

Dr. David Schreiner, Pondering the Spade, Session 3, Tell Dan Steele and the Taylor Prism, Narrow Convergences

© 2024 David Schreiner and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. David B. Schreiner in his teaching on Pondering the Spade. This is session 3, Tell Dan Steele and the Taylor Prism, Narrow Convergences.

Alright, we're in lecture 3 now and we're going to transition away from broad convergences, which is what we talked about when we talked about Mari and the Gilgamesh epic.

But now I want to talk about some narrow convergences and I want to begin to show you some narrow convergences through Tell Dan, the Tell Dan Steele, and Sennacherib's Annals and his Royal Records. We'll get into that in a second, but these are going to be a little bit different because these are going to bring us up to specific points, specific passages, specific things within the Old Testament. So hopefully, if you're still a little fuzzy on, well, what is exactly a broad convergence, hopefully by discussing narrow convergences, and these two in particular, we'll begin to, as a foil almost, you'll begin to kind of clarify what actually is a narrow convergence versus a broad convergence.

So again, we're going to talk about the Tell Dan Steele and the Taylor Prism. It's actually also going to jump us into some discussions about what's the nature of ancient history writing, ancient historiography, which seems like a simple question, is history writing? Well, it's not really that simple. It's very complicated and nuanced and we have to understand some certain things.

The Tell Dan Steele is a fancy term for a monument, and the Tell Dan Steele was found at Tell Dan during the 1993 and 1994 dig seasons, and it is an incomplete monument. We only have three fragments of varying sizes, and overall, it's generally not that big. But the discussion around the fragments, because of what was said, is robust, and it really did, probably second to maybe the discussion on Khirbet Qeiyafa, which is in more recent memory. This discussion on the Tell Dan Steele has just been amazing.

In many ways, it still continues today, but it has toned down an awful lot, but yeah, we'll get into that. It is an inscription written in, it's not written in Hebrew, it's written in Old Aramaic, and it's an inscription found on a very nice basalt stone monument. The fragments obviously show us that the stone monument has been broken, and each one of these fragments was actually found in what we call secondary usage, meaning that it was used as something else.

Two of them will be found as paving stones, another one will have been found as a stone literally sticking out of a bulk wall. So, the monument was broken into a billion pieces, and then each one of the pieces was used for other things. This is interesting because it shows us that the monument was desecrated, and somebody came along after the fact and wanted to kind of leave their imprint, and they saw a stone structure glorifying some Aramaic king.

And they thought, we don't need that here and we just break it into a billion pieces and use all the pieces for something else. But anyway, this is what I mean when I say it was destroyed and the fragments were reused. The issue with the Tell Dan Steele is that on the Tell Dan Steele, this is where the name David was first found outside of the Old Testament.

Now, what's interesting about this claim is that after The Tell Dan Steele was published, there was an article published that argued that David, and actually, I think it's the House of David, which is the same phrase on the Tell Dan Steele, was actually reconstructed and appeared in the Moabite stone. The Moabite stone has been around since the 19th century but nobody had known until recently that the House of David was on that. So, the Tell Dan Steele was not the earliest but it is the first time that the name David was mentioned outside of the text of the Bible.

This is very, very important, and it's really fueling debate because this kind of find happened at a very strategic moment in the history of scholarship. And let's be a little bit more precise here. This is interesting in this graphic.

This is the phrase in question, Beit, which is a house, Beit right there, Beit Yod Tav, Dalet Vav Dalet, House of David. So that phrase right there is actually a construct chain but that's what we are looking at. That is the first time David was mentioned outside of the Bible.

So naturally, whenever you have somebody that is as widely influential upon the content of the Old Testament, somebody that's as important, say Moses, Joshua, David, you know, anybody like that, when you start seeing their names mentioned outside Scripture, you are going to have every Tom, Dick, and Harry register an opinion on it. I mean if Facebook existed back then, social media existed back then, I think the internet would have exploded. It got, it was pretty intense, and that was before the era of social media.

But anyway, the responses to this find are all over the place, and I'm going to kind of unpack that a little bit here. But this was a bomb that dropped, and it dropped because, very, just a couple years before this find happened, you had some widely influential historians essentially make the statement that David was a mythical figure. That David didn't really exist, likely, we have no evidence of him outside the

Bible. Therefore, the Bible is just presenting this ideal character, this David guy, who probably didn't even exist, as some sort of standard.

Well, this find said, Nah, you're wrong, and really challenged some of those people. So, these responses, basically all the responses that happened in response to Tel Dan, they were very, very passionate. Alright? And we can actually interestingly enough, despite the diversity of all the responses, we can actually begin to kind of group the responses into a few categories.

And this is where I'm going to have the discussion go on here. One category was, well, is this inscription a forgery or not? Now, you guys may hear that and say, well, what kind of question is that? Of course, it's not a forgery. Look, I have said in a different lecture that archaeology today is very, very, very methodologically conscious.

It's methodologically obsessed, which means when you find something, you better tag it and document it threefold in case something happens to the first two documentations and records. So, we are obsessed with, where was it? What was the context of the find? What is it? Who found it? And so, this is a very, and actually in recent memory, I mean, this just happened within the past few months. Museum of the Bible people, the Green Foundation, they have just been told, ha, all your Dead Sea Scrolls, they're actually forgeries.

Alright? So, this is very serious; millions and millions and sometimes billions of dollars are being made off of forgeries. So, this is actually a very legitimate question. And so, this was a question that came up when this find, was it a forgery? And you actually had people that developed arguments.

One person in particular actually argued that the inscription was chiseled on the stone by the excavators after the fact. And it's just kind of a ludicrous accusation, but it's out there. And so thankfully, the scholarly consensus has kind of smacked these people, these conspiracy theorists, back into their place.

The consensus is that this is not a forgery. It is an authentic inscription. Alright? The difficulty is, what does it say and what does it mean? So, this forgery question, while legitimate, has been put to rest.

Another interesting question that does impact the content, the semantics of what we can have, is the relationship of the fragments. When the excavators initially found the three fragments, they put them in a certain location. And initially, people were like, okay, that makes sense.

But then you had other people who eventually came along and said, well, I don't know about that. Maybe we should readjust these types of things. And again, these

are legitimate questions because, look, it's three fragments of an inscription that was probably fairly large.

So, we just have a small piece of it. It's a very important piece. And man, I wish we could have some more of it, but we don't.

But the relationship of the fragments, fragments A, fragments B1, and fragments B2, how do they get put together? And so there is a debate out there, and you can find it in the literature. Certain people put pieces above other pieces. Certain people put one piece over here versus over there.

And, but again, the consensus largely sides with the excavators and says this is probably our best bet. But there is a debate out there. And so the origin of the inscription, basically, who was the benefactor? Who said, okay, let's make an inscription.

We want to memorialize this. The person in charge of the inscription, again, it's the benefactor of the inscription. That is a, that's a debate that's very fierce.

And there is a consensus, but the consensus is not nearly as definitive. The reality is that we do not have the person mentioned. We have people mentioned on this inscription, but we don't know who sanctioned the inscription.

We don't have that. The part of that, that part of the inscription, is gone. So we're left putting the clues together, all right? We're left with circumstantial evidence.

We're left with making educated guesses. And there are, there are possibilities that kind of floated to the surface. A lot of people have said, well, it's Ben-Hadad.

Well, the problem with Ben-Hadad, is it Ben-Hadad 1, 2, or 3? Ben-Hadad is an Assyrian king who shows up in the Old Testament, but Ben-Hadad, which literally means son of Hadad, Hadad is the chief Aramean deity. So, it's a son of their god. That's kind of a generic name.

What does that mean? And how many Ben, so the idea is, is Ben-Hadad really a specific name, or is it more like a royal title? Is it something else? Because there are at least two different Ben-Hadads, an argument can be made for a third Ben-Hadad in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, there are people who say, oh, it's Ben-Hadad 2, the second Ben-Hadad. Well, I, that's, there's a lot of, there's a lot of ambiguity there, but that is part of the discussion.

Where a lot of people land is this guy named Hazael. Hazael is this Aramean king that comes about around the time of Jehu. Some people speculate, and we'll get into this.

Some people speculate that Jehu may have been in cahoots with Hazael and overrun the Ahab, the Amorite dynasty.

It's a possibility. But Hazael comes to power around the time of Jehu, and really creates a lot of havoc for the Israelites during that time period. In fact, Hazael is first introduced in 1 Kings chapter 19, I do believe, where Elijah finds himself fleeing from Ahab and Jezebel, finds himself at Mount Sinai, and God basically says, what are you doing here? Go back and do your job.

You're going to anoint Jehu and Hazael as the next king of Aram. And so, Hazael doesn't come to fruition until later on after his death, but that's where we're first introduced to Hazael. Hazael is a very significant figure.

He's talked about in the Old Testament a lot. He's also talked about a lot in Neo-Assyrian records. So, this is a guy that's very popular, very widely known, and it's probably the case, based on chronology, based on what is said, that Hazael was the benefactor.

He's the guy who sanctioned this inscription initially. Again, we don't know. Educated guesses and many of the scholars would side with Hazael on that.

The one issue and the one discussion that has created the most controversy is the meaning of that construct chain that I showed to you just a few moments ago. The Beit Yod Tav, Dalet Vav, Dalet. Now, if you know anything about Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Hebrew was originally written as only consonants.

Internal vowels developed later as the language developed. But the vowels are little points in your text, mostly. And when you look at these inscriptions, these writings during the Iron Age outside of the text of your scripture, none of them have vowels.

There's some evidence for internal vowels, but for the most part, it's just consonants. So, the consonants that are in question on this inscription are Beit Yod Tav, which translates to House of, and then Dalet Vav Dalet, which are the consonants associated with the proper name of David. So literally, the construct chain reads House of David.

Now, again, as I mentioned, this find happened right about the time when some very influential scholars were questioning the historical legitimacy of David. Was he even a real figure? Was he a mythical figure? And so you have this inscription that comes along that references David as a historical person and attributes him to a lasting dynasty, which is exactly what the Old Testament does. How are these people who are questioning the historicity of David as a person going to react? Well, they reacted very poorly.

And it really becomes a case study in how far you are going to go to make sure that your ideas don't die out to the point where you are going to actually sound absurd. Because some of the ideas were the Dalet Vav Dalet was actually not David, but Dode, which is some sort of god, a deity of love or something along those lines. It really gets kind of comical to the point where you step back and scratch your head and say you're just coming up with ideas because you do not want to be; you do not want to admit that you're probably wrong. But that's essentially what it was.

There was a long, lengthy conversation. What does this phrase mean? Again, the consensus has landed on it means what it looks like it means. House of David.

And so, the question has shifted. Actually, the question has shifted. This Tel Dan Stele is still a very important textual witness in historical discussions about the Old Testament.

But the discussion of whether or not David actually existed, whether or not David was actually the founder of a historical dynasty, that's not the conversation that's happening right now. Instead, the conversation is happening around issues of historiography and the nature of history writing. In particular, does the Tel Dan Stele contradict Scripture in its claim that Jehu was the one who eradicated the Amorite dynasty? Because when you read in 2 Kings chapters 8, 9, and 10, it's Jehu who silenced the Amorite family, Ahab's family, silenced them all, silenced Jezebel, killed all the kids, eradicated the dynasty because that's what he was supposed to do.

He was anointed to that. In this text, though, the Aramean benefactor appears to be the one claiming the defeat and the destruction and killing of the Amorite dynasty. So, whose team you want? Team Bible or Team Tel Dan Stele? And so that's where the conversation has shifted.

It's moved from David, dynasty, to who killed him. So, it's still in play. It's still being discussed, but it's being discussed for different reasons.

And we'll get back to that because I think that's important. I think that's a legitimate argument to have, but it does force us to wrestle with the dynamics of what is ancient history writing? And how is ancient history writing different than modern history writing? Because we like our history writing. We like our history writing to be scientific, fact-based, etc.

But when you deal with ancient history writing, you deal with some things that, quite frankly, make me nervous. But it's the reality, and I can't ignore them. So, again, all of this silenced the debate of whether or not David was a historical figure.

And again, just as I mentioned, just to kind of put it up on a slide here, it frames the discussion, the conversation around the Tel Dan Stele now frames the discussion of

the Bible's historical value in a new way. As I mentioned, the historical claims of the Stele are in contradiction of 2 Kings. And who killed the Amorite dynasty? Who silenced them? Was it Jehu who was an Aramean king? Or, which is somewhere where I'm probably going to take us, is there something more nuanced going on here? Is there something else that the Bible's not denying, but the Bible's merely shifting its focus away for theological reasons? Again, this will force us to consider the nuances of historical writing in an ancient Near Eastern context. So, with all of that said, put that on pause.

We'll come back to this, because what we need to look at now is something called the Taylor Prism. Alright? The Taylor Prism is basically one copy of Sennacherib's royal historical account, his annals, if you will. Okay? Sennacherib has at least three copies of his sanctioned official history of his reign, and they are found in the Taylor Prism, the Jerusalem Prism, and the Chicago Prism.

Now, text critics have looked at all three copies, and they've determined that this is essentially the same document. There are subtle differences, minor differences, and scribal variations, but it's nothing that fundamentally suggests that we're dealing with different documents. Okay? It seems to be that Sennacherib, at some point, sanctioned his royal history, and he said, okay, make at least three copies of it.

But these accounts, his battle accounts, what he did as a king, this isn't just fixated on one year. There are multiple years discussed here. They appear on what are called clay prisms, and the prism developed in such a way as to, essentially, the prism developed as a shape because it could contain more writing.

It's very interesting. As a side discussion, the nature of the medium of historical reflection in Mesopotamia. They wrote on clay, clay cylinders, clay tablets, and those types of things, and it's interesting to kind of consider, okay, why did they change from this to this? But the clay prism seems to have become important sometime during Sennacherib's reign because of the fact that it could hold more writing.

Okay? This is a picture of the Taylor Prism here, and it's named for a British colonel. All right? It's named for a British colonel who came into possession of it. We're not really sure how he came into possession of it.

We just know that by a certain time period, for a certain point in time, there was a publication of the content by the British Museum. So, it seems to be that the British colonel came into possession of it associated with the excavations at Mesopotamia, and then at some point, he pawned it off to the British Museum, where they had it and published the contents of it. Again, Taylor Prism in association with the Chicago Prism and the Jerusalem Prism.

Okay? And that's eventually how it came to be. Again, a lot of ambiguity on the provenance of the find, how the find came to be, and so this does make archaeologists a little nervous because there's just no, for lack of a better term, there's no paper trail. You know, put a paper trail on it.

There's none of that. But the content of it is really, really important. So again, this document, this cylinder prism here, recounts the exploits of Sennacherib, who was a very, very famous king.

He was the successor to Sargon II. Sargon II, no, no, no, not Sargon II. Shalmaneser V, I'm sorry.

Sargon II gave way to Shalmaneser V, who gave way to Sennacherib. Sargon II is likely the person who sacked Samaria in 722. There's some discussion about that, whether it was Sargon II or Shalmaneser V. But Sennacherib came to power at the end of the 8th century and just was, yeah, he just, he did a lot.

This prism will recount that. And one of it, one of the sections talks about his third military campaign. So, one of the most tenuous time periods for any empire was at the time of political transition.

And as mighty as the Neo-Assyrian Empire was, this was still a very, very real reality. When the Assyrians switched kings, when one king died off and gave way to a new king, it was at that moment of transition where all these little vassal kingdoms who were disenfranchised with the Neo-Assyrian Empire, they said, we are going to rise up in rebellion. And so for the first three years of Sennacherib's reign, he was essentially dealing with the rebellions that came to pass with his ascension to the throne.

But in year three, his third, I should say his third military campaign, when his third military campaign, he set his eyes on the region of Syria-Palestine. Because what had happened was a coalition had formed that included Hezekiah, that included some Philistines, that included some other polities there, and they started to rise up. They started to dispossess pro-Assyrian kings.

They began to take them off, what do we call this now, the CIA regime changes, if you will. They instituted some regime changes. And so the Assyrians didn't like this.

And so eventually, when Sennacherib had his ducks in a row in Mesopotamia proper, he said, okay, I got to go down to Syria-Palestine. I got to go down to Syria-Palestine, not only because we've been trying to get to Egypt for all these years, but I got to deal with this pain in the neck rebellion and deal with this guy named Hezekiah. And so the text recounts his movement, his systematic movement across the northern

edge of the Fertile Crescent, down the coastal plain, across the Shephelah and up toward Jerusalem.

You can track it and you can tell how he was, you know, as he was going along, he was dealing with the problem areas and putting Assyrian appointees back in power. But he's making his way towards Hezekiah and towards Jerusalem. And so his third military campaign actually ends with him and his efforts in Judah and Jerusalem, okay? But again, this third military campaign was a response to the rebellions.

Again, you see him work through Phoenicia, down the coast, hit the coastal plain with the Philistines, and then bisects the Shephelah across the valleys in order to get to Jerusalem and Judah. He's deposing kings and installing pro-Assyrian kings all along the way. In the process of doing this, he utterly devastates Judah.

We know this from the archaeological record. He leaves a wake of destruction in his path, all right? And if he accomplishes one thing, he accomplishes the crippling of the Judean economy and the Judean social structures, and the Judean infrastructure. If he can boast one thing, he can boast that.

But what happens is that he sets up shop at Lachish. And Lachish, as I've mentioned in a previous lecture, is one of the major administrative centers in Judah. Remember, at this time, Israel is no longer existing.

There is no Israel. Israel was sacked and deported in 722. 701, it's just Judah.

And so, Lachish is a very, very important center. It appears that Sennacherib makes his camp right outside of Lachish, and he destroys Lachish. And how do we know this? Well, thanks to Austin Henry Laird, we found his wall decorations on his palace in Nineveh.

And those wall decorations are gold overlays that depict the grotesque siege warfare that Sennacherib subjected Lachish to. I mean, there are some nasty, nasty pictures. People being impaled, people being filleted, piles of heads, et cetera.

I mean, this is visual rhetoric at its best. The reason why it was the wall decorations of his palace was that he wanted to intimidate anybody who stepped foot in that palace in every way possible. And those pictures would remind everybody who stood in waiting that this is the individual who you are going to see.

If you cross him, this is what you will experience. And it's interesting, folks. It is interesting that he chooses to emphasize and he chooses to celebrate the destruction of the second biggest city of Judah and not its capital.

So, this is important as we'll get to here in a second. But all of this, the Taylor Prism, Sennacherib's annals, his recounting. Remember, the Taylor Prism gives Sennacherib's account of his siege of Jerusalem and Judah.

It adds another layer of sophistication, ambiguity, and difficulty to the events that surround 701. And, in fact, we've got multiple accounts of this event in the Bible itself, all right? Isaiah, chapters 36 through 39, talks about this. And even within 2 Kings, there's a debate of, are we, are there multiple accounts here? Is this a singular account? Because what do you do with 2 Kings, chapter 18, verses 13 through 16, and 2 Kings, chapter 8, verses 37 through chapter 19? Because 2 Kings chapter 18, verses 37 through chapter 19 give us the images that we grew up on in Sunday school.

This is the flannel board account of the messenger of the Lord going out in the middle of the night, slaying 185,000 Assyrians like that. So, Hezekiah wakes up the next morning and oh my goodness, they're all dead. And we can thank the Lord for that miraculous salvation.

But yet, those three verses in chapter 18, verses 13 through 16, seem to suggest that Hezekiah capitulated. It talks about how he stripped the overlays, the gold overlays of the temple. He stripped all the precious metals from the royal storehouses and the royal banks, et cetera.

And he gave them to the Assyrians. So, what are we talking about here? Did Hezekiah capitulate, or did he stand firm? Was Jerusalem saved, or was Assyria paid off? So, there's a difficulty here, even within the text. And where Sennacherib's account does is it just increases that difficulty because Sennacherib will talk about how he locked Hezekiah up like a bird in a cage, how he accepted tribute payment after the fact, all these men, slaves and goods, et cetera.

Sennacherib will talk about how he accepted all of that from Hezekiah while not talking about the destruction of Jerusalem. He'll brag about the 46 cities or 48 cities that he destroyed, but he won't brag about the destruction of Jerusalem. So how do we put all of this stuff together? What's going on here? What happened? Well, we know for a fact that Jerusalem stood, that Jerusalem during this time period wasn't burnt to the ground.

We know that Hezekiah continued to be king. So, we know that Sennacherib was unsuccessful up to a certain point. But how can all of these things be synthesized? Can they be synthesized? What are we doing here? What is all of this evidence brought to us by archaeology, brought to us by the earliest excavations in Mesopotamia? What is all of this doing to our understanding of scripture? Is it clarifying it, or is it producing a situation that can't be explained? How can we trust scripture? Is it telling us the truth? So, you see all the implications here, folks.

You see the problems and the difficulties that are created. You can see now how both the Tel Dan Stele, who killed the Amorites, was it Jehu, was it Hazael, or was it something else? What happened to Jerusalem in 701? You can see how all of these things, thanks to archaeology, are forcing us to wrestle with the nature of historical writing, ancient historical writing. What's the role of rhetoric in ancient historical writing? What's the nature of literary artistry in historical writing? Because we, as modern historians, don't like rhetoric.

We want our history to be straight, fact-laced, boom, give it to me, baby, boom, boom, boom. But that's not what we have, apparently. Because yes, King's is historical writing.

Yes, Sennacherib's accounts are historical writings. But they're different. I believe, and just to kind of tip my hand and kind of try to wrap things up here, I believe that a synthesis is possible.

But it's possible if we understand the fickleness of language and rhetoric. If we understand that rhetoric was an important factor in the way the ancients wrote their history. If we understand that language itself can be elusive by nature.

If we understand those things, then I think we can get to a point where we're beginning to respect the genre of ancient historical writing, and things are not necessarily, well, whose team are you on? We don't create this dichotomy of, oh, is it this or is it this? And if it's this, it can't be this. It's got to be one or the other because that's difficult. Because I believe that if we come on to these issues like that, where it's either this or this, and it's black and white, and there's nothing gray here.

I think if we address the problem with that, I think we're going to get ourselves into an apologetic problem. Because we can side with the Bible, we can say the Bible's true.

The Bible's account is the one that matters. But if we say that, are we engaging an intellectual, burying our head in the sand? We're just going to pretend like this stuff doesn't exist over here. That's the apologetic problem.

We can defend scripture without ignoring things that have to be addressed. So this is where I want to go. And so for the next couple moments, I just kind of want to tease some things out for you.

And I talk about this a little bit more in my book. And if you want to have some more definitive statements on that, I would encourage you to read the chapters on the Taylor Prism and the Taylor-Dance Dealer. But what happens if what we're doing here happens if this evidence from archaeology is forcing us to live within the gray?

What happens if this stuff is good because it helps us to wrestle with the dynamics of the genre? What would happen if ancient history writing was as much about emphasizing a particular point while not pretending as if things don't exist? So, bear with me here.

There's a verb that's used to describe Jehu's efforts in eradicating the Omride line in 2 Kings chapter 9. It's not a common verb, but it's a verb that appears in a specific derived stem. And it means conspire. He conspired.

Now, there's no agent involved. There's no agent explicitly stated. We don't know if Jehu conspired with the prophets.

We don't know if Jehu, we don't know who Jehu conspired with. But the text tells us that Jehu conspired to kill off the Omrides. All right? The most immediate example is that he did conspire with the prophets because we have just read in that context, we have just read about a prophet coming from Elisha to anoint Jehu with the expressed purpose of anointing him as the divinely anointed assassin.

So that's the most obvious agent in that conspiracy. But what happens if there's something else going on? What happens if Jehu is also conspiring with somebody else? Because of the Aramaic in the Tel Dan Stele, it's difficult to associate an active sense with a passive sense. So, that verb in the Tel Dan Stele that talks about this Aramaic king killing, the Omride, it can also be read passively so that the Omrides were killed by the Aramaic.

It could make the statement that the Omrides were killed off. That passive idea allows us this wiggle room, which is so important in royal rhetoric, that wants to talk about the greatness of the king. So, is the text in the Old Testament creating this type of wiggle room that allows us to see multiple agencies involved, multiple agencies converging upon a specific, complicated, complex historical event? Look, the assassination of the Omride dynasty would have left a huge impact.

The Omrides, for all the things that they did wrong, they stabilized the region and they allowed both Israel and Judah to develop, to progress, and to prosper. And when you take that dynasty out, you are automatically going to take that region and plunge it into chaos. That is a complicated historical event that has wide-reaching ramifications.

So, what happens if there are multiple agencies, Aramean agencies, working with other Israelite factions, all for a unified intention, all for a unified goal, and that is to remove the Omrides from the equation? So, it's not whose team you want. You want Team Bible or Team Tel Dan Stele, but rather, how do these two things converge to give us clarity on what actually may have happened? And I think something similar can be said about the events at 701 BCE. The Bible acknowledges the fact that

Hezekiah's defiance had huge implications for Judean society and Judean infrastructure.

Yes, there was an exchange of tribute because while Jerusalem stood, they were not destroyed. And yes, Sennacherib failed. And the miracle of the event, the miracle of 701 BCE, was more about how Jerusalem stood when it shouldn't have.

And so, the Assyrians talk about their efforts in a specific way, emphasizing the fact that Sennacherib received all of this tribute, he received all of these slaves, he devastated Judean society, all while trying to say, hey, don't look over here, don't look at the 800-pound elephant in the room, because that 800-pound elephant in the room is this. Hezekiah wasn't deposed from the throne, and Jerusalem wasn't sacked. So, really, how successful was Sennacherib? So, Sennacherib's got to deal with that.

He's got to deal with that. And so, he tells the scribes, okay, focus, focus on something else. All right, sleight of hand, if you will.

And the Old Testament is saying, yes, this nation, this army, operating at the height of its militaristic efficiency, was miraculously repelled. And that's the miracle. And it's very, very interesting.

So, all that to say, I think we need to move away from this idea that it's got to be one or the other. In these instances, demonstrated by the Tel Dan Stele and demonstrated by the Taylor Prism, in these instances where it seems that, uh-oh, we got a contradiction here. No, no, no, no.

Let's not settle with this idea of a contradiction. Let's do the hard work, all right? Let's do the hard work and look at what the text actually says. What is the text demanding of us? And what is, and how is that clarified by the evidence of archaeology? In this instance, the textual evidence, thanks to archaeology.

Again, it's about how archaeology and the Old Testament and the content of the Old Testament converge to potentially clarify very complicated events and situations. So, in our final lecture, we'll get more about these broad and narrow convergences and some things to think about. I mean, I certainly don't offer that reconstruction with any sort of claim of definitive expertise, but it is something that I think it's a discussion that's hard and it's a discussion that has to be had.

But in our last lecture, we're going to get a number of different, we're going to go rapid fire and we're going to get a number of different finds, and we're going to talk about the nature of their convergences.

This is Dr. David B. Schreiner in his teaching on Pondering the Spade. This is session 3, Tell Dan Stele and the Taylor Prism, Narrow Convergences.