

Bible Study from an Archaeological Perspective

Lesson Six

The Iron Period (1200 – 586 B.C.) Part Two: continued – The Iron II C Period (800 B.C. – 586 B.C.) – From Sennacherib’s Assyrian campaign unto Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian campaign.

II Kings 20:16-21

II Kings 21:1-2 – *Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem... And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel.*

Jeremiah 15:4 – *And I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem.*



Mold-made head of Judean Pillar Figurine

The mold-made heads display hairstyles resembling Egyptian wigs, with rows of curls, and defined facial features. A solid cylindrical pillar was used for the bodies of the pillar figurines made with oversized breasts, under which the arms curve. The figurines are interpreted as either fertility goddesses, most frequently Asherah or Astarte.

Although these figurines have been found all over Judah, about half (405 out of 822, to be exact) were found in Jerusalem, many only a short distance from the Temple Mount. About 5 or 6 inches tall, the handmade body is solid and shaped like a column, while the mold-made head was manufactured separately. All of the figurines pre-date the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem.

- In 612 B.C., the city of Nineveh fell to the Babylonian-Mede coalition and this date is recognized as **the end of the Assyrian Empire**. Even so, the last Assyrian king, Ashur-uballit, struggled to regain power with the help of the Egyptians under pharaoh Necho II (r. 610-595 B.C.). Necho II was defeated in battle by Nebuchadnezzar II in 605 B.C. near Carchemish.

Scripture reading:

(609 B.C.) II Kings 23:36 – *Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem...*

(605) Jeremiah 46:1-2 – *The word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Gentiles; Against Egypt, against the army of Pharaoh-necho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon smote in **the fourth year of Jehoiakim** the son of Josiah king of Judah.*

(606/605) Daniel 1:1-3, 6-7 – ***In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.** And the LORD gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god. And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes... Now among these were the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abed-nego.*

(605) Jeremiah 25:1-3 – *The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; The which Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day, that is the three and twentieth year, the word of the Lord hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened.*

Jeremiah 36:1-2, 4 – *And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that this word came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day. Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah: and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord, which he had spoken unto him, upon the roll of a book.*

Jeremiah 36:29-31 – *And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the Lord; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast?*

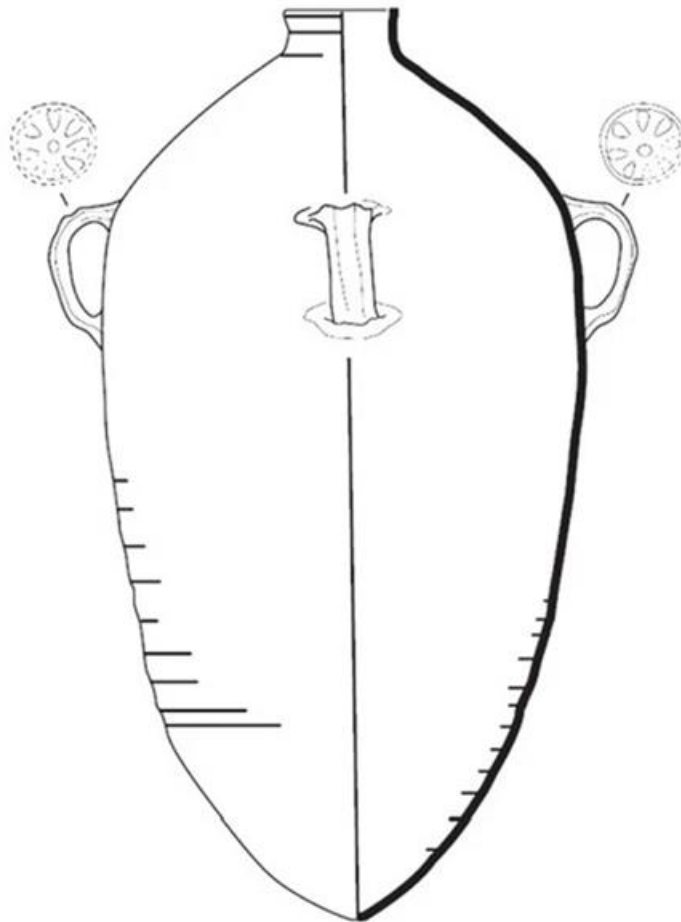
Therefore thus saith the Lord of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David... and I will bring... upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not.

*Jeremiah 25:11-12 – And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and **these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.** And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.*

Daniel 1:17-21 – ...unto the first year of king Cyrus (535).

Archaeological evidence:

Rosette-Stamped Jar Handles originate in this period (Iron II C – 800-586 B.C.) Scholars have suggested that the rosette may be a royal Judean Symbol. Analysis of the stratigraphic settings of these rosette impressions suggests that they were introduced during the reign of Jehoiakim.



Royal storage jar with rosette stamp on the handles



Jar handles with rosette impression. Purchased in 2015 from Licensed Dealer in Israel – Uri Shovanov

“The rosette motif enjoyed a long history in the realm of ancient Near Eastern art, where it became a popular manifestation of divine kingship. The royal significance of the rosette motif indicates that the vessels on which they appear were manufactured under royal sponsorship and intended for official use. The stratigraphic analysis of the well-stratified impressions from the City of David and elsewhere leads to the conclusion that the rosette-impressed vessels date to the very last phase of the Iron Age II. **They appear to have been introduced during the reign of Jehoiakim, possibly in response to the threat of Babylonian invasion that followed Egypt’s defeat at the Battle of Carchemish in 605 BCE** (Cahill 1995: 247-50)” (Qedem 41 Cahill 2000: 99).

“Each of the seven well-stratified rosette stamp seal impressions from the City of David can be dated on the basis of the accompanying pottery and artifacts to the final phase of the Iron Age II. The chronological peg to which these cultural assemblages may be linked is 587/6 BCE, the year in which the Babylonian army of Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the fortified cities of Azekah, Lachish and Jerusalem” (Malamat 1968; Tadmor 1976: 157).

“Well-stratified rosette impressions from other sites also derive exclusively from the destruction levels marking the end of the Iron Age II” (Cahill 1995: 244-46). “In addition to those from the City of David, 26 rosette-impressed handles have been found in well-stratified contexts at seven other sites” (Cahill 1995: 245-46).

(598) II Kings 24:6, 8 – *So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers: (Reigned eleven years – II Kings 23:36) and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead... Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months...* [II Chronicles 36:6-8].

(597) II Kings 24:12 – *And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and **the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign.*** [II Chronicles 36:9-10]. (See Babylonian ration lists below).



Bullae from Area G in the City of David

Dr. Yigal Shilo of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem conducted extensive excavations in the City of David from 1978 to 1985. 51 bullae (clay seal impressions) were discovered in his Area G near the Stepped-Stone Structure. One read, "*Gemariah/son of Shaphan.*"



Seal impression of Gemariah son of Shaphan. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority/Clara Amit

This bulla, which the late Yigal Shiloh excavated along with 50 others in the City of David, reads, "Belonging to Gemaryahu / son of Shaphan." Found in a stratum that securely dates it to shortly before the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem in 587 / 586 B.C.E., about the same time as the events described in Jeremiah 36, **this bulla can be identified with the Biblical Gemariah, mentioned in Jeremiah 36:10** – *Then read Baruch in the book of the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe...*



Jehucal son of Shelemiah

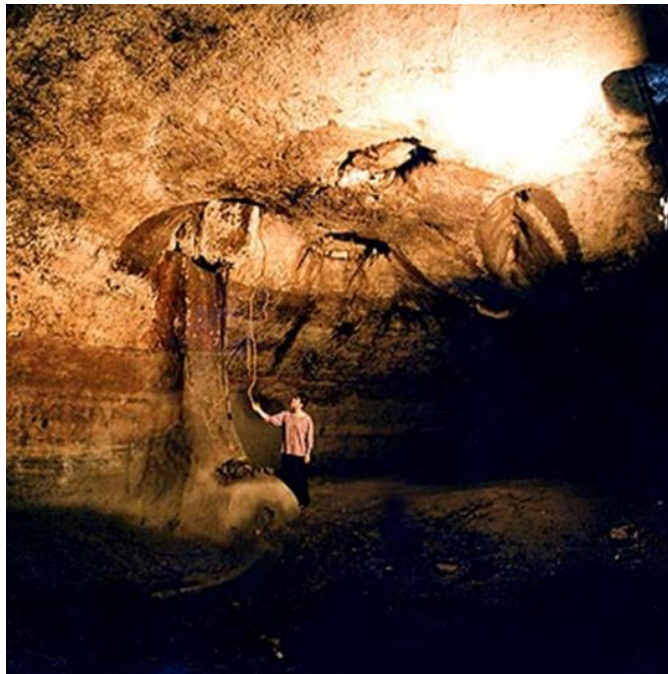
The Jehucal bulla was found by Eilat Mazar above the Stepped Stone Structure, “We found the bulla of Jehucal inside the palace structure,” Mazar said. “We found the bulla of Gedaliah outside the wall, just at the foot of the same spot we found Jehucal. The two must have been connected somehow.”

Jeremiah 38:1 - *Then Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashur, and Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashur the son of Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken unto all the people...*



Gedaliah son of Pashur

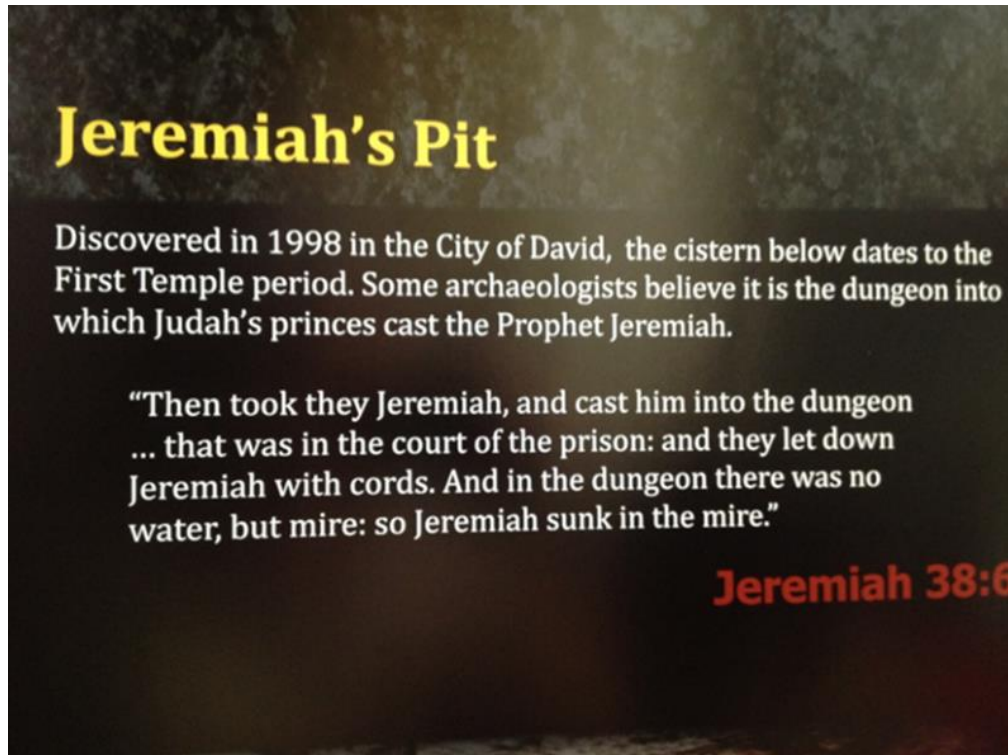
Jeremiah 38:4 – *Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city...*



Jeremiah's Dungeon

Jeremiah 38:12-13, 28 – *And Ebedmelech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now these old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine armholes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so. So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison. ...So Jeremiah abode in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken: and he was there when Jerusalem was taken.*

Jeremiah 32:2 – *For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem: and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which was in the king of Judah's house.*



Sign posted above the cistern near the remains of the palace.



SINGLE-SPOUTED JUDAEAN LAMP, Iron Age II (ca. 800 - 586 B.C.) Sussman, BAR, 2/1985, p. 47. Amiran – Plate 100, #19; Plate 101, #22. "In Iron II C, in the South, a completely new type evolved. It has a relatively small, shallow bowl placed on a thick, high disc base."

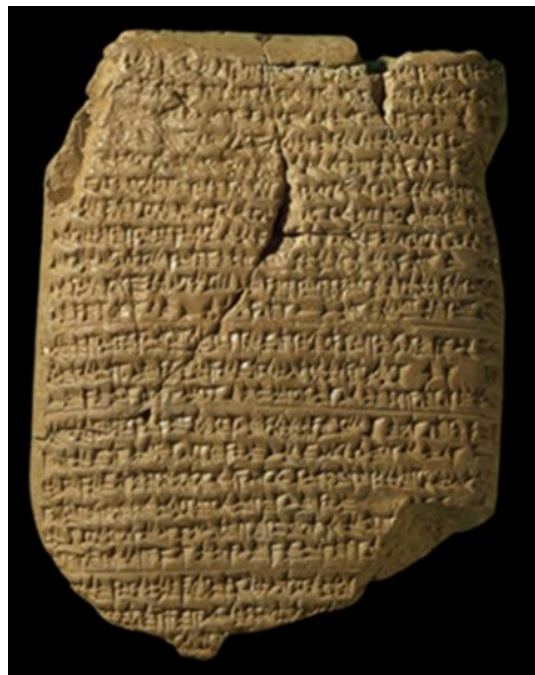
(597) II Kings 24:17-18 – *And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah his father's brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah. Zedekiah was twenty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem...* [II Chronicles 36:10-11]. (See Babylonian chronicle below).

(588) II Kings 25:1 – *And it came to pass in the ninth year of his (Zedekiah's) reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about.* [Jer. 39:1; Ezek. 24:1-2]

(586) II Kings 25:2 – *And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.* [Jer. 39:2]

(586) Jeremiah 39:11-12 – *Now Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, saying, Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee.*

(586) II Kings 25:8-11 – *And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the **nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon**, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem: And he burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire. And all the army of the Chaldees, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about. Now the rest of the people that were left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude, did Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carry away.*



The Babylonian Chronicle – March 16, 597 B.C.

The cuneiform text records the Battle of Carchemish and the accession of Nebuchadnezzar.

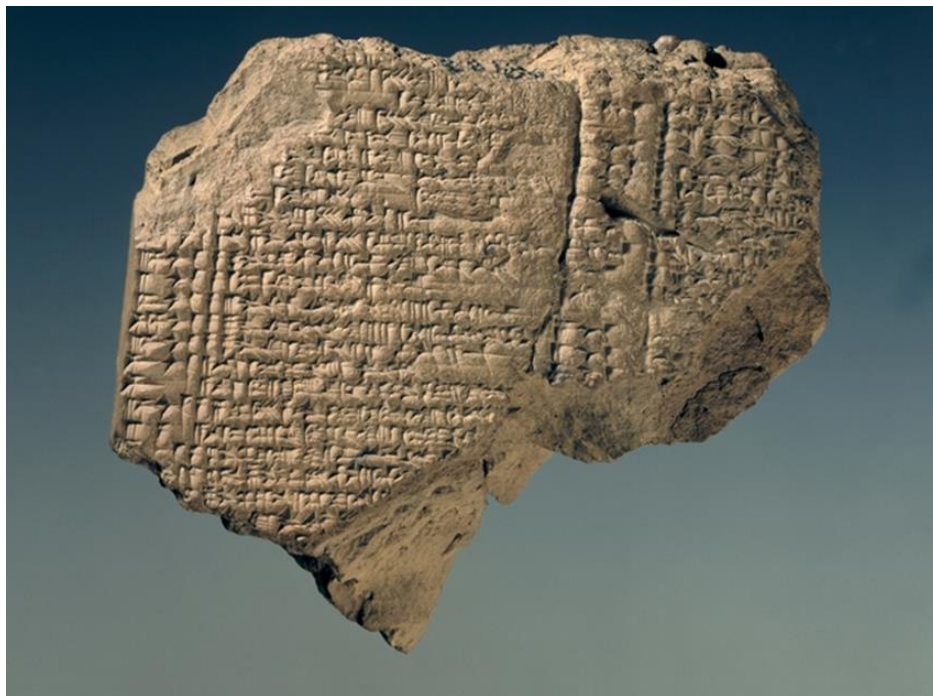
The fifth paragraph says, “In the seventh year [598], the month of Kislîmu, the king of Akkad mustered his troops, marched to the Hatti-land and besieged the city of Judah. On the second day of the month of Addarunote [597] he seized the city and captured the king. **He appointed there a king of his own choice**, received its heavy tribute and sent to Babylon.”

*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.***

First published by Donald J. Wiseman in 1956, the Babylonian Chronicle records the last year of the reign of Nabopolassar and the first 11 years of his son Nebuchadnezzar. Among Nebuchadnezzar’s accomplishments was the capture of Jerusalem, dated precisely to March 16, 597 B.C. This document is on display in the British Museum, London.

Jeremiah 52:28-30 – *...three and twentieth year of Nebuchadrezzar = 582 B.C.*

(561) Jeremiah 52:31-34



Three-inch-tall **cuneiform tablet dating to Nebuchadnezzar’s 13th year (592 B.C.)**. It contains the monthly rations for “Ya’u-kînu, king of the land of Yahudu” (Babylonian for “Jehoiachin, king of Judah”).

At the beginning of the 20th century, German archaeologists excavating the massive southern palace in Babylon discovered nearly three hundred cuneiform texts that record the disbursal of rations from the royal storehouses. There are four texts that show monthly rations for “Ya’u-kînu, king of the land of Yahudu” (Babylonian for “**Jehoiachin, king of Judah**”).



(535) Daniel 5:25-31 – *And this is the writing that was written, Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin. This is the interpretation of the thing: Mene; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. Tekel; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Peres; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.*

(535) Daniel 9:1-3 – *In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the LORD God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes...*

(605) Jeremiah 29: 10-14 – *For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.*

(535) Daniel 9:21-25 – *Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.*

NEXT – Lesson Seven – Persian, Hellenistic, Roman Periods (535 B.C. – A.D. 70) and a summary.

Bud Chrysler, July 2022 – www.biblicalarchaeologytruth.com