

The Historicity of the Old Testament

**Prepared for Bryan Ross'
From This Generation For Ever Class**

Lesson 24

@ Grace Life Bible Church

By Bud Chrysler – March 13, 2016

I Kings 6: 1

- *And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the Lord.*
- Most scholars agree that the building of the First Temple occurred around 960 BC. According to this verse, if we go back 480 years from that point, we will arrive at the date of the exodus. As we will see, archaeology supports both dates.
- **960 + 480 = 1440BC**

Galatians 3: 17

- *And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.*
- The law was given to Moses during the Exodus. If we add 430 years to the date of the exodus we will arrive at the year that God made the covenant with Abraham.
- **1440 + 430 = 1870 BC**

Berlin Statue Pedestal Relief

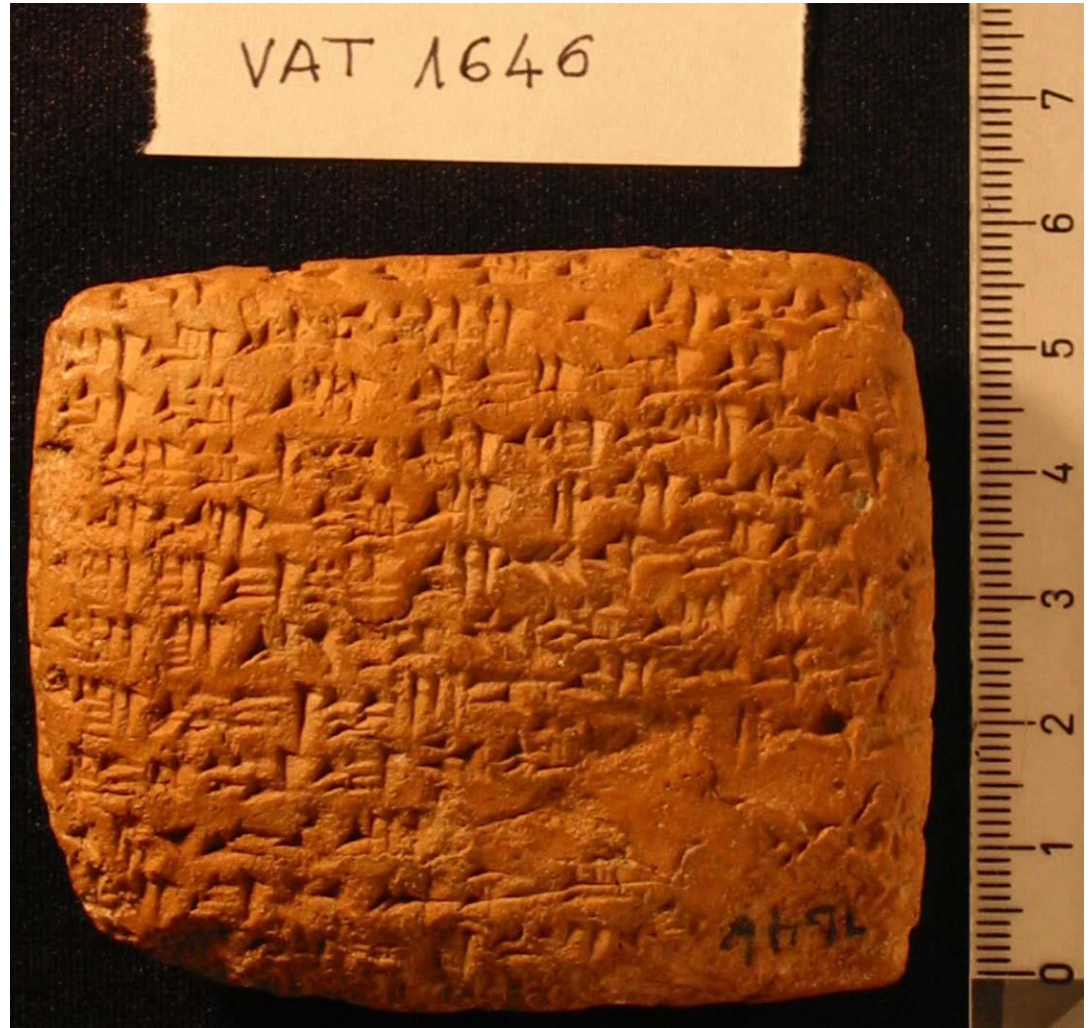


- This fragmentary hieroglyphic inscription contains the first mention of Israel from an extra-biblical source. According to an article by Manfred Görg, Peter van der Veen and Christoffer Theis, the name-ring on the right reads “Israel,” and they date it to around 1400 BC.

The El-Amarna Letters

ca. 1360-1343 BC

In 1887, about 350 clay tablets written in Akkadian were salvaged from Tell el-Amarna in southern Egypt. Abdi-Hepa, governor of Urushalim was responsible for six of the tablets which were found in the palace of Pharaoh Amenhotep IV, known also as Akhenaton. Their message is clear, as seen by this example, “*The war against me is severe ... Habiru have plundered all the lands of the king.*”



The Merneptah Stele ca. 1210 BC

The renowned British archaeologist Flinders Petrie discovered the Merneptah Stele at Thebes in 1896. “Israel is laid waste, his seed is not.”

The word “Israel” here is written with the determinative for people rather than land. This suggests that Israel did not have a king or kingdom at this time, and also that Israel was a force to be dealt with in the region during the late 13th century, reinforcing the biblical narrative.

It is currently housed in the Cairo Museum.

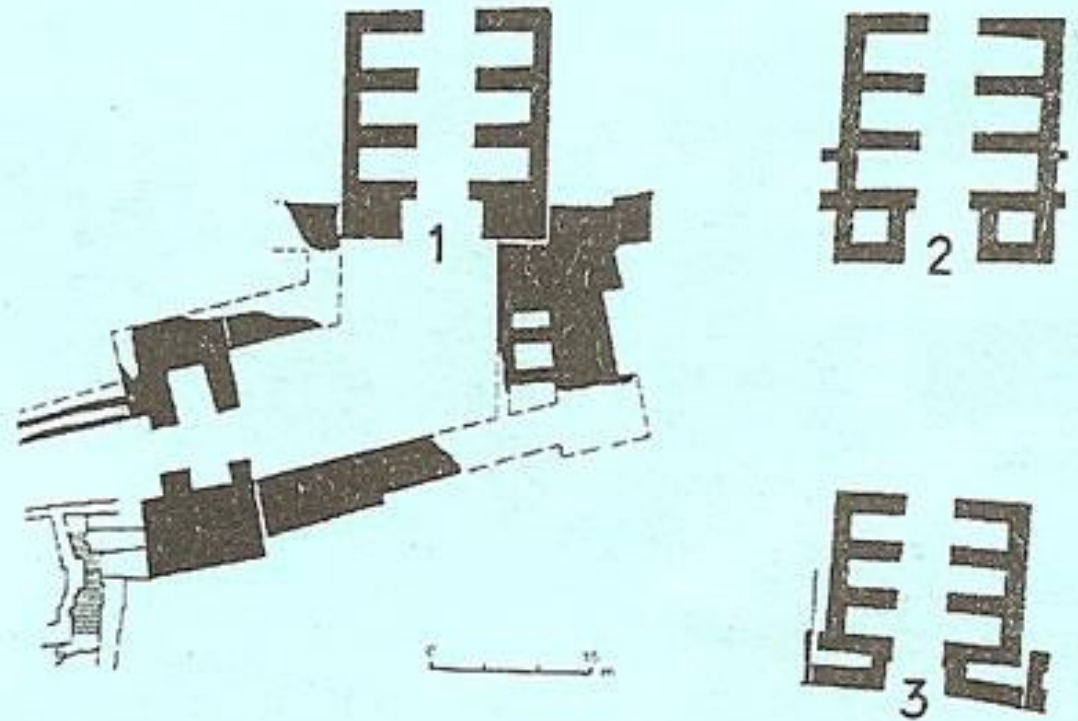


I Kings 9:15

And this is the reason of the levy which king Solomon raised; for to build the house of the Lord, and his own house, and Millo, and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer.

The six-chambered gates all date to the mid-10th century BC.

Six-chambered gates dated to Solomon.
(1) Megiddo. (2) Hazor. (3) Gezer.



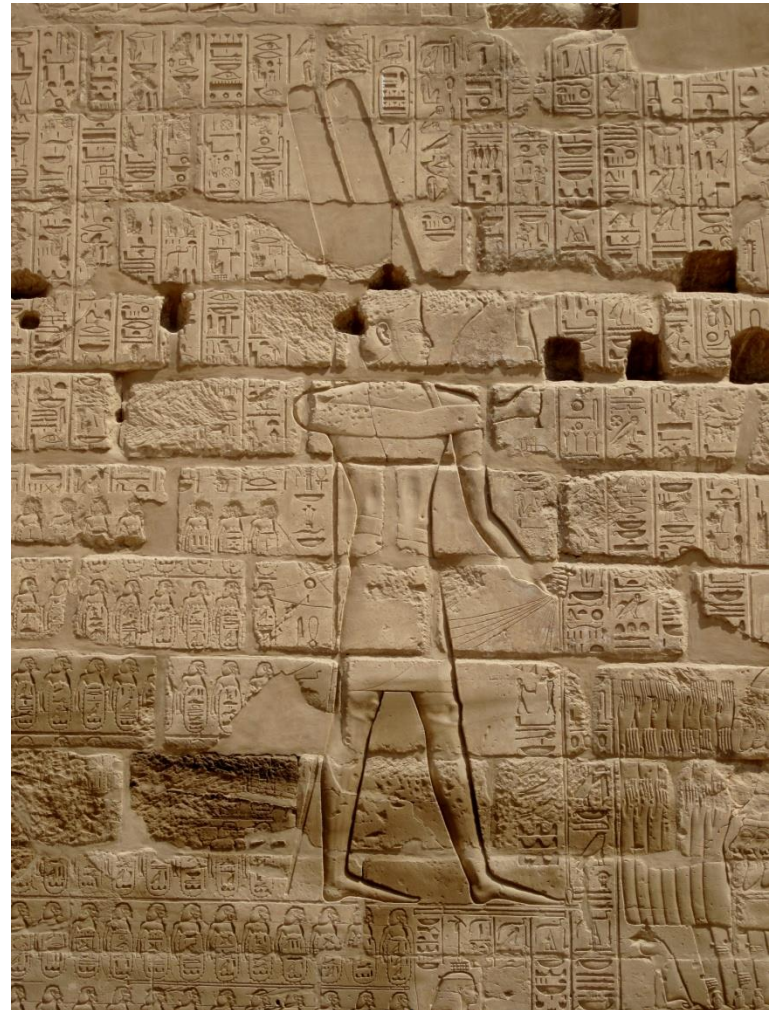
Shishak (Shoshenq I)

Pharaoh from 945-924 BC

- Shishak was the first Egyptian king to be mentioned by name in the Bible (I Kings 11: 40; 14: 25; II Chronicles 12: 2-9) and is the first foreign king in the Bible for whom we have extra-biblical evidence.
- *And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboham, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem: And he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he even took away all: and he took away all the shields of gold which Solomon had made (I Kings 14: 25-26).*

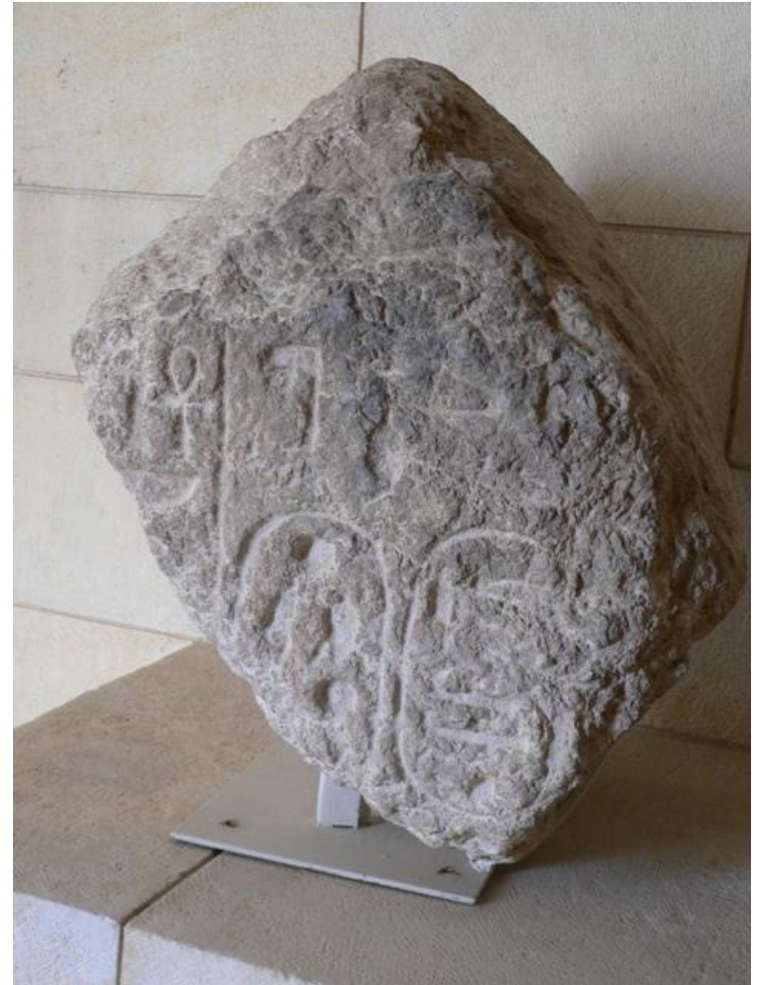
Relief Scene at Karnak

- The Shishak (Sheshonq) Relief in the Karnak Temple in Egypt includes a large weathered relief in which the pharaoh lists more than 150 towns (including Megiddo) he conquered during his military campaign into Israel and Judah.



Stela Fragment at Megiddo

- At the site of Megiddo a portion of a commemorative stela of Shishak was found by the University of Chicago Oriental Institute excavations in 1926.
- His name can be clearly read and the stela is undoubtedly related to the 925 BC campaign.
- Solomon's six-chambered gate at Megiddo would have stood during this time.
- Photo: D. Ellis/P. Van der Veen



Yigal Levin -

Bar-Ilan University, Jewish History Department, Faculty Member

- Israeli scholar Yigal Levin points out that if the Egyptian Pharaoh's records match those from First Kings, “this would be the earliest event in Biblical history for which we have a contemporaneous reference in an extrabiblical source.”
- Moreover, Egyptian records of Sheshonq's rule between 945 and 924 BC could be used to date the reigns of Rehoboam's father, Solomon, and his grandfather, David.

The Tel Dan Inscription ca. 840 BC

Excavations at Tel Dan in northern Israel have revealed a basalt stele with an Aramaic inscription which includes the words “Biet David” (House of David). This is the first extra-Biblical proof of the existence of a dynasty founded by David.

Unfortunately, the recovered fragments of the “House of David” inscription do not preserve the names of the kings involved in this encounter, but most scholars believe the stela speaks of Hazael of Damascus in which he defeated both Jehoram of Israel and Ahaziah of Judah. (II Kings 9: 15-16).



The Moabite Stone

ca. 835 BC

The Moabite Stone, also called the Mesha Stela, is an inscribed black basalt monument written in the Moabite language. It stands nearly four feet tall and was found in 1868 in the land of ancient Moab, now modern Jordan. It contains references to biblical figures such as Israelite King Omri and Moabite King Mesha (I and II Kings) as well as the covenant name of God, YHWH. It is now located in the Louvre.



Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III

In 1846 archaeologists discovered a black basalt, obelisk measuring 6'5" high in Nimrud, Iraq.

This was the site of the ancient Assyrian capital, and the obelisk was erected as a public monument glorifying Shalmaneser III's military exploits (858-824 BC).

Present location: British Museum



Jehu, son of Omri

The second row of pictures on the Obelisk depict the tribute of Jehu king of Israel. The inscription reads, “The tribute of Jehu, son of Omri: I received from him silver, gold, a golden bowl, a golden vase with pointed bottom, golden tumblers, golden buckets, tin, a staff for a king [and] spears.”

And the time that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty and eight years (II Kings 10: 36).

This is the only depiction of anyone mentioned in the Bible made by a contemporary (and the earliest depiction of an Israelite king).



Bethlehem Bulla

ca. 700 BC.

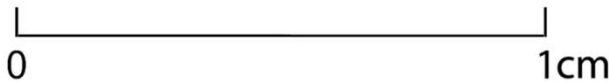
The first ancient artifact constituting tangible evidence of the existence of the city of Bethlehem, was discovered in Jerusalem. According to Eli Shukron, director of the excavation in the City of David, “this is the first time the name Bethlehem appears outside the Bible, in an inscription from the First Temple period, which proves that Bethlehem was indeed a city in the kingdom of Judah.”

See Micah 5: 2.

Micah wrote in 710 BC.



Seal Impression of King Hezekiah Discovered Near Temple Mount

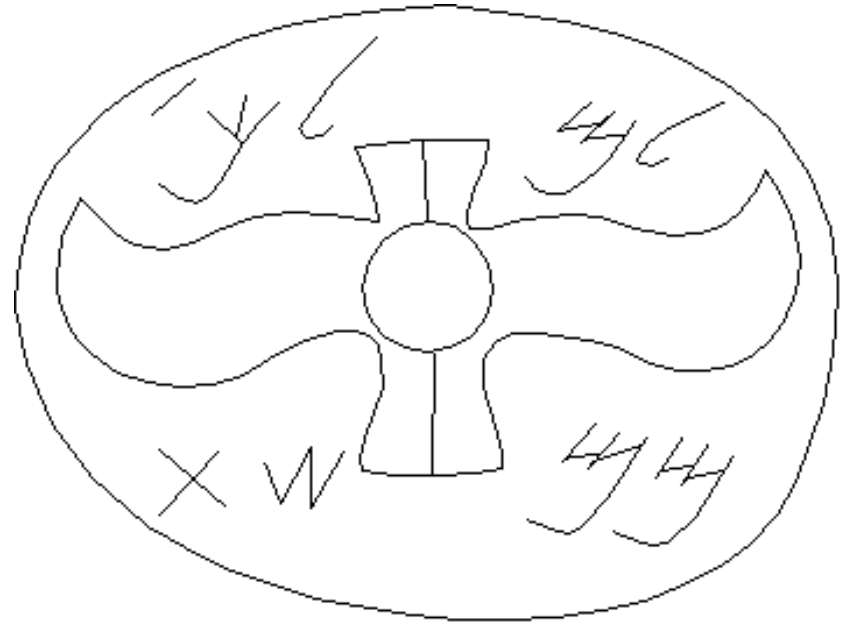


© Eilat Mazar, Photo: Ouria Tadmor

- A personal seal impression (bulla) belonging to King Hezekiah has been discovered in excavations south of Jerusalem's Temple Mount. The tiny inscription reads, "Belonging to Hezekiah (son of) Ahaz king of Judah," and is the first of its kind to be discovered in an excavation. [December 2015]
- The discovery of this bulla in the City of David sees the classic convergence between text, geography, and material culture.

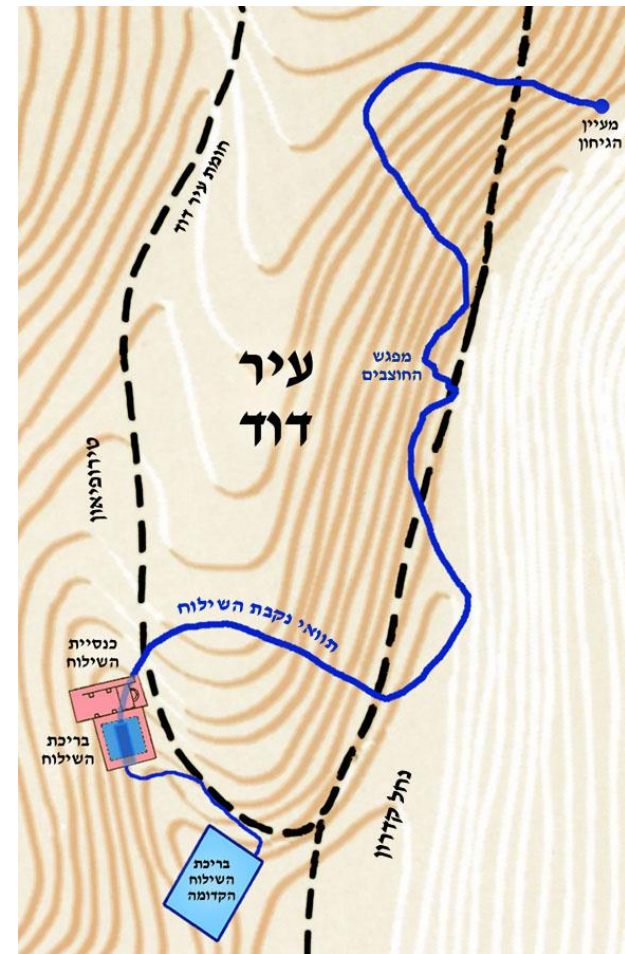
The Script

- All the features of the script on the bulla are in agreement with a date in the reign of Hezekiah (c. 715-687 BC). The script is almost identical to that on the royal jar handles known from the inscriptions stamped on them as *LMLK* (belonging to the king) handles. These handles date to the reign of Hezekiah, as shown by David Ussishkin's excavations at Lachish.
- The script on the bulla is also similar to that of the Siloam Tunnel inscription, which is also attributed to Hezekiah's reign.



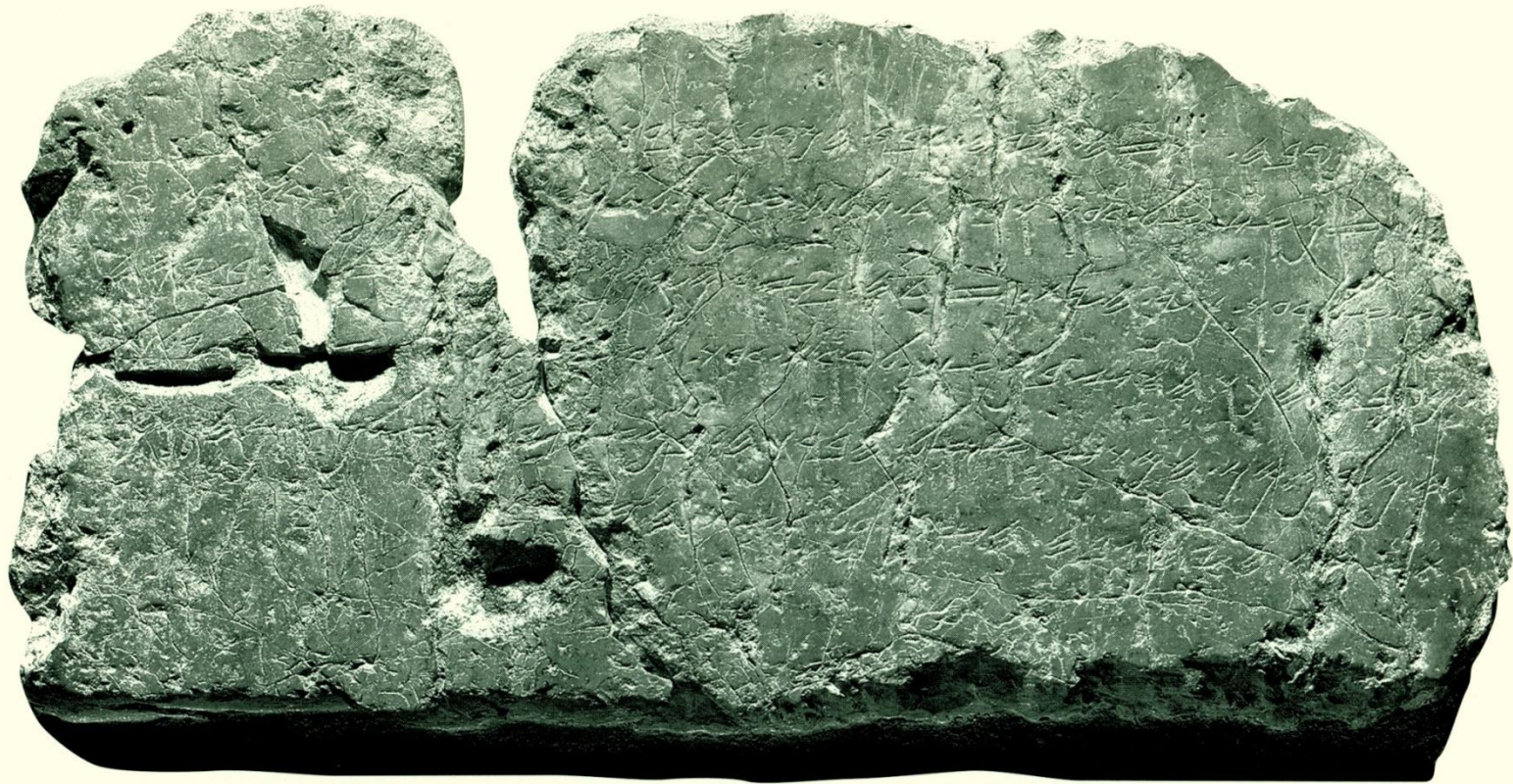
II Chronicles 32: 30

- *This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.*
- The tunnel begins in the north-eastern portion of the City of David, and ends at the south-western point on the chart.





The Siloam Tunnel Inscription – Discovered in 1880

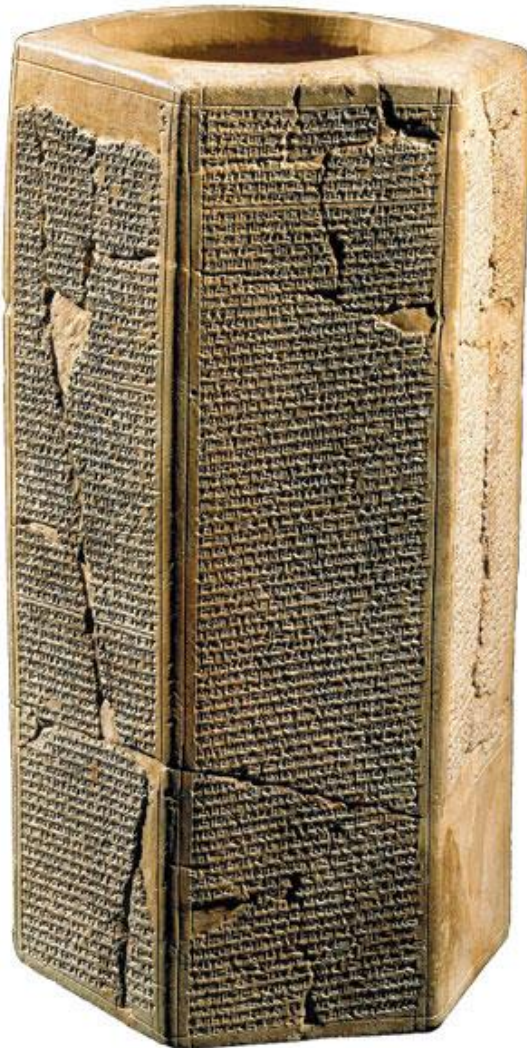


Hebrew inscription of the tunnel-aqueduct of Siloam.

II Kings 18: 13 - Isaiah 37: 33-34

- *Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them.*
- *Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD.*

The Sennacherib Prism - 700 BC



- The Prism was discovered among the ruins of Nineveh by Colonel Robert Taylor in 1830. *“As for the king of Judah, Hezekiah, who had not submitted to my authority, I besieged and captured forty-six of his fortified cities, along with many smaller towns, taken in battle with my battering rams . . . I took as plunder 200,150 people, both small and great, male and female, along with a great number of animals including horses, mules, donkeys, camels, oxen, and sheep. As for Hezekiah, I shut him up like a caged bird in his royal city of Jerusalem.”*

II Chronicles 32: 21 - II Kings 19: 36-37

- *And the LORD sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels slew him there with the sword.*
- *So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.*
- *And it came to pass... his sons smote him with the sword... And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.*

Esarhaddon tablet

680-669 BC



- *“On the twentieth day of the month Tebet, Sennacherib king of Assyria - his son slew him in rebellion... Esarhaddon his son sat on the throne of Assyria.”*

The Ketef Hinnom Amulets (600 BC)

- **The Silver Amulets -**
- “May Yahweh bless you and keep you;
- May Yahweh cause his face to shine upon you
- And grant you peace.”
- **Numbers 6:24, 26 -**
- *The Lord bless thee and keep thee:*
- *The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.*
- The scrolls are the oldest known examples of Biblical text on an archaeological artifact and precede the Dead Sea Scrolls by approximately 400 years.
- The amulets are currently on display at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.



Bullae

- Dr. Yigal Shilo conducted extensive excavations in the City of David from 1978 to 1985. A rich assortment of bullae (clay seal impressions) was discovered in his Area G.
- Among 51 bullae found there, were seal impressions with biblical names. One bulla reads, “Gemariah son of Shaphan” (King Jehoiakim’s scribe - Jeremiah 36: 10, 12). The seal impression of “Azariah son of Hilkiah” (Ezra 7: 1 and I Chronicles 6: 13) was also among the bullae found in Area G.





Gemariah son of Shaphan

Jeremiah 36: 10 – Then read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the Lord, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, ... in the ears of all the people.

The Baruch Bulla

In 1975, 200 bullae were discovered in a shop in East Jerusalem. From the shape of the Hebrew characters scholars date the collection to the 6th century BCE, the time of Jeremiah. Within this collection is a bulla believed to have belonged to Baruch. The three lines read: “(Belonging) to Berekhyahu, the son of Neriyahu, the scribe.” The bulla is now displayed in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. *Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah... (Jer. 36: 4).*



Gedaliah son of Pashur

- During her excavations in Area G, Eilat Mazar discovered a large deposit of finds from the late Babylonian period. In addition to many arrowheads and late Judahite anthropomorphic figurines, literally “dozens of bullae and fragments thereof” were obtained from the sealed soil underneath the northern tower, which she dates to the time of Nehemiah (ca. 445 BC). One complete bulla reads: “Gedaliah son of Pashur.”
- *Then Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pasur the son of Malchiah, heard the words Jeremiah had spoken...* (Jer. 38: 1).



Jehucal son of Shelemiah

- During Mazar's 2005 excavation season, another bulla ("Jehucal son of Shelemiah") was discovered within the walls of the Large Stone Structure. This person also can be identified with a high-ranking official in the court of Zedekiah (Jeremiah 38: 1).
- The findspots of both bullae, especially the stratigraphic position of the "Gedaliah son of Pashur" bulla in the destruction debris of the Babylonian conquest, further supports this possibility.
- Jeremiah 38: 4 - *Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city...*



The Babylonian Chronicle

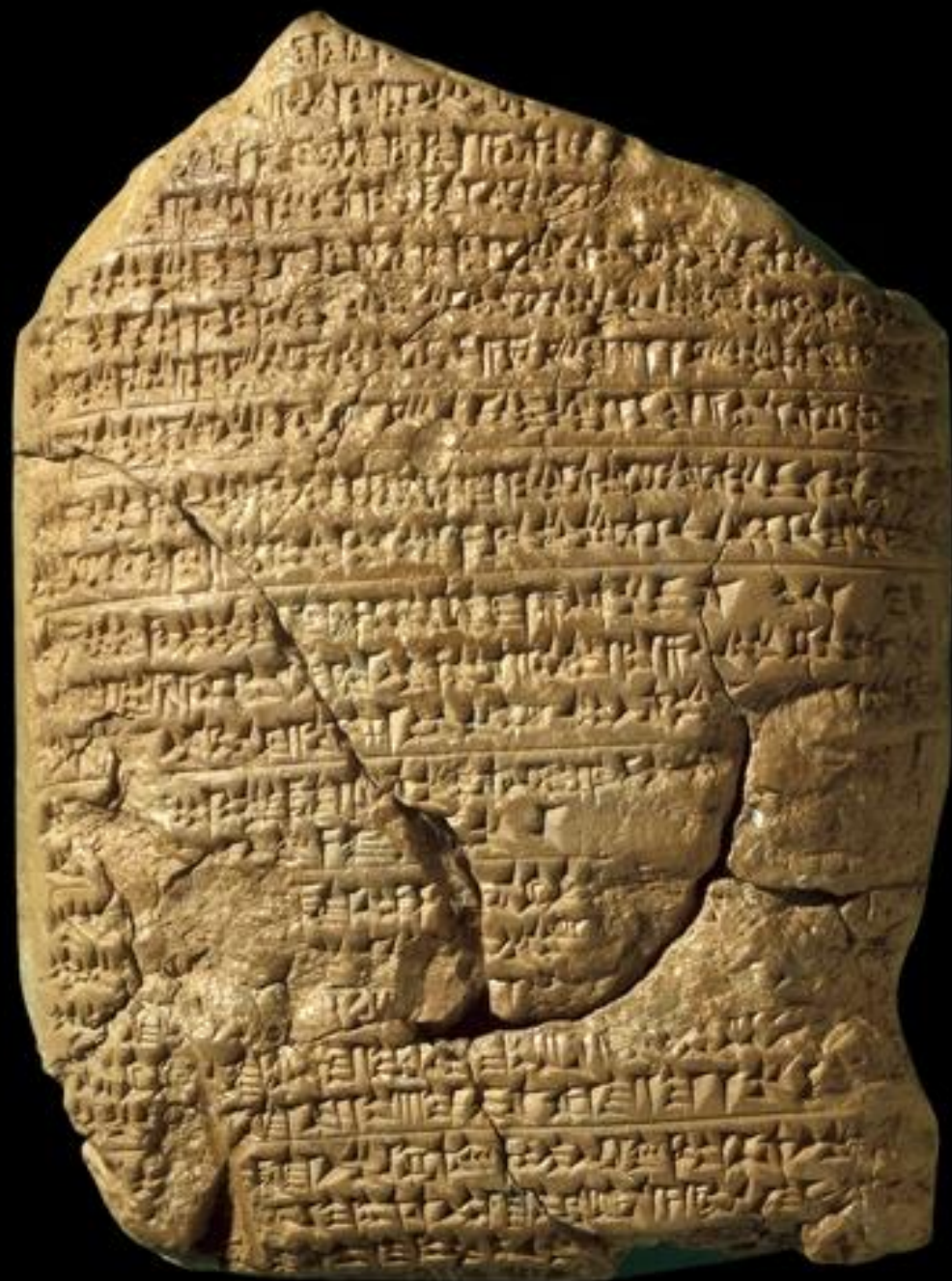
March 16, 597 BC

II Kings 24:15, 17 -

- *And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, those carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah his father's brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah.*

The Chronicle -

- “He (Nebuchadnezzar) encamped against the city of Judah (Jerusalem) and on the second day of Adar, he seized the city and seized the king. He appointed a king of his own pleasure over it [the city].”





Babylonian Ration Lists II Kings

25:27-30

Four tablets dating to the years 594 – 569 BC, found in Nebuchadnezzar’s palace, list rations for “Jehoiachin, king of Judah” and his family. See Jeremiah 52: 31-34.

II Chronicles 36: 22, 23

(Cyrus the Great – 559 – 530 BC)

- *Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,*
- *Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up.*

The Cyrus Cylinder

- Discovered in Babylon in 1879, this inscription on a clay barrel (dating to 537 BC) documents Cyrus's policy of religious tolerance and liberation.
- He returned stolen images to their sanctuaries and, “gathered all their inhabitants and returned (to them) their dwellings.”



The birth of Christ

Luke 2:1

- *And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.*

Matthew 2:1

- *Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem.*

World taxed (Luke 2: 1) - Jesus born (Matthew 2: 1)

“Caesar Augustus” 4 BC



“Of King Herod” 37-4 BC



The Dead Sea Scrolls

- Discovered between 1947 and 1956, the Dead Sea Scrolls comprise some 800 documents. The Scrolls date from 250 BC to AD 68.



Luke 4: 17-19

- *And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*

Luke 4: 20, 21

- *And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*

The James Ossuary

The James Ossuary is a limestone bone box that bears an Aramaic inscription reading “James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus.”

The inscription, which is the earliest written reference to Jesus, has been authenticated by two eminent paleographers (specialists in dating, interpreting and authenticating inscriptions): Andre’ Lemaire of the Sorbonne (University of Paris) and Ada Yardeni of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Ossuaries of this type were used from 20 BC to AD 70.

