain in the land are bad figs awaiting destruction. The relocation of Yahweh’s place of worship during the exile signals a radical departure from the practice of confining worship of God to a specific geographical location.

Jeremiah inverts the contemporary theology of his day in a way that anticipates the words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman, that the worship of God is not bound to a geographic location (John 4:21). True worship of God is not land-limited. Seventy years after the exile to Babylon, the Jews eventually returned to Israel and re-populated the land according to the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. As seen in the next section, Jesus expands Ezekiel’s and Jeremiah’s theology of the land that remains intertwined with God’s presence. The Gospels emphasize the gift and promise of divine presence beyond the geographical boundaries to the whole world.

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<sup>66</sup> I. M. Duguid, “Ezekiel,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 230.

<sup>67</sup> Brueggemann, *The Land*, 107.

### **Theology of the Land—Jesus and the Land**

First-century Judea saw a rise in territorial nationalism, a trend that significantly influenced Jesus's ministry. This influence was particularly pronounced in Galilee where Jesus began His ministry. Galilee, with its predominantly Jewish inhabitants, was a testament to the religious motivation of the Hasmoneans. The Hasmoneans, led by Hyrcanus I (135-105 BCE) and Jannaeus (104-78 BCE), annexed Galilee and sought to 'purify' the Land of Israel from any idolatry and to expand their kingdom's territory to the borders of the kingdom of David.<sup>68</sup> These motivations set the political stage for Jesus's ministry, underscoring the depth of their influence.

Theological ideas of land restoration and a longing for Jewish rule over their homeland had widespread appeal. The New Testament also reflects these aspirations, as seen in the Book of Acts when the apostles ask Jesus about restoring the kingdom to Israel after His resurrection (Acts 1:6).

During this period in history, different Jewish responses to Roman occupation arose. Gary Burge posits that some, such as Herod cooperated with Rome. Others, like the Qumran sectarians, isolated themselves in anticipation of divine intervention, while individuals like Judas Maccabeus promoted resistance to remove foreign rule.<sup>69</sup> It felt natural for Jesus's followers to want to understand His stance toward Roman domination. However, Jesus did not openly address land ownership and political issues. This discretion was partly due to the dangers of opposing Rome and the intolerance

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<sup>68</sup> David A. Fiensy and Ralph K. Hawkins, *The Galilean Economy in the Time of Jesus: Early Christianity and Its Literature* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 13.

<sup>69</sup> Gary M. Burge, *Jesus and the Land: The New Testament Challenge to "Holy Land" Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 26-27.

within fellow Jewish communities for sympathizing with the Romans. However, the Gospels provide some insights into Jesus's attitude toward the land issues.

### Teachings of Jesus on the Land

Despite Jesus's lack of political commentary, some observations emerge from the Gospels: (a) Jesus remained silent on the territorial and political issues of His time, even as Judaism grappled with whether to resist or cooperate with the Roman rule; (b) He acknowledged Roman laws, such as paying Roman taxation (Matt 22:22) and the forced labor rule of carrying a Roman soldier's equipment for one mile, and even encouraged going the extra mile and loving one's enemies (5:41); (c) He demonstrated receptivity toward Roman proselytes, as seen in His praise of the centurion's faith (8:5-13).

Jesus's tolerant approach to the Roman occupation of Israel aligns more closely with the pharisaic School of Hillel. Harvey Falk maintains that while the School of Shammai asserts that even the most righteous Gentile could not merit a place in the World to Come, the School of Hillel believes that righteous Gentiles could achieve salvation just like the Jews and a mission to reach them could prevent destruction of their land.<sup>70</sup> Hillel states (Avot 1:12), "Be thou of the disciples of Aaron, one who loves peace, pursues peace, loves mankind, and draws them nigh to the Torah."<sup>71</sup> This saying reflects Hillel's compassion for the Gentiles.

During the AD 66-70 war, Jewish [Christian] believers refused to fight for the land. According to Eusebius, "The Jerusalem Christians had taken no part in the Jewish

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<sup>70</sup> Harvey Falk, *Jesus the Pharisee: A New Look at the Jewishness of Jesus* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985), 8, 32.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

war: they had abandoned the city even earlier to settle in a territory of Peraea called Pella.”<sup>72</sup> Jesus and His disciples’ responses to the Roman governing authority demonstrate a preference for cooperation and compliance rather than resistance.

Nevertheless, Jesus’s connection to the land reveals a traditional Jewish perspective. His life’s events occurred in locations tied to Jewish heritage, such as Bethlehem, Nazareth, Capernaum, and Jerusalem. Christ began His public ministry in Galilee, a region with historical connections to Israel but considered somewhat on the periphery, indicating a continuity with Israel’s geographical consciousness.<sup>73</sup> His ministry primarily focused on geographical Israel. Both Judea and Jerusalem held significant theological roles in His teachings. He selected twelve apostles, most likely symbolizing the twelve tribes of Israel, which suggests a desire to restore Israelite hope within the Promised Land’s borders.<sup>74</sup> He initially restricted His disciples’ evangelism to the House of Israel, implying a focus on the cultural perimeters of Judaism within the land.<sup>75</sup> These actions indicate Jesus’s perspective on the importance and continuity of the land in the Gospels.

Besides the Jews, Jesus also ministers to the Gentiles in places such as Syria, the Decapolis, and the east side of the Sea of Galilee (Matt 15:29-39). Burge contends that the area Jesus chose for His ministry challenged the exclusivity of Israelite privilege in

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<sup>72</sup> Angelo Di Berardino, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 436.

<sup>73</sup> Burge, *Jesus and the Land*, 30.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*



the land, leading to some resistance from some quarters (Luke 4:16-30).<sup>76</sup> However, Christ's choice of locations for ministry does not necessarily symbolize defiance of the Israelite's exclusivity to the land but rather an "inclusivity" of the Gentiles, similar to the flexible teachings of the School of Hillel.

Jesus's kerygma of the kingdom of God does not correlate to territorial or political aspirations, which differs from the Maccabean era's focus on territorial kingdom aspirations.<sup>77</sup> Jesus's perspective on land and politics remains nuanced and complex. He avoided explicit political statements and prioritized spiritual and moral concerns over nationalistic or territorial agendas. His ministry was all-encompassing and demonstrated a willingness to engage with individuals and regions outside the conventional boundaries, challenging the pharisaic School of Shammai's prevailing "land theology" of His time.

Several passages in the Gospels shed light on Jesus's awareness of the land and its significance in His time's religious and political context. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus speaks of the meek inheriting the earth (Matt 5:5), drawing upon the land metaphor as a symbol of spiritual formation and connection with God.<sup>78</sup> This inversion of theology challenged the prevailing power dynamics and expectations of the time, reflecting a reversal of some of the religious values. Instead of aggression, Jesus advocates humility of humanity over the possession of land. Overall, Jesus emphasizes the importance of righteousness, fruitfulness, and a heavenly inheritance over the physical possession of the land.

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 41.

## Jesus and the People of Israel

John's Gospel underscores the subtlety and complexity of Jesus's engagement with the concept of the land. Jesus's appearance supplants key fundamentals of Jewish religious practices, such as purification rituals and festivals.

Jesus claims that He is the new temple (John 2:19-22) and connects himself to the story of Jacob's ladder (1:51) and the name given to the place of the dream as Bethel, "the house of God" (Gen 28:11-19). Burge postulates by doing so, Jesus subsumes the role of "house of God," replaces Jacob, and becomes "the recipient of the promise of the Holy Land held by Jacob."<sup>79</sup> Burge's statement alludes to the replacement of God's covenant of the promised land to the Jews by Jesus.

On the contrary, Craig Keener argues that the new Jacob is Nathanael, not Jesus.<sup>80</sup> Citing the more widespread LXX interpretation of Genesis 28:12 that underpins the rabbinic interpretation, the more natural context supports Nathanael (representing earthly Israel) as the new Jacob and not Jesus.<sup>81</sup> Jesus is Jacob's ladder, the way between God and the world (John 14:6).<sup>82</sup> "If later rabbis could claim that Moses was greater than Jacob because he not merely saw angels but ascended into their domain, no one could dispute that Jesus was greater than Jacob, for angels depended on him as the true connection between the worlds."<sup>83</sup> The "true Israelite (1:47) may receive the revelation of

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<sup>79</sup> Burge, *Jesus and the Land*, 48-49.

<sup>80</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 1:490.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 490-491.

God as his ancestor did (Gen 28:12; cf. 32:1).”<sup>84</sup> Even though Jesus is the new temple through which humanity now worships God, this does not equate to the replacement of God’s covenant of promised land with the people of Israel.

In Matthew 21:33-45, Jesus tells the parable of the wicked tenants of the vineyard scheming to kill the heir. According to John Nolland, this parable draws upon Isaiah’s vineyard metaphor to critique Israel’s religious leaders for failing to produce spiritual fruit and righteousness in the land and their substitution by the Christian community as the replacement tenant farmers.<sup>85</sup> However, citing verses 42-44 as the key to the interpretation, Brad Young asserts that this parable is about Christology and not the Church replacing Israel.<sup>86</sup> Jesus’s listeners understood that the “stone” in Psalm 118 refers to King David, whom Jesse and Samuel initially rejected. The audience comprehended that the stone in verses 42-44 refers to the rejection of the Son of David. Jesus communicates through this parable that death cannot defeat Jesus, the Son of David.<sup>87</sup> Incorrect interpretation of this parable leads to a wrongful substitution of Israel with the Church, thereby diminishing the importance of God’s Abrahamic Covenant with the people and the Land of Israel.

As Michael Trainor asserts, “The Land formed Jesus” and influenced His identity and ministry, shaping the first generation of believers and giving rise to the gospel and its

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<sup>84</sup> Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 489.

<sup>85</sup> John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 876.

<sup>86</sup> Brad H. Young, *Jesus the Jewish Theologian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1995), 215.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

followers.<sup>88</sup> The teachings of Jesus expound the superiority of His presence and promises as compared to the physical Land of Israel. However, His teachings do not imply a replacement of the tangible land.

Trainor further proposes that while the New Testament often echoes the Old Testament's expressions for the gift and promise of the land, "These probably never describe the actual role of the Land of Israel... they describe a transcendental inheritance: the Reign of God, the heavenly city, the heavenly Jerusalem."<sup>89</sup> While the New Testament's imagery and wording demonstrate continuity with the Old Testament, there appear to be elements of both continuity and discontinuity in the New Testament.

Justification for the continuity of the physical land promise derives from the themes of unconditionality and eternity of the promise based on the prominent biblical passages, especially in Genesis.<sup>90</sup> In 2001, the statement of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (JPSS), asserted that "This unconditional promise, exemplified in the covenant with Abraham, remains valid irrespective of the people's disobedience. Even though disobedience might lead to exile, the connection to the Promised Land cannot be entirely severed."<sup>91</sup> In other words, God's graciousness in choosing the people of Israel and His

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<sup>88</sup> Phillip A. Cunningham, Ruth Langer, and Jesper Svartvik, eds., *Enabling Dialogue about the Land: A Resource Book for Jews and Christians* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2020), 22.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>90</sup> The Pontifical Biblical Commission, "The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible," accessed January 25, 2024, [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20020212\\_opolo-ebraico\\_en.html#1.%20In%20Judaism](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20020212_opolo-ebraico_en.html#1.%20In%20Judaism).

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

commitment to maintaining a relationship with them are not contingent on Israel's actions.

Citing the prophets (Jer 12:15; Ezek 36:24-28; Amos 9:11-15; and Mic 5:6-7), the Pontifical Biblical Commission conjectures that punishment of Israel's disobedience with exile and the harsh prophetic denunciations do not alone fully reveal the divine will, for prophets always "leave open a way to return to a new occupation of the Promised Land."<sup>92</sup>

Complementing this perspective, David Andrew Dean surmises that God established a unilateral covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15, formalizing the land and seed promises using cultural practices Abraham would understand. According to him, Genesis 17 reaffirms this covenant, reiterating the promises and introducing the sign of circumcision as a regulation, not an obligation, while Genesis 22 tests Abraham's obedience to existing covenant regulations, enhancing already-established obligations as a reward for his obedience without establishing a new covenant.<sup>93</sup> The Abrahamic Covenant is unilateral and irrevocable, with God as the sole covenanting party, and includes regulations but no obligations for Abraham and his descendants. As a result of the unilateral covenant, the Jewish people can always hope for a return despite exile, supported by divine reassurance from the covenant between Yahweh and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> David Andrew Dean, "Covenant, Conditionality, and Consequence: New Terminology and a Case Study in the Abrahamic Covenant," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 57, no. 2 (2014): 307.

This idea of “everlasting” remains central to the Pontifical Biblical Commission’s interpretation. They maintain that the land promise persists across generations, extending from the original recipients to later Israelites and Jews (Deut 5:3), shaping the lasting bond between God and Abraham’s descendants.<sup>94</sup> The land promise extends from Abraham to subsequent generations of Israelites and Jews which underscores the eternity of God’s covenant. The notion of eternity rejects supersessionism and supports the view that the covenantal relationship and land promise are relevant in the past, present, and future.<sup>95</sup> God’s commitment and blessings promised in the Abrahamic covenant are not only ancient idealisms but are relevant both now and in the future.

Generations after Abraham, the tribes of Israel renewed the covenant of the land promise with Yahweh (Deut 5:3). Though centuries go by, the temporal distance between the generations is abolished and the covenant of the land promise remains equally valid for later Israelites and Jews.<sup>96</sup> The land promise persists, transcending its original recipients from the past; the covenant remains resolute and unaltered by the passage of time.

### **Theology of the Land—The New Jerusalem**

The theology of the land in the Garden of Eden anticipates the New Jerusalem. God’s plan to expand Eden to cover the whole earth will ultimately be realized in the New Jerusalem, a holy temple city.<sup>97</sup> The New Jerusalem, described as a golden cube

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<sup>94</sup> Pontifical Biblical Commission, “The Jewish People.”

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 30.

(Rev 21:16), resembles the inner sanctum of the Holy of Holies in the Old Testament temple (1 Kgs 6:20).<sup>98</sup> Edmund Clowney asserts, “So holy will the city become that the inscription on the high priest’s tiarra will be on the bells of the horses and the wash pots will be as temple vessels (Zech. 14:20).”<sup>99</sup> The entire city will be so holy, and “since the high priest has to be holy to enter the Holy of Holies, those who enter the New Jerusalem will also have to be holy.”<sup>100</sup> Clowney argues that holiness remains the prerequisite for entering the sanctified space of the New Jerusalem.<sup>101</sup> “Holiness of life is to be the ambition of every believer.”<sup>102</sup> The concept of holiness remains fundamental within the biblical meta-story, especially for understanding the fulfillment of God’s creation blueprint that the entire earth should become his temple city.

The biblical narratives concerning the New Jerusalem predict this transformation. The New Jerusalem undergoes ecological transformation compared to its predecessor (Ezek 47: 8-12).<sup>103</sup> Fertility and abundance will replace the Adamic curse on the ground (Isa 30:23-25); predatory animals, such as wolves and lions, will coexist peacefully with humanity and their prey (Isa 11:6).<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, the earth will be filled with the

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<sup>98</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Rev 21:16.

<sup>99</sup> Edmund P. Clowney, “Final Temple,” *The Westminster Theological Journal* 35, no. 2 (Winter 1973): 164.

<sup>100</sup> Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 139.

<sup>101</sup> Clowney, “Final Temple,” 164.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>104</sup> J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20 of *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 223.

knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, symbolizing a state of spiritual enlightenment (Hab 2:14).<sup>105</sup> The earth has become so good that predatory animals can feed off the earth itself—a return to the Garden of Eden.

In addition to spiritual and ecological transformation, the New Jerusalem will also experience social transformation, which within the context of John’s vision of the New Jerusalem emphasizes the “international dimension of life in the New Jerusalem” and how people from all nations will participate in this transformed community.<sup>106</sup> This inclusive vision highlights the unity and harmony that will characterize the New Jerusalem. Revelation underscores the idea of the New Jerusalem as a diverse and inclusive community comprising people of all ethnicities on earth (Rev 5:9; 21:26), which finds its roots in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:3; 22:16-18).<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, it fulfills Psalm 72’s anticipation of a future Davidic king who will bring blessings to the nations and have dominion over the entire earth. This vision offers hope for a world where the realization of justice, righteousness, and divine blessing provides reassurance in the face of life’s challenges and difficulties.

However, it also suggests a connection between the universal reign of this king and Christ’s second coming and the establishment of the New Jerusalem.<sup>108</sup> From a naturalistic perspective, such a description of the New Jerusalem predicts an other-

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<sup>105</sup> Kenneth L. Barker, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, vol. 20 of *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 341.

<sup>106</sup> Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 165.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 163-164.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 168-9.



worldly vision of heaven. Nevertheless, Romans 11:26 addresses an essential aspect of Paul's argument in chapters 9-11 of the Book of Romans, where Paul urges non-Jewish Christian believers not to be arrogant toward Jews. Toward the end of this argument, in Romans 11:25-32, Paul resolves the tension by stating that "all Israel will be saved" (v. 26).

Quoting Isaiah's words, "The Deliverer will come from Zion" (Rom 11:26), two pivotal questions emerge regarding both the identity of Zion and that of the Deliverer. "Zion typically refers to Jerusalem or the Temple in Jerusalem. However, it could also allude to "the role of God's holy abode (Ps 132:13)." <sup>109</sup> The dual significance of Zion suggests two possible readings. Philip Cunningham renders the double interpretation of Romans 11:26 as "(a) Jesus' second coming from heaven and delivering the world or (b) Jesus descends from heaven, resides in Jerusalem and becomes the source of eschatological salvation for both Jews and non-Jews." <sup>110</sup> This interpretation leaves the question of whether God will establish the New Jerusalem on earth or in heaven. Regardless of its ultimate location, believers can anticipate and eagerly await the New Jerusalem as a place where they will dwell in harmony with God, fulfilling the original blueprint set by God in the Garden of Eden (Isa 65:17; 66:22; Ezek 47:1-23; 2 Pet 3:13; and Rev 21:1).

The rebuilding of creation depicts the New Jerusalem and the renewed Land of Israel as a microcosm of God's renewal of all things, expanding His glory and rule until

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<sup>109</sup> C. E. Shepherd, "Zion," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), Logos Research System.

<sup>110</sup> Cunningham, *Enabling Dialogue about the Land*, 34.

they fill the whole earth and unify all kingdoms under Him. This transformation serves as a visible reminder of God's faithfulness to His promises and covenant.

### **Conclusion**

The tripartite connection between God, the land, and humanity remains inescapable. The creation of land as a place for God to coexist with humans is expressed through the Garden of Eden and expanded to the Promised Land in Canaan. However, through the Israelites' journey of gaining and losing the land in the biblical narratives, God demonstrates the superiority of His presence and Person as the Creator and landowner over the Promised Land, a preamble to the incarnated Christ who dwells among the people in Israel.

This gift of land comes with a vital condition—obedience to God's commands—and a corresponding curse: landlessness as a severe consequence of disobedience. This theme of blessings and curses intertwined with the land forms a foundational aspect of the biblical narrative. The acceptance of the landowner—the incarnated Christ, brings blessings of eternal rest and eternal inheritance in the form of a new Jerusalem and a restored Land of Israel. In contrast, rejection brings a curse of landlessness where God's presence remains absent, a reminder of the importance of obedience to God.

The advent of Christ significantly alters the centrality of the land of Canaan as a place of worship. The worship of Yahweh, the Creator God, is no longer confined to a specific geographic location. God fulfills His covenant to Abraham that He will bless all the nations through the seed of Abraham. The renewal of creation, embodied in the New Jerusalem and the restored Land of Israel, underscores the eternity of God's land

promises and covenant, a testament to the remarkable power and impact of Christ's advent.

However, by no means does the territorial liberation of the worship of Yahweh diminish the importance of the tangible land. The unilateral covenant with Abraham and the land blessings remains in force for his descendants, as revealed through the biblical narratives.

While the role of the land of Israel in eschatology and the second coming of Christ remains a subject of debate, the land itself undeniably retains immense importance for historical and archaeological studies. The land of Israel exists as a treasure trove of historical context, abundant with artifacts and evidence that shed light on the study of the Scriptures. Furthermore, it maintains a deep connection to our Lord Jesus Christ as the backdrop to many events in His life and ministry.

In this context, biblical archaeology emerges as a vital discipline. It illuminates the narratives found in both the Old and New Testaments, bridging the gap of understanding across time and cultures. Unearthing archaeological treasures and historical context enriches our comprehension of the biblical texts, allowing us to delve deeper into the intricacies of the Scriptures.

## CHAPTER 3: GENERAL LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

Archaeological discoveries, safeguarded in museums around the world, showcase the diverse cultures of antiquity. These artifacts foster an appreciation of the civilizations that have shaped our world. The exhibits educate the public about a past society's way of life, beliefs, and practices and help communities connect with their cultural identity and heritage.

On October 22, 1996, the world was shocked when rebels decimated the National Museum in Kabul, which housed the important Bagram collection and some of the oldest coins in the world. Randall Price describes the parallel loss of Afghanistan's history in this decimation: "It also lost its birthright for coming generations, for without a heritage from the past there can be no legacy for the future. This tragedy of our modern day may be repeated on a lesser scale if we devalue our past."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, all communities have ethical stewardship to protect their national treasures discovered through archaeology for future generations.

Archaeology, which originated over 200 years ago, continues to evolve. Defined by the Greek term *archaiologia*, the discipline involves recovering and studying the material remains of past peoples and cultures. Biblical archaeology, as a subset of this

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<sup>1</sup> Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out: What Archaeology Reveals about the Truth of the Bible* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1997), 344-45.

general field, applies archaeological science to biblical studies, bridging the scientific perspective of archaeology with the theological perspective of the Bible.

Integrating archaeological studies into biblical and theological studies provides historical and literary context, enlightening the reader on the biblical text. Nevertheless, given the rise of open hostility toward the Bible over the past two hundred years, Christians have historically approached archaeology as a tool to authenticate biblical events against such criticism. The eagerness to connect a discovery with the Bible can lead to unwarranted conclusions, misinformed readers, and harm the theological process.

To maximize the benefits of biblical archaeology as a discipline, the first part of this chapter discusses the value it contributes to biblical interpretation and exegesis and recommends appropriately integrating biblical archaeology into the hermeneutical process. The second part of the chapter outlines the principles of biblical archaeology and relevant historical periods. The final part describes the relationship between the historical geography of Israel and biblical archaeology, offers an overview of the four divisions of the biblical land of Israel, and explores some of the key archaeological finds in each of these regions that support the historicity of biblical figures, places, and possibly events.

### **Value of Biblical Archaeology to Biblical Interpretation**

Context is king when it comes to biblical interpretation. William Klein and Craig Blomberg and Robert Hubbard highlight the importance of understanding the broader framework surrounding the text in biblical interpretation: “interpreters must be aware of the worlds of the texts—of the ancient Near East for nearly two millennia before Christ

for the OT, and the Roman Empire of the century AD for the NT.”<sup>2</sup> Understanding the milieu of the Scriptures illuminates modern readers to the historical, literary, and political environment that shaped the biblical narratives. Since its inception, archaeology has played a significant role in illuminating the Scriptures.

### Providing Historical Context

Archaeology significantly aids exegesis by providing external evidence from literature contemporaneous with the Hebrew Bible. Extrabiblical texts discovered in the same region and timeframe illumine contextual and literary forms within the Bible, which is crucial for interpretation.

For example, in Genesis 16, Sarah offers her maidservant as a surrogate wife to Abraham to bear children. A few chapters later, in chapter 30, Rachel offered her maidservant to Jacob to bear children. While this practice may seem unusual, Mesopotamian laws legally sanctioned such customs. Marriage contracts even included provisions stating that if a woman could not bear children, she was obligated to provide a surrogate for her husband. Similar contracts also allowed a husband to take another wife if the original wife did not bear an heir within a specified period. James Hoffmeier correctly discerns, “Regulations dealing with this dilemma are found in the laws of the Amorite king Lipit-Ishtar of Isin (1934–1924 BC) and are updated in Hammurabi’s code,

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<sup>2</sup> William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), chap. 5, Kindle.

which dates nearly a century and a half later.”<sup>3</sup> Sarah’s expulsion of Hagar was a cultural practice allowed by the laws of that era.

The discovery of the Mesopotamian law code illumines researchers’ understanding of the Ancient Near East’ laws and customs. Arthur Ungnad asserts, “In 1902, French archaeologist Jacques de Morgan discovered forty-four columns of ancient Babylonian cuneiform writings containing the collection of laws of King Hammurabi.”<sup>4</sup> The discovery illuminates the Bible’s historical practices during the time of Abraham. Hoffmeier postulates, “Hammurabi law 170 stipulates that when a man has children by both the first wife and a surrogate, the children ‘shall equally divide the property of the paternal estate’. The son of the first, however, takes the first share.”<sup>5</sup> Based on this clause, Ishmael, the son of Hagar, would have initially been considered Abraham’s heir.

When Isaac was born to Sarah, she demanded that Abraham send away Hagar and Ishmael to protect Isaac’s inheritance. Sarah’s insistence on removing Hagar and Ishmael, which seems harsh in modern times, aligns with another clause in Hammurabi’s Code, which allows parents to exclude the children of the surrogate mother and secure the inheritance for their biological son by granting freedom to the enslaved person and

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<sup>3</sup> James Karl Hoffmeier, *The Archaeology of the Bible* (Oxford, UK: Lion Scholar, Lion Hudson Limited, 2019), 40.

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Ungnad, “Hammurabi, The Code of,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, ed. James Orr et al. (Chicago, IL: The Howard-Severance Company, 1915), 1327.

<sup>5</sup> Hoffmeier, *Archaeology of the Bible*, 40.

her children.<sup>6</sup> These examples highlight how Mesopotamian legal documents provide insights into and parallels Abraham and Sarah's actions in the biblical narrative.

The discovery of Hammurabi's Code accentuates archaeology's benefits in enabling exegetes to interpret texts in their historical context. The following section reveals how archaeology illuminates the Scriptures to the readers.

### Elucidating Literary Texts

The Old Testament, written in Hebrew and Aramaic, encompasses diverse ancient cultures, such as those in Mesopotamia, Assyria, Persia, Babylon, Egypt, and Canaan over a period of a thousand and five hundred years. These cultures had distinct religions, traditions, languages, governments, and localized phenomena that impacted biblical interpretation. The authors of the Old Testament assumed a shared understanding with their original audience, making it challenging for contemporary interpreters to grasp the background knowledge.

Archaeology has significantly influenced text-critical decisions, crucial in the absence of original manuscripts. The practice of textual criticism concerning the Bible is not a recent development. For more than two thousand years, both Jews and Christians have engaged meticulously in this discipline to preserve the sacred text.

Nowhere is the significance of archaeology for textual criticism more pronounced than in the case of the Dead Sea Scrolls from the Qumran Community. Concerning the unearthing of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Peter Flint surmises that examining these manuscripts

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<sup>6</sup> Hammurabi, "The Code of Hammurabi," University of Chicago Press, accessed June 21, 2024, <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/hammurabi-the-code-of-hammurabi>.



has led to the discovery of copies of every book in the biblical canon except Esther.<sup>7</sup> Hilliard asserts that the Masoretic Texts utilized for current translations of the Old Testament and the Dead Sea Scrolls derive from the same textual tradition.<sup>8</sup> Discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls underscores the reliability of the source employed in translating Scriptures. Archaeology, mainly through the practice of text criticism, played a vital role in validating and establishing the text of the Bible and enriching the exegetical process in biblical studies.

Bible scholars striving to translate the Bible from ancient to modern languages face challenges such as semantic evolution and manuscript errors due to handwritten transmission. Archaeology has played a crucial role in addressing these challenges. Andrew Messmer underscores, “During the Patristic period, textual criticism was ... a common practice amongst exegetes, translators, pastors, and laymen.”<sup>9</sup> Citing second century theologian Irenaeus, Messmer maintains, “Although Patristic authors wrote at different times, at different places and for different purposes, they employed similar criteria to adjudicate between the known variants. Regarding the manuscripts, they preferred older manuscripts over newer ones, high-quality manuscripts over low-quality ones, and original languages over translations.”<sup>10</sup> Discovery of variant readings through archaeological finds helped minimize the impact of human error on manuscript

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Flint, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013), 66.

<sup>8</sup> Kenny E. Hilliard III, “Masoretic Text,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, edited by John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), Logos Bible Software.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Messmer, “A History of Biblical Textual Criticism,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 47, no. 1 (February 2023): 30.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

transmission and illuminate cultural-specific literary forms essential for proper exegetical understanding.

An example of how ancient texts enlighten the Scriptures is the King James Version translation of Proverbs 26:23, which reads, “Burning lips and a wicked heart are like a potsherd covered with silver dross.” Marten Krijgsman explicates how Ugaritic linguistic studies render a clearer translation, “Smooth words may hide a wicked heart, just as a pretty glaze covers a common clay pot” (Prov 26:23, NLT).<sup>11</sup> Every new archaeological discovery has the potential to elucidate the Scriptures, which benefits readers.

The Codex Sinaiticus is another significant discovery illuminating the Greek New Testament. Constantine Tischendorf found a complete fourth-century Greek New Testament manuscript in St. Catherine’s monastery in Sinai.<sup>12</sup> The codex aided in textual criticism and enabled a more accurate translation of the New Testament into modern language. The following section discusses how archaeology sheds light on the political climate surrounding the biblical events.

### Clarifying the Political Context

Archaeological finds contribute to understanding the political circumstances of the period, which remains essential for exegesis. The discovery of the Cyrus Cylinder reveals the political context of the Jews’ return under Cyrus. Besides Cyrus’s achievements in building projects and conquests, it notes that former captives (not just

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<sup>11</sup> Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 18.

<sup>12</sup> James H. Charlesworth, “Codex: Codex Sinaiticus,” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1074.

Jews) were allowed to return to their homelands.<sup>13</sup> Krijgsman asserts that a comparison of Ezra (1:2) with the cylinder demonstrates that

In both passages, a foreign god (neither Marduk nor Yahweh were Persian) grants Cyrus the authority to hold command over the world. Isaiah 10:5 and 2 Kgs 18:25 further reflect this idea, suggesting that ancient kings frequently made these kinds of arguments for claim legitimacy.<sup>14</sup>

The cylinder enhances our comprehension of the biblical narratives.

A reading of Ezra may lead readers to believe that the Jews have preferential treatment. However, the discovery of the cylinder informs the political context and background, which is not apparent from the Scriptures. Accurately dating the cylinder remains crucial to establish the chronology of the return of the Jews mentioned in the Bible. The following section outlines archaeology's vital role in shaping the chronological understanding of biblical events.

### Chronological Dating of Biblical Events

Archaeology shapes our chronological understanding of events. Citing the standard comparison made between human anatomy and historiography, Eugene Merrill maintains, "Just as the human skeleton is the indispensable 'framework' around and upon which the body with all its parts are suspended, so chronology is the equally indispensable framework upon or against which the flow and acts of history find proper

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<sup>13</sup> Marten Krijgsman, "Cyrus Cylinder," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), Logos Bible Software.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

arrangement, relationship, function, and meaning.”<sup>15</sup> Chronology organizes and imparts meaning to the flow and events of history.

However, chronological dating remains challenging as many biblical accounts do not provide specific dates. It becomes critical then to rely on contemporaneous ancient documents for dating. One of the most essential documents for Old Testament dating purposes is the Assyrian Eponym Canon, which records the list of Assyrian kings and significant events such as the building of monuments and the military campaigns of surrounding nations, including Israel and Judah.

Discovered in the nineteenth century in ancient Assyrian sites by Sir Austen Henry Layard, the Eponym Canon recorded a solar eclipse of the sun over Nineveh. William Hallo maintains, “the eponymate of Bur-sagale, of Guzan, revolt in the citadel of Assur; in the month of Siwan there was an eclipse of the sun.”<sup>16</sup> Modern astronomical calculations ascertained that the eclipse occurred in 763 BC. As many of the texts in the Eponym Canon refer to Israel and Judah and their respective rulers, the dates of the early divided monarchy, can thus be established by referencing the Assyrian Eponym Canon.<sup>17</sup>

Many other sources of chronological value have been unearthed, further establishing a sound biblical chronology. Among these are lists that trace the lines of Egyptian pharaohs from 3000 BC to the age of the Achaemenids (ca. 50 BC). The

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<sup>15</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, “Ai and Old Testament Chronology: Who Cares?” *Bible and Spade* 27, no. 2 (April 1, 2014): 52.

<sup>16</sup> William W. Hallo, *The Context of Scripture. 1: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World* (Leiden Köln: Brill, 2002), 465-66.

<sup>17</sup> Merrill, “Ai and Old Testament Chronology: Who Cares?” 53.

discovery of different epigraphical documents that record the critical historical events in the surrounding region of Israel enables historians to date the biblical events accurately.

### Validate Historicity of Biblical Narratives

Archaeological finds also validate biblical figures and events found in the Scriptures. Discoveries of artifacts providing different perspectives, such as the Mesha Stele, the Annals of Sennacherib, and the Dan Stele, substantiate the historicity of the biblical narratives.

#### *The Annals of Sennacherib*

King Hezekiah who ruled Judah in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC is legendary for building the Hezekiah's Tunnel (2 Kgs 20:20; 2 Chron 32:2-4). The tunnel channels water from Gihon to Jerusalem which enables the city to resist King Sennacherib's siege until he is forced to return to Assyria where he is assassinated by his sons (2 Chron 32:11,22,30). This event is validated by the discovery of the Taylor Prism, named after Colonel Taylor, who acquired it in 1830. Walter Elwell and Barry Beitzel assert, "The hexagonal clay prism in cuneiform dating to 691 BC was discovered at the Assyrian capital Nineveh in modern Iraq, claims that Sennacherib shut up Hezekiah in Jerusalem "like a caged bird," with no mention of the conquering of Jerusalem."<sup>18</sup> Israel's enemy's recording of the same event from a different perspective provides evidence of the historicity of the siege of Jerusalem during the time of Hezekiah.

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<sup>18</sup> John McRay, "Inscriptions," in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1039.

### *The Mesha Stele*

The Mesha Stele, discovered in 1868 at Dhiban (biblical Dibon) in modern-day Jordan, is one of the most significant West Semitic inscriptions. Erected by Mesha, king of Moab, in the ninth century BC, its 34-line text confirms key biblical figures and events from the early divided monarchy, referencing the Northern Kingdom of Israel, King Omri, and the competing deities Yahweh and Chemosh.

The rendition of the faint inscription as “btdwd” or “House of David,” has been contested by some scholars. However, André Lemaire and Jean-Philippe Delorme skillfully demonstrate that recent advancements in digital imaging techniques, specifically Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI), have clarified previously unreadable sections of the text and have revealed faint traces of the letters bet, taw, dalet, and another dalet, confirming the phrase ‘btdwd’ as ‘House of David.’<sup>19</sup> Recent advances in technology enable archaeologists to interpret artifacts more accurately. Lemaire and Delorme further argue, the Mesha Stele references historical events like the “death of Ahab (c. 853 BC)” and “Jehu's coup in 842-841 BC,” dating the stela to “the time of Jehoahaz (c. 810-805 BC).”<sup>20</sup> The references to these events provide persuasive context for the interpretation as “House of David”.

Despite advances in archaeological technologies and the enormous number of discoveries made in the last two centuries, biblical archaeology encounters inherent limitations. The following section discusses the limitations of biblical archaeology.

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<sup>19</sup> André Lemaire and Jean-Philippe Delorme, “Mesha’s Stele and the House of David,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 48, no. 4 (2022): 34-41.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

### Limitations of Biblical Archaeology

While biblical archeology provides excellent value to biblical exegesis and interpretation, it is based on the scientific method of observation, recording, and categorizing, followed by interpretation. However, biblical archaeology comprises inherent limitations. Two significant limitations include the inability of proving the Bible's divine inspiration and the fragility and availability of archaeological evidence.

#### *Inability of Proving Divine Inspiration of the Bible*

Establishing the historicity of a biblical event does not constitute proof of the divine revelation of the Bible, so archaeology cannot provide evidence for miraculous occurrences. While one may present a compelling argument regarding the geographical location of the Red Sea in the Book of Exodus, it remains impossible to ascertain through archaeological means whether the Israelites indeed crossed the Red Sea. However, as Price posits, "The stage of the Bible is historical and geographical, but its drama is divine."<sup>21</sup> Although archaeology cannot prove divine inspiration, it can validate the history of the Bible.

Nevertheless, the challenge lies in distinguishing between archaeological finds that support historical contexts and matters of faith or divine intervention. It is widely acknowledged that the authors of Scripture deliberately selected what to write and report on, often framing events from specific perspectives. Consequently, not all available information was included in the biblical accounts, leaving room for forthcoming historical revelations that could augment our understanding of a narrative or shed light on

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<sup>21</sup> Price, *The Stones Cry Out*, 329.

a biblical character in instances where the Scripture remains silent.<sup>22</sup> Archaeology remains useful to augment one's understanding of the text where they complement each other.

Another limitation for the exegete includes reliability issues that stem from archaeological evidence preservation. The lack of dependability hinders exegetes from drawing accurate conclusions about the historical contexts or interpretations of texts. The following section discusses the conditions that affect the dependability of the artifacts.

### *Fragility and Lack of Archaeological Evidence*

The condition and preservation rates of artifacts vary across the type of artifacts and over different historical periods. Factors such as site disturbance, the perishable nature of some materials, and environmental conditions affect the condition of the artifacts, rendering some more challenging to analyze. For example, the aridity of the Qumran Caves preserved the Dead Sea Scrolls, while no similar texts have been unearthed in Jerusalem due to its humid weather.<sup>23</sup>

Acknowledging the limited archaeological information for earlier periods, particularly the second millennium BC, Hoffmeier urges against exclusive reliance on archaeological evidence to authenticate events and people from the Bible.<sup>24</sup> The evidence presented by archaeological finds is minuscule compared to the written text. Edwin Yamauchi highlights the minute survival rate of antiquities and warns against an over-

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<sup>22</sup> Hoffmeier, *Archaeology of the Bible*, 29.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*



reliance on archaeological evidence to authenticate biblical stories. He posits: “Less than 2% of the known sites have been meaningfully excavated, and only a fraction of the fraction has been published.”<sup>25</sup> The fragility and small amount of archaeological evidence against the vast written text emphasizes the need for a balanced approach to integrating biblical archaeology with the Scriptures. The different views of reliance on Scriptures to interpret artifacts have led to the minimalist-maximalist debates.

### *The Minimum/Maximum Debate*

The minimalist-maximalist divide in biblical archaeology refers to differing perspectives on the reliability and interpretation of biblical texts concerning archaeological evidence. Heated debates often arise when archaeologists’ interpretations of artifacts differ widely, as expressed in published journals, professional meetings, books, social media, and documentaries.

Skeptical of the historical accuracy of the biblical texts, minimalists argue that the texts are more reflective of ideological agendas than historical facts. They advocate for interpreting archaeological evidence independent of the biblical narratives, which they believe were penned long after the events they describe, thus challenging traditional views.

On the other hand, maximalists advocate for using the Bible as a significant source alongside archaeological evidence, believing that the texts can guide interpretations of the archaeological record. They view the texts as providing a framework for understanding the material culture of ancient Israel and surrounding

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<sup>25</sup> Edwin Yamauchi, *The Stones and the Scriptures: An Introduction to Biblical Archaeology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1972), 146-156.

regions. However, some archaeologists maintain nuanced positions within the broader maximalist and minimalist spectrum in terms defined as “maximalist-minimalists” and “minimalist-maximalists.”

Richard A. Freund, who identifies himself as a minimalist-maximalist, believes that each discovery offers information primarily about itself. However, he acknowledges that extrapolation is integral to the prevailing scientific method, and thus, it is essential to consider how each archaeological find impacts the overall reading of the Bible.<sup>26</sup> Freund also describes maximalist-minimalists as those who believe that “the extrapolation process should be restricted to learning as much as possible about a possible connection between material culture and the text.”<sup>27</sup> In summary, maximalist-minimalists prioritize extensive but cautious investigation, while minimalist-maximalists prioritize skepticism but remain unprejudiced to robust associations of archaeological evidences to the Biblical texts.

The broad spectrum of perspectives reflects researchers’ views of the extent to which the texts provide a framework for understanding the material culture of ancient Israel and surrounding regions. Using the Tel Dan stele inscribed with “the House of David” as an illustration, Freund portrays the different responses of archaeologists on the Minimalist/ Maximalist spectrum to this important discovery: “the extreme Minimalists suggesting the possible phrase as the ‘House of a Beloved’ or the ‘House of the Uncle’ and the extreme Maximalists declares since this confirms King David’s existence, it

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<sup>26</sup> Richard A. Freund, *Digging through the Bible: Modern Archaeology and the Ancient Bible* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2009), 14-15.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 36.

confirms every element about him in the biblical narrative.”<sup>28</sup> Freund advocates a Minimalist-Maximalist approach that accepts that “there was a House of David, just like the biblical expression, and learns that King David existed but cannot confirm all of the details about him in the Bible.”<sup>29</sup> Freund’s approach avoids both extreme views and considers extrapolation to the Bible essential to analyzing the archaeological artifact.

Aren Maeir also maintains the need to be open to incorporating insights from various textual corpora, biblical or otherwise, and not be frightened to search for such connections. Maeir cautions against making automatic and uncritical connections to textual evidence, stating,

At the same time, there is no reason to shy away from looking for explicit or implicit connections between the material remains (the archaeological evidence) and the cultural and historical realia imbedded in the biblical text, while being very much aware of the multi-vocality and multi-layered structure of the biblical text. Just as one relates to an archaeological site as a multi-faceted ‘artifact’ ... , thus the biblical text, to a large extent, can be compared to a multi-period archaeological site.<sup>30</sup>

Researchers should not be apprehensive about searching for connections between archaeological remains and biblical texts. They should treat the latter just as they would any other artifacts, to be examined in its own right.

Theological debates persist in resolving conflicts between archaeological finds and biblical narratives; this requires careful consideration in employing archaeology

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Aren M. Maeir, “Stones, Bones, Texts and Relevance: Or, How I Lost My Fear of Biblical Archaeology and Started Enjoying It,” in *Historical Biblical Archaeology and the Future*, ed. Thomas E. Levy (New York: Routledge, 2010), 300.

within the theological task. The next section outlines the factors crucial to integrating archaeology with biblical theology.

### Essential Factors for Integrating Archaeology with Biblical Theology

Biblical archaeology must adhere to the same standards of objectivity and impartiality as any other branch of archaeology, regardless of whether the outcomes align with biblical interpretations. While Archaeology contributes to biblical studies by confirming assertions, clarifying text-critical matters, and providing historical, cultural, and religious information, these assertions can potentially challenge the Bible if the data conflicts with one another.

Participating in the ongoing dialogue between biblical interpretation and archaeology, Donald McIntyre asserts, “The notion of scrutinizing the Bible in this way may be contentious among theologians, but archaeology unavoidably engages in making truth-based claims. If such claims conflict with the Bible, it suggests a possible misinterpretation of the data.”<sup>31</sup> Therefore, integrating archaeological finds into theology demands a higher level of scrutiny.

Archaeology, a blend of art and science, offers scientifically verifiable data but requires interpretation. Careful consideration is necessary to avoid skewed interpretations, especially when addressing shortcomings in exegetical methodology that can compound and negatively impact systematic theological methods. “The Bible informs archaeology, and if one is incompetent as an exegete they will be hindered as an

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<sup>31</sup> Donald C. McIntyre, “An Examination of Biblical Archaeology’s Impact on Exegetical and Theological Method with Attendant Case Study,” *Eleutheria* 6, no. 1 (2022): 216.

archaeologist.”<sup>32</sup> Competence in exegesis remains integral to successful archaeology. As seen in the next section, the key lies in fidelity to the Scriptures’ infallibility to integrate archaeology with the Scriptures.

### *Understanding the Goal of the Biblical Authors*

The authors of the biblical narratives, while not primarily focused on creating a perfect historical record, were dedicated to providing their readers with historical information. Their primary goal was to convey God’s interactions with His people in a historical context that can be trusted. This dedication to historical accuracy establishes the lens through which theologians perceive the world, acknowledging the Bible as a pivotal historical document and validated through archaeological discoveries.

Millard Erickson, a prominent theologian, acknowledges the role of extrabiblical sources in the theological task, asserting that both general and special revelation contribute to understanding God’s truth.<sup>33</sup> He adopts a holistic approach, integrating scientific fields like archaeology, which may verify or challenge biblical claims. However, he cautions that “general and special revelation may be in harmony with one another only if fully understood and correctly interpreted, and friction may arise as a complete understanding of either of these sources remains difficult to achieve in practice.”<sup>34</sup> Erickson’s methodology recognizes the unity of God’s truth through natural (general revelation) and supernatural (special revelation) means.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>33</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 59.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

Though archaeology provides valuable insights, it must be employed skillfully, with an awareness of the potential dangers of misinterpretation. The text of Scripture is upheld as the ultimate authority, with archaeology employed as a complementary tool. However, both archaeological finds and textual evidence are critical for a comprehensive understanding of historical and religious contexts.

*Absence of Evidence, not Evidence of Absence*

When navigating the intricate terrain where archaeology and biblical interpretation converge, it remains essential to adopt the guiding principle that “The absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence.” This saying emphasizes the importance of remaining open-minded and discerning as one explores the material remnants of ancient civilizations.

Archaeological evidence takes time to surface. The Garden of Eden, often regarded as a mythical location, describes four rivers, of which two still exist today: the River Euphrates and River Tigris (Gen 2:10-13). Little is known of the other two rivers, the Pishon and the Gihon. However, this situation took a turn when evidence supporting the existence of such a river surfaced through satellite radar images captured during the 1994 Space Shuttle Endeavour mission. Geologist Farouk El-Baz from Boston University identified traces of a dormant river traversing from “Hijaz mountains to Kuwait” which dried up after 3500 BCE as a result of climate change.<sup>35</sup> Some scholars have suggested it could be the Pishon River mentioned in Genesis 2 because of its apparent connection to

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<sup>35</sup> Molly Dewsnap Meinhardt, “How to Find a River—No Divining Rod Needed,” sidebar to James A. Sauer, “The River Runs Dry: Creation Story Preserves Historical Memory,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 22, no. 4 (1996): 52, 54, 57, 64.

the Euphrates or its outlet into the Persian Gulf.<sup>36</sup> This discovery underscores the importance of not dismissing the historicity of the Bible prematurely due to the absence of archaeological evidence.

*Recognition of Archaeology as a Tool for  
Validation of the Bible*

When integrating archaeology into theological studies, the fundamental guiding principle is the recognition of archaeology as a tool, serving as a means to validate rather than invalidate factual assertions in the Bible. Biblical texts should be considered in biblical archaeology as the Bible is a historical document predominantly authored by eyewitnesses. The Bible is also an artifact that must be interpreted. “If the text and artifact do not seem to agree, it is because one of them has not been interpreted correctly.”<sup>37</sup> The absence of archaeological evidence should uphold the explicit claims of Scripture, and over-reliance on archaeological finds can lead to potential misinterpretations.

In conclusion, integrating archaeology into theology requires a nuanced approach that upholds the biblical text’s primacy while recognizing archaeological evidence’s complementary role. Erickson’s theological methodology stresses the foundational importance of an inerrant biblical text and advocates a cautious engagement with extrabiblical sources. Overall, the careful interpretation and understanding of both biblical and archaeological data are crucial for a well-balanced theological framework.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Mark Jenkins, email message, June 4, 2024.

Uncovering the archaeological finds remains crucial to ensure the authenticity and preservation of the artifacts and the surroundings. Additionally, thorough and precise documentation of excavation processes facilitates future research. The following section discusses the basic principles and methods employed in archaeological excavation.

### **Basic Principles and Methods Employed in Archaeological Excavation**

Archeological excavation involves the meticulous and methodical uncovering and recording of artifacts, structures, and material remains. The primary methods employed in archaeological excavation include identification, stratification, grid system for artifact preservation, documentation, dating of artifacts, and excavation techniques.

Understanding how archeology constitutes systematic and scientific methods provides the basis for relying on archeological evidence and reports. The following section discusses the site selection for excavation as the key decision on where to begin digging affects time and costs.

#### Identification of Site

Before any excavation, archaeologists would survey the “tell” to determine where to begin. A “tell” (termed *tel* in Hebrew) is “a small hill created by successive habitation layers deposited through destruction and abandonment from manmade and natural disasters.”<sup>38</sup> Describing the fieldwork involved in the site survey, Randall Price and Wayne House maintains, “information gathering involves analyzing pottery sherds to gain a preliminary understanding of habitation and utilization of both simple probes and

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<sup>38</sup> Randall Price and H. Wayne House, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2017), 31.



advanced technology, like remote sensing and geophysical surveys, to identify the features of the structures.”<sup>39</sup> In-depth factfinding remains critical for archaeologists before conducting further exploration.

Digging involves costly expenses. Thus, archaeologists’ decisions on where to dig remain of primary importance. John Garstang asserts, “Excavation is not a happy-go-lucky affair; it has become a science, and as such calls for careful organization.”<sup>40</sup> When Rabbi Nelson Glueck wondered where to begin the search for King Solomon’s port of Ezion-geber, he consulted the Bible. According to 1 Kings, the location is in Eloth (or Elath, Eilat), on the shore of the Red Sea, in Edom (9:26; 10:22). Following the Bible, Glueck found Ezion-Geber in Tell el-Kheleifeh on the north shore of the Gulf of Aqabah, east of the Red Sea, which aligns with the location described in the Scriptures.<sup>41</sup> Glueck’s discovery serves as an example of how the Bible can be utilized for site identification.

Other means of ascertaining biblical sites, such as Dan and Gezer, include artifacts that identify the name of the place or by modern Arab names similar to the biblical names. Dan is one of the two high places where King Jeroboam I set up a golden calf for the northern Kingdom of Israel to worship (1 Kgs 12:28-29). John Laughlin postulates that in 1976, Avraham Biran discovered a beautifully preserved inscription “dating to the Hellenistic period (third-second century BC). ... The inscription, [which includes] three lines in Greek and one in Aramaic, refers to a person named ‘Zoilos’ who

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> John Garstang, *The Story of Jericho*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, UK: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1948), 39.

<sup>41</sup> Price, *The Stones Cry Out*, 322

made a vow to the ‘god who is in Dan’.... Although the Aramaic portion of the inscription is damaged, it probably reads the same as the Greek.”<sup>42</sup> This discovery confirms Dan as one of the few sites identified by finding its name inscribed on an artifact excavated there.

A similar archaeological find found at the biblical city of Gezer authenticates the site. Laughlin maintains, “Pharaoh ceded Gezer to Solomon as part of his daughter’s dowry (1 Kgs 9:15-17), which Solomon subsequently fortified. In 1873, French scholar Clermont-Ganneau discovered a boundary inscription from the Herodian period, written in Hebrew, reading “boundary of Gezer.”<sup>43</sup> Since then, archaeologists found eight more of these boundary inscriptions.<sup>44</sup> Both inscriptions enable archaeologists to determine the locations of Dan and Gezer.

Modern Arab names also provide clues to the ancient site. In 1838, American scholar and explorer Edward Robinson and Eli Smith identified the linguistic connection between the Arabic name “Beitin” and the ancient Hebrew name “Bethel.” Both names translate to “House of God.” “The Bible describes ancient travel routes passing through Bethel and those descriptions correspond with travel routes through Beitin that were still in use at the time of Robinson and Smith.”<sup>45</sup> Tracing the etymology of the names of the

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<sup>42</sup> John C. H. Laughlin, “The Remarkable Discoveries at Tel Dan,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 7, no. 5 (1981): 20-37.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Joel P. Kramer, *Where God Came Down: The Archaeological Evidence* (Brigham City, UT: Expedition Bible, 2020), 47.

places enables archaeologists to identify where they should begin their excavations, saving time and money.

### Stratification

Stratigraphy is identifying and interpreting layers (strata) within archaeological sites.<sup>46</sup> Price and House observe, “The geological and archaeological strata that make up an archaeological tell can be identified and interpreted with respect to the different periods of occupation they contain.”<sup>47</sup> Geologist Charles Lyell’s Law of Superposition theorizes that earlier-deposited soils are older than those above.<sup>48</sup> This law forms the basis for establishing a relative chronology by comparing the contextual relationships with similar sites.

The relative chronology of architectural styles, tombs, and pottery between different archaeological sites is crucial for researchers to synchronize historical events and societal changes across different areas, providing a more comprehensive picture of ancient civilizations. The excavations of Manfred Bietak in Tell el-Dab‘a reveal that the Hyksos city of Avaris in Egypt was built and settled by Canaanites.<sup>49</sup> After analyzing the Tell el-Yahudiah ware (Middle Bronze vessels with white incised designs against dark burnished surfaces) found at the site, Tine Bagh posits, “Tell el Yahudiyeh Ware (pTeY), also found largely in tombs ... may be regarded as part of the continuation of the

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<sup>46</sup> Price and House, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, 32.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Cleave, *The Holy Land Satellite Atlas* (Nicosia, Cyprus: Rohr Productions, 1999), 13.

Levantine painted tradition.”<sup>50</sup> By comparing the pottery with the wares found in the Levant, Bietak revealed Canaanite material culture in Avaris.

Artifacts such as coins found in similar sites can solidify the chronology and provide evidence of specific historical events. Coins often bear dates, inscriptions, and images of rulers, which can be precisely linked to particular timeframes. Hoffmeier asserts that the discovery of four Jewish coins at the Qumran excavations help to date the “latest levels of the occupation” to the “third year of the revolt against Rome, which corresponds to AD 68.”<sup>51</sup> Such finds enable archaeologists to construct accurate historical timelines and understand the socio-political context of the period.

Despite potential interruptions or intrusions caused by artificial features, such as later construction or agricultural activity, these disturbances can be understood and contextualized within the broader archaeological landscape. Different coins found in different layers of the strata aid in the differentiation of layers of occupation and refine the chronological framework and historical significance of the archaeological site.

### Grid System

In the excavation process, each context within an archaeological site is systematically removed in reverse order, starting with the last deposited layer and progressing to the oldest strata, ensuring complete documentation before moving on. The

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<sup>50</sup> Tine Bagh, “Levantine Painted Ware and Some Related Pottery From Tell El -Dabca,” in *Tell El-Dab`a XXIII: Levantine Painted Ware from Egypt and the Levant*, 1st ed., 35–60, Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1vw0r25.10>, 59.

<sup>51</sup> Hoffmeier, *Archaeology of the Bible*, 129.

documentation of each layer before moving to the next is crucial as excavation erases the historical record, preserved only through documentation.

The aim is to record as much data as possible in each context to make the most accurate interpretation possible. The horizontal open-area method of excavation invented by Clarence Fisher enables archaeologists to have a big picture and to map the entire site while Wheeler-Kenyon method focuses on precise documentation of finds, allowing for the interpretation of stratification and controlled data recording.<sup>52</sup> Price and House posit, “This grid divides the site into manageable squares (usually  $5 \times 5$  m or  $10 \times 10$  m) separated by a one-meter-wide unexcavated section called a balk.”<sup>53</sup> A combination of the open-area and Wheeler-Kenyon methods is used to achieve the most comprehensive and accurate excavation and documentation of a site.<sup>54</sup> Appropriating the proper excavation method enables archaeologists to gain more information from the site while preserving the excavated area.

### Documentation

The archaeologist’s task involves documenting each stratum in relation to others, including artifacts, to comprehend the site. Archaeologists typically work under issued permits, which obligate them to publish excavation results. The thoroughness of this process relies on the quality of site documentation. The amount of detailed and microscopic documentation in archaeological finds is necessary to ensure the accuracy of

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<sup>52</sup> Price and House, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, 33.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

finds for further analysis off-site and the final report. Inadequate documentation can mislead the analysis of the artifacts.

### Dating of Artifacts

Dating artifacts enables one to examine what transpired in the past, how life changed over time in that location, and connect the past to the present. Archaeologists date artifacts and different layers of the stratum by combining relative and absolute dating methods. Relative dating establishes chronological sequences by comparing artifacts or their arrangements in the same strata with those in subsequent strata which are generally older than those above.

Pottery, inscribed materials, and coins are crucial for relative dating. Coins may carry dates or events linked to a known calendar. Absolute dating involves testing organic samples to provide specific dates. Although ancient events are relatively dated, scholars use observed synchronisms with other chronologies and compare results from nearby sites to establish chronological timelines and cultural connections.<sup>55</sup>

Pottery plays a crucial role in archaeological dating, with a well-documented ceramic typology based on the relative sequence of types. Even broken pottery pieces (sherds) with distinctive characteristics such as rims, handles, bases, and decoration can serve as diagnostic indicators. Collections of body sherds from a site help establish the pottery type, providing insights into the site's size and influence. However, ceramic typology is relative and not absolute dating.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 35.

However, style variations and subtle regional differences necessitate the expertise of ceramic typology professionals for accurate analysis. A new technique called rehydroxylation measures hydroxyl groups in clay to potentially yield precise dates, but temperature-dependent errors can occur.

One of the most widely used dating methods is Carbon-14 (C-14) dating, which relies on the decay of C-14 in plants after death. It is primarily used for dating materials living at one time, like wood, plant matter, skin, bones, and carbonized seeds. Accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS) allows such dating from tiny samples. However, in desert regions, wood may remain unchanged for long periods before being used archaeologically, leading to wide date ranges.

Calibration with other techniques, such as dendrochronology, is essential for accurate C-14 dating. Price and House maintain that “radioactive dating methods cannot be calibrated with known dates before 5,000 years ago, and all dates have a plus or minus variance, sometimes in the range of hundreds of years.”<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, carbon dating remains an important method for testing the chronology of the finds.

Thermoluminescence dating is another method applicable to pottery but could be more precise, especially in cases where samples are found in different soil levels. Extracting ancient DNA from bones and collagen can determine species, gender, and age, offering insights into past animal use. This method is also applied to manuscripts written on animal skin, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, thus serving as a crosscheck with artifacts of established dates at the same site. Being able to date things allows archaeologists to

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 37.

understand how people's lives changed over time and to tell histories that connect the past and present.

The wide range of dating techniques, including radiometric dating for sedimentary rocks, fluorine testing, dendrochronology, and soil and pollen analysis, has significantly advanced researchers' ability to date material remains and enhance the understanding of artifacts.

### Excavation Techniques

Archaeology employs various excavation techniques, including shoveling and brushing. The goal is to remove layers of soil carefully while preserving artifacts and features. Shoveling helps to quickly but carefully remove the bulk of the overlying soil and sediment. As the excavation progresses and more delicate or significant features are uncovered, fine tools like brushes and dental picks are often used to work around delicate items to preserve the artifacts for accurate analysis. Sieving is used to ensure that small artifacts such as seeds or tiny bones, are not overlooked.

From site identification to the final excavation and analysis of the finds, the entire process takes years and requires the dedication of teams of researchers. However, by systematically uncovering the past, archaeologists preserve the integrity of the sites while gaining valuable insights into their historical significance and culture.

The following section defines the archaeological periods in the relation to the Bible as they correlate biblical events with the physical evidence and confirm the existence and location of ancient cities and landmarks.



### **Archaeological Periods in Relation to the Bible**

Synchronizing and comparing biblical chronology with conventional dating and extrabiblical chronologies, such as Egypt and Assyria, inform archaeological periods. However, published chronologies of historical periods before the eighth century BC reveal numerous differences. These arise from debates over geological periods, missing genealogies, use of different calendars (lunar, solar, or luni-solar), prioritization of internal biblical or extrabiblical chronologies, and reconciliation of chronological gaps and archaeological data with biblical data led to the differences in the chronologies.<sup>57</sup> Controversies remained unresolved over the dating of pivotal events such as the patriarchs, the exodus, the conquest, and the time of the judges, resulting in high (earlier date) and low (later date) chronologies due to interpretational differences in the lack of underlying data.

Employing “Christian Tomsen’s proposed three-age system,” Price and House define the post-diluvian pre-patriarchal periods based on technological advancements, particularly the use of metals for trade and as weapons and tools.<sup>58</sup> Dividing the periods into Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age, which reflects the metal technological progress, helps to differentiate societies and distinguish people at various sites.<sup>59</sup>

The Bronze Age marks the development of urban civilizations, city-states, major architectural achievements, proto-writing systems, religion, and educational institutions. This age began with the Sumerian civilization (ca. 3500 BC) and ended around 1200 BC

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<sup>57</sup> Price and House, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, 38.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

with the invasion of Aegean Sea Peoples. Biblical events related to the patriarchs, Moses, Joshua, and the judges occurred during this period.

The Iron Age, characterized by the development of smaller kingdom-states based on national identity, witnessed biblical events recorded for the kingdom of Israel from the united monarchy to the exile. This age coincides with the collapse of Bronze Age civilizations and ends with the fall of kingdom-states under the Neo-Babylonian and Persian Empires. Following the Iron Age, civilizations that define biblical periods are Babylonian, Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman.<sup>60</sup>

The Babylonian Period (605-538 BC) follows the fall of the Southern Kingdom of Judah and precedes the rise of the Persian province of Yehud. Sparse textual and archaeological evidence suggests desolation and population loss in Judah. The Hellenistic Period (330-149 BC) sees the Hellenization of the region after Alexander's conquest, with key events being the Jewish persecution under Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the subsequent Maccabean Revolt. The rule of the Maccabean dynasty marks the Hasmonean Period (167-63 BC), the independent Jewish government, and the rise of Jewish sects. Archaeological indicatives include Hasmonean oil lamps and changes in pottery forms.

The Roman Period (149 BC-AD 638) includes the Early Roman period (149 BC-AD 135), characterized by Roman influence, the Herodian dynasty, the ministry of Jesus, and the First Jewish Revolt. The Middle Roman period (AD 132-200) features the Second Jewish Revolt and the completion of the Jewish Mishnah. The Late Roman period (AD 200-330), also known as the Talmudic period, includes the production of the

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

Talmud and the Roman adoption of Christianity as a state religion, leading to Byzantine Christian rule until the Muslim invasion in AD 638.

### **Relationship between Biblical Geography and Biblical Archaeology**

Unlike most holy writings, the Bible contains references to hundreds of names of places, mountains, deserts, rivers, seas, and surrounding countries. Barry Beitzel observes, “The New Testament is the foundational claim that God became man at a definite moment in time and at a precise point in space.”<sup>61</sup> His observation encapsulates the importance of biblical geography in Bible studies.

The study of biblical archaeology relies heavily on understanding the biblical geography of the Land of Israel. William Dörmers observes the interface between the two: “As a model, historical geography supplies the necessary framework within which the quest for the location of the biblical traditions can take place.”<sup>62</sup> This knowledge remains crucial for several reasons.

First, knowledge of biblical geography provides a contextual understanding of events and narratives in the Bible by interpreting the significance of locations and people’s movements. For example, the study of the geography of Egypt, the Sinai Peninsula, and the surrounding regions remains essential to mapping the potential routes of the Israelites’ crossing of the Red Sea (Exod 14) and the wilderness journey (Exod 19),

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<sup>61</sup> Barry Beitzel, “Preface,” in *Lexham Geographic Commentary on the Gospels*, Lexham Geographic Commentary, ed. Barry J. Beitzel and Kristopher A. Lyle (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), xiv.

<sup>62</sup> William R. Dörmers, “The Interface between Historical Geography and Archaeology,” *Old Testament Essays* 9, no. 2 (1996): 217.

and understanding the strategic importance of Jericho in controlling the other regions of Canaan (Josh 3-6).

Second, knowledge of biblical geography aids in identifying and locating specific sites mentioned in the Bible, guiding archaeologists to focus their excavations on areas relevant to biblical events. Archaeologists identified Tell es-Sultan, located in the Jordan Valley near the modern city of Jericho, as the likely site of ancient Jericho.<sup>63</sup> Tell es-Sultan matches the geographical description provided in the Scriptures, being “north of the Dead Sea” and “west of the Jordan River.”<sup>64</sup>

Third, knowledge of biblical geography enables researchers to consider the impact of the environment on the culture and lifestyle of ancient inhabitants, influencing settlement patterns, agriculture, and trade. Jerusalem’s surrounding hill country provides a natural defense that fosters its development as a political center; Jordan Valley and the Coastal Plains occupied by the Philistines support agriculture and farming; the ancient Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon on the Mediterranean coast facilitated maritime trade.

Additionally, the geography of the Land of Israel holds religious and cultural significance, contributing to the interpretation of cultural heritage associated with biblical narratives. Shechem (Sychar in the NT), a place of profound historical significance, is where Abraham built his first altar to God after He appeared to him in Canaan (Gen 12:6-7). It is also where Joshua renewed the Mt. Sinai covenant and delivered his iconic

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<sup>63</sup> Titus Kennedy, “The Bronze Age Destruction of Jericho, Archaeology, and the Book of Joshua,” *Religions* 14, no. 6 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14060796>, 1.

<sup>64</sup> Hoffmeier, *Archaeology of the Bible*, 74-75.

speech, exhorting the people to fear the Lord and serve Him in ‘sincerity’ and ‘truth’ (Josh 24:14-15, NASB). Shechem is situated between Mt. Ebal, where Joshua erected an altar and pronounced curses (Deut 11:28-29, 27:4-26; Josh 8:30-33), and Mt. Gerizim, where he pronounced blessings (Deut 27:12; Josh 8:30-33).

At Jacob’s well in Shechem, with Mt. Ebal on one side and Mt. Gerzaim on the other locates where Jesus replied to the Samaritan woman’s question regarding the supremacy of worship at Mt Gerazim (John 4).<sup>65</sup> Perry Phillips asserts that

The choice of Sychar as the location for this teaching was no accident. Jesus was echoing the statement of Joshua in the Old Testament who had reaffirmed the Sinai Covenant at nearby Shechem with these words: “Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth” (Josh 24:14 NASB). Joshua’s covenant renewal reminded his listeners of God’s faithfulness to an obedient people. Jesus’ words reverberate with the same promise of a faithful father to those who worship him.<sup>66</sup>

Understanding the geographical surroundings of Shechem enhance the readers' appreciation of the interaction between Jesus and the Samaritan woman in the location of Sychar and viewed in the context of Joshua’s original covenant ceremony in Shechem. Knowledge of biblical geography helps verify the accuracy of such biblical accounts when archaeological finds align with geographical details, thus providing evidence for historical authenticity.

In summary, biblical geography serves as a crucial foundation for biblical archaeology, offering a framework for interpreting evidence, verifying historical

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<sup>65</sup> Perry G. Phillips, “At the Well of Sychar,” in *Lexham Geographic Commentary on the Gospels*, ed. Barry J. Beitzel and Kristopher A. Lyle (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 95.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

accounts, and understanding the cultural and environmental context of the biblical world. The following section describes the historical geographical divisions of the land.

### **Geographical Division of the Land**

Despite its limited size, Israel has a diverse geographical landscape. Yohanan Aharoni observes that the diversity plays a significant role in shaping the nation's historical and cultural development, which influenced settlements and trade routes in antiquity. The significant topographical variations contributed to diverse populations in each region and hindered national or political unity throughout history.<sup>67</sup>

Located between Mesopotamia and Egypt, Israel served as a conduit for their influence in ancient times. Positioned as a crucial land bridge, it played a significant role in trade routes and served as a convergence point for cultural influences from the North and the South.<sup>68</sup> Aharoni divides Israel into four distinct longitudinal strips: the coastal plain, central mountain range, Jordan rift, and Transjordanian highlands.<sup>69</sup> The following sections describe each of these regions and the associated archaeological finds that have attracted scholars and sparked debates between minimalists and maximalists.

#### **Coastal Plains**

The coastal plain of Israel features a dynamic landscape divided into distinct sections. The Plain of Acco, nestled between Rosh HaNiqra and Mount Carmel in the

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<sup>67</sup> Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), 41.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 21

northern coastal plain, encompasses significant harbor cities such as Acco and Achzib. Sand deposits in Haifa Bay led to the formation of marshes, impacting local settlements and influencing the socio-economic dynamics of the region.<sup>70</sup>

The Jezreel Valley is the largest valley connecting the coastal area with the Jordan Valley. Renowned for its fertile soil and crucial trade routes, this valley comprises the most direct west-east passage through Israel. It hosts major cities, including Jokneam, Megiddo, Taanach, and Ibleam, contributing to its strategic importance in the economic and geopolitical landscape. Many battles were fought “between Megiddo and Mount Tabor” to control this valley.<sup>71</sup>

Moving southward, the Sharon coastal plain, stretching from Carmel to Joppa, is characterized by lush forests and dominated by Mousterian red sand and kurkar hills. Principal cities along the Via Maris, such as Aphek further highlight the significance of this region as a hub for trade and commerce.<sup>72</sup> The Philistine Coast, in the southern coastal area, is marked by the dominance of the Philistines. The gradual widening of the coastal plain facilitates traffic. It contributes to the prosperity of cities like Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ashdod, forming a crucial connection in the regional trade network.

The Shephelah consists of a hilly region between the southern coastal plain and the Judean mountains. Aharoni postulates that the Shephelah served as a fortified buffer against Philistine incursions.<sup>73</sup> Cities like Gezer, Lachish, and Mareshah, known for

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 24-25.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 25-26.

cultivating olives and sycamore trees, played a pivotal role in safeguarding this region.<sup>74</sup> This region includes the Valley of Elah, where David defeated Goliath. In the Southern region.

### *Old Testament Archaeological Finding*

The biblical account of the Philistines' affliction with the Hebrew word '*opalim*' after capturing the Ark of the Covenant and placing it in the temple of their god, Dagon, took place in ancient Ashdod, located in the coastal region. Aren Maeir observes that traditionally the Hebrew word '*opalim*' translates to hemorrhoids and suggests a controversial alternative interpretation "based on comparative archaeological evidence."<sup>75</sup>

Maeir contends that "the phallic shaped vessels" found in Tell es-Safi/Gath resemble situlae found in Tel Ashkelon which depicts the Egyptian god Min that is closely associated with male sexual potency."<sup>76</sup> Based on these discoveries, he agrees with archaeologist Lawrence Stager's conclusion that the Philistines' ailment may have involved erectile dysfunction or penile pain, and the golden offerings they sent back with the Ark could be symbolic of male sexual organs rather than hemorrhoids. Maeir asserts that the Hebrew word '*opalim*', still considered unbecoming for reading in synagogues, is seen as a playful mockery in the biblical text.<sup>77</sup> Thus, archaeology continues to enrich the Scriptures and bring new possible clarity to the text.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>75</sup> Aren M. Maeir, "Did Captured Ark Afflict Philistines with ED?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 34, no. 3 (2008): 46-51.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.



### *New Testament Archaeological Finding*

Archaeological discoveries in Israel over the past six decades have provided material evidence related to the figure of Pontius Pilate, as mentioned in writings by Josephus, Philo, and the New Testament. A significant find in 1961 uncovered a Latin inscription at Caesarea Maritima, indicating Pilate's title and responsibilities in the Roman province of Judea during the reign of Emperor Tiberius. Michael Kennedy contends, "the damaged inscription identifies Pilate as the "[pref]ect of Jud[e]a," contradicting the earlier designation of him as a procurator in the writings of Greek and Latin authors."<sup>78</sup> This inscription, originally a dedicatory plaque for a structure called the "Tiberieum," clarifies Pilate's official position as a Roman prefect responsible for military matters rather than a procurator with financial duties. This correction is relevant to historical accuracy and aligns with the Roman Empire's distinctions between prefects and procurators.

Derek Brown maintains that the find also elucidates the accounts of first century Roman Empire recorded by Roman Historian, Tacitus.<sup>79</sup> Tacitus (ca. 56-118 AD) wrote in the *Annals* about Christ's death penalty under Pilate.<sup>80</sup> Before this discovery, skeptics doubted the existence of Pontius Pilate and his role in the Roman Empire. However, archaeological evidence refined our understanding of historical figures and events.

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<sup>78</sup> T. Michael Kennedy, "Caesarea," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), Logos Bible Software.

<sup>79</sup> Derek Brown, "Tacitus," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), Logos Bible Software.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

### The Central Mountain Range

The Central Mountain Range of the land of Israel is between the coastal plain and the Shephelah. Initially adorned with lush forests, the highlands underwent deforestation as settlements expanded, consequently leading to soil erosion.<sup>81</sup> This expansive region is subdivided into Galilee, Mount Ephraim, the mountains of Judah, and the mountains of the Negeb. Galilee, the northernmost and highest region, is divided into Upper Galilee and Lower Galilee. While Upper Galilee boasts a mountain plateau with sparse habitation, Lower Galilee offers a more level terrain.

Mount Ephraim, situated at the heart of the Central Mountain Range, plays a pivotal role in the settlement of the people. Characterized by distinct differences between Ephraim and Manasseh, the southern part is higher, fertile, and well-forested, featuring significant cities like Bethel and Shiloh. In contrast, the northern part is lower and less fertile but well-connected, hosting cities such as Shechem, Tappuah, and Samaria.<sup>82</sup>

The Judean Hill Country is a Cenomanian limestone plateau with fertile soil conducive to fruit trees, vines, and plants. This region boasts main cities like Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Hebron. To the east of these cities lies the Judean Desert with the oasis of En-Gedi. Continuing along the central mountain range towards the south, the Eastern Negeb exhibits a semi-arid climate approximately fifteen miles south of Hebron. This region, covered with loess, becomes suitable for agriculture and pasturage.<sup>83</sup> Cities like Arad and Hormah mark the landscape, while further south, the region transforms into

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<sup>81</sup> Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible*, 27.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 31

sparsely settled areas, eventually merging into the expansive desert wilderness.<sup>84</sup> The Wilderness of Zin, situated south of the Negeb, is a barren and wild desert region. This region was crucial in guarding roads and was a temporary settlement area in ancient times.<sup>85</sup>

*Old Testament Archaeological Finding: Mt. Ebal*

In March 2022, a research team from the Associates for Biblical Research (ABR) claimed to have discovered a lead tablet from Mt. Ebal in the West Bank, dating back to the end of the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1200 BC). The tablet, believed to be the oldest extant Hebrew inscription, is said to contain a curse invoking the deity Yahweh. Scott Stripling et al. posits that the tablet was found at the discarded pile from the site first excavated by archaeologist Adam Zertal in the 1980s, who identified it as the location of Joshua's altar. The lead tablet, measuring less than one square inch, was recovered in 2019 and is readable only through advanced digital scanning by the Czech Academy of Sciences.<sup>86</sup>

According to the ABR team, the inscription, consisting of forty letters in four lines of text, is a curse related to the covenant renewal ceremony on Mt. Ebal described in Deuteronomy 27:15-45 and Joshua 8:34: "You are cursed by the god *yhw*, cursed. You will die, cursed—cursed, you will surely die, Cursed you are by *yhw*—cursed."<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Scott Stripling, Gershon Galil, Ivana Kumpova et al., "'You are Cursed by the God YHW:' An Early Hebrew Inscription from Mt. Ebal," *Heritage Science* 11, no. 105 (2023): 1-3.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 5-7.

Despite these claims, some scholars disagreed, citing the lack of substantial written or visual documentation to support the team's reading. Christopher Rollston, an epigrapher from George Washington University, anticipates vigorous challenges to the readings once other scholars in the field of epigraphy can examine the image.<sup>88</sup> Aren Maeir disputes the claims made by Scott Stripling after the publication of the peer-reviewed articles and suggests that the stone tablet was a fishing weight.<sup>89</sup> Significant discoveries such as the Mt. Ebal curse tablet will continue to be disputed until further examination or more discoveries of new evidence are made.

#### *New Testament Archaeological Finding: Pool of Siloam*

When healing the man born blind, Jesus told him to wash in the Pool of Siloam as part of regaining his sight (John 9:7). The Gihon Spring channels its waters into the man-made Siloam Pool through Hezekiah's Tunnel.<sup>90</sup> King Hezekiah built this tunnel to protect Jerusalem from the Assyrian siege (2 Kgs 20:20, Isa 22:9).

While excavating in the City of David, archaeologists Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron's chance discovery of stone steps led to the exposure of a pool which was later identified as the Pool of Siloam.<sup>91</sup> Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron observe, "It seems therefore that Siloam in the Early Roman period continued to be the name of the entire

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<sup>88</sup> Biblical Archaeology Society, "Controversial Curse: Mt. Ebal Tablet Published," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 49, no. 3 (2023): 14.

<sup>89</sup> Aren Maeir, "The So-Called Mount Ebal Curse Tablet: A Critical Response," *Israel Exploration Journal* 73, no. 2 (2023): 132, 140.

<sup>90</sup> John D. Barry et al., eds., "Siloam, Pool of," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), Logos Bible Software.

<sup>91</sup> Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron, *Excavations in the City of David, Jerusalem (1995-2010)*, Ancient Jerusalem Publications (AJP) Series (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2021), 67.

water system, which included the spring, the ancient Siloam Tunnel, and the pool to which the tunnel channeled the water.”<sup>92</sup> The discovery of the pool holds great significance for Christians and marks a pivotal moment in biblical archaeology.

### The Jordan Rift

The extensive and profound depression, the Jordan Rift Valley, is an extensive depression traversed by the Jordan River. The rift is a geographical demarcation, sharply dividing mountainous terrains and giving rise to distinct climates. The Jordan Rift is further delineated into five key areas.

The Huleh Valley, situated in the north and enclosed by the Litani River and Mount Hermon, emerges as a fertile and well-watered expanse reminiscent of biblical Mizpeh. This region contains the renowned Tell Dan with its royal sanctuary. Moving southward, the section covering the area below Lake Huleh is the Sea of Galilee, famous for its sudden storms, which blow down from the surrounding mountains. The Jordan Valley, a roughly seventy-mile stretch between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, follows the river’s course and vegetation. The region experiences water scarcity and occasional flooding.

The Dead Sea, with its distinctive characteristics such as high salt content and lack of marine life, is situated around the Lisan peninsula. To the west of the sea lies the En Gedi oasis, and seven miles northwest of the Dead Sea is Jericho, the most ancient city of Israel. The Arabah region continues southward as an extension of the Jordan rift between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Elath (or Eilat). Aharoni maintains that besides

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 14.

copper mining, the strategic trade road passed through Arabah to Elath, and the Red Sea port was for profitable trade with South Arabia and the East African coast. Control over Elath remains economically critical (1 Kg 9:26).<sup>93</sup> The geography of this region illumines the politics of the Old Testament.

*Old Testament Archaeological Finding: Tel Dan Stele*

The Tel Dan Stele, discovered in 1993 at Tel Dan in northern Israel by Avraham Biran, is a broken and fragmentary inscription from the ninth century BC. It commemorates an Aramean king's victory over the "king of Israel" and the "king of the House of David." The inscription, written in early Aramaic characters, claims divine guidance in defeating Israelite and Judahite forces.<sup>94</sup> Although the specific kings involved are not preserved, some scholars believe it refers to a campaign by Hazael of Damascus against Joram of Israel and Ahaziah of Judah (2 Kgs 8:28-29).<sup>95</sup>

What excited scholars and the public was the unprecedented reference to the "House of David." The inscription provided historical evidence that King David was a genuine figure, countering skeptics who dismissed his story as sensationalism. The Tel Dan Stele, set up by an enemy more than a century after David's death, acknowledged David as the founder of the Kingdom of Judah. While the Tel Dan Stele confirmed David's historicity, debates persist among scholars regarding the nature and extent of his

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<sup>93</sup> Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible*, 36, 40.

<sup>94</sup> Avraham Biran, "'David' Found at Dan," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 20, no. 2 (1994): 26, 28, 30-31, 33, 35-36, 39.

<sup>95</sup> Avraham Biran and Joseph Naveh, "An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan," *Israel Exploration Journal* 43, no. 2-3 (1993): 98.

rule. Discussions at the intersection of archaeology, history, and the Bible continue to be fueled by questions about whether David was the great king of biblical lore or merely a ruler of a tribal chiefdom. Some minimalists even alleged that Biran forged the inscription.<sup>96</sup> Nevertheless, the Tel Dan Stele stands as a crucial piece of evidence in the ongoing exploration of ancient Israel's history.

*New Testament Archaeological Finding: Peter's House in Capernaum*

Much of Jesus's Galilean ministry takes place in Capernaum, situated on the Sea of Galilee (Matt 4:13; Mk 1:16-28; Luke 4:16-37; John 6:22-59). Capernaum is also the location of Peter's House where Jesus likely stayed when he moved from Nazareth (Matt 8:14-16, Mark 2:1).<sup>97</sup> While the ancient synagogue in the village was initially thought to be the site of Jesus's earliest teachings, the actual location of Peter's residence remained uncertain.

In 1968 while excavating the Capernaum synagogue, Franciscan fathers, Virgilio Corbo and Stanislao Loffreda, uncovered what they believe to be the house of Peter, eighty-four feet south of the synagogue.<sup>98</sup> James Strange and Hershel Shanks postulate that excavators found evidence that the house had been converted in the middle of the first century into a rudimentary church with over a hundred graffiti containing Christian sentiments written in Greek, Syriac, or Hebrew. The church persisted for over 300 years before being replaced by an octagonal martyrium church in the fifth century. Although

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<sup>96</sup> Ziony Zevit, "Three Debates about Bible and Archaeology," *Biblica* 83, no. 1 (2002): 16.

<sup>97</sup> John McRay, *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 16.

<sup>98</sup> James F. Strange and Hershel Shanks, "Has the House Where Jesus Stayed in Capernaum Been Found?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 8, no. 6 (1982): 26–37.

there is no definitive proof that the original house belonged to Peter, the layers of circumstantial evidence strongly suggest its significance to early Christians, associating it with Jesus and His disciple Peter.<sup>99</sup> The transformation of a standard first-century house into a center of Christian worship and identity for centuries indicates its profound historical and religious importance.

### The Transjordanian Highlands

The Transjordanian Highlands form a distinctive mountain constructed from Cenomanian and Senonian limestone with deep layers of durable Nubian sandstone. The region faces challenging weather conditions, including siroccos and icy desert winds, impacting agriculture and steering the region toward a predominantly pastoral lifestyle.

Nomadic groups and weak central authority contributed to prolonged intervals between periods of permanent occupation in Transjordan. Most rainfall in the region flows towards the Jordan Rift, and the Yarmuk, Jabbok, Arnon, and Zered rivers play pivotal roles, forming natural divisions and occasionally serving as political boundaries.<sup>100</sup> Important cities include Gilead, Bashan, Edrei, and Ashtaroth. Mount Hauran, “probably the biblical Mount Bashan,” acts as a protective barrier against the encroaching desert, adding to the region’s significance.<sup>101</sup>

Aharoni maintains, “Gilead, situated in a higher mountain region, encompasses forested areas, with Rabbath-Ammon (‘Amman) serving as a prominent city and the

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible*, 37.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 38.



“capital of the small Ammonite kingdom.”<sup>102</sup> Concerning the importance of Gilead in Transjordan, Aharoni maintains, “Gilead, its importance and wealth was significant for its unrivalled domination of the King’s Highway.”<sup>103</sup> As a result of Gilead’s isolated and strategic location, the nation became a political haven for various Israelite leaders in times of crisis.<sup>104</sup>

*Old Testament Archaeological Finding: Rabbath-Ammon Water Supply (King’s Pool?)*

In the early tenth century BC, Israel went to war with the Ammonites after King Hanun humiliated the Israelite envoys. The biblical account details the conflict between the Ammonites and King David of Israel. David’s general, Joab, weakened the Ammonites by attacking Rabbath, taking its water supply, and allowing the Israelites to take over the town (2 Sam 12:27).

In 1969, subsequent archaeological excavations on the Citadel in Amman revealed structures dating to the tenth or ninth century BC. Notably, a water installation on the upper terrace and sections of a fortification wall along the lower terrace’s southern edge suggest extensive defensive measures. The finds indicate a possible water system, called the “King’s Pool,” captured by Joab. This reservoir, located outside the city walls, played a crucial role in supplying drinking water to Rabbath Ammon, highlighting the integration of biblical accounts with archaeological evidence.

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

Timothy Harrison asserts that Solomon's marriage alliance with an Ammonite princess, Na'amah, who gave birth to Rehoboam, Solomon's successor, further connects biblical narratives with the region's historical and archaeological context.<sup>105</sup> Solomon constructs a sanctuary dedicated to the Ammonite god Milcom (1 Kgs 11:5-7). The Citadel's excavators also unearthed a mid-ninth-century BC Ammonite inscription on a small stone slab, commemorating the construction of a public building, possibly a temple dedicated to the god Milcom.<sup>106</sup> These archaeological insights complement the biblical narrative, shedding light on Rabbath Ammon's evolving nature during this historical period.

*New Testament Archaeological Finding:  
Healing of the Demoniacs*

Historically less explored by Christian pilgrims, the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee has gained archaeological significance due to excavations by the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums. Contrary to earlier beliefs, discoveries on the eastern shore have revealed its importance in early Christian pilgrimages, particularly associated with the "swine miracle" site described in the Synoptic Gospels. After calming a storm on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus encounters a demoniac on the eastern shore and casts his demons into a herd of swine, causing them to drown. Vassilios Tzaferis posits, "The exact location of this miracle, the Land of Gadarenes, Gergesenes, Gerasenes, or

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<sup>105</sup> Timothy P. Harrison, "Rabbath of the Ammonites," *Archaeology Odyssey* 5, no. 2 (2002): 13-19.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

Gergustenes (Matt 8:28; Mark 5:1, Luke 8:26, 37), was fixed by early Christian fathers at the mouth of Wadi Samak, known as the Valley of Kursi.”<sup>107</sup>

This chosen site, opposite Capernaum, remains unexcavated but is associated with an ancient settlement known as Tell el-Kursi. The site’s discovery, linked to the “swine miracle,” occurred accidentally during road construction to the Golan Heights in 1970.<sup>108</sup> Subsequent excavations revealed a large walled settlement of religious character, likely a monastery with a well-built basilica.<sup>109</sup> Tzaferis maintains that “halfway up the steep slope was a separate tower-like structure ... we discovered that this was the very site of the miracle, as fixed by Christians in the mid-third century.”<sup>110</sup> These archaeological finds, facilitated by chance discovery and subsequent systematic excavation, shed light on the religious significance of the eastern shore in the context of early Christian narratives and pilgrimage.

### Conclusion

The past two centuries have witnessed an extraordinary surge in archaeological finds in Israel. Advancements in archaeological methods and technologies have played a pivotal role in the surge of discoveries that range from monumental structures like the ancient city of Jericho to everyday artifacts, such as pottery, tools, and religious objects.

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<sup>107</sup> Vassilios Tzaferis, “A Pilgrimage to the Site of the Swine Miracle,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 15, no. 2 (1989): 45-49, 51.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

Archaeology has provided believers with a comprehensive view of the region's rich and complex history.

For exegetes and theologians, archaeology remains a powerful tool. It has assisted in exegesis by establishing context, chronology, grammar, and syntax. For theology, archaeology validates the historical nature of the biblical text, encourages believers in their faith, and convinces some skeptics of the Scriptures' trustworthiness.

However, inappropriately applied archaeology can lead to minimalist interpretations of the text that does not help to bolster the faith. Proper archaeological integration in exegetical and theological methods remains essential. In the hands of the wrong person—one without adequate knowledge of how archaeology operates, what it is designed to accomplish, what it cannot accomplish, and how the information it contains contributes to interpretation—the biblical text may be misinterpreted and misleading to the readers. Therefore, the exegete and theologian must develop an adequate methodology that skillfully applies and properly limits the use of archaeology in the practice of interpretation and application.

While archaeology does not prove divine inspiration, it lends an additional voice to the Bible's places, events, and people and provides historical credibility to the Scriptures. The demonstrable link between the biblical narrative and archaeological finds distinguishes Scriptures from myths or legends. For the believer, archaeological evidence should serve as a compelling testament to the historical authenticity of the Word of God, reinforcing its distinctness from mythical or legendary narratives and offering believers a tangible connection to the reality of the biblical world.

## CHAPTER 4: DESCRIPTION OF FIELD PROJECT

### **Introduction**

Asia Theological Center (ATC) exists to equip students who aim to be effective ministers of the Gospel. Upon Dr. Cheryl Taylor's (ATC Vice-President for Academic) advice, teaching the course "Introduction to Biblical Archaeology" at ATC aligns with the school's objective. Through this course, learners with varying levels of understanding in biblical archaeology appreciate the world of the Bible and how the Scriptures confirm the historicity of the biblical narratives, develop critical thinking skills as they analyze the artifacts, and learn how biblical archaeology complements theology and historical geography and elevates their study of God's Word and providing literary resources for their ministry.

### **Preparation of the Project**

#### **A Personal Journey**

In 1992, the late Rev. Fred Seaward organized a tour of Israel and Jordan. This journey transformed my perspective of the Bible. Before the trip, I perceived the Bible as a collection of ancient stories to discourage disobedience to God. However, seeing firsthand how the ruins and artifacts connected with the Scriptures turned the Bible from a mere religious storytelling into the Word of God seen through His divine activities as revealed in human history.

The expedition to Israel and Jordan brought the Bible to life. Fascinated by the monumental rock carvings of Petra and the histories of the places recounted by the tour

guides, the trip ignited my passion for biblical history and archaeology. I learned that every archaeological find, however insignificant, has the potential to clarify the Scriptures. After my return from that trip, my heightened curiosity motivated me to read the Bible from cover to cover, a feat I had never undertaken before.

Since then, whenever I read the Bible, I often research whether certain biblical events or people are supported by archaeological evidence. This personal journey of enjoying God's Word through the lens of archaeology became the foundation for the biblical archaeology course I developed. I hope to impart the same joy to the students when they read the Scriptures, not as mere stories but as the tangible works of God through human history.

#### Research and Survey Design

Developing a biblical archaeology course content that was academic yet accessible to students with minimal biblical archaeological knowledge required various approaches to the research. The first preparation involved taking the elective, "PTH 939: DR: Bible Lands Study Seminar Fall 2022,"<sup>1</sup> which included participation in Dr. Wave Nunnally's *Bible Unplugged* tour of the Holy Land in November 2022. The elective involved an in-depth study of the geography of the Land of Israel, which remains essential to the study of biblical archaeology as geography plays a crucial role in understanding the historical and cultural contexts of biblical events.

Visiting the biblical sites further deepened my appreciation for the historicity of the Scriptures. Dr. Nunnally's on-site knowledgeable lectures skillfully connected the

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<sup>1</sup> See the syllabus in Appendix A, "PTH 939 DR Bible Lands Study Seminar\_Nunnally\_FA22."

archaeological evidence and geographical locations to the biblical narratives, allowing the participants to imagine how the biblical events unfolded and “giving flesh to the bones” of the biblical stories.

After the trip, I attended Dr Mark Jenkins’ class on the Archaeology of Ancient Israel to further enhance my understanding of biblical archaeology.<sup>2</sup> This course provided a comprehensive overview of the key archaeological discoveries in Israel and their significance for understanding the Old and New Testaments. Dr. Jenkins’ teaching emphasized the critical relationship between archaeological evidence and the interpretation of biblical texts, exploring how material culture such as pottery, inscriptions, and ruins can illuminate or challenge our understanding of Scripture due to the interpretation of the archaeological finds.

Dr. Jenkins’ lessons also underscored the importance of archaeological methodology, which became the foundation of the course I developed. He taught students to evaluate finds in a balanced manner.

In addition to attending Dr. Jenkins’ class, I watched his video lectures on “Archaeology and the New Testament” multiple times through the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary (AGTS) sandbox.<sup>3</sup> These videos provided valuable insights into New Testament archaeology and highlighted vital discoveries contributing to believers’ understanding of Jesus’s life and the early Christian movement. They were beneficial in

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<sup>2</sup> See the syllabus in Appendix B, “BIB 640 Archaeology of Ancient Israel\_Spring 2024.”

<sup>3</sup> See the syllabus in Appendix C, “BNT 640 Archaeology and the New Testament.” A “sandbox” is a reserved practice area of an online Learning Management System (LMS).

developing the New Testament section of my course, as they provided a wealth of examples of how archaeology can enrich our understanding of the Gospels.

Initially, I had planned to join Dr. Jenkins on an archaeological dig at Shiloh in the Spring of 2024, which would have provided firsthand experience of field archaeology. Unfortunately, due to the current conflict in Israel, this opportunity did not materialize. Instead, in May 2024, I traveled to London and spent three days at the British Museum, exploring the museum's biblical archaeological artifacts related to the Assyrian, Babylonian, Levantine, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman empires.<sup>4</sup>

Before the visit, I researched the critical biblical archaeological artifacts held at the British Museum and detailed descriptions about each artifact and how they were discovered. Prior investigations of these artifacts held at the British Museum enabled me to prioritize the exhibits that would be most relevant to my course and save time spent on unrelated displays.

During my visit, I also took advantage of the museum's free docent tours, which furnished additional context and background on the artifacts. Moreover, I joined a paid tour organized by Christian Heritage London, where the guide offered a biblical archaeological perspective on critical exhibits.<sup>5</sup> This tour deepened my appreciation for how ancient artifacts can bring to life the cultural and historical contexts of the Bible. Although a few key exhibits were closed for cleaning during my visit, seeing these other

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<sup>4</sup> "Museum Map," British Museum, accessed October 11, 2024, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/visit/museum-map>.

<sup>5</sup> "Walks & Tours," Christian Heritage London, accessed October 11, 2024, <https://christianheritagelondon.org/walks>.



artifacts firsthand makes me appreciate the grueling work of archaeologists who have unearthed these ancient treasures.

In preparation for the course, I also dedicated significant time to self-directed study, such as watching numerous YouTube videos on biblical archaeology and reading scholarly journals, articles, and books. These resources helped me to select engaging and informative materials for the course. The research process while preparing the biblical-theological and general literature review chapters provided a sound theological basis and foundation for the course.

My main challenge was curating the course content to focus on the most significant archaeological finds that would capture students' interest and provide the most impactful insights into the Bible. To do so required keeping up to date on the current controversies and debates within biblical archaeology. From mid-May to mid-July 2024, I spent two months away from home in Amherst, Massachusetts, to focus on the course's research, plan the curriculum, and select the most exciting and important archaeological discoveries for the course.

Conversations with church members from different walks of life and potential students helped me identify which topics and discoveries piqued people's curiosity about the Bible. These insights were invaluable in developing the course content, as they helped me narrow the vast amount of research into a meaningful curriculum that would engage students.

Other preparation efforts included promoting the course through ATC and my local church with the published prospectus<sup>6</sup> and issued personal invitations to potential participants. I also crafted the course syllabus,<sup>7</sup> which outlined the course objectives, required readings, and schedule of teaching sessions. In addition, I developed pre-course assessments<sup>8</sup> to gauge students' prior knowledge of biblical archaeology, as well as post-course assessments<sup>9</sup> and a course evaluation to measure the effectiveness of the course. These assessments were designed to determine if the students left the course with a better understanding of biblical archaeology.

The research and preparation for the course on biblical archaeology were intensive but rewarding. Through these efforts, I created a course that offered the students a meaningful and transformative exploration of the intersection between archaeology as a science and biblical studies.

### Writing and Organizing the Curriculum

To make biblical archaeology accessible to the students, I designed the “Introduction to Biblical Archaeology” course to take place over two Saturdays, ensuring that students could engage with the material with minimal disruption to their commitments. The sessions were held on September 28 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and October 5 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., each lasting six hours with short breaks in between

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix D, “Prospectus for Introduction to Biblical Archaeology.”

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix E, “BI 133 Syllabus\_Intro to Biblical Archaeology\_3T2024.”

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix F, “Pre-Course Assessment Questions.”

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix G, “Post-Course Assessment Questions and Course Evaluation.”

totally one hour of breaks. This structure allowed for in-depth exploration of the content within a limited timeframe.

### Structure of Sessions and Content Overview

The design of the first session provided a comprehensive introduction to biblical archaeology, focusing on the archaeological discoveries' relationships to biblical narratives. The teaching strategy incorporated PowerPoint slides,<sup>10</sup> handouts for student notes (both PDF and hard copies) for Day One<sup>11</sup> and Day Two,<sup>12</sup> and Supplemental Instructor's Guides<sup>13</sup> to facilitate learning and interaction. This approach ensured that students engaged in audio-visual senses and writing notes to interact with the material effectively.

The course comprises four main parts, each building on the previous one to provide an organized and meaningful learning experience.

#### *Part One - Birth, Goals, and Limitations of Biblical Archaeology*

The first part of the course introduced students to the birth, goals, and limitations of biblical archaeology as a discipline. The goal was to demonstrate biblical archaeology as a scientific discipline with rigorous methods and interpretive challenges, not simply a tool for defending the faith. This section also delved into the critical debates about

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix H, "Intro to Biblical Archaeology Slides for Lesson 1 and 2."

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix I, "Sample of Student Handouts\_Sep 28, 2024."

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix J, "Sample of Student Handouts\_Oct 5, 2024."

<sup>13</sup> See Appendix K, "Supplemental Instructor's Guide."

interpreting the artifacts within archaeology, particularly the minimalist-maximalist debate.

Students learned how to bridge the science of archaeology with the theological study of the Bible, underscoring the challenges that archaeology may bring to traditional biblical interpretations. This segment emphasized critical thinking, encouraging students to recognize the potential biases that can arise in religious and scientific interpretations which include the students' partiality.

### *Part Two - Foundation of Biblical Archaeology*

The second part of the course provided an overview of the activities involved in biblical archaeology, such as excavation techniques, dating methods, and deciphering ancient scripts, an overview of the different archaeological periods, beginning with the Bronze Age and ending with the Roman-Byzantine period. The chronological framework helped students understand how different periods of history relate to specific biblical events and characters.

This session included the geography of Israel, which helped students visualize the biblical landscape and comprehend how geographical features influenced the region's historical and cultural development.

### *Part Three - Old Testament Archaeological Discoveries*

Part three of the lesson was divided into two sections and covered some of the most significant and controversial archaeological discoveries related to the Bible. Section A explored the archaeological discoveries related to the books of Genesis and Exodus. One fascinating example discussed was Dr. Farouk El Baz's discovery of the "Kuwait

River,” which some scholars suggest could be linked to the Garden of Eden described in Genesis.

This section also tackled some of the main controversies in biblical archaeology, including the ongoing debates surrounding the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Exodus, and Abraham’s historicity. Students were encouraged to consider different scholarly viewpoints and examine the evidence for these vital biblical events. The goal was not to provide definitive answers but to help students develop a critical understanding of how archaeological evidence can support and complicate biblical narratives.

Section B continued with archaeological evidence for key biblical cities and figures, including Shechem, Jericho, Gezer, and Dan, as well as the rise of Israel as a nation. The section also introduced discoveries related to the prophet Jeremiah’s enemies, King Hezekiah’s tunnel, and the existence of Belshazzar, whose reign was questioned by critics until corroborated by the Nabonidus cylinder. Additionally, the course covered significant archaeological findings such as Cyrus’ decree for the return of the exiles and how the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls provided vital insight into the accuracy of the transmission of biblical texts.

#### *Part Four - New Testament Archaeological Discoveries*

The final part of the course focused on the archaeology of the New Testament, particularly the life of Jesus Christ. This section covered King Herod’s major building projects, such as the construction of the Second Temple, Caesarea Maritima, and the fortress at Masada, essential to understanding the history of Judaism and early Christianity.

Students also explored archaeological evidence from biblical sites such as Bethlehem, Capernaum, and Jerusalem relating to Jesus's birth, ministry, death, and resurrection. They also examined artifacts such as the Pilate Inscription Stone, which confirms the existence of Pontius Pilate, who sentenced Jesus to crucifixion. The course also examined a first-century fishing vessel typical of the one sailed by Jesus's disciples.

#### Engaging Students - Quizzes, Map Tests, and Presentations

To ensure active student engagement, I employed a variety of approaches. Each lecture included interactive elements such as fun quizzes to make learning more dynamic and less formal, a map test<sup>14</sup> that helped students familiarize themselves with the geography of the biblical world, reinforcing the importance of location in understanding archaeological and biblical contexts, and a challenge to decipher some names written in hieroglyphics to give the students a glimpse of how the scholars decipher the ancient near eastern scripts.

One engaging aspect of the course was Lydia's student research presentation on the armor of a Roman soldier, illuminating the passage from Ephesians 6:10-18. Such exercises helped students develop their presentation skills and aided in student-centered learning as they delved into the historical and cultural background of the Bible.

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<sup>14</sup> See Appendix L, "Map of Israel."

### Preparing Pre-Course and Post-Course Assessment Questions

I drew up a pre-course assessment<sup>15</sup> which the students took at the beginning of the first lesson and a post-course assessment,<sup>16</sup> which they took at the end of the lesson based on materials that I planned to teach during the course. This second document also included a course evaluation.

### **Execution of the Project**

On April 16, 2024, I finalized the timing for the “Introduction to Biblical Archaeology” course with Kathleen, ATC’s competent registrar. Finalizing the timing was crucial in moving the course from the planning phase into execution. With the logistics of the course dates settled, the focus shifted to promoting the class and ensuring adequate student enrollment.

By May 25, 2024, I completed the promotional write-up for the course. The aim was to craft an engaging and informative description of the class for inclusion in the ATC prospectus,<sup>17</sup> which Jenny uploaded to the ATC website by June 1, 2024. The online prospectus and registration process remained crucial in attracting potential students to the course. In the meantime, I invited members of my church to sign up for the class to ensure a sufficient number of participants.

Over the following months, I maintained contact with potential students and gave snippets of what I would teach to generate interest and excitement. ATC charged a fee of

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<sup>15</sup> See Appendix F, “Pre-Course Assessment Questions.”

<sup>16</sup> See Appendix G, “Post-Course Assessment Questions and Course Evaluation.”

<sup>17</sup> See Appendix D, “Prospectus for Introduction to Biblical Archaeology.”

ten Singapore dollars for registration and seventy Singapore dollars for the course.

Eventually, seventeen people signed up, representing a healthy enrollment, but two had to withdraw due to other commitments and one could not complete the course.

By September 1, 2024, I finalized the syllabus.<sup>18</sup> ATC's academic coordinator, Jenny, emailed the syllabus to the students on September 7, 2024. This early distribution gave students ample time to prepare for the course, review the topics to be covered, and acquire any necessary reading materials.

In addition to preparing the syllabus, I worked on refining the PowerPoint slides for my presentations. However, my slides still needed more visual appeal, so I enlisted the help of a friend to make them more attractive so they would capture the students' attention and enhance the learning experience.

On September 14, 2024, I thoroughly surveyed the classroom where I would instruct the course. This visit was essential for testing the equipment, particularly the compatibility of my laptop with the classroom projector. Ensuring that the technical aspects were in order beforehand minimized the risk of disruptions during the lessons. I also sat in various corners of the room to ensure the text on the PowerPoint slides was visible from every seat, ensuring that all students would have a clear view of the content wherever they were seated.

In addition to the classroom preparations, I arranged for the students' first-day breakfast. Recognizing the importance of building rapport among the students early on, I booked tables at a local Indian restaurant just a hundred meters from ATC. This

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<sup>18</sup> See Appendix E, "BI 133 Syllabus\_Intro to Biblical Archaeology\_3T2024."



communal breakfast was designed to create an informal and friendly environment where students could get to know each other before the start of the class. Building relationships from the beginning of the class would translate into more interactive participation of the students.

In the days before the first lesson, I collaborated with Jenny to print out all course materials, including student handouts and notes. I ensured proper printing and organization of the handouts for distribution on the first day of class. Although minor, such attention to detail helped minimize disruption during the class and ensured that students would have all the necessary resources.

On the eve of the first lesson, I created a WhatsApp group chat to facilitate student communication regarding any readings, coursework, or logistics related to the sessions. On the morning of the first lesson, I arrived at the classroom thirty minutes early to make final preparations. I double-checked the room and equipment setup, ensuring everything was for a smooth start. As the students arrived, Dr. Susan Comiskey (Dean of students) began with an opening prayer.

We engaged in a brief introductory activity to break the ice and create a comfortable atmosphere. Each student took turns sharing “one thing about themselves that most people did not know.” This activity lightened the atmosphere and helped the students feel more at ease with one another and with me as their instructor.

As I began teaching, I was fortunate to have the support of Amelia, the ATC librarian, and Peter, ATC’s office assistant. They alternated between video recording the lesson and taking photographs.

At the start of the first lesson, I distributed the pre-course assessments to gauge the students' baseline knowledge of biblical archaeology. Some students appeared apprehensive about the assessments, so I took a moment to reassure them that these initial tests would not impact their grades.

At 10:00 a.m., we took a break for our scheduled breakfast at the local Indian restaurant where I had made reservations the week before. Sharing a meal outside the classroom allowed the students to continue building relationships in a relaxed and informal setting. The sense of community that began to develop over breakfast translated into more active participation in class once we returned.

The second session took place a week later, maintaining the same engaging and interactive atmosphere. On this final day, I distributed the post-course assessment questions to evaluate the student's progress and understanding of the material. Unlike the pre-course assessments, the post-course assessment also served as a test and contributed not only to my evaluation of their progress but also to their overall grade for the course. The course evaluation distributed at the end of the class also provided valuable feedback on the effectiveness of the course.

## **Results of the Project**

### **Quantitative Results**

To evaluate the effectiveness of the "Introduction to Biblical Archaeology" course, I compared responses from these pre- and post-course assessments. Fourteen participants completed both assessments, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of learning outcomes. Results from the assessments showed clear evidence that the course significantly impacted the participants' understanding of biblical archaeology. The pre-

course assessments revealed a mean score of 44 percent, indicating that many students had limited or partial knowledge of the subject at the beginning of the course. The range of pre-course assessment scores, from 3 percent to 75 percent, reflected the participants' varying levels of familiarity with biblical archaeology.

After completing the course, the post-course assessments markedly improved all students' comprehension, with a mean score of 92 percent. This post-course score represented a 48 percent increase in the overall average score, a significant improvement in understanding. The post-course assessment scores ranged from 83 percent to 100 percent, demonstrating that every student made substantial progress. The median increase in the range of scores was 48 percent, further underscoring the effectiveness of the course in enhancing students' knowledge. See Figure 2 below:

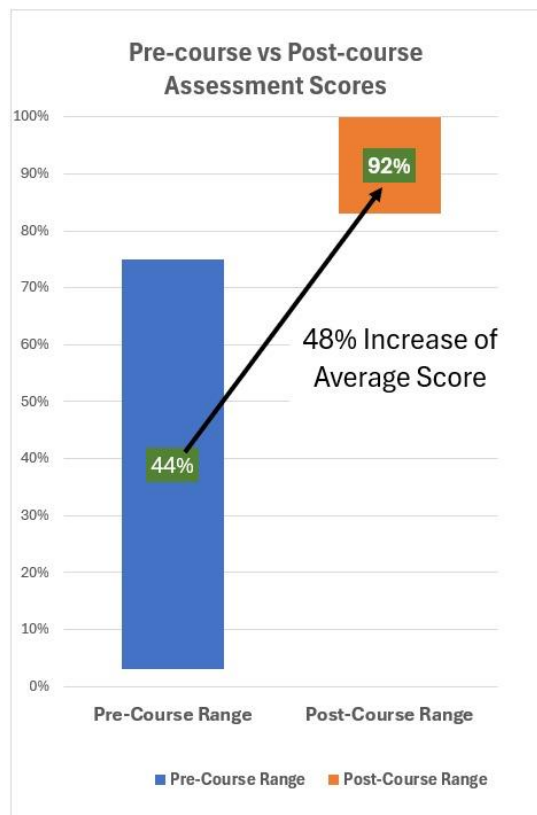


Figure 2. Comparison of Range and Median Score from Pre-Course and Post-Course Assessments

On an individual level, the improvements varied, with the lowest increase being 20 percent and the highest reaching 97 percent. Students who had scored higher on the pre-course assessments typically showed smaller percentage improvements, which is expected since they already had a relatively strong understanding of the subject. Nevertheless, even these participants demonstrated growth in their knowledge. The more significant improvements were seen in students who had entered the course with little or no prior knowledge of biblical archaeology, reflecting a significant impact on the beginners' understanding of biblical archaeology. Figure 3 below depicts the course effectiveness analysis.

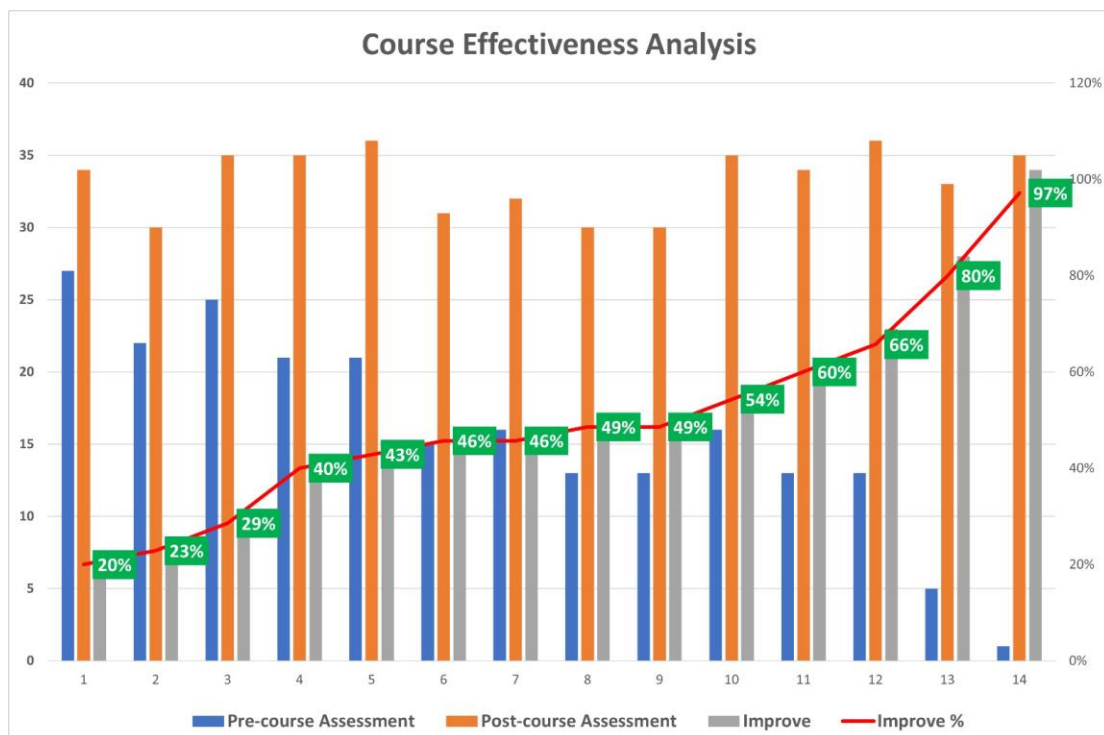


Figure 3. Measurement of Individual Student's Increase in Understanding from Pre-Course and Post-Course Assessments

These results conclusively demonstrate that substantial learning occurred as a result of participating in the course. The shift from a 44 percent pre-course average to a

92 percent post-course average highlights the effectiveness of the course structure, content, and teaching methods. The broad range of improvement across individual students also suggests that the course was accessible and beneficial to participants with varying levels of prior knowledge.

### Qualitative Results

The post-course assessments included several qualitative questions to evaluate the course's impact on students' spiritual lives, particularly their desire to read the Bible more attentively and their faith in the authenticity of God's Word. These questions offered qualitative insights into the course's effectiveness beyond academic learning, focusing on its ability to inspire greater engagement with Scripture.

Below is a summary of the qualitative test results, which reflect the spiritual impact of the course on the students:

Table 2. Qualitative Test of Spiritual Impact of the Course by the Number of Participants

<i>Qualitative Questions</i>	<i>100 percent</i>	<i>75 percent</i>	<i>60 percent</i>
Which percentage best describes the extent to which this course has increased your desire to read the Old Testament?	7	7	
Which percentage best describes the extent to which this course has increased your desire to read the New Testament?	7	6	1
Which percentage best describes the extent to which you are likely to pay more attention to details in the biblical narrative since taking this course?	10	4	
Which percentage best describes the extent to which this course has increased your faith in the authenticity of God's Word?	13	1	

The results demonstrate that the course inspired students to engage with the Old and New Testaments. In particular, all the students reported an above-average desire to read both the Old and New Testaments with increased attentiveness to details in the biblical narrative. This suggests that the course successfully highlighted the connection

between archaeology and biblical history, which in turn prompted students to search the Scriptures carefully. Moreover, all the students reported that the course significantly strengthened their faith in the authenticity of God's Word, reflecting how proper integration of archaeology and Scripture deepens intellectual understanding and fosters a stronger sense of spiritual affirmation.

In addition to quantitative data, the assessments also gathered open-ended feedback from students on how the course influenced their perspective of the Bible. The qualitative answers provide further insight into the personal experiences of the participants. Below are some of the critical reflections shared by students:

Table 3. Participants' Reflection on How This Course Impacted Them

It has given me a better appreciation that the Bible stories and characters were real places and people with beliefs, practices, and cultures relevant to their times. In a way, seeing the Word of God in the proper context helps me understand it better. It makes me want to visit the ancient sites and museums to view the artifacts even more!
[I have] always been interested in biblical history and archaeology. This course has provided some guidance and perimeters for properly conducting a background study on the Scriptures and archaeological findings.
Knowing the locations of the places through the map test helps shed more light on my understanding of the bible reading.
This course has impacted me to a certain extent as I see the Old Testament stories in a different light and not as how I used to view them.
[This course] answered some Bible questions deepened [my] curiosity for the Word of God.
[The location of Joshua's command to the Israelites at Shechem (Josh 24:14-15) and Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at Sychar, near ancient Shechem (John 4:24) suggests a close association between the two events.] In-depth 'search' of the Bible. Eg: Shechem - what is the meaning and significance of this place mentioned in the Bible. Now, I have a better understanding of Shechem.
The Bible is true; [I feel that I] understand the Old Testament better.
There's so much to discover about the historicity of God's Word!
[This course gave me a d]eeper appreciation for history and archaeology
[I appreciated t]he reality and existence of people during the Old and New Testaments, the evidence left behind of their lives then, and the fact that they were real people.
[I liked t]he different artifacts of each of the critical events in the Bible (e.g., Hezekiah's tunnel, Exodus).
Biblical archaeolog[y] gave [me] insight [in]to biblical events and that the Bible is true.
[The course showed me the i]mportance of reading the Word (Bible) thoroughly, knowing the locations, history...

The qualitative feedback from the post-course assessments reveals that the "Introduction to Biblical Archaeology" course significantly impacted the students'

spiritual and intellectual development. Students left the course with a greater sense of curiosity about biblical history and a more thorough understanding of the cultural and historical context of the Bible, which deepened their faith. For many, this experience laid the groundwork for further exploration into biblical archaeology, offering a lasting impact on how they approach the study of God's Word.

### **The Project's Contribution to Ministry**

This project addresses a significant gap in the understanding of the historicity of biblical narratives and the cultural, geographical, and historical context of the Scriptures. A lack of knowledge in these areas has often led to misinterpretations of Scripture and contributed to doubt about the Bible's authenticity.

Exploring how the various archaeological discoveries connect the artifacts, inscriptions, and sites to the different cultures of Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) civilizations illuminates the historical, cultural, and religious context of the Bible and helps to develop students' critical thinking skills. Through the archaeological study process, students not only confirm the historical reliability of the Old and New Testaments but also appreciate the Bible not as just a religious text but one filled with actual historical events.

As seen in the feedback, the course on Biblical Archaeology deepened students' desire to read Scriptures, encouraging a more in-depth study of the Bible. Training in God's Word inherently fosters personal spiritual growth, deepens students' confidence in the Bible's historical reliability, and enhances their ability to communicate the Gospel more effectively. The study of biblical archaeology only enriches students' understanding of the Bible and helps them articulate their faith with greater confidence, grounded in

historical and archaeological evidence. Knowing that the same God who delivered His people in human history is the same God who works in the believers' lives augments one's spiritual relationship with Him, leading to personal spiritual growth.

Finally, offering a course on "Introduction to Biblical Archaeology" raises awareness of the intersection between archaeology and biblical studies in Singapore and the rest of Asia, where a gap exists. As teachings on biblical archaeology gain traction in Asia, this momentum can build a stronger generation of disciples, disciple-makers, and missionaries armed with knowledge to supplement their spiritual maturity.



## CHAPTER 5: PROJECT SUMMARY

### **Introduction**

This chapter comprehensively summarizes the training course, “Introduction to Biblical Archaeology.” This summary aims to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the project and identify key components that contributed to the success. The chapter also outlines specific recommendations based on student feedback, personal observations during the execution of the project, and informal conversations with the students and those involved in the execution. Finally, the chapter looks at how to improve the syllabus, training methods, and further studies to enhance the curriculum.

### **Evaluation of the Project**

#### Keys to Project Effectiveness

The keys to the project’s effectiveness include the collective effort of the ATC staff, the multifaceted approach to research and the extensive coverage of the materials narrowed to a focused curriculum; the quality of the presentation materials; the aptitude and attitude of the students; and personal passion for biblical archaeology. The sections below outline the details of each component that contributed to the project’s success.

#### *The ATC Staff*

It takes a village to manage a project smoothly. Indeed, one of the key factors contributing to the success of the project was the ATC staff, beginning with Dr. Cheryl Taylor. As Vice President of Academics, Dr. Taylor obtained approval from the

President, Jeremy Seaward, who gave me the platform to teach “Introduction to Biblical Archaeology” as a one-credit course at ATC. As this was my first time teaching at the Bible school, Dr. Susan Comiskey, Dean of Students at ATC, guided me on the inner workings of the school. She consistently checked in on the progress of my course development.

Kathleen Lee, the registrar, considered the time I would need to complete the D.Min. project and worked out the internal scheduling to establish the dates of the lectures. The confirmed dates accorded me sufficient time to prepare for the lessons and also for post-course reflection to complete the remaining chapters for this project.

The excellent logistical support from ATC administrative staff for IT, printing of the notes, balmy room temperature control, comfortable lighting, and even pre-ordering the breakfast for the students contributed to the smooth execution of the project. Their careful planning in managing the student registration process, pre-class communication, and attention to detail enabled me to focus on teaching and engaging with the students.

### *Research*

Biblical archaeology encompasses a wide area, and a targeted scope remains critical to the project’s success. Adopting a multifaceted approach to the research of biblical archaeology enabled me to deliver varied, deep, and accurate content systematically. The research began with the trip to Israel based on the elective, “Bible Lands Study Seminar” by Dr. Wave Nunnally. Subsequent to that, I took Dr. Mark Jenkins’ classes on biblical archaeology (both zoom as well as from AGTS’s Sandbox) to build up my biblical archaeological database. Continuous interaction with AGTS

professors not only gave me excellent insights into the world of biblical archaeology but also significantly increased my confidence in teaching this subject.

Personal experiences gained during my trips—to Israel and Jordan, where I visited biblical sites, and to the British Museum, where I immersed myself in Ancient Near Eastern, Greek, and Roman artifacts relevant to biblical archaeology—helped me present first-hand accounts that contributed to the authenticity of the lessons.

The research also included a self-directed study; reading varied scholarly journals, articles, and books; and watching hours of biblical archaeological related video content. The extensive exploration from different angles meant that I could answer participant questions, provide different perspectives on the subject, and generate greater interest in biblical archaeology that continued even after the course ended. The fact that I have never dug nor found any artifacts did not deter students from learning and sharing more about this subject, as seen in the results presented in chapter 4.

### *Presentation Materials*

The design of the slides was a key element contributing to the effectiveness of the course. Given my limited skills in media design, my friend Cheow Bee Bee's help in this area significantly improved the designs to capture audience attention. Visually appealing and organized PowerPoints complemented the story-telling to engage the students, minimize confusion, and improve student learning.

The presentations used consistent colors to emphasize and contrast critical points, animation, and flowcharts to direct the students' thoughts and provide teaching cues. The slides served as an instructional roadmap to help students digest small bites of information, each block building on the earlier block. The PowerPoints also included

various images and icons to represent complex ideas, making them more accessible for students to comprehend. Incorporating quizzes helped to break the monotony of the lessons.

The mix of activities (maps, fun quizzes, questions, video use, and teaching through story-telling) engaged the students, with some requesting a longer course in biblical archaeology.

### *Aptitude, Attitude, and Motivation of the Students*

The students' aptitude and attitude to education proved essential to the project's effectiveness. English remains the primary medium of communication and education in Singapore. Conducting the class in English posed minimal difficulty as students rapidly comprehended the classroom teachings and confidently asked questions if they needed clarification. The students also maintained an attitude of continuous learning (aligned with Singapore government's emphasis on educational and skill upgrade regardless of age), contributing to their keen attention during the lessons.

Student motivation to study biblical archaeology remains high. Eleven out of the fourteen students have served in the mission field for one to six years. One of the students is preparing to go to the mission field, another ministers to prisoners regularly, and another organizes evangelistic outreaches for her church. Most students understand the dynamics of preaching the gospel to strangers and would have encountered challenging questions about the Bible's historicity and authenticity.

Knowledge of biblical archaeology instilled confidence in the defense of the gospel and gave the students tools to answer complex questions during evangelism. The ability to spread the gospel effectively raised the students' keen interest in the course,

contributing to greater classroom dynamics and effectiveness. The students' collective interest, energy, and motivation added vibrancy to the class.

### *Personal Passion*

My passion for biblical archaeology served as another component contributing to the success of the course. Having taught apologetics and biblical studies at church, I realized that the narrow biblical narrative remains insufficient to answer members' questions. I often have to extend my research beyond the Scriptures to extrabiblical sources to appreciate the historical and cultural framework that informs the Scriptures.

The desire to accurately exegete God's Word, know the answers to some challenging passages in the Scriptures, and dispel doubt in the authenticity of the Bible when I share the gospel and to the believers who sat in my Bible classes on Sundays motivated me to delve deeply into biblical archaeology. When I witnessed the effectiveness of the cross-disciplinary intersection of biblical archaeology, historical geography, and Bible interpretation on the spiritual growth of the students, I decided that it was essential to develop content and promote education in biblical archaeology, a subject that Bible schools and churches in Singapore rarely offer.

### **Keys to Project Improvement**

Keys to improve the project include improving and lengthening course content, strengthening promotion of the course, and raising the quality of course delivery.

### *Improved and Lengthened Content*

To elevate the lessons, incorporating primary sources such as excavation reports of key biblical sites will provide more depth to the teachings and give students insights

into the detailed documentation process involved in archaeology. Excavation reports provide details of the process and interpretation of the artifacts, pottery, inscriptions, and other finds. Students could see the process from the inception to how the archaeologists conclude the finds' possible connection or lack thereof to biblical history. From such details, I could also explore having the students examine whether any potential biases exist in the report as part of the discussion.

Based on student feedback, some of them would like a longer course to cover more materials. One improvement could involve having a two- to three-credit course instead and more time to cover Paul's missionary journeys and the seven churches described in the Book of Revelation. Much of the New Testament narrative described Paul's travels through Asia Minor, Rome, and Greece. Some of the cities Paul visited, such as Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus, have extensive excavation. Incorporating archaeological research that informs the political and cultural background of the New Testament would significantly enhance the course. The seven churches in Revelation 3—Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea—have been extensively excavated. Inclusion would aid theological understanding of the challenges faced by the early Christian communities.

Another area to include would be Old Testament architectural structures such as the Israelite four-room house and Solomon's palaces, as well as New Testament architecture such as the mikveh, synagogues, types of Roman architecture, and Roman baths. A study of ancient architecture would enable students to understand how the people lived, communed, and worshipped that corroborated the descriptions in the biblical narratives.

### *Stronger Promotion of the Course*

After the class, a few people came to me and said that they would have signed up for the course had they known that ATC was offering it. In hindsight, the personal invitations to the course should have been more thorough and wide-reaching.

### *Increased Quality of Course Delivery*

To improve the delivery of the course, some recommended actions included having more student presentations that could raise confidence and elevate student-centered learning as they research the biblical archaeological topics of their choice. Including more map tests would raise student awareness of the geography related to the archaeological finds. More fun archaeological quizzes and snippets of archaeological-related videos would break the monotony of the long lectures. Microphones are required for a class of fifteen students to ensure that students sitting at the back do not have to strain to hear the lectures.

Given the class size, the font size of the words on some of the PowerPoint slides should have been larger. During the class, I should have regularly checked with the students as to whether the words were large enough for them to see. Before the lessons started, I should have allowed students to download the electronic version of the handouts as a reference, which would have enabled them to see the presentation clearly and write notes on their electronic devices. As for the student handouts, two slides should be on one page for students to more easily read them and provide more space for students to write their notes. Before printing, I should have sent samples to the students for their input.

I also took too much break time on the first Saturday to increase student interaction. While I achieved the goal of more student interaction, I was not able to cover all the slides intended for the first lesson, which crunched the teaching time on the following lesson conducted on the second Saturday.

Other improvements I would make include presenting a video clip of a recent archaeological dig that involves interviews with the archaeologists and diggers on-site to appreciate their experiences. I also would add a timeline of key events in the Bible to make it easier for students to follow the chronological events and associated artifacts.

To increase students' retention of the lessons, I would like to partner with Dr. Nunnally to offer student tours to Israel when the political situation has stabilized.

### **Implications of the Project**

This project has several implications that can influence academic biblical studies and one's spiritual and intellectual development. As seen from the students' open feedback, the course inspired a deeper analysis of the Scriptures and encouraged critical thinking about interpreting extrabiblical evidence relating to biblical narratives.

Participants corrected their misconception that biblical archaeology can prove divine inspiration, a teaching some Christian communities have propagated for a long time. However, understanding that biblical archaeology confirms the historicity of the Scriptures motivated students to research extrabiblical archaeological finds to supplement their studies of the Bible. The time spent on research stimulated and inspired personal growth.

Students also understood the perspectives on interpreting archaeological data that gave rise to the minimalist-maximalist debate. Appreciating the different views promoted



critical thinking about navigating their faith in light of conflicting interpretations of archaeological artifacts.

The study of biblical archaeology also led to a better understanding of the historical geography of the Land of Israel, which significantly enhanced students' personal study of the Scriptures. The inclusion of biblical archaeology dramatically improved students' research skills, making them feel competent and skilled in their academic pursuits.

Understanding the science of archaeology can equip students to discern facts from the hype when confronted with social media news about archaeological finds. They can, in turn, inform the people they influence to differentiate truth from myths.

### **Recommendations for Asia Theological Center**

The apologetic value gained from the research into biblical archaeology enriched my ability to defend the gospel's reliability and historicity. Students tutored in this course will likewise be better prepared to defend the gospel. Offering biblical archaeology with varying credits enables ATC to target a wider group of students with different interest levels.

Thus, it remains crucial to include a one-credit "Introduction to Biblical Archaeology seminar" regularly for students new to this subject. This will emphasize the importance of this discipline in understanding the Scriptures and in a believer's faith. For students interested in advanced knowledge of Biblical Archaeology, ATC should consider a possible partnership with AGTS to offer a three-credit course by inviting Professor Dr. Mark Jenkins to teach this specialized subject. Once this discipline has gained traction, ATC could offer the course on Biblical Archaeology on a regular basis.

To enhance the students' experience, ATC can work with organizations or universities that offer tours focused on biblical archaeological sites in Israel. For students interested in pursuing higher education in biblical archaeology, ATC can provide them with information on where to sign up for archaeological digs in Israel to enhance their experience.

This humble beginning could lead to Asia's first undergraduate degree in biblical archaeology. Such a degree could open up exciting job opportunities for students to serve in museums, write for archaeological publications, and to work as tour guides to archaeological sites, providing them with a practical and rewarding career path. A course in biblical archaeology in Singapore could also ignite the passion of Asian Bible scholars who aspire to be proficient in the field of archaeology and help to gain access to biblical sites and artifacts unavailable to existing archaeologists.

### **Recommendations for Future Study**

With a constant stream of new artifacts found in Israel, keeping up to date with the latest finds remains of paramount importance to instructors of biblical archaeology. Research from the latest scholarly journals, publications, and real-time interviews of archaeologists in charge of the finds (publications usually take a long time to reach the public) ensures the relevance of the curriculum offered.

The study of the Hebrew language remains a powerful tool that can unlock the secrets of biblical artifacts and advance studies in biblical archaeology. It not only enhances instructors' understanding of epigraphs such as the Dead Sea Scrolls but also empowers them to interpret biblical artifacts firsthand, adding a new dimension to their teaching.

As biblical history intersects with Egyptian history, research into Egyptian material culture and epigraphs, such as the Amarna letters from the Levant to the Pharaoh, informs the chronology and history that undergirds biblical archaeology.

Research into pottery shapes and coins from different archaeological periods would elevate the course contents, since understanding various types of pottery remains essential for dating the stratigraphical level of destruction where they are found or even for tracing the migration of the people groups as they travel from place to place with their pottery.

Participating in an archaeological dig not only imparts real-life experience but also instills in instructors a sense of responsibility. It teaches them to discern the real archaeological finds from the social media hype, fostering a culture of diligence and critical thinking among students.

## APPENDIX A: PTH 939 DR BIBLE LANDS STUDY

SEMINAR\_NUNNALLY\_FA22



### Doctor of Ministry

"Building Leaders Who Build the Kingdom"

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## PTH 939: DR: Bible Lands Study Seminar

### Fall 2022

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#### Faculty Information

Professor: W.E. Nunnally, PhD  
Email: [nunnallyw@evangel.edu](mailto:nunnallyw@evangel.edu)  
Virtual office hours: by appointment



#### Course Information

Credit hours: 3  
Semester dates: August 24 – December 10  
Trip Dates: November 25 – December 5

#### Required Textbooks

(Unless otherwise noted, textbooks may be purchased through the Evangel Bookstore <http://www.bkstr.com/evangelstore/home>)

Richard Cleave. *The Holy Land Satellite Atlas*, vols. 1 and 2. Bangkok: Rohr Productions Ltd., 1999. *Volume 1 should be brought on the trip to Israel.* Available through professor and sometimes from online sources. Be sure to buy the 1999, two-volume edition.

#### Recommended:

Yohanan Aharoni. *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981.

\_\_\_\_\_ and Michael Avi-Yonah, *The Macmillan Bible Atlas*. New York: Macmillan, 2003.

Richard Cleave. *HolyLand 3D: Student edition v2.5* (a CD). Nicosia, Cyprus: Rohr Productions, 2004.

Jack Finegan. *The Archeology of the New Testament: The Life of Jesus and the Beginning of the Early Church*. Rev. ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Joseph P. Free. *Archaeology and Bible History*. Revised and expanded by Howard F. Vos. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor. *The Holy Land: An Archaeological Guide*. Fifth Edition. NY: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Carl G. Rasmussen. *Zondervan NIV Atlas of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989.

Walter E. Rast. *Through the Ages in Palestinian Archaeology: An Introductory Handbook*. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992.

**Note:** It is a violation of academic policy to include in the required reading any books previously read for credit. If you have previously read any of the required texts for credit, please substitute another book after discussing with the professor.

### **Assemblies of God Theological Seminary Mission Statement**

The purpose of Assemblies of God Theological Seminary is to train men and women to fulfill the mission of the Church as taught in Scripture—*Shaping servant leaders with knowledge, skill and passion to revitalize the Church and evangelize the world in the power of the Spirit.*

### **Evangel University Mission Statement**

Evangel University is a comprehensive Christian university committed to excellence in educating and equipping students to become Spirit-empowered servants of God who impact the Church and society globally.

### **DMin. Mission Statement**

The mission of the DMin. is threefold: 1) to enhance the participants' professional competence in the particular area of their gifts and calling; 2) to integrate learning into the context of each participant's ministry; and 3) to develop strong Pentecostal scholar-practitioners/ministers.

### **Course Description**

The Bible Lands Study Seminar will consist of pre-session work (including six hours of video lecture, preparatory reading, etc.), an academic study trip to Israel, and post-session work (described below). Students will study on-site in Israel and during this time, receive 90-plus hours of instruction). The purpose of the study is to give the student an insider's perspective on the Land of the Bible, and to begin to develop tools which can be employed in the academy and/or parish for more effective

ministry. In this 11-day study trip, most of Israel's 13 major geographical regions will be covered, employing a cross-disciplinary approach which will draw from culture, agriculture, history, geography, meteorology, archeology, history, literature, and language.

## Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites.

## Course Purpose

The objectives of the course are stated in terms of learning outcomes. All AGTS Program Learning Outcomes, EU 20 Outcomes, and Faith, Work, and Economics (FWE)/Oikonomia Network (ON) Outcomes are found on the website: <https://agts.edu/current-students/academic-policies/>.

*This course does not access CLOs, PLOs, EU 20 Outcomes or FEW/ON Outcomes.*

## Course Format

This course includes reading, on-site lectures, group discussion, experiential learning, daily journaling, assigned reading, reflection, and writing.

## Course Schedule

Six one-hour instructional videos by the professor that are designed to provide and introduction to the history, geography, archeology, literatures, and culture of the Land of Israel. The purpose of these lectures is to develop within the student the basic information needed to fully appreciate the material covered and experiences shared during our time together in the Land.

### **Day 1 Friday, November 25 - Depart USA.**

As of March 1, 2022, no Covid vaccination required is to enter Israel. Testing, however, is mandated prior to departure, upon arrival, and when leaving Israel. These tests are mandated by the American and Israeli governments.

### **Day 2 Saturday, November 26 (Shabbat) Weather: H – 72, L – 50.**

Arrive in Israel, transfer to hotel on our tour bus.

**Overnight on Coast**

### **Day 3 Sunday, November 27 - First Sunday of Advent Weather: H-70, L- 58.**

We will travel to **Caesarea** where we will focus on Peter, Paul and the early Church. Next we head up to **Mt Carmel** and address Elijah and the prophets of

Baal. Part of today's Christmas journey will include a visit to **Nazareth** where the announcement of the birth of Jesus to Mary occurred and **Nazareth Village** where we will observe the first Sunday of Advent.

**Overnight in Galilee**

**Day 4 Monday, November 28 – Weather: H-70, L-58**

On our visit to **Tel Dan**, we will enjoy a hike through a nature preserve where we see the sources of the **Jordan River**, study Scripture, visit the high place of Dan and city gates from the time of Abraham and Jeroboam. Then, the bus will carry us about two miles to **Caesarea Philippi** where Jesus reveals His Messianic identity and sacrificial death to his disciples. Next, we will ascend the **Golan Heights** for a view of **Mt Hermon** and the **Damascus Road** experience of Paul.

**Overnight in Galilee**

**Day 5 Tuesday, November 29 – Weather: H –70, L – 58**

Today we will travel around the **Sea of Galilee**. We will be traveling to **Capernaum** which was the home base of Jesus ministry and to **Korazin**, which is found 2 miles from Capernaum. On the western shore is **Magdala**, home of Mary Magdalene, which has an excavated 1st -century synagogue where Jesus likely taught. The **Yigael Alon Museum** holds a 1st -century fishing boat from the Sea of Galilee, similar to the ones Jesus used. Next, we will participate in a Sea of Galilee **boat ride** that will help orient us to Biblical locations around the lake and allow us to travel the same body of water that Jesus referred to so many times in the Word.

**Overnight in Galilee**

**Day 6 Wednesday, November 30 - Weather: H – 76, L – 50**

An early morning ride will take us down to the **Judean Wilderness** and **Dead Sea** area where we will travel in the territory of John the Baptist. This Christmas we will be reminded of Isaiah's words "In the wilderness, prepare the way of YHWH." We will view this vast area from the top of **Masada**, Herod's greatest fortress, visit **Qumran**, view **Dead Sea Scrolls caves**, experience the Dead Sea and the **Jerusalem-Jericho Road** where we will recall the parable of the Good Samaritan.

**Overnight in Jerusalem**

**Day 7 Thursday, Dec 1 - Weather: H-60, L-49**

Today is museum day! **The Israel Museum**, which houses a one-acre model of Jerusalem & the Temple in the time of Jesus, will be our first stop. Here we will discuss Jesus' first visit to the Temple 40 days after His birth. Next, we will tour the **Shrine of the Book** which houses Israel's Dead Sea Scrolls. If time allows, we will visit the **archeological wing of the museum**. Our next museum stop will be the **City of David** where we will see extensive excavations and learn about King David.

**Overnight in Jerusalem**

**Day 8 Friday, Dec 2 - Weather: H-60, L-49**

Today's journey will take us from the birth of Jesus to his death. Our first stop is **Bethlehem**, the birthplace of Jesus, **the Church of the Nativity**, **the Shepherds' Field**, with a focus on the Christmas narrative in detail. Our next stop will include **an olivewood shop**, Christmas shopping and lunch near **Manger Square**. We then return to **Jerusalem** to visit **the Tower of David Museum** and **Herod's Palace**. Here we will focus on Herod's role in the Christmas story. Next, we visit **the Wohl Museum**, which contains **the mansions of the Chief Priests**. We conclude today with **the Church of Holy Sepulcher**, and discuss the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

**Overnight in Jerusalem**

**Day 9 Saturday, Dec 3 (Shabbat) – Weather: H-59, L-49**

Our morning begins with a visit to **the Mount of Olives**, a survey of biblical events that occurred there and an overview of Jerusalem. A brief bus ride from the Mt of Olives takes us down into **the Kidron Valley** and **the Church of All Nations**. Here, we visit **the Garden of Gethsemane** and discuss the arrest of Jesus and His ultimate sacrifice. After a brief walk, we re-enter the Old City through **St. Stephen's/Lion's Gate** and then enter **St. Anne's Church** where we will discuss the role of Mary in the Christmas story. Built in honor of Mary's mother, this compound also includes **the Pools of Bethesda**. Next, we walk to **the Western Wall** for instruction and take time to pray at the Wall. After another short walk, we visit **the Pinnacle of the Temple** and **the Southern Steps** leading to the Temple Mount. After returning to our hotel, we conclude our day together with a Celebration Dinner.

**Overnight in Jerusalem**

**Day 10 Sunday, Dec 4 - 2nd Sunday of Advent Weather: H-59, L-49**

After breakfast and hotel check out, we will visit **Jerusalem University College** on **Mt. Zion** for a tour of archeological finds, **the gravesite of Horatio Spafford** and Sunday worship service. In addition, we will conduct a Service Project by bringing small Christmas gifts to students studying at JUC. Our next stop is **the Garden Tomb**, we will observe the 2nd Sunday of Advent and Communion. Remainder of the day will be free time to Christmas shop, revisit a local site or have coffee in a Jerusalem coffee shop. Lunch & dinner at your expense.

[www.juc.edu](http://www.juc.edu)

**Departure to airport**

**Day 11 Monday, Dec 5**

Arrive in **USA**.

**\*\*Schedules, housing and itinerary are subject to change without notice due to Covid, the devaluation of the dollar and political uncertainties. This itinerary is based on the best possible use of time-management, keeping in mind the complexities of Israeli traffic, the current political climate and opening hours as regards to Jewish, Christian and Muslim holidays.**



APPENDIX B: BIB 640 ARCHAEOLOGY OF  
ANCIENT ISRAEL\_SPRING 2024



**Bible and Theology Department**  
*Shaping Servant Leaders*

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## **BIB 640 Special Themes: Archaeology of Ancient Israel**

**Spring 2024**

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### **Faculty Information**

Professor: Mark Jenkins, PhD  
Email: [Jenkinsm@evangel.edu](mailto:Jenkinsm@evangel.edu)  
Phone: 417-865-2815 ext. 8877  
Office location: Trask 214  
Office hours: By appointment



### **Course Information**

Credit hours: 3  
Course dates: January 10 – May 1  
Location: Trask 217 (or virtual)  
Time: MWF 8:45 – 9:35

### **Required Texts**

Mazar, Amihai. *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, Volume 1 10,000-586 B.C.E.* Yale University Press, 2007. ISBN 9780300140071

Price, Randall and H. Wayne House. *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. ISBN 9780310286912

### **Evangel University Mission Statement**

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### **Assemblies of God Theological Seminary Mission Statement**

AGTS shapes servant leaders with knowledge, skill and passion to revitalize the church and evangelize the world in the power of the Spirit.

### Catalog Description

A study of the archaeological material culture of the Levant relevant for the interpretation of the Old Testament in areas such as history, social contexts, and religion. Special attention will focus on Israelite material culture in the context of the Old Testament.

### Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites.

### Course Purpose

The purpose of this course is to familiarize the student with the material culture of the Ancient Near East preceding and contemporary with the Old Testament world. A better understanding of this material culture is indispensable in providing insight into the cultural context of the Old Testament aiding in more effective exegesis and hermeneutics.

### Learning Outcomes<sup>1</sup>

This class supports but does not assess the following EU20 Outcome(s).

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:	CLO	EU20
Demonstrate a familiarity with the geography of Israel	X	
Explain the history and evolution of Biblical Archaeology	X	
Demonstrate a knowledge of the basic features of archaeological and cultural remains of Ancient Israel.	X	
Demonstrate a knowledge of the archaeological features associated with the Israelite Settlement	X	
Demonstrate a knowledge of the archaeological features associated with Old Testament Narrative where it may apply.	X	
Historical Inquiry: Define essential issues in human history, identify ways others have addressed those issues, and explore the applicability of those approaches to other intellectual, political, social, and/or spiritual contexts.		E3
Global Cultures: Demonstrate knowledge of nations and regions of the world and key historical and cultural events in those regions.		G3

### Course Format

Primary delivery of this course will be in a seated lecture format. PowerPoint lectures will be utilized to cover a majority of the material. In addition, live Zoom sessions will be available during class time for those who are taking the course virtually. Course evaluation will be made based on periodical reviews, exams, a research essay, and a final sermon utilizing information gleaned in the research essay.

## Course Schedule

This is a tentative course outline. The course schedule may be changed at the discretion of the course instructor. Notice of changes will be made in class and/or through Course Commons announcements.

Date	Assignments
1/10	Introduction - Syllabus
1/12	What is Archaeology? History of Biblical Archaeology – Mazar 1-21
1/17-19	Archaeological Method – Mazar 21-33, Handbook 17-36
1/22-26	Geography of Israel Download “Map of Palestine” in <i>Files</i> on Course Commons. Fill in the map during Geography of Israel
1/29-2/2	Chalcolithic Period – Mazar chapter 3
2/5-9	Early Bronze Age – Mazar chapter 4, Handbook 47-76
2/12-16	EB IV-MB I – Mazar Chapter 5 Map Quiz <b>1<sup>st</sup> Article Essay due.</b>
2/19-23	Middle Bronze II – Mazar Chapter 6, Handbook 77-82 Late Bronze Age – Mazar Chapter 7, Handbook 82-105
2/26-3/1	Late Bronze Age Continued Date of the Exodus <b>Midterm Exam</b>
3/4-8	Israelite Settlement – Handbook 106-113 Iron Age I – Mazar Chapter 8, Handbook 113-126 <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Article Essay due</b>
3/18-22	Iron Age I - Continued Iron Age IIA – Mazar Chapter 9, Handbook 126-135
3/25-27	Iron Age IIB-C – Mazar Chapter 10, Handbook 135-145
4/1-5	Israelite Material Culture – Mazar Chapter 11 <b>3<sup>rd</sup> Article Essay due</b>
4/8-12	Assyrian and Babylonian Domination – Mazar Chapter 12 <b>Site Presentation for Shiloh</b>
4/15-19	Kingdom and Cult – The Art of Ancient Israel <b>4<sup>th</sup> Article Essay due</b>
4/22-24	Student Presentations <b>Final Project Due</b> <b>Take-home Final</b>

## APPENDIX C: BNT 640 ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE NEW TESTAMENT



**Bible and Theology Department**  
*Shaping Servant Leaders*

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### **BNT 640 - Archaeology and the New Testament**

Fall 2020

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#### **Faculty Information**

Professor: Mark Jenkins, PhD  
Email: [Jenkinsm@evangel.edu](mailto:Jenkinsm@evangel.edu)  
Phone: 417-865-2815 ext. 8877  
Office location: AGTS 209  
Office hours: By appointment



#### **Course Information**

Credit hours: 3  
Course dates: September 7 – December 11  
Location: Online ([Course Commons](#))

#### **Required Texts**

McRay, John. *Archaeology & the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009. ISBN 9780801036088

Price, Randall and H. Wayne House. *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. ISBN 9780310286912

#### **Evangel University Mission Statement**

Evangel University is a comprehensive Christian university committed to excellence in educating and equipping students to become Spirit-empowered servants of God who impact the Church and society globally.

#### **Assemblies of God Theological Seminary Mission Statement**

AGTS shapes servant leaders with knowledge, skill and passion to revitalize the church and evangelize the world in the power of the Spirit.

### Catalog Description

A study of the archaeological material culture of the Roman world including areas of Italy, Greece, Asia Minor, and the Levant relevant for the interpretation of the New Testament in areas such as history, social contexts, and religion. Special attention will focus on cities mentioned in the context of the New Testament.

### Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites.

### Course Purpose

The purpose of this course is to familiarize the student with the material culture of the Roman world of the first century AD as it pertains to places and events mentioned in the New Testament. A better understanding of the ancient Roman world is indispensable in providing insight into the cultural context of the New Testament aiding in more effective exegesis and hermeneutics.

### Learning Outcomes<sup>1</sup>

This class supports but does not assess the following EU20 Outcome(s).

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:	CLO	EU20
Demonstrate a familiarity with the geography of Israel	X	
Explain the history and evolution of Biblical Archaeology	X	
Demonstrate a knowledge of the basic features of Graeco-Roman cities and architecture, including civic, religious, and domestic structures	X	
Demonstrate a knowledge of the archaeological features associated with the ministry of Jesus.	X	
Demonstrate a knowledge of the archaeological features associated with Paul's missionary journeys	X	
Historical Inquiry: Define essential issues in human history, identify ways others have addressed those issues, and explore the applicability of those approaches to other intellectual, political, social, and/or spiritual contexts.		E3
Global Cultures: Demonstrate knowledge of nations and regions of the world and key historical and cultural events in those regions.		G3

### Course Format

Primary delivery of this course will be in an online format. Video PowerPoint lectures will be utilized to cover a majority of the material. In addition, live Zoom meetings will be held at least twice monthly to cover supplementary material, answer questions, and to encourage discussion. Course evaluation will be made based on periodical reviews, exams, a research essay, and a final sermon utilizing information gleaned in the research essay.

## Course Schedule

This is a tentative course outline. The course schedule may be changed at the discretion of the course instructor. Notice of changes will be made in class and/or through Course Commons announcements.

Date	Assignments
9/7-13	McRay 17-34; Price & House 233-34; Aren Maeir Article Video Lectures on the History of Biblical Archaeology
9/14-20	Video Lectures: Archaeological Method; Geography of Israel Download "Map of Palestine" in <i>Files</i> on Course Commons. Fill in the map during Geography of Israel.
9/21-27	McRay 37-64 Video Lectures "City Layouts and Civic Structures" Map Test
9/28-10/4	McRay 65-90 Article on "Zodiac Motif" in ancient synagogues. Video Lectures "Religious and Domestic Structures" 1 <sup>st</sup> Article Review
10/5-11	McRay 91-152; Price & House 237-245 Video Lectures "Herodian Jerusalem" Video Lectures "Herodian Construction"
10/12-18	McRay 153-184; Price & House 235-236, 246-264 Video Lectures "Jesus' Ministry in Galilee"
10/19-25	McRay 185-224; Price & House 265-293 Video Lectures "Jesus' Ministry in Judea" Article on the Church of the Holy Sepulchre 2 <sup>nd</sup> Article Review
10/26-11/1	McRay 225-241; Price & House 294-307 Video Lectures on "Eastern and Central Asia Minor" Midterm Exam
11/2-8	McRay 243-276; Price & House 308-321 Video Lectures on "Western Asia Minor" 3 <sup>rd</sup> Article Review (Article based on choice of city for the "Site Paper")
11/9-15	McRay 277-310 Video Lectures on "Macedonia and Athens" 4 <sup>th</sup> Article Review (Article based on choice of city for the "Site Paper")
11/16-22	McRay 311-350 Video Lectures on "Corinth and Rome"
11/23-29	Thanksgiving Break
11/30-12/7	Site Paper due; Short Sermon due

## Course Policies & Requirements

### Preparation

In order to succeed in this class, students should arrange to have regular access to a computer, the internet, Evangel email and [Course Commons](#). This class will use Course Commons for all course communication, interaction, content, announcements, collaboration and assignments.

APPENDIX D: PROSPECTUS FOR INTRODUCTION  
TO BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY



BI 112 Intro to Biblical Archaeology  
(1 credit)  
Lecturer: Ang Eng Eng, D.Min Candidate

In Person  
Date: 28 Sept (Sat)  
S'pore Time: 9 am - 3 pm  
Date: 6 Oct (Sat)  
S'pore Time: 11 am - 6 pm  
Venue: ATC Tampines

Cost:  
Admission Fee \$38 (waived)  
Registration Fee: \$10  
Course Fee: \$70

Embark on a transformative journey into the world of biblical archaeology with this introductory course designed to delve into the historical context of the Bible through the lens of archaeology. Uncover the profound stories behind the sacred sites in the Holy Land and witness how the diverse artifacts illuminate obscure passages in the Bible. Traverse through the rich annals of history and unearth the compelling evidence that brings the Bible to life. This course, catering to all levels of interest, offers a deeper understanding of the cultural, historical, and religious significance of the Bible, fostering personal growth and inspiring a deeper faith.

ABOUT THE  
LECTURERS

APPENDIX E: BI 133 SYLLABUS\_INTRO TO BIBLICAL  
ARCHAEOLOGY\_ST2024

**ASIA THEOLOGICAL CENTER**

**BI 133 Introduction to Biblical Archaeology (1 credit)**

Ang Eng Eng, D.Min candidate

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> Sept & 5<sup>th</sup> Oct (2 Sats)

Time: (9am-3pm) & (11am-5pm)

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**A. COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

A study of the archaeological material culture of the Ancient Near East, including Israel, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and the Roman world, relevant to biblical interpretation and gaining insights into the historical, social, and religious contexts of the Bible.

The purpose of this course is to familiarize the student with the material culture of the Ancient Near East and the Roman world of the first century AD as it pertains to people, places and events mentioned in the Scriptures. A better understanding of the spheres of the Ancient Near East and Roman world is indispensable in providing insight into the cultural context of the Scriptures aiding in more effective exegesis and hermeneutics.

**B. COURSE OBJECTIVE:**

Upon completion of this course the student should be able to:

1. Demonstrate familiarity with the geography of Israel.
2. Explain the history and evolution of Biblical archaeology.
3. Identify the controversies surrounding Biblical archaeology.



4. Appreciate how biblical archaeological artifacts are chronologically dated and interpreted.
5. Demonstrate knowledge of the archaeological features associated with the birth, ministry, and death of Jesus.

### **C. TEXTBOOKS:**

Price, Randall. *The Stones Cry Out: What Archaeology Reveals about the Truth of the Bible*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1997. ISBN-10: 1-56507-640-0

### **D. COURSE OUTLINE:**

1. Development of Biblical archaeology
  - Evolution
  - Goals
  - Limitations
  - Interpretation
2. Foundation of Biblical archaeology
  - List of activities
  - Importance of dating
  - Archaeological periods and Biblical history
  - Decipherment of ancient near eastern artifacts
  - Geography of Israel
3. Old Testament archaeological discoveries relating to
  - Key events
  - Key individuals
  - Key biblical sites
  - Biblical texts
4. New Testament archaeological discoveries relating to
  - Biblical texts
  - Birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ

### **E. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Students are encouraged to participate actively in class discussions and collaborations to enrich collective understanding.
2. Read the article by Aren Maeir before the first lesson on September 28<sup>th</sup> and be prepared to discuss the article during the class.

Maeir, Aren. "Stones, Bones, Texts and Relevance: Or, How I Lost My Fear of Biblical Archaeology and Started Enjoying It." In *Historical Biblical Archaeology and the Future*, edited by Thomas E. Levy, 295-303. New York: Routledge, 2010.

3. Read Chapters 1- 4 of the textbook by Price before the second lesson on October 5<sup>th</sup>.
4. Complete map tests and a final test to be given during the class.
5. Complete **one** of the following by **Oct 13<sup>th</sup>**:
  - (a) Submit a three-page research paper related to an artifact or excavation that illumines a biblical narrative or validates a historical person, place, or event found in the Bible. The paper should be well-researched and properly cited.

**OR**

  - (b) Create a video or voice recording of yourself serving as a docent, engaging visitors about the history of the biblical artifact or group of artifacts on display at the museum—transcripts to be included.

**OR**

  - (c) Submit a two-page summary detailing the practical application(s) of what you have learned from the lectures or readings in this course to your ministry. This will help you see the direct relevance of the course material to your future work.

**Make the paper typed using New Times Roman, 12-point font, and double-spaced.**

#### **F. COURSE GRADING**

Class Attendance & Participation	10%
Reading of required texts	20%
Map Tests	20%
Final Test	40%
Site paper or recording	10%

***Note: Late work will be penalized. All work must be completed to obtain a passing grade.***

## G. SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aharoni, Yohanan. *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981.

———. *The Archaeology of the Land of Israel: From the Prehistoric Beginnings to the End of the First Temple Period*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982.

Báez Camargo, Gonzalo, and Gonzalo Báez Camargo. *Archaeological Commentary on the Bible*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1986.

Bartlett, John R., ed. *Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Ben-Yosef, Erez. “The Architectural Bias in Current Biblical Archaeology.” *Vetus Testamentum* 69, no. 3 (2019): 361-87.

Carter, Warren. *Seven Events That Shaped the New Testament World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013.

Domeris, William R. “The Interface between Historical Geography and Archaeology.” *Old Testament Essays* 9, no. 2 (1996): 213-223.  
[https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/AJA10109919\\_645](https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/AJA10109919_645).

Finegan, Jack. *The Archaeology of the New Testament: The Mediterranean World of the Early Christian Apostles*. London: Croom Helm, 1981.

Flint, Peter W. *The Dead Sea Scrolls*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013.

Free, Joseph P. *Archaeology and Bible History*. Rev. and exp. by Howard F. Vos. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992.

Freund, Richard A. *Digging through the Bible: Modern Archaeology and the Ancient Bible*. Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2009.

Garstang, John, *The Story of Jericho*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London, UK: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1948.

Hoerth, Alfred J. *Archaeology and the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998.

Hoerth, Alfred J., and John McRay. *Bible Archaeology: An Exploration of the History and Culture of Early Civilizations*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006.

Hoffmeier, James Karl. *The Archaeology of the Bible*. Oxford, UK: Lion Scholar, Lion Hudson Limited, 2019.

- Holden, Joseph M., and Norman L. Geisler. *The Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2013.
- Lapp, Paul W. "The Importance of Dating." *Biblical Archaeology Review* (March 1977): 13-17, 19-22. <https://library.biblicalarchaeology.org/article/the-importance-ofdating-2/>.
- Maeir, Aren. "Stones, Bones, Texts and Relevance: Or, How I Lost My Fear of Biblical Archaeology and Started Enjoying It." In *Historical Biblical Archaeology and the Future*, edited by Thomas E. Levy, 295-303. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- McIntyre, Donald C. "An Examination of Biblical Archaeology's Impact on Exegetical and Theological Method with Attendant Case Study." *Eleutheria* 6, no. 1 (2022): 20735.
- McRay, John. *Archaeology and the New Testament*. Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2008.
- Negev, Avraham, ed. *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2003.
- Nunnally, Wave. "New Discoveries at Magdala." Bible Unplugged, July 2022. Video of lecture. <https://youtu.be/AtHDvlsGmMM>.
- Price, Randall. *The Stones Cry Out: What Archaeology Reveals about the Truth of the Bible*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1997.
- Price, Randall, and H. Wayne House. *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology: A Book by Book Guide to Archaeological Discoveries Related to the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2017.
- Smith, George Adam. *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*. New York: A. C. Armstrong, 1895.
- Vos, Howard Frederic. *Archaeology in Bible Lands*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1977.
- . *Beginnings in Bible Geography*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1973.
- Williams, Walter George. *Archaeology in Biblical Research*. London, UK: Lutterworth Press, 1966.
- Yamauchi, Edwin. *The Stones and the Scriptures: An Introduction to Biblical Archaeology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1972.
- Zevit, Ziony. "Three Debates about Bible and Archaeology." *Biblica* 83, no. 1 (2002): 127.

## APPENDIX F: PRE-COURSE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

### Pre-Course Assessment Questions

#### Introduction to Biblical Archaeology - BI133

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Biblical archaeology aims...
  - (a) To prove divine inspiration and clarify the Scriptures.
  - (b) To prove divine inspiration and confirm the historicity of the narratives.
  - (c) To prove divine inspiration, clarify the Scriptures, and confirm the historicity of the narratives.
  - (d) To clarify the Scriptures and confirm the historicity of the narratives.
  
2. Biblical archaeology involves the following process. Put them in the right order with (1) being the first step and (5) being the last step.
  - Dating -----
  - Documentation -----
  - Excavation -----
  - Site identification -----
  - Stratification -----
  
3. According to archaeologist, Edwin Yamauchi, \_\_\_\_ percent of known sites had been meaningfully excavated as of 1973.
  - (a) Less than 2 percent
  - (b) Less than 5 percent
  - (c) Less than 7 percent
  - (d) Less than 10 percent
  
4. What is a tell?
  - (a) A historical explanation about a biblical site
  - (b) A Canaanite religious structure
  - (c) A fragment of an Assyrian pottery
  - (d) A small hill created by successive habitation layers
  
5. Which of the following two statements are true? Circle the statements.

- (a) Minimalists interpret archaeological evidence independent of the Bible.
  - (b) Maximalists believe the Bible can guide interpretations of the archaeological find.
  - (c) Maximalists interpret archaeological evidence independent of the Bible.
  - (d) Minimalists believe the Bible can guide interpretations of the archaeological find.
6. Circle the **three** ways of identifying the biblical sites:
- (a) Carbon dating of the sites
  - (b) Tracing the current names of the sites
  - (c) Description of the sites from the Bible
  - (d) Artifacts identifying the names of the sites
7. Arrange the biblical time periods in order, with (1) being the oldest and (7) being the latest:
- Babylonian Period \_\_\_\_\_
  - Bronze Age \_\_\_\_\_
  - Hasmonean Period \_\_\_\_\_
  - Hellenistic Period \_\_\_\_\_
  - Iron Age \_\_\_\_\_
  - Persian Period \_\_\_\_\_
  - Roman Period \_\_\_\_\_
8. Carbon dating is an important dating method. The main feature of carbon dating is that it is:
- (a) generally used to date remains of plants, trees, animals, and humans.
  - (b) generally used to date pottery and ceramics that were once fired at high temperatures.
  - (c) generally used for soil and pollen analysis and dating layers of rock.
  - (d) generally used for dating metals.
9. Which of the following enables archaeologists to most accurately date Old Testament events?
- (a) The Anubis Chest found in King Tut's tomb - its features bear similarities to the ark of the covenant.
  - (b) The Beni Hasan carvings found in an Egyptian tomb - the images bear similarities to the Semites coming into Egypt.
  - (c) The Eponym Canon - Assyrian record of an eclipse of the sun in Nineveh.
  - (d) Jacob's well - a working well that exists even during the New Testament period.

10. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are important to deciphering hieroglyphics and Akkadian scripts. Choose from the following:
- (a) The Behistun Rock
  - (b) The Herodium tomb
  - (c) The Magdala mosaic map
  - (d) The Rosetta Stone
11. The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in the following place
- (a) Jerusalem
  - (b) Masada
  - (c) Petra
  - (d) Qumran Caves
12. The Bible is also an archaeological artifact. True or false. \_\_\_\_\_
13. The **main** controversies surrounding Sodom and Gomorrah are whether the biblical account of devastation is a myth and \_\_\_\_\_ (select one of the following):
- (a) the location of Sodom and Gomorrah is on the north or south of the Dead Sea.
  - (b) the period of the devastation occurred during the Bronze Age or the Iron Age.
  - (c) the location of Sodom and Gomorrah is on the east or west of the Dead Sea.
  - (d) the period of the devastation occurred during the Iron Age or Babylonian Period.
14. The **main** controversies surrounding the Exodus are whether the biblical account is a myth and whether \_\_\_\_\_ (select one of the following):
- (a) the Pharaoh of the Exodus is Rameses II.
  - (b) the Israelites and the Hyksos are the same people group.
  - (c) there are multiple exoduses.
  - (d) the Israelites crossed the Red Sea or the Reed Sea.
15. Which of the following four archaeological artifacts contain the name "Israel?"  
Select all that apply:
- (a) Black Obelisk
  - (b) King David's tomb
  - (c) Moabite (Mesha) Stele
  - (d) Merneptah Stele
  - (e) Tel Dan Stele
16. Jesus was crucified, buried, and rose from
- (a) The Antonia Fortress
  - (b) The Church of the Holy Sepulchre
  - (c) The Dome of the Rock
  - (d) The Garden Tomb

17. One of the most important inventions of the Romans that enable the empire to build big cities are the \_\_\_\_\_.
18. The present day “Dome of the Rock” is built upon
- (a) Mt. Nebo
  - (b) Mt. Moriah
  - (c) Mt. Sinai
  - (d) Mt. Zion
19. What year did Herod the Great, who gave the order to kill the babies of Bethlehem, die?
- (a) 1 AD
  - (b) 1 BC
  - (c) 3 AD
  - (d) 4 BC
20. Which of the following artifacts demonstrates the existence of Pontius Pilate who prosecuted Jesus?
- (a) Caesarea Maritima stone tablet
  - (b) Gezer Inscription
  - (c) Siloam Inscription
  - (d) St. Ebal tablet



APPENDIX G: POST-COURSE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS  
AND COURSE EVALUATION

**Post-Course Assessment Questions**

Introduction to Biblical Archaeology - BI133

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Biblical archaeology aims...
  - (e) To prove divine inspiration and clarify the Scriptures.
  - (f) To prove divine inspiration and confirm the historicity of the narratives.
  - (g) To prove divine inspiration, clarify the Scriptures, and confirm the historicity of the narratives.
  - (h) To clarify the Scriptures and confirm the historicity of the narratives.
2. Biblical archaeology involves the following process. Put them in the right order with (1) being the first step and (5) being the last step.
  - Dating \_\_\_\_\_
  - Documentation \_\_\_\_\_
  - Excavation \_\_\_\_\_
  - Site identification \_\_\_\_\_
  - Stratification \_\_\_\_\_
3. According to archaeologist, Edwin Yamauchi, \_\_\_\_\_ percent of known sites had been meaningfully excavated as of 1973.
  - (e) Less than 2 percent
  - (f) Less than 5 percent
  - (g) Less than 7 percent
  - (h) Less than 10 percent
4. What is a tell?
  - (e) A historical explanation about a biblical site
  - (f) A Canaanite religious structure
  - (g) A fragment of an Assyrian pottery
  - (h) A small hill created by successive habitation layers

5. Which of the following two statements are true? Circle the statements.
- (e) Minimalists interpret archaeological evidence independent of the Bible.
  - (f) Maximalists believe the Bible can guide interpretations of the archaeological find.
  - (g) Maximalists interpret archaeological evidence independent of the Bible.
  - (h) Minimalists believe the Bible can guide interpretations of the archaeological find.
6. Circle the **three** ways of identifying the biblical sites:
- (a) Carbon dating of the sites
  - (b) Tracing the current names of the sites
  - (c) Description of the sites from the Bible
  - (d) Artifacts identifying the names of the sites
7. Arrange the biblical time periods in order, with (1) being the oldest and (7) being the latest:
- Babylonian Period \_\_\_\_\_
  - Bronze Age \_\_\_\_\_
  - Hasmonean Period \_\_\_\_\_
  - Hellenistic Period \_\_\_\_\_
  - Iron Age \_\_\_\_\_
  - Persian Period \_\_\_\_\_
  - Roman Period \_\_\_\_\_
8. Carbon dating is an important dating method. The main feature of carbon dating is that it is:
- (e) generally used to date remains of plants, trees, animals, and humans.
  - (f) generally used to date pottery and ceramics that were once fired at high temperatures.
  - (g) generally used for soil and pollen analysis and dating layers of rock.
  - (h) generally used for dating metals.
9. Which of the following enables archaeologists to most accurately date Old Testament events?
- (e) The Anubis Chest found in King Tut's tomb - its features bear similarities to the ark of the covenant.
  - (f) The Beni Hasan carvings found in an Egyptian tomb - the images bear similarities to the Semites coming into Egypt.
  - (g) The Eponym Canon - Assyrian record of an eclipse of the sun in Nineveh.
  - (h) Jacob's well - a working well that exists even during the New Testament period.

10. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are important to deciphering hieroglyphics and Akkadian scripts. Choose from the following:
- (e) The Behistun Rock
  - (f) The Herodium tomb
  - (g) The Magdala mosaic map
  - (h) The Rosetta Stone
11. The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in the following place
- (e) Jerusalem
  - (f) Masada
  - (g) Petra
  - (h) Qumran Caves
12. The Bible is also an archaeological artifact. True or false. \_\_\_\_\_
13. The **main** controversies surrounding Sodom and Gomorrah are whether the biblical account of devastation is a myth and \_\_\_\_\_ (select one of the following):
- (e) the location of Sodom and Gomorrah is on the north or south of the Dead Sea.
  - (f) the period of the devastation occurred during the Bronze Age or the Iron Age.
  - (g) the location of Sodom and Gomorrah is on the east or west of the Dead Sea.
  - (h) the period of the devastation occurred during the Iron Age or Babylonian Period.
14. The **main** controversies surrounding the Exodus are whether the biblical account is a myth and whether \_\_\_\_\_ (select one of the following):
- (e) the Pharaoh of the Exodus is Rameses II.
  - (f) the Israelites and the Hyksos are the same people group.
  - (g) there are multiple exoduses.
  - (h) the Israelites crossed the Red Sea or the Reed Sea.
15. Which of the following four archaeological artifacts contain the name "Israel?"  
Select all that apply:
- (f) Black Obelisk
  - (g) King David's tomb
  - (h) Moabite (Mesha) Stele
  - (i) Merneptah Stele
  - (j) Tel Dan Stele
16. Jesus was crucified, buried, and rose from
- (e) The Antonia Fortress
  - (f) The Church of the Holy Sepulchre
  - (g) The Dome of the Rock
  - (h) The Garden Tomb

17. One of the most important inventions of the Romans that enable the empire to build big cities are the \_\_\_\_\_.
18. The present day “Dome of the Rock” is built upon
- (e) Mt. Nebo
  - (f) Mt. Moriah
  - (g) Mt. Sinai
  - (h) Mt. Zion
19. What year did Herod the Great, who gave the order to kill the babies of Bethlehem, die?
- (e) 1 AD
  - (f) 1 BC
  - (g) 3 AD
  - (h) 4 BC
20. Which of the following artifacts demonstrates the existence of Pontius Pilate who prosecuted Jesus?
- (e) Caesarea Maritima stone tablet
  - (f) Gezer Inscription
  - (g) Siloam Inscription
  - (h) St. Ebal tablet

### Course Evaluation

- (1) Which percentage below best describes the extent to which this course has increased your desire to read the Old Testament?
- 0 percent
  - 25 percent
  - 50 percent
  - 75 percent
  - 100 percent
  - Other \_\_\_\_ percent
- (2) Which percentage below best describes the extent to which this course has increased your desire to read the New Testament?
- 0 percent
  - 25 percent
  - 50 percent
  - 75 percent
  - 100 percent
  - Other \_\_\_\_ percent

- (3) Which percentage below best describes the extent to which you are likely to pay more attention to details in the biblical narrative since taking this course?

0 percent  
25 percent  
50 percent  
75 percent  
100 percent  
Other \_\_\_\_ percent

- (4) Which percentage below best describes the extent to which this course has increased your faith in the authenticity of God's Word?

0 percent  
25 percent  
50 percent  
75 percent  
100 percent  
Other \_\_\_\_ percent

- (5) Which activity did you find most beneficial?

\_\_\_\_\_

- (6) How has this course impacted you?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- (7) Please include any feedback below for this course's improvement:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- (8) Would you recommend this course to your others? \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX H: INTRO TO BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

### SLIDES FOR LESSON 1 AND 2



# INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY (BI133)

Ang Eng Eng  
September 28, 2024



## 2 | Introduction to Biblical Archaeology

- Development of Biblical Archaeology
- Foundation of Biblical Archaeology
- Old Testament Archaeological Discoveries
- New Testament Archaeological Discoveries

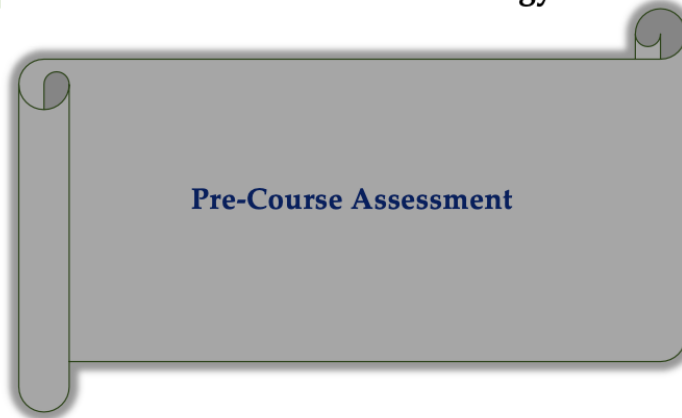
### 3 | Introduction to Biblical Archaeology



### 4 | Introduction to Biblical Archaeology



## 5 | Introduction to Biblical Archaeology



## 6 | Introduction of Biblical Archaeology

Development of Biblical Archaeology

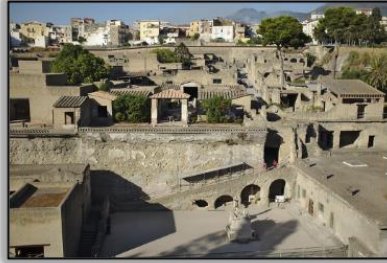
Foundation of Biblical Archaeology

Old Testament Archaeological Discoveries

New Testament Archaeological Discoveries



## 7 | Development of Biblical Archaeology



- Greek *archaiologia* – *Study of Ancient things*
- Originated **250** years ago in Italy – excavation of Pompeii and Herculaneum

## 8 | Development of Biblical Archaeology



<https://allthatsinteresting.com/bodies-of-pompeii#32>

## 9 | Development of Biblical Archaeology

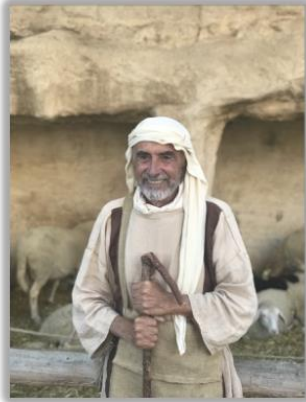


- A subset of the field of archaeology
- Bridges science of archaeology with theology

## 10 | Development of Biblical Archaeology

- Edward Robinson travelled to Palestine to identify biblical sites – 1838
- Investigation by Society – American Schools of Oriental Research – 1900
- Developed systematic excavation techniques and detailed recording systems

## 11 | Goals of Biblical Archaeology



*Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*

- Confirms the Word of God - historicity of biblical places and events
- Clarifies the World of the Bible
- Provides complementary historical, cultural, and religious information
- Enlightens our understanding of the geographical setting

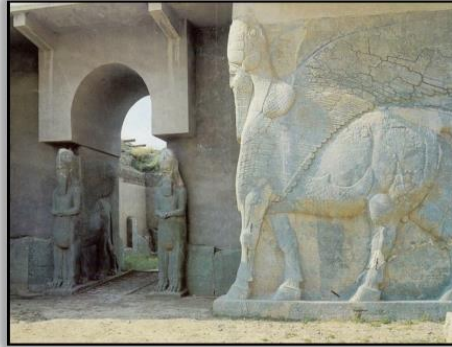
## 12 | The Stage of the Biblical Narratives



Other Religious  
Texts



### 13 | Limitations of Biblical Archaeology



Palace of [Ashurnasirpal II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palace_of_Ashurnasirpal_II) in [Nimrud](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nimrud), pictured in 2007.  
IS bulldozed and destroyed the city in March 2015  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Destruction\\_of\\_cultural\\_heritage\\_by\\_the\\_IsLAMic\\_State#/media/File:Iraq\\_Nimrud\\_-\\_Assyria\\_Lamassu's\\_Guarding\\_Palace\\_Entrance.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Destruction_of_cultural_heritage_by_the_IsLAMic_State#/media/File:Iraq_Nimrud_-_Assyria_Lamassu's_Guarding_Palace_Entrance.jpg)

#### Quality and Quantity of Archaeological Evidence

- Natural Disasters
- Wars
- Pillage
- Black Market
- Access to Sites

### 14 | Limitations of Biblical Archaeology



Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology

15 | Small % of archaeological finds – Is that a problem?



16 | Small % of archaeological finds – Is that a problem?

**Absence of Evidence  
is NOT  
Evidence of Absence**



## 17 | Limitations of Biblical Archaeology

**Cannot prove divine inspiration and miracles**

**"The stage of the Bible is historical and geographical, but its drama is divine."**



Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out*, 329.

## 18 | Interpretation of Archaeological Evidence

- **Minimalists interpret archaeological evidence independent of the Bible.**
- **Maximalists believe the Bible can guide interpretations of the archaeological find.**

## 19 | Interpretation of Archaeological Evidence

Huh, so what's the problem?



Minimalists

versus

Maximalists

Minimalist – Maximalist Debate

## 20 | Interpretation of Archaeological Evidence

### The Minimalist's Position

- "Its [archeology's] finds have revolutionized the study of early Israel and have cast serious doubt on the historical basis of such famous biblical stories as the wanderings of the patriarchs ... . Some of the most famous events in the Bible clearly never happened at all."

Israel Frankelstein, *Bible Unearthed*

## 21 | Interpretation of Archaeological Evidence

### Minimalist – Maximalist Debate

Prioritize  
skepticism,  
but remain  
unprejudiced.



**"There is no reason to shy away from looking for explicit or implicit connections between the material remains (the archaeological evidence) and the cultural and historical realia imbedded in the biblical text."**

**Aren Maeir**

Aren M. Maeir, "Stones, Bones, Texts and Relevance: Or, How I Lost My Fear of Biblical Archaeology and Started Enjoying It," in *Historical Biblical Archaeology and the Future*, ed. Thomas E. Levy (New York: Routledge, 2010), 300

## 22 | Introduction of Biblical Archaeology

Development of Biblical Archaeology

Foundation of Biblical Archaeology

Old Testament Archaeological Discoveries

New Testament Archaeological Discoveries



## 23 | Foundation of Biblical Archaeology

List of Activities

Importance of Dating

Archaeological Time Periods and Biblical History

Decipherment of Ancient Near Eastern Artifacts

Geography of Israel

## 24 | The Foundation of Biblical Archaeology – List of Activities



## 25 | Step 1 : Site Identification



**“Excavation is not a happy-go-lucky affair; it has become a science, and as such calls for careful organization.”**

**John Garstang**

## 26 | Site Identification

### STEP 1: Where to begin?



**“A Tell is a small hill created by successive habitation layers deposited through destruction and abandonment from manmade and natural disasters.”**

## 27 | Site Identification

Where to begin? 3 WAYS



### I. BIBLICAL SOURCE

In 1937, Rabbi Glueck discovered Ezion Geber from the Bible (1 Kgs 9:26; 10:22)

## 28 | Site Identification

Where to start? 3 WAYS



### II. WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Arabic Names

*Beitin* = *Bethel*

*Acre* = *Akko*

*Seilan* = *Shiloh*

*Saffurieyeh* = *Sepphoris*

## 29 | Site Identification

- Where to start? 3 WAYS (III) In-situ Artifacts



To the God who is in Dan...

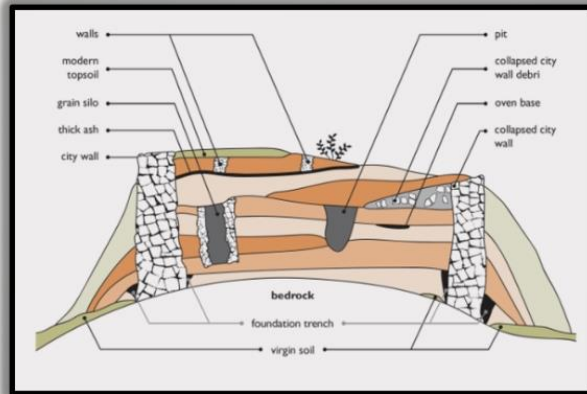
## 30 | Step 2: Excavation



Open  
Area  
vs  
Wheeler  
Kenyon  
Method

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wheeler-Kenyon\\_method#/media/File:Moza-449.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wheeler-Kenyon_method#/media/File:Moza-449.jpg)

### 31 | Step 3: Stratification



*Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*

### 32 | Step 4: Documentation



Lays the foundation for  
all subsequent analysis  
including dating and  
interpretation

### 33 | Step 5 – Dating the Artifact



- C-14 Carbon Dating
- Thermoluminescence dating
- Dendrochronology
- Soil and pollen analysis
- Coins
- Relative dating (Pottery)

### 34 | Actual and Relative Dating



Silver shekel from the first year of the  
First Jewish Revolt AD 66

Guess how much this shekel was sold for?

Coins often bear dates, inscriptions, and images of rulers, which can be precisely linked to particular timeframes.

Archaeology of the Bible.

### 35 | Pottery – Relative Dating



Sidnie White Crawford, "A View from the Caves," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 37, no. 5 (2011): 30-39, 69.



- Corroborate with biblical accounts
- Identify layer of stratification

### 36 | Interpreting the Data



**Exact Science**

OR

**Interpretive Art** based on Logic, Deduction, and Intuition.

OR

**Dangerous Art?**



"(Archaeology) is a political jungle... Indeed, the higher stakes only intensify the political animosities."

Adam Mikaya, "The Politics of Ebla," "

### 37 | Discuss the following Video

[https://youtu.be/y3pX2Flc8YQ?si=D\\_cDlPGKmknQ8F8y](https://youtu.be/y3pX2Flc8YQ?si=D_cDlPGKmknQ8F8y)

### 38 | Archaeological Time Periods

Stone Age

Chalcolithic Age (4500- 3300BC)

Bronze Age (ca. 3300-2950 BC) - (ca. 1290-1177 BC)

Iron Age (ca. 1177-1100 BC) - (ca. 722-587/6 BC)

Babylonian Period (587/6 - 538 BC)

Persian Period (538 - 330 BC)

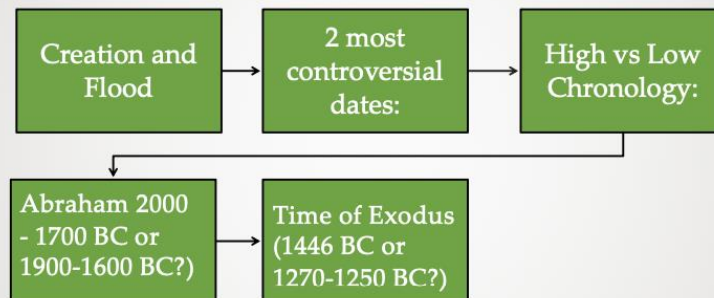
Hellenistic Period (330 - 149 BC)

Hasmonean Period (167 - 37 BC)

Roman Period (Byzantine Period) (149 BC - AD 637)



### 39 | Controversies of dating Biblical Events



### 40 | Dating Biblical Events

Chronology – How do we know what we know?



What do the moon and the stars have to do with biblical chronology?

## 41 | Dating Biblical Events



### Assyrian Eponym Canon

Eponymate records the chronology of significant events and kings in Assyria, " ... the eponymate of Bur-sagale, of Guzan, revolt in the citadel of Assur; in the month of Siwan there was an eclipse of the sun."

Modern astronomical calculations ascertained that the eclipse occurred in **763 BC.**

## 42 | Assyrian Eponym Canon vs Biblical Records



"In King Hezekiah's fourth year, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, **Shalmaneser king of Assyria** marched against Samaria and laid siege to it. At the **end of three years** the Assyrians took it" (2 Kgs 18:9-10).

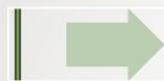
"One day, while he (Sennacherib) was worshipping in the temple of his god Nisrok, his sons Adrammelek and Sharezer killed him with the sword, and they escaped to the land of Ararat" (2 Kgs 19:36-37).

### 43 | The Prophecy of Isaiah

Isaiah 37:29  
(Isaiah to  
Sennacherib)

"Because you rage against me  
and because your  
insolence has reached my ears,  
I will put my hook in your nose  
and my bit in your mouth,  
and I will make you return  
by the way you came."

### 44 | Assyrian Eponym Canon vs Biblical Records



598/597 BC Babylonian king  
took Judah

Eponym: "the king of Babylonia ... set his camp against the city of Judah ... he took the city and captured the king. He appointed a king of his choosing there, took heavy tribute and returned to Babylon."

"At that time the officers of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon advanced on Jerusalem and laid siege to it, ... Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin captive to Babylon ... . The king of Babylon also deported to Babylon the entire force of seven thousand fighting men, strong and fit for war, and a thousand skilled workers and artisans. He made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah (2 Kgs 24:10, 15-17).

Halla, Context of Scripture.

#### 45 | Deciphering Ancient Near East Languages



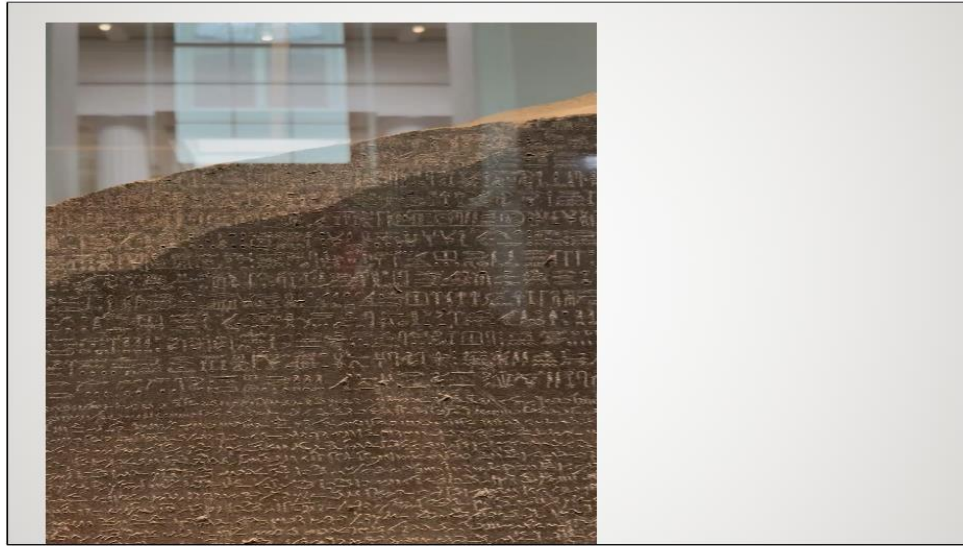
#### 46 | Deciphering Ancient Near East Languages



##### **The Rosetta Stone**

Decree written in three languages:

- Egyptian Hieroglyphic
- Egyptian Demotic Scripts
- Ancient Greek



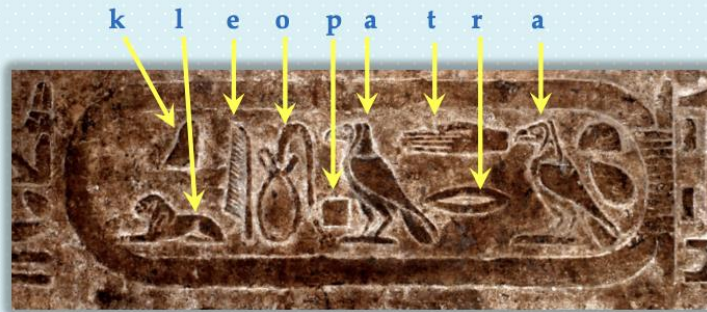
48 | Deciphering Ancient Near East Languages



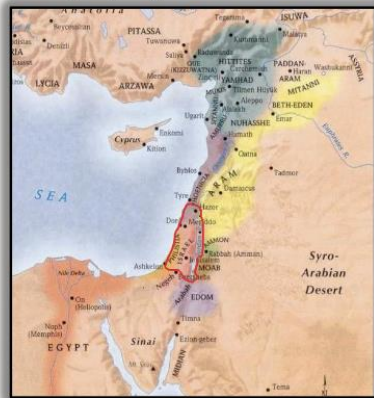
**The Rock of Behistun**  
Old Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian



## 49 | Quiz # 2

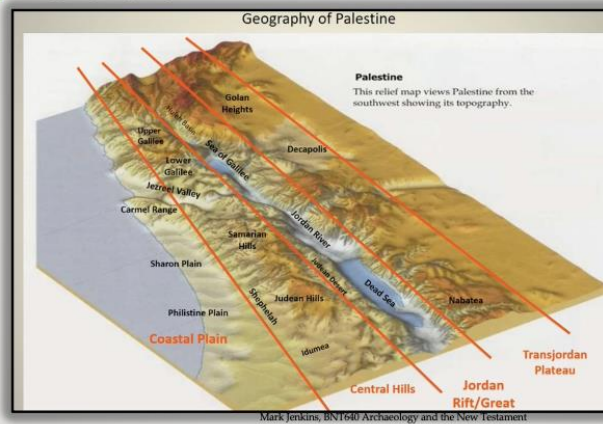
**HIEROGLYPHICS  
QUIZ**

## 50 | Geography of Israel



- Nestled between two superpowers: Egypt Assyria/ Babylon/Persia
- Biblical history intertwines with Assyrian/Babylonian/ Egyptian/Persian history

## 51 | Topography of Palestine



## 52 | Map Test – Locate the following places

Dan	Lachish	Jerusalem	Shiloh	Shechem
Jericho	Beersheba	Tyre	Bethlehem	Via Maris (Rd)
Megiddo	King's Highway (Rd)	Sea of Galilee	Dead Sea	Hebron
Mt. Ebal	Mt. Gerazim	Bethel	Peniel	Jordan River

53 | **Introduction of Biblical Archaeology**

Development of Biblical Archaeology

Foundation of Biblical Archaeology

Old Testament Archaeological Discoveries

New Testament Archaeological Discoveries

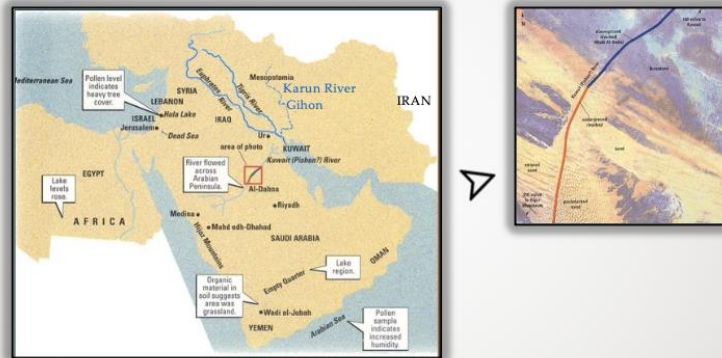
**SECTION A:  
BIBLICAL  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
DISCOVERIES AND  
THE  
OLD TESTAMENT  
(Pentateuch and Joshua)**







## 57 | The Genesis of the Garden of Eden



Sauer, "River Runs Dry," 52, 54, 57, 64.

## 58 | Where Did the Gold Come From?



Then King David said to the whole assembly: "My son Solomon, the one whom God has chosen, is young and inexperienced. The task is great, because this palatial structure is not for man but for the Lord. I now give my personal treasures of gold and silver for the temple of my God ... three thousand talents of gold (gold of Ophir) and seven thousand talents of refined silver, for the overlaying of the walls of the buildings (1 Chron 29:1, 3, 4).

## 59 | Where Did the Gold Come From?



“King Solomon also built ships at Ezion Geber, which is near Elath in Edom, on the shore of the Red Sea. And Hiram sent his men—sailors who knew the sea—to serve in the fleet with Solomon’s men. They sailed to Ophir and brought back 420 talents of gold, which they delivered to King Solomon” (1 Kgs 9:26-28).

“Hiram’s ships brought gold from Ophir; and from there they brought great cargoes of almugwood and precious stones. ... The weight of the gold that Solomon received yearly was 666 talents, not including the revenues from merchants and traders and from all the Arabian kings and the governors of the territories” (1 Kgs 10:11, 14, 15).

## 60 | What Happened to Solomon’s Gold?



“In the fifth year of Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem. He carried off the treasures of the Temple of the Lord and the treasures of the royal palace. He took everything, including all the gold shields Solomon had made” (1 Kgs 14:25-26).

<https://library.biblicalarchaeology.org/sidebar/where-did-solomons-gold-go/>

## 61 | Creation Accounts from Assyria and Babylon

### Genesis 1 - 2



CREATION – Discovery of the Enuma Elish tablet from the library of Ashurbanipal

The different gods fought and Marduk defeats the goddess Tiamat and uses her body to form the heavens and earth.

Marduk creates humanity to serve the gods and him as the supreme deity. Marduk captures Kingu, executes him, and then uses his blood mixed with clay to form the first humans to serve the gods, taking on the labor that the gods no longer wish to do themselves.

## 62 | The Flood – Genesis 6-8



### The Epic of Atrahasis

The lesser gods, overwhelmed by labor, rebel, prompting Enki to create humans to take over their work. When Enlil plans to destroy overpopulated humanity with a flood, Atrahasis is warned by Enki, builds an ark, and survives, leading to a new divine agreement on human mortality and procreation.

63

## The Flood – Genesis 6-8



### The Epic of Gilgamesh

Utnapishtim was warned in secret by the god, Ea, to build a boat for humans and animals. Birds were released before the boat landed safely on Mt. Nisir.

64

## The Flood – Genesis 6 – 8

### Oldest map in the world



Mentions Urartu  
= Ararat



65 | The Flood – Genesis 6-8

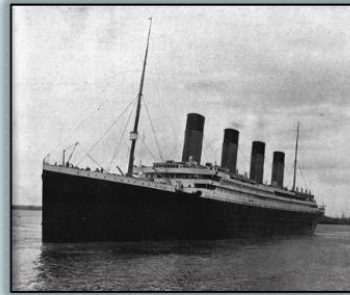


Did the Bible copy from the Assyrian/  
Babylonian creation and fall accounts?

OR

Did these accounts point to an actual event?

66 | Quiz# 3 – Which is bigger? Noah's Ark or the Titanic?



67 | Is Abraham a Historical Figure? Gen 9 - 25



"The patriarchs' acts are not history in the sense we understand the word today; they are an attempt to establish a literary tradition."

*Israel Finkelstein, The Bible Unearthed*

Do we have any extrabiblical evidence of the existence of Abraham?

68 | Is Abraham a Historical Figure? Gen 9 - 25



The Fort of Abram

Yigal Levin, "Did Pharaoh Sheshonq Attack Jerusalem?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 38, no. 4 (2012): 43-45, 48-52.

### 69 | The Fort of Abram in the Negev



<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdf/10.1086/360524>

"Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?" (Amos 9:7).

### 70 | Tombs of the Patriarchs - Hebron





## 71 | Genesis - Abraham



### The Code of Hammurabi

"Hammurabi law 170 stipulates that when a man has children by both the first wife and a surrogate, the children 'shall equally divide the property of the paternal estate'. The son of the first, however takes the first share."

Another clause in the Code of Hammurabi allows parents to exclude the children of the surrogate mother and secure the inheritance for their biological son by granting freedom to the enslaved person and her children.

Hammurabi, "The Code of Hammurabi," University of Chicago Press, accessed June 21, 2024, <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/hammurabi-the-code-of-hammurabi>.

## 72 | Sodom and Gomorrah



### Question: North or South of the Dead Sea?

Sodom = Bad edh-Dhra  
Gomorrah = Numeira  
Zoar – Ghor es=Safi

Admah and Zeboiim?

### 73 | Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah – Fact or Myth?

Video by Joel Kramer on Sodom and Gomorrah.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjPcSQUY2W0&t=46s>

Start at 10:59 mark

### 74 | Sodom and Gomorrah



Steve Collins (2005) – Tall el-Hammam in the north of Dead Sea

“Lot looked around and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan toward Zoar was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east” (Gen 13:10-11).

## 75 | Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah – Fact or Myth?



The archaeological site of Tall el-Hammam, Jordan that overlooks the Jordan Valley

Steve Collins and the Discovery of Sodom

- Top layer Iron Age (1000 BC), missing 600 years, next layer thick layer of ash from 1700 BC
- Piece of pottery – one side glazed, the other side pottery
- Trinitite (Lab test in USA) – 20000 F
- Lot's gate

## 76 | Comparing Tell el-Hammam (Sodom?) with Tunguska



## 77 | Comparing Tell el-Hamman (Sodom?) with Tunguska



<https://www.nasa.gov/history/115-years-ago-the-tunguska-asteroid-impact-event/>

"Scientists have found compelling evidence that **Tel el-Hamman**, a city in what is now Jordan, flourished for 3,000 years before a **cataclysmic event around 1,650 B.C.E.** devastated it. Evidence points to an **airburst asteroid impact** somewhat larger than the **Tunguska event** as the most likely cause of the devastation. The area remained unoccupied for 300 to 600 years after the event, possibly due to drastic changes in the soil's fertility resulting from the impact. Fifteen nearby cities, including Jericho and Tall Nimrin, and more than 100 smaller villages, appear to have suffered a similar fate at the same time."

## 78 | Remember Lot's wife... – A pillar of salt?



"But Lot's wife, from behind him, looked *back*, and she became a pillar of salt" (Gen 19:26, NASB).

"But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. ... It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day no one who is on the housetop, with possessions inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. **Remember Lot's wife!** (Luke 17:29-32).

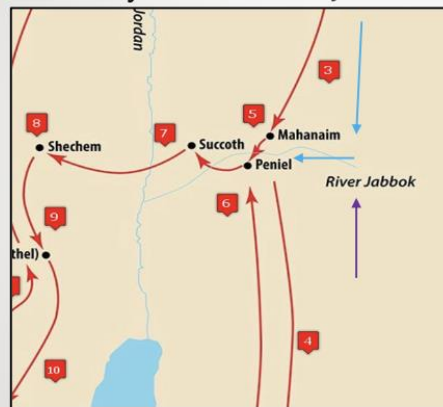
## 79 | The story of Rachel and Jacob



Why did Rachel steal her father's household gods?

Robert Boyd, *Tells, Tombs, and Treasure: A Pictorial Guide to Biblical Archaeology*

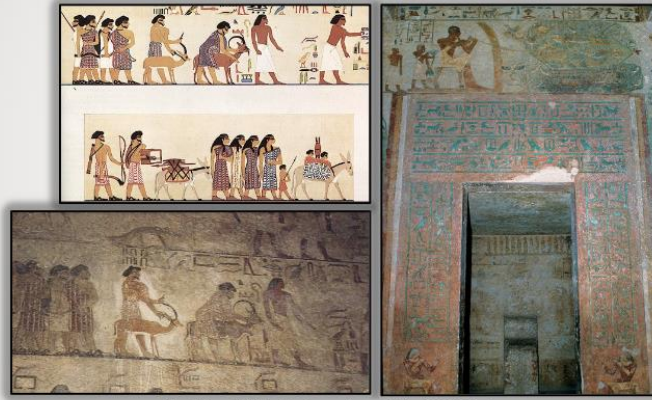
## 80 | The Story of Rachel and Jacob



<https://biblemaps.com/jacobs-travel-2/>

Peniel – Where Jacob wrestled with God

## 81 | Does Archaeology Confirm Joseph's Time in Egypt?



Beni  
Hasan  
tomb

<https://library.biblicalarchaeology.org/images/bbkra0000040021jpg/>

## 82 | The Exodus – The Big Questions

Was there an exodus?

Who is the Pharaoh of the exodus?

Exodus Route - Where did they cross over  
from Egypt to Canaan?

Where is Mt. Sinai?



### 83 | Why a Historical Exodus Matters



*"The biblical evidence for the exodus and wilderness periods . . . so overwhelmingly supports the historicity of these events that the priests, prophets, psalmists, people of Israel, and foreigners believed these events occurred, and consequently they celebrated festivals, sang songs, dated events, and observed laws that assumed that Yahweh's salvation from Egypt was authentic." —James Hoffmeier*

### 84 | Evidence of the Exodus



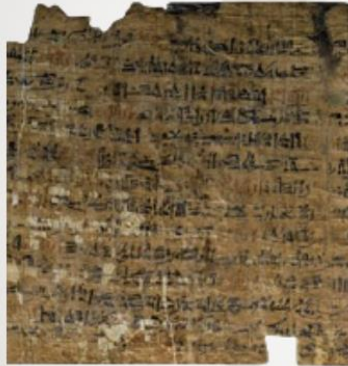
**Anubis  
Chest**

**vs**

**Ark of the  
Covenant**

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-artifacts/artifacts-and-the-bible/ark-of-the-covenant-in-egyptian-context/>

## 85 | The Ipuwer Papyrus and the Ten Plagues



- "The river is blood. If you drink of it, you lose your humanity, and thirst for water." (Ipuwer 2:10)" 2:6—Blood is everywhere.
- "The river was turned to blood. Blood throughout all the land of Egypt" (Exod 7:20-21).

## 86 | Ipuwer Papyrus and the Ten Plagues

Papyrus 2:10—Gates, columns and walls are consumed by fire.

- "And the fire ran along the ground" (Exod 9:23-24).

Papyrus 4:14—Trees are destroyed

- "And the hail ... broke every tree in the field" (Exod 9:25).

Papyrus 9:11—The land is not light.

- "And Moses stretched forth his hand ... and there was a thick darkness (Exod 10:22).

Papyrus 2:13—He who places his brother in the ground is everywhere.

- "For there was not a house where there was not one dead" (Exod 12:30).



## 87 | Ipuwer Papyrus and the 10 Plagues

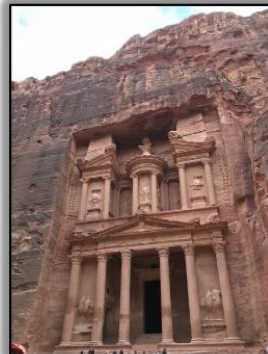


Papyrus - Gold and lapis lazuli, silver and malachites, carnelian, and bronze, are on the necks of female slaves.



"They had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing" (Exod 12:35-36).

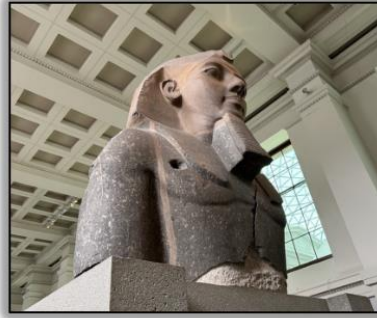
## 88 | The Route of the Exodus Petra and Wadi Musa



89 | Main Controversy Regarding the Exodus  
- Who is the Pharaoh of the Exodus?



Amenhotep II (Early Date: 15<sup>th</sup> cent BC)



Ramses II (Late Date: 13<sup>th</sup> cent BC)

90 | Argument for 1270 to 1250 BC Exodus

"When Joshua had grown old, the Lord said to him, 'You are now very old, and there are still very large areas of land to be taken over. This is the land that remains: all the regions of the Philistines'" (Josh 13:1-2).

Philistines only came to the Levant in the twelfth century (1100 to 1200 BC).

The cities of Pithom and Rameses exist only in the thirteenth century.

"So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh" (Exod 1:11).

## 91 | Argument for 1446 BC exodus

"In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites came out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the Lord" (1 Kgs 6:1).

$479 + 967 \text{ BC (the year Solomon built the temple)} = 1446 \text{ BC.}$



## 92 | Argument for 1446 BC Exodus

Pharaoh during Moses's exile must have long life – Thutmose III

Pharaoh during the exodus lost his firstborn son during the plague.

Amenhotep II - Successor Thutmose IV (There is no mention that he was the firstborn son.) (Dream Stele)

Amenhotep II's second campaign in 1446 BC Nov - > 100,000 slaves

<https://biblearchaeology.org/research/book-video-reviews/1996-book-review-origins-of-the-hebrews-new-evidence-of-israelites-in-egypt-from-joseph-to-the-exodus>

### 93 | Extrabiblical Argument for 1446 BC Exodus

#### The Soleb Inscription



The nomads  
of Yahweh



<https://armstronginstitute.org/766-the-soleb-inscription-earliest-discovered-use-of-the-name-yahweh/>...not-The%20Yahweh%20inscription%20fact%20directly,feature%20not%20the%20god%20Yahweh.

### 94 | Psalm 135:13



**“Yahweh, Your name  
endures forever, Your  
reputation, Yahweh,  
through all generations”  
(Ps 135:13, HCSB).**

95 |

5 Oct 2024

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**SECTION B:  
BIBLICAL  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
DISCOVERIES AND  
THE  
OLD TESTAMENT  
(Cities, Prophets, and  
Kings)**

5 Oct 2024



## 101 | Excavation of Tel Balata - Shechem

5 Oct 2024

Excavation of the site aligns with Judges 9:6, which records Abimelech's (illegitimate son of Gideon who killed seventy of his brothers) destruction of Shechem's cultic temple by fire (Judg 9:46-49)

1956-57 excavations showed that walls were reinforced 920 BC. This excavation suggests that it was briefly King Jeroboam's capital (1 Kgs 12:25)

<https://armstronginstitute.org/847-uncovering-the-bibles-buried-cities-shechem>

## 102 | What's so special about Shechem ?

5 Oct 2024

Abram (Gen 12:6-7) - First promise of God: Land to his offspring

Jacob bought land (Gen 33:18-20) and built Jacob's well

Jacob buried household's foreign gods (Gen 35:4)

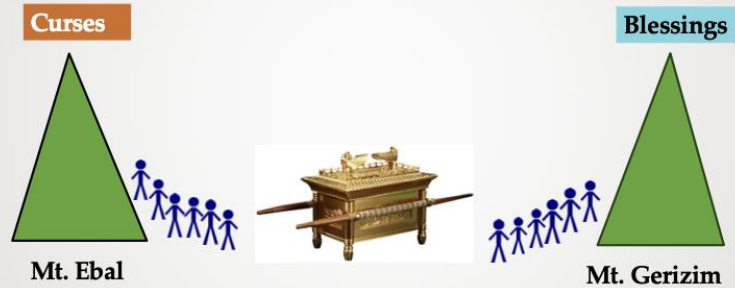
"And I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you have lived in them; you are eating of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant. Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and do away with the gods which your fathers served beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord" (Josh 24:13-14).



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### 103 | What's so special about Shechem ?

#### Joshua 24



5 Oct 2024

### 104 | Woman at Jacob's Well in Sychar



- Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there ... . Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. **God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth"** (John 4:4-6, 23-24).

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### 105 | What's so special about Shechem ?

Abram (Gen 12:6-7) -  
First promise of God:  
Land to his offspring

Jacob bought land  
(Gen 33:18-20) and  
built Jacob's well

Jacob buried  
household's  
foreign gods  
(Gen 35:4)

"Serve Him in sincerity and truth;  
and do away with the gods which  
your fathers served beyond  
the Euphrates River and in Egypt,  
and serve the Lord" (Josh 24:13-14).

Jesus and woman at the well:  
"God is spirit, and his  
worshippers must worship in  
the Spirit and in truth"  
(John 4:24)

5 Oct 2024

### 106 | Jacob's Well at Nablus



[http://www.lifeintheholyland.com/woman\\_at\\_the\\_well/](http://www.lifeintheholyland.com/woman_at_the_well/)





5 Oct 2024

109

**Biblical City of Gezer -****Have the sins of the Amorites reached its full measure ?**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R.\\_A.\\_Stewart\\_Macalister](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R._A._Stewart_Macalister)

- Numbers 13:29 – Amorites live in the hill country
- Exodus 23 – Amorites have sacred stones
- Sacrifice to Molek (serpent)
- Deuteronomy 12:31 They burn their sons and daughters as sacrifices
- Macalister's findings

5 Oct 2024

110

**Solomonic Walls at Gezer**

**Aerial view of the palatial building found in ancient Gezer, which archaeologists have tentatively dated to King Solomon's time.**

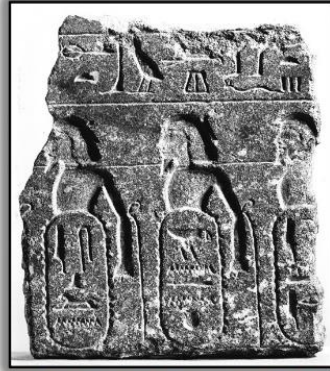
Credit: Tel Gezer Excavation Project, Steven M. Ortiz

<https://www.haaretz.com/archaeology/2016-08-31/ty-article/king-solomon-era-palace-found-in-biblical-gezer/000017f-441d-dc28-a17f-fc3f56350000>

**“(Pharaoh king of Egypt had attacked and captured Gezer ... then gave it as a wedding gift to his daughter, Solomon's wife. And Solomon rebuilt Gezer) (1 Kgs 9:16-17).**

5 Oct 2024

### 111 | Archaeological Evidence of Nation of Israel



Hershel Shanks, "When Did Ancient Israel Begin?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 38, no. 1 (2012): 59-62, 67.

5 Oct 2024

### 112 | Extrabiblical Evidence of The Name "Israel"

Tel Dan Stele (9<sup>th</sup> century BC)

Moabite (Mesha) Stele (9<sup>th</sup> century BC)

Kurkh Monolith (9<sup>th</sup> century BC)

The Black Obelisk

Merneptah Stele (13<sup>th</sup> century BC)



5 Oct 2024

### 113 | Extrabiblical Evidence of Israel – Tel Dan Stele

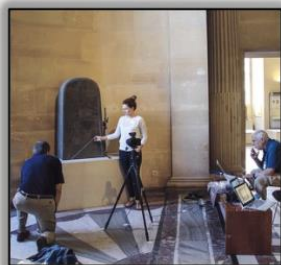


- 9<sup>th</sup> Century BC
- 2 Kings 8:28-9:28
- Likely King Hazael
- Joram, Ahaziah, and the House of David, Jehu mentioned on the Tel Dan Stele

André Lemaire and Jean-Philippe Delorme, "Mesha's Stele and the House of David," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 48, no. 4 (2022): 34-41.

5 Oct 2024

### 114 | Extrabiblical Evidence of Israel – Moabite Stele



- 9<sup>th</sup> century BC
- Mesha also claims that "Israel was utterly destroyed forever" (line 7)

House  
of  
David



André Lemaire and Jean-Philippe Delorme, "Mesha's Stele and the House of David," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 48, no. 4 (2022): 34-41.

5 Oct 2024

## 115 | The Extrabiblical Evidence of Israel – Kurkh Monolith



- 9<sup>th</sup> century BC
- Shalmaneser III
- “[Karkara] brought along to help him ... 10,000 foot soldiers of Ahab, the Israelite

Baruch Halpern, “Erasing History,” *Bible Review* 11, no. 6 (1995): 26, 28-29, 31-35, 47.

5 Oct 2024

## 116 | The Extrabiblical Evidence of Israel : The Black Obelisk



“The tribute of Jehu, son of Omri,” an event dated to about 841 B.C”  
 Son of Omri = Israelite

Erika Bleibtreu, “Grisly Assyrian Record of Torture and Death,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 17.1 (1991): 52, 54–55, 57–58, 60–61.

5 Oct 2024

## 117 | Extrabiblical Evidence of Israel- The Mernapteh Stele

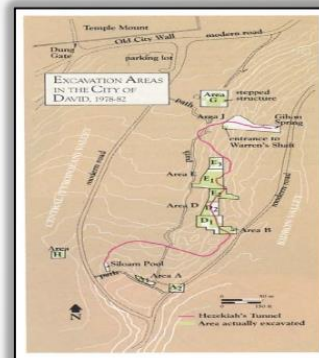
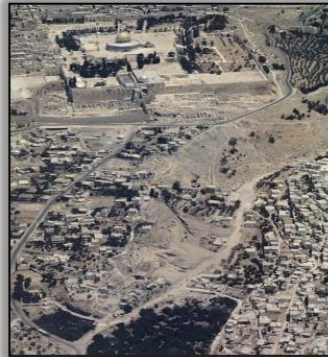


- 13<sup>th</sup> century BC
- The oldest extrabiblical evidence
- Israel is desolated, her seed is not.

Hershel Shanks, "Face to Face: Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 23, no. 4 (1997): 26-29, 32-38, 40-42, 66.

5 Oct 2024

## 118 | City of David





5 Oct 2024

## 119 | City of David - Prophet Jeremiah's Enemies



**Bullae found :**  
**Jer 37:3 Jehucal son**  
**of Shelemiah (left)**  
**and Jer 38:1**  
**Gedaliah son of**  
**Pashur (right).**

"Seals of Jeremiah's Captors Who Urged Imprisonment," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 41, no. 5 (2015): 18.

5 Oct 2024

## 120 | King Solomon's building Projects

- The First Temple
- Ezion Geber
- Solomon's Palace
- House of Pharaoh's daughter



5 Oct 2024

## 121 | King Jeroboam and the Temple of Dan



5 Oct 2024

## 122 | Tel Dan - Laish



**Was Abraham here?**

5 Oct 2024

### 123 | Quiz # 4

Who was the famous crime writer who married archaeologist Max Mallowan, famous for his digs in ancient Nimrud (Iraq)?



5 Oct 2024

### 124 | King Hezekiah



- Seal of Hezekiah discovered in 2015 in Ophel

"Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him" (2 Kgs 18:5).

"Royal Seal of King Hezekiah Comes to Light in Jerusalem Excavation," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 42, no. 2 (2016): 12.

5 Oct 2024

## 125 | King Hezekiah's Tunnel in Jerusalem



Hezekiah's Tunnel  
(2 Kgs 20:20)



Taylor Prism  
(Annals of Sennacherib)

5 Oct 2024

## 126 | Hezekiah's Tunnel: Siloam Inscription



5 Oct 2024

### 127 | Hezekiah and the Siege of Lachish



"Later, when Sennacherib king of Assyria and all his forces were laying siege to Lachish, he sent his officers to Jerusalem with this message for Hezekiah king of Judah and for all the people of Judah who were there" (2 Chron 32:9).

Kern, Paul Bentley. "Under Siege!" *Archaeology Odyssey* 71 (2004): 40-47, 61.

5 Oct 2024

### 128 | Jonah, Nahum, and Nineveh



"Forty days from now, Nineveh will be destroyed!" Jon 3:4  
Nahum's Prophecy-Destruction of Nineveh

5 Oct 2024

## 129 | Nebuchadnezzar and the last king of Judah



"Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin captive to Babylon ... He made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah" (2 Kgs 24:15-17).

5 Oct 2024

## 130 | Nebuchadnezzar and the last king of Judah



"In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the year Awel-Marduk became king of Babylon, he released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison ... . So Jehoiachin ... ate regularly at the king's table ... the king gave Jehoiachin a regular allowance as long as he lived" (2 Kgs 25:27-30).

Louvre Museum: Ration tablet for Jehoiachin



5 Oct 2024

### 131 | Prophet Daniel – History or Myth?

Is the book of Daniel a sixth-century BC historical event or a second-century BC invention?

What has biblical archaeology uncovered?

5 Oct 2024

### 132 | Daniel and Belshazzar - The writing is on the wall



Nabonidus Cylinder

"Now I have heard that you are able to give interpretations and to solve difficult problems. If you can read this writing and tell me what it means, you will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around your neck, and you will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom" (Dan 5:16).

Alan R. Millard, "Daniel and Belshazzar in History," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 11, no. 3 (1985): 72-78.

5 Oct 2024

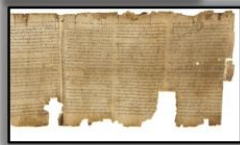
### 133 | Cyrus Cylinder and the return of Jews



- "In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia ..., the Lord roused the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia to issue a proclamation ... by word of mouth and in writing ... 'Anyone of you of all His people ... let him go up to Jerusalem that is in Judah and build the House of the Lord God of Israel'" (Ezra 1:2-3, JPS).

5 Oct 2024

### 134 | Qumran Caves and the Dead Sea Scrolls





135 | Introduction of Biblical Archaeology

5 Oct 2024

Development of Biblical Archaeology

Foundation of Biblical Archaeology

Old Testament Archaeological Discoveries

New Testament Archaeological Discoveries

136 | Part IV: Biblical Archaeological Discoveries and the New Testament

5 Oct 2024

**Is Jesus a historical figure?**

*"From a purely archaeological standpoint, there is no direct evidence that Jesus ever existed."*

Israel Finkelstein



5 Oct 2024

## 137 | The Roman Empire

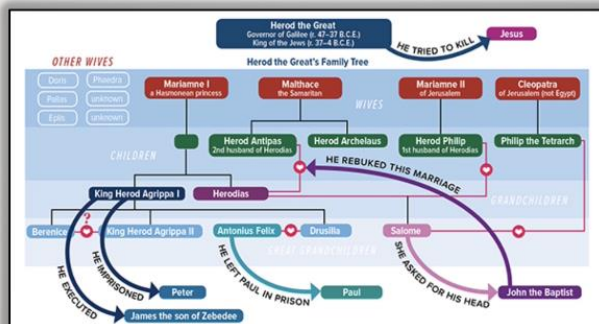
### The Roman Empire's Biggest Invention - Aqueduct



5 Oct 2024

## 138 | Herod the Great and His Descendants

Herod died 4 B.C.



<https://library.biblicalarchaeology.org/images/baba00000000.jpg/>

5 Oct 2024

### 139 | Herod the Great's Building Projects



Expanded the  
Second Temple  
built by  
Zerubbabel



Built  
Caesarea  
Maritima



Masada (near  
Qumran Caves)

5 Oct 2024

### 140 | Herod – Expansion of Zerubbabel's Second Temple



Western Wall



Model of the Herodian Temple

5 Oct 2024

### 141 | Herod's Building Project – Caesarea Maritima



Pontius Pilate found at  
Caesarea Maritima!



5 Oct 2024

### 142 | Herod's Building Project - Masada



Herod's palace /  
fortress

5 Oct 2024

### 143 | The Birth of Christ – Church of Nativity in Bethlehem



"The Church of the Nativity is built on the site traditionally where Jesus was born. Historically it's got really good credibility as being the place where Jesus' family lived, and he was born right here."

Dr Joan Taylor, historian and co-director of the archaeology dig at the Church of the Nativity

5 Oct 2024

### 144 | Ministry of Christ – Peter's House in Capernaum



5 Oct 2024

### 145 | Ministry of Jesus – The Fishing Boat



5 Oct 2024

### 146 | Christ's Crucifixion, Burial and Resurrection - Church of the Holy Sepulchre



VS



5 Oct 2024

## 147 | Heel of Crucified Man



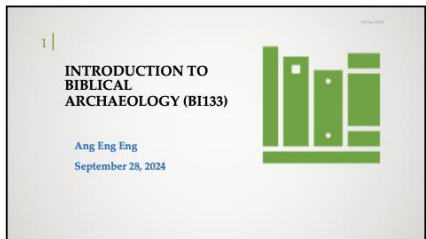
Discovered in 1968 in  
Jerusalem's Jewish  
cemetery

Vassilios Tzaferis, "Crucifixion—The Archaeological Evidence," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 11.1 (1985): 44–53.



APPENDIX I: SAMPLE OF STUDENT HANDOUTS\_SEP 28, 2024

28 Sep 2024



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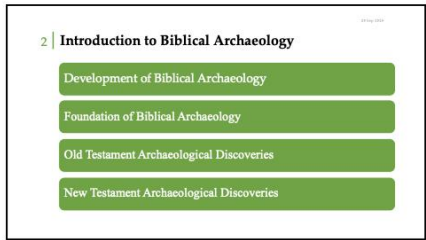
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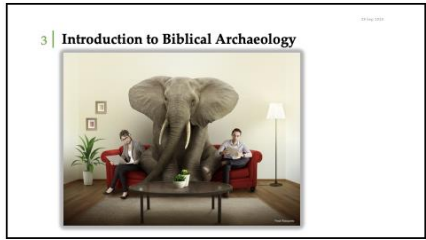
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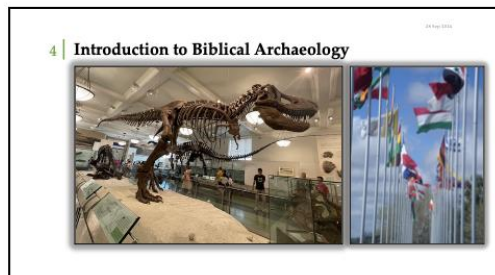
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28 Sep 2024



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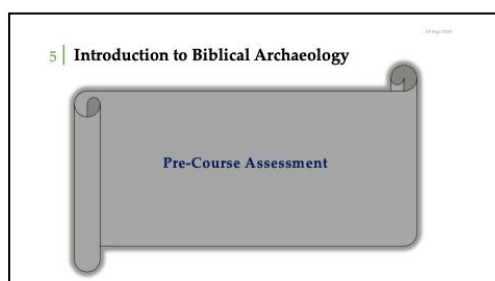
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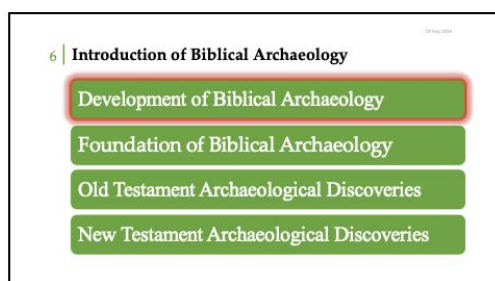
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## APPENDIX J: SAMPLE OF STUDENT HANDOUTS\_OCT 5, 2024

5 Oct 2024

100 | SECTION B:  
BIBLICAL  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
DISCOVERIES AND  
THE  
OLD TESTAMENT  
(Cities, Prophets, and  
Kings)



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101 | Excavation of Tel Balata - Shechem

Excavation of the site aligns with Judges 9:6, which records Abimelech's (illegitimate son of Gideon who killed seventy of his brothers) destruction of Shechem's cultic temple by fire (Judg 9:46-49)

1956-57 excavations showed that walls were reinforced 920 BC. This excavation suggests that it was briefly King Jeroboam's capital (1 Kgs 12:25)

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/ancient-israel-and-the-bible/ancient-shechem/>

101

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102 | What's so special about Shechem ?

Abram (Gen 12:6-7) - First promise of God: Land to his offspring

Jacob bought land (Gen 33:18-20) and built Jacob's well

Jacob buried household's foreign gods (Gen 35:4)

"And I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you have lived in them; you are eating of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant. Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth, and do away with the gods which your fathers served beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord" (Josh 24:13-14).

102

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103 | What's so special about Shechem ?

Joshua 24


Curses



Mt. Ebal



Blessings



Mt. Gerizim

103

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104 | Woman at Jacob's Well in Sychar



• Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there ... . Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth" (John 4:4-6, 23-24).

104

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105 | What's so special about Shechem ?

Abram (Gen 12:6-7) - First promise of God: Land to his offspring

Jacob bought land (Gen 33:18-20) and built Jacob's well

Jacob buried household's foreign gods (Gen 35:4)

"Serve Him in sincerity and truth; and do away with the gods which your fathers served beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord" (Josh 24:13-14).

Jesus and woman at the well: "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth" (John 4:24)

105

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## APPENDIX K: SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

### Introduction to Biblical Archaeology

#### Supplemental Instructor's Guide

**Slide 1**

Cover Page

**Slide 2**

Introduction to Biblical Archaeology - Overview

**Slide 3**

First, remove the elephants in the room.

**Slide 4**

Lessons preclude discussion on dinosaurs and current politics.

**Slide 5**

Pre-Course Assessment

**Slide 6**

Development of Biblical Archaeology

**Slide 7**

“The word ‘archaeology’ is formed from the Greek words *archaios* (‘ancient’) and *logia* (‘word, study of’). The Greek term *archaiologia* (‘archaeology’) is a word about or a study of ancient history or culture and the places from which they derive.”<sup>1</sup>

**Slide 8**

This is a picture of a dog frozen in time discovered during the excavation of Pompeii.

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<sup>1</sup> Randall Price and H. Wayne House, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2017), chap.1, Kindle.

**Slide 9**

“Biblical Archaeology is a subset of the field of archaeology. It bridges the science of archaeology with theology.”<sup>2</sup> Picture of the archaeologists: Left to Right (Aren Maeir, Amihali Mazar, and AGTS professor, Dr. Mark Jenkins).

Integrating archaeological studies into biblical and theological studies provides historical and literary context, enlightening the reader on the biblical text. Nevertheless, given the rise of open hostility toward the Bible over the past two hundred years, Christians have historically approached archaeology as a tool to authenticate biblical events against such criticism. The eagerness to connect a discovery with the Bible can lead to unwarranted conclusions, result in misinformed readers, and harm the theological process.

**Slide 10**

Biblical archaeology began when Edward Robinson travelled to Palestine to identify biblical sites in 1838.<sup>3</sup> A prominent society that investigates biblical archaeology is the American Schools of Oriental Research that began in 1900.<sup>4</sup> Archaeologists developed systematic excavation techniques and detailed recording systems in the 1960s.<sup>5</sup>

**Slide 11**

The goals of biblical archaeology

**Slide 12**

Compared to other religious texts, the Bible contains thousands of references to people and places.

**Slide 13**

The limitations of biblical archaeology

**Slide 14**

The limitations of biblical archaeology

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Maxwell Miller, “Biblical Maps,” *Bible Review* 3, no. 4 (1987): 32-41.

<sup>4</sup> ASOR, “About American Society of Overseas Research (ASOR),” *American Society of Overseas Research (ASOR)*, January 5, 2017, accessed August 30, 2024, <https://www.asor.org/about-asor/>.

<sup>5</sup> Keith J. Fitzpatrick-Matthews, “Archaeological Recording System,” *North Hertfordshire District Council Museums Service*, 2010, accessed August 29, 2024, [https://nortoncommarch.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/recording\\_system.pdf](https://nortoncommarch.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/recording_system.pdf).

**Slide 15**

Does a small percent of archaeological finds mean we cannot trust the historicity of the Bible? Joel Kramer draws an analogy from a jigsaw puzzle. Even though the players managed to fix a few small pieces, they have the picture on the box to guide them.<sup>6</sup>

“In archaeology and the jigsaw puzzle, the analogy is, say that you have a 500-piece jigsaw puzzle, and you only have five pieces of that jigsaw puzzle. The rest have been lost. Well, those five pieces are important evidence that there once was a jigsaw puzzle. However, just using those five pieces, you really can’t tell what the jigsaw puzzle is about. You need the cover of that jigsaw puzzle and the picture on that to give you the context of where your five pieces that you still have fit into the overall picture on the cover. And so, in this analogy, the Bible is the cover. It’s what gives us the information. It’s what paints for us this big picture of what’s happened in the past and the events that have happened, the people that have lived, and so forth.”<sup>7</sup>

**Slide 16**

The absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. It just means it is not discovered yet.

**Slide 17**

Biblical archaeology cannot prove divine inspiration and miracles.

“The stage of the Bible is historical and geographical, but its drama is divine.”<sup>8</sup>

**Slide 18**

Definitions of minimalists and maximalists.

**Slide 19**

The difference in perspectives led to the minimalist-maximalist debate.

**Slide 20**

The following is a quote from a prominent Israeli archaeologist, Israel Frankelstein, who is a minimalist.

**Slide 21**

Skeptical of the historical accuracy of the biblical texts, minimalists argue that the texts are more reflective of ideological agendas than historical facts. They advocate for interpreting archaeological evidence independent of the biblical narratives, which they

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<sup>6</sup> Joel P. Kramer, *Where God Came Down: The Archaeological Evidence* (Brigham City, UT: Expedition Bible, 2020), 8.

<sup>7</sup> Frank Turek, “5 Amazing Archaeological Finds from the Old Testament with Joel P. Kramer,” *Crossexamined.org*, November 23, accessed August 30, 2024, <https://crossexamined.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/11.3-Podcast-5-AMAZING-Archaeological-Finds-with-Joel-Kramer.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out: What Archaeology Reveals about the Truth of the Bible* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1997), 329.

believe were penned long after the events they describe, thus challenging traditional views.

On the other hand, maximalists advocate for using the Bible as a significant source alongside archaeological evidence, believing that the texts can guide interpretations of the archaeological record. They view the texts as providing a framework for understanding the material culture of ancient Israel and surrounding regions.

However, some archaeologists maintain nuanced positions within the broader maximalist and minimalist spectrum in terms defined as “maximalist-minimalists” and “minimalist-maximalists.” A balanced approach to biblical archaeology is to prioritize skepticism but remain unprejudiced. Aren Maeir, another prominent Israeli archaeologist, asserts that “There is no reason to shy away from looking for explicit or implicit connections between the material remains (the archaeological evidence) and the cultural and historical realia imbedded in the biblical text.”<sup>9</sup>

## **Slide 22**

The next section will cover “Foundation of Biblical Archaeology.”

## **Slide 23**

Overview of the foundation of biblical archaeology

## **Slide 24**

List of activities involved in biblical archaeology.

Biblical archaeology is not “treasure hunting” but a science. It begins with site identification, then excavation, followed by stratification, then documentation, and finally dating.<sup>10</sup>

## **Slide 25**

Quote on excavation by John Garstang

## **Slide 26**

Definition of a tell

To identify where a possible ancient site may be located, archaeologists would usually look for a tell. A Tell is “a small hill created by successive habitation layers deposited through destruction and abandonment from manmade and natural disasters.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Aren M. Maeir, “Stones, Bones, Texts and Relevance: Or, How I Lost My Fear of Biblical Archaeology and Started Enjoying It,” in *Historical Biblical Archaeology and the Future*, ed. Thomas E. Levy (New York: Routledge, 2010), 300.

<sup>10</sup> Price and House, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, 31-34.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 31.

**Slide 27**

There are three ways to identify where to begin excavation. One site identification method is to research the Bible. When Rabbi Nelson Glueck wondered where to begin the search for King Solomon's port of Ezion-geber, he consulted the Bible. According to 1 Kings, the location is in Eloth (or Elath, Eilat), on the shore of the Red Sea, in Edom (9:26; 10:22). Following the Bible, Glueck found Ezion-Geber in Tell el-Kheleifeh on the north shore of the Gulf of Aqabah, east of the Red Sea, which aligns with the location described in the Scriptures. Glueck's discovery serves as an example of how the Bible can be utilized for site identification.<sup>12</sup>

**Slide 28**

Site identification is the second way to identify where to begin excavation. Modern Arab names also provide clues to the ancient site. In 1838, American scholar and explorer Edward Robinson and Eli Smith identified the linguistic connection between the Arabic name "Beitin" and the ancient Hebrew name "Bethel." Both names translate to "House of God." "The Bible describes ancient travel routes passing through Bethel and those descriptions correspond with travel routes through Beitin that were still in use at the time of Robinson and Smith."<sup>13</sup> Tracing the etymology of the names of the places enables archaeologists to identify where they should begin their excavations, saving time and money.

Other means of ascertaining biblical sites, such as Dan and Gezer, include artifacts that identify the name of the place or by modern Arab names similar to the biblical names. Dan is one of the two high places where King Jeroboam I set up a golden calf for the northern Kingdom of Israel to worship (1 Kgs 12:28-29).

John Laughlin postulates that in 1976, Avraham Biran discovered a beautifully preserved inscription "dating to the Hellenistic period (third-second century BC). ... The inscription, [which includes] three lines in Greek and one in Aramaic, refers to a person named 'Zoilos' who made a vow to the 'god who is in Dan' .... Although the Aramaic portion of the inscription is damaged, it probably reads the same as the Greek."<sup>14</sup> This discovery confirms Dan as one of the few sites identified by finding its name inscribed on an artifact excavated there.

**Slide 29**

Site identification - third way (in-situ artifacts).

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<sup>12</sup> Price, *Stones Cry Out*, 322.

<sup>13</sup> Joel P. Kramer, *Where God Came Down: The Archaeological Evidence* (Brigham City, UT: Expedition Bible, 2020), 47.

<sup>14</sup> John C. H. Laughlin, "The Remarkable Discoveries at Tel Dan," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 7, no. 5 (1981): 20-37.



**Slide 30**

In the excavation process, each context within an archaeological site is systematically removed in reverse order, starting with the last deposited layer and progressing to the oldest strata, ensuring complete documentation before moving on. The documentation of each layer before moving to the next is crucial as excavation erases the historical record, preserved only through documentation.

The aim is to record as much data as possible in each context to make the most accurate interpretation possible. The horizontal open-area method of excavation invented by Clarence Fisher enables archaeologists to have a big picture and to map the entire site while Wheeler-Kenyon method focuses on precise documentation of finds, allowing for the interpretation of stratification and controlled data recording.<sup>15</sup>

Price and House posit, “This grid divides the site into manageable squares (usually  $5 \times 5$  m or  $10 \times 10$  m) separated by a one-meter-wide unexcavated section called a balk.”<sup>16</sup> A combination of the open-area and Wheeler-Kenyon methods is used to achieve the most comprehensive and accurate excavation and documentation of a site.<sup>17</sup> Appropriating the proper excavation method enables archaeologists to gain more information from the site while preserving the excavated area.

**Slide 31**

Stratigraphy is identifying and interpreting layers (strata) within archaeological sites.<sup>18</sup> As Price and House observe, “The geological and archaeological strata that make up an archaeological tell can be identified and interpreted with respect to the different periods of occupation they contain.”<sup>19</sup> Geologist Charles Lyell’s Law of Superposition theorizes that earlier-deposited soils are older than those above.<sup>20</sup> This law forms the basis for establishing a relative chronology by comparing the contextual relationships with similar sites.

The relative chronology of architectural styles, tombs, and pottery between different archaeological sites is crucial for researchers to synchronize historical events and societal changes across different areas, providing a more comprehensive picture of ancient civilizations. The excavations of Manfred Bietak in Tell el-Dab’a reveal that the Hyksos

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<sup>15</sup> Price and House, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, 33.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

city of Avaris in Egypt was built and settled by Canaanites.<sup>21</sup> After analyzing the Tell el-Yahudiah ware (Middle Bronze vessels with white incised designs against dark burnished surfaces) found at the site, Tine Bagh posits, “Tell el Yahudiyeh Ware (pTeY), also found largely in tombs ... may be regarded as part of the continuation of the Levantine painted tradition.”<sup>22</sup> By comparing the pottery with the wares found in the Levant, Bietak revealed Canaanite material culture in Avaris.

Artifacts such as coins found in similar sites can solidify the chronology and provide evidence of specific historical events. Coins often bear dates, inscriptions, and images of rulers, which can be precisely linked to particular timeframes. James Hoffmeier asserts that the discovery of four Jewish coins at the Qumran excavations help to date the “latest levels of the occupation” to the “third year of the revolt against Rome, which corresponds to AD 68.”<sup>23</sup> Such finds enable archaeologists to construct accurate historical timelines and understand the socio-political context of the period.

Despite potential interruptions or intrusions caused by artificial features, such as later construction or agricultural activity, these disturbances can be understood and contextualized within the broader archaeological landscape. Different coins found in different layers of the strata aid in the differentiation of layers of occupation and refine the chronological framework and historical significance of the archaeological site.

### **Slide 32**

Documentation should generally come before dating. Proper documentation is a critical first step in the archaeological process because it ensures that all information about the site, artifacts, and features is accurately recorded before any further analysis, including dating, is conducted.

The archaeologist’s task involves documenting each stratum in relation to others, including artifacts, to comprehend the site. Archaeologists typically work under issued permits that obligate them to publish excavation results. The thoroughness of this process relies on the quality of site documentation. The amount of detailed and microscopic documentation in archaeological finds is necessary to ensure the accuracy of finds for further analysis off-site and the final report. Inadequate documentation can mislead the analysis of the artifacts.

In summary, documentation lays the foundation for all subsequent analysis, including dating, ensuring that the archaeological record is preserved and interpreted correctly.

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<sup>21</sup> Richard Cleave, *The Holy Land Satellite Atlas* (Nicosia, Cyprus: Rohr Productions, 1999), 13.

<sup>22</sup> Tine Bagh, “Levantine Painted Ware and Some Related Pottery from Tell El -Dabca,” in *Tell El-Dab`a XXIII: Levantine Painted Ware from Egypt and the Levant*, 1st ed. (Vienna, Austria: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2013), 59, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1vw0r25.10>.

<sup>23</sup> James Karl Hoffmeier, *The Archaeology of the Bible* (Oxford, UK: Lion Scholar, Lion Hudson Limited, 2019), 129.

**Slide 33**

There are different methods of dating such as

- C-14 Carbon Dating
- Thermoluminescence Dating
- Dendrochronology
- Soil and Pollen Analysis
- Coins
- Relative Dating (Pottery)

One of the most widely used dating methods is Carbon-14 (C-14) dating, which relies on the decay of C-14 in plants after death. It is primarily used for dating materials living at one time, like wood, plant matter, skin, bones, and carbonized seeds. Accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS) allows such dating from tiny samples. However, in desert regions, wood may remain unchanged for long periods before being used archaeologically, leading to wide date ranges.

Calibration with other techniques, such as dendrochronology, is essential for accurate C-14 dating. Price and House maintain that “radioactive dating methods cannot be calibrated with known dates before 5,000 years ago, and all dates have a plus or minus variance, sometimes in the range of hundreds of years.”<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, carbon dating remains an important method for testing the chronology of the finds.

Thermoluminescence dating is another method applicable to pottery but could be more precise, especially in cases where samples are found in different soil levels. Extracting ancient DNA from bones and collagen can determine species, gender, and age, offering insights into past animal use. This method is also applied to manuscripts written on animal skin, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, thus serving as a crosscheck with artifacts of established dates at the same site. Being able to date things allows archaeologists to understand how people’s lives changed over time and to tell histories that connect the past and present.

The wide range of dating techniques, including radiometric dating for sedimentary rocks, fluorine testing, dendrochronology, and soil and pollen analysis, has significantly advanced researchers’ ability to date material remains and enhance the understanding of artifacts.

**Slide 34**

Artifacts such as coins found in similar sites can solidify the chronology and provide evidence of specific historical events. Hoffmeier asserts that the discovery of four Jewish coins at the Qumran excavations help to date the “latest levels of the occupation” to the “third year of the revolt against Rome, which corresponds to AD 68.”<sup>25</sup> Such finds enable

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<sup>24</sup> Price and House, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, 37.

<sup>25</sup> Hoffmeier, *Archaeology of the Bible*, 40.

archaeologists to construct accurate historical timelines and understand the socio-political context of the period.

#### Quiz #1

Guess how much this coin is sold for? This First Revolt shekel minted by the Jews after the start of the revolt against Rome in 66 AD was sold for \$1.1m as of August 2012.<sup>26</sup> A shekel is less than 1 USD.

#### Slide 35

Pottery is important for relative dating.

#### Slide 36

Interpreting the data.

#### Slide 37

Students to watch the video and share their thoughts.

#### Slide 38

Synchronizing and comparing biblical chronology with conventional dating and extrabiblical chronologies, such as those from Egypt and Assyria, informs archaeological periods. However, published chronologies of historical periods before the eighth century BC reveal numerous differences. These arise from debates over geological periods, missing genealogies, use of different calendars (lunar, solar, or lunisolar), prioritization of internal biblical or extrabiblical chronologies, and reconciliation of chronological gaps and archaeological data with biblical data led to the differences in the chronologies.<sup>27</sup> Controversies remain unresolved over the dating of pivotal events such as the patriarchs, the exodus, the conquest, and the time of the judges, resulting in high (earlier date) and low (later date) chronologies due to interpretational differences in the lack of underlying data.

Employing “Christian Tomsen’s proposed three-age system,” Price and House define the post-diluvian pre-patriarchal periods based on technological advancements, particularly the use of metals for trade and as weapons and tools.<sup>28</sup> Dividing the periods into Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age, which reflects the metal technological progress, helps to differentiate societies and distinguish people at various sites.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> “Strata: First Revolt Shekel Sells for \$1.1 Million,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 38, no. 4 (2012): 10.

<sup>27</sup> Price and House, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, 38.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

The Bronze Age marks the development of urban civilizations, city-states, major architectural achievements, proto-writing systems, religion, and educational institutions. This age began with the Sumerian civilization (ca. 3500 BC) and ended around 1200 BC with the invasion of Aegean Sea Peoples. Biblical events related to the patriarchs, Moses, Joshua, and the judges occurred during this period.

The Iron Age, characterized by the development of smaller kingdom-states based on national identity, witnessed biblical events recorded for the kingdom of Israel from the united monarchy to the exile. This age coincides with the collapse of Bronze Age civilizations and ends with the fall of kingdom-states under the Neo-Babylonian and Persian Empires. Following the Iron Age, civilizations that define biblical periods are Babylonian, Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman.<sup>30</sup>

The Babylonian Period (605-538 BC) follows the fall of the Southern Kingdom of Judah and precedes the rise of the Persian province of Yehud. Sparse textual and archaeological evidence suggests desolation and population loss in Judah. The Hellenistic Period (330-149 BC) sees the Hellenization of the region after Alexander's conquest, with key events being the Jewish persecution under Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the subsequent Maccabean Revolt. The rule of the Maccabean dynasty marks the Hasmonean Period (167-63 BC), the independent Jewish government, and the rise of Jewish sects. Archaeological indicatives include Hasmonean oil lamps and changes in pottery forms.

The Roman Period (149 BC-AD 638) includes the Early Roman period (149 BC-AD 135), characterized by Roman influence, the Herodian dynasty, the ministry of Jesus, and the First Jewish Revolt. The Middle Roman period features the Second Jewish Revolt and the completion of the Jewish Mishnah. The Late Roman period also known as the Talmudic period, includes the production of the Talmud and the Roman adoption of Christianity as a state religion, leading to Byzantine Christian rule until the Muslim invasion in AD 638.

### **Slide 39**

While there are various controversies surrounding the dating of biblical events, one of the key controversies surrounds the date of the exodus. The two dates in question are 1446 BC or 1270-1250 BC. Accordingly, this affects the date of the Patriarch Abraham.

### **Slide 40**

What do the moon and the stars have to do with biblical chronology?

### **Slide 41**

Chronological dating remains challenging as many biblical accounts do not provide specific dates. It becomes critical, then, to rely on contemporaneous ancient documents for dating. One of the most essential documents for Old Testament dating purposes is the Assyrian Eponym Canon, which records the list of Assyrian kings and significant events

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

such as the building of monuments and the military campaigns of surrounding nations, including Israel and Judah.

Discovered in the nineteenth century in ancient Assyrian sites by Sir Austen Henry Layard, the Eponym Canon recorded a solar eclipse of the sun over Nineveh, “the eponymate of Bur-sagale, of Guzan, revolt in the citadel of Assur; in the month of Siwan there was an eclipse of the sun.”<sup>31</sup> Modern astronomical calculations ascertained that the eclipse occurred in 763 BC. As many of the texts in the Eponym Canon refer to Israel and Judah and their respective rulers, the dates of the early divided monarchy can thus be established by referencing the Assyrian Eponym Canon.<sup>32</sup>

Many other sources of chronological value have been unearthed, further establishing a sound biblical chronology. Among these are lists that trace the lines of Egyptian pharaohs from 3000 BC to the age of the Achaemenids (ca. 50 BC). The discovery of different epigraphical documents that record the critical historical events in the surrounding region of Israel enables historians to date the biblical events accurately.

#### **Slide 42**

Compare the accounts in the eponym with the Bible.

#### **Slide 43**

Read Isaiah 37:29.

#### **Slide 44**

Another post on the canon is that in 598/597 BC: “the king of Babylonia ... set his camp against the city of Judah ... he took the city and captured the king. He appointed a king of his choosing there, took heavy tribute and returned to Babylon.”<sup>33</sup>

“At that time the officers of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon advanced on Jerusalem and laid siege to it, ... Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin captive to Babylon ... . The king of Babylon also deported to Babylon the entire force of seven thousand fighting men, strong and fit for war, and a thousand skilled workers and artisans. He made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin’s uncle, king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah” (2 Kgs 24:10, 15-17).

#### **Slide 45**

So how do researchers decipher these ancient Near East Languages?

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<sup>31</sup> William W. Hallo, *The Context of Scripture. 1: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World* (Leiden Köln: Brill, 2002), 465-66.

<sup>32</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, “Ai and Old Testament Chronology: Who Cares?” *Bible and Spade* 27, no. 2 (April 1, 2014): 53.

<sup>33</sup> Hallo, *The Context of Scripture. 1*, 466.

**Slide 46****The Rosetta Stone**

“The stone is presented in three languages (Middle Egyptian, Demotic, and Greek) in three successive bands, the text was intended to proclaim the monarch’s achievements in the sacred hieroglyphic script as well as the two administrative tongues of the empire. The original form of the decree was Demotic, from which it was loosely translated into Greek and hieroglyphic Egyptian. The Rosetta Stone proved to be the decisive key to deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphs. The ability to read ancient Egyptian texts unlocked a wealth of textual and historical sources related to the Bible, including the famed Merneptah Stele, which furnished the earliest mention of a people called Israel, and numerous other accounts that linked Egyptian and biblical history.”<sup>34</sup>

**Slide 47**

Show movie of The Rosetta Stone in the British Museum.

**Slide 48**

The other important discovery is the Rock of Behistun. Carved into the rock, is the rock of Behistun in Old Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian.

1835 British official, Henry C. Rawlinson, climbed the rock and made squeezes and copies of the scripts. When the Persian was deciphered, this led to the decipherment of the Akkadian language.<sup>35</sup>

**Slide 49**

Quiz #2

Guess the word of this Hieroglyphics

Answer: Cleopatra

**Slide 50**

Ancient Israel is nestled between two superpowers: Egypt to the left and then depending on the period, Assyria, Babylon, or Persia to the right. Having control over Israel enables the superpower to have political control. As a result of its strategic location, Israel is caught up in the political struggle between the superpowers and often attacked by these two nations. From a biblical archaeological standpoint, this means that excavating these two regions can yield finds that throw light on the biblical narratives.

**Slide 51**

Map of the different regions of Israel with its distinctive topography.

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<sup>34</sup> “Text Treasures: The Rosetta Stone: Key to Egyptian Hieroglyphs,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 48, no. 3 (2022): 66.

<sup>35</sup> “Past Perfect: Deciphering Darius,” *Archaeology Odyssey* 8, no. 5 (2005): 30-33, <https://old.biblicalarchaeology.org/archaeology-odyssey/8/5/12>.

**Slide 52**

For this exercise, every student will be given a blank map of Israel. On the map, students will locate the places listed on this slide.

**Slide 53**

Old Testament Archaeological Discoveries - Discuss key finds, which will be done in two sections.

**Slide 54**

Section A: Discuss biblical archaeological discoveries related to the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua.

**Slide 55**

According to the Bible, the location of Eden is where four rivers intersect. We know geographically where Euphrates and Tigris rivers are located and possibly Gihon River. But what about the Pishon River that flows through Havilah? But the Scriptures did not reveal where Havilah is except that there is gold. This map shows two possible locations (see the circles) where the Euphrates and Tigris intersect.

**Slide 56**

According to Dr. Farouk El Baz, there is an ancient river near the intersection of Euphrates and Tigris rivers which can be detected from space. He calls it the Kuwait River.<sup>36</sup>

**Slide 57**

“If you place [the] image on the right into the bigger map on the left, you can see that this Kuwait river flows through the Arabian peninsula. Could this be the Pishon River? Is the Arabian peninsula Havilah? Perhaps we can find some clues from King Solomon and archaeological discoveries. ‘An important key is the Biblical phrase “the gold of that land is good.” Only one place in Arabia has such a deposit—the famous site of Mahd edh-Dhahab, the “Cradle of Gold.” This ancient and modern gold mining site is located about 125 miles south of Medina, near the headwaters of the Kuwait River.”<sup>37</sup>

Another intriguing discovery that took place in this place is called Solomon’s gold mines. “*The New York Times* quoted Dr. Robert Luce, one of the geologists who was part of the American-Saudi team exploring the area, as saying, ‘Our investigations have now confirmed that the old mine could have been as rich as described in biblical accounts and,

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<sup>36</sup> Molly Dewsnap Meinhardt, “How to Find a River—No Divining Rod Needed,” sidebar to James A. Sauer, “The River Runs Dry: Creation Story Preserves Historical Memory,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 22, no. 4 (1996): 52, 54, 57, 64.

<sup>37</sup> James A. Sauer, “The River Runs Dry: Creation Story Preserves Historical Memory,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 22, no. 4 (1996): 52, 54, 57, 64.



indeed, is a logical candidate to be the lost Ophir ... “King Solomon’s Lost Mines” are no longer lost.”<sup>38</sup>

### Slide 58

Read the verses from 1 Chronicles 29 and 1 Kings 9.

### Slide 59

According to 1 Chronicles 29 and 1 Kings 9, King Solomon is a very wealthy king with plenty of gold inherited from David and from annual tributes. Where did this gold come from? Could this place called Ophir be the Arabian Peninsula where the famous site of Mahd edh-Dhahab, the “Cradle of gold” exists?

### Slide 60

So where did the gold go? According to 1 Kings, King Shishak carried off the treasures of the temple and the royal palace. King Shisak died one year after he attacked Jerusalem and was succeeded by Osorkon. Archaeologists found fragments of this long and detailed hieroglyphic text of Osorkon that record gifts of immense value given by Osorkon to the gods.<sup>39</sup>

### Slide 61

The Bible is not the only creation account. One archaeological artifact discovered among the tablets found in ancient Nineveh, is a Babylonian creation account written in cuneiform script. The **Enuma Elish** describes the origins of the gods and the creation of the world, where the god Marduk defeats the chaos goddess Tiamat and uses her body to form the heavens and earth. Marduk then organizes the cosmos, creates humanity to serve the gods, and is celebrated as the supreme deity.<sup>40</sup>

### Slide 62

This is a picture of the Epic of Atrahasis at the British Museum, which describes a flood account. In this account, the lesser gods, overwhelmed by labor, rebel, prompting the bigger god Enki to create humans to take over their work. When another bigger god Enlil plans to destroy overpopulated humanity with a flood, Atrahasis is warned by Enki,

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<sup>38</sup> Lois Berkowitz, “Has the U.S. Geological Survey Found King Solomon’s Gold Mines?” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 3, no. 3 (1977): 1, 28-33, <https://old.biblicalarchaeology.org/biblical-archaeology-review/3/3/1>.

<sup>39</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, “Where Did Solomon’s Gold Go?” sidebar to Alan R. Millard, “Does the Bible Exaggerate King Solomon’s Golden Wealth?” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 15, no. 3 (1989): 20-22, 24, 26-29, 31, 34.

<sup>40</sup> Bernhard W. Anderson, “The Persistence of Chaos in God’s Creation,” *Bible Review* 12, no. 1 (1996): 19, 44.

builds an ark, and survives, leading to a new divine agreement on human mortality and procreation.<sup>41</sup>

### **Slide 63**

Another famous account is the Epic of Gilgamesh, which describes how Utnapishtim was warned in secret by the god, Ea, to build a boat for humans and animals. Birds were released before the boat landed safely on Mt. Nitsir.<sup>42</sup>

### **Slide 64**

Another Babylonian artifact is a map that mentions Urartu, which means Ararat in Akkadian.

### **Slide 65**

Did the Bible copy from the Assyrian/ Babylonian creation and fall accounts? Or did all these accounts point to an actual event? Likely the latter.

### **Slide 66**

Quiz #3

Which is bigger? Noah's Ark or the Titanic?

Answer: The Titanic<sup>43</sup>

### **Slide 67**

Is Abraham an historical figure?

### **Slide 68**

This is a picture of Karnak Temple in Egypt, which lists the more than 150 places in Judah and Israel that Pharaoh Shishak conquered. On one of these is mentioned the fort of Abram.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "What the Babylonian Flood Stories Can and Cannot Teach Us about the Genesis Flood," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 4, no. 4 (1978): 32-41.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Scottish Bible Society, "'Was the Ark Bigger than the Titanic?'" | Blog," *Scottish Bible Society*, accessed August 30, 2024, <https://www.scottishbiblesociety.org/blog/was-the-ark-bigger-than-the-titanic>.

<sup>44</sup> Yigal Levin, "Did Pharaoh Sheshonq Attack Jerusalem?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 38, no. 4 (2012): 43-45, 48-52.

**Slide 69**

On one of these was carved, “the fort of Abram.” The earliest mention of Abram dates to 926 BC, which is 700 to 1000 years after Abraham.<sup>45</sup> A good parallel is prophet Amos’ reference to the history of the Philistines, which occurred 400 years before Amos.

**Slide 70**

Another evidence of Abraham’s existence is the Tombs of the Patriarchs in Hebron.<sup>46</sup> “Recently, four pottery vessels, which were taken from the caves during a clandestine incursion in 1981, were dated to the Iron Age, suggesting that the Cave of Machpelah was venerated by pilgrims during the First-Temple-era.”<sup>47</sup>

**Slide 71**

The Code of Hammurabi describes the Mesopotamian law code. In Genesis 16, Sarai offers her maidservant as a surrogate wife to Abram to bear children. A few chapters later, in chapter 30, Rachel offers her maidservant to Jacob to bear children. While this practice may seem unusual, Mesopotamian laws legally sanctioned such customs. Marriage contracts even included provisions stating that if a woman could not bear children, she was obligated to provide a surrogate for her husband. Similar contracts also allowed a husband to take another wife if the original wife did not bear an heir within a specified period.

As Hoffmeier correctly discerns, “Regulations dealing with this dilemma are found in the laws of the Amorite king Lipit-Ishtar of Isin (1934-1924 BC) and are updated in Hammurabi’s code, which dates nearly a century and a half later.”<sup>48</sup> Sarai’s expulsion of Hagar was a cultural practice allowed by the laws of that era.

The discovery of the Mesopotamian law code illuminates researchers’ understanding of Ancient Near East laws and customs. Arthur Ungnad gives background to this discovery: “In 1902, French archaeologist Jacques de Morgan discovered forty-four columns of ancient Babylonian cuneiform writings containing the collection of laws of King Hammurabi.”<sup>49</sup> The discovery illuminates the Bible’s historical practices during the time

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<sup>45</sup> James Henry Breasted, “The Earliest Occurrence of the Name of Abram,” *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 21, no. 1 (October 1904): 22-36, <https://doi.org/10.1086/369524>.

<sup>46</sup> Nancy Miller, “Patriarchal Burial Site Explored for First Time in 700 Years,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 11, no. 3 (1985): 26-30, 34-43.

<sup>47</sup> Bryan Windle, “Top Ten Discoveries Related to Abraham,” *Bible Archaeology Report* (blog), July 16, 2021, accessed August 30, 2024, <https://biblearchaeologyreport.com/2021/07/16/top-ten-discoveries-related-to-abraham/>.

<sup>48</sup> Hoffmeier, *Archaeology of the Bible*, 40.

<sup>49</sup> Arthur Ungnad, “Hammurabi, The Code of,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, ed. James Orr et al. (Chicago, IL: The Howard-Severance Company, 1915), 1327.

of Abram/Abraham. Hoffmeier postulates, “Hammurabi law 170 stipulates that when a man has children by both the first wife and a surrogate, the children ‘shall equally divide the property of the paternal estate’. The son of the first, however, takes the first share.”<sup>50</sup> Based on this clause, Ishmael, the son of Hagar, would have initially been considered Abram’s heir.

When Isaac was born to Sarah, she demanded that Abraham send away Hagar and Ishmael to protect Isaac’s inheritance. Sarah’s insistence on removing Hagar and Ishmael, which seems harsh in modern times, aligns with another clause in Hammurabi’s Code, which allows parents to exclude the children of the surrogate mother and secure the inheritance for their biological son by granting freedom to the enslaved person and her children.<sup>51</sup> These examples highlight how Mesopotamian legal documents provide insights into and parallels of Abram/Abraham and Sarai/Sarah’s actions in the biblical narrative.

The discovery of the Code of Hammurabi accentuates archaeology’s benefits in enabling exegetes to interpret texts in their historical context. The following section reveals how archaeology illuminates the Scriptures to the readers.

## **Slide 72**

The controversies surrounding Sodom and Gomorrah have to do with location (whether they are located north or south of the Dead Sea) and their destruction (how were they destroyed).

## **Slide 73**

Play the following video by Joel Kramer on Sodom and Gomorrah.

## **Slide 74**

Is there another Sodom?

## **Slide 75**

Steve Collins excavated Tel el-Hamman. Collins discovered that “the city was destroyed rapidly in a scorching fireball which is hard to explain, pottery and mudbricks were melted, people were ripped limb from limb, and their bones are found smashed and scattered, buried in layers of ash, charcoal, and pulverized mudbricks.”<sup>52</sup>

## **Slide 76**

Picture of Tunguska in Siberia when it was hit by an asteroid

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<sup>50</sup> Hoffmeier, *Archaeology of the Bible*, 40.

<sup>51</sup> Hammurabi, “The Code of Hammurabi,” University of Chicago Press, accessed June 21, 2024, <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/hammurabi-the-code-of-hammurabi>.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

**Slide 77**

Here is an excerpt from NASA's website on Tell-el Hamman.

**Slide 78**

Compare Lot's wife who turned into a pillar of salt with the picture of the people in Pompeii after the Mt. Vesuvius eruption.

**Slide 79**

Next, we move to the story of Jacob.

Why did Rachel steal these gods (*terraphim*) from Laban (Gen 31)? According to a Nuzi tablet that was discovered, the household gods belong to the head of the household and serve like a title deed (according to Nuzi law). Rachel wanted to secure the inheritance for Jacob in case her father, Laban, cheated on them again. Jacob could then go to the magistrate with a witness and with the family gods and claim ownership.<sup>53</sup>

**Slide 80**

Map of the route Jacob took after leaving Paddan Aram for Shechem. On the way, he wrestled with God on a hill, which he named Peniel. Gideon threatened to break down the tower of Peniel (Judg 8:5-9). Jeroboam built the town anew (1 Kgs 12:25). Peniel is Identified with Tell edh-Dhahab esh-Sharqiyeh, on the River Jabbok. Surveys made here uncovered remains of the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age I and II.<sup>54</sup>

**Slide 81**

Picture of Semites entering Egypt.

**Slide 82**

This is a list of the big questions surrounding the Exodus.

**Slide 83**

Why does a historical exodus matter to our faith? See quote from James Hoffmeier.

**Slide 84**

What is the evidence of the exodus? One such artifact is what archaeologists have discovered from the tomb of King Tut. On the left is an image of an Anubis chest from the tomb of King Tutankhamun in the Valley of the Kings, Western Thebes, now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. The features bear similarities to the ark of the covenant. Price and House note, "We should not be surprised to find these close parallels to the structure of the ark of the covenant among the Egyptians, since Bezalel (Exod 37:1-9), the craftsman who constructed the ark, probably learned and plied his craft in Egypt. He

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<sup>53</sup> Robert T. Boyd, *Tells, Tombs, and Treasure: A Pictorial Guide to Biblical Archaeology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1969), 88.

<sup>54</sup> Avraham Negev, *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land* (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1990).

undoubtedly had experience with chests and shrines similar to those found in the tomb of Tutankhamen.”<sup>55</sup>

### **Slide 85**

“One of these is the Egyptian document known as the Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage: The Ipuwer Papyrus (Papyrus Leiden 344) first translated in 1909. Its contents were written by a high Egyptian official and describe a lamentation over plague conditions that devastated the country. ... Indeed, the hieratic script in which it is written was in use at that time, and its catalog of catastrophic events accord remarkably with those of the exodus plagues.”<sup>56</sup>

### **Slide 86**

Comparing Ipuwer Papyrus and Exodus

### **Slide 87**

Comparing Ipuwer Papyrus and Exodus

### **Slide 88**

The route of the Exodus has names that point to Moses.  
Near Petra in Jordan is a place named Wadi Musa, which means the Valley of Moses.

### **Slide 89**

Another big question is who is the Pharaoh of the Exodus? There are two strong contenders. Amenhotep II, who lived between 1427-1401 and Ramses II, who lived from 1303 BC-1213 BC.

### **Slide 90**

From historical records, the Philistines only came to the Levant in the twelfth century (1177/6 BC), and the names of Pithom and Rameses exist only in the thirteenth century.<sup>57</sup>

### **Slide 91**

“The date for the exodus can be argued from the internal chronology given in 1 Kings 6:1 which indicates that the exodus occurred 480 years before Solomon began to build the temple in Jerusalem in 967 BC (1 Kgs 11:42; 2 Chr 9:30 argues this is Solomon’s fourth regnal year).”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Price and House, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, chap. 2, Kindle.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> James K. Hoffmeier, “What Is the Biblical Date for the Exodus?: A Response to Bryant Wood,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50, no. 2 (2007): 235, 242.

<sup>58</sup> Price and House, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, chap. 2, Kindle.

**Slide 92**

Argument for 1446 BC Exodus<sup>59</sup>

**Slide 93**

The Soleb Inscription is an ancient Egyptian text dating back to the reign of Pharaoh Amenhotep III (around the fourteenth century BC). The inscription is found at the Temple of Soleb in Nubia (modern-day Sudan), which was dedicated to the god Amun. This inscription references a group called the “Nomads of Yahweh.” The inscription is one of the earliest known references to the name “Yahweh,” the deity worshiped by the Israelites, and suggests a connection between these nomadic groups and the worship of Yahweh.<sup>60</sup>

**Slide 94**

Ps 135:15 (HCSB)

**Slide 95 - 99**

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**Slide 100**

Cover Page

**Slide 101**

Scriptures relating to Shechem in the Old Testament. Excavations at site of Tel Balata align with Judges 9:6 and 1 Kings 12:25<sup>61</sup>

**Slide 102**

Old Testament Scriptures regarding the importance of Shechem to the Patriarchs

**Slide 103**

A picture of the renewal of the covenant between the Israelites and Yahweh in Shechem

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<sup>59</sup> Clyde E. Billington, “Book Review: *Origins of the Hebrews: New Evidence of Israelites in Egypt from Joseph to the Exodus*,” by Douglas Petrovich (Nashville: New Creation, 2021), Associates for Biblical Research, November 21, 2022, accessed August 30, 2024, <https://biblearchaeology.org/research/book-video-reviews/4996-book-review-origins-of-the-hebrews-new-evidence-of-israelites-in-egypt-from-joseph-to-the-exodus>.

<sup>60</sup> Jude Flurry, “The Soleb Inscription: Earliest-Discovered Use of the Name ‘Yahweh,’” ArmstrongInstitute.org, October 10, 2022, accessed August 30, 2024, <https://armstronginstitute.org/768-the-soleb-inscription-earliest-discovered-use-of-the-name-yahweh>.

<sup>61</sup> Samuel McKoy, “Uncovering the Bible’s Buried Cities: Shechem,” ArmstrongInstitute.org, accessed September 10, 2024, <https://armstronginstitute.org/847-uncovering-the-bibles-buried-cities-shechem>.

**Slide 104**

The geography of the Land of Israel holds religious and cultural significance, contributing to the interpretation of cultural heritage associated with biblical narratives. Shechem (Sychar in the NT), a place of profound historical significance, is where Abraham built his first altar to God after He appeared to him in Canaan (Gen 12:6-7). It is also where Joshua renewed the Mt. Sinai covenant and delivered his iconic speech, exhorting the people to fear the Lord and serve Him in “sincerity” and “truth” (Josh 24:14-15, NASB). Shechem is situated between Mt. Ebal, where Joshua erected an altar and pronounced curses (Deut 11:28-29, 27:4-26; Josh 8:30-33) and Mt. Gerizim, where he pronounced blessings (Deut 27:12; Josh 8:30-33). Jacob’s well in Shechem, with Mt. Ebal on one side and Mt. Gerizim on the other, locates where Jesus replied to the Samaritan woman’s question regarding the supremacy of worship at Mt. Gerizim (John 4).<sup>62</sup> Perry Phillips asserts that

The choice of Sychar as the location for this teaching was no accident. Jesus was echoing the statement of Joshua in the Old Testament who had reaffirmed the Sinai Covenant at nearby Shechem with these words: “Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth” (Josh 24:14 nasb). Joshua’s covenant renewal reminded his listeners of God’s faithfulness to an obedient people. Jesus’ words reverberate with the same promise of a faithful father to those who worship him.<sup>63</sup>

Understanding the geographical surroundings of Shechem enhances the reader’s appreciation of the interaction between Jesus and the Samaritan woman in the location of Sychar viewed in the context of Joshua’s original covenant ceremony in Shechem. Knowledge of biblical geography helps verify the accuracy of such biblical accounts when archaeological finds align with geographical details, thus providing evidence for historical authenticity.

**Slide 105**

Connecting Shechem with Sychar

**Slide 106**

Picture shows that Jacob’s well was still in use in the nineteenth century.

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<sup>62</sup> Perry G. Phillips, “At the Well of Sychar,” in *Lexham Geographic Commentary on the Gospels*, ed. Barry J. Beitzel and Kristopher A. Lyle (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 95.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.



**Slide 107**

Jericho is the first city conquered by the Israelites. Ancient Jericho is located at Tell es-Sultan. Excavation at Tell es-Sultan (Jericho) indicates a fallen wall in line with the biblical account described in Joshua 6:20.<sup>64</sup>

**Slide 108**

Excavation at Tell es-Sultan indicates there was an attack on the city during harvest time.<sup>65</sup> Compare with Joshua 3:15.

**Slide 109**

Scriptures regarding the city of Gezer. Stewart Macalister found findings of human sacrifice during his excavation at Gezer.<sup>66</sup>

**Slide 110**

Excavation indicates a palatial structure.<sup>67</sup> Compare with the biblical account that Pharaoh gave Gezer to Solomon as dowry for the Pharaoh's daughter.

**Slide 111**

When did Israel begin as a nation?

**Slide 112**

The different archaeological discoveries demonstrate that Israel is already an established nation by the ninth century BC.

**Slide 113**

The Tel Dan Stele, discovered in 1993 at Tel Dan in northern Israel by Avraham Biran, is a broken and fragmentary inscription from the ninth century BC. It commemorates an Aramean king's victory over the "king of Israel" and the "king of the House of David." The inscription, written in early Aramaic characters, claims divine guidance in defeating Israelite and Judahite forces.<sup>68</sup> Although the specific kings involved are not preserved,

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<sup>64</sup> Bryant G. Wood, "Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho? A New Look at the Archaeological Evidence," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16, no. 2 (1990): 44-47, 49-54, 56-57.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Biblicalarchaeology.org, "R.A. Stewart Macalister [1870-1950], Bible Side-Lights from the Mound of Gezer. A Record of Excavation and Discovery in Palestine," Biblearchaeology.org, accessed September 10, 2024, [https://biblicalarchaeology.org.uk/book\\_bible-side-lights\\_macalister.php#gsc.tab=0](https://biblicalarchaeology.org.uk/book_bible-side-lights_macalister.php#gsc.tab=0).

<sup>67</sup> Philippe Bohstrom, "King Solomon-Era Palace Found in Biblical Gezer," Haaretz | Archaeology, August 31, 2016, accessed September 10, 2024, <https://www.haaretz.com/archaeology/2016-08-31/ty-article/king-solomon-era-palace-found-in-biblical-gezer/0000017f-f41d-dc28-a17f-fc3f56350000>.

<sup>68</sup> Avraham Biran, "'David' Found at Dan," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 20, no. 2 (1994): 26, 28, 30-31, 33, 35-36, 39.

some scholars believe it refers to a campaign by Hazael of Damascus against Joram of Israel and Ahaziah of Judah (2 Kgs 8:28-29).<sup>69</sup>

What excited both scholars and the public was the unprecedented reference to the “House of David.” The inscription provided historical evidence that King David was a genuine figure, countering skeptics who dismissed his story as sensationalism. The Tel Dan Stele, set up by an enemy more than a century after David’s death, acknowledged David as the founder of the Kingdom of Judah. While the Tel Dan Stele confirmed David’s historicity, debates persist among scholars regarding the nature and extent of his rule. Discussions at the intersection of archaeology, history, and the Bible continue to be fueled by questions about whether David was the great king of biblical lore or merely a ruler of a tribal chiefdom. Some minimalists even alleged that Biran forged the inscription.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, the Tel Dan Stele stands as a crucial piece of evidence in the ongoing exploration of ancient Israel’s history.

#### **Slide 114**

The Mesha Stele contains not only the word “Israel” but also the “House of David.”<sup>71</sup>

#### **Slide 115**

The Kurhh Monolith in the British Museum contains the word “Israelite.”<sup>72</sup>

#### **Slide 116**

The Black Obelisk in the British Museum contains the word “Son of Omri.”<sup>73</sup>

#### **Slide 117**

The Mernapteh Stele dates to the thirteenth century BC, which demonstrates that Israel was a nation by then.<sup>74</sup>

#### **Slide 118**

Map of the City of David in Jerusalem.

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<sup>69</sup> Avraham Biran and Joseph Naveh, “An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 43, no. 2-3 (1993): 98.

<sup>70</sup> Ziony Zevit, “Three Debates about Bible and Archaeology,” *Biblica* 83, no. 1 (2002): 16.

<sup>71</sup> André Lemaire and Jean-Philippe Delorme, “Mesha’s Stele and the House of David,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 48, no. 4 (2022): 34–41.

<sup>72</sup> Baruch Halpern, “Erasing History,” *Bible Review* 11, no. 6 (1995): 26, 28–29, 31–35, 47.

<sup>73</sup> Erika Bleibtreu, “Grisly Assyrian Record of Torture and Death,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 17.1 (1991): 52, 54–55, 57–58, 60–61.

<sup>74</sup> Hershel Shanks, “Face to Face: Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 23, no. 4 (1997): 26-29, 32-38, 40-42, 66.

**Slide 119**

Bullae of Jeremiah's enemies found in Ophel

**Slide 120**

The various building projects of Solomon

**Slide 121**

A pagan temple found in Tel Dan indicative of King Jeroboam's building of the pagan temple<sup>75</sup>

**Slide 122**

At Tel Dan, a gate dating to eighteenth century BC has been discovered. If Abraham had gone on a mission to rescue Lot in Laish, would he had passed through this gate?<sup>76</sup>

**Slide 123**

Agatha Christie

**Slide 124**

Hezekiah's seal

**Slide 125**

Hezekiah's tunnel

**Slide 126**

The Siloam Inscription, chiseled onto the Siloam tunnel, is believed to have been created by the workers who built the tunnel. It commemorates the point where the workers digging from both sides finally met in the middle.<sup>77</sup>

**Slide 127**

The Siege of Lachish -

Comparing the archaeological discovery of the Assyrian panel of the siege of Lachish with the biblical account of the siege of Lachish (2 Chron 32:9).

**Slide 128**

The prophet Jonah preached to the Assyrians in Nineveh (Book of Jonah) while Nahum prophesized God's judgment on the city of Nineveh (Book of Nahum).

**Slide 129**


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<sup>75</sup> Jonathan Greer, "Archaeological Views: Cultic Practices at Tel Dan—Was the Northern Kingdom Deviant?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 38, no. 2 (2012): 26, 67.

<sup>76</sup> Hershel Shanks, "BAR Interview: Avraham Biran—Twenty Years of Digging at Tel Dan," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 13, no. 4 (1987): 12, 14-16, 18, 21-25.

<sup>77</sup> Simon B. Parker, "Siloam Inscription Memorializes Engineering Achievement," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 20, no. 4 (1994): 36-38.

Comparing the account of 2 Kings 24:15-17 with the discovery of the cuneiform tablet describing Nebuchadnezzar's capture of Jerusalem and the surrender of Jehoiakim king of Judah.

**Slide 130**

The discovery of the ration tablet for Jehoiachin confirms the account in 2 Kings 25:27-30.

**Slide 131**

Questions regarding the book of Daniel

**Slide 132**

The discovery of the Nabonidus Cylinder confirms the existence of Belshazzar in history.

**Slide 133**

Archaeological finds contribute to understanding the political circumstances of the period, which remains essential for exegesis. The discovery of the Cyrus Cylinder reveals the political context of the Jews' return under Cyrus. Besides Cyrus's achievements in building projects and conquests, it notes that former captives (not just Jews) were allowed to return to their homelands.<sup>78</sup> Krijgsman asserts that a comparison of Ezra (1:2) with the cylinder demonstrates that

In both passages, a foreign god (neither Marduk nor Yahweh were Persian) grants Cyrus the authority to hold command over the world. Isaiah 10:5 and 2 Kgs 18:25 further reflect this idea, suggesting that ancient kings frequently made these kinds of arguments for claim legitimacy.<sup>79</sup>

The cylinder enhances our comprehension of the biblical narratives. A reading of Ezra may lead readers to believe that the Jews have preferential treatment. However, the discovery of the cylinder informs the political context and background, which is not apparent from the Scriptures. Accurately dating the cylinder remains crucial to establish the chronology of the return of the Jews mentioned in the Bible.

**Slide 134**

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at the Qumran Caves. The condition and preservation rates of artifacts vary across the type of artifacts and over different historical periods. Factors such as site disturbance, the perishable nature of some materials, and environmental conditions affect the condition of the artifacts, rendering some more challenging to analyze. For example, the aridity of the Qumran Caves preserved the Dead

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<sup>78</sup> Marten Krijgsman, "Cyrus Cylinder," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), Logos Bible Software.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

Sea Scrolls, while no similar texts have been unearthed in Jerusalem due to its humid weather.<sup>80</sup>

### **Slide 135**

New Testament Archaeological Discoveries

### **Slide 136**

Quote by Finkelstein

### **Slide 137**

One of the Roman Empire's biggest innovation is the aqueduct.

### **Slide 138**

Family tree of Herod the Great

### **Slide 139**

Major projects by Herod the Great

### **Slide 140**

Herod's expansion of Zerubbabel's second temple

### **Slide 141**

The Pilate inscription found at Caesarea Maritima confirms Pontius Pilate's existence. Archaeological discoveries in Israel over the past six decades have provided material evidence related to the figure of Pontius Pilate, as mentioned in writings by Josephus, Philo, and the New Testament. A significant find in 1961 uncovered a Latin inscription at Caesarea Maritima, indicating Pilate's title and responsibilities in the Roman province of Judea during the reign of Emperor Tiberius. Michael Kennedy contends, "the damaged inscription identifies Pilate as the "[pref]ect of Jud[e]a," contradicting the earlier designation of him as a procurator in the writings of Greek and Latin authors."<sup>81</sup> This inscription, originally a dedicatory plaque for a structure called the "Tiberieum," clarifies Pilate's official position as a Roman prefect responsible for military matters rather than a procurator with financial duties. This correction is relevant to historical accuracy and aligns with the Roman Empire's distinctions between prefects and procurators.

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>81</sup> T. Michael Kennedy, "Caesarea," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), Logos Bible Software.

**Slide 142**

Herod's building project at Masada: Masada is where the zealots succumbed to the Roman siege in 73 or 74 AD. Rather than allow themselves to be taken prisoner and enslaved, they chose to commit mass suicide.<sup>82</sup>

**Slide 143**

The Church of Nativity in Bethlehem

**Slide 144**

While it cannot be confirmed, "a considerable body of circumstantial evidence does point to its identification as St. Peter's house."<sup>83</sup>

**Slide 145**

The discovery of the first-century fishing boat<sup>84</sup>

**Slide 146**

The location of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre perfectly fits the first-century conditions regarding where Jesus was buried as compared to the garden tomb (picture on the right).<sup>85</sup>

**Slide 147**

The heel of a crucified man. "The victim of crucifixion was a Jew, of a good family, who may have been convicted of a political crime. He lived in Jerusalem shortly after the turn of the era and sometime before the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D."<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Ehud Netzer, "The Last Days and Hours at Masada," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 17, no. 6 (1991): 20-32.

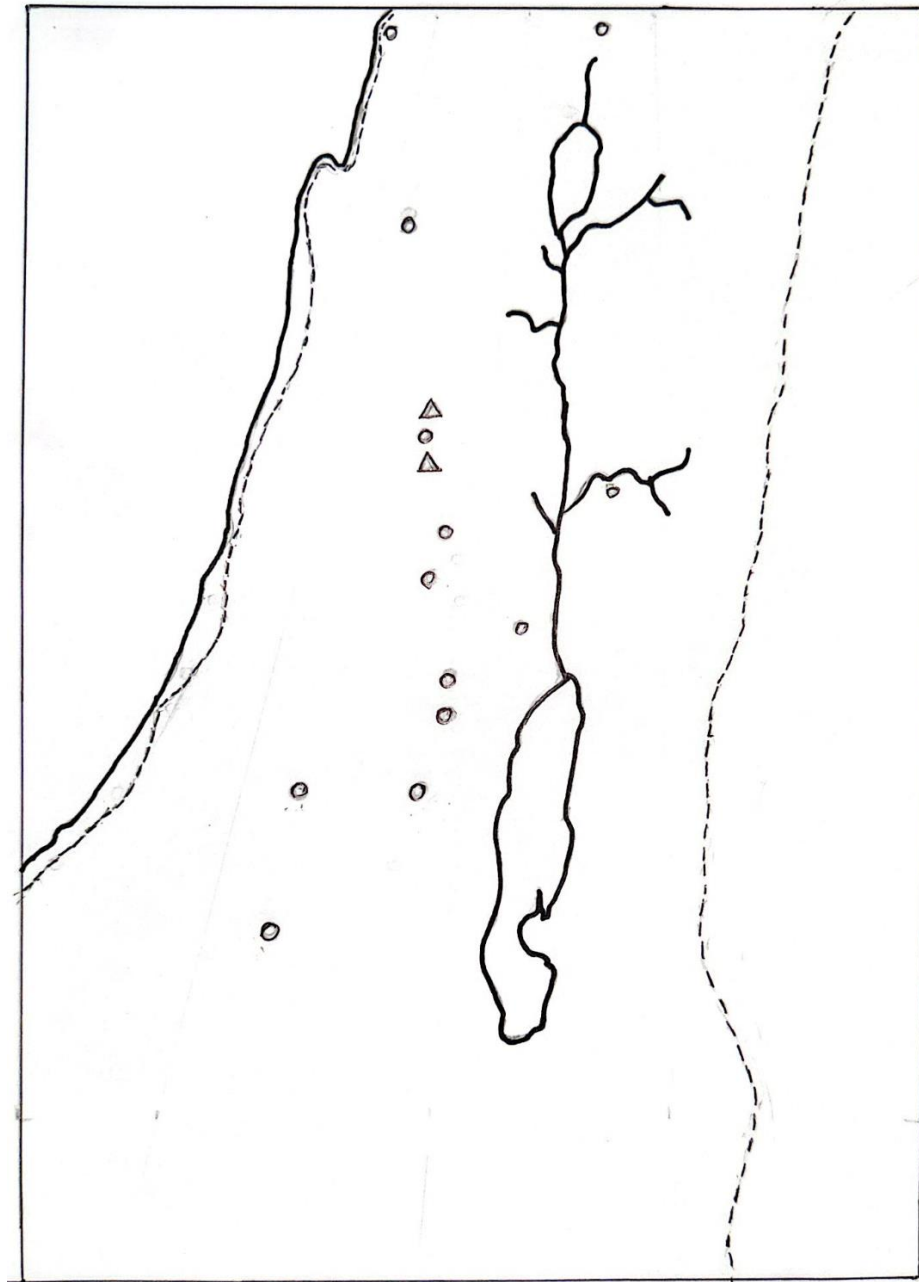
<sup>83</sup> James F. Strange and Hershel Shanks, "Has the House Where Jesus Stayed in Capernaum Been Found?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 8, no. 6 (1982): 26-37.

<sup>84</sup> Shelley Wachsmann, "The Galilee Boat—2,000-Year-Old Hull Recovered Intact," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 14, no. 5 (1988): 18-33.

<sup>85</sup> Dan Bahat, "Does the Holy Sepulchre Church Mark the Burial of Jesus?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 12, no. 3 (1986): 26-45.

<sup>86</sup> Vassilios Tzaferis, "Crucifixion—The Archaeological Evidence," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 11, no. 1 (1985): 44-53.

APPENDIX L: MAP OF ISRAEL



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