

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

115 Discoveries That Support the Reliability of the Bible



DAVID E. GRAVES

Features over 160 Photographs, Charts, and Maps

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ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*
ZEB	*The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible: Revised Full-Color Edition.* Revised. Edited by Merrill C. Tenney, and Moises Silva. 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.
ZPEB	*Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible.* Revised, Full-Color Edition. Edited by Merrill C. Tenney, and Moisés Silva. 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

Preface

We live in a time when an unprecedented number of excavations are happening in the Lands of the Bible, producing fascinating research and discoveries. Never before have so many new sites been opened and artifacts and inscriptions brought to the attention of the world. While there have been many exciting discoveries made in the past by famous archaeologists such as Petrie, Rawlinson, Layard, Woolley, Kenyon, and others, many new discoveries have surfaced in recent years that directly relate to the Old Testament (OT) text. These new discoveries needed a voice and venue to make them accessible to non-specialist students.

My interest in archaeology goes back over 35 years (1979) to my first archaeology course while a student at Ontario Bible College (now Tyndale University College and Seminary). Since that time I have had the privilege to teach archaeology in various settings to undergraduate students, travel through the lands of the Bible and visit first hand many archaeological sites. In addition I have worked as a square and field supervisor at the Tall el-Ḥammâm Excavation Project, Jordan since 2009, uncovering artifacts in the Chalcolithic, Early Bronze, Middle Bronze, Iron Age and Roman Byzantine periods. During this time I closely followed, with interest, the new discoveries that have been made. What I observed is that, unfortunately, the modern media does not normally present the facts relevant to new archaeological discoveries of the Bible, and "revisionist" scholars seek to undermine and downplay the relevance of many of the discoveries. For the minimalists, Sodom never existed, the Exodus never happened, Jericho never fell to the Israelites, and David was never a great king. But so often the archaeological material essential for a meaningful dialogue over the reliability of the Bible is confined to academic journals and conference papers.

I had previously published two volumes on Biblical archaeology, but the first volume only considered artifacts discovered in the last 20 years and the second volume presented the older discoveries (100 years) and both covered the entire Bible. While there are many good older works on biblical archaeology that cover the whole Bible in one volume available on the market, few dealt with Old Testament in one volume. This book was born out of necessity and a desire to deliver an accessible single-volume work for approaching up-to-date research in Old Testament archaeology.

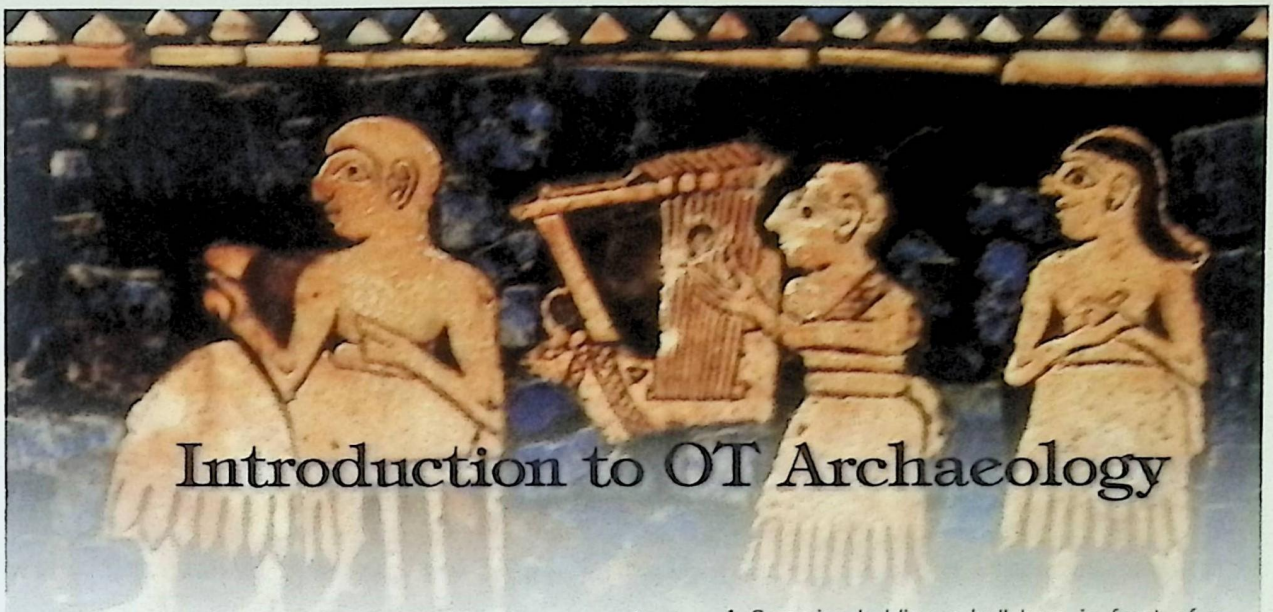
The discoveries presented in this work, are not meant to be an exhaustive treatment of the subject, nor presented as a technical discussion and the final conclusion of archaeological research. As with all archaeological investigations, many of the conclusions are ongoing. However, they are presented here in a summary introduction for undergraduate students to appreciate the availability of relevant discoveries and some of the possible implications for understanding the Old Testament text. Some of the most significant and promising finds have been selected to demonstrate the historical reliability of the people and events of the Bible. This work is intended to fill the void in providing an accessible and collective work on the subject of Old Testament archaeology and the reliability of the Bible.

The advantage of such a volume is that it provides a collective source of material for readers that would otherwise be inaccessible. Of help for the reader are 175 photographs, charts, timelines, maps, and a glossary, which will facilitate the difficult task of understanding the

unfamiliar lands of the Bible. Numerous footnotes and an academic bibliography are provided to give students the tools for doing further research. It is my hope that those who use this work will find it useful and develop a love and passion, like the author, for the fascinating field of biblical archaeology. Students can read the Bible with confidence that the details of its geography and facts are accurate and be encouraged in their faith that the Bible is reliable.

The archaeolgocial dates (i.e., EB1, IB1, MB2, or LB2A) represented in the New Chronology (see Chart 1 and 2) will be used throughout the work, although the old dating system (i.e., EB I, EB IV, MB II, etc) will be used when dealing with works that refer to the older dating system.

David E. Graves, PhD
Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada
August 10, 2019



Introduction to OT Archaeology

1. Sumerian holding a bull harp in front of a possible singer depicted on the Royal Standard of Ur (ca. 2500 BC), the home of Abraham.

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This book is about archaeology and its contribution to our understanding of the Bible. The word "archaeology" conjures up many romantic images of what this discipline is all about. The Hollywood-inspired image of Indiana Jones is often what comes to mind; but this is far from reality!

I once asked a family: "What's the different between me and Indiana Jones? They all thought for a moment and then one young boy spoke up and said…. "you don't carry a gun". While it is true that archaeologists do not need to carry a gun, they often do have armed tourist police present on site, especially if they are working in the Middle East. The answer to the question however is Jones worked alone (although usually with a beautiful lady), while we work as a team. Nevertheless, we all wear hats like Jones to be protected from the hot sun!

Because there are many misconceptions about archaeology and archaeologists, this introduction will provide a basic overview of the discipline and lay a foundation for the discoveries to follow in the remaining chapters.

Understanding Dates in OT Archaeology

While there are some dates given in the Bible (i.e., third reign of King...), these are not presented according to modern calendars, and few period benchmarks from before the Iron Age I period. The first Pharaoh mentioned in the Bible is Sheshonq (Shishak) in 1 Kings 11:40 (see Chart 3) who invaded Palestine in 925 BC (1 Kgs 14:25). The chronologicla dates are derived from correlating the biblical chronology with other extrabiblical data (i.e., Assyrian, Hittite, Egyptian, Babylonian, etc.) and modern conventional dates.

Approach to Numbers

One issue that affects chronology is the set of different methods used when handling biblical numbers. Some conservative scholars propose a literal chronology using base-10 hard numbers.[1]

[1] Bryant G. Wood, "Locating Sodom: A Critique of the Northern Proposal," *BS* 20, no. 3 (2007): 81; Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 83–96; "Fixed Dates in Patriarchal Chronology," *BSac* 137, no. 547 (1980): 241–51; "Texts, Talls, and Old Testament Chronology: Tall el-Hammam as a Case Study,"

Bryant Wood states that he bases his dating scheme on "a straightforward reading of the chronological data in the Old Testament."[2]

By contrast, other conservative scholars use a different method of accounting for numbers, where they treat the years as "formulaic/honorific" or authentic.[3] Collins states: "I do take the number [440] as formulaic and not literal in the arithmetic sense, and I rely on historical synchronisms to link the Exodus to Egyptian history."[4] Collins goes on to explain "in terms of its original cultural context. . . . Authentic may equate to literal if that's what the writer intended."[5] For example, this explains why even conservative scholars arrive at conclusions with such a large spread between the dates of the patriarchs (see Chart 4).

Egyptian Chronology

A large part of the chronology of the OT is derived from correlating the reign of the Egyptian Pharaoh's with the events described in the Bible.[6] In the third cent. BC, Manetho, an Egyptian priest, recorded thirty Egyptian dynasties in his work *Aegyptiaka* (*History of Egypt* in Greek), which have become useful in creating the Egyptian chronology.[7] However, even with his help this is not an exact science and while dates for the Kingdoms are generally agreed upon, there is much debate over the exactitude of the rule of individual Pharaohs.[8]

As Kitchen explains:

> Unfortunately, the lengths of a good number of reigns are not completely known, or not known at all, and in the "intermediate periods", national unity broke down with rival lines of kings reigning contemporaneously. However, a variety of resources exist by use of which one may largely overcome these gaps and obscurities, particularly from the second millennium BC onwards.[9]

Artifax 27, no. 4 (2012): 20–21; Edwin Richard Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings: A Reconstruction of the Chronology of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah*, revised (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional.

[2] Wood, "Locating Sodom: A Critique of the Northern Proposal," 81.

[3] David M. Fouts, "A Defense of the Hyperbolic Interpretation of Large Numbers in the Old Testament," *JETS* 40 (1997): 377–87; "The Demographics of Ancient Israel," *BRB* 7, no. 2 (2007): 1–10; Carol A. Hill, "Making Sense of the Numbers of Genesis," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 55, no. 4 (2003): 239–51; Andrew E. Steinmann, "The Mysterious Numbers Of the Book of Judges," *JETS* 48 (2005): 491–500; James K. Hoffmeier, "What Is the Biblical Date for the Exodus? A Response to Bryant Wood," *JETS* 50, no. 2 (2007): 235–39; Steven Collins, "Tall el-Hammam Is Still Sodom: Critical Data-Sets Cast Serious Doubt on E. H. Merrill's Chronological Analysis," *BRB* 13, no. 1 (2013): 4; "Tall el-Hammam Is Sodom: Billington's Heshbon Identification Suffers from Numerous Fatal Flaws," *Artifax* 27, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 6; Craig Olson, "A Proposal for a Symbolic Understanding of the Patriarchal Lifespans" (Dallas Theological Seminary, 2017); "How Old Was Father Abraham? Re-Examining the Patriarchal Lifespans in Light of Archaeology," in *Evangelical Theological Society* (Evangelical Theological Society, Boston, MA, 2017), 1–26.

[4] Collins, "Tall el-Hammam Is Still Sodom," 8.

[5] Steven Collins and Latayne C. Scott, *Discovering the City of Sodom: The Fascinating, True Account of the Discovery of the Old Testament's Most Infamous City* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), 138.

[6] Kenneth A. Kitchen, "Egyptian Interventions in the Levant in Iron Age II," in *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past: Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age Through Roman Palaestina*, ed. William G. Dever and Seymour Gitin (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 113–32.

[7] Manetho, *History of Egypt and Other Works*, trans. W. G. Waddell, Loeb Classical Library 350 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940).

[8] Colin Renfrew and Paul G. Bahn, *Archaeology: Theories, Methods, and Practice*, 6th ed. (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2012), 132; Nicolas Grimal, *A History of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1994), 389–95; Erik Hornung, Rolf Krauss, and David A. Warburton, *Ancient Egyptian Chronology*, Handbook of Oriental Studies Section One: The Near and Middle East 83 (Leiden: Brill Academic, 2006), 13; Kenneth A. Kitchen, "The Basics of Egyptian Chronology in Relation to the Bronze Age," in *High, Middle Or Low?: Acts of an International Colloquium on Absolute Chronology Held at the University of Gothenburg, 20th-22nd August, 1987*, ed. Paul Åström, vol. 1, 3 vols., Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology and Literature (Gothenburg: Åström, 1987), 37–55; "Regnal and Genealogical Data of Ancient Egypt (Absolute Chronology I) The Historical Chronology of Ancient Egypt, A Current Assessment," in *Synchronisation of Civilisations in Eastern Mediterranean in the Second Millennium B.C. II*, ed. Manfred Bietak, Contributions to the Chronology of the Eastern Mediterranean: Denkschriften Der Gesamtakademie 29 (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 2003), 39–52; "Egyptian Interventions in the Levant in Iron Age II," 113–32; "The Chronology of Ancient Egypt," *World Archaeology* 23, no. 2 (October 1, 1991): 201–8; *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt, 1100-650 BC*, 2nd ed., Egyptology (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1996).

[9] Kitchen, "The Chronology of Ancient Egypt," 201.

But recent archaeology has assisted in refining the dates. Kitchen explains: "Decipherment of the Egyptian scripts and language brought us king-lists almost a thousand years earlier than Manetho–and a multitude of original sources contemporary with many of the rulers named in the lists."[10]

A new chronology has been proposed by David M. Rohl and others, who attempt to lower dates by several hundred years to align the dates better with the biblical account (see Chart 1).[11] However, Kitchen is not impressed with his arguments and states: "a recent "crank-chronologist," Rohl (1995), whose attempts to down-date Egyptian and ancient Near Eastern chronology by 250/300 year are 100% nonsense, considering the full array of evidence we are privileged to have these days."[12]

For a scholarly evaluation of the discussion one should consult Hornung et al., *Ancient Egyptian Chronology*.[13] However, Kitchen has summarized the approach best. He states:

> The chronology of ancient Egypt can only be recovered (and then, inexactly) by combining several approaches. These include the sequences of kings and reigns, grouped into dynasties and larger periods. Original documents and interstate synchronisms (plus genealogical data) permit considerable control. To some extent, if their ambiguities can be overcome, lunar and 'Sothic' dates from astronomy can help. Other science-based techniques (e.g., radiocarbon) are not precise enough to help, except in the prehistoric epoch. The margin of error of c. 200 years in early third millennium BC sinks to 20/10 years during the second millennium, and to zero in 664 BC.[14]

Old Testament Chronology

Dating and chronology are further complicated by how ancient people calculated the reigns of kings. In the 1950's Edwin R. Thiele demonstrated, in his dissertation at the University of Chicago, that the chronological practice in the ancient Near East (ANE) was also used in the OT.[15] For example, when a king died they would wait until the end of the year to include this period in the years of his reign (accession year system). Depending on the system practiced at the time, the next king would either wait until the following year to begin counting his reign (accession year system) or he would include the partial year as the first year of his reign (non-accession year system). In the non-accession calculation both kings are given credit for the same year, creating an overlap in their reign.

Thiele further identified that occasionally the ANE kings would allow their sons to join them on the throne (coregency system) and both father and son were granted the full years of their coregency, duplicating the calculation. Taking these anomalies into consideration, Thiele created his widely accepted chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah. Although many conservative and liberal scholars use his chronology, Kaiser points out: "Despite that fact of scholarly dedication, neither Thiele's carefully argued University of Chicago dissertation, nor anyone else's, has achieved as yet universal acceptance."[16]

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[10] Kitchen, "Regnal and Genealogical Data of Ancient Egypt," 39.

[11] David M. Rohl, *A Test Of Time: Volume One-The Bible-From Myth to History* (London: Arrow, 2001), 159–74; *Pharaohs and Kings: A Biblical Quest* (New York: Three Rivers, 1997); *From Eden to Exile: The Five-Thousand-Year History of the People of the Bible* (Lebanon, TN: Greenleaf, 2009); *The Lords Of Avaris: Uncovering the Legendary Origins of Western Civilisation* (Hawthorn, Australia: Cornerstone Digital, 2010); R. Morkot *et al., Centuries of Darkness: A Challenge to the Conventional Chronology of Old World Archaeology* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991).

[12] Kitchen, "Egyptian Interventions in the Levant in Iron Age II," 122.

[13] Hornung, Krauss, and Warburton, *Ancient Egyptian Chronology*, 13.

[14] Kitchen, "The Chronology of Ancient Egypt," 208.

[15] Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*.

[16] Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *History of Israel* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010), 293; J. Gordon McConville, *Exploring the Old Testament, Volume 4: A Guide to the Prophets* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), viii.

New Dating Chronology

Recently a new calibration of relative dates for the early Bronze Age has been proposed based on some 420 calibrated radiocarbon dates taken from 57 sites in Israel and Jordan.[17] This was deemed necessary as the southern Levant does not have its own historical chronology and normally scholars would depend on the chronologies of neighboring countries such as Egypt, however, as Regev et al., points out: "The chronological framework of Egypt has been amply discussed by scholars (Kitchen 1987, 1991; Hornung et al. 2006) and recently by Dee et al. (2009), but there is a controversy over its accuracy for the third millennium BCE."[18]

This study synthesizes the dates from various sites using relative and absolute dates and creates a plausible chronology of the EB period in the Levant (see Chart 1).

Three-Age Dating System

Archaeologists have developed a three-age method of generalizing the dating periods through the identification of ancient technologies. The first to propose the three-age dating system for the region of Palestine was the Danish archaeologist Christian Jürgensen Thomsen (1788–1865). He identified the age by reference to the materials – stone, bronze, and iron – used to manufacture the artifacts in each period (see Chart 1).[19]

- Stone Age - 8500 BC–3600 BC
- Bronze Age - 3600 BC–1500 BC
- Iron Age - 1500 BC–586 BC

In 1865 Sir John Lubbock divided the Stone Age into sub-epochs and for the first time coined the terms "Palaeolithic" and "Neolithic" to identify the Old and New Stone Ages.[20] However, the notion of a Stone Age civilization existing purely through the use of stones is a relative fantasy. All metals were used to greater or lesser degree throughout the ages.[21] For example, in the tomb of King Tutankhamun, who lived in the Late Bronze Age (1300 BC), an iron dagger was found. While there is debate over the origin of the iron (meteorite or smelted),[22] the evidence remains that it was being used in the LBA. The Early Bronze Age used very little bronze but preferred copper (Chalcolithic), and bronze was used in the Iron Age and even through the Roman period.[23] Recently (2014), a copper awl was discovered in a Middle Chalcolithic tomb at Tel Tsaf, Israel, providing evidence that imported cast metal technology was introduced to the Jordan Valley region as early as the late sixth millennium BC.[24]

Thus the identification of periods according to materials used in those periods is rather

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[17] Johanna Regev *et al.*, "Chronology of the Early Bronze Age in the Southern Levant: New Analysis for a High Chronology," *Radiocarbon* 3–4 (2012): 528.

[18] Ibid., 525.

[19] Peter Rowley-Conwy, *From Genesis to Prehistory: The Archaeological Three Age System and Its Contested Reception in Denmark, Britain, and Ireland*, Oxford Studies in the History of Archaeology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 298–301.

[20] John Lubbock, *Pre-Historic Times, as Illustrated by Ancient Remains, and the Manners and Customs of Modern Savages*, 2nd ed. (London: Williams & Norgate, 1869), 2–3.

[21] Graham Connah, *Writing about Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 62–63.

[22] Alfred Lucas and J. R. Harris, *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1962), 239–241; John Coleman Darnell and Colleen Manassa, *Tutankhamun's Armies: Battle and Conquest During Ancient Egypt's Late Eighteenth Dynasty* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2007), 77; Jack Ogden, "Metals," in *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology*, ed. Ian Shaw and Paul T. Nicholson (Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 166–68; Lloyd Weeks, "Metallurgy," in *A Companion to the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East*, ed. D. T. Potts (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, 2012), 298.

[23] Weeks, "Metallurgy," 302.

[24] Yosef Garfinkel *et al.*, "The Beginning of Metallurgy in the Southern Levant: A Late 6th Millennium Cal BC Copper Awl from Tel Tsaf, Israel," *PLoS ONE* 9, no. 3 (March 26, 2014): e96882.

arbitrary, but these are the accepted terms used in biblical archaeology, although the dates are well-established for these periods since they are correlated with the datable chronology of Ancient Egypt. Certainly scholars continue to debate the dates of the sub-periods attached to these periods, but as Princeton professor Peter Bogucki states: "Although modern archaeologists realize that this tripartite division of prehistoric society is far too simple to reflect the complexity of change and continuity, terms like 'Bronze Age' are still used as a very general way of focusing attention on particular times and places and thus facilitating archaeological discussion."[25]

Dating Abbreviations

BC and AD

The abbreviation BC means "before Christ," while AD means *anno Domini* (Lat. "in the year of our Lord").[26] From the relative birth of Christ, BC counts backward and AD counts forward. There is no year 0. It must be acknowledged that the dates used still do not perfectly coincide with the birth of Christ, since it is known that Jesus was born between 6 and 4 BC[27], because Matthew writes that he was "born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king" (Matt 2:1), and Herod the Great died in 4 BC.[28]

The origin of this dating system dates back to Dionysius Exiguus (ca. AD 470–ca. AD 544) who was known as the inventor of the Anno Domini (AD) era, used to number the years of both the Gregorian calendar and the (Christianised) Julian calendar.[29] Their general acceptance is described by Feeney, who points out: "Only in 1627 did Domenicus Petavius, in his *Opus De Doctrina Temprum*, expound the B.C./A.D. system as a basis for a universal time line for scholars and historians, on the understanding that the reference point of the birth of Christ represented 'not the actual event but an agreed upon point from which all real events could be dated.'"[30]

But the system did not become popular until the eighteenth century and is often used by Christian scholars who wish to convey a Christian worldview. It is the terminology used in this publication.

C.E. and B.C.E.

The abbreviation B.C.E. means "Before the Common Era" and means the same as BC, while C.E. means "Common Era", "Christian Era", or "Current Era." These abbreviations are often preferred by those who do not want to refer to religious titles, however, the actual use of the dates are the same for both sets of abbreviations (i.e. B.C.E./BC or C.E./AD). This theologically

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[25] Peter Bogucki, "Europe, Northern and Western: Bronze Age," in *Encyclopedia of Archaeology*, ed. Deborah M. Pearsall, vol. 1 (San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 2008), 1216.

[26] Bonnie Blackburn and Leofranc Holford-Strevens, *The Oxford Companion to the Year: An Exploration of Calendar Customs and Time-Reckoning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 782.

[27] James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 324; Jack Finegan, E. Jerry Vardaman, and Edwin M. Yamauchi, eds., *Chronos, Kairos, Christos* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 97–117; Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008).

[28] Timothy David Barnes, "The Date of Herod's Death," *Journal of Theological Studies* 19, no. 1 (1968): 204–19; P. M. Bernegger, "Affirmation of Herod's Death in 4 B.C.," *Journal of Theological Studies* 34, no. 2 (1983): 526–31; Harold W. Hoehner, "The Date of the Death of Herod the Great," in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos*, ed. Jack Finegan, Jerry Vardaman, and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 101–32.

[29] J. Rambaud-Buhot, "Dionysius, Exiguus," in *NCE* 4:754; Georges Declercq, *Anno Domini: The Origins of the Christian Era*, Brepols Essays in European Culture 1 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2000).

[30] Denis Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History* (Oakland, Calf.: University of California Press, 2007), 7; Donald J. Wilcox, *The Measure of Times Past: Pre-Newtonian Chronologies and the Rhetoric of Relative Time* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 207.

neutral system is now used by secular, Jewish and Christian scholars who exavate in Bible lands and is the accepted academic terminology for archaeology.

BP

Since the Muslims and Jews also have a dating system, scientists who work with radiocarbon dating (C-14) prefer an international standard and count the years backward from the present (BP).[31] This date is not counted from the point of Jesus' birth, but rather the birth of radiocarbon dating, thus "before 1950."[32] This is a very confusing dating method and it is best to convert all dates to BC or AD.

THE ROLE OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN BIBLICAL STUDIES

But what exactly is the value of biblical archaeology for biblical studies? Some people believe that archaeology can be used to confirm, authenticate, substantiate or even prove the Bible true. This view goes back to the nineteenth century when the liberal critics began to use archaeology in an attempt to disprove the Bible. For example, in 1872, George E. Smith translated the Mesopotamian flood story and found parallels with the biblical record. The critics quickly came to the conclusion that the Genesis account was borrowed from the Mesopotamian account and was not inspired by God.

When archaeologists found no trace of the Hittite civilization, the biblical critics made the claim that the Hittite people were imaginary.[33] In 1876 Archibald H. Sayce delivered a lecture to the Society of Biblical Archaeology in London, making a startling claim that the Hittites were a vast empire, but the capital was yet to be discovered.[34] In 1906, when the Hittite civilization was discovered by Hugo Winckler along with the royal archive of 10,000 tablets during his excavations at Boğazköy (*Ḫattuša*), this brought a new zeal to archaeology and its use for defending the Bible.[35] Believers began to think that archaeology had validated their faith.

But as Hoerth states:

> Even if every historical statement in the Bible could be proven true – confirmed – this would still not prove the theological message of the Bible...It can be proved that historical conditions were such that Solomon could have been as powerful a king as the Bible says he was; but this does not prove that God gave Solomon wisdom. It can be fairly well substantiated that there was a census when Jesus was born; but this confirmation hardly proves his divinity. No archaeological evidence will prove the atonement.[36]

It is interesting that eminent archaeologist William F. Albright was lead more towards a respect for the historicity of the Bible, but was increasingly more liberal in his theology.[37] One must be careful not to assume too much from archaeology.

No archaeological evidence can verify the atonement or the virgin birth. As Vaux pointed out: "This spiritual truth can neither be proven nor contradicted, nor can it be confirmed or

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[31] See below *Dating a Tel: Radiocarbon Dating*. Graves, *Digging Up the Bible*, 93.

[32] Renfrew and Bahn, *Archaeology*, 114.

[33] Francis William Newman, *A History of the Hebrew Monarchy: From the Administration of Samuel to the Babylonish Captivity* (London: Chapman, 1853), 179 n.2.

[34] Trevor Bryce, *Life and Society in the Hittite World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2; A. H. Sayce, *The Hittites the Story of a Forgotten Empire*, Classic Reprint (Charleston, SC: Forgotten Books, 2012).

[35] Bryce, *Life and Society in the Hittite World*, 2.

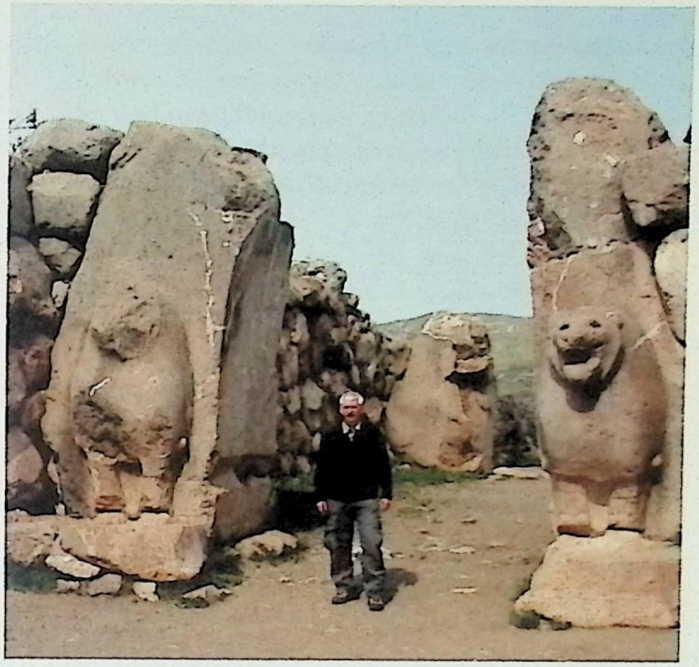
[36] Alfred Hoerth and John McRay, *Bible Archaeology: An Exploration of the History and Culture of Early Civilizations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006). 20.

[37] William F. Albright, "Toward a More Conservative View: Interview with W. F. Albright," *Christianity Today*, January 18, 1963, 3–5; "Archaeological Discovery and the Scriptures," *Christianity Today* 12, no. 19 (June 21, 1968): 3–5; William G. Dever, "What Remains of the House That Albright Built?," *BA* 56, no. 1 (March 1993): 25–35.

invalidated by the material discoveries of archaeology."[38] Albright also cautions that:

> Though archaeology can thus clarify the history and geography of ancient Palestine, it cannot explain the basic miracle of Israel's faith, which remains a unique factor in world history. But archaeology can help enormously in making the miracle rationally plausible to an intelligent person whose vision is not shortened by a materialistic world view.[39]

Hoerth summarizes Yamauchi and points out that: "no one questioned the historicity of either Pontius Pilate or Herod the Great, yet neither were found in inscriptions until the early 1960's. It is a mistake to insist that traditions – including the Old Testament stories – must interlock with other evidences before they can be believed."[40]



2. Author standing in the Lion Gate of the Hittite capital *Ḫattuša* (*Boğazköy*) founded in the Old Kingdom period by Hattushili I *ca.* 1586-1556 BC.

Turkey © David E. Graves

But this is not a division between history and faith, because it is impossible to separate faith from history. The problem lies not with the evidence but with our faith. Even if we were to prove every Bible story as historically accurate by referencing archaeological evidence, this still would not solve the dilemma of sinful human nature. This in essence is what Jesus taught in the account of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:27–31; see *Quotes from Antiquity).*

The question of sufficient evidence is certainly not at issue here, since the resurrection by itself offers abundant evidence for belief in the gospel. The Bible records that Jesus rose from the dead and there were hundreds of witnesses to the resurrection, but people continue to doubt. The problem is not in the lack of evidence but because of the human condition of spiritual blindness and the unbelief of the human heart (Luke 16:27–31; 1 Cor 2:14). Humanity needs a changed heart and nature, not more evidence. Archaeology does not change hearts, only the landscape. As Charlesworth put it: "Archaeology cannot form faith, but it can help inform faith."[41] God may use archaeology to change our hearts, but this is not its main purpose.

Raymond uses a helpful illustration of the radio station, which transmits the signal properly, but the radio at the other end cannot pick up the signal because there is something wrong with the radio's aerial, not the transmission.[42]

The Bible does not need proving true as it is self-authenticating, but archaeology can help

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[38] Roland de Vaux, "On Right and Wrong Uses of Archaeology," in *Near Eastern Archaeology in the Twentieth Century: Essays in Honor of Nelson Glueck*, ed. James A. Saners (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 68.

[39] William F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine* (London: Penquin, 1956), 255.

[40] Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, 21; Edwin M. Yamauchi, *The Stones and the Scriptures: An Introduction to Biblical Archaeology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981).

[41] James H. Charlesworth, "Archaeology, Jesus, and Christian Faith," in *What Has Archaeology to Do with Faith?*, ed. James H. Charlesworth and Walter P. Weaver, Faith & Scholarship Colloquies (Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International, 1992), 19.

[42] Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), 81.

shed light on the text. Therefore, the value of archaeology is not apologetic but hermeneutic. It increases our understanding of the Bible and its world. Hoerth describes the various uses for archaeology: "The most important contributions of archaeology to biblical studies are the various ways it illuminates the cultural and historical setting of the Bible; adds to our knowledge of the people, places, things and events in the Bible; and aids in translation and exegesis of biblical passages."[43]

Quotes from Antiquity

Jesus on Evidence

And he said, 'Then I beg you, father [Abraham], to send him [Lazarus] to my father's house— for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead' (Luke 16:27–31).

The new information we acquire to advance our knowledge of the biblical text only comes from the discipline of archaeology. The role of archaeology in our understanding of the text is immeasurable. Through the discovery of local references we better understand the geography, religions, traditions, history and text of the Bible. The ground and text work together to further our awareness of what is in the Bible.

MINIMALIST VS MAXIMALIST APPROACH

Before proceeding we must differentiate between what is meant by a minimalist and a maximalist in the context of archaeology, as these terms are commonly used in both the debate over the historical reliability of the Bible and in the remaining chapters.

Minimalist View

In archaeology, a *minimalist*[44] (The Copenhagen School, also called "nihilists,"[45] and "deconstructionists"[46]) or "revisionist,"[47] as they sometimes call themselves, is one who finds that the Bible contributes little or not at all to our understanding of the history of Palestine before about 500 BC (that is before Israel's return from exile). They accept the minimal amount of biblical history in relation to the archaeolgical inquiry. The leading spokespersons for this view are P. Davies,[48] G. Garbini,[49] J. Van Seters,[50] I. Finkelstein,[51] N. Lemche,[52] and T. Thompson,[53]

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[43] Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, 17.

[44] Baruch Halpern, "Erasing History: The Minimalist Assault on Ancient Israel," *Bible Review* 11, no. 6 (December 1995): 26–35.

[45] Anson F. Rainey, "The 'House of David' and the House of the Deconstructionists," *BAR* 20, no. 6 (1994): 47.

[46] Gary N. Knoppers, "The Vanishing Solomon: The Disappearance of the United Monarchy from Recent Histories of Ancient Israel," *JBL* 116, no. 1 (April 1, 1997): 20.

[47] William G. Dever, "The Current School of Revisionist and Their Nonhistories of Ancient Israel," in *What Did the Biblical Writers Know, and When Did They Know It?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 23.

[48] Philip R. Davies, *In Search of "Ancient Israel": A Study in Biblical Origins*, The Library of Hebrew Bible/OT Studies (London: Continuum International, 2006), 57–71.

[49] Giovanni Garbini, *Myth and History in the Bible*, The Library of Hebrew Bible/OT Studies (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 1–10.

[50] John Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997); *The Biblical Saga of King David* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009).

[51] Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na'aman, eds., *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994); Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel* (New York: Touchstone, 2002); Israel Finkelstein and Amihai Mazar, *The Quest for the Historical Israel*, ed. Brian B. Schmidt, Archaeology and Biblical Studies 17 (Atlanta: SBL, 2007).

[52] Hershel Shanks *et al.*, "Face to Face: Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challenge," *BAR* 23, no. 4 (1997): 26–42, 66; Niels Peter Lemche, *The Israelites in History and Tradition*, Library of Ancient Israel (Louisville: Westminster/Knox, 1998), 166.

among others.[54] They argue that the primary OT characters, like the patriarchs, Moses, David, and Solomon, did not exist except in the minds of the Israelites. Davies, a professed revisionist, explains it this way:

> There is no way in which history automatically reveals itself in a biblical text; there are no literary criteria for believing David to be more historical than Joshua, Joshua more historical than Abraham, and Abraham more historical than Adam. An additional problem, in fact, is that there is no non-literary way of making this judgment either, since none of these characters has left a trace outside the biblical text![55]

According to Ronald S. Hendel, Professor of Hebrew Bible and Jewish Studies in the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of California, Berkeley:

> Archaeology did not illumine the times and events of Abraham, Moses and Joshua. Rather, it helped to show that these times and events are largely unhistorical. The more we know about the Bronze and early Iron Ages, the more the Biblical portrayals of events in this era appear to be a blend of folklore and cultural memory, in which the details of historical events have either disappeared or been radically reshaped. The stories are deeply meaningful, but only occasionally historical. Archaeological research has—against the intentions of most of its practitioners—secured the non-historicity of much of the Bible before the era of the kings.[56]

Dever, who does not consider himself to be a minimalist although most would place him in this camp, summarizes their position:

> There was no "ancient" or "biblical" Israel. These are all late "intellectual constructs," forced back upon an imagined past by centuries of Jewish and Christian believers. The notion of "ancient Israel" stems ultimately from the Bible itself; but the Bible is "pious fiction," not historical fact. The Bible, too, is a late literary construct, written in and reflecting the realities of the Persian-Hellenistic era (*ca.* fifth–first centuries BC), not the Iron Age of Palestine (*ca.* 12th–sixth centuries) that purports to be its setting.[57]

In addition, minimalists look to the date of the earliest discovered manuscripts of the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS), written sometime after the second cent. BC, to provide the date for the writing of the OT books. For the minimalist, the biblical books were originally composed just before the time of the DSS (fourth–third cent. BC). Kenneth Kitchen reveals the implications of this view: "With that late date they would couple an ultralow view of the reality of that history, dismissing virtually the whole of it as pure fiction, as an attempt by the puny Jewish community in Palestine to write themselves an imaginary past large, as a form of national propaganda."[58]

Others were already involved in this practice, setting the precedent for Israel. Both Manetho's (Egyptian priest, third cent. BC) *Aegyptiaka*[59] and Berossus' (Babylonian priest of Marduk) *Chaldaika*[60] were written as political propaganda. However, the OT books were written in Hebrew for their own nation, not as political propaganda for others. The Greek translation of the OT (LXX) was produced years later and then only for their own community.

The minimalists have even gone so far as to campaign against the use of the term *biblical archaeology* and replace it with *Near-Eastern archaeology*. Holden and Geisler explain their motivation behind this change:

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[53] Thomas L. Thompson, *The Bible in History: How Writers Create a Past* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999); *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology And The Myth Of Israel* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 77–82; *Early History of the Israelite People: From the Written & Archaeological Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

[54] Robert B. Coote and Keith W. Whitelam, *The Emergence of Early Israel in Historical Perspective*, Social World of Biblical Antiquity Series (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2010).

[55] Davies, *In Search of "Ancient Israel": A Study in Biblical Origins*, 12.

[56] Ronald S. Hendel, "Biblical Views: Is There a Biblical Archaeology?," *BAR* 32, no. 4 (2006): 20.

[57] Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know*, 4.

[58] Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 2.

[59] Manetho, *Manetho.*

[60] Stanley Mayer Burstein, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, 5 vols., Sources from the Ancient Near East 1 (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1978).



3. Pottery jar handles stamped with seals reading *lmlk* (belonging to the King). Upper right: two-winged icon with only one word in the top register. Upper left: two-winged icon with divided words in both registers. Center: two-winged icon with divided word in the top but an undivided word in the bottom. Lower left: four-winged icon with a professional carved inscription. Lower right: four-winged icon with an amateurish, cursory inscription. Such stamps are specific to the reign of Hezekiah of Judah (716-687 BC).

Courtesy of George M. Grena

> Their [Minimalists] contempt for any title associated with the Bible appears to be driven by its perceived association to biased research, antiquated methodology, rigid ideology, lack of objectivity, and contempt for the scientific method. (However, this notion seems to be shortsighted since it requires archaeologists to discriminate against the Bible as a valid primary-source document originating from the ancient Near-Eastern world.)[61]

Kitchen asks several important questions which deserve answering:

> Were the Old Testament books all composed within circa 400–200 BC? And are they virtually pure fiction of that time, with few or no roots in the real history of the Near East during circa 2000–400 BC? . . . Are they purely fiction, containing nothing of historical value, or of major historical content and value, or a fictional matrix with a few historical nuggets embedded?
>
> Merely sitting back in a comfy armchair just wondering or speculating about the matter will achieve us nothing. Merely proclaiming one's personal convictions for any of the three options just mentioned (all, nothing, or something historical) simply out of personal belief or agenda, and not from firm evidence on the question, is also a total waste of time.[62]

Maximalist View

By contrast the *maximalists* are those who generally accept the biblical text as historically accurate and see a significant correspondence between the Bible and the archaeological data. They accept the maximum amount of biblical history in relation to the archaeolgical inquiry. They find that the Bible contributes significantly to our understanding of the history of Palestine and generally agree with the early dates for the authorship of the OT books. Kitchen lays out significant evidence for such an early date in his life's work entitled *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*.[63] There is not always agreement on the exact dates between these scholars, as dates can be very difficult to verify with pinpoint accuracy.

Leading maximalist scholars would include Kitchen, Hoerth, Hoffmeier, Millard, Price, Ortiz, McRay, Yamauchi, and others.[64] While some would place William Dever in this camp, he

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[61] Norman L. Geisler and Joseph M. Holden, *The Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013), 183.

[62] Kitchen, *Reliability of the OT*, 2–3.

[63] Ibid., 283–99.

[64] Kitchen, *Reliability of the OT*; *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1966); Hoerth and McRay, *Bible Archaeology*; Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*; James K. Hoffmeier, ed., *The Archaeology of the Bible: Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2008); Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Homer and Archaeology: Minimalists and Maximalists in Classical Context," in *The Future of Biblical Archaeology: Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions*, ed. James K. Hoffmeier and Alan R. Millard (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 69–90; Hoffmeier and Millard, *The Future of Biblical Archaeology*; McRay, *Archaeology and the NT*; J.

would not consider himself either a maximalist or a minimalist but a middleist, placing himself somewhere in the middle. From his own statements, most evangelicals would not consider him to be a maximalist. Dever states:

> We cannot turn the clock back on the time when archaeology allegedly "proved the Bible." We must allow archaeology as it is practiced today to challenge, as well as to confirm, the Bible's stories. Some things described there really did happen, but *others did not.* The Biblical narratives about Abraham, Moses, Joshua and Solomon probably do reflect some historical memories of actual people and places, but the "larger-than-life" portraits of the Bible are *unrealistic* and are, in fact, *contradicted by the archaeological evidence.* Some of Israel's ancestors probably did come out of Egyptian slavery, but there was *no military conquest of Canaan*, and most early Israelites were displaced Canaanites (emphasis added).[65]
>
> What the revisionists seem to mean by "biblical" Israel is the Israel of mythic proportions. This is the Israel reflected in numerous "stories" that are *embellished with exaggerations* and *fanciful features* such as miracles, compiled partly from sagas, legends, folk-tales, and outright inventions. Above all, it is the story of an Israel that is set in an over-arching theocratic framework whose intent is always didactic. It aims not at historical narrative per se, but at elucidating the hidden theological meaning of events and their moral significance. Of course this "Israel" is *not historical*, except for revealing something of the historical context of its writers and final editors. But then few modern readers except Fundamentalists ever thought that it was (emphasis added).[66]

While he is often very critical of the minimalists, he himself clearly does not believe that the Bible is historical, and thus Dever is a minimalist. However, Dever has criticised scholars for holding the view that every historical event in the Bible should be "assumed to be false" unless supported by archaeological evidence. On this point maximalists would agree with Dever.

It is apparent that the distinction is not as simple as saying that Minimalists are theological liberals and Maximalists are theological conservatives. A person, like Dever, may deny the miracles of the OT, attributing such biblical accounts to the superstitious nature of people in biblical days, and still believe that the overall history of Israel is accurately portrayed in the Bible. Likewise, a person may not believe in the miracles of the Bible, such as the Resurrection, but may still be a maximalist and believe that the majority of the Bible's history is true.

The minimalist approaches the biblical text from the viewpoint that it contains a minimal amount of real history, as opposed to the maximalist viewpoint that holds to a more conservative position and embraces the maximum amount of history. Davis observes the difference between the two in that "where the combatants disagree is on the value placed on the biblical record."[67] While these are broad generalizations, most archaeologists would fall somewhere between these two approaches to biblical history.

Direct and Indirect Evidence

The maximalist need not put his head in the sand and ignore the evidence. There is ample evidence all around, but sometimes it is hard to see.[68] Evidence can be broken down into two categories, direct and indirect, and both are valid forms of verification. An example of explicit, or direct evidence would be the royal seals with the names of the kings of Judah on them (fig. 3).[69]

Randall Price and H. Wayne House, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology: A Book by Book Guide to Archaeological Discoveries Related to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018).

[65] William G. Dever, "The Western Cultural Tradition Is At Risk," *BAR* 32, no. 2 (2006): 76.

[66] Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know*, 46.

[67] Thomas W. Davis, "Theory and Method in Biblical Archaeology," in *The Future of Biblical Archaeology: Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions*, ed. James K. Hoffmeier and Alan R. Millard (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 26.

[68] See, The Fallacy of Negative Proof. David E. Graves, *Digging Up the Bible: Introduction and Brief History of Biblical Archaeology* (Moncton, N.B.: Electronic Christian Media, 2019), 73.

[69] George M. Grena, *LMLK–A Mystery Belonging to the King*, vol. 1 (Redondo Beach, CA: 4000 Years of Writing History, 2004); "What Are Lmlk Stamps and What Were They Used For?," *BS* 18, no. 1 (2005): 19–24.

Seal-impressions (bullae) exist that verify the rule of Judah's kings e.g., "Belonging to Yotham" (739–735 BC; 2 Kgs 14:22; fig. 126); "Belonging to Ahaz (son of Yotham) king of Judah" (735–716 BC; 2 Kgs 15:38; "Belonging to Hezekiah (son of Ahaz) king of Judah" (715–687 BC; 2 Kgs 16:20; fig. 4)[70] and "Belonging to Manasseh, son of the king" (687–643 BC; 2 Kgs 20:21). There is also the famous Megiddo lion seal "to Shema (Heb. *Lšmc)* Servant of Jeroboam" (1 Kgs 12–14).[71]



4. The seals (bullae) of King Hezekiah bearing the same textual inscriptions "Belonging to Hezekiah [son of] Ahaz, King of Judah." (A) Reproduction of the older dung beetle motif. (B) Eilat Mazar bulla with the winged sun motif from late in Hezekiah's reign. A total of nine bullae have been discovered bearing the name of Hezekiah. Six picture a two-winged scarab (dung beetle) pushing a ball of mud or dung (A & C), and three bullae picture a two-winged sundisk (B & D).

© (A) Photo by David E. Graves (B) Madain Project (C), (D) Ruben Betanzo SJ/ Wikimedia Commons Adapted

The more difficult evidence to understand is the implicit or indirect evidence, but it is still valuable. This type of evidence is exemplified in the comparison of the price of a slave or the covenant structure in the biblical text with their counterparts in ancient tablets.

For example, the age of the tablets and the cost of a slave are known from the archaeological period (strata). Joseph was sold into slavery for 20 shekels (Gen 37:28). In the early second millennium the cost of a slave, according to the Code of Hammurabi (§§116, 214, 252; fig. 61, 62),[72] the Mari tablets (fig. 35),[73] and other documents, averaged 22 shekels.[74] Inflation was in operation as it is today and so the cost of a slave gradually increased. In the Third Dynasty of Ur the cost was 10 shekels,[75] while after the eighteenth cent. it was 30 shekels (Moses, Lev 27:2) until in the first millennium the price of a slave rose to as much as 50–60 shekels (Menahem, 2 Kgs 15:20).[76] During the Persian Empire prices reached 90–120 shekels.[77] This graph of inflation for the price

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[70] Nahman Avigad, *Hebrew Bullae from the Time of Jeremiah: Remnants of a Burnt Archive,* trans. Rafi Grafman (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986). Another seal was uncovered in 2009 by Eilat Mazar at the Ophel excavations in Jerusalem, and the only one found by archaeologists in a provenanced context. https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-sites-places/jerusalem/king-hezekiah-in-the-bible-royal-seal-of-hezekiah-comes-to-light.

[71] Avraham Negev and Shimon Gibson, eds., *AEHL*, 452–54.

[72] "The Code of Hammurabi," trans. Theophile J. Meek (*ANET*, 163–79).

[73] André Parrot, Georges Dossin, and Georges Boyer, *Archives Royales de Mari: Publiées Sous La Direction de André Parrot et Georges Dossin. Textes Juridiques: Transcrits, Traduits et Commentés Par Georges Boyer*, vol. 8 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1958), 23, no. 10:1–4.

[74] A. Falkenstein, *Die Neusumerische Gerichtsurkunden*, vol. I (Munich: Beck, 1956), 88 n. 5.

[75] Ibid., I:88–90; Isaac Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the Ancient Near East; A Comparative Study of Slavery in Babylonia, Assyria, Syria, and Palestine From the Middle of the Third Millennium to the End of the First Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949), 117, 155 n. 164.

[76] C. H. W. Johns, *Assyrian Deeds and Documents Recording the Transfer of Property, Including the So-Called Private Contracts, Legal Decisions and Proclamations Preserved* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1924), 542–46.

[77] Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the ANE*, 117, 155 n. 174.

of a slave creates a parallel track useful in dating each of the biblical events. The date for writing the biblical text corresponds to the discovered tablets by comparing the price of a slave.

The covenant structure also evolved over time and displays a unique pattern in the second and first millennium BC that Kitchen uses for dating the biblical material. According to Kitchen "the sequence of covenants is consistent, reliable and securely dated"[78] and useful for dating.

Tolerance

In a controversial discipline like archaeology how does one interact with those of differing opinions? The general response is tolerance. But what does tolerance mean? Does it mean that their views are also true and valid? Does it mean that we must accept their views as our own in order to be tolerant? Unfortunately, this is often the postmodern understanding of tolerance.[79]

The *Oxford American Dictionary & Thesaurus* defines tolerance and toleration as: "Tolerance: A willingness or ability to tolerate; forbearance. . . Toleration: The process or practice of tolerating, esp. the allowing of differences in religious opinion without discrimination."[80]

Webster's Unabridged Dictionary defines toleration as: "The endurance of the presence or actions of objectionable persons, or of the expression of offensive opinions."[81]

The definition of tolerance deals with how people are treated and how people interact with others. There are many misconceptions about tolerance in the postmodern world. Tolerance does not mean accepting that two opposing views are both valid or embracing their views. It does not mean accepting their views as correct. It means fairly representing a differing opinion. Tolerance means treating those who differ with us with respect and fairness. Stetson defines it as "patience toward a practice or opinion one disapproves of."[82]

Debate is a sound academic exercise, but must be done with respect for the person because everyone is created in the image of God (Gen 1:26–27; John 13:35). Debate must involve fairly representing the opposing views. Thus, it is important to represent an opposing view as accurately and fairly as possible. If one creates a caricature of the views of others and soundly demolishes the caricature, then you have not successfully countered their arguments.



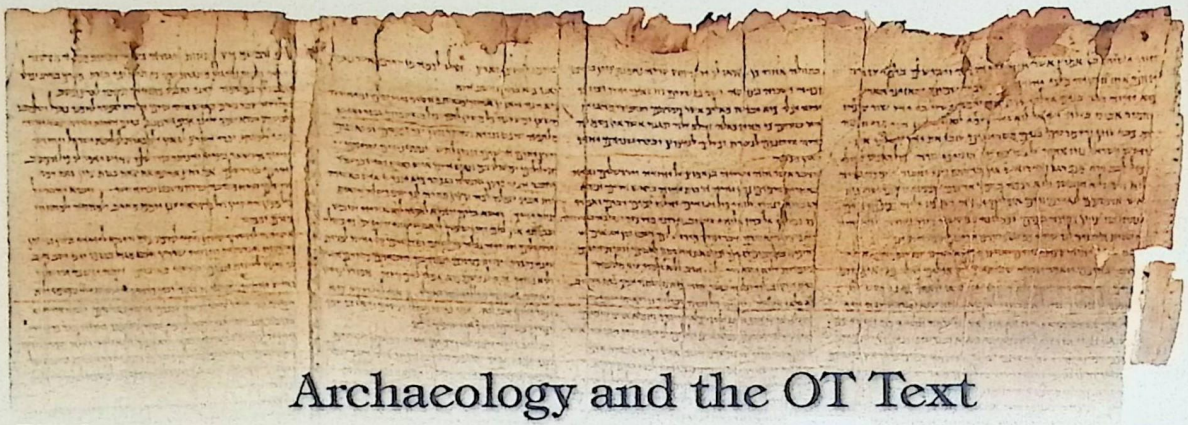
[78] Kitchen, *Reliability of the OT*, 4.

[79] Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler, *The New Tolerance: How a Cultural Movement Threatens to Destroy You, Your Faith, and Your Children* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1998), 19.

[80] Christine A. Lindberg, Katherine M. Isaacs, and Ruth Handlin Manley, eds., *Oxford American Dictionary & Thesaurus*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2009), 1607.

[81] Daniel Webster, *Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* (New York: Random House Reference, 1999), NP.

[82] Brad Stetson and Joseph G. Conti, *The Truth About Tolerance: Pluralism, Diversity and the Culture Wars* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 140; Arthur F. Holmes, *All Truth Is God's Truth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1983); James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997).



Archaeology and the OT Text

The Bible contains 66 books written by around 24 authors over a period of 2000–3500 years. The Old Testament (OT) consists of 39 of these books. With so many documents it is surprising that so little discussion is provided in biblical archaeology textbooks to the processes of archaeology concerning OT texts and manuscripts. This chapter will introduce the major discoveries of biblical texts and manuscripts that have provided the basis for the Hebrew and English Old Testament.

5. A photographic reproduction of part of the Isaiah Scroll discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls from cave one. It is the best preserved of the biblical scrolls found at Qumran and contains the entire Book of Isaiah in Hebrew (second Cent. BC).

© Ardon Bar Hama / Wikimedia Commons

Languages of the Bible

Originally God communicated his revelation in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Thus, biblical texts can be found in all three of these languages, as well as translated into other languages, such as Copitc, Latin, Syriac, and etc.



6. The Sumerian pictograph tablet. This tablet is one of the first pieces of writing recovered, dating to 3100-2900 BC.

Cast of the original at the University of Pennsylvania Museum.

Semitic Languages

Hebrew and Aramaic are *Semitic* languages, named after the descendants of Shem (Gen 10). Other Semitic languages include Phoenician, Assyrian, Arabic, Akkadian, Ethiopic, Sumerian (fig. 6), Ugaritic, Moabite, and Babylonian. All of these languages are read from right to left except Akkadian and Ethiopic, which were the first languages to indicate vowels. There is a common cultural life because of the common language. Sumerian, Greek and English are Indo-European languages and not Semitic.

Cuneiform Script

The cuneiform (cursive wedge-shaped) script can be traced back to Egyptian hieroglyphs, though the phonetic values are dependent on the *acrophonic* principle of the Proto-Canaanite alphabet (LBA). For example, the letter A, represents the sound "a", while the pictogram representing an ox is pronounced as *'alp*. Ancient Hebrew and Phoenician are based on the Proto-Canaanite language (fig. 6, 95, 98, and 103) and this family of languages are the first to adopt a Semitic alphabet.

One might wonder why sometimes the spelling of the names in the ancient texts differs from

the way they are spelled in the Bible. The main reason is that the ancient languages were more spoken than written. People spelled words the way they sounded, and because of different accents similar words with the same meaning were often spelled a bit differently. There was no standardisation of spelling, much like it is today with British and American words (colour and color). Thus, sometimes it is difficult to know if the person or place names in the tablets are the same as in the Bible. One good example is found in the Ebla tablets and the possible mention of Sodom.

History of Hebrew

The majority of the OT was written in Hebrew with small portions written in Aramaic (Gen 31:47b; Jer 10:11b; Ezra 4–7; Dan 2–7; See *Aramaic).* One of the earliest Hebrew inscriptions yet discovered is by Yosef Garfinkel, the Israeli director of the Khirbet Qeiyafa excavation (2007). It dates to around 1,000–975 BC (see *Khirbet Qeiyafa ostracon*).[1]

For Jews, Hebrew was "the language of sanctity, the holy tongue" (*m. Sotah* 7:2). This fact helps to explain the reason for the care exercised by the scribes to ensure the precision of the Hebrew text down through the generations.

Writing was well-established in Palestine while Israel was ruling there, evident from the many inscriptions that have been discovered from that period (see *Paleo-Hebrew inscriptions* below).[2] Diringer indicated that the Bible has "as many as 429 references to writing or written documents."[3] An early criticism of the Bible was that it could not have been written as early as it stated because writing was not used until much later. However, according to Diringer in 1934 there were "about 300 Early Hebrew inscriptions, ostraca, seals [*ca.* 150+], jar-handle-stamps [*ca.* 600+], weights [*ca.* 100+], and so on."[4] Today there are hundreds more.

Paleo-Hebrew

Also known as Old Hebrew or Archaic Biblical Hebrew (tenth to sixth cent. BC), Paleo-Hebrew is descended from the Canaanite (Phoenician) alphabet.[5] Diringer explains that: "We may assume that about 1000 BC, after the united kingdom had been established and its centralised administation organised by King David with a staff of secretaries (see, for instance, 2 Sam 8:17 and 20:25), the Early Hebrew alphabet had begun its autonomous development."[6]

By the fifth cent. it was no longer used by the Jews, who had adopted the Aramaic alphabet

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[1] Gershon Galil, "The Hebrew Inscription from Khirbet Qeiyafa/Neta'im: Script, Language, Literature and History," *UF* 41 (2009): 193–242; S. H. William, "The Qeiyafa Ostracon," *UF* 41 (2009): 601–10; Haggai Misgav, Yosef Garfinkel, and Saar Ganor, "The Ostracon," in *Khirbet Qeiyafa: Excavation Report 2007-2008*, ed. Yosef Garfinkel and Saar Ganor, vol. 1 (Jerusalem, Israel: Israel Exploration Society, 2010), 143–60; Hershel Shanks, "Prize Find: Oldest Hebrew Inscription Discovered in Israelite Fort on Philistine Border," *BAR* 36, no. 2 (April 2010): 51–55; Christopher A. Rollston, "The Khirbet Qeiyafa Ostracon: Methodological Musings and Caveats," *Journal of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University* 38, no. 1 (2011): 67–82; Aaron Demsky, "An Iron Age IIA Alphabetic Writing Exercise from Khirbet Qeiyafa," *IEJ* 62, no. 2 (2012): 186–99; Israel Finkelstein and Alexander Fantalkin, "Khirbet Qeiyafa: An Unsensational Archaeological and Historical Interpretation," *Tel Aviv* 39 (2012): 38–63.

[2] Alan R. Millard, "An Assessment of the Evidence for Writing in Ancient Israel," in *Biblical Archaeology Today, Proceedings of the International Congress on Biblical Archaeology, Jerusalem*, ed. Avraham Biran (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1985), 98.

[3] David Diringer, "The Biblical Scripts," in *CHB*, 1:13.

[4] Diringer, "The Biblical Scripts," in *CHB*, 1:13; *Le Iscrizioni Antico-Ebraiche Palestinesi* (Florence, Italy: Le Monnier, 1934).

[5] Edward Yechezkel Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1982), 1; Angel Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, trans. John Elwolde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1–45; Benjamin Sass, *The Alphabet at the Turn of the Millennium: West Semitic Alphabet CA 1150-850 BCE*, Tel Aviv Occasional Publications 4 (Tel-Aviv: Institute of Archaeology, 2009).

[6] Diringer, "The Biblical Scripts," in *CHB*, 1:13; Alan R. Millard, "The Practice of Writing in Ancient Israel," *BA* 35, no. 4 (1972): 98–111.

for their system of writing. However, a small group of modern Samaritans still use a derivative of the old Paleo-Hebrew script known as the Samaritan alphabet. Some examples of this early Hebrew script can be found in the Siloam Tunnel Inscription[7] (1880, lapidary style *ca.* 700 BC; fig. 132), the Gezer Calendar[8] (1908; fig. 82), the Lachish Letters or ostraca[9] (1935–1938, cursive style sixth cent. BC; fig. 137), Lachish Step inscription (1938), Tel Dan stele[10] (1993–94; fig. 90), and Tel Zayit Abecedary (2006). It is also unlikely that reading and writing were only confined to the professional scribe, as Albright states:

> Since the forms of the letters are very simple, the 22 letter alphabet could be learned in a day or two by a bright student and in a week or two by the dullest; hence it could spread with great rapidity. I do not doubt for a moment that there were many urchins . . . who could read and write as early as the time of the Judges, although I do not believe that the script was used for formal literature until later.[11]

Classical Biblical Hebrew

Classical Biblical Hebrew flourished during the Babylonian Exile in the sixth cent. BC. The influence of the Greeks and Persians is evident from the presence of Persian and Greek loanwords in Hebrew. However, by the fifth cent. BC, the Jews gradually stopped using it and adopted the Aramaic alphabet and writing system. The present Hebrew alphabet ("square-script") is descended from these.



7. Dead Sea Scroll reproduction.
Qumran Visitors Center, Qumran, Israel. © David E. Graves

Late Biblical Hebrew

A slight variation of the classical biblical Hebrew that corresponds to the Persian Period was used in the sixth–fourth cent. BC. It used the Imperial Aramaic script.

Qumran Hebrew

The Hebrew script of the Hellenistic and Roman Periods before 70 AD (third cent. BC–AD first cent.) used the Hebrew square script (Assyrian or literary style script), and it is still in use today.[12] The script is used in many of the Dead Sea Scroll (DSS) manuscripts discovered in the caves around Khirbet Qumran in 1946

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[7] "The Siloam Inscription," trans. W. F. Albright (*ANET*, 321); C. Schick, "Phoenician Inscription in the Pool of Siloam," *PEQ* 12, no. 4 (1880): 238–39; Robert B. Coote, "Siloam Inscription," in *ABD*, 6:23–24; Mitchell J. Dahood, "Siloam Inscription," in *NCE*, 13:120; R. I. Altman, "Some Notes on Inscriptional Genres and the Siloam Tunnel Inscription," *Antiquo Oriente* 5 (2007): 35–88.

[8] "The Gezer Calendar," trans. W. F. Albright (*ANET*, 320); Daniel Sivan, "The Gezer Calendar and Northwest Semitic Linguistics," *IEJ* 48, no. 1–2 (1998): 101–105; William F. Albright, "The Gezer Calendar," *OR* 92 (1943): 16–26.

[9] André LeMaire, *Inscriptions Hébraïques. I. Les Ostraca.*, vol. 1, Littératures Anciennes Du Proche-Orient 9 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1977); Anson F. Rainey, "Watching for the Signal Fires of Lachish," *PEQ* 119 (1987): 149–51.

[10] Rainey, "The 'House of David' and the House of the Deconstructionists," 47; André LeMaire, "'House of David' Restored in Moabite Inscription," *BAR* 20, no. 3 (1994): 30–37; Alan R. Millard, "The Tell Dan Stele," trans. Miriam Lichtheim (*COS* 2:161–62); Lester L. Grabbe, *Ahab Agonistes: The Rise and Fall of the Omri Dynasty* (New York: Continuum International, 2007), 333.

[11] William F. Albright and Benno Landsberger, "Scribal Concepts of Education," in *City Invincible: A Symposium on Urbanization and Cultural Development in the Ancient Near East. Held at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, December 4-7, 1958*, ed. Carl H. Kraeling and Robert M. Adams (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 123.

[12] Ernst Würthwein and Alexander Achilles Fischer, *The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica*, trans. Erroll F. Rhodes, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 1.

and 1947 (See *The DSS).*[13]

Jerusalem Papyrus



8. Reproduction of Jerusalem Papyrus.
© drawn by David E. Graves

A controversial find that dates to October 26, 2016 concerns the announcement by the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) of a 2,700-year-old papyrus that mentions the city of Jerusalem. Its provenance is unknown but is believed to have come from one of the caves in the Judean Desert on the western shore of the Dead Sea and was confiscated from black market sellers by the Israeli robbery prevention unit.

The small scroll (4.3 in ×1.3 in [10.9cm × 3.2cm]) only contains three lines but has been translated as "From the king's maidservant, from Naharata, jars of wine, to Jerusalem."[14] Some read Naharata as "from his cave" or "from To-Maarat" or "from To-Naarat" (as in the Bible, Josh 10:36).[15]

Forgery of papyrus is a common practice and difficult to refute due to the availability of blank papyrus on the black market. A small piece of blank papyrus was discovered in cave 53 now identified as Q12) by the author's team led by Oren Gutfeld of Hebrew University and Randall Price on January 16, 2017. Forgers acquire a piece of blank papyrus and forge a significant message to receive a high price on the black market. But as the epigrapher Christopher Rollston points out "The fact that the papyrus itself has been carbon dated to the 7th century BCE certainly does not mean that the writing on the papyrus is ancient. . . In fact, it really means nothing."[16] The important analysis is the ink that was used but as Prof. Gideon Avny, head of the Antiquities Authority's Archaeological Division and a lecturer at the Hebrew University's Institute of Archaeology points out, it is difficult to accurately analyze the date of ink. The style of writing appears to be authentic but the use of a margin of a sheet of papyrus, the *modus operandi* of forgers, brings the authenticity of the discovery into question.

Writing Yahweh

Because Jews would not say God's special name–*Yahweh* (*YHWH tetragrammaton*)–scribes would insert a substitute series of letters or symbols into the text of the manuscript.

Examples of this practice can be found in the DSS Messianic Testimonia (4Q175; fig. 24) quoting from Deut 5:28–9, 18:18–19, 33:8–11, and Numbers 24:15–17[17] where the Messiah is described as prophet, priest, and king and *Yahweh* is described using four dots, each representing the consonants *YHWH (TETRAGRAMMATON).* Another DSS fragment of the Psalms (11Q5Ps[a]

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[13] Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, 112–46; James C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 2–28.

[14] Daniel K. Eisenbud, "IAA Refutes Authenticity Accusations of 'Jerusalem' Papyrus Inscription," *The Jerusalem Post*, October 30, 2016, http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/IAA-refutes-authenticity-accusations-of-Jerusalem-papyrus-inscription-471239.

[15] Michael Langlois, "How a 2,700-Year-Old Piece of Papyrus Super-Charged the Debate over UNESCO and Jerusalem," *The Conversation*, November 15, 2016, http://theconversation.com/how-a-2-700-year-old-piece-of-papyrus-super-charged-the-debate-over-unesco-and-jerusalem-68376.

[16] Eisenbud, "IAA Refutes Authenticity."

[17] Joan Jacobs and Irwin Jacobs, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Margaret Dykens, San Diego Natural History Museum (San Diego: San Diego State University Press, 2007), 64–65.



9. Dead Sea Scroll Messianic Testimony (4Q175). God's Name, Yahweh is represented by four dots.

Amman Museum, Jordan. © David E. Graves

[Pss 124:8–127:1]) replaced the four consonant name of God (*YHWH*) with the ancient Paleo-Hebrew letters in order to preserve the ancient name while the rest of the text was written in the square Aramaic script.[18]

Until their discovery it was believed that such perishable materials as parchment and papyrus could not have survived for two millennia. Since the discovery of the initial scrolls several others were discovered in eleven other caves north and south of Qumran along the west scarp of the Jordan River Valley, the most recent in 2017. This historic event is likely the greatest archaeological discovery of the twentieth century.[19]

Mishnaic Hebrew

Mishnaic Hebrew I, also known as *Tannaitic*, or *Early Rabbinic Hebrew* (first–fourth cent. AD), was used during the Roman Period after 70 AD and the destruction of the Temple, and has been identified as the spoken language of that time. **Mishnaic Hebrew II,** also known as *Amoraic Hebrew* or *Late Rabbinic Hebrew*, was the literary version.

For over 600 years, Jewish Pharisees recorded their writings into a compilation of some six thousand pages called the *Talmud* (Heb. "instruction"), that formed the authoritative body of Jewish tradition, comprising Jewish civil and ceremonial law. The *Jerusalem Talmud* (Palestinian), compiled at the end of the fourth or early fifth cent. AD, was combined with the *Babylonian Talmud,* which in its turn was compiled at the end of the fifth century. The heart of the *Talmud* was the *Mishnah* (Heb. pl. *Mishnayot*; "study by repetition" or "(oral) instruction"), the first major written redaction of Jewish oral traditions (oral law) and the first work of rabbinic literature (Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, third cent. AD), comprising sayings of Rabbi Judah the Patriarch (third cent. AD), and while originally written in Mishnaic Hebrew, the Talmud comments on the Mishnah's use of Aramaic. It is composed of six major sections, divided into sixty-three tractates. These documents deal with laws pertaining to the Sabbath, temple rituals, marriage, civil and criminal law. Over time additional comments and sayings called *Gemarah* (mid fourth to fifth cent. AD) were added to the *Mishnah* in Aramaic to form the *Talmud* (Heb. "translation" or "interpretation").[20]

This large volume of work is useful for understanding religious Jewish thought during the first century, although care must be exercised in using them. Perhaps Jesus refers to the *Mishnah* in speaking of the Jewish writings as "heavy burdens" (Matt 23:4).

The *Targums* were compiled using the Aramaic translation of the OT along with paraphrases, word studies, discussions of grammar and Jewish commentary. Collected over a five-hundred-year period, it is difficult to date individual passages. Fragments were found at Qumran among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Midrash is another Jewish body of work that comments on the OT. They contain homilies, commentaries, and notes. It is dated to the third cent. AD after the completion of the NT.

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[18] Ibid., 24–25.

[19] Keith N. Schoville, "Top Ten Archaeological Discoveries of the Twentieth Century Relating to the Biblical World," *Stone Campbell Journal* 4, no. 1 (2001): 29.

[20] An English translation is available online at www.come-and-hear.com/talmud.

The *Tosefta* (Heb. "supplement") is another large collection of writings, written in Mishnaic Hebrew, that are similar to the *Mishnah* but not as authoritative for Jews.

Mishnaic Hebrew is also evident in some of the DSS's, particularly the Copper Scroll, and the Bar Kokhba Letters (AD 132–135). The shift from Aramaic to Hebrew during the Bar Kokhba revolt is explained by Yadin: "the earlier documents (DSS) are written in Aramaic while the later ones are in Hebrew. Possibly the change was made by a special decree of Bar-Kokhba who wanted to restore Hebrew as the official language of the state."[21]

While Rabbinical Hebrew was replaced with Aramaic as the spoken language, it survived in the form of a liturgical and literary language, evident in the Gemara text.[22] Aramaic had a profound impact on the development of Mishnaic Hebrew.[23]

Masoretic Text (MT)

This is the traditional (accepted) Hebrew text of the Bible (ca. AD 1000) composed by the Masoretes, a group of scribes in Tiberias who developed a vowel system (critical apparatus) so the text could read with confidence. There are no vowels in the early forms of Hebrew, with vowels only being added later by the *Masoretes* (המסורה from Heb. *Masora,* "tradition") scribes.[24] The complex work of adding vowel points (Heb. *niqqud*) and cantillation marks, called *Masora*, to the manuscripts (*Codex Orientales* [AD 820–850]; *Cairo Geniza* collection [AD 870]; *Codex Cairensis* [AD 896]; *Codex Babylonicus Petropolitanus* [AD 916]; *Codex Leningradensis* B19A [AD 1008; fig. 25]; *Aleppo Codex* [AD 1040–1050]),[25] was carried out by two independent schools (the Babylonian and Palestinian). The most famous group were led by the Palestinian families of Moses ben Asher (AD 895), and Moses ben Naphtali (AD 890–940), working from Tiberias.[26] Until that time the only way to determine the exact pronunciation and meaning of the words was by their context. Thus, the Masoretes became famous for developing and standardizing the vowel notation (diacritic) system used for the pronunciation of Hebrew. The Masoretes also added a series of critical notes to ensure the accuracy of the text. According to Dotan they also "counted the letters and the words of the text; they discussed grammatical rules, vowels, and accents."[27] The Masoretic apparatus was designed to protect the copies from error. The oldest dated Masoretic manuscript is ascribed to Moses Ben Asher and is known as the *Codex Cairensis* (AD 896) and is the basis for the Hebrew Bible today.[28]

History of Aramaic

Aramaic originated in Aram (modern Syria) and became the international language of the Persians. It belongs to the Northwest group of Semitic languages of the ancient Near East. Other similar

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[21] Yigael Yadin, *Bar-Kokhba: The Rediscovery of the Legendary Hero of the Last Jewish Revolt Against Imperial Rome* (London: Littlehampton, 1971), 181.

[22] Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, 170–71.

[23] Moshe Bar-Asher, "Mishnaic Hebrew: An Introductory Survey," in *The Literature of the Sages: Second Part: Midrash, and Targum; Liturgy, Poetry, Mysticism; Contracts, Inscriptions, Ancient Science and the Languages of Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Shmuel Safrai *et al.*, Compendia Rerum Ludaicarum Ad Novum Testamentum (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006), 567–96; Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, 110–11.

[24] F. F. Bruce, Philip W. Comfort, and James I. Packer, *The Origin of the Bible* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2003), 158.

[25] The Russian National Library in Saint Petersburg, Russia houses the largest collection of Hebrew OT manuscripts in their Second Firkovitch Collection.

[26] Hayim Tawil and Bernard Schneider, *Crown of Aleppo: The Mystery of the Oldest Hebrew Bible Codex* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2010).

[27] David Bridger and Samuel Wolk, *The New Jewish Encyclopedia* (Springfield, NJ: Behrman, 1962), 309.

[28] Aron Dotan, "Ben-Asher, Moses," in *EncJud*, 3:321.

languages are Canaanite (Hebrew, Phoenician, Moabite, and Edomite) and Ugaritic.[29]

When Abraham moved to Haran from Ur he settled in Aramean territory (Genesis 12:1–4; Acts 7:2). Abraham's father Terah and his family would have spoken Aramaic. Rebekah, Leah and Rachel would have spoken Aramaic even though they lived in Canaan after Abraham's move to Palestine.

Hebrew is similar in vocabulary and pronunciation to Aramaic and those who have mastered Hebrew find Aramaic easy to learn. But there are sufficient differences to make the two languages distinct in their look and sound.

Portions of the OT books of Ezra (Ch. 4–7) and Daniel (Ch. 2–7) are written in Aramaic along with Gen 31:47b and Jer 10:11b. Parts of Daniel were written in Aramaic because this was the language of the Persian Empire, where he was living and working as a high-ranking political attaché. The correspondence of Ezra was of international interest and thus was written in the diplomatic language of the local rulers.

Along with Greek and Hebrew, Aramaic was also commonly used as a language in Israel in the first cent. AD. By then the OT was completely translated into Aramaic and available to Jesus and the disciples although they mostly used the Septuagint. The NT Aramaic dialect was sometimes called Hebrew (John 5:2; 19:13, 17, 20; 20:16; Acts 21:40; 22:2).

The Targum (Ezra 4:7) is the Aramaic translation of the OT and also the collection of Aramaic commentaries on the OT text.[30] It has varying degrees of accuracy with the translation of the Hebrew text. While the Targum assists in our understanding of Jewish interpretation, they are not a reliable witness to the Hebrew text.

IMPORTANT OT MANUSCRIPTS

The OT text relies on two main traditions to provide the English Bible with the OT: the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Dead Sea Scrolls. However, several other manuscripts have been dated as even earlier witnesses to the events in the OT text. The manuscripts presented here, although not an exhaustive list, represent some of the earliest texts of the Old Testament.

The *Silver Scroll* (*ca.* 600 BC; Num 6:24–26)

Perhaps the earliest biblical text is the *Silver Scroll* (*KH2*), which is actually two small (4 cm long) scroll fragments made out of silver (IAA 1980-1495; IAA 1980–1496) that date to *ca.* 600 BC, discovered by Gabriele Barkay and Gordon Franz in 1979 at the Ketef Hinnom (Heb. "shoulder of Hinnom") burial chambers, cut out of the rock just southwest of the Old City of Jerusalem (fig. 10).[31]

Although the silver amulets were difficult to unroll, a process was developed by the Israel

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[29] Klaus Beyer, *Aramaic Language: Its Distribution and Subdivisions* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986); Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Semitic Background of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 57–84; R. Buth, "Aramaic Language," ed. Stanley E. Porter and Craig A. Evans, *DNTB* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 86–89; F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "Aramaic," in *EDB*, 84–85.

[30] Yehuda Komlosh, "Targum," in *EncJud*, 19:513.

[31] S. Ben Arieh, "A Burial Cave on Mount Scopus," *Atiqôt* 8 (1982): 59–60; Gabriele Barkay, "News From the Field: The Divine Name Found in Jerusalem," *BAR* 9, no. 2 (1983): 14–19; *Ketef Hinnom: A Treasure Facing Jerusalem's Walls* (Jerusalem, Israel: The Israel Museum, 1986); Ada Yardeni, "Remarks on the Priestly Blessing on Two Ancient Amulets from Jerusalem," *VT* 41, no. 2 (1991): 176–85; Gabriele Barkay, "The Priestly Benediction on Silver Plaques from Ketef Hinnon in Jerusalam," *Tel Aviv* 19 (1992): 139–92; Jeremy Daniel Smoak, *The Priestly Blessing in Inscription and Scripture: The Early History of Numbers 6:24-26* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Museum to preserve them over the next three years.[32] Once unrolled, scholars were able to date them to before the Babylonian captivity.[33] The treasure inside contained a portion of the Priestly Blessing from the Book of Numbers (6:24–26) and other portions of the Pentateuch (Exod 20:6; Deut 5:10; 7:9;[34] Num 6:24–26) written in proto-Hebrew script.[35] The text in Fig. 10 translates as: "May h[e]/sh[e] be blessed by Yahweh, the warrior [or: helper] and the rebuker of [E]vil: May Yahweh bless you, keep you. May Yahweh make his face shine upon you and grant you p[ea]ce."[36]



10. The Silver Scroll (KH2; IAA 1980-1495) found in Ketef Hinom.

Photograph, drawing, and transliteration by Tamar Hayardeni / Wikimedia Commons

The authors of a revised edition of the Ketef Hinnom scrolls believe that they were used as amulets to ward off evil spirits. They conclude:

> While neither inscription makes specific reference to Satan, demons, or other agents of wickedness, they do offer God's protection from Evil through the invocation of his holy name and the text of his most solemn of protective blessings. Given that context, it is safe to conclude that these artifacts both served as amulets and that their function falls in line with similar amulets whose inscriptions invoke divine protection for the wearer through the use of one of the tradition's most famous prayers.[37]

This is possibly the oldest surviving text from the Hebrew Bible. The text of the *Silver Scroll* is identical to the later Masoretic text and Dead Sea Scrolls, which attest to the accuracy of the methods used by the scribes for 400 years in transmitting the biblical text. The discovery of this text also supports the belief that the Pentateuch was written prior to 600 BC, and certainly prior to the Babylonian Exile, when some minimalists suggest the OT was written. They also contain the earliest record of the name of YHWH, indicating that it was not a late development in Israelite history as some have suggested.[38]

The *Nash Papyrus* (150–100 BC; Exod 20; Deut 6:4–5)

The *Nash Papyrus* (MS Or.233) contains a collection of four papyrus fragments purchased by Walter Llewellyn Nash in Fayyum, Egypt in 1902 (fig. 11).[39] In 1903 it was given to Cambridge

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[32] Gabriele Barkay et al., "The Amulets from Ketef Hinnom: A New Edition and Evaluation," *OR* 334 (2004): 41–70; Gabriele Barkay et al., "Using Advanced Technologies to Recover the Earliest Biblical Texts and Their Context," *NEA*, Using Advanced Technologies, 66, no. 4 (2003): 162–71.

[33] Goldie Feinsilver, "How the Silver Amulet Inscribed with the Divine Name Was Unrolled," *BAR* 9, no. 2 (1983): 19.

[34] In 1990, Bruce Zuckerman used special photography and computer software to reconstruct another biblical verse from Deuteronomy 7:9; Gabriele Barkay et al., "The Challenges of Ketef Hinnom: Using Advanced Technologies to Reclaim the Earliest Biblical Texts and Their Context," *NEA* 66, no. 4 (2003): 162–71.

[35] Barkay et al., "The Amulets from Ketef Hinnom," 41–70; Gabriele Barkay, "The Riches of Ketef Hinnom: Jerusalem Tomb Yields Biblical Text Four Centuries Older than Dead Sea Scrolls," *BAR* 35, no. 4 (2009): 23–35; Erik Waaler, "A Reconstruction of Ketef Hinnom I," *Maarav* 16, no. 2 (2011): 225–63.

[36] Barkay et al., "The Challenges of Ketef Hinnom," 170; Graham I. Davies et al., *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: Corpus and Concordance*, vol. 1 (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 4:301–302. See also "The Silver Scroll," trans. Miriam Lichtheim (*COS* 2.18: 221).

[37] Barkay et al., "The Amulets from Ketef Hinnom," 68.

[38] Ibid., 41–70; Barkay et al., "Using Advanced Technologies to Recover the Earliest Biblical Texts and Their Context," 162–71; Barkay, "The Riches of Ketef Hinnom," 23–35.

[39] Stanley A. Cook, "A Pre-Massoretic Biblical Papyrus," *PSBA* 25 (1903): 34–56.

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DAVID E. GRAVES (Ph.D., University of Aberdeen) has been involved in teaching the Bible and archaeology for more than thirty-five years. He has taught at Oxford University, England; Liberty University, School of Divinity, provided tours of the Ashmolean and British Museums; traveled extensively in the Middle East, been involved in Mount Ararat research and consulted for National Geographic productions. He has been involved in archaeological excavations at Qumran, Temple Mount and Shiloh, Israel, as well as the Tall el-Hammam excavation project in Jordan, for over ten seasons. He is the author of *The Seven Messages of Revelation and Vassal Treaties; Key Themes of the Old Testament; Key Themes of the New Testament; The Location of Sodom; Archaeology of the NT; Digging Up the Bible; The ECM Handbook of the OT; Essential Guide to the NT* and has authored a number of articles on the Bible and archaeology.

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