

Dr. Jeffrey Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 16, Archaeology and the Historical David

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This is Dr. Jeffrey Hudon in his teaching on Biblical Archaeology. This is session 16, Archaeology and the Historical David.

Okay. Subsequent to the death of Saul, David returned to Judah and ruled as king over the tribe of Judah and Hebron for seven years. After that, he was invited by the other tribes to become king over all Israel. At that point, he made a very wise tactical decision and chose a neutral location to rule from, and that was the Canaanite or Jebusite city of Jebus or Jerusalem.

David and his men, specifically Joab, his general, attacked the citadel or the fortress of Tzion, again a pre-Israelite name. Tzion is not initially a Hebrew term. It's a pre-Israelite name for Jerusalem, and it conquered the city and made it his royal domain.

So, Jerusalem became almost kind of a Washington DC of ancient Israel. This is a very, again, like the conquest, a very important period in Israel's history for archaeological work. And again, it's a complicated period that has a lot of differing opinions.

Just a couple of, or I should say four, photos here. Let's point out some things. This is a, again, a computer-generated reconstruction of a site called Khirbet Qeiyafa, which either dates to the reign of Saul or to the reign of David.

And this overlooks the Elah Valley where David fought Goliath. You can see here a large four-room style house, which was probably a governor's residency or an administrative residency for the ruler of this city. It also has two gates here and here.

These features make a lot of scholars believe this is biblical Sha'arim, which means two gates that were in this immediate vicinity. So, a good indication of the biblical name for this site. Over here is an artist, another artist's rendition of Jerusalem at the time of David.

Again, isolated or just isolated to the vicinity of David. No extension onto Mount Zion or Mount Moriah or the Western Hill. You have this extension here of the Gihon Spring and a tower there to protect the water source of the city.

Down here on the bottom left is Slaves Hill at Timna, where mining operations took place during this time of mining of copper. And those are that accelerated under David and Solomon and certainly were under their direction, at least in my opinion. Finally, a close-up of a stela fragment was found at Dan in 1992-1993.

This caused a lot of scholarly activity, speculation, and different, differing opinions because it says the word House of David, Beit David. That's the first known mention of David in a contemporary document. The stela dates approximately a century after David himself.

So, it talks about his dynasty, the king of the House of David. Okay, a biblical portrait of David's life and his legacy, David's early years. Again, he grew up in Bethlehem and the Rephaim Valley.

There's an Iron One site, which we'll talk about here in a future slide, named Gilo, that may have to do in part with one of his wars with the Philistines. Gibeah of Saul, who, of course, was a member of Saul's court. Elah Valley, where he defeated Goliath.

Gath was, again, when he was fleeing from Saul, David served under time at Achish with King Achish of Gath and was given the city of Ziklag. And that ended when the Philistines defeated the Israelites on Mount Gilboa. And David went back into Judah and became king over the tribe of Judah.

The wilderness of Judah figured in David's life because he fled from Saul. Places are mentioned there, such as the stronghold, which may be a term for Masada, the later Herodian stronghold. Jerusalem, Bethsaida.

One of his wives was from Bethsaida, the princess of Geshur. Rabat Amon, where he sent his army to fight the Ammonites. Inscriptions, Tel Dan, the Moabite Stele, and Karnak Temple all may mention the house of David, not just one of them, but all three of them.

Then Khirbet Qeiyafa, which was a recently discovered site, had very important implications for the early monarchy. And then, and then finally, Timna Valley, where we saw a picture of the Slaves Hill location, which has all of this area. Timna Valley and the Edom Lowlands have important discoveries relating to copper mining and production during the 10th century, during the time of David and Solomon.

Again, stepping back and looking at the world at the time of the reign of David, you see a golden opportunity here because Egypt and Mesopotamia are weak. The Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Egyptians all are in decline. And so there is essentially a power vacuum, no superpower in this great region to affect the policies of these petty kingdoms or regional kingdoms in the Levant.

So, David is able to flex his muscles and, through warfare and treaties, expand his influence greatly and become a very strong regional kingdom, if not a mini-empire. Now, with the discovery of the Tel Dan Stele, the house of David, almost at the same

time, just a year or two previously, this book came out. And Philip R. Davies, a gentleman pictured here looking at a book and kind of smirking at the camera, wrote this book.

And Davies was an agnostic or atheist. And he suggested in this book that, in quotes, King David is about as historical as King Arthur. He argued that David was legendary, that it was a myth.

He never even existed. And, of course, in the next year or two, they find the Tel Dan Stele. The challenge that Davies and others of his ilk made was that this doesn't refer to David, but it refers to some unknown deity with the same consonants.

And, of course, very few people accepted that. Rather, they accepted how it easily reads as the house of David. Here's another picture of the entire Tel Dan Stele.

It was discovered in 1993. It's kind of got an interesting story here. Avraham Biran, a very senior archaeologist at Hebrew Union College, had been digging at Dan since 1966.

His assistant was kind of a minimalist. She did not have a high view of scripture. They're doing some clearing outside of the outer gate at Dan.

And she found this piece of basalt in secondary use on a wall with this inscription on it. And Avraham Biran came by. I think her name was Gila Cook if I remember, and she said, my gosh, we have an inscription.

And so, they immediately looked around for more basalt pieces of this inscription and found these two, these two others, eventually, and still very fragmentary, but they're able to read more of the text. And this text is not an Israelite text. It is Aramean, from the Aramean king Hazael, most likely when Hazael took over Dan a century after David's life and mentions the king of Israel and the king of the house of David in this inscription, his defeat of them.

So, again, you've got essentially a contemporary document from a non-Israelite source mentioning not necessarily King David but the house of David, the Davidic dynasty. And so that really proves, under any circumstances, it has to prove that there was a historical David. And so, all of the work of Philip R. Davies and his quote that David is about his historical King Arthur falls flat on its face.

At the same time, a French scholar was again studying the Mesha Stele, the Moabite Stele. This is a stele dating about the time of the Tel Dan inscription, but it was erected by the king of Moab, Mesha, in Transjordan, around 840 BC, about the same time. The lower lines were obscure, but Andre Le Maire, the professor who was studying these lines, thought he recognized the term Heights of David on there.

And so, there was a second mention, possibly, of David. Finally, K. A. Kitchen, the British Egyptologist, was reading the Shishak list at Karnak and believes he also mentions the Highland of David in the Shishak inscription. And I may have misspoken here, but I think the Highland of David is in the Karnak.

The House of David is in the Mesha Stele and the Tel Dan Stele. So, within just a few years, you have three references discovered. One on a newly discovered inscription, and two on inscriptions that have been known for a long time.

Again, we look at Bethlehem. This is where David grew up. We don't know exactly where his home was, but we do know that there was a place called Bethlehem, which is where he was born.

I have a theory about that, which I'll mention in a minute. But Bethlehem today is a sprawling city, probably half Christian or most likely majority Muslim at this point. But this was, again, the home of David.

And we'll see this Bulla. We may have seen it before. We'll see it again.

A very important seal impression was found recently in Jerusalem. And you can see the word Bethlehem here in Paleo. You can see a little bit of the Beit, the Tav, the Lamed, the Het, and the beginning of the Mem.

So that spells out Bethlehem. And that's the oldest inscription that mentions the name of that city that's ever been found. It dates to about 700 BC.

Okay, we talked about the Rephaim Valley before, but overlooking the Rephaim Valley is again the breadbasket of Jerusalem, the valley that goes down into the Zorik Valley and ultimately to the coast. This is a battleground. It was a battleground because the Philistines twice tried to come up this valley from the Shephelah and attack David in Jerusalem.

David was an excellent general and had his soldiers hidden on the sides of the valley. And when the Philistines got close, he attacked them and defeated them. Now, why was David so successful there? Well, there was a site discovered shortly after the Six-Day War overlooking the Rephaim Valley to the south.

And it was a very rustic, poorly preserved Iron I Israelite settlement site that they named Gilo. Gilo was, actually, it's an ancient name, but it actually isn't related to the site, but it's called Gilo, nevertheless. Gilo has, again, kind of a perimeter wall and there were some houses that, again, poorly preserved, just sections of walls.

But two things here that are important. One is an Iron II watchtower that was built probably in the 8th century. And then off the screen here to the north was an Iron I, a solid tower that overlooked the Rephaim Valley.

And I believe that it was from this site that David's army descended into the valley and attacked the Philistines and defeated the Philistines coming up. Why do I say that? I also believe that Gilo and the surrounding upper reaches of the Rephaim Valley were property or territory belonging to David's clan, to David's family. There's evidence, too, that this was a royal estate later on in the Iron Age from the Davidic monarchy because of a tunnel and some royal architecture found along the Refaim Valley.

So, possibly even with the name that is mentioned or stamped on royal jar handles later. Now, the person who excavated Gilo was Ami Mazar, one of my former professors when I was in Israel. And Ami Mazar did a very good job excavating this.

And today, unfortunately, there's an Israeli housing development around it, but it's preserved, the site itself. The importance of this site is multifaceted. One of the important parts of the site is that there was no water there.

It was an elevated site. They had protection from the surrounding terrain. However, it had no spring and very difficult life for the settlers there at Gilo in the period of the judges.

At the same time that this was being processed and studied, certain Israeli scholars argued that Jerusalem at this time was just a very minor, if not even occupied, town. The important thing to understand is that Gilo had no water source, Jerusalem does. Jerusalem had the Gihon Spring.

And there's no sensible way that Jerusalem would be abandoned and Gilo would be occupied. So just the fact that Gilo existed without a water source really proves that Jerusalem was a town, probably of some stature, you could call it a city, during this transition period between the Bronze Age and the monarchy. Another view of Gibeah of Saul.

This is again where David was part of the court of Saul during his early years before his kingship. Again, it shows where he fought Goliath to review his life. And another picture of the Philistines and Goliath.

The Bible gives very descriptive terminology about Goliath's armor. And again, a scholar from Cornell University, Jeffrey Zorn, has written an excellent paper, published about 15 years ago, on the armor of Goliath and the historicity of the account given that description. And that's well worth reading.

And of course, Goliath's hometown, Gath, which we've seen before. And again, when David was a renegade from Saul, he would head out to the Judean wilderness as well as the Philistine city of Gath to escape Saul. And, of course, we remember the Battle of Mount Gilboa and the death of Saul and Jonathan, and this is what made David king in the aftermath of that.

Okay, again, an artist's rendition of Jerusalem during the time of Solomon or shortly thereafter. So, let's take a look at this. I hope to discuss Jerusalem's history more in-depth in a later lecture.

But today, this depicted here is the Kidron Valley. And the Mount of Olives is up here off the picture of the Mount of Offense. And then there is the Tyropoeon Valley or Central Valley, as Josephus calls it, the Valley of the Cheesemakers coming down here.

And so, this provided at least some protection on two sides or three sides. The northern side of the city of David, which is the original core settlement area of Jerusalem up until the time of Solomon, did not include this extension here. And this is a city here that David conquered.

And you can see the weak part of the city is to the north. Now, there's kind of a saddle here called the Melo. And then another ascent up into Mount Moriah or Mount Zion, actually, the Temple Mount.

So, what we see here is a step stone structure, which parts of it still exist, and the fortress of Zion or David's palace that was above that. And then, of course, the houses of the city below that. Now Jerusalem was interesting because not only was it not Israelite controlled, Israel initially conquered it and then it reverted back into Jebusite control until Joab and David conquered it seven years into his reign.

Jerusalem was off the beaten path. It really didn't have any great strategic features that would draw people to it. The main road, the Route of the Patriarchs, is well to the west, probably a 20 or 25-minute walk off of the road to get to the city.

Again, it was fairly well protected on some sides, but on the north, it was very vulnerable. You can see the gate there and the towers. The one thing it did have was a spring, a water source, the Gihon Spring, somewhere in this area here.

Recent excavations suggest that walls came out of the city walls, with a tower protecting that spring. At this point, when this was made, most scholars believed there was a tunnel and not walls and towers. But recent excavations have shown that those may have existed as early as the Middle Bronze Age, the period of the late patriarchs.

So, it was not an impressive city by any means, but David jumped on this because it was right on the border between the tribal territories of Judah and Benjamin, and it was a foreign enclave. So, he took that and made it royal property. It was a brilliant move because it was neutral territory.

No tribe could claim that they had the capital in their territory. Now, after the death of David, Solomon took over and expanded the city to encompass Mount Moriah. Parts of this wall can be seen today south of the Temple Mount.

A lot of this is speculation on where palaces were and what they looked like. We generally know what palaces looked like at the time of Solomon, but we know that there were several palaces and, of course, the Temple compound. But again, a lot of that is somewhat speculative.

We'll unpack that in a later lecture. Politically, David had a large empire. Again, there was still a small Philistine area here that was under Israeli hegemony, but they were a vassal of Israel.

And then way up into Syria, there were Syrian kingdoms that were either vassals or directly controlled, all the way up to the Euphrates River. So, this was, under David and initially at least under Solomon, the height of Israelite control of the southern Levant. Notice, however, that the Phoenicians maintained their territory and, at some point during the reign of Solomon, when the land of Kabbalah was seceded from them, came all the way down here.

They had the coastline, they wanted the seaports, Israel grew the crops and olives, and the Phoenicians would ship those to markets across the Mediterranean. So, it was a great business partnership, but religiously it was not the best agreement. Now Jerusalem is a city that's been continuously occupied since well before the time of Abraham. As history goes back into the Chalcolithic period, some say the Neolithic period, even, certainly, the Chalcolithic period.

So, excavations in Jerusalem are very, very difficult to do and very complicated. You will dig down four meters and hit Roman pottery perhaps from the time of Christ and then immediately hit bedrock. And you move five feet over and dig down and you'll find Iron Age and Bronze Age and maybe even Chalcolithic sherds in the crevices in the bedrock.

Whereas just five feet away, you'd swear it was only dated back to the time of the Romans. Well, the Romans maybe built a structure there and cleared it to bedrock and so they eradicated all the older material. So, Jerusalem must be excavated very carefully, and sometimes, as in the case of the excavations of Yigal Shiloh, they actually had to do the stratigraphy on the pottery table.

There was no clear stratigraphy in the field. So, it's a challenging place to excavate but also one of the most important places to excavate because so much of biblical history took place here. In 2005, Eilat Mazar, granddaughter of Benjamin Mazar, one of the founders of Israeli archaeology, excavated in the city of David and actually found a monumental building dating to the very end of the Iron I or very early Iron II period.

This structure had very thick walls. It was only partially excavated and partially preserved. But she believes she has found the walls of David's palace because of the data in the Bible coupled with what was found on the ground.

Again, an artist's rendition, Leen Ritmeyer, drew this up of what David's palace probably looked like and partially perhaps discovered by Eilat Mazar. This revetment wall or revetment glassy here is still in existence today. So, this is this.

David's palace would have been in this area here. This is looking south, Kidron Valley is here in the eastern slope of the city of David. Here's an artist's rendition of David looking out on his city.

You can see the city of David spread out before him and the style of volute capitals, which we'll talk about later. And balustrades are known archaeologically. And by the way, it's a picture of Eilat Mazar, who excavated so much of this, and we owe her a great debt of gratitude.

She has unfortunately passed away. Now we talked about Khirbet Qeiyafa several times. Here's another view of Khirbet Qeiyafa overlooking the Elah Valley.

This could have been Saul's headquarters or it could have been David's headquarters later when he was king. There's a debate on the exact date of the site. It was only occupied roughly 50 to 100 years.

It was a relatively short occupation and fairly well-preserved in most areas. The excavator Yossi Garfinkel is showing here a clay model of a shrine. He has pointed out in various articles that this is a very early prototype shrine that depicts the later Temple of Solomon.

And, of course, that was found, this is partially restored, that was found at Khirbet Qeiyafa. And here's some pottery found there. And here's one of the four-chamber gates at Khirbet Qeiyafa overlooking the Elah Valley.

Very, very important site. The pottery there and the radiocarbon dating have again led to almost a rewriting of textbooks. All of a sudden, you've got Judahite control over the lower Elah Valley because it's clearly a Judahite site.

And that tells us it's not some small chiefdom or David ruling from some Bedouin tent. This is a real kingdom. And they built stuff like this here.

Jerusalem certainly was much more elaborate than what they previously thought. Here's some pottery from the site and again other pictures of the site. This is part of that central building.

That was probably the administrative center or the governor's house, whoever ruled Shaarim at the time of either Saul or David. Now in the city of David, inside the city, these two tunnels were excavated. They were excavated over a century ago, about 110 years ago, in 1914.

And thereafter by a French archaeologist by the name of Raymond Bile. He was a Jewish archaeologist, the first Jewish archaeologist to dig in Jerusalem. And he excavated down to bedrock here and found these two tunnels.

Again, some scholars immediately believed that these possibly were remnants of the royal tombs of the Davidic dynasty. Now, how do we know this? Well, Nehemiah chapter 3 describes Nehemiah's midnight examination of Jerusalem's walls. And when Nehemiah gets to this point along the eastern walls, he says, opposite the tombs of the kings.

And right when Bile dug these out, this is the general vicinity where Nehemiah would have been. Now, different archaeologists have different interpretations. A lot of them didn't think these were tombs.

Clearly, they had been quarried away later on. They were originally extended farther out. But Kathleen Kenyon, when she was excavating Jerusalem in the 1960s, thought that they were cisterns.

Now they may have been used as cisterns later in their history if they were plastered, but that was a secondary use. The initial use was something else. And it wasn't until another article by Geoffrey Zorn, who again wrote on Goliath's armor, he wrote a very important article showing parallels to royal tombs at Hazor in the late Bronze Period.

And I believe tombs of the kings of Uritu also mimic this gallery style where you have these tunnels going into bedrock. So, what we have here, I believe, is the remnants of the tombs of David, Solomon, and the kings after them, long since robbed away and quarried away, much of them quarried away, but still, remnants of them existing for us to see today. By the way, when you go to Israel and say, I want to see David's tomb, most guides will not take you here.

They will take you to a place on Mount Zion near the upper room, and they will say, here's David's tomb, and show you the sarcophagus, and you can stand there with your yarmulke on and observe this. This is clearly not David's tomb. Mount Zion was not Mount Zion.

Today is not Mount Zion at the time of the Bible. Mount Zion is the top of the Western Hill. It's misnamed.

And this tomb was certainly not the tomb of David. There may have been tombs of the later kings of Judah on top of Mount Zion because of the palace of the Garden of Uzzah that Manasseh and his successors lived in, and that might have been atop Mount Zion. So, there may be some kind of a small segment or small kernel of truth there.

Some of the later kings of Judah and the last kings of Judah may have been buried in this vicinity, but not David. And again, around 20 years ago, Tom Levy of the University of California, San Diego, began researching and excavating copper mining operations in the Edomite lowlands along the Aravah on the Jordanian side of the modern border and found a place called Khirbet en-Nahas, or the ruins of copper, and found a very, very elaborate fortress and copper mining system. Clearly, this was not some Bedouin operation or some tribal operation.

This was a very elaborate, well-planned operation done by a regional kingdom. Which kingdom? Was it the Edomites? Well, we don't think so. It was probably, most likely, the Israelites under David and Solomon.

Later on, farther south at Timna on the Israel side of the Aravah, Erez Ben-Yosef, Tel Aviv University, found additional copper mining operations at sites near Timna. This is Slaves Hill. We saw a picture of this earlier.

And again, radiocarbon dating has dated this to the early 10th century, the time of David.

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