

Dr. Elaine Phillips, Introduction to Biblical Studies, Session 2, Focus on Archaeology

© 2024 Elaine Phillips and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. Elaine Phillips and her teaching on Introduction to Biblical Studies. This is session 2, Focus on Archaeology.

Well, here we are, continuing with our introduction to historical geography.

Just a reminder that in our last lecture, we surveyed the land and the implications of the land. We'll do more with that later. We talked about texts.

We briefly introduced ourselves to toponomy. Now, the idea is to unpack a little bit of what we know about archaeology. Archaeology, of course, means the study of ancient things or comes from the same word as archaic.

So we're talking about antiquities. This particular site is one of the more impressive ones in the land of Israel. You'll see those monumental fallen-down columns right here and some capitals that are Corinthian capitals, which are very well decorated.

This happens to be the site of Beit Shan. So, we'll spend a little bit of time making our way through what we need to understand about archaeology. I would encourage you to take a whole course in archaeology and read books because this is just the beginning.

In terms of the beginning, give us an idea of where we're going to go in the next hour or so so you kind of see what it is. We need to deal with some introductory issues. We'll need to talk about definitions of some terms that you're going to hear over and over again or read over and over again. So what do they mean? We want to talk about, well, an overview of chronological periods as they impact our understanding of biblical text and historical developments.

And then we also want to talk about both advantages but also limitations of archaeology because there are some things that we can say and things that we would be careful not to say in terms of our archaeological data. That leads us to another brief look at the kinds of approaches that archaeologists use, what's been used in the past, what they're looking for, and the kinds of methods that they use when they're in the field. So, here is a brief survey of that as well.

And how to look at some of these things that have been, as I've indicated, hot topics. You'll notice the hot pink there for hot topics. These are debated, still are very much so.

So, we will certainly address what this is called. Some people have called it biblical archaeology, but other people dig in their heels and say no, so they need to call it Syro-palestinian archaeology. We'll unpack that just a little bit if we have time.

And then the second and the third one kind of go together. There's been a tendency within biblical studies to engage in revising our understanding of biblical history and that does feed right into archaeologists and how they deal with the chronological developments that we see. So we'll try and put those together as well.

Our main focus, however, is going to be on the first two bullets that we have up there. Definitions for starters. It does, the word itself means a study of ancient things, antiquities.

William Dever has said the scientific study of material remains of past human life and activities. And that's really a fairly decent compressed definition. Scientific is important at this point.

It used to be that it wasn't all that scientific in the process of rummaging around for these things, but now folks are being a lot more careful as they're studying past human life and activities. Obviously, it then contributes directly to what we're trying to do when we're doing historical geography. Another definition that we have to have our minds wrapped around is this word tell.

Sometimes, you'll see it spelled with one l, sometimes with two, but we're talking about an artificial mound, and it's a mound that represents a particular site. You don't have tells all over the world when you're doing archaeology, but you do in Israel, and I'm going to try and make clear why that is true. So when I say artificial mound, but I leave you right now, cheer up, we are coming back to that.

For now, just know it's an artificial mound. It has been built up over time as, you remember, our toponomy principles: you have to have water, and you've got to have defensibility. So let's say that a site gets destroyed, it's going to be rebuilt in the same area, the walls are going to be rebuilt in the same area, they take the debris, but it slowly grows upward over the millennia and the periods of time.

So anyway, again, we'll come back to that in a moment in greater detail. These tells, or a tell, is going to be composed of a number of layers of settlement. So, the stratum is the singular, strata, plural, layer, or layers that constitute the history of the site.

So taking what I just said a moment ago, if you have a site and an enemy comes along, they destroy it, people regroup, they rebuild walls, they rebuild settlements, sometimes they reuse stuff, but they also bring in new layers of things, they may bring in new layers of or new kinds of technologies, new kinds of things that they are

using as implements, as pottery, and so you can kind of see how the layers represent different kinds of settlement over the centuries as well. People who study this stuff are doing stratigraphy, and by that we're simply referring to how that stuff has added on to each other. Study of the buildup of soil refuse, usually the pottery, building debris, and other material in the ground as it relates to its context.

And again, we'll talk in greater detail in terms of how the stratigraphic layers are studied. These are the definitions that we want to know and kind of have in our back pocket. Now, let's move forward just a little bit with a photograph.

If you look at that, and if you look really carefully, there are several things you want to notice. First of all, you can see some evidence of excavation at this point, but what I really want you to focus on is the difference between this line and that one, because you see this little horizon, I suppose we could call it, behind is a natural hill, and there's lots of those natural low rolling hills. We'll talk about why that's true later on, but this is the artificial line of Et-tell, because you see when things get destroyed on top, gravity does its work, and it's going to have this debris kind of slide down that slope.

We'll talk more a little bit later on about how archaeologists do surveys. They may even get to the point where they don't dig in some of these areas, but they simply walk around these tells; you can tell one, sorry, I was going to try and avoid that pun, and they pick up the various pieces of pottery, which are going to be representative of different periods of time during which that was inhabited. So hold on to that line and hold on to your visual impression of this flat top because those are going to just flash green lights at us; go dig there; it's a tell of some sort.

Well let's pick up a few more visual impressions of this. Doton, by the way, as we're going to see when we start doing our geography survey and our historical survey, Doton was on a major international route, that's why it was such an important place. Beersheba, and you'll notice that's transcribed there as Beersheba, not Beersheba.

I will continue to use that pronunciation and spelling. This is a very old photograph, and I show it to you simply because if you look at this place now, it's been changed considerably. It's been reconstructed.

Archaeologists have done a lot of reconstruction. They've also built an observation tower right in the middle of it, whereas this picture gives us a much clearer sense of what beginning excavations would have looked like, and you can see some interesting features here. We won't do a lot with this now.

We'll come back to it later, but you'll notice that we have somewhere near the city wall, represented by this stuff out here, you've got what seems to be rooms very close by there. They've been dug out. You also have that same slope that we talked

about earlier, and then you have very square blocks, and these are areas that have been sectioned off and excavated.

Again, we'll do more with Beersheba later on, simply to look at an excavated tell. In terms of a diagram that might help us with this, I've taken this from a very helpful book that Jerusalem University College uses to teach their unit on archaeology, and they give a diagram that simply helps us see how this thing builds up over time. The only change that I have made to it, as you can see, is I'm going to suggest that probably the sides are not quite that steep.

A proper angle in terms of gravity dealing with debris falling down might be as indicated by that red site. At any rate, let's just look at some of the things that are going to characterize our location here. When we talked about toponomy, one of the things we said over and over again, got to be near a water source.

Well, look at our key. This one happens to have a water source. There's a spring.

Another important thing is always to keep that water source accessible to people who are living in this location. If we look at section eight, sorry, six right here, we're talking about Iron Age settlement. I will indicate in a moment what that means and what time frame we're talking about, but for now, just in your mind, strip all this off.

Strip all that off and presume that you are living, oh, about a thousand years before Christ. This is the level that you are living on, and if you're living there, you've got to get some water. Well, interestingly enough, you may have some enemies roundabout.

Your water source, the spring, is out here. You've got a wall that's protecting you, to be sure, city wall, number eight right there, but how do you get outside of that water source, especially if you're surrounded by a siege? Well, in your providing ahead of time, if you've got municipality folks who are dealing with this, you build a bit of a shaft and then a tunnel to get out to your water source so that you can access water safely. There are a number of sites that have these things.

We'll look at pictures of a few of them momentarily. So fine, over time, the Iron Age settlement gets destroyed, possibly over and over again, different strata within Iron Age probably. After that, we have successive periods.

I'm not going to walk through each one of these now because I'm going to give you dates for them later on, but let's just say a smaller settlement here during a Persian period's going to expand to a huge size and continue on up. Let's leave that for now, and hopefully, if there are still questions on how tells work, we can deal with them as we go on. Just keep in mind that I'm going to repeat this over again because I've had questions about it in years past.

Each of these is not here at the time, and people are living down here. It has grown up over centuries. By the time we come along as archaeologists in the 19th and 20th centuries, we're looking at this stuff up here.

This is what we walk up to and start looking at it. This is what we walk around and see what kind of pottery debris is left, that's been cast out. Archaeologists will start digging down through this stuff, taking out those sections that we saw in that Beersheba aerial view to try and figure out what's below.

Those are definitions. That's an illustration of a tell. Now, let's get a sense of our geographical scope that we need to be thinking about, and then we'll deal with chronology.

You see, it'd be really easy for us to say, OK, going to do biblical archaeology. That means we're going to focus on the area in this ellipse right here. Tremendously important.

We'll come back to sites in that in a moment. But you'll remember that this is the land between, and therefore, it's going to be influenced by all kinds of cultural things. Sometimes they're benign, sometimes they're malignant, but all kinds of cultural things.

So we have to know a good deal about Egypt as well. We have to know what's going on in Mesopotamia as they are going to impact this area. And then, especially in terms of our intertestamental period into the New Testament, we have to understand what's going on with Hellenistic cultures and, obviously, Roman culture as well.

So geographical scope of biblical archaeology includes all those things as they impact what's going on in the land between. Now here's where it gets, well, it's going to feel like a grocery list. OK, so bear with me.

We have to understand some of these in order to park our biblical data or our biblical understanding into the broader chronological time frame. And as I've noted in brackets there, we're talking about broad approximations. Stone Age is huge.

I won't spend a lot of time here. Although, if you look at Neolithic, that's going to be our new Stone Age. There are some really interesting things.

A tower found in the Old Testament we call Old Testament Jericho. If we have time, we'll look at that later on. But there's other very fascinating things from the Neolithic period in terms of burials, likewise important.

But if you notice that the only thing that is vaguely biblical is going to be the name Jericho, Obviously, we don't have any biblical events that are showing up this early on. Once we have a transition in technology, we're going to have our implements.

I should say, by the way, that these early chronological periods are defined primarily by what tools are made out of. So, stone tools are now a combination of copper and stone tools from the Chalcolithic period. For our purposes, we want to think bronze.

Here's where it starts funneling down toward events that show up in the biblical text. Early Bronze, long time frame as you can see. Fascinating in terms of some of the things that were happening in the land of Canaan, even though obviously the Israelites are not there yet.

Significant cultural developments during this time frame from 3500 down to about 2200 BC. Middle bronze, again you can read those dates as well as I can. And here's where we can start interfacing with biblical text.

Now I realize I'm getting into a somewhat debated matter right now. But if we have Abraham, our father Abraham, showing up long about 2000, 2100-2000 BC. Again, I know there are differences of opinion on that.

But if indeed that's true, then we have his descendants, particularly Israel, going down into Egypt. Jacob first and then all the rest of the sons, sorry Joseph first, and then all the rest of the sons of Israel who will then be in Egypt for about 400 years. So this is going to be a really important time as we have a bigger picture.

I should say, just as sort of an aside at this moment, that I said a moment ago we've got the names of these periods defined by implement bronze in this case. But when we talked about what's in a name, that's going to affect this as well. And there will be people who will refer to these not as Early Bronze, Middle Bronze, and Late Bronze, but early Canaanite, middle Canaanite, and late Canaanite.

I will continue to use probably the more standard terms. By the time we get to late bronze, fascinating stuff is going on. Obviously, you can see those dates as well as I can.

No matter how we parse out dating the Exodus and then working back to Abraham, we do have during that time frame the Exodus and the conquest happening. So that's going to be a significant period for us. For reasons we don't really understand, there are lots of hypotheses on this and lots of interesting stuff.

But at the end of the late bronze period, and our ballpark date is about 1200, it seems that all over the eastern Mediterranean area, there was a major upheaval. Lots of movements of people, lots of destruction, evidence of destructions in our

archaeological remains. But again, in terms of what caused that, it's not entirely certain.

So far, so good. And now we have additional material that will become important in terms of Israel. Here's our Iron Ages.

I said a moment ago that bronze is sometimes called Canaanite. So early bronze, early Canaanite, middle bronze, et cetera. Once we get to Iron Age, some people are going to refer to this as the Israelite period.

But I will stick with iron because that's standard. Iron Age 1, I also should tell you that each one of these broad periods is broken up into lots of subheadings. We're not going to worry about most of them.

But from 1200 to about 1000, we do have the period of the Judges. As you can see in that bracketed smaller print there, this is a really extremely important time frame, this Iron Age 1, because a fair amount of work has been done assessing developments of smaller settlements, as you can read, smaller and more numerous settlements in the hill country.

In our earlier lecture, we talked about the fact that this region was not very heavily inhabited before the Israelites came in. I also talked about the possibility of honey and wildflowers for honey, and so forth. From an archaeological standpoint, I'll just repeat, there seem to have been smaller and more numerous settlements starting with Iron Age 1. Of course, Iron Age 2 is what's really important for us as we're looking at Old Testament history because we're talking about the united monarchy of David and Solomon, starting with Saul and David and Solomon, and then our division of the kingdom in 931 and the divided monarchies, first Israel going into exile in 722, and then Judah into exile in 587-586.

But this is going to be, again, the Israelite period or the Iron Age period. Period of Israel's ascendancy, important stuff. At this point, in terms of our standard designation of these chronological periods, things do shift.

Now, if we move to those later designations that have been added, such as Canaanite-Israelite, this isn't as much of a shift. But for people who are still sticking with Bronze and Iron Age, now our period names significantly shift because we have empires, the names of empires, that are defining the archaeological periods. So we have Babylonian, Persian, Hellenistic.

We will not worry too much about the first two of those, but the Hellenistic and particularly Hasmonean will be very significant, and I'll talk especially with regard to those when we come to the architecture and archaeology of Jerusalem. Once Rome comes on the scene, and again, a historical event, 63 BC, when the Roman Pompey

comes into Jerusalem, we have Roman dominance in this area all the way through AD 360, with all kinds of ups and downs going on. For our purposes and for gospel purposes, our most interesting time frame is going to be architectural and archaeological materials that are going to be around the Herodian period.

So that's highlighted for that reason. We will find all kinds of interesting things, especially in our major sites in the Galilee, out in the coastal plain area, and in Jerusalem that we're going to identify as Herodian. Beyond that, the time of church domination, the Byzantine period, is likewise important for reasons I'll be talking about when we do talk about Jerusalem, so just hang on to that.

Following that, an alternation back and forth and back and forth between Islamic domination and Crusader presence, but there's the uncertainty that's going to be there, and then finally, the Ottoman Empire and the British mandate beyond that. That is our chronological sweep, a very quick one through here. Let's spend just a little time talking about why archaeology is both very helpful but also potentially problematic if we try and overread it.

So you can read as well as I can, but let's just walk our way through this. You'll remember that Bill Deaver, in his definition, said the scientific study and that is true. Archaeologists work very hard at being scientific, especially now, but it's not an exact science, and so there is a good deal of artistry involved in interpretation.

Once you read these artifacts, whatever they happen to be, in the context in which they've been found, it's especially challenging if those artifacts have been removed from their stratigraphic context, and that has happened before. Sadly, it continues to happen. Anson Rainey, probably the best epigrapher and also an extraordinarily good historical geographer, had this very interesting quip, the science of digging a square hole and the art of spinning a yarn from it.

He knew archaeology well. He also was, as I said, at the forefront of many of these disciplines as they come together. He's written a book along with a person named Stephen Notley called *The Sacred Bridge*, which is a goldmine of information that helps us in this whole discipline of historical geography.

Here's another thing that we need to keep in mind as we're thinking about archaeology, because there's lots of those little tells out there. Do you remember? They're small, especially in our hill country area. Excavated sites, small number of the ones that existed in antiquity.

When we start talking about methods, I'll talk about surveys and the help that that's been, but you know it costs a lot to excavate a site, and if the site happens to be in a place where there's already a city or a town existing, that creates other issues as

well. It's particularly true when people are working in Jerusalem. When we do our study of Jerusalem, we'll see how that works or doesn't.

Related to that is the fact that to be sure, one does excavate, but you can't pull the whole layer off of any given tell. Very few comprehensive excavations, which is a good thing, because, quite frankly, as methods are more sophisticated, it's good to still have some materials to dig through from each given stratum in these places. So, very few comprehensive excavations.

Of course, the downside of that is that, guess what? If you're four feet off, you may miss something that could have been an incredibly important find. There are some understandings in terms of where best to excavate, but it's a bit subjective in choosing where you're going to put those trenches. In addition to that, we do have, quite frankly, a small number of extra-biblical documents and inscriptions.

They're all very helpful, but sometimes we are challenged as we put them together and try to interface them with the findings that we have. So, you may think, well, I certainly don't ever want to go on an archaeological dig with that not being very helpful, but the truth of the matter is, bottom line, very helpful. Not improving.

We don't want to use the term proving, but it is certainly helpful in corroborating what we see in the biblical texts. Yes, lots of debates. Yes, there are issues that are always under discussion in terms of whether or not archaeology is helping or hindering our understanding of given things.

We'll talk about some of those as we make our way into regional studies. Let's take a moment to think a little bit about what archaeologists are looking for, or maybe what they've looked for in the past, and how that quest has perhaps become a little more sophisticated. And then what I'm going to do after presenting this list, two separate blocks of material here, is actually a number of photographs of representative samples of these things.

So, one of the focal points, especially in archaeology as it began to be done in the early 20th century and well beyond that, is trying to find evidence of central governments, entities, and statehood, and you can read this as well as I can, geopolitical and religious emphases as evidenced in official documents and also in this kind of thing. So, do you remember that picture that we had of the aerial of the excavation at Be'er Sheva? Even before people started digging into that tell, you could see in that little rugged rim around the outside a wall, and therefore, you're going to look for that, kind of figure out what's there. If you have some vague idea, I'm not going to stick with Be'er Sheva at this point, but some vague idea where the water source might have been, you can guess that there would have been a gate there, and so you would work and see if you could find a gate.

Water fortification, sorry, water systems, temple, and palace structures think again logically along with our archaeologists from back in the 20th century, probably the high point of some tell is going to be where there's going to be some evidence of temple, palace, larger buildings, etc. Temples and palaces, by the way, were often the same building because they just, especially if it's not an Israelite thing, the king was often considered to be some sort of a god, a personification, embodiment of a god, and therefore temple palace is very much interchanged. Continuing to look at things that are part of this bigger religious, political, and geopolitical entity, we might come across things we think of as altars.

Now, depending on what context we're in, that's an interesting quest, and it might take some creativity. Standing stones, figurines, inscriptions, and coins. Are you noticing we're going from monumental structures at the beginning of that list all the way down to small things that are going to interface with our next category? To be sure, inscriptions and coins are going to contribute to how we understand the geopolitical entity here, but they're also going to show the following.

Continuities and changes in settlement are going to reflect economic and cultural shifts. How does this work? And by the way, I should say that this has probably been a greater emphasis in archaeology recently, to try and get in some of the more nuanced understandings of daily life as it was lived. A moment ago, I mentioned this business about gates near water systems and fortifications, and I mentioned the fact that we would find these big palatial structures at the top of hills.

Well, you know, there's always a question in terms of how did the regular person live? Well, probably, they lived farther down the hill slope. In fact, in many cases, we see evidence that might suggest that we have our marginalized populations sometimes being what we might think of as a human shield, which is a sad kind of thing. They're marginalized, and they're the front line in that way.

At any rate, here are some of the other emphases that we're going to look at. House styles. There were particular ways of building houses.

Later on, we're going to look at something that's called the Israelite four-room house, standard way of dealing with things. In this country, you know, you had the 1950s structure or a split-level house. We have it too, but they certainly had particular house styles.

Looking at pottery. Pottery changes. Pottery sometimes was imported, and the way things develop in terms of what kinds of pottery were used, how it was decorated, important stuff to show some of this shifting of cultural and social emphases.

How burials occurred changed, too. I'll show you two rather different illustrations in a moment.

We see things that were used for decorating. Ivories, jewelry. We see metals.

We see evidence of destruction, and we also see this thing I've mentioned before, the inscribed pot sherd, the post-it note of antiquity. All of these things are important in terms of archaeology doing its work. So now, I hope a whole series of photographs will help a little bit.

We're going to start with our big stuff first. The walls, the fortifications, the water systems. This is a very interesting picture.

Here you have a wall, as you can see it today. It happens to be in the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem, in the old city of Jerusalem. I'll make a very long and fascinating story short at this point by simply telling you that between 1948 and 1967, the Jews who had lived inside those old city walls in the Jewish quarter were expelled from that area between 1948 and 1967.

When they came back after the Six-Day War in 1967, they got into this area that had been terribly, well, ruined, let's put it that way, and they were going to rebuild. But what an opportunity, because as they contemplated rebuilding their Jewish quarter, they thought, here's our chance to look archaeologically at what underlies this. So they did a lot of fascinating archaeological work.

This is just one small illustration of something from a wall that, by and large, seems to date to Hezekiah's time. Here's what it looked like back in the 1969 photograph, as I'd evidenced for you there. If you are looking at this, you may know that as the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

One visits the Jewish quarter now and sees structures, et cetera, that have been very wisely and architecturally beautifully built around. So this is a living area, but it has preserved this, and a number of other finds as well in situ. Here's what it looked like when you had Nachman Avigad, who's the archaeologist who was actually called out of retirement to work on this, and you get a sense of how big that wall is.

It was a defensive wall, so much more to say about that when we deal with Jerusalem. Here's a gate. Iron Age, remember that's the Israelite period, a place called Hazor.

We'll deal with that later on. It's in the northern part of the country. I've got Solomonic question mark written there.

Because you see, when we read 1 Kings 9 verse 15, it says Solomon fortified Gezer, Megiddo, and Hazor. So when archaeologists were first dealing with these sites, they found this very significant gate. By the way, how does this work? Well, you've got a

walkway going through from the outside to the inside of the city, like so, but on either side of that are rooms.

These would have been covered. They would have been used for all kinds of things, judicial, economic kinds of exchanges, and obviously, again, covered over. Lots of activity that you read about in the biblical text in terms of gates.

Standing Stones mentioned them and saw this right at the beginning of our discussion. It's a place called Gezer, a major site, just a reminder from a moment ago. That's one of those places that Solomon fortified.

This is long prior to Solomon's time, although, quite frankly, we don't know exactly what it's for. It's standing stones. And are they ever huge? They go from large at this end down to smaller at that end, probably middle Bronze Time.

And then here we have a whole bunch of standing stones at this place called Hazor, some sort of a religious site in both cases. That's where our artistry comes in. Burial, talked about burial.

And here's a very interesting, curious specimen. This is called an anthropoid sarcophagus. The word sarcophagus means flesh eater, and there are sarcophagi from all over our chronological span.

This happens to be significantly earlier. You'll notice that we're talking late Bronze, so we're talking about 1550 down to about 1200 BC. You see probably some Philistine influence because we see what looks like maybe a Philistine crest, but there's clearly some Egyptian influence in actually creating one of these things for a person to come to his final rest in.

We'll be talking about the place called Ekron. That was a Philistine city back in the time of our monarchy, coming into the monarchy period, judges to an early monarchy. Here's another illustration of a burial significantly later.

That previous one was the Late Bronze, which puts us well before 1000 BC. This one is the Second Temple Period, which means we're talking about a time frame when the Second Temple, rebuilt by the Jews in the 6th century BC, was not destroyed until the Romans came along. So, the Second Temple Period is that time frame, and here it's quite different, isn't it? We've got a cavern in there, and if you were to walk into that, you'd see kind of a chamber with some places for laying bodies, perhaps setting sarcophagi on them.

You also see some shafts that would go into the stone wall, and of course, our most interesting thing is this stone that rolls in front of that, which could be rolled away as

you continue to use and reuse and reuse this. This, of course, is reminiscent for us of gospel narratives, perhaps. Much more to say about that.

We'll deal with it when we deal with Jerusalem. Continuing on with some of the other things that archaeologists are interested in looking at, we mentioned water systems, and I talked about the fact that if you're dealing with a situation where you have to access your water, but you might have some political instability, you'd have a shaft or a tunnel. This is Megiddo, and at Megiddo, a major site, come back to that again as well, you would go down into a shaft, and then here is our horizontal tunnel going way out to the end where the water source would be.

That's horizontal. Here is a place called Gibeon, another extremely significant site. In fact, it was that one site that was important for the Gibeonite League, which gathered itself together against the forces of Joshua and the Israelites when the Israelites were first coming in to make the conquest.

Here, our initial access from the top of the tell, which would be up there somewhere, was down a shaft that was at an angle, and that angle would go down to the water source, which would have been here. You'll notice that we don't have in this place, by the way, this photograph is back from the 1970s, so in those days, A, we could go to Gibeon, which is not something we do right now, and B, we didn't even have flashlights along, we just lit candles to kind of see that. A couple more things.

Here's a shift for us in terms of the water system. Caesarea. We'll talk more about Caesarea a good deal, but notice our time frame.

Those preceding ones were from the Iron Age. This is a Herodian Roman time frame, 1st century, 2nd century AD, and when Caesarea, by the Mediterranean Sea, which you can see right out there, when Caesarea was built, Herod the Great's engineers are the ones who did it, it did not have a water source, a source of fresh water, just had the sea, and so they managed to create aqueducts in the true Roman classic form, bringing water from the foothills of Mount Carmel way back this way down to Caesarea to supply water. We'll do more with that, too, as time goes on.

These large cities that were brought in by, in terms of Hellenistic Roman influence, always had theaters, too, and so here you see one. Our opening slide that we saw about half an hour ago was from the place called Beit Shan. That's the Old Testament name.

The Hellenistic city's name was Scythopolis, and those columns that you saw were a fallen down temple, probably for Dionysius. Here was the city theater, so that temple would have been right about in this area. Here are seats from the theater, and this is simply the first of three tiers of seats, remains, and then further ones up there.

Estimates that this could hold about 7,000 people, so for those of you who know capacities of entertainment halls, this was a fairly significant one, and it represented very strong Hellenistic influence, Greco-Roman influence. More in terms of Roman presence, one of the things the Romans did was to improve on travel in many ways, so let's do the right one first. They set up a road system, and you still have in places gathered together.

There's some at the Israel Museum, and there are also other places, but there's a wonderful little place right along the highway where a number of these Roman milestones that have inscriptions have been gathered together, indicative of the fact that they were careful to try and figure out how many miles it was from here to there, to there, and to there. On the left, save that for a second here, we see an inscription, and if you look really carefully, you see a name that, if you're familiar with your Gospels, you recognize. Yes, the letters have been kind of squared off, but you see Pilatus right here.

Pontius is here, Tiberium is here, and so it's an inscription that was found in secondary usage. That means that whatever it was on had been destroyed, and then it was reused as a building block, and so this is telling us something very interesting. It's a reference to Pontius Pilate, probably building the Tiberium, maybe during the time of Tiberius the emperor.

A Tiberium would have been named after him. We'll do more with that when we talk about Caesarea as well. More artifacts.

This one's kind of fun. We're moving ahead now. That one was the first century.

We're moving ahead to the fourth century AD, and I want you to take a quick look at that. If I had an interactive class in front of me, I would say, what do you see? They would look very carefully, and first of all, they would see a wall that had been built across what is a mosaic. When you go visit Hamat Tiberius, which is where this is located now, that wall has been removed, and this thing's been covered, so it's been upgraded just a little bit, but even more interesting than all of this is that on a synagogue floor, synagogue floor, house of Jewish worship floor, after you have lions and an entrance inscription, you have a zodiac right here. Isn't that fascinating? And this is Helios, the sun god, riding along in his chariot.

Up here, we see some very significant standard symbols. We see a menorah. We see a shofar.

We see an incense shovel. We see a lulav. We see what probably housed the Torah scroll right here.

So an incredible mixture of symbols. Here's where doing archaeology gets really interesting, trying to interpret this. Lest you think this is an anomaly, there's a number of these around the country.

It seems to have been the standard pattern for doing synagogue floors long about the 4th century AD. A couple more things in terms of technological advances. Here's a late bronze oil lamp.

Put the oil there. Put the wick here. Light it.

Away you go. By the time you get to the Roman period, are you noticing centuries going by? Again, late bronze about 1550 to 1200 BC. Roman after 63 BC.

You got a covered container now. It doesn't spill quite so much. This one's really interesting, isn't it? Because you see those same symbols here that you saw on the top part of that synagogue floor, or at least some of them.

You see the menorah, the lampstand. You see an incense shovel here. So, obviously, this particular lamp is being used by some Jewish family.

A fairly recent discovery has been a seal impression. Let's look at it. Here it is, right here.

This is a transcription into modern Hebrew of what this says. It's belonging to Hezekiah now. Remember what's in brackets is not there.

It's being interpreted in. But notice what's mentioned next is Ahaz, king of Judah. Isn't that fascinating? Because we do know that Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah is the son of Ahaz.

Abula is a seal impression. Bulai is the plural. There have been a number of these found.

If you try and get the sense of the size of this, it is about a half an inch. So just hold up your thumb, and it's maybe about, oh, I don't know, two thirds of the size of your thumb. Eilat Mazar, very famous name in terms of doing archaeology of Jerusalem.

We'll talk much more about her. A couple more, even more recent discoveries. This was found earlier on, almost eight years ago or so.

But Eilat Mazar actually announced its discovery in 2018. And it seems to have most of the name of Isaiah on it. There's some question on how to interpret that, but it's fascinating stuff.

Here's a coin, particularly interesting coin, because it's depicting, notice we've got a different language now from what we were just seeing, Udaya, Judea, Copta. So this is obviously after the Romans have taken over Judea. That's all we're going to do in terms of artifacts.

You've got a little bit of a sense of the kinds of things that archaeologists look for. Let's do a little bit with methods of investigation, and then maybe our first hot topic. I've been talking about surface surveys as we've been going along thinking about tells and talking about them.

Actually, what's been interesting is that I mentioned 1967 when we were talking about Jerusalem and the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem. But once the Israelis not only took over Jerusalem after the 1967 war, they also took over what's called West Bank or Occupied Territory or Palestinian Authority or whatever you want to call it. But once that happened, teams of archaeologists and archaeological students went around all these areas in the West Bank, the hill country, and they walked around with plastic bags, picking up sherds that they found, potsherds, so that what can we discover? Well, you can find out the different representative types of pottery.

That helps you understand chronological change through these times. I have not given you a list of pottery types and how they change, but that's one of the things that you can see. You can see what is represented in those potsherds or what's not, where there might have been a gap in a settlement.

That's the first thing. Second way of doing this study is if you have enough money and you probably join together with several institutions and maybe get a good funder, you actually do excavation. There are different methods of excavation.

I will not get into that. The real question is figuring out intuitively where to excavate. We said before that very few of these sites are completely excavated, comprehensively excavated.

And so it takes a certain amount of, as I said, intuitiveness to figure out where to go. I was remembering Abraham Biran who is the one who said all excavation is destruction. Once you've excavated, you can't re-excavate that.

One of the classic, should I say, destructive excavations was the one done at Gezer early on in the 20th century by a man named Macalester, who, to all intents and purposes, as you read the accounts, brought in the equivalent of a bulldozer and was moving things around. Once he did that, he shoved stuff back again. So that was truly living up to this; all excavation is a destruction.

In addition to that, one then is going to work at dating, to the best of their ability, both the big structures you find and those smaller bits of artifacts that we've been

talking about. To do that, you look at how these layers of strata reflect what's being found. And although, as I said, we're not going to go into it, it would take a whole lecture just to talk about ceramics, how pottery changes, and what that reflects over time.

Sir Philander's Petrie, a fascinating guy back in the early 20th century, was our big person in terms of understanding that there were patterns and changes in these patterns that helped us deal with developing pottery and the chronology that's behind that. And then, more recently, this is where, again, Bill Deaver's definition of scientific study really comes in because now doing archaeology involves all sorts of lab analyses as well. Pollen, clay, bones, organic remains, and metals are all taken to the lab, or the lab is brought to the tell in some cases.

That is a very quick overview of methods and related study tools. I want to at least address our hot topic number one. Do we go with an understanding and a label of this whole study as biblical archaeology? This is what Albright did.

In fact, he was a very significant figure because he was doing archaeology with a Bible in one hand and the artifacts in the other. Very helpful, but as many people kind of in retrospect, began to say, it may be too dependent on the biblical text to interpret the archaeological remains rather than holding them together. William Deaver, the name I've been mentioning several times, a very significant archaeologist, was behind the move to suggest a different designation.

And that is, let's not call it biblical archaeology. Let's acknowledge that we're dealing with a broader, wider geographical, geopolitical culture or cultures, and therefore think in terms of Palestinian archaeology. So here are just some things we want to say about these.

I've kind of mentioned this already, but just to get ourselves on track. Doing biblical archaeology, by the way, is a very significant endeavor, and I'm certainly not trying to undercut it as I pose this hot topic, presupposes the Bible offers a good resource for the study of ancient Israel's history. That's going to be an important interface as we move into hot topic two if we have a little time to do that.

At any rate, then archaeology serves to corroborate biblical history, presuming then that biblical history does indeed reflect ancient Israel's history. To do this, then, there is an intentional corroboration of the biblical narratives in terms especially of political developments, monarchies, shifts in power struggles, etc. Corroborating that, sorry, correlating that with archaeological finds.

Albright did indeed claim that biblical archaeology should include all of the ancient Near East context, so he wasn't discounting that at all. Don't think that he was simply focused on the Bible land in a limited sense. In case you're interested in names,

Nelson Gluck, Yadin, and Abraham Biran all of these were very significant persons who were involved in this quest that we call biblical archaeology.

And, of course, the popular magazine *Biblical Archaeology Review* is still an extremely helpful resource for exploring some of these things. They, too, went through the question as to whether to change their name, and they stayed with *Biblical Archaeology Review*. As kind of a counterpart, here's kind of a thumbnail sketch in terms of how Syro-Palestinian archaeology folks were thinking.

Intentionally separating archaeology from biblical studies, not to keep them separate forever, but to have a dialogue between two disciplines rather than have archaeology be a handmaid, if you will, of biblical studies. Claimed to be more inclusive, and that meant, in many cases, putting a lot of emphasis also on early bronze stuff. Now, early bronze is important.

We're going to see, especially when we get into some areas of the country, why early bronze is so significant to look at. And then also, as you can see, going well into the Islamic period and the implications of that and a wider geographical scope. So this kind of sums that up.

Less emphasis on how archaeology corroborates biblical text, more emphasis on ancient Near Eastern cultures. Just recognizing that we have these two different ways of thinking about how to do archaeology. We have got time for at least a quick, quick overview of historical minimalism.

I'm going to help define that in a moment. I will say that the term minimalism is used by, well, outsiders looking at a certain way of dealing with the biblical historical narratives. People who do history that way, biblical history, do not intentionally like the name minimalism.

So just kind of keep that in mind. We have some significant names in this field. There's many others.

There's many others, but probably these are the ones who have early on made names for themselves, Thomas Thompson especially. So here's what it boils down to, and this is going to be important because it's going to interface very much with what archaeologists are doing. Dispute, and it is a dispute.

What is the nature of the biblical narratives about the history of Israel? What is the nature of the biblical narratives that purport to talk about the history of Israel? Is it an accurate picture of the rise of the nation of Israel from conquest and settlement through the period of the monarchy? Those of us who read the Bible and have taught the history of Israel or studied the history of Israel would say, yeah, it is, but there's a whole school that says no. The second question is, is it an ideal theological

construction with an agenda written during the Persian period, which is after the exile? So that's the dispute. If it's the latter, according to these scholars and others who join their ranks, and there's a fair number of them, Thomas Thompson, by the way, was a major figure starting in the 1970s with his suggestions.

If it is indeed the latter, it's useless as a historical source, especially in terms of a united monarchy, especially in terms of a united monarchy. That would be David Solomon particularly. So that is part of our issue.

Here is, related to it, high versus low chronology, because you see, if our minimalists have said the 10th century cannot be elaborated on or, sorry, we can't be informed by the biblical text in terms of the 10th century, that's David and Solomon. That's a united monarchy. And so what we do with dating some of these finds has everything to do with whether we attribute, for example, that gate at Hazor.

I had Solomonic question mark there. What we do with that, then, is going to determine whether we're going to accord historicity to those narratives. Here are our figures in terms of high chronology.

They would be our, yes, the biblical text has historical authenticity. Here's Israel Finkelstein, who's going to be a low chronology guy. He would date all these structures, major structures, examples, the gates at Gezer, Megiddo, Hazor, a century later and say Solomon wasn't responsible for them.

Oh no, it was the only dynasty that did them. Let's do first, and I can do these fairly quickly, minimalist positions. Said this already, no monumental architectural structures from the 10th century.

Bottom line. Jerusalem is the main focus here, but there's others as well. No evidence of centralized monarchy, no coherent history.

The literary form creates an image of the past. That's Peter Lemke. Second claim, all significant structures then are not David or particularly Solomon.

They come from a century later, 9th century, the Omri dynasty especially. Jerusalem didn't become a major town until after the destruction of Lachish in 701 and then, I've been intimating this already, David and Solomon are myths. Thomas Thompson's book is entitled *The Mythic Past*, and so you kind of know where that's going.

Well, unfortunately for that particular position, a man whose picture you saw a couple of slides ago, Avraham Biran, who was excavating Tel Dan, has done so for longer than any other archaeologist in the history of Israel. Avraham Biran, as part of that whole excavation process, found the Tel Dan inscription. 1993, the major portion found, 94, another part of it as well, and here you see in that ellipse the key

nail in the coffin in terms of one of the major arguments of the minimalists, because they said, guess what? David and Solomon are mythical.

Guess what? The Tel Dan inscription here says, House of David, Beit David. So here you go, the largest fragment, 1993, and by the way, the fact that it was found in secondary usage, in other words, reused in a wall in the city gate area, says that it's not a forgery. They found it covered by debris, so it's not a forgery, as was claimed by some people.

Two additional fragments, the smaller ones, were found later. It's in Aramaic, and basically what you have is the king of Aram Syria, probably Hadza El, is saying, and I've read this already, I killed Jehoram, probably, son of Ahab, king of Israel, and Ahaziah of the House of David, and it's this House of David reference that is so critical in that area. I'm going to run through these very quickly because it gets a little bit gnarly here.

Context addresses the king of Israel, that's important. House of David, who would it be if it's something other than an opposition to the House of Israel? It clearly does say House of David. Now, some of our minimalists read this as something else, like the House of the Beloved or the House of Adod, a kettle, but that's probably not the case because the king of Syria is claiming to have killed these people, so you probably are not killing the House of the Beloved, or the House of a kettle, most likely.

Interestingly enough, in the wider culture that we have there, you have House of a number of people being mentioned, so it's perfectly understandable that an inscription coming out of Syria would use that same format for referencing this particular little kingdom, House of David. Well, at any rate, that's enough on interpretive issues. I am going to do two more things, and then we'll stop for today.

These minimalists also have to deal with the fact that, guess what? Jerusalem appears as a fairly significant city in those Amarna texts, which we referred to when we did the earlier text background for historical geography. They also have to contend with Jerusalem having a monumental structure, a very significant one. Photographs coming shortly.

They likewise have to contend with a Merneptah stele, which dates well before the dynasties, the United Kingdom, but it mentions Israel as being in the land, because you see, just to go back in terms of our chronological thing, if David and Solomon are myths, then everything before is a myth, too, in the minds of minimalists, and yet here you have an Egyptian standing stone from a guy named Merneptah, a pharaoh, who says, oh, I did in Canaan and Ashkelon and Gezer, and you know I'm in old Israel, too, as a matter of fact. Here is this monumental structure, and you're looking at it and saying, really? Well, now it's hard to see it because you have a platform built

over it. There's the metal stuff, and you actually stand up here, and there's a worker, but here it is Eli Mazar.

There she is, right there. She's our major archaeologist working on this, before this super structure was built over it, and you do see the footprint of this thing as being fairly significant. Again, here is the whole footprint of a very significant structure in the city of David, where David, we learn, built his palace.

Makes sense. We're going to do Jerusalem later. You also have, in addition to that, these finds should not be here because that's referring to those two seal impressions that I referenced earlier on.

I moved them to that part of our presentation, but they're found right here. Here's our Temple Mount. One more.

When we said minimalists need to contend with Jerusalem finds, they also need to contend with a very interesting little place right here. Jerusalem's up in this area, and here it is right here that has been discovered. It has a massive wall.

It has two gates. We're going to come back to this site later on when we talk about this region itself, but it's got some things that are very indicative of a major site, probably representative of a significant centralized government. They date it, and it dates to long about 1000 BC.

So again, depending on how you make all this work, it seems like we have something other than what our minimalists and our low chronology people are saying. We have a David and Solomon who live in Jerusalem, who seem to control some fairly significant area. Now you're looking at this, and you're seeing some topography that's important.

We're going to get to that in a next lecture. For now, we will stop with the archaeology and we're going to move on to geography more widely of the Middle East, and then circle into how geography is affected by geology and topography. Enough for now.

This is Dr. Elaine Phillips and her teaching on Introduction to Biblical Studies. This is session 2, Focus on Archaeology.