

Bible Study from an Archaeological Perspective

Lesson Three

The **Late Bronze Period** (1550 – 1200 B.C.) – continued, and
The **Iron Period** (1200 – 586 B.C.) – From the Judges unto the destruction of
Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

Scripture reading:

Joshua 1:1-2 – ...*go over this Jordan...*

Joshua 5:13-6:2

Archaeological evidence:

In addition to the biblical references, archeology also affirms the 1446 B.C. date for the Exodus. John Garstang, who excavated Jericho in the 1930s, dated the destruction of Jericho around 1400 B.C. Jericho was the first city that the Israelites conquered under the leadership of Joshua when they entered the land of Canaan. Adding forty years to Garstang's date (to account for Israel's wandering before entering Canaan) puts the exodus shortly before 1440 B.C. Garstang also concluded that the walls of the city toppled outward, which would compare favorably with Josh. 6:5, 20 (The fallen walls became as a ramp for the Israelites to go up into the city).

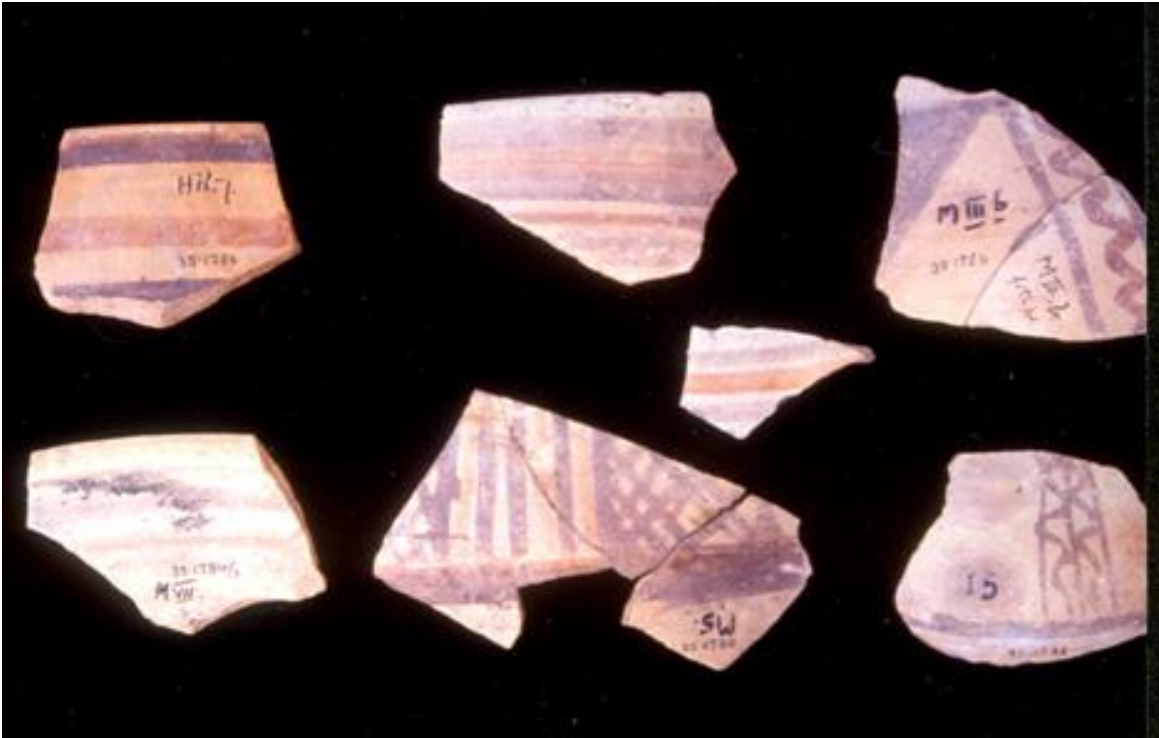


Archaeologist John Garstang discovered several scarabs and a seal in a cemetery near Jericho. Pictured (from left to right): a scarab of Hatshepsut (c. 1473–1458 B.C.), a scarab of Thutmose III (reigned c. 1479–1426 B.C.), reverse side of a seal of Thutmose III, and scarab of Amenhotep III (c. 1390–1353 B.C.). Collectively they demonstrate that the city's cemetery was in active use during the time that Kathleen Kenyon believed that Jericho was abandoned. Photo Credit, Israel Antiquities Authority, Jerusalem.

The scarab on the right is part of the Chrysler Collection and features the cartouche of Thutmose III (reigned c. 1479–1426 B.C.) – Men-Kheper-Ra. To the left, the god Thoth (scribe of the gods). Purchased in 2016 from Tarrab Coins & Antiquities – Salem Oregon.

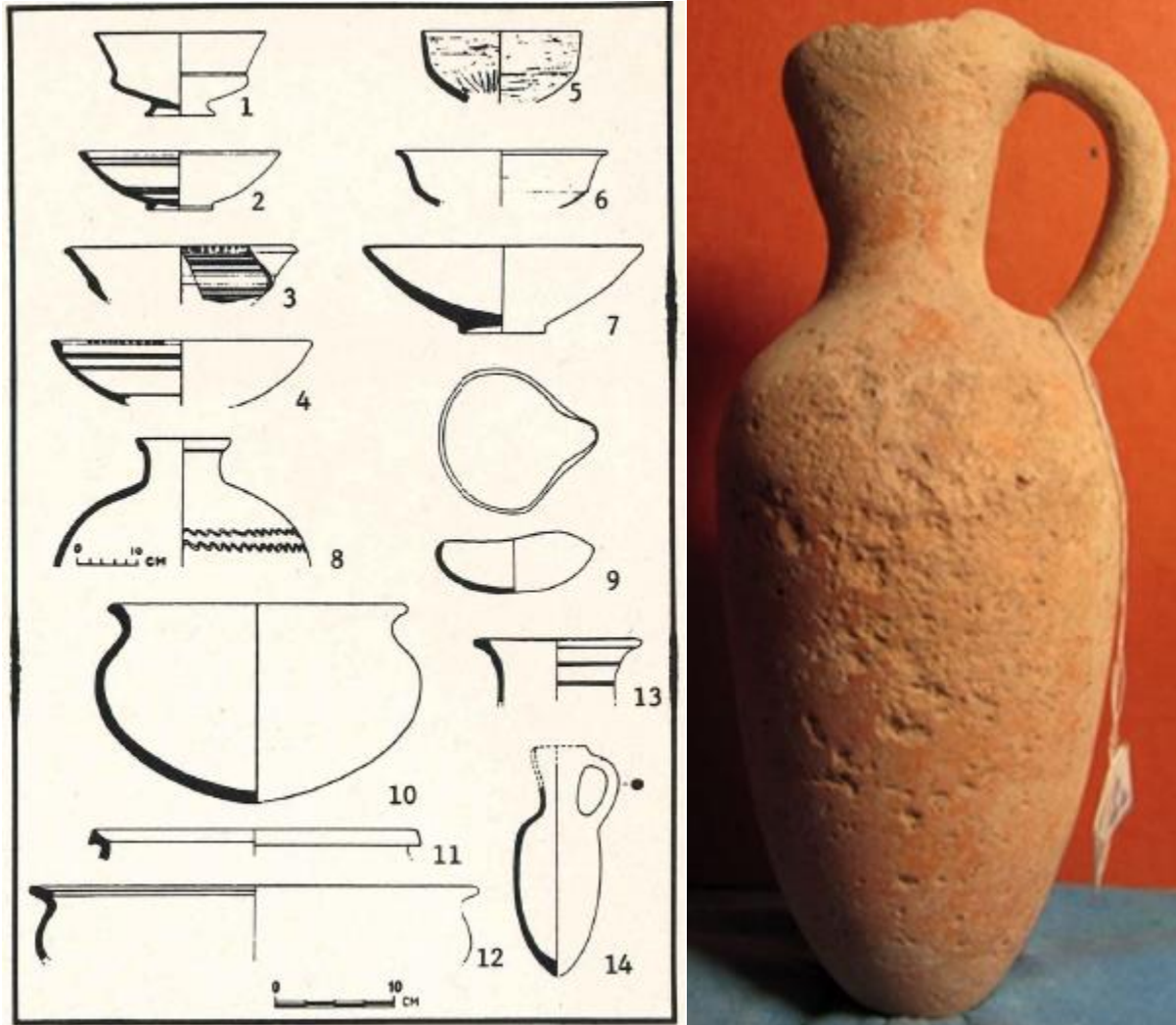
Archaeologist, Dr. Bryant Wood discovered that Kenyon had based her dating of the destruction of Jericho solely on the absence of imported pottery. During her excavations at Jericho (1952 to 1958), Kenyon did not find any imported bichrome (two-color) pottery from Cyprus, which is a prime indicator of Late Bronze I occupation. Thus, she concluded that it was unoccupied at

Joshua's time and had been destroyed 150 years earlier. (She would have done well to follow esteemed Egyptologist, Kenneth Kitchen's maxim, "The absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.")



Examples of locally made **bichrome pottery** discovered by archaeologist John Garstang at Tell es-Sultan (ancient Jericho). Photos Credit: Associates for Biblical Research

Inexplicably, Kenyon seems to have failed to consider the pottery discovered by Garstang. He had unearthed numerous examples of a locally made, imitation bichrome “Cypriot” pottery from the destruction layer of the final Canaanite city of Jericho. Garstang called it “red ware” and several of the pieces he published have classic Cypriot bichrome motifs.



Late Bronze Age pottery excavated by Kathleen Kenyon. 1. flaring carinated bowl (Jericho 4, fig. 110:1); 2-4. bowls decorated with internal concentric circles (Jericho 5, fig. 206:2; Jericho 4, fig. 110:8 and Jericho 5, fig. 206:1); 5-7. bowls (Jericho 5, fig. 191:16, Jericho 4, fig. 109:34 and Jericho 5, fig. 189:2); 8. storage jar (Jericho 5, fig. 199:6); 9. lamp (Jericho 5, fig. 197:2.); 10-12. cooking pots (Jericho 5, fig. 198:10; Jericho 4, figs. 150:22 and 121:11); 13. decorated water jar (Jericho 5, fig. 206:11); **14. dipper juglet (Jericho 5, fig. 196:5).**

The dipper juglet on the right is from the Chrysler Collection. It is considered transitional between the long dipper juglet of the Middle Bronze and the Late Bronze II short dipper juglet and is the common form for Late Bronze I. Amiran – Plate 46, #7; Kenyon – Jericho V, Fig. 196, #5. Purchased in 2016 from Licensed Dealer in Israel – Uri Shovanov.

Scripture reading:

Joshua 6:17-19; 24 – Instructions about plunder

Joshua 6:26 – The curse

Archaeological evidence:



Jars full of grain found by John Garstang at Jericho. They were charred in the fire that the Israelites set to destroy the Canaanite city. A total of six bushels of grain were discovered in a single excavation season amid the charred debris of City IV.

Jericho summary:

The city was heavily fortified (Josh 2:5,7,15; 6:5,20); it was destroyed in harvest time (Josh 2:6; 3:15; 5:10-12); the inhabitants of Jericho had no opportunity to flee with their food (Josh 6:1); the siege was short (Josh 6:15); the walls fell down flat (Josh 6:20); the invaders did not plunder the city (Josh 6-17-18); the city was burned (Josh 6:24). These things all point to the accuracy of the Biblical account. When archaeology is correctly interpreted, the evidence uncovered supports the historical accuracy of the Bible, even in the smallest detail.

The Amarna tablets

British palaeographer and biblical scholar, Frederic George Kenyon wrote, "In the year 1887 an Egyptian woman found, amid the ruins of an ancient city about half-way between Thebes and Memphis, a collection of some 350 clay tablets inscribed with strange markings. [The tablets are now mainly divided between Berlin and the British Museum.] The city is now well known as Tell el-Amarna, the capital of the remarkable king Amenhotep IV, or Akhenaten, who made a

vain attempt to revolutionize the religion of his country, and was the father-in-law of Tutankhamen, the discovery of whose tomb by Lord Carnarvon made such a sensation at the end of 1922. The tablets of Tell el-Amarna, however, raised an almost equal sensation among Oriental scholars; for here, in the middle of Egypt, were documents written not after the manner of the country, in the Egyptian language and upon papyrus, but engraved upon clay in the unmistakable cuneiform, or wedge-shaped script characteristic of Mesopotamia. Nor did their surprise lessen as the writings were deciphered and their meaning ascertained. For these tablets proved to be the official correspondence of Egyptian governors or vassal-princes, from various places in Palestine and Syria, with their overlord, the king of Egypt. Their date is about the year 1380 B.C., which, according to the view now generally accepted, and which seems to be confirmed by the recent excavations at Jericho, is the period when Joshua and the Hebrews were overrunning southern Palestine, while the Hittites were conquering Damascus, and the Amorites were invading Phoenicia. **Jerusalem, Lachish, Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer, are mentioned by name; and complaints are made of the assaults of the Habiru, who have been generally regarded as the Hebrews**, though the identification is not accepted by all scholars” (Sir Frederick Kenyon, *Our Bible & the Ancient Manuscripts*, 1939, p. 5).



A letter from Abdi-Heba of Jerusalem to the Egyptian Pharaoh. 1st half of the 14th century B.C. Akkadian cuneiform text. From Tell el-Amarna, Egypt. Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin.

“The present interest in the Habiru is primarily caused by three factors: (1) the resemblance between the names Habiru and Hebrew, (2) the chronological relationship between the Amarna Habiru and the Israelites, and (3) the proximity of their location within the land of

Canaan to that of the Hebrews in Joshua's time" (S. Douglas Waterhouse, *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, *Who are the Habiru of the Amarna Letters?* 12/1 (2001): 31–42. Andrews University).

"The Amarna Letters from Jerusalem are of interest for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that they come from Jerusalem a few centuries before King David would ostensibly vanquish the Canaanite (Jebusite) population of Jerusalem and make it his own capital (II Samuel 5). Also, the correspondence with a Jerusalem ruler in the 14th century provides evidence for occupation in the city in a period (Late Bronze Age II) for which there is little archaeological evidence. Recently a fragment of an Akkadian tablet (now called 'Jerusalem Tablet 1') was found in excavations at Jerusalem, and some scholars have claimed that this tablet contained some correspondence between a king of Jerusalem and a king of Egypt. But this tablet is ultimately too fragmentary to determine if it was a letter. Among the most important things that these tablets demonstrate is that there was a vibrant and sophisticated scribal apparatus in Jerusalem during the Late Bronze Age. This Canaanite city was certainly not a backwater, but precisely the reverse" (Christopher Rollston, *Jerusalem in the Amarna Letters*).



Fragment of Cuneiform tablet ('Jerusalem Tablet 1') found in Jerusalem. Hebrew University excavations unearthed a clay fragment dating back to the 14th century B.C.

The Mount Ebal Tablet

Deuteronomy 27:12-13

Deuteronomy 28:1-5; 15-17



Archaeologists estimate the "curse tablet," made from a folded lead sheet and inscribed with proto-alphabetic characters, may be at least 3,200 years old. (Credit: ABR/Michael C. Luddeni)

Associates for Biblical Research archaeologist Dr. Scott Stripling said that his team found the curse tablet high on Mount Ebal, just north of the city of Nablus, in December 2019.

The ancient Hebrew inscription in proto-alphabetic script consists of 40 letters and is centuries older than any known Hebrew inscription (Khirbet Qeiyafa, ca. 1000 B.C.) from ancient Israel.

It reads: | *Cursed, cursed, cursed - cursed by the God YHW.*

| *You will die cursed.*

Cursed you will surely die.

Cursed by YHW – cursed, cursed, cursed.

The curse tablet came to light when Scott Stripling led an ABR team to wet sift the discarded material from Adam Zertal's excavations (1982–1989) on Mt. Ebal. The stratigraphy of the site — in other words, the dates of different layers of earth determined by archaeological excavations — suggest that the tablet dates to around 1200 B.C. at the very latest, and perhaps as early as 1400 B.C., Stripling said.

Scripture reading:

Joshua 24:1-13 – Summary



Single-spouted lamp with traces of burning. Found in Hebron – Amiran – Plate 59, #19. Purchased in 1984 from Omar Kahyam Museum – Old City, Jerusalem.

Judges 7:1-2, 12, 16-23

The Iron Period (1200 – 586 B.C.) – From the Judges unto the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

Michal Dayagi-Mendels, Curator of Israelite and Persian Periods, Israel Museum wrote, “It is clear from archaeological evidence that the decline of the Canaanite culture and the appearance of the Israelites in the country were not discrete historical events but were rather a historical process that lasted for roughly two hundred years. In contrast, 587/586 B.C., the date of the destruction of the First Temple and the end of the period, was a catastrophic turning point in the history of the Israelites and of the land of Israel. Evidence of the destruction has been revealed by excavations, and the echo of its impact reverberates in the words of the biblical narrator and the prophets, as well as in the lamentations of the exiles.”

“On the basis both of archaeological evidence and of historical reconstruction, which leans on the biblical account, it is customary to divide the span from 1200 to 586 B.C. into two principal periods: 1200-1000 B.C. (the period of the Conquest and the Judges) and 1000-586 B.C. (the period of the Monarchy), with further divisions into subperiods” (Michal Dayagi-Mendels, *Treasures of the Holy Land*, Israelite Period/ Iron Age, 1986, p. 137).

1200-1000 B.C. (the period of the Conquest and the Judges)



Merneptah Stele. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

The Israel Stele from the reign of the Pharaoh Merneptah (1236-1223 B.C.) was discovered in 1896 at Thebes. It is about 7.5 feet high and made of black granite. The inscription includes the lines:

“Now that Tehenu has come to ruin, Hatti is pacified.

Canaan has been plundered into every sort of woe. Ashkelon has been overcome.

Gezer has been captured. Yano’am was made non-existent.

Israel is laid waste (and) his seed is not.

Hurru has become a widow because of Egypt.

All lands have united themselves in peace.

Anyone who was restless, he has been subdued by the King of Upper and Lower Egypt...”
(*Biblical Archaeology Review*, 16:05, Sept/Oct 1990).

By this point in time, Israel was established in the land of Canaan to such an extent that it would be included in a listing of nations defeated by the world’s most powerful monarch.

NEXT – Lesson Four – **1000-586 B.C. (the period of the Monarchy)**

Bud Chrysler, June 2022 – www.biblicalarchaeologytruth.com