

# Dr. Jeffrey Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 8, The Geopolitical Arena, Part 1

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This is Dr. Jeffrey Hudon in his teaching on Biblical Archaeology. This is session 8, the Geopolitical Arena, Part 1.

The Israelite people in the Old Testament, especially, and also in the New Testament lived in a larger geopolitical arena as well.

We have to understand, too, that in the biblical period, the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were very, very small kingdoms, regional kingdoms, local kingdoms, but they existed in a much larger framework of global empires. The first empire we were going to talk about is Egypt. Then, we'll talk about the Mesopotamian empires of Assyria, Babylon, Babylonia, and Persia.

And these shaped a lot of Old Testament history because, for much of Old Testament history, one or more of these were controlled and had hegemony over the Hebrew people or the Israelite people. So, we'll take those one at a time. Again, just to review, Egypt's here, again, the Nile River, Sinai, and then the land between or the sacred bridge, and then Mesopotamia, which again, the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers helped spawn these great empires over here.

And in the middle, the desert, very almost impassable. So, all travel and commerce had to go along the coast. All right.

The first people I want to talk about are, again, the local Levantine people, the indigenous people that were here before the Israelites and those are the Canaanites. And the Canaanites lived, it says in scripture, in the valleys and along the shoreline of the Mediterranean. And they were Semitic people like the Israelites.

And if the Canaanites did anything, probably their greatest heritage is the alphabet. We can thank the Canaanites for developing an alphabet, which greatly simplified writing compared to cuneiform and pictographs. Now, the early Canaanite writing was also in cuneiform.

Here's a Ugaritic tablet here. But they used 30 symbols or 30 letters. And that was it, not thousands of different symbols as the Mesopotamian peoples did.

And so that simplified it greatly. The Canaanites were polytheists and worshipped a pantheon of gods and goddesses, including Baal and El, their main god, and Ashtar and Molech and other gods and goddesses. Another characteristic of the Canaanites was that they lived in Lebanon.

And that was famous for the great cedars of Lebanon, groves of which still exist today. Here's one here. And those were, lumberjacks used those and cut those down for building projects throughout history, early history, including Solomon's Temple.

But the Assyrians also had cedar of Lebanon shipped over to Assyria to adorn their buildings and interiors as well. Another thing about the Canaanites is they were traders, they were merchants. In fact, the name Ka'anan means merchant.

And they were excellent sailors and their ships plied the Mediterranean. And they had Canaanite settlements, Phoenician settlements, all the way to the Pillars of Hercules or the Rock of Gibraltar, right at the western edge of the Mediterranean, and everywhere in between. Carthage is again a very famous Phoenician city that began its own empire, its own regional empire, as well as these other sites as well as Cyprus, Sicily, and Crete.

All of these had Canaanite settlements and influence. Now, Canaanites versus Phoenicians are essentially the same people, just different names. Phoenicians again were northern Canaanites north of the land of Israel, in what's now Lebanon and Syria.

Below are the royal tombs at Ugarit. We'll talk about Ugarit on the next slide. But the finds at Ugarit very much defined and shaped our understanding of Canaanite culture.

In the late 1920s, a Syrian farmer was plowing in Antiquities, and the French, who again had a mandate over Syria at that time, were called in. They started excavating, I believe, in 1929 and uncovered an immense Canaanite city at a place called Ras Shamra. This is ancient Ugarit. Ugarit, on this map here, is the way to the northern part of Syria.

Now, along with palaces and temples, they found a cache of cuneiform tablets. These were sent to Jerusalem to be deciphered. They couldn't make sense of it because it was not the cuneiform they were used to from Assyria or Babylon, so to speak, until one student recognized that there were only 30 different symbols.

This is actually an alphabetic cuneiform script. They discovered essentially a new language, a Canaanite language, very similar to Hebrew, cognate Hebrew, and other West Semitic languages, but only written in cuneiform. Again, this Ugarit and Ugaritic dates to the second millennium BC.

It was destroyed by the invasions of the Sea Peoples, among them the Philistines, and never rebuilt, essentially. So, the remains are extensive and in a good state of preservation because it wasn't constantly built over and built upon, like at other

sites. Now, Canaanite tablets, or Ugaritic tablets written in Ugaritic, opened a huge window in our understanding of Old Testament accounts, specifically the Book of Psalms.

And we see the Book of Psalms using similar language, only instead of Baal or Molech or El, you have Yahweh doing these great things. And so some scholars, including Mitchell Dahood, were famous for making connections between Ugaritic and the poetic passages in the Book of Psalms. And some of these, again, have been in various collections.

The most common here are stories from ancient Canaan, still in print, by one of Frank Moore Cross's students. Just a final word about Ugarit and Ugaritic. The Canaanite culture and places like Ugarit had a great influence, negative influence, on the Israelite people.

One of those was played out in the biblical text by King Ahab of Israel, marrying a Phoenician princess, Queen Jezebel. Her seal, which I can bounce back two slides, which I didn't mention, is here. Again, its authenticity is debated, but that may be the actual seal of Jezebel, the Queen of Israel.

She was Phoenician or Canaanite in background. We all know about her infamous actions in the Book of Kings. Okay, we move ahead now to our first global empire, which is Egypt, Mitzraim, the land of the pharaohs.

A very dramatic sunset over the pyramids here at Giza. And it helps to understand, and we'll say this again when we talk about the patriarchs, when Abraham and Sarah came to Egypt in Genesis chapter 12, because of famine, these pyramids were standing at that time, and they were four to 500 years old. So, when we talk about the pyramids, which are old kingdom tombs, royal tombs, and tombs of officials, that's an extremely ancient monument for the pharaohs.

Just a little introduction about Egypt. Ancient Egyptians called their land the Black Land. And that was land on either side of the Nile River that extended way to the south.

The surrounding land, the Black Land, again, was arable land, rich with irrigation, and able to grow food. The surrounding land was the Red Land, the desert, which is on both sides of the Nile Valley. And so that was a very, very telling explanation of how Egyptians described themselves.

Egypt was quite isolated in antiquity, again, surrounded by deserts on all sides: the Arabian desert, or excuse me, the Sierra Desert to the west, the Sinai Peninsula, and the desert to the east, as well as the eastern desert. To the south, the various cataracts, the rapids of the Nile, and deserts in Nubia, which is modern Sudan,

basically isolated it from the rest of the surrounding nations and empires. So, it grew and developed pretty much in isolation.

It's important to point out that there are two Egypts: Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt. Lower Egypt, again, think downriver. The Nile is one of the few rivers in the world that actually flows to the north.

So, downriver, Lower Egypt is to the north, and Upper Egypt is upriver to the south. These two had independent kings, Upper and Lower Egypt, and it wasn't until the old dynasty, the reign of Pharaoh Narmer, that these two were united.

And you have the double crown from the Pharaoh there, that they were united into one kingdom. And that was, again, early in the old kingdom. Now notice that the arable land along the Nile was only about 12 miles wide.

And so that was the lifeline, that was the life of Egypt. Without the Nile River, Egypt was desert, it was, there was nothing there. So, the Nile River was very, very important.

It was vital to the economy and to the livelihood of the people. Egyptian chronology, there are two different chronologies for Egypt, based on ancient sources. But these are the ones we'll use.

You can see the dates of the old kingdom. This third millennium BC, Upper and Lower Egypt are united. And this is the age of the pyramids. This is when the pyramids were built.

And this was a way of monumental commemoration of their pharaohs by building these huge, huge, immense pyramids. That was followed by a period called the First Intermediate Period. So, the period of, there were three of these.

And these are periods of internal conflict, and weak pharaohs, and maybe competing pharaohs for control. And so that was, again, the First Intermediate Period, about a century. And then the Middle Kingdom, again, Egypt became strong again.

And either the end of the First Intermediate Period, or the early part of the Middle Kingdom was the age of the patriarchs. And we'll see more evidence of that later on in this slide series and in another lecture as well. The second Intermediate Period was a period where Egypt was ruled by foreigners, Asiatics.

The Greeks called them Hyksos, rulers of a foreign land, or shepherd kings. You hear different terms for them. But these were Asiatics, Canaanites, so to speak, who actually ruled Lower Egypt, the Delta area. Now, some scholars have said this is

probably the ideal time to place Joseph as he goes down to Egypt and serves under Potiphar as a slave.

And then eventually, as you know, he becomes vizier of Egypt under Pharaoh. It could have been here, or it could have been in the Middle Kingdom. There are arguments and evidence for both.

So, we just simply don't know. We do know that when Joseph died, and after Joseph died, a new king ruled over Egypt and who did not know Joseph. And that's when the Israelite oppression began.

So that's probably the biblical way of explaining a new dynasty or new kingdom. This would have been the New Kingdom, which is when Egypt was at its strongest. At its height, the power lasted from about 1550 to 1069 BC. This is the period of the sojourn and the Exodus.

And the late part of that would be the period of the judges. Now, the necropolis of the New Kingdom was the Valley of the Kings near across the Nile from Karnak, which is to the south. Now the New Kingdom, again, Egypt at its height, the power, fell into again, a period of turmoil called the Third Intermediate Period.

And these were, again, Egypt was ruled by Libyan pharaohs, by Cushite pharaohs, and competing pharaohs. And this allowed Israel one of the reasons why Israel became strong under the United Monarchy under David and Solomon and during the early divided monarchy because Egypt was in turmoil and really not a player on the world stage. At the same time, so was Assyria.

So, there's a period of kind of a power vacuum. And as one of my professors used to say, when the cat's away, the mice will play. And so, when the empires are weak, then regional kingdoms can flourish and expand.

That's what happened during the 10th century. That was followed by the same period, the last period of Egyptian power under the late period, the last few dynasties up to the 30th dynasty. And that lasted until 525, all the way, actually all the way down to the death of Cleopatra, when Egypt became fully Roman control.

Now, the list of Egyptian interactions with Israel, you can see Genesis 12, Abraham, 37 through 50, Joseph, the Exodus, 1 and 2 Kings, and so on. And Egyptian pharaohs are named after Shishak. But before Shishak, this is important for historians, and they are not named.

Why is that? This has been an agonizing issue for biblical historians and Egyptologists since time immemorial because we don't know the name of the pharaoh of the

Exodus. We don't know the name of the pharaoh who interacted with Abraham and Sarah. And we don't know the pharaoh who let his daughter marry Solomon.

Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter. Who are these pharaohs? Well, we can guess. And we can use a lot of conjecture and make suggestions.

But again, this is still debated. Why is that? Why do they have stature? And because the pharaoh of the Exodus was impotent, you think of the 10 plagues. We'll talk about this later, maybe in more detail. An impotent pharaoh is not worthy of a name.

And so, this was done theologically, I believe, in part. So, unfortunately, for history, we don't have the pharaoh's name. Now recently, I was in Egypt last month, and there's a beautiful new museum there where they have all the royal mummies on display.

And I went around and looked at every mummy, every pharaoh that they have. And I am certain that I looked into the eyes or maybe the eye sockets of the pharaoh of the Exodus. But was that Amenhotep III? Was that Thutmose III? Amenhotep II? Whatever.

Ramses II? We don't know for certain, but I'm fairly certain I saw the mummy of the pharaoh of the Exodus.

Another chart shows the different dynasties of the ancient Egyptian kings. And that goes all the way up to actually the 31st dynasty or the 30th dynasty, and then on into the Ptolemaic period, and until the Romans took over. Egypt has an important role to play in the Old Testament.

There's Egyptian influence in the Old Testament. And we have to understand, too, that in the New Testament, Mary and Joseph fled Bethlehem with the infant Jesus and sojourned in Egypt until Herod the Great died. And then it was safe to come back and settle in Nazareth.

And you see that, again, prophesied in Hosea. And you see that beautiful parallelism between the oppression and the Exodus from Egypt, and then that was done again during the early years of Jesus by his parents. So, there are a lot of interesting connections here.

We'll talk about Pharaoh Merneptah, who actually mentions Israel. It's the first time Israel is mentioned by a foreign power in his stela. Pharaoh Shishak, who left part of a stela in the Holy Land at Megiddo, and Pharaoh that actually killed a king of Judah, Josiah at Megiddo, Pharaoh Necho in 609, and so on and so forth.

Other Egyptian influences in the Old Testament you can see names. Moses, of course, Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli the priest, had Egyptian names. And a number of Proverbs have close Egyptian parallels as well.

So, there's a lot of Egyptian parallels in the Old Testament. This is a famous tomb painting that we'll again, we'll revisit when we talk about the patriarchs. But this is a, again, 12th Dynasty Pharaoh, Sesostris, his tomb.

You've got these murals on the wall of his tomb, showing Canaanites or Asiatics bringing goods to trade, copper igneous and animals to Egypt to trade. And you notice the different hairstyles, the different beards, the lighter colored skin, and the colorful garments. Of course, you immediately think of Joseph in a coat of many colors.

This dates to about 1892. Again, it is definitely within, I believe, the patriarchal period. So, if you want a depiction of what Abraham looked like, this is a, and Sarah, this is a good clue of what they look like from these depictions on this tomb face.

During the second intermediate period that we have the rule of the Hyksos in Egypt, the Canaanites or Asiatics that ruled Egypt for about a century. And this was their capital, again, in the Nile Delta, again, lower Egypt, the northern part of Egypt. And this is a place called Avaris.

And Avaris has been excavated for many years by an Austrian expedition. And they have found some very interesting finds there. One of which is a tomb of a vizier and a destroyed statue.

Much has been made out of this, possibly being the tomb of Pharaoh, or excuse me, of Joseph. It's a reconstruction of what the statue probably looked like. And the question is, are we looking into the face of Joseph? Well, maybe, maybe not.

But that gives us a good indication of what Joseph probably looked like in his Egyptian garb. In Exodus, we talk about two store cities built by the Israelites, Ramses and Pithom. One of these was excavated in the 1970s by John Holliday and Tel es-Mescuda. And that's a picture of the excavations going on there.

Picture of the Temple of Karnak and the face of Pharaoh Thutmose III, very likely the Pharaoh of the Exodus in the 18th dynasty, but again, we're not certain. And the Egyptian Empire at its height under Thutmose III.

Egypt expanded again, went through this narrow corridor, the southern Levant, up to the Euphrates River. And put in place a stela there, showing the northern extent of their empire. And that happened again during the 18th dynasty when Egypt was at its height.

Another interesting reign to talk about in ancient Egypt is the reign of Akhenaten or Amenhotep IV, who was a heretic pharaoh because he rejected the pantheon or the Egyptian religious system and worshipped one god. He was a monotheist. That god, however, was Aten the son.

Here's a picture of him kissing his baby, his wife, Nefertiri, and the, or excuse me, Nefertiti and the son, Aten, shining down upon them. His wife, a very famous bust of his wife, Nefertiti. And this is, again, an artist's depiction or photograph of what she would have looked like.

He moved the capital, and we'll go into detail here later when we talk about the Exodus, from Luxor and Karnak downriver to a place called Tel El Amarna. So, Akhenaten is the name of the new capital that he built. And it's kind of interesting.

He built this from scratch, apparently. There are mountains in the desert, both to the west and to the east. Right where he built his new capital, there are V notches in each of the surrounding mountains to the west and to the east.

So he can see the full extent of the sun as it rises and as it sets on the horizon. Because, again, he worshipped the sun as the sole god. Now, did he get this idea of monotheism from the Hebrews? Again, that's a debatable subject.

What was found at Tel El Amarna when it was excavated, and even before it was excavated, was the Egyptian foreign office under Akhenaten. And he was so interested in his new religion, and he kind of apparently neglected Egyptian foreign policy and his troops that were abroad. So, he received and sent a series of dispatches, diplomatic correspondents, between Vassal Kings and his government.

These were collected and placed in the Foreign Office archives and discovered in the late 19th century, at first by Egyptians trying to get fertilizer for their farms. They found these small clay tablets that had Akkadian cuneiform writing on them.

And so, they took them to Cairo to get some money for them, and that's what got the interest of the archaeologists. And eventually they have found to date, or know of, 382 of these tablets from, again, the foreign office of Akhenaten and perhaps some of the pharaohs before him. These have been published very well by William Moran and Anson Rainey in different publications.

And they tell very, very dramatically what this geopolitical situation is in various areas of Egypt, and more importantly in the Levant. And they have, again, correspondents from the kings of Shechem, the kings of Jerusalem, the kings of Gezer. And so, you have insights, very valuable insights, into the geopolitical goings-on, so to speak, in Canaan.



This is right during the general period of the Exodus and conquest, so it is very interesting to study these. And again, very, very good editions out there for people to read. The nineteenth dynasty is the later dynasty, and again, this is dominated, totally dominated, by the reign of Ramses II.

Look at his dates. Very, very long reign that he had. And he was a master builder, who built temples, statues, and monumental architecture all over Egypt.

But his son, as important as Ramses was, and a lot of people believe he could be the pharaoh of the Exodus, his son, after Ramses' death, well, I think he was well over 90 years old, his son, Merneptah, also did some activity, foreign activity, and worked on the Temple at Karnak. But he also had foreign expeditions as well, and the Merneptah Stele is very, very famous because it mentions him attacking and eliminating Israelites. Israel is laid waste, and his seed is no more.

Again, that dates to about 1205 BC and is probably, most definitely for now, the first clear reference to Israel by a non-biblical source. And there's a picture of him there. Now, in the late 1980s, Frank Yurko, University of Chicago, studied the reliefs on the walls of the Karnak Temple and recognized that some of these were made by Merneptah.

And he claims that these figures here represent the Israelites that are mentioned on Merneptah Stele. So we have, in essence, the first depictions, artistic depictions, of the Israelites in Canaan, in the land of Israel, by the Egyptians. And that's, again, 1205 BC, so to speak.

There's his mummy and one of his statues as well. And again, the Merneptah Stele and the surroundings, it's basically a chant that he wrote, it's poetry, poetic, and it talks about the various lands that he conquered or various peoples he conquered. And you can see Ashkelon mentioned Gezer, Jenoaam, and then Israel, which seems to place her right in the hill country, which would be where she would naturally be, according to the Bible.

Again, these are hyperbole here. He probably ran over a few Israelite farmers with his chariots, didn't wipe her out, and didn't take away her ability to procreate, but again, hyperbolic language on a victory stela to enhance his reputation back home in Egypt. There's an interesting passage, interesting text in Joshua 15:9. And again, this is part of the boundary description of the various provinces or districts of the tribe of Judah.

And here it reads, from the hilltop, the boundary headed towards the spring of the waters of Nephthoah, came out of the towns of Mount Ephron, and went down towards Baalah, that is Kiriath Yarim. Okay, the waters of Nephthoah, we can

recognize those as being west of Jerusalem, it's today called Lifta. And it's really the first major spring west of ancient Jerusalem.

But the strange name here is the waters of Nephthoah. Again, in construct form in Hebrew, you would say, Me-Nephthoah. And you can see the corruption there possibly of Merneptah.

And so, there could be possibly corruption very early in Israelite history of a place named after Merneptah, Me-Nephthoah, Merneptah. Okay, now more than that, parts of an Egyptian stela and libation table were found outside of the old city of Jerusalem. Again, Egyptian, clearly Egyptian style, including some lotus capitals as well.

And it's the opinion of one of my teachers, Gabi Bar Kai, that there was actually an Egyptian temple outside of the city of Jerusalem to the north during the New Kingdom, probably during the reign of Merneptah. So you've got little pieces of evidence, some alabaster vessels found in that same excavation at St. Stephen's in Koba Bleak back in the 19th century. These seem to add up to an Egyptian temple or administrative center there, possibly established by Merneptah, maybe earlier.

Okay, the Bible has these comments on Egypt that we need to read. And you can understand that if you understand the context that they were written in. Hosea, the beautiful quote from Hosea, Hosea, when Israel was a child, I loved him and out of Egypt, I called my son again, looking backward to the Exodus to the nation of Israel being called out of Egypt, but also looking forward to God's only son, Jesus Christ being called out of Egypt with his parents at the death of Herod and coming back to the land of Israel and settling in Nazareth so he can complete his mission.

Also, in the Old Testament, there was a kind of a lingering interest in Egypt and hope that the Egypt of old would come to the rescue of Israel when Israel was being oppressed by the Babylonians. And God warns his people, Israel, and says the following: Behold, you are trusting now in Egypt that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of any man who leans on it, such as Pharaoh, king of Egypt to all who trust in him. So, the great, powerful empire of Egypt, by this time during the third intermediate period, is being called a broken reed of a staff, again, kind of a touching motif because papyrus reeds grow so plentiful in the Nile Delta.

That is the extent to which Egypt declined in power, importance, and prestige by the time of the late monarchy. All right, we move on to another empire, the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Again, the Neo-Assyrian Empire is based first in Kala and Asher, the earlier capitals, and then Nineveh.

It again encompasses all of Mesopotamia up into Urutu towards the Black Sea and then down again towards this this, the southern Levant, and later kings. This is an

eighth-century political map, 8th century BC. Later, Assyrian kings Ashurbanipal and Esarhaddon conquered Egypt.

So for a short period of time, the Neo-Assyrian Empire was a global empire that covered all of the Fertile Crescent down into Egypt. And it was a very brutal empire, as we'll see here in a minute. Usually based at Nineveh for most of its history.

It was a huge, huge city. And towards the west, expansion began in earnest. And there were expeditions there earlier.

But a king by the name of Shalmaneser III, and we'll see and talk about him a little bit more when we see the Black Obelisk on another segment of, video segment. Shalmaneser III was a ninth century Assyrian king who fought a huge battle at a place called Karkar in Syria against a whole coalition of regional kings led by Ahab of Israel. We know the exact date of this because of Assyrian records, 853 BC.

And, of course, Shalmaneser III claimed victory. But at best, this was a draw or a defeat for Syria because he did not campaign for a number of years out west after that battle. And he claims that the Israelite king Ahab had thousands of chariots and men.

Probably not, probably, this is probably an exaggeration, but it was a defeat more than likely or a bloody draw that forced Shalmaneser away from the southern Levant for a number of years. Now, later on, Jehu overthrew the Umayyad dynasty after the death of Ahab. And it was in that year, in 841 BC, that Shalmaneser returned to the Levant and set up his headquarters on Mount Carmel.

All the surrounding kings, including Jehu of Israel, had to act as vassals and give tribute and plunder to their new overlord. Now, in the early eighth century, the Assyrians went into decline. And that probably roughly 50-year period allowed these regional kingdoms to renew their prosperity and expand their borders.

Israel did this under Jeroboam II, as Judah did under Uzziah. This is basically the background for the prophecy or the prophetic book of Jonah, who was told by the Lord to go to Nineveh and preach and evangelize. At this time, Nineveh, again, or Assyria, was very, very weak.

But he had success in Nineveh, and many came to the Lord, many Gentiles and Assyrians. But that all changed with the accession of Tiglath-Pileser III, an Assyrian king who again reasserted Assyrian control over the Levant. He came with a powerful army, annexed Israel, and made Judah a vassal.

His successors, Shalmaneser V and Sargon II, both of them spelled the end of the northern kingdom of Israel. Samaria fell in 722, and most of the Israelites were

deported. It's important to understand that Assyrian kings were masters of psychological warfare.

They used terror tactics, and they were brutal in their treatment of prisoners and subjects who were disloyal. And what they would do if they conquered a kingdom that revolted against them they would deport most of the population, almost all the population, to the other side of the empire and then import foreign peoples from other parts of the empire into the region. That way, it would separate the people from their land, from their homeland, and after a generation or two, they would essentially be loyal Assyrian subjects.

They would be speaking the language and assuming the cultural and religious beliefs of the Assyrians. That was the idea. That didn't always work, but it seemed to work with the Israelites because they were never a recognizable entity again.

Now, after Sargon II died in battle in Anatolia, he was succeeded by Sennacherib. Sennacherib was perhaps the most important Assyrian king in relation to biblical history because he was the king who attacked Judah. After the death of Sargon, again, all the kingdoms revolted.

Sennacherib came in 701 and attacked Judah because Judah under Hezekiah revolted. Sennacherib erected prisms and proclaimed very proudly that 46 cities of Judah were destroyed and many 200,000 people were deported. However, he never mentions taking Jerusalem, and that's very significant.

We'll talk about that when we deal with the 8th century. After him, Ashurbanipal and Esarhaddon. Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal were the last two powerful kings of Assyria, and they expanded the borders of Assyria into Egypt.

After the death of Ashurbanipal, following the civil war, Assyria quickly declined, and the Babylonians moved north from Babylon and began gobbling up the Assyrian Empire, which fell in quick succession. The Assyrians were very, very brutal people. Here's a picture or artist's rendition of what Nineveh looked like on the Tigris River at its height.

Incredible, beautiful buildings. And anyway, again, here are the main Assyrian kings and what they did, as they're mentioned in the Bible. And Shalman, Shalmaneser III, you have this horrible depiction of atrocities that the Assyrians would do.

They would take mothers, pregnant mothers, rip them open, pull out their unborn children, and bash the children's heads on the rocks while the mother was still alive. Typical, almost stuff you would expect ISIS to do. Well, ISIS is only doing what the ancient Assyrians did before.

Tiglath-Pileser is mentioned as Pul in 2 Kings 15, talking about gobbling up all of these cities in northern Israel and defeating these cities, following one after the other as the Assyrians approach the capital of Samaria. Shalmaneser V and Sargon II finally completed the destruction of the northern kingdom. And then, of course, Sennacherib, which we just described, 185,000 of his men died as the angel of death visited the Assyrian camp, and Jerusalem was saved.

Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal are also mentioned. And so, this is, again, a brutal empire that would do horrible things ruled by fear and terror. But when they fell, they fell quickly because they had no allies.

Nobody came to their defense. Okay, the first one, Shalmaneser III, this is Karkar, the site of that major battle between Ahab and his coalition and the Assyrian king. We'll talk more about the Black Obelisk when we see our copy in the museum.

The Kurkh stele, which talks about the Battle of Karkar, and then a close-up of that Black Obelisk, which we have in the museum. And it shows Jehu actually bowing before the Assyrian king. And that is our first depiction of an Israelite king in a contemporary artistic fashion.

And this shows the campaigns of Shalmaneser III, all the way from Nineveh, all the way down along the coast here into Israel. And you can see the Battle of Karkar in northern Syria. So, all of these regional armies had to travel all the way up here to meet the Assyrians and probably defeat them.

Very, very famous relief found in the palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh. And this shows the destruction of Lachish, an Israelite city, or excuse me, a city of Judah. And again, we'll revisit this as we talk about the eighth century.

But here we have depictions of Judeans being led off into captivity. Actual Judeans from the kingdom of Judah. And as well as horrible atrocities, here are people being impaled on poles because they were caught trying to escape.

Artist's depiction of what Sennacherib's palace throne room looked like from the excavations. And of course, the famous poem by Lord Byron of the destruction of Sennacherib, which we won't read. But beautiful poetry there describing the destruction of the entire army.

Ashurbanipal's palace. This is just to give all of you just the idea of the grandeur and the incredible beauty of the Assyrian court. And in that beauty, there was horrible butchery as well.

Here's Ashurbanipal and his queen enjoying a party in his garden, drinking wine from their Assyrian style cups. While over here on the left hangs the decapitated head of

one of their enemies, an Arab chieftain that they were fighting. So, you've got this beauty, and at the same time, you've got this horrible, cruel, macabre scene of decapitated heads while they're enjoying their time in the garden.

This is, again a modern photo of a modern Assyrian procession. Now, what do I mean by that? Well, Assyrians today are Iraqi Christians. It's a Christian church, a denomination, so to speak.

And this is an Assyrian wedding, and they're again using Assyrian-style clothing with a chariot for the ceremony. Now, sadly, many of these people either had to flee Iraq or were killed by ISIS because of their faith. Finally, we have the legacy of Assyria.

Woe to Assyria, the rod of my anger, in whose hand the club is a club of my wrath. So, you have to understand that the Israelite people, people of Judah, this is a very difficult quote to swallow because God was using these despicable people called the Assyrians, who were so cruel and inhumane and evil, as the rod of his judgment. And Isaiah is telling his people that God has used them to chastise his people because they don't obey.

Anyway, we'll revisit Assyria as we examine the archeological evidence for the ninth, eighth, and seventh centuries. For several centuries, Assyria was a very, very powerful empire that made a lasting impact on the Levant and on biblical history. Thank you very much.

This is Dr. Jeffrey Hudon in his teaching on Biblical Archaeology. This is session 8, the Geopolitical Arena, Part 1.