Lecture on Extra-biblical Materials that Bear on the OT
Chantilly Bible Church June 16-20, 2019

Lecture 1 (Sunday night)

We have three goals in these lectures: 1) become somewhat acquainted with Ancient Near East culture and religion 2) a look at the way the OT faith fit into the surrounding culture 3) a few artifacts and writings that validate the OT.

Slide #2

Use my book on Bible History and Archaeology ($10.00); Pritchard, The Ancient Near Eastern Texts ($45.00 on Amazon). For those who want to dig deeper, K. Kitchen’s On the Reliability of the OT, Eerdmans, 2003 is the best.

The Flood Slides 3-12

Flood—Gilgamesh epic—history—Sumerians, Hittites, Babylonians.

1. **The gods: Shamash, Hadad, the great God’s.** Gilgamesh was two thirds deity; one third human. Beautiful and powerful. King of Uruk (biblical Erech; modern: Warka).

2. **Gilgamesh was a bad King, so the gods created Enkidu.** He was virtuous and lived among the animals.

3. **Hunter’s feared Enkidu, so they devised a plan to trap him.** They asked Gilgamesh to send a harlot to entice him. The ruse was successful, the animals abandon him, and the harlot brought him to Uruk.

4. **Enkidu and Gilgamesh fought like two bulls,** but Gilgamesh won, and then the two of them became fast friends.

5. **The two of them go to the cedar forest (Lebanon) to fight the giant Humbaba** who rules there. They killed the giant.


Enkidu’s dream: ‘There is the house [place of the dead] whose people sit in darkness; dust is their food and clay their meat. They are clothed like birds, with wings for covering, they see no light, they sit in darkness. I entered the house of dust and I saw the kings of the earth, their crowns put away forever; rulers and princes, all those who once wore kingly crowns and ruled the world in the days of old. They who had stood in the place of the gods like Anu and Enlil stood now like servants to fetch baked meats in the house of dust, to carry cooked meat and cold water from the water-skin. In the house of dust which I entered were high priests and acolytes, priests of the incantation and of ecstasy; there were servers of the temple, and there was Etana, that king of Dish whom the eagle carried to heaven in the days of old. I saw also Samaqan, god of cattle, and there was Ereshkigal the Queen of the Underworld; and Belit-Sheri squatted in front of her, she who is recorder of the gods and keeps the book of death. She held a tablet from which she read. She raised her head; she saw me and spoke:” Who has brought this one here?” Then I awoke like a man drained of blood who wanders alone in a waste of rashes; like one whom the bailiff has seized and his heart pounds with terror.’

*Isaiah 14:9-12: 9* “Sheol from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come; It arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth; It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones. 10 “They will all respond and say to you, ‘Even you have been made weak as we, you have become like us.’ 11 Your pomp and the music of your harps Have been brought down to Sheol: Maggots are spread out as your bed beneath you, And worms are your covering.” 12 “How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! (Isa 14:1 NAS)
Hebrews 2:14: Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15 and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. (Heb 2:14-15 NAS).

7. Gilgamesh grieves and begins to search for eternal life.

Bitterly, Gilgamesh wept for his friend Enkidu; he wandered over the wilderness as a hunter, he roamed over the plains; in his bitterness he cried, ‘How can I rest, how can I be at peace? Despair is in my heart. What my brother is now, that shall I be when I am dead. Because I am afraid of death I will go as best I can to find Utnapishtim whom they call the Faraway, for he has entered the assembly of the gods.' So Gilgamesh travelled over the wilderness, he wandered over the grasslands, a long journey, in search of Utnapishtim, whom the gods took after the deluge; and they set him to live in the land of Dilmun, in the garden of the sun; and to him alone of men they gave everlasting life.

He meets a young woman and says to her:

“But now, young woman, maker of wine, since I have seen your face do not let me see the face of death which I dread so much.”

2 O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me.
3 O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit. (Psa 30:2-3 ESV)
9 ‘What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness? (Psa 30:9 ESV)

She answered, ‘Gilgamesh, where are you hurrying to? You will never find that life for which you are looking. When the gods created man they allotted to him death, but life they retained in their own keeping. As for you, Gilgamesh, fill your belly with good things; day and night, night and day, dance and be merry, feast and rejoice. Let your clothes be fresh, bathe yourself in water, cherish the little child that holds your hand, and make your wife happy in your embrace; for this too is the lot of man.'

Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do. 8 Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head. 9 Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. (Ecc 9:7 ESV)

8. After an arduous journey, Gilgamesh meets Utnapishtim who alone of mortals received everlasting life after the flood. He tells Gilgamesh the story of the flood.

A. The reason for the flood.

‘You know the city Shurrupak, it stands on the banks of Euphrates? That city grew old and the gods that were in it were old. There was Anu, lord of the firmament, their father, and warrior Enlil their counsellor, Ninurta the helper, and Ennugi watcher over canals; and with them also was Ea. In those days the world teemed, the people multiplied, the world bellowed like a wild bull, and the great god was aroused by the clamour. Enlil heard the clamour and he said to the gods in council, "The uproar of mankind is intolerable and sleep is no longer possible by reason of the babel." So the gods agreed to exterminate mankind.
When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown. The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them." (Gen 6:1-8 ESV)

B. The Preservation of humanity.

Enlil did this, but Ea because of his oath warned me in a dream. He whispered their words to my house of reeds, "Reed-house, reed-house! Wall, O wall, hearken reed-house, wall reflect; O man of Shurrupak, son of Ubara-Tutu; tear down your house and build a boat, abandon possessions and look for life, despise worldly goods and save your soul alive. Tear down your house, I say, and build a boat. These are the measurements of the barque as you shall build her: let her beam equal her length, let her deck be roofed like the vault that covers the abyss; then take up into the boat the seed of all living creatures."

8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. 7 These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. (Gen 6:1 ESV)

because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. (1Peter 3:20 ESV)

14 Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark and cover it inside and out with pitch. 15 This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. 16 Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks. 17 For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. 18 But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. 19 And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. 20 Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you to keep them alive. 21 Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them." 22 Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him. (Gen 6:14-22 ESV)

C. Utnapishtim’s lie; Noah’s honesty.

"Behold, what you have commanded I will honour and perform, but how shall I answer the people, the city, the elders?" Then Ea opened his mouth and said to me, his servant, "Tell them this: I have learnt that Enlil is wrathful against me, I dare no longer walk in his land nor live in his city; I will go down to
the Gulf to dwell with Ea my lord. But on you he will rain down abundance, rare fish and shy wildfowl, a rich harvest-tide. In the evening the rider of the storm [Hadad] will bring you wheat in torrents.

2 Peter 2: 5 and spared not the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.

D. Building the boat.

‘In the first light of dawn all my household gathered round me, the children brought pitch and the men whatever was necessary. On the fifth day I laid the keel and the ribs, then I made fast the planking. The ground-space was one acre, each side of the deck measured one hundred and twenty cubits, making a square. I built six decks below, seven in all, I divided them into nine sections with bulkheads between. I drove in wedges where needed, I saw to the punt poles, and laid in supplies. The carriers brought oil in baskets, I poured pitch into the furnace and asphalt and oil; more oil was consumed in caulking, and more again the master of the boat took into his stores. I slaughtered bullocks for the people and every day I killed sheep. I gave the shipwrights wine to drink as though it were river water, raw wine and red wine and oil and white wine. There was feasting then as there is at the time of the New Year's festival; I myself anointed my head. On the seventh day the boat was complete.

Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. 15 This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. 16 Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks. (Gen 6:14-16 ESV)

E. Launching the boat.

‘Then was the launching full of difficulty; there was shifting of ballast above and below till two thirds was submerged. I loaded into her all that I had of gold and of living things, my family, my kin, the beast of the field both wild and tame, and all the craftsmen. I sent them on board, for the time that Shamash had ordained was already fulfilled when he said, “in the evening, when the rider of the storm sends down the destroying rain, enter the boat and batten her down.” The time was fulfilled, the evening came, the rider of the storm sent down the rain. I looked out at the weather and it was terrible, so I too boarded the boat and battened her down. All was now complete, the battenning and the caulking; so I handed the tiller to Puzur-Amurri the steersman, with the navigation and the care of the whole boat.

Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came upon the earth. 7 And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood. 8 Of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground, 9 two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah. (Gen 7:6-9 ESV)

F. The Terrible flood.

‘With the first light of dawn a black cloud came from the horizon; it thundered within where Adad, lord of the storm was riding. In front over hill and plain Shullat and Hanish, heralds of the storm, led on. Then the gods of the abyss rose up; Nergal pulled out the dams of the nether waters, Ninurta the warlord threw down the dykes, and the seven judges of hell, the Annunaki, raised their torches, lighting the land with their vivid flame. A stupor of despair went up to heaven when the god of the storm turned daylight to darkness, when he smashed the land like a cup. One whole day the tempest raged, gathering fury as .it went, it poured over the people like the tides of battle; a man could not see his brother, nor the people be seen from heaven. Even the gods were terrified at the flood, they fled to the highest
heaven, the firmament of Anu; they crouched against the walls, cowering like curs. Then Ishtar the
sweet-voiced Queen of Heaven cried out like a woman in travail: "Alas the days of old are turned to
dust because I commanded evil; why did I command thus evil in the council of all the gods? I
commanded wars to destroy the people, but are they not my people, for I brought them forth? Now like
the spawn of fish they float in the ocean." The great gods of heaven and of hell wept, they covered their
mouths.

And after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah's
life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great
deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. And rain fell upon the earth forty
days and forty nights. On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and
Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark, they and every beast, according
to its kind, and all the livestock according to their kinds, and every creeping thing that creeps on the
earth, according to its kind, and every bird, according to its kind, every winged creature. They went
into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. And those that
entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him. And the LORD shut him in.

The flood continued forty days on the earth. The waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose
high above the earth. The waters prevailed and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated
on the face of the waters. And the waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains
under the whole heaven were covered. The waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them
fifteen cubits deep. And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming
creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind. Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was
the breath of life died. He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and
animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah
was left, and those who were with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days.

(Gen 7:10-24 ESV)

G. The landing of the ark.

For six days and six nights the winds blew, torrent and tempest and flood overwhelmed the world,
tempest and flood raged together like warring hosts. When the seventh day dawned the storm from the
south subsided, the sea grew calm, the flood was stilled; I looked at the face of the world and there was
silence, all mankind was turned to clay. The surface of the sea stretched as flat as a roof-top; I opened
a hatch and the light fell on my face. Then I bowed low, I sat down and I wept, the tears streamed down
my face, for on every side was the waste of water. I looked for land in vain, but fourteen leagues distant
there appeared a mountain, and there the boat grounded; on the mountain of Nisir [possibly a mountain
in Iraqi Kurdistan] the boat held fast, she held fast and did not budge. One day she held, and a second
day on the mountain of Nisir she held fast and did not budge. A third day, and a fourth day she held
fast on the mountain and did not budge; a fifth day and a sixth day she held fast on the mountain. When
the seventh day dawned I loosed a dove and let her go. She flew away, but finding no resting-place she
returned. Then I loosed a swallow, and she flew away but finding no resting-place she returned. I loosed
a raven, she saw that the waters had retreated, she ate, she flew around, she cawed, and she did not
come back.

But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And
God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided. The fountains of the deep and the
windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained, and the waters receded
from the earth continually. At the end of 150 days the waters had abated, and in the seventh month,
on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. And the waters
continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of
the mountains were seen. At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had
made and sent forth a raven. It went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground. But the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him. He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore. (Gen 8:1-12 ESV)

H. The sacrifice.

Then I threw everything open to the four winds, I made a sacrifice and poured out a libation on the mountain top. Seven and again seven cauldrons I set up on their stands, I heaped up wood and cane and cedar and myrtle. When the gods smelled the sweet savour, they gathered like flies over the sacrifice. Then, at last, Ishtar also came, she lifted her necklace with the jewels of heaven that once Anu had made to please her. "O you gods here present, by the lapis lazuli round my neck I shall remember these days as I remember the jewels of my throat; these last days I shall not forget. Let all the gods gather round the sacrifice, except Enlil. He shall not approach this offering, for without reflection he brought the flood; he consigned my people to destruction."

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." (Gen 8:20-22 ESV)

I. Lament of the gods.

'When Enlil had come, when he saw the boat, he was wroth and swelled with anger at the gods, the host of heaven, "Has any of these mortals escaped? Not one was to have survived the destruction." Then the god of the wells and canals Ninurta opened his mouth and said to the warrior Enlil, "Who is there of the gods that can devise without Ea? It is Ea alone who knows all things." Then Ea opened his mouth and spoke to warrior Enlil, "Wisest of gods, hero Enlil, how could you so senselessly bring down the flood? It was not I that revealed the secret of the gods; the wise man learned it in a dream. Now take your counsel what shall be done with him."

'Then Enlil went up into the boat, he took me by the hand and my wife and made us enter the boat and kneel down on either side, he standing between us. He touched our foreheads to bless us saying, "In time past Utnapishtim was a mortal man; henceforth he and his wife shall live in the distance at the mouth of the rivers." Thus it was that the gods took me and placed me here to live in the distance, at the mouth of the rivers.'

11. Utnapishtim sends Gilgamesh home and tells him of a plant that will assure him everlasting life.

Gilgamesh, I shall reveal a secret thing, it is a mystery of the gods that I am telling you. There is a plant that grows under the water, it has a prickle like a thorn, like a rose; it will wound your hands, but if you succeed in taking it, then your hands will hold that which restores his lost youth to a man:
12. Gilgamesh gains access to the plant.

When Gilgamesh heard this he opened the sluices so that a sweet water current might carry him out to the deepest channel; he tied heavy stones to his feet and they dragged him down to the water-bed. There he saw the plant growing; although it pricked him he took it in his hands; then he cut the heavy stones from his feet, and the sea carried him and threw him on to the shore.

13. A snake carries away the plant.

Gilgamesh saw a well of cool water and he went down and bathed; but deep in the pool there was lying a serpent, and the serpent sensed the sweetness of the flower. It rose out of the water and snatched it away, and immediately it sloughed its skin and returned to the well.

14. Discussion

What are the gods in the Babylonian pantheon like?
What is the parallel between the Babylonian myth and the OT regarding death and the afterlife?
What is one of Jesus’ purposes in coming? (Hebrews 2:14-15)
How do you account for the similarities? The differences?
See my BHA pp. 39-40 for parallels. See John N. Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths*, pp. 91-107, for an excellent discussion.
Place of Canaan (Genesis 9:18 – 29) BHA pp. 27–34. Slides 13-15

Moses writes this for Israelites in the wilderness.

Israel had 12 tribes; the Canaanite family had 12 names including Canaan. Is this possibly an apologetic for wiping out the Canaanites? Canaan was originally Hamitic, but when we meet them in the Bible, they are speaking a Semitic language (father of Hebrew) and worshiping Semitic Gods and even having some of the same offerings (Ugaritic).

1. Genealogies are selected and oriented to a certain position—the history of Abraham.

2. Genealogies begin with the most remote person, and the most important (theologically) is discussed last and amplified. In this case Shem.

3. Japheth has only four verses (10:1-5). Discuss these mountain people and later biblical history: Medes, Persians, Greeks.

These are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood. 2 The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. 3 The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. 4 The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. 5 From these the coastsland peoples spread in their lands, each with his own language, by their clans, in their nations. 15 Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth,

4. The Hamites (Genesis 10:6–14). Note the Mesopotamian cities in verses 10 through 12. Custance argues that since the Sumerians describe themselves as black headed people, they were originally Hamitic and dark skinned. The language is unique. They had the first story of the flood. Noah is Ziusudra. They also have a king list and divide time between before the flood and after the flood.

6 The sons of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. 7 The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan. 8 Cush fathered Nimrod; he was the first on earth to be a mighty man. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD. Therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD." 10 The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. 11 From that land he went into Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, and 12 Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. 13 Egypt fathered Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, 14 Pathrusim, Casluhim (from whom the Philistines came), and Caphtorim.

The Hittites are also Hamites as perhaps are the Chinese. So, Hamites were the most widely scattered and inventive people. Sumerians: writing. Egyptians: pyramids and pictograph writing. Chinese: developed so many things.

Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth, 16 and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, 17 the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, 18 the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward the clans of the Canaanites dispersed. 19 And the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon in the direction of Gerar as far as Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. 20 These are the sons of Ham, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations. (Gen 10:15 ESV)
Shemites (10:21–32). We return to them after Babel (11:10–32). Their genealogy culminates in Abraham, who obviously is the center of history from here on throughout the Old Testament.

21 To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth, children were born. 22 The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. 23 The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash. 24 Arpachshad fathered Shelah; and Shelah fathered Eber. 25 To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided, and his brother's name was Joktan. 26 Joktan fathered Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, 27 Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, 28 Obal, Abimael, Sheba, 29 Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan. 30 The territory in which they lived extended from Mesha in the direction of Sephar to the hill country of the east. 31 These are the sons of Shem, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations. 32 These are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations, and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood. (Gen 10:15 ESV)
1. Tablets of Nuzi, Mari, Ebla, Jericho Map Slide #17

Abraham and His Milieu

God called Abraham from Ur and made a unique covenant with him. The record also indicates that the main center of Patriarchal activity before coming to Palestine was Haran (Aram-Naharaim, Gen. 24:10. Padan-Aram, Deut. 26:5). Many of the place names in the region of Haran are tied in with Abrahamic history: Serug, Nahor, Terah.¹

Culture at Nuzu

“Nuzi [sometimes Nuzu], modern Yorghan Tepe, about 9 miles south-west of Arrapha, modern Kirkuk, in the eastern hill-country of ancient Assyria, was excavated (1925-31) by the American Schools of Oriental Research in Baghdad, first with the Iraq Museum and later with Harvard University, under the direction of E. Chiera, R. H. Pfeiffer, and R. F. S. Starr. The settlement, originating before 3000 B.C., had, c. 2200 B.C., an Akkadian population and was called Gasur, but by 1500 B.C. its name was Nuzi and its population mainly Hurrian. The ruins, including a temple in seven levels, a palace, with some painted rooms, and many private houses, contained pottery, and other small objects. Most important, however, were some 4,000 cuneiform tablets dating c. 1500-1400 B.C. and written in Akkadian influenced by Hurrian vocabulary and idioms.”² While the dates of these tablets are considerably later than the date for Abraham (c. 2000 B.C., though critical scholars would date the patriarchs, if they even existed, in the middle of the second millennium), the fact that the patriarchal narratives have more in common with these data than with those later in Israelite history, makes their discussion pertinent to patriarchal studies. Kitchen’s excellent little work defends the patriarchal authenticity and deals with the parallels. He also argues that the Hurrian influence has been exaggerated. Many of these parallels are found in Mesopotamia in general.³

Filial adoption

The purpose of this adoption was to provide a childless couple with care in their old age and the performance of religious rites in exchange for an inheritance. This seems to fit the action of Abraham in connection with Eliezer as a “son of his house” who would inherit from Abraham (Gen. 15:2-4).⁴ Weir also includes the adoption of someone into a family without sons. He believes the Jacob and Laban situation fits this description.⁵

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¹ J. Kelso, Archaeology and Our Old Testament Contemporaries, p. 19.

² C. J. Mullo Weir, “Nuzi” in AOTS, p. 73. The following discussion is based primarily on this essay.


⁴ Ibid., p. 70 and Weir, “Nuzi,” p. 73.

⁵ Ibid.
**Teraphim**

The Teraphim stolen by Rachel were once assumed to represent property ownership. Kitchen believes this is a fallacious identification. He believes she took them for her own protection and blessing.

**Birthright**

The importance of the birthright is stressed at Nuzi. “A double share by the principal son, normally the eldest natural son, as is definitely prescribed in Deut. xxi. 15ff.” At Nuzi, an eldest son might be demoted as was Reuben.

**Blessings/oaths**

Kitchen downplays the significance of blessing-oaths at Nuzi and of the idea of selling a birthright. In other words, he does not believe the Nuzi material is parallel.

**Conclusion**

Weir concludes his discussion by saying, “The Nuzi documents do not mention any Old Testament incident or personage, nor do they indicate with certainty that any of Israel’s ancestors ever lived in or visited Mesopotamia. Their fifteenth-century provenance cannot accurately date patriarchal traditions since the customs they portray may have originated much earlier and may have persisted in Palestine until the monarchical period. They reveal, however, that the social customs, much of the terminology, and many of the personal names in the Pentateuch and elsewhere in the Old Testament were those current in parts of the Near East during the second millennium B.C., and to that extent they validate Israelite tradition.”

Van Seters has led the way in trying to destroy the edifice built up in the Albright era supporting the historicity of the patriarchs. Kitchen has shown that Van Seters’ attempts to tie the patriarchal stories into the first millennium are unsuccessful.

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8Weir, “Nuzi,” p. 76.

9Ibid., pp. 76-77.


2. Ebbl

The ancient city of Ebbl was found in the mound of modern Tell Mardikh in North Syria, some 44 miles south of Aleppo. The excavation began in 1964, but in 1975 confirmation was found that this mound was Ebbl indeed. Now for the first time it was known that Ebbl was at one time an empire rivaling that of Sargon of Akkad, of Mari and of Assyria. Slide #17,18, 19

In 1974 42 clay tablets were found. Dated paleographically they belong to about 2300 B.C., roughly contemporaneous with Sargon of Akkad. In 1975 1000 tablets and fragments were found, and in another room some 14,000 tablets were found as they fell from burning shelves when Ebbl was sacked by Naram Sin of Akkad in 2250 B.C. This comes to some 15,000 tablets altogether. Slide #20

Linguistically, Eblaite belongs to the Northwest Semitic family. This material however comes from 1000 years before Moses and three or four hundred years before Abraham. Obviously, the impact on the Bible will be indirect. Sumerian was the pattern for both Akkadian and Eblaite. “There are 32 (perhaps up to 56) bilingual vocabularies, having each Sumerian word translated into Eblaite (i.e., early Canaanite). One superb example (with 18 duplicate copies!) contains 1000 words in both languages.”14 There are paradigms of verbs as well as lexical texts containing lists of birds, animals, fish, and other items.

Ebla furnishes us with names (Ebrum = Eber, Ishmail, Ishrail); places (Hazor, Megiddo, Jerusalem, Lachish, Dor, Gaza, Ashtaroth); religion (Dagan, El, Adad, Reseph, Asherah, Kemosh [known in the Bible]). Ebla has nabi’utum as a class of prophets. This will add to the discussion of prophecy at Mari. As Kitchen says, however, “These men indeed delivered the ‘message’ of Dagan or other gods to the king of Mari—but always briefly, and purely in the king’s political or military interests, sometimes with promise or threat, depending on the king’s response. Never, however, do they adopt the stance of a Nathan, an Amos or a Hosea, or an Isaiah, to reprove and admonish on vital issues of personal morality, social justice, or obedience to God as man’s due to him. Apart from the eloquent (but relatively ‘secular’) pleas for just conduct of affairs in Egyptian works such as the Eloquent Peasant or the Admonitions of Ipuwer, the moral and spiritual tone of the later Old Testament prophets remains without real parallel in the ancient world.”15

3. Joseph/Israel in Egypt

a. Were there Semites in Egypt? The answer is yes. Egyptian records, Beni Hassan picture [my copy], Slide #22

b. Discuss the Hyksos (c. 1700-1600) and the Habiru

c. Was it possible for a Semite to rise to be second to the Pharaoh? Here is an article from BAR that deals with one who did. A certain ‘Abdiel (in Hebrew spelling) whose name means “Servant of God” in Hebrew. Slide #23-24

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13Though some argue that it is closer to Northeast Semitic (Akkadian).


15Ibid., pp. 54-55.
He is referred to as “Vizier” an Arabic/Islamic word meaning vice regent or next to the king. He is called the “father of the god” with god meaning the Pharaoh. He is also called a general of the horses (chariotry). “Most interesting among his titles, also mentioned on the same object, are “chief in the entire land” (mr pr m t3 r-djr.f) and “child of the kap” (khrd n k3p), often translated as “child of the nursery” but better rendered as “child of the palace.” The holder of this last title had grown up or had been educated in the palace (the private part connected with the harem) with the future king. As far as we know, no other vizier is known as having been a “child of the kap.”’’ Alain Zivie


“His floruit was in the last decades of the 18th Dynasty, under the reigns of both Amenhotep III and Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten), corresponding to the famous Amarna period in its broader definition (c. 1391–1353 B.C.).” The parallels with Joseph are striking, but he is too late to be Joseph. He does live in the approximate era of the Exodus (1441).

d. Discuss the revolution of Akhenaten and the Amarna letters (1300-1100).

e. Israel in Egypt. The Israelites settled in Goshen, the eastern part of the Delta of Egypt. They became landowners there. Bietak is the current excavator. He has located a 4 room house that is characteristic of the Hebrew homes in Canaan. See Bryant G. Wood, Associates for Biblical Research, Spring 2019.


Why is there so little evidence of Israel in Egypt?

One answer is that there was no Exodus, but a better answer is as follows:

We’re expecting more than archaeology can deliver

1) It would have been next to impossible to determine if it were Israel.

2) The Delta (Goshen, land of Ramases) contains hundreds of sites, but relatively few have been excavated. Excavation is difficult because of water. Bietak, after 35 years, has found no papyri. In short, the Nile Delta has produced no historical or administrative documents to shed light on any person.

3) Royal inscriptions never include negative information. Compare the battle of Kadesh; Thutmose III and his mother.

In sum, it is plausible that the story of Israel coming to Egypt and later being enslaved happened?

The geographical sites make the story plausible. Pi-Ramases is no doubt the Ramases of the Bible.

f. History of Tell el-Dab’a (Associates of Biblical Research)

“Ancient Rameses is located at Tell el-Dab’a in the eastern Delta, approximately 100 km northeast of Cairo. In antiquity, the Pelusiac branch of the Nile flowed past the site, giving access to the Mediterranean. In addition, the town lay on the land route to Canaan, the famous Horus Road. Thus, it was an important commercial and military center.

We can divide the history of the site into three periods: pre-Hyksos, Hyksos and post-Hyksos. The Hyksos were a Semitic people from Syria-Palestine, who took up residence in the eastern Nile Delta and eventually ruled northern Egypt for some 108 years, ca. 1663–1555 BC (15th Dynasty).Jacob
and his family arrived in Egypt around 1880 BC, based on an Exodus date of ca. 1450 BC. That was in the pre-Hyksos period when the name of the town was Rowaty, “the door of the two roads” (Bietak 1996: 9, 19).

In the 14th Dynasty, toward the end of the 18th century BC, the name of the town was changed to Avaris, “the (royal) foundation of the district” (Bietak 1996: 40). When the Hyksos later established their capital there, they retained the name Avaris. It was probably the Hyksos rulers who forced the Israelites to build the store cities of Pithom (= Tell el-Maskhuta) and Rameses (= Tell el-Dab’a = Avaris) (Ex 1:11). When Rameses II rebuilt the city in the 13th century in the post-Hyksos period, and long after the Israelites had left Egypt, the name was changed to Rameses.

**Could this be the Israelites?**

The earliest evidence for Asiatics at Rowaty occurs in the late 12th Dynasty (mid 19th century BC, Area F/I, Str. d/2, and Area A/II, Str H). At that time a rural settlement was founded. It was unfortified, although there were many enclosure walls, most likely for keeping animals. The living quarters consisted of rectangular huts built of sand bricks (Bietak 1986: 237; 1991b: 32). It is highly possible that this is the first material evidence of Israelites in Egypt. It is the right culture in the right place at the right time.

Not all residents of the first Asiatic settlement at Tell el-Dab’a lived in huts. One of them, evidently an important official, lived in a small villa. The Bible tells us that Joseph became a high official after he correctly interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams (Gn 41:39–45). We are not told where Joseph lived while serving in the Egyptian bureaucracy. It seems logical to assume, however, that after discharging his duties associated with the famine, he would have moved to Rameses to be near his father and brothers. Could the villa in Str. d/2 at Tell el-Dab’a have been Joseph’s house?

**What is a Four-Room House Doing Here?**

The Str. d/2 villa was 10 x 12 m in size, situated on one side of an enclosure measuring 12 x 19 m. It consisted of six rooms laid out in horseshoe fashion around an open courtyard. The most striking aspect of the house is that the floor plan is identical to the Israelite “four-room house” of the later Iron Age in Palestine (Holladay 1992a). In this type of house two side rooms and a back room were arranged around a central space, or courtyard. In Palestine, the side rooms were usually delineated by stone columns. With the scarcity of stone in Egypt, this feature would not be expected. Holladay suggests that the ground floor of such a house was primarily utilized for the economic aspects of family life such as the storage of food, tools and supplies, and the housing of animals. The family living space, on the other hand, was most likely on the second floor.”

4. First and only Egyptian reference to Israel.

Merenptah’s stele (1213-1203). Slides #25-26. This stele of Pharaoh Merenptah lists his victorious foray into Canaan. This contains the only reference to Israel. It speaks of Israel as a settled people by the 13th century.

The princes are prostrate, saying, "Peace!"
Not one is raising his head among the Nine Bows.
Now that Tehenu (Libya) 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 is made non-existent.
**Israel is laid waste and his seed is not;**
Hurr is become a widow because of Egypt. (From Wikipedia)
The throw stick (foreigners) and two people stacked represent people with the three vertical dashes representing plural. Much debate on the meaning of “people.”

5. Semitic Abecedary in Egypt 1450 BC Slide #27-28

“First written record of Semitic alphabet, from 15th century BCE, found in Egypt. Inscribed 3,400-year-old limestone flake from Luxor is world’s first — and second — transliteration of early Canaanite alphabet, says Egyptologist Thomas Schneider

From the ostracon, we learn that the two arrangements or orders of Semitic/Canaanite lettering were evidently known to the Egyptian scribe, says Goldwasser. “This is unsurprising,” writes Goldwasser.

At least in Egypt, at around the same time period, they are also attested in Ugaritic, an extinct Northwest Semitic language, which was spoken — and written in cuneiform — in the Syrian city of Ugarit, she continues.

“We are aware of not a few Egyptian scribes who apparently were fluent in Canaanite. There were many Canaanite Egyptians and ties between Egyptian cities and the cities on the Lebanon coast were strong,’ writes Goldwasser.

At the same time, finding a “straightforward” explanation for these Canaanite letters in Egyptian is very difficult, she adds.

If Schneider and Haring are correct, she adds, this is the first evidence that not only were the Egyptians interested in writing down in Egyptian Canaanite words, but also knew the Canaanite letters — and in two orders.”

6. Semitic alphabet in Serabit el Kadim Slide #29

Semitic slaves in the Sinai Pennisula Egyptian copper mines are using a crude early form of Semitic alphabet to celebrate their goddess Baalat (or female Baal). Albright originally dated this to 1800 BC, but later revised it down to 1500 BC.
1. Discuss the minimalist and maximus debate.

2. Ugaritic material and the Psalms (1400-1200 BC).

   In the 1930’s, when Syria was under the French Mandate, a farmer’s plow unearthed a clay tablet. The Arabic name of the town is Ras Shamra, but the ancient name was Ugarit. Many tablets were discovered here. They were different in that instead of being “grocery lists,” they were poetic and epic.

   The second unique thing is that they were alphabetic yet written in cuneiform style. Slide #31

   Since the city was destroyed in the 13th century, we have these tablets in situ and they have had no chance of being changed over time.

   Michell Dahood was an earlier translator of these texts and used them extensively in his commentary for Anchor Bible. The good thing is that he has pushed the date of some of the Psalms back to the time of David (rather than during and after the exile). The bad thing is that he has revised the meaning of so many words based on the Ugaritic, that they tend to be unrecognizable.

3. Tel El Keiyafa and tablet. BAR 43:1 2017. Y. Garfinkel, Saar Ganor, and Joseph Silver. “Qeiyafa’s Unlikely Second Gate.” Slides #32-34

   a. Dated by C14 and radiometrically on 27 olive pits to c. 1000 BC (time of David).
   b. No other excavation has turned up a city with two gates.
   c. The Biblical city Shaaraim (Joshua 15:36; 1 Samuel 17:52; 1 Chron 4:31) means two gates.
   d. Threshold stone and step of the western gate is ten feet long and weighs roughly 8 tons.
   e. An administrative building in the summit of the city. Excavation of the site showed some 200,000 stones required to build the site.
   f. Conclusion: all this shows a strong and powerful central government.


Qeiyafa’s architecture helps us know who built it. Some scholars have suggested Khirbet Qeiyafa was constructed by Philistines instead of Israelites. Why? Because they simply believe Israel lacked the capability to build large-scale fortresses in the early 10th century B.C. Many scholars have questioned whether a centralized Israelite government existed during King David’s time (early 10th century B.C. – Iron Age IIa). The construction of Qeiyafa’s massive Iron IIa walls required many resources and workers over many years. Only a powerful, centralized authority could provide this. If Judah/Israel had no effective central government during the Iron IIa period (c. 1000 BC), the Philistines were the only ones in the area capable of building such a thing.

But what if Qeiyafa is the evidence of a centralized Judahite/Israelite government during David’s time? This is where its architecture becomes very interesting.

The city is surrounded by a casemate wall. Domestic buildings (residences) are literally attached to the city casemate wall all around the site and include the casemate spaces as rooms. You can see examples of this around both of Qeiyafa’s Iron IIa gates.
Casemate wall near the western Iron IIa gate. Notice how the thin walls of the residences adjoin the thicker casemate city walls. Each of these casemate sections includes an entrance to a residence at the top left. The houses use the casemates as additional living space. (Photo from Khirbet Qeiyafa excavation website - Hebrew University.)
The southern Iron IIa gate with casemates on both sides. (Evidence of later reconstruction is visible in the gate.) The casemates are used as rooms for the attached residences. This design - residence buildings abutting casemate walls - is unique to Judahite cities in the Iron Age. (Photo from Khirbet Qeiyafa excavation website - Hebrew University.)

According to the Khirbet Qeiyafa archaeological staff, three other Iron Age Judahite sites – Tel Beersheba, Tel en-Nasbeh and Tel Beit Mirsim – have this same architectural feature: residences abutting a casemate wall. This urban concept is not found in Philistine or Canaanite cities, nor is it found in Israelite sites to the north.

Someone in Judah was building cities with a common blueprint during the time of the biblical King David. Khirbet Qeiyafa’s architecture indicates centralization in the tribe’s governance during the time of David. This is consistent with the biblical text, which records David reigning as king over Judah for 7-1/2 years before assuming the throne over the other tribes. (2 Samuel 2:4, 11; 5:5) Judah seems to have had an earlier start with centralized governance than the other tribes.

Architecture can have interesting implications, yes? It’s good to continue uncovering and observing more of Qeiyafa’s architecture to better understand its context.

The tablet found at Keiyafa contains an early form of the Semitic alphabet applied with a brush to an ostracon (piece of broken pot= hence potsherd). Slide #35 It is written boustrophedon (right to left and left to right). There is much disagreement on the translation. Emile Puech, “L’Ostracon de Khirbet Qeyafa et les Debuts de la Royaute en Israel,” Revue Biblique, 2010, 117-2 (pp. 162-184) offers the following:

a. Do not oppress, and serve God :: The cheater
b. The judge and the weeping widow; he has power
c. Over the resident stranger and over the child, he cuts them off together.
d. The men and the heads/officers have set up a king.
e. He marked [sixty] servants among the communities/habitations/generations.

Shaaraim is mentioned in 1 Samuel 17:52 in connection with David’s triumph over Goliath. Puech argues that this potsherd is a reference to Saul becoming king. It indicates a transitional discussion from judges to kings. This, of course, is hotly debated.

4. David’s palace—Stepped stone structure. Slides #36-46
5. The Divided Kingdom (Assyrian dominance 900-600 BC) Slide #47
6. Continued paganism in Israel. Slide #48
7. References to “House of David.” Slide 49

Tel Dan Inscription. See A. Biran, Biblical Dan, IES, Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, Jerusalem, Israel, 1994. Slide #50

Found in the excavation of Tel Dan with secondary use in a wall. It is local basalt, the original was probably 3’ tall by 18” wide. Dated to the 9th century.

No king either of Syria, Israel or Judah is named, so it could refer to any of the several contacts.

This translation (C. Rollston, “The Tel Dan Inscription” The Odyssey, April 2019) assumes it is the alliance of Hazael with Jehu (2 Kings 19:15-18) in which Jehu kills Jehoram, king of Israel, and Ahaziah, king of Judah—Beyt David). Hazael, if he is the subject of the stele, takes credit for killing them as part of the alliance.
And the LORD said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death. Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.” (1Ki 19:15 ESV)

The most significant part if the “house of David” mention which deflates the “no historical David” argument in spite of the minimalists’ attempt to “minimize” it to mean something else.

See the power point for a translation. Slide #51

“Now King Joram had returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds that the Syrians had given him, when he fought with Hazael king of Syria. So Jehu said, "If this is your decision, then let no one slip out of the city to go and tell the news in Jezreel." Then Jehu mounted his chariot and went to Jezreel, for Joram lay there. And Ahaziah king of Judah had come down to visit Joram. Now the watchman was standing on the tower in Jezreel, and he saw the company of Jehu as he came and said, "I see a company." And Joram said, "Take a horseman and send to meet them, and let him say, 'Is it peace?'" So a man on horseback went to meet him and said, "Thus says the king, 'Is it peace?'" And Jehu said, "What do you have to do with peace? Turn around and ride behind me." And the watchman reported, saying, "The messenger reached them, but he is not coming back." (2Ki 9:15-18 ESV)

Moabite Inscription Slide #52-53

I am Mesha, son of Chemosh-gad, king of Moab, the Dibonite. My father reigned over Moab thirty years, and I have reigned after my father. And I have built this sanctuary for Chemosh in Karchah, a sanctuary of salvation, for he saved me from all aggressors, and made me look upon all mine enemies with contempt. Omri was king of Israel, and oppressed Moab during many days, and Chemosh was angry with his aggressions. His son succeeded him, and he also said, I will oppress Moab. In my days he said, Let us go, and I will see my desire upon him and his house, and Israel said, I shall destroy it forever.

Now Omri took the land of Madeba, and occupied it in his day, and in the days of his son, forty years. And Chemosh had mercy on it in my time. And I built Baal-meon and made therein the ditch, and I built Kiriathaim. And the men of Gad dwelled in the country of Ataroth from ancient times, and the king of Israel fortified Ataroth. I assaulted the wall and captured it, and killed all the warriors of the city for the well-pleasing of Chemosh and Moab, and I removed from it all the spoil, and offered it before Chemosh in Kirjath; and I placed therein the men of Siran, and the men of Mochrath. And Chemosh said to me, Go take Nebo against Israel, and I went in the night and I fought against it from the break of day till noon, and I took it: and I killed in all seven thousand men, but I did not kill the women and maidens, for I devoted them to Ashtar-Chemosh; and I took from it the vessels of Jehovah, and offered them before Chemosh.

And the king of Israel fortified Jahaz, and occupied it, when he made war against me, and Chemosh drove him out before me, and I took from Moab two hundred men in all, and placed them in Jahaz, and took it to annex it to Dibon. I built Karchah the wall of the forest, and the wall of the Hill. I have built its gates and I have built its towers. I have built the palace of the king, and I made the prisons for the
criminals within the wall. And there were no wells in the interior of the wall in Karchah. And I said to all the people, ‘Make you every man a well in his house.’ And I dug the ditch for Karchah with the chosen men of Israel. I built Aroer, and I made the road across the Arnon. I took Beth-Bamoth for it was destroyed. I built Bezer for it was cut down by the armed men of Daybon, for all Daybon was now loyal; and I reigned from Bikran, which I added to my land. And I built Beth-Gamul, and Beth-Diblahaim, and Beth Baal-Meon, and I placed there the poor people of the land. And as to Horonaim, the men of Edom dwelt therein, on the descent from old. And Chemosh said to me, Go down, make war against Horonaim, and take it. And I assaulted it, And I took it, for Chemosh restored it in my days. Wherefore I made.... ...year...and I.... From Wikipedia

The inscription seems to parallel an episode in 2 Kings 3: Jehoram of Israel makes an alliance with Jehoshaphat king of Judah and an unnamed king of Edom (south of Judah) to put down his rebellious vassal Mesha; the three kings have the best of the campaign until Mesha, in desperation, sacrifices to his god Kemosh either his eldest son or the eldest son of the king of Edom; the sacrifice turns the tide, "there came great wrath against Israel," and Mesha apparently achieves victory. This apparent correspondence is the basis of the usual dating of the inscription to about 840 BCE, but André Lemaire has cautioned that the identification is not certain, and the stele may be as late as 810 BCE. Wikipedia

Proposed references to David and "House of David" Biblical Odessey

“The discovery of the Tel Dan Stele led to a reevaluation of the Mesha Stele by some scholars. In 1994, André Lemaire reconstructed BT[D]WD as "House of David", meaning Judah, in line 31. This section is badly damaged but appears to tell of Mesha's reconquest of the southern lands of Moab, just as the earlier part dealt with victories in the north. Line 31 says that he captured Horonen from someone who was occupying it. Just who the occupants were is unclear. The legible letters are BT[*]WD, with the square brackets representing a damaged space that probably contained just one letter. This is not universally accepted—Nadav Na'aman, for instance, reads it as BT[D]WD[H], "House of Daodoh", a local ruling family; but if Lemaire is correct, then this is the earliest evidence of the existence of the Judean kingdom and its Davidic dynasty.

“In 2001 Anson Rainey proposed that a two-word phrase in line 12—'R'L DWDH Slide #53—should be read as a reference an "altar hearth of David" at Ataroth, one of the towns captured by Mesha. The sentence reads: "I (i.e., Mesha) carried from there (Ataroth) the 'R'L of its DWD (or: its 'R'L of DVD) and I dragged it before Kemosh in Qeriot". The meaning of both words is unclear. One line of thought sees 'R'L as the name of a man (literally "El is my light") and translates DWD as "defender", so that the sense of the passage is that Mesha, having conquered Ataroth, dragged its "defender", whose name was "El is my light", to the altar of Kemosh, where he was presumably sacrificed. It seems more likely that some kind of cult-vessel is meant, and other suggestions have included "the lion-statue of its beloved", meaning the city god.

Kitchen, Kenneth, “A Possible Mention of David in the Late Tenth Century BCE, and Deity *DOD as Dead as the Dodo?” JSOT 76 (1997) 29-44.

Strong definitive statement that bytdwd refers to Judean kingdom. Also argues for btdwd in the Mesha inscription as the same and a possible reference to the “heights of David” in the Sheshonq inscription. The problem with the latter is that it has dwt rather than dwd. This shift in Egyptian from a soft “d” to a “t” says Kitchen is not unusual. Furthermore, he points out a 5th c A.D. Ethiopian inscription in South Arabia with just such a shift. The emperor is referring to a Psalm of David and vocalizes the latter as dwt. He then argues strongly that any reference to a "Dod" deity be laid to rest. There is no evidence any place of such a deity. Slide #54.
Lecture #4  
Wednesday June 19  
The Era of the Divided Kingdom

1. The issue of chronology. Chronology is a very difficult issue. Today: Jewish (from the creation), Christian (from birth of Christ), Islam (from Mohammed’s flight to Medina). During the Assyrian period (900-600), the chronology becomes fairly fixed because of the epinomic years. When these are linked to the astronomical events, we can give it a modern date. See Kitchen, OROT, pp. 88, 89. He asks, “Why are there no Assyrian references to David and Solomon?” His answer is two-fold: 1) There was only slight penetration of the Levant by earlier Assyrian kings, and 2) Assyria was in serious decline for a century, including the period of David and Solomon.

“However, outside the Bible there is one other written source of some value for the Phoenician Kings. This is the annotated Tyrian King list by Menander of Ephesus, cited and summarized by Josephus in his against Apion 1.116-26. This gives a series of eight kings from Abibaal (father of Hiram I, named as a contemporary of Solomon) down to one Phellas, inclusive. Then comes Itobaal (I), or Ithobalos in Greek, and a Balezoros, originally succeeded by (and then confused with) a second Baal-ma(n)zer, named also in texts of Shalmaneser III, a contemporary of Ahab of Israel. This would make Ithobalos (Itoobaal I) an older contemporary of Ahab, and thus most likely the Ethbaal whose daughter Jezebel was married off to Ahab. Thus, on this limited but valuable evidence, Ethbaal is no phantom.” OROT, p. 13.

2. Shishak’s invasion (See Kitchen, OROT, pp. 32-34 for a discussion). Slides 55-59

We know that Shishak provided asylum for Jeroboam I when he fled from Solomon (1 Kings 11:40; 12:2).

“Then Solomon sought to kill Jeroboam, but Jeroboam arose and fled to Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and he was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.”

So, when Rehoboam’s kingdom was established, and he became strong, he abandoned the law of Yahweh and all Israel with him. And so, in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem because they had been unfaithful to Yahweh. He came with twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand horsemen. The people who came with him from Egypt were innumerable: Lubim, Sukkiim, and Ethiopians. He captured the fortified cities belonging to Judah and came to Jerusalem. Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and the princes of Judah who were gathered to Jerusalem because of Shishak.

He said to them, “Thus, says Yahweh, ‘You have abandoned me, so I also, have abandoned you to Shishak.’” Then the princes of Israel humbled themselves and said, “Yahweh is just.” When Yahweh saw that they had humbled themselves, the word of Yahweh came to Shemaiah, saying, “They have humbled themselves, so I will not destroy them, but I will allow them to escape a little, and my wrath will not be poured out on Jerusalem through Shishak. But they shall become servants to him, and they shall know [the difference between] my servitude and that of the kingdoms of the lands.”

1 Kings 14:26-28; 2 Chronicles 12:9-14

So, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem and took the treasures of Yahweh’s house and the treasures of the king’s house. He took everything, and he took all the golden shields that Solomon had made. King Rehoboam made bronze shields in their place and committed them to the officers of the runners who were guarding the door of the king’s house. So, as often as the king came to Yahweh’s house, the runners came and took them up and returned them to the guard’s chamber. And when he humbled himself the anger of Yahweh turned back from him, and he did not completely destroy him. Moreover, things were good in Jerusalem.
3. Shalmaneser III (859-825 BC) Battle of Qarqar (Ahab’s coalition) 853 BC Slide #60

Shalmaneser’s monolith, now in the British Museum, celebrates a claimed Assyrian victory over a coalition of kings including Ahab (since Assyria did not return for some time, it is assumed that the battle must have been a draw). This battle is not in the Bible but informs us of battles and alliances in the ANE. This monolith and the black obelisk referring to Jehu provide two anchor dates: 853 and 841. Since Jehu killed both the king of Israel and of Judah at the same time, we have 12 years between Ahab’s last year and Jehu’s first. So, there must have been two battles fought by Ahab in his last year: Qarqar (not in the Bible) and Jabesh Gilead (1 Kings 22) where he was killed. Both of these monuments belong to Shalmaneser III.

(ANE#155).

Sixth year (853 B.C.). “In the year of (the eponym) Daian-Ashur, in the month Aiaru, the 14th day, I departed from Nineveh. I crossed the Tigris and approached the towns of Giammu on the river Balih…I departed from Aleppo and approached the two towns of Irhulei from Hamath. I departed from Arqana and approached the city of Karkara. I destroyed, tore down and burned down Karkara, his royal residence. He brought along to help him 1,200 chariots, 1,200 cavalrymen, 20,000 foot soldiers of Hadad-ezer of Damascus, 700 chariots, 700 cavalrymen, 10,000 foot soldiers of Irhulei from Hamath, 2,000 chariots, 10,000 foot soldiers of Ahab, the Israelite. 500 soldiers from Que, 1,000 soldiers from Musri, 1000 chariots, 10,000 soldiers from Irqana, 200 soldiers of Matinu-ba’lu from Arvad, 200 soldiers from Usanata, 30 chariots, 10,000 soldiers of Adunu-ba’lu from Shian, 1,000 camel-(rider)s of Gindibu’, from Arabia [. . .], 1,000 soldiers of Ba’sa, son of Ruhub, from Ammon--(all together) these were twelve kings. They rose against me [for a] decisive battle. I fought with them with (the support of) the mighty forces of Ashur, which Ashur, my lord, has given to me, and the strong weapons which Nergal, my leader, has presented to me, (and) I did inflict a defeat upon them between the towns Karkara and Gilzau. I slew 14,000 of their soldiers with the sword, descending upon them like Adad when he makes a rainstorm pour down. I spread their corpses (everywhere), filling the entire plain with their widely scattered (fleeing) soldiers. During the battle I made their blood flow down the hur-pa-lu of the district.”

This battle is not mentioned in the Bible. These twelve kings decided that they needed to put a stop to the westward expansion of the Assyrians. Ahab of Israel and Hadad-ezer of Damascus, normally bitter enemies, joined the coalition as allies. Shalmaneser claimed complete victory, but it was several years before he returned. Kitchen believes the “Musri” are Egyptians. This would be a token force in support of Byblos, an ally of Egypt. Since Ahab’s two sons ruled 12 years (parts of years combined), and Jehu paid tribute in 841 B.C. to Shalmaneser, Ahab must have died in 853. His death occurred when he resumed hostilities toward Damascus over Ramoth-Gilead (1 Kings 22).

Shalmaneser III’s black obelisk receiving tribute from Jehu king of Israel (841 BC).

16ANET, pp. 278-79. Note Ahab in the underlined section.

17So Olmstead, History of Assyria, p. 137; and Sidney Smith, CAH 3:22.

18The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100-650 B.C.).

Only the sins of Jeroboam ben Nebat, by which he caused Israel to sin, Jehu did not turn aside from after them: the golden calves which were in Bethel and Dan. Then Yahweh said to Jehu, “Because you have done well in doing what was right in my eyes, according to all which was in my heart, you have done to the house of Ahab, therefore, your sons to the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.” But Jehu was not careful to walk in the law of Yahweh, God of Israel, with all his heart. He did not turn away from the sin of Jeroboam, by which he caused Israel to sin.

In those days, Yahweh began to cut off pieces of Israel. Hazael struck them everywhere in Israel: from the Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, Reubenites, and Manassites, from Aroer by the Wadi Arnon, that is, Gilead, and Bashan. (2 Kings 11:32-33).

On Shalmaneser’s black obelisk Slide #61 is a depiction of Jehu bowing down to Shalmaneser to pay his tribute (ANE I #100A, B). “The tribute of Jehu, son of Omri; I received from him silver, gold, a golden saplu-bowl, a golden vase with pointed bottom, golden tumblers, golden buckets, tin, a staff for a king, (and) wooden puruhtu.” Since Jehu’s payment of tribute can be dated by Assyrian chronology to 841 B.C., these two dates (853-841) become the last year of Ahab and the first of Jehu.

4. Jezebel’s seal ring. Slide #62

The seal not only bears symbols that indicate a woman but also symbols that designate a royal female owner. Furthermore, the seal is exceptionally large compared to the seals commonly possessed by ordinary citizens. With regard to the name, Korpel demonstrates through comparison with similar seals that the upper edge of the seal must have carried two broken-off letters that point to Jezebel as owner and lead to a correct spelling of Jezebel’s name (in mirror image).

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20See ANEP, 351-55, ANET, pp. 280.
5. Deportation of the Israelites (2 Kings 17:1-6)

Shalmaneser V

The captivities began in approximately 733/2 BC.

The Fall of Israel

So, the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul, king of Assyria, even the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria, and he exiled them, namely the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. Then he brought them to Halah, Habor, Harra, and to the river of Gozan, to this day. (1 Chronicles 5:26)

In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and took Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, Galilee, and all the land of Naphtali; then he exiled them to Assyria. 2 Kings 15:29.

Then Hoshea ben Elah conspired against Pekah ben Remaliah, struck him, killed him, and ruled in his place in the twentieth year of Jotham ben Uzziah. Now the rest of the acts of Pekah and all he did, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

In the twelfth year of Ahaz, king of Judah, Hoshea ben Elah ruled in Samaria over Israel for nine years. He did evil in the sight of Yahweh, only not as the previous kings of Israel. Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him, and Hoshea became his vassal and paid him tribute. But the king of Assyria discovered a conspiracy in Hoshea when he sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, and did not send up tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year. So, the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison. Then the king of Assyria came up against all the land and against Samaria and besieged it for three years. In Hoshea’s ninth year, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and exiled Israel to Assyria and settled them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and the cities of the Medes. 2 Kings 17:3-6.

Sargon II (see OROT)

“He was a usurper who needed to claim some military victory and so he claimed Samaria.” In 722 BC, nearly ten to twenty years after the initial deportations, the ruling city of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Samaria, was finally taken by Sargon II after a three-year siege started by Shalmaneser V.

“I besieged and conquered Samaria, led, away as booty 27, 290 inhabitants of it. I formed from among them a contingent of 50 chariots and made remaining (inhabitants) assume their (social) positions I installed over them an officer of mine and imposed upon them the tribute of the former King.” ANE I:195.


Only thereafter in 701 could Sennacherib move westward. The Assyrian first secured most of Phoenicia—only Tyre on its offshore rock proved impregnable. But with the rest of Phoenicia at his feet, Sennacherib held a durbar or rally of loyal vassals, who dutifully brought or sent their tribute, including arrears. Missing were Hezekiah of Judah (rebel), Padi of Ekron (in Hezekiah’s custody), and Gaza open (perhaps occupied by Egypto-nubian forces). Sennacherib moved south, toward Philistia. Joppa fell, but at Eltekeh the allies opposed Sennacherib, although without success. The Assyrian could then recapture Ekron, and thus feel free to invade Judah, taking its towns as he went. Lachish put up stiff resistance to the Assyrian emperor (cf. here 2 Kings 1814; 19:8. Hezekiah could smell potential disaster, so he sent word down to Lachish, offering to pay tribute once more (cf. 18:14—15). That
encouraged Sennacherib to send high dignitaries up to Jerusalem with an intimidating army force, to demand full surrender (cf. 18:17 to 19:8). Sennacherib, meanwhile, moved on to Libnah, after overcoming Lachish (OROT, p. 41).

At this point something happened to Sennacherib’s troops, because (even though rid of the Egypto-nubians, with only puny Gaza against him) he did not reengage against either Gaza or Judah, but set off home instead. Here 2 Kings 19: 35-36 speaks of a visitation that brought sudden death to a large part of the Assyrian force. What this was in practice, we do not know--food poisoning or whatever? Sennacherib did not even wait for Hezekiah’s tribute before quitting the noxious little province; He himself states that Hezekiah’s tribute followed him to Assyria, doubtless the tribute that we see Hezekiah gathering up in 18:15-16. Viewed thus with careful observance of the features of both of Assyrian and Hebrew texts, a coherent picture of the whole episode emerges. Thus 18:15-16 simply round off in advance the source of Hezekiah’s tribute, almost as a “footnote” to the kings offer and the Assyrians fixing the rate, early on in the proceeds. OROT, p. 41-42.

7. Hezekiah’s tunnel Slide #63 Gihon

When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come prepared for war against Jerusalem, he took counsel with his officers and military leaders to stop up the waters of the springs outside the city, and they helped him. So, a lot of people gathered, and they stopped up all the springs and the stream that flows in the midst of the land, saying, “Why should the kings of Assyria come and find a lot of water.” Then he took courage and rebuilt the entire wall that was broken down. He also, erected towers on it. He built another wall outside. He also, repaired the Millo in David’s city. And he prepared many weapons and shields. (2 Chron 32:1-5). Slides #64-65 Inscription and translation

And the rest of the deeds of Hezekiah and all his mighty acts and all his acts of mercy, and what he did with the pool and the conduit where the waters came to the city, are they not written in the vision of Isaiah ben Amoz the prophet in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah and Israel. (2 Kings 20:20-21; 2 Chronicles 32:32-33)

Furthermore, it was that same Hezekiah who stopped up the source of the waters of upper Gihon and sent them straight down to the west side of the city of David. (2 Chron 32:30). Slides #66-74.

The Siege

After these things and these acts of faithfulness, it happened that in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib, king of Assyria came up and invaded Judah and encamped against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them, thinking to break into them for himself. 2 Kings 18:14-16

Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish saying, “I have done wrong; turn back from me. Whatever you impose on me, I will bear.” So, the king of Assyria levied on Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. So, Hezekiah gave all the silver found in the house of Yahweh, and in the treasury of the king’s house. At that time Hezekiah cut off the gold of the doors of the temple of Yahweh and off the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and he gave it to the king of Assyria.

2 Kings 18:17-22; Isaiah 36:2-7; 2 Chronicles 32:9-12

After this Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, who was besieging Lachish with all his forces, sent the Tartan, the Rabsaris, and the Rabshakeh and his servants, with a great army from Lachish to Jerusalem, against King Hezekiah king of Judah at Jerusalem.
They went up and came to Jerusalem and to all the people of Judah that were in Jerusalem. When they arrived, they came, and he stood by the conduit of the upper pool which is on the highway to the fuller’s field.

When they called out to the king, Eliakim ben Hilkiah, who was over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah ben Asaph, the recorder, went out to them.

Then the Rabshakeh spoke to them, saying, “Say to Hezekiah, thus, says Sennacherib the great king, king of Assyria, ‘What is this your confidence, in what are you trusting that you are besieged in Jerusalem? I say surely, your counsel for might and war are mere words. Now whom are you trusting, that you have rebelled against me. Now, behold, you have put your confidence for yourselves in Egypt, that crushed reed of a staff, which, if a man leans on it, will pierce his hand. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him.’”

“Is not Hezekiah stirring you up, so as to deliver you into death by famine and thirst, when he says, ‘Yahweh our God will deliver us from the hand of the king of Assyria’? If you say to me, ‘We will trust in Yahweh our God,’ is it not this the Hezekiah who has removed his high places and his altars, and told Judah and Jerusalem, saying, ‘Before this one altar you shall worship in Jerusalem and upon it you shall burn incense?’”

2 Kings 18:23-27; Isaiah 36:8-12

“Come on now; make a bet with my lord, the king of Assyria. I will give you two thousand horses, if you can put riders on them. Then we shall see if you can turn back one of the least of the officers of the servants of my lord, when you have placed your confidence in Egypt for chariots and horsemen. Furthermore, now have I come against this land, this place, apart from Yahweh to destroy it? Yahweh said to me, ‘Go up against this land, and destroy it.’”

Then Eliakim ben Hilkiah, Shebna, and Joah said to the Rab Shakeh, “Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, because we understand it, and do not speak to us in Judean in the ears of the people who are on the wall.” But the Rabshakeh said to them, “Is it to your lord and to you that my lord has sent me to speak these words? Is it not for the men who sit on the wall, doomed with you, to eat their filth and to drink their urine?”

2 Kings 18:28-32a; Isaiah 36:13-17; 2 Chronicles 32:18, 15

Then the Rabshakeh stood and called with a loud voice in Judean. And they called in a loud voice to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall in Judean. This was to frighten them and to terrify them, so that they might capture the city. He spoke and said, “Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria, thus, says the king. ‘Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he is not able to deliver you from my hand. And now, do not let Hezekiah deceive you nor let him entice you like this, and do not believe him because none of the gods of any nation or kingdom has been able to deliver his people from my hand or from my fathers’ hand. So, indeed your god will not be able to deliver you from my hand.’

‘And do not let Hezekiah cause you to trust in Yahweh, saying, “Yahweh will surely deliver us, and this city will not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.” Do not listen to Hezekiah, because thus, says the king of Assyria. ‘Make with me a blessing and come out to me and let each one eat of his own vine and fig tree and each one drink the waters from his own cistern, until I come and take you to a land like your land, with grain, wine, a land of food, vineyards, a land of olive trees, and honey, so that you might live and not die.’”

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“And do not listen to Hezekiah because he misleads you, saying, ‘Yahweh will deliver us.’ Do you not know what I and my fathers did to all the peoples of the lands? Were the gods of the nations of those lands able to deliver each one his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim Henah and Ivvah and indeed did they deliver Samaria and their land from my hand?”

“Who among all the gods of these lands which my fathers devoted to destruction could deliver their land from my hand, that Yahweh your god should be able to deliver you/Jerusalem from my hand.”

“And now do not let Hezekiah deceive you, nor entice you this way, and do not believe him because no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to deliver its people from my hand or from my fathers’ hand. Surely, much less can your god deliver you from my hand.”

And his servants spoke more against Yahweh God and Hezekiah his servant. He also, wrote letters to reproach Yahweh the god of Israel and to speak against him, saying, ‘Just as the gods of the nations of the lands could not deliver their people from my hand, thus, the god of Hezekiah cannot deliver his people from my hand. Then they called in a loud voice in Judean to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall, to make them afraid and to terrify them, so as to capture the city. He also, spoke of the God of Jerusalem just as he had done of the gods of the peoples of the land, the work of human hands.

2 Kings 18:36-37; Isaiah 36:21-22; 2 Chronicles 32:20

But the people kept quiet; nor did they answer him a word, because the king had commanded them not to answer him. Then Eliakim ben Hilkiah, who was chief steward, Shebna the scribe, and Joah ben Asaph the recorder, tore their clothes and went to Hezekiah, and told him the words of the Rabshakeh.

Hezekiah's Prayer
2 Kings 19:1-34; Isaiah 37:1-13

So, when King Hezekiah heard, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and came to the house of Yahweh. Then he sent Eliakim the chief steward, Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, who were wearing sackcloth, to Isaiah ben Amoz, the prophet. They said to him, “Thus, says Hezekiah, ‘This day is a day of distress, rebuke, and disgrace, because children are ready to be born, but there is no strength to bear them. Perhaps Yahweh your God has heard all the words of the Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria, his master, sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which Yahweh your God has heard; so, lift up a prayer in behalf of the remnant that is left.’”

The servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah, and Isaiah said to them, “Thus, you shall say to your master, thus, says Yahweh, ‘Do not fear the words which you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled me. Look, I am about to put a spirit in him, and he will hear a rumor and return to his own land. Then I will cause him to fall by the sword in his land.’”

2 Kings 19:8-13; Isaiah 37:8-13; 2 Chronicles 32:13-19

Then the Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah; for he had heard that the king had moved on from Lachish. Then he heard about Tirhakah, king of Cush, saying, “Look, he has come out to fight against you.”
When he heard, behold, he again sent messengers to Hezekiah, and he wrote letters to reproach Yahweh the God of Israel, saying “Thus, you shall say to Hezekiah, king of Judah, ‘Do not let your God deceive you, in whom you trust, saying, ‘Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.’ Look, you have heard what the kings of Assyria did to all the lands, devoting them to destruction—and you will be delivered?’”

“Did the gods of the nations which my father destroyed deliver them: Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, the sons of Eden: which were in Tel-Assar? Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Henna, or Ivah? Just as the gods of the people of the lands did not deliver their people from my hand, thus, the God of Hezekiah will not deliver his people from my hand.” And they called in a loud voice in Judean against the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall to frighten and terrify them in order that they might capture the city. They spoke against the God of Jerusalem as against the gods of the people of the land, the work of human hands.

2 Kings 19:14-19; Isaiah 37:14-20; 2 Chronicles 32:20

Then Hezekiah took the letters from the messengers, and read them. Then he went up to Yahweh’s house, and spread it out before Yahweh. Then King Hezekiah and Isaiah ben Amoz, the prophet, prayed about this, and they cried out to Yahweh in heaven, saying, oh, Yahweh of hosts, God of Israel: the one who sits above the Cherubim. You are that God, you alone of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made the heavens and the earth. Oh, Yahweh, incline your ear, and hear; oh, Yahweh, open your eyes and see and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God.”

“Truly, oh, Yahweh, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and all their lands and their land, and burned their gods in fire, because they are not gods, but rather the work of human hands, wood and stones, and they destroyed them. So, now, oh, Yahweh, our God, please deliver us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth might know that you, oh, Yahweh are God—you alone are Yahweh.”

2 Kings 19:20-24; Isaiah 37:21-25

Then Isaiah ben Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, “Thus, says Yahweh the God of Israel to whom you prayed about Sennacherib king of Assyria—I have heard.” This is the word that Yahweh has spoken against him. “The virgin daughter Zion despises you and mocks you. Daughter Jerusalem shakes her head behind you. Whom have you reproached and blasphemed, and against whom have you raised your voice? You have raised your eyes on high against the holy one of Israel. By means of your servants, your messengers, you have reproached Yahweh. You said, ‘With the multitude of my chariots, I have gone up on heights of the mountains, on the remote parts of Lebanon, and cut off her tall cedars and her choice cypresses. I came to its remotest retreat its greatest height, its thickest forest. I dug and drank foreign waters. With the sole of my foot I dried up all the rivers of Egypt.’”

2 Kings 19:25-34; Isaiah 37:26-35

“Have you not heard? From long ago I did it; from ancient times I planned it. Now I have brought it to pass that you should turn fortified cities into heaps of ruins. Therefore, their inhabitants are short on strength; they are dismayed and embarrassed; they have become like plants of the field and tender grass; like grass on the roof top blighted as a field before it is grown.”

“But I know your sitting down, your going out, your coming in, and your raging against me. Because you are raging against me, and your arrogance has come up to my ears, I will put my hook in your nose, and my bridle between your lips, and I will turn you back in the way by which you came. And this is
the sign for you: eat the annual crop, and in the second year what grows of itself, and in the third year, sow and reap; plant vineyards and eat their fruit. Then the escapee of the remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward, because from Jerusalem the remnant will go out, and the escapee from Mount Zion. The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will do this.”

Therefore, thus, says Yahweh of the king of Assyria, “He shall not enter this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with a shield, nor build up a siege ramp against it. He shall return by the way he came, and he shall not come into this city.” says Yahweh, “For I will defend this city, to deliver it for my sake and for the sake of David, my servant.”

**God’s Judgment on Assyria**

2 Kings 19:35-37; Isaiah 37:36-38; 2 Chronicles 32:21-23

And so it was in that night, Yahweh sent out an angel, and the angel of Yahweh went out, struck and annihilated all the men of valor, the princes and officers in the camp of the king of Assyria, one hundred eighty five thousand. When they arose early in the morning, behold, all of them were dead bodies. Then Sennacherib king of Assyria moved on, went away, and returned with shame to his land and dwelt in Nineveh.

And so it was, that when he came worshipping in the temple of Nisroch, his god, some of his offspring, Addrammelech and Sharezer, some of his sons, struck him down there with the sword, and escaped into the land of Ararat. Then Esarhaddon, his son, ruled in his place. So, Yahweh delivered Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib, king of Assyria and from the hand of all his enemies. He gave them rest on every side. Then many were coming bearing gifts to Yahweh to Jerusalem and precious gifts to Hezekiah, king of Judah. He was exalted in the eyes of all the nations after this.

8. Sennacherib’s prism Slide #75

“In my third campaign I marched against Hatti, Luli, king of Sidon, whom the terror-inspiring glamor of my lordship had overwhelmed, fled far overseas and perished. The awe-inspiring splendor of the ‘Weapon’ of Ashur, my lord, overwhelmed his strong cities (such as) Great Sidon, Little Sidon, Bit Zitti, Zaribru, Mahalliba, Ushu (i.e. the mainland settlement of Tyre), Akzib (and) Akko, (all) his fortress cities, walled (and well) provided with feed and water for his garrisons, and they bowed in submission to my feet. I installed Ethba’al upon the throne to be their king and imposed upon him tribute (due) to me (as his) overlord (to be paid) annually without interruption.

“As to all the kings of Amurru—Menahem from Samsimuruna, Tuba’lu from Sidon, Abdili’ti from Arvad, Urumilki from Byblos, Mitinti from Ashdod, Buduili from Beth-Ammon, Kammušunadbi from Moab (and) Aiarammu from Edom, they brought sumptuous gifts and—fourfold—their heavy presents to me and kissed my feet. Sidqia, however, king of Ashkelon, who did not bow to my yoke, I deported and sent to Assyria, his family-gods, himself, his wife, his children, his brothers, all the male descendants of his family. I set Sharruludari, son of Rukibtu, their former king, over the inhabitants of Ashkelon and imposed upon him the payment of tribute (and of) presents (due) to me (as) overlord—and he (now) pulls the straps (of my yoke)!

“In the continuation of my campaign I besieged Beth-Dagon, Joppa, Banai-Barka, Azuru, cities belonging to Sidqia who did not bow to my feet quickly (enough); I conquered (them) and carried their spoils away. The officials, the patricians and the (common) people of Ekron—who had thrown Padi, their king, into fetters (because he was) loyal to (his) solemn oath (sworn) by the god Ashur, and had handed him over to Hezekiah, the Jew—and (and) he (Hezekiah) held him in prison, unlawfully, as if he
(Padi) be an enemy—had become afraid and had called (for help) upon the kings of Egypt (and) the bowmen, the chariot(-corps) and the cavalry of the king of Ethiopia, an army beyond counting—and they (actually) had come to their assistance. In the plain of Eltekah, their battle lines were drawn up against me and they sharpened their weapons. Upon a trust(-inspiring) oracle (given) by Ashur, my lord, I fought with them and inflicted a defeat upon them. In the melee of the battle, I personally captured alive the Egyptian charioteers with the(ir) princes and (also) the charioteers of the king of Ethiopia. I besieged Eltekah (and) Timnah, conquered (them) and carried their spoils away. I assaulted Ekron and killed the officials and patricians who had committed the crime and hung their bodies on poles surrounding the city. The (common) citizens who were guilty of minor crimes, I considered prisoners of war. The rest of them, those who were not accused of crimes and misbehavior, I released. I made Padi, their king, come from Jerusalem and set him as their lord on the throne, imposing upon him the tribute (due) to me (as) overlord.

“As to Hezekiah, the Jew, he did not submit to my yoke, I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities, walled forts and to the countless small villages in their vicinity, and conquered (them) by means of well-stamped (earth-) ramps, and battering-rams brought (thus) near (to the walls) (combined with) the attack by foot soldiers, (using) mines, breeches as well as sapper work. I drove out (of them) 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, big and small cattle beyond counting, and considered (them) booty. Himself I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage. I surrounded him with earthwork in order to molest those who were leaving his city’s gate. His towns which I had plundered, I took away from his country and gave them (over) to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, Padi, king of Ekron, and Sillibel, king of Gaza. Thus I reduced his country, but I still increased the tribute and the katru-presents (due) to me (as his) overlord which I imposed (later) upon him beyond the former tribute, to be delivered annually. Hezekiah himself, whom the terror-inspiring splendor of my lordship had overwhelmed and whose irregular and elite troops which he had brought into Jerusalem, his royal residence, in order to strengthen (it), had deserted him, did send me, later, to Nineveh, my lordly city together with 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, precious stones, antimony, large cuts of red stone, couches (inlaid) with ivory, nimedu-chairs (inlaid) with ivory, elephant-hides, ebony-wood, box-wood (and) all kinds of valuable treasures, his (own) daughters, concubines, male and female musicians. In order to deliver the tribute and to do obeisance as a slave he sent his (personal) messenger.”

There was a battle between Egypt and Sennacherib at Eltekah. The Egyptians were routed under Taharqa, then a prince not a king, but God routed the Assyrian army supernaturally.

9. Seal of Hezekiah (definitely) and Isaiah (maybe). Control click on the seals for the 7-minute video. Be sure the wifi is on. Both found in the citadel area 10 feet apart. Slide #76-77 (Two Buddies)

10. Lachish wall friezes

After this Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, who was besieging Lachish with all his forces, sent the Tartan, the Rabsaris, and the Rabshakeh and his servants, with a great army from Lachish to Jerusalem, against King Hezekiah king of Judah at Jerusalem. (2 Kings 18:17; Isaiah 36:2; 2 Chron 32:9)

Discuss the several panels of the friezes on PP. These are in the British Museum. Slides #78-84
Lecture 5  
Thursday June 20  
Babylonian and Persian Eras

1. Seals from the persecutors of Jeremiah Slide #86

The relationship between archaeology and the Bible is not always an easy one, but sometimes they come together in striking agreement as witnesses to history. Two small clay bullae (seal impressions) found in the course of Eilat Mazar’s City of David, Jerusalem, excavations are bringing Jeremiah, prophet of the last kings of Judah, back to life.

“These clay bullae (seal impressions), discovered by archaeologist Eilat Mazar during her excavations of the City of David, Jerusalem, bear the names of two royal ministers mentioned in the Bible’s story of Jeremiah, prophet of the Old Testament. Photos by Gaby Laron, The Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University.

“The first of the clay bullae, which surfaced during Mazar’s excavation of what may be King David’s palace, bears the name “Yehuchal [or Jehucal] ben Shelemiyahu [Shelemiah]” (pictured above left). The second was found in the First Temple period strata underneath what has been identified as Nehemiah’s Northern Tower, just a few yards away from the first, and reads “Gedalyahu [Gedaliah] ben Pashur” (pictured above right).

“These two men are mentioned together in the Bible as ministers of King Zedekiah (597–587 B.C.E.). As the Babylonians closed in on Jerusalem during the last years of the First Temple period, Jeremiah, prophet to Judah’s last kings, advised Zedekiah and the people of the city to surrender to Nebuchadnezzar’s men so that their lives and city might be spared. But not everyone liked Jeremiah’s message, including Gedaliah son of Pashur and Jehucal son of Shelemiah. According to Jeremiah 38:1–13, the two ministers had Jeremiah thrown into a pit because they did not like the message of surrender he was preaching to the people of Jerusalem.”

2. Jeremiah was the main prophet in Jerusalem in the last days of the kingdom. In 597 BC Jehoiakim rebelled against Babylon, died (was murdered?), and his young son, Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) was put on the throne. Nebuchadnezzar took him into captivity and replaced him with Zedekiah.
3. Babylonian Chronicle

Siege of Jerusalem in 597 BC Wikipedia Slide #87

The Chronicle does not refer to Jerusalem directly but mentions a "City of Iaahudu", interpreted to be "City of Judah". The Chronicle states:

In the seventh year (of Nebuchadnezzar) in the month Chislev (Nov/Dec) the king of Babylon assembled his army, and after he had invaded the land of Hatti (Syria/Palestine) he laid siege to the city of Judah. On the second day of the month of Adar (16 March) he conquered the city and took the king (Jeconiah) prisoner. He installed in his place a king (Zedekiah) of his own choice, and after he had received rich tribute, he sent forth to Babylon.

There are no extra-biblical sources for the Second Siege of Jerusalem, which has been dated to 586 BC. The date was arrived at by comparing the evidence of the Chronicle to dates given in the Book of Ezekiel in connection to the year of captivity of Jeconiah (i.e. the first fall of Jerusalem).

4. Lachish letters. Slide #88

Lachish Ostracon II

To my lord Yaosh: May Yahweh cause my lord to hear tidings of peace this very day, this very day! Who is thy servant (but) a dog that my lord hath remembered his servant? May Yahweh afflict those who re[port] an (evil) rumor about which thou art not informed!

Lachish Ostracon III

Thy servant Hoshaiyah hath sent to inform my lord, Yaosh: May Yahweh cause my lord to hear tidings of peace! And now thou has sent a letter, but my lord did not enlighten thy servant concerning the letter, which thou didst send to thy servant yesterday evening, though the heart of thy servant has been sick since thou didst write to thy servant. And as for what my Lord said, “Dost thou not understand? – – call a scribe!”, as Yahweh liveth, no one hath ever undertaken to call a scribe for me; and as for any scribe who might have come to me, truly, I did not call him nor would I give anything at all for him!

And it has been reported to thy servant, saying, “The commander of the host, Coniah son of Elnathan, has come down in order to go into Egypt; and Hodaviah son of Ahijah and his men hath he sent to obtain… from him.”

And as for the letter of Tobiah, servant of the king, which came to Shallum son of Jaddua through the prophet, saying, “Beware!”, thy servant has sent it to my lord.

Lachish Ostracon IV

May Yahweh cause my lord to hear this very day tidings of good! And now, according to everything that my lord hath written, so half thy servant done; I have written on the door, according to all that my lord hath written to me. And with respect to what my lord, has written about the matter of Beth RF and, there is no one there.

And as for Semachia, Shemaiah hath taken him, and has brought him up to the city. And as for thy servant, I am not sending anyone thither [today (?), But I will send] tomorrow morning.

And let (my lord) know that we are watching for the signals of Lachish, according to all the indications which my lord hath given, for we cannot see Azekah.

Lachish Ostracon VI

To my lord, Yaosh: May Yahweh cause my lord to see this season in good health! Who is thy servant (but) a dog that my servant has sent the [let]ter of the king and the letters of the prince[s saying], pray, read them, and behold the
words of the prin[cles] are not good (but) to weaken our hands. [And to sla]cken the hands of the m[en] who are informed about them. […] And now] my lord, will thou not write to them, saying, “Why do you thus, [even] in Jerusalem? Behold, unto the king and unto [his house] are you doing this thing!” [And,] as Yahweh thy God liveth, truly since thy servant read the letters there has been no [peace] for [thy ser]vant. . . . ANET, p. 322.

Then, about 601, the Judean King [Jehoiakim] changed his mind and rebelled against Babylon (2 Kings 24: 1-2. Why? Because in that year, on Egypt’s borders, the armies of Egypt and Babylon “inflicted great havoc on each other” (as the Babylonian Chronicle puts it), such that Nebuchadrezzar’s forces went back to Babylon so badly mauled that the year 600 was needed for a refit, and even in 599 they could only tackle the Syrian Arabs for a “trial spin. This discomfiture of Babylon lulled the foolish Jehoiakim into thinking that Babylon’s day was done, and that he could defy them (and perhaps rely on Egypt for protection). OROT, p 44.

The End of the Exile (Bold: Unique to Ezra)
Ezra 1:1-4; 2 Chronicles 36:22-23

5. Cyrus cylinder. Slide #89

Then in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, to fulfill the word of Yahweh through the mouth of Jeremiah, Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, and he broadcast through all his kingdom. He also put it in writing, saying, “Thus, says Cyrus, king of Persia, ‘All the kingdoms of the earth Yahweh the God of heaven has given to me. He also, appointed me to build for him a house in Jerusalem which is in Judah.

Whoever among you of all his people, may Yahweh his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of Yahweh the God of Israel, that is the God who is in Jerusalem. And let each survivor from whatever place he sojourns, let the men of that place support him with silver, gold, goods, animals, and free will offerings for the house of the God who is in Jerusalem.’”

When I went as harbinger of peace into Babylon I founded my sovereign residence within the palace amid celebration and rejoicing. Marduk, the great lord, bestowed on me as my destiny the great magnanimity of one who loves Babylon, and I every day sought him out in awe. My vast troops marched peaceably in Babylon, and the whole of [Sumer] and Akkad had nothing to fear. I sought the welfare of the city of Babylon and all its sanctuaries. As for the population of Babylon […, w]ho as if without div[ine intention] had endured a yoke not decreed for them, I soothed their weariness, I freed them from their bonds(?). Marduk, the great lord, rejoiced at [my good] deeds, and he pronounced a sweet blessing over me, Cyrus, the king who fears him, and over Cambyses, the son [my] issue, [and over] my all my troops, that we might proceed further at his exalted command. All kings who sit on thrones, from every quarter, from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea, those who inhabit [remote distric]ts (and) the kings of the land of Amurru who live in tents, all of them, brought their weighty tribute into Shuanna, and kissed my feet. From [Shuanna] I sent back to their places to the city of Ashur and Susa, Akkad, the land of Eshnunna, the city of Zamban, the city of Meturnu, Der, as far as the border of the land of Qutu - the sanctuaries across the river Tigris - whose shrines had earlier become dilapidated, the gods who lived therein, and made permanent sanctuaries for them. I collected together all of their people and returned them to their settlements, and the gods of the land of Sumer and Akkad which Nabonidus – to the fury of the lord of the gods – had brought into Shuanna, at the command of Marduk, the great lord, I returned them unharmed to their cells, in the sanctuaries that make them happy. May all the gods that I returned to their sanctuaries, every day before Marduk and Nabu, ask for a long life for me, and mention my good deeds, and say to Marduk, my lord, this: “Cyrus, the king who fears you, and Cambyses his son, may their … […] [……].”
The Elephantine Papyri consist of 175 documents from the Egyptian border fortresses of Elephantine and Aswan, which yielded hundreds of papyri in Hieratic and Demotic Egyptian, Aramaic, Koine Greek, Latin and Coptic, spanning a period of 1000 years. The documents include letters and legal contracts from family and other archives and are thus an invaluable source of knowledge for scholars of varied disciplines such as epistolography, law, society, religion, language and onomastics. They are a collection of ancient Jewish manuscripts dating from the 5th century BCE. They come from a Jewish community at Elephantine, then called šw. The dry soil of Upper Egypt preserved documents from the Egyptian border fortresses of Elephantine and Aswan.

Though some fragments on papyrus are much older, the largest number of papyri are written in Aramaic, the lingua franca of the Achaemenid Empire, and document the Jewish community among soldiers stationed at Elephantine under Achaemenid rule, 495–399 BCE. The Elephantine documents include letters and legal contracts from family and other archives: divorce documents, the manumission of slaves, and other business, and are a valuable source of knowledge about law, society, religion, language and onomastics, the sometimes surprisingly revealing study of names.

Jewish temple at Elephantine (Wikipedia) Yaho, Knum

A letter from the Elephantine Papyri, requesting the rebuilding of a Jewish temple at Elephantine.

The Jews had their own temple to Yahweh evincing polytheistic beliefs, which functioned alongside that of Khnum.

Excavation work done in 1967 revealed the remains of the Jewish colony centered on a small temple.

The "Petition to Bagoas" (Sayce-Cowley collection) is a letter written in 407 BCE to Bagoas, the Persian governor of Judea, appealing for assistance in rebuilding the Jewish temple in Elephantine, which had recently been badly damaged by an anti-Jewish rampage on the part of a segment of the Elephantine community.

In the course of this appeal, the Jewish inhabitants of Elephantine speak of the antiquity of the damaged temple:

'Now our forefathers built this temple in the fortress of Elephantine back in the days of the kingdom of Egypt, and when Cambyses came to Egypt he found it built. They (the Persians) knocked down all the temples of the gods of Egypt, but no one did any damage to this temple."

The community also appealed for aid to Sanballat I, a Samaritan potentate, and his sons Delaiah and Shelemiah, as well as Johanan ben Eliashib. Both Sanballat and Johanan are mentioned in the Book of Nehemiah, 2:19, 12:23.

There was a response of both governors (Bagoas and Delaiah) which gave the permission by decree to rebuild the temple written in the form of a memorandum: "Memorandum of what Bagohi and Delaiah
said to me, saying: Memorandum: You may say in Egypt ... to (re)build it on its site as it was formerly...".

By the middle of the 4th century BCE, the temple at Elephantine had ceased to function. There is evidence from excavations that the rebuilding and enlargement of the Khnum temple under Nectanebo II (360–343) took the place of the former temple of YHWH.

**Letter from Elephantine papyri**

Among the Elephantine papyri, a collection of 5th century BCE Hebrew manuscripts from the Jewish community at Elephantine in Egypt, a letter was found in which Johanan is mentioned. The letter is dated "the 20th of Marshewan, year 17 of king Darius", which corresponds to 407 BCE. It is addressed to Bagoas, the governor of Judah, and is a request for the rebuilding of a Jewish temple at Elephantine, which was destroyed by Egyptian pagans. The letter includes the following passage:

"(...) We have also sent a letter before now, when this evil was done to us, to our lord and to the high priest Johanan and his colleagues the priests in Jerusalem and to Ostanes the brother of Anani and the nobles of the Jews, Never a letter have they sent to us. (...)"

It has been suggested that the Anani that is referred to here might be the same as in 1 Chronicles 3:24.

7. The Elevation of King Jehoiachin. Slide #93

2 Kings:  
And in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, graciously freed Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison; and he spoke kindly to him, and gave him a seat above the seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon. So Jehoiachin put off his prison garments. And every day of his life he dined regularly at the king's table; and for his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, every day a portion, as long as he lived. Slide #93

1½ sila for three carpenters from Arvad, ½ sila each

11½ sila for eight ditto from Byblos, 1 sila each ...

3½ sila sila for seven ditto, ½ sila each

½ sila for Nabû-ētir the carpenter

10 sila to Ia-ku-ū-ki-nu, the son of the king of Ia-ku-du

2½ sila for the five sons of the king of Ia-ku-du through Qana'a