

Top OT Archaeological Finds

/Ronald Cram

1. Dead Sea Scrolls – discovered 1947–1956 – Provided the oldest copies of almost all copies of the Old Testament and confirmed accuracy of newer copies. The Great Isaiah Scroll has been carbon14 dated to 100 BC or earlier. This clearly establishes that the prophecy about Jesus in Isaiah 53 was written at least 100 years before Jesus was born.

<http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/isaiah>

2. Merneptah Stele – discovered in 1896 by Flinders Petrie – On display at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, it was found in Thebes and dated at 1208 B.C. This stele is the first documented instance of the name “Israel” outside of the Bible. It is important because it shows the Israelite people had begun to possess Palestine by this date.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merneptah_Stele

The “Israel” Merneptah Stele (1205 BC)



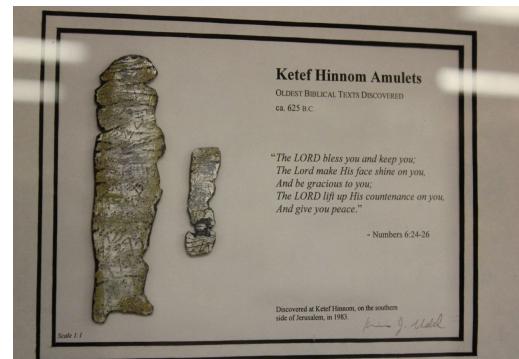
3. Tall el-Hammam/Sodom – excavation 2006-ongoing – A joint excavation of the Kikkar by Trinity Southwest University and the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, this dig has uncovered pottery that had turned into trinitite (can only be produced between 10-12,000 degrees kelvin, a temperature that cannot be achieved geologically) indicating a fiery destruction rained down on this region confirming Genesis 19:24-25. This fertile area was uninhabited for 700 years after its destruction.

<http://bit.ly/TrinititeAtSodom>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svG2-uZEZjk>

4. Ketef Hinnom Amulets – discovered 1979 – Found on the road from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, these contain the text of Numbers 6:24-25 and Deuteronomy 9:7 written in Paleo-Hebrew characters on silver scrolls and include a reference to YHWH. The oldest known Hebrew text of the Old Testament, they are dated to the 7th century B.C. They are important because they show portions of the Old Testament were copied centuries before skeptics believed the Old Testament was written.

<http://bit.ly/SilverScrolls>



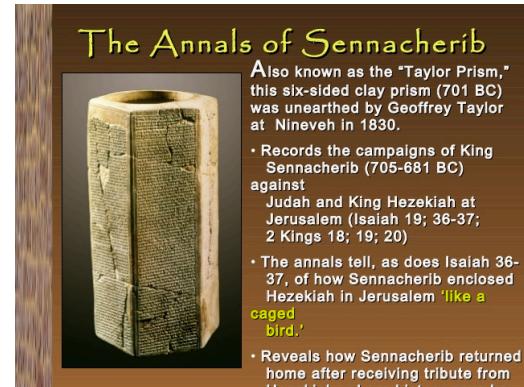
5. Khirbet Qeiyafa – Excavated by Yosef Garfinkel of Hebrew University between 2007-2013. According to 14C dating, the city was built in the 10th century BC - the time of King David. It is located near the site of the battle between David and Goliath. The city shows massive fortifications using megalithic stones and advanced urban planning. These features indicate a central authority in Judea during the time of David. The most important discovery is a pottery shard with a 10th century BC inscription. This is the earliest Hebrew writing found to date. While not a biblical text it seems to be an admonition to obey the ideals of Exodus 23:3-9, commands to protect the vulnerable in society- the poor and strangers.

<http://qeiyafa.huji.ac.il/>

http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2010-01/uoh-mah010710.php

6. Taylor Prism (Annals of Sennacherib) – discovered in 1830 – Describes the destruction of 46 cities in Judah as described in 2 Kings 18:13. The Bible story also describes how God miraculously saved Jerusalem from Sennacherib. In accord with the Bible, the Taylor Prism does not describe conquering Jerusalem.

<http://bit.ly/Sennacherib>



7. House of David inscriptions – discovered 1993-94 – Found in Tel Dan, Israel, this is the earliest mention outside the Bible of King David whom some minimalists held to be a fictional character. On display at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Dan_Stele

8. Khirbet Summeily Bullae – discovered 2014 – At one time, the existence of King David and King Solomon were debated. But a team of archaeologists from Mississippi State University excavated Khirbet Summeily finding six bullae dated to the 10th century BC. The find is significant because these are the first bullae found from this period. The findings indicate a complex political system in Israel in the 10th century BC consistent with the existence of Kings David and Solomon.

<http://bit.ly/KingDavidBullae>

9. Cyrus Cylinder – excavated in 1879 by Hormuzd Rassam – Found in Babylon, contains a decree from Cyrus dating to 539 BC that corroborates Ezra 1:1-3; 6:3; 2 Chronicles 36:23 and fulfills the prophecy in Isaiah 44:28 regarding the return of the people of Israel to their land. This act was completely unprecedented in antiquity and many skeptics doubted the Bible story about it.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyrus_Cylinder



10. Lachish Relief – discovered 1847 by Henry Layard - Sennacherib tells of conquering Lachish but did not claim to conquer Jerusalem described in 2 Kings 18:17-19:37; 2 Chronicles 32:1-12; Isaiah 36:1-37:38.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lachish_relief

11. Military Ostraca in Arad – discovered 2015 – Over 100 clay tablets contain letters written by at least six different soldiers at a desert military outpost in Arad. These ostraca, dated from 600 BC, show that even low-ranking soldiers can read. This is important because most minimalist scholars thought literacy rates were too low for the Bible to be written at this time. This find proves this assumption wrong. The Old Testament was probably written centuries earlier than they thought.

<http://bit.ly/2aWX2Lb>

12. Ipuwer Papyrus (Leiden I 344) – Purchased in 1928 by Giovanni Anastasi – On display at the Dutch National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, Netherlands, this papyrus is a poetic lament for calamities in Egypt that closely parallel the Ten Plagues found in the Old Testament book Exodus. These include the Nile River turning into blood, fire “on high,” trees destroyed so there’s no food, cattle weep and

moan, terror from darkness, chosen children are laid out dead, jewelry is fastened to the necks of female slaves and poor people (slaves) flee into the desert. This papyrus is one of 90 Egyptian papyri showing a parallel to the Book of Exodus.

<http://bit.ly/IpuwerPapyrus>

Papyrus Ipuwer	Exodus
<i>Papyrus 2:5-6:</i> Plague is throughout the land. Blood is everywhere.	<i>Exodus 7:21:</i> ...there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.
<i>Papyrus 2:10:</i> The river is blood.	<i>Exodus 7:20:</i> ...all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.
<i>Papyrus 2:10:</i> Men shrink from tasting -- they thirst after water for they could not drink of the water of the river.	<i>Exodus 7:24:</i> And all the Egyptians digged round about the river for water to drink.
<i>Papyrus 3:10-13:</i> That is our water! That is our happiness! What shall we do in respect thereof? All is ruin!	<i>Exodus 7:21:</i> ...and the river stank.
<i>Papyrus 4:14:</i> Trees are destroyed. <i>Papyrus 6:1:</i> No fruit nor herbs are found.	<i>Exodus 9:25:</i> ...and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field.
<i>Papyrus 2:10:</i> Forsooth, gates, columns and walls are consumed by fire.	<i>Exodus 9:23-24:</i> ...the fire ran along upon the ground. ...there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous.
<i>Papyrus 10:3-6:</i> Lower Egypt weeps... The entire palace is without its revenue. To it belong wheat, barley, geese and fish.	<i>Exodus 7:21:</i> And the fish that was in the river died.
<i>Papyrus 6:3:</i> Forsooth, grain has perished on every side. <i>Papyrus 5:12:</i> That has perished which yesterday was seen. The land is left over to its weariness like the cutting of flax.	<i>Exodus 10:15:</i> ...there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the fields, though all the land of Egypt.
<i>Papyrus 5:5:</i> All animals, their hearts weep. Cattle moan...	<i>Exodus 9:3:</i> ...the hand of the Lord is upon thy cattle which is in the field... there shall be a very grievous murrain.

13. The Destruction of Mankind (Book of the Heavenly Cow) - inscribed on the tombs walls of Seti I, Ramesses II, and Ramesses III – The story tells the divine punishment of Egyptians and foreigners and has an unusual name for Ra with the Egyptian root “Yawi.” Translators have translated this as “I am I” which is strikingly similar to the Hebrew word for God YHWH or “I am that I am. Minimalists have claimed the Hebrews were never enslaved in Egypt and the Exodus never happened. The Seti I tomb presents even more striking parallels, including color pictures of the Exodus, the parting of the Red Sea and the mass drowning of the Egyptian army.

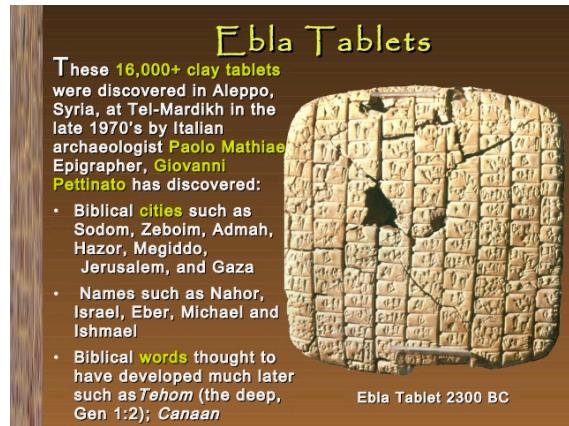
<http://bit.ly/DestructionOfMankind>

14. Gezer - discovered 2013 – A joint excavation between Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and the Israel Antiquities Authority have found a city dating to the period of King Solomon, confirming 1 Kings 9:15-17.

<http://www.bpnews.net/40805>

15. Ebla Tablets – discovered in 1970s – Found in Syria, the tablets generated controversy when the names of Biblical characters were found in the tablets. Non-controversial aspects of the Ebla Tablets still help to confirm the historical reliability of the Old Testament. The name “Canaan” clearly appears in the tablets showing the term was used some 800 years before Moses. The same is true of the term translated ‘the deep’ in Genesis 1:2.

<http://bit.ly/EblaTablets>



16. King David's Palace – Excavated by Eilat Mazur in 2006 – Mazur found a “large stone structure” suitable for a king’s palace and dated to the time of King David. It was built on top of an older, flat area that had been filled with limestone and datable pottery shards. The palace site is outside the Jebusite walls of the time.

<http://bit.ly/DavidsPalace>



17. Cylinder of Nabonidus – discovered 1854 – Found in Ur, Iraq, corroborates Belshazzar as last king of Babylon as recorded in Daniel 5:1-30, 7:1; 8:1.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cylinders_of_Nabonidus

18. Sargon inscriptions – discovered 1843 - Found in Khorsabad, Iraq, confirms the existence of Sargon II, King of Assyria, Isaiah 20:1 as well as his conquering of Samaria (2 Kings 17:23-24)

<http://bit.ly/SargonInscriptions>

19. Tiglath-Pileser III inscriptions – discovered 1845-49 – Found in Nimrud, Iraq, the inscriptions mention the names of 5 Hebrew kings: Uzziah, Ahaz, Menahem, Pekah and Hoshea. They corroborate that King Menachem paid Pul (another name for Tiglath-Pileser III) 1,000 talents of silver as described in 2 Kings 15:19. The inscriptions also confirm Pul took people from Israel into Assyria as stated in 1 Chronicles 5:26.

<http://bit.ly/TiglathPileserIII>



Bible History Online

20. Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser – discovered 1846 by Henry Layard – Found in Nimrud, Iraq, depicts Jehu, son of Omri, oldest known image of an ancient Israelite.

<http://bit.ly/Shalmaneser>

21. Moabite Stone/Mesha Stele – discovered 1868 – Found in Palestine, corroborates the story in 2 Kings 3:4-8 that Moab served Israel and then rebelled.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesha_Stele

22. Mesad Hashavyahu Ostracon – discovered in 1960 – William Albright dates this between 630 BC to 609 BC. An appeal written by a reaper for the return of his coat. The appeal is the earliest mention outside the Bible of the Sabbath day. The appeal seems to be based in part on the law written in Exodus 22 and Deuteronomy 24 about not keeping someone's coat overnight.

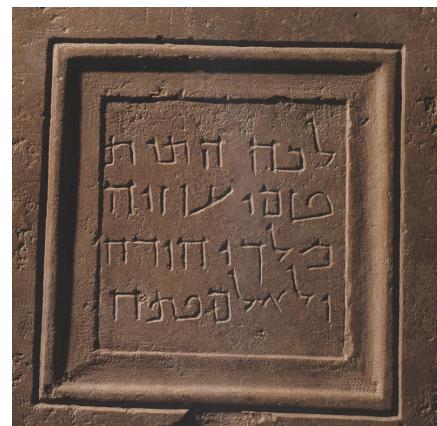
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesad_Hashavyahu

23. Gedaliah Seals – discovered 1935 and 2008– Gedaliah is mentioned 26 times in the Old Testament, sometimes as “son of Pashur son of Shaphan” (2 Kings 25:22) and sometimes as “son of Ahikam son of Shaphan” (Jeremiah 40:11). His father must have used both names: Pashur and Ahikam. The first seal was found in Lachish, Israel and reads “Gedaliah who is over the house” and corroborates his appointment as governor in 2 Kings 25:22. A second seal refers to “Gedaliah son of Pashur son of Shaphan” was discovered in 2008 and was probably used by Gedaliah before Nebuchadnezzar appointed him governor.
<http://bit.ly/GedaliahSeal>



24. Siloam inscription – discovered 1880 – Found in Jerusalem inside Hezekiah's Tunnel (discovered in 1625). The inscription was written in Paleo-Hebrew characters. It commemorates the completion of a public construction. It's one of the few extant ancient Hebrew writings from the 8th century B.C. Archaeologists believe the tunnel was dug during the reign of Hezekiah confirming 2 Kings 20:20 and 2 Chronicles 32:3-4. Displayed at the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siloam_inscription



25. Uzziah's Burial Plaque – discovered in 1931 – Found by Professor E.L. Sukenik of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the inscription for the leprosy king reads "The bones of Uzziah, King of Judah, rest here ... Do not open!"
<http://bit.ly/Uzziah>

26. Bethlehem Seal – discovered 2012 – This 2,700 year old clay seal is the oldest artifact carrying the name Bethlehem outside the Bible. This proves Bethlehem was indeed a city in Israel during the first Temple period and perhaps earlier.

<http://bit.ly/BethlehemSeal>

27. Jehoiachin's Rations Tablets – discovered 1899-1917 – Found in Babylon by Robert Koldewey, these tablets were written in the Akkadian language. They are from the royal archive of King Nebuchadnezzar and describe food rations given to captives, including Jehoiachin and his five sons described as princes. The tablets confirm 2 Kings 24:10-17. The tablets are on display in the Museum of the Ancient Near East in Berlin.

<http://bit.ly/JehoiachinsRations>

Jehoiachin's Rations in Babylon Jer 52:31-34 2 Kings 25:27-30



28. Milkom Seal – discovered 1999, now in Israel Museum – Jeremiah 40:14 cites the Ammonite King Baalis. This seal reads “belonging to Baalis, king of Ammon.”

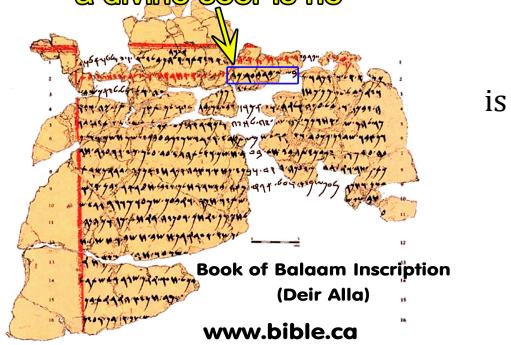
<http://www.robert-deutsch.com/en/monographs/m7/>

29. Bubastite Portal – located in the forecourt of the Temple of Amun in Karnak, Egypt – While Egyptian kings are known to exaggerate their victories, most modern scholars believe the Bubastite Portal describes legitimate and historical military campaigns carried out by Pharaoh Sheshonq (known in the Bible as Shishak), including a victory over Megiddo. 1 Kings 14:25 describes Shishak as marching against Jerusalem but does not mention Megiddo or other sites targeted by Shishak. Possibly Israel's king paid Shishak not to attack Jerusalem. This is strong evidence confirming Shishak's army marched on Israel. <http://bit.ly/BubastitePortal>

30. Deir Alla Inscription – discovered in 1967 in Deir Alla, Jordan – On display at the Citadel Museum in Amman, Jordan, this inscription is painted on fragments of a plastered wall and dates to about 800 BC. It is the oldest known example of Aramaic writing. It contains visions of a seer called “Balaam the son of Beor” just as his name appears in Numbers 22-24. Balaam later told Balak to put a stumbling block before the Israelites (Revelation 2:14).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deir_Allā_Inscription

“Balaam, the son of Beor;
a divine seer is he”



31. Elephantine Papyri – arrived on the antiquities market in 19th century – Consists of 175 documents from Egyptian border fortresses Elephantine and Syene. The documents span a period of 2,000 years and confirm the existence of Sanballat and Johanan as mentioned in Nehemiah 2:19 and 12:23.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephantine_papyri

Quotes

Archaeologist and Egyptologist K.A. Kitchen writes:

"In terms of general reliability ... the Old Testament comes out remarkably well, so long as its writings and writers are treated fairly and evenhandedly, in line with independent data, open to all." (*On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, p. 500)

G.E. Wright states "We shall probably never prove that Abram really existed...but what we can prove is that his life and times, as reflected in the stories about him, fit perfectly within the early second millennium, but imperfectly within any later period."

Archaeologist William F. Albright observes: "The excessive scepticism shown toward the Bible by important historical schools of the eighteenth-and-nineteenth centuries, certain phases of which still appear periodically, has been progressively discredited. Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details, and has brought increased recognition to the value of the Bible as a source of history." (*The Archaeology of Palestine*, pp. 127-8)

Hebrew and Semitic scholar Lawrence Mykytiuk writes:

"Since the mid-twentieth century, the discovery of Hebrew inscriptions has continued unabated. We now know the names of more than 1,200 pre-exilic Israelites from inscriptional sources alone, primarily Hebrew seals, bullae and ostraca. The names of exilic and post-exilic Israelites from those periods can be added to these, as can the names of many Gentiles in Northwest Semitic inscriptions of other peoples in Syria-Palestine." (*Identifying Biblical Persons in Northwest Inscriptions of 1200-539 B.C.E.*, p. 2)