

Archaeological Evidence for the Old Testament Historical Accounts

In summary, all the historical records of these contacts are consistent with the biblical presentation, including names of kings, dates of military conflicts, and sometimes even greater details. This verification of the biblical account at several points provides support for the integrity of the biblical history of the nation of Israel as a whole, from the time of the Judges through the return from exile. Also, as the biblical accounts have details consistent with the customs and cultures of the Ancient Near East, they [or their sources] could not have been produced later – such as in the post-exilic period, as assumed by liberal scholars – because these details had been forgotten by then, and this early dating also adds to the credibility of the biblical account.

- † The inscription found at Wadi el Hol, in Egypt, is dated to 1800BC, showing the use of the regional alphabet in the time of Jacob and his sons in Egypt, hundreds of years before Moses prepared to write the Pentateuch.¹ This counters the contention of critics that Moses could not have written something so sophisticated; also supported by complex legal treaties between Hittites and Egyptians.
- † The excavation at Tell el-Daba appears to be the capital city Rameses of the Hyksos, who ruled Egypt 1730-1580BC. An Asiatic settlement from the time of Joseph was found there, possibly where Jacob and his family settled.²
- † The ruins at Khirbet el-Maqatir appear to be the ruins of Ai from Joshua's conquest, with evidence favoring the early date of the Exodus, matching up with dating in 1 Kings 6.³
- † A granite statue pedestal dating to about 1400BC, recently rediscovered in Berlin museum, appears to list Israel among the military victories by the Pharaoh.⁴ This would be the earliest extra-biblical mention of Israel that we have. Again, this would support the early dating of the exodus as presented by the biblical text.
- † The Merenptah Stele, dating about 1209BC, details Egyptian military victories against nearby people groups. It was the earliest known extra-biblical reference to Israel, showing Israel was in the land by then. Interestingly, it marks all the other people groups with a symbol indicating they are a city state or foreign country, but indicates Israel is not considered that politically organized, which would be consistent with the time of the Judges, which the Bible dates to this period.
- † The Khirbet Qeiyafa inscription, dating to about 1000BC, mentions a ruler of Gath and possibly the governor of Gaza, matching up with the historical and geographic details in the Bible about the trouble with the Philistines at this time.⁵ It also shows Israel had scribes writing literary texts at this time.
- † The massive building stones found in the City of David portion of Jerusalem date to 1000-950BC, giving evidence of the might of David as accounted in the Bible.⁶
- † The 'Ain Dara Temple in Syria is a tenth century BC structure with a layout and size about the same as the Solomonic temple in scripture, showing such structures were in use at that time period.⁷
- † The Bubastite Portal in Karnak details the military adventures of Egyptian king Sheshonq [the biblical Shishak], including forays into both Israel and Judah, while Rehoboam was king of Judah. The date and accounts match up

¹ See Eugene H. Merrill, "Old Testament Scholarship and the Man in the Street: Whence and Whither?" *Bible and Spade* 24.4 (2011), 99

² See Merrill, 98.

³ See Merrill, 101.

⁴ See Herschel Shanks, "When Did Ancient Israel Begin?" in *Biblical Archaeology Review* 38, #1 [January/February 2012], 59-62, 67.

⁵ See Merrill, 100.

⁶ See Merrill, 101.

⁷ See Merrill, 98.

well with the biblical account of Rehoboam paying tribute to Shishak to save Jerusalem and Shishak taking several towns in Judah as detailed in 1 Kings 14.25-26; 2 Chronicles 12.4.⁸

- † The Kurkh Monolith records a battle between Assyria and Ahab of the northern kingdom in the mid-ninth century. Though this battle is not mentioned in the Bible, the dating for Ahab is consistent. This monolith indicates the northern kingdom was very powerful at the time of the battle, as does the stabling complex discovered at Megiddo.⁹ This is consistent with the depiction of Ahab in 1 Kings 16-22.
- † The Mesha Stele, found in Jordan and dating to the early ninth century BC, commemorated the king of Moab's victories over Israel. It mentions King Omri of the northern kingdom, the name of Yahweh, and the military battle recorded in 2 Kings 3.
- † The Tel Dan Inscription, found in northern Israel, is thought to be from an Aramean ruler, dating to the mid-ninth century BC, and discussing military interaction with both the northern and southern kingdoms. It refers to the southern kingdom as the "House of David," which was a cultural way of saying the "Davidic Dynasty." This is the only extra-biblical mention of David, and it shows that a couple of centuries after the Bible says David reigned, the neighboring nations regarded David's legacy in Judah to be real just as the Bible indicates.
- † The Black Obelisk, found in the former Assyrian capital of Nimrod, dates to the first half of the ninth century BC, and mentions Jehu of the House of Omri paying tribute to the Assyrian king. Jehu is mentioned in 2 Kings 9-10.
- † The worship alter at Arad, from the mid-ninth century BC, has an inscription of "Yahweh and his Asherah," showing the pagan syncretization and idolatry that is depicted in the Old Testament for this time period before the exile.¹⁰
- † The stele found at Tell al-Rimah, in Iraq, mentions the Assyrian king's collection of tribute from "Jehoash the Samarian" around 800BC. Jehoash is mentioned in 2 Kings 13-14.
- † Tiglah Pileser III's annals, from the eighth century BC, mention accepting tribute from Menahem of Samaria [the northern kingdom]. Tribute paid by Menahem is mentioned in 2 Kings 15.
- † Tiglath Pileser III's Summary Inscription, dating from the eighth century BC, mentions the northern kingdom's exile and the death of Pekah and installation of Hosea. Again, the northern kingdom is referred to as the House of Omri. These events are mentioned in 2 Kings 15.
- † In the Annals of Sennacherib, detailing events begun in 701BC, there are details of the Assyrian encirclement of Jerusalem and the amount of tribute recorded as paid from Hezekiah which match that of 2 Kings 18.
- † The Assyrian kings Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal mention Manasseh, king of Judah, in their writings.¹¹ 2 Kings 21 details the reign of Manasseh.
- † The Katef Hinnom silver scrolls, dating to the late 7th or early 6th century BC, contained an abridged version of Numbers 6.24-26, proving the priestly part of the Pentateuch was written hundreds of years earlier than liberal scholars attest.¹²
- † The Babylonian Chronicle gives details of the battle of Carchemish, in which Josiah died. It mentions taking captives in Judah, with a sixth century BC date consistent with the biblical account in 2 Kings 33.
- † In Jerusalem, in 2005 and 2008, a team found two seals belonging to Jehucal, son of Shelemiah, and Gelaliah, son of Pashur, two of Jeremiah's antagonists in Jeremiah 38.¹³

⁸ See Yigal Levin, "Did Pharaoh Sheshonq Attack Jerusalem?" in *Biblical Archaeology Review* 38, #4 [July/August 2012], 42-52.

⁹ For the stabling complex, see Bryant G. Wood, "Israelite Kings in Assyrian Inscriptions," at www.biblearchaeology.org.

¹⁰ See Merrill, 99.

¹¹ Bryant G. Wood, "Israelite Kings in Assyrian Inscriptions," at www.biblearchaeology.org.

¹² See Merrill, 99-100.

- † The Cyrus Cylinder, from the sixth century BC, details the Persian decrees of freedom for exiled peoples, consistent with the biblical accounts in Ezra and 2 Chronicles.
- † Other accounts show a consistency of customs and styles with the writings of Israel's history. For example, conquest language in Joshua 9-12 is consistent with language used in battle accounts by Tiglath Pileser I of Assyria; also his accounts switch between first and third person, just as in the Old Testament writings of this time. This Assyrian ruler also built his temple after a conquest, as Solomon later did.

¹³ See advertisement on p.2 of *Biblical Archaeology Review* 38, #1 [January/February 2012].