

Dr. Jonathan Greer, Archaeology and the Old Testament, Session 4, Hebrew Kingdoms Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Greer, Archaeology and the Old Testament, Session 4, Hebrew Kingdoms, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Jonathan Greer's lecture on archaeology and the Old Testament, specifically focusing on the Hebrew kingdoms, explores the complexities of dating and interpreting archaeological evidence related to the reigns of **Saul, David, and Solomon**. The lecture highlights the ongoing debate between **high and low chronologies**, impacting interpretations of monumental architecture and the extent of Solomon's empire. It further examines the **archaeological and biblical accounts of the Northern and Southern kingdoms**, including key figures like Jeroboam I and Hezekiah, referencing significant inscriptions such as the Tel Dan Stele and the Mesha Stele. Finally, the lecture previews a future discussion on broader aspects of Israelite culture and social structures.

**2. 19 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Greer, Archaeology and the Old Testament, Session 4 –
Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (Introduction & Languages → Introductory Series →
Archaeology).**



**Greer_Archaeology_
Session04.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Greer_Arch_EN_Session 04.pdf":

Briefing Document: Archaeology and the Hebrew Kingdoms

Main Themes:

- **The Transition to Monarchy:** The lecture examines the shift in ancient Israel from a tribal, nomadic society to a monarchy, acknowledging that this transition is a subject of ongoing scholarly debate. There's a movement away from a traditional understanding of monarchy as a medieval paradigm with grand structures towards a view that is more closely aligned with nomadic social structures.
- **Challenges in Archaeological Interpretation:** The document highlights the difficulties in connecting the biblical narrative of the Hebrew kingdoms with archaeological findings. The primary challenge lies in the lack of inscriptional evidence from the 11th and 10th centuries BC, specifically mentioning the absence of inscriptions mentioning a kingdom of Israel, Judah, or figures such as David and Solomon. This absence leads to reliance on other forms of evidence, particularly monumental architecture, which is then subject to intense debate about chronology.
- **The High vs. Low Chronology Debate:** A central theme is the ongoing debate about dating archaeological finds. The "high chronology" traditionally dates monumental architecture to the 10th century BC (Solomon's time), while the "low chronology" re-dates it to the 9th century BC (the Omride dynasty). This debate has significant implications for the historical interpretation of the early Israelite monarchy. The main difference is roughly a 7,500 year span which is the error range for C14 dating, the method the debate primarily rests on.
- **The Significance of Monumental Architecture:** The lecture details the importance of monumental architecture, such as casemate walls, six-chambered gates, pillared storehouses, and large cisterns, in the archaeological debate. These structures, particularly those found at sites like Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer, have been central to the traditional understanding of a powerful Solomonic kingdom but are now subject to chronological reassessment.

- **The Role of Inscriptions:** The document emphasizes the crucial role of inscriptional evidence, particularly for confirming historical figures and events. The Tel Dan Stele (mentioning the "house of David") and the Mesha Stele (referring to the Omrides and potentially the house of David) are presented as key examples. The Assyrian records, along with Egyptian records like the Shashank campaign list, are also used to cross-reference the biblical timeline.
- **The Northern and Southern Kingdoms:** The lecture discusses the split of the united monarchy into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, exploring the political and religious dynamics of each. The Omride dynasty of the north is highlighted as a powerful force in the region. The southern kingdom, Judah is noted for its greater longevity because of the temple in Jerusalem and its connection to the "house of David" lineage.
- **The Assyrian and Babylonian Invasions:** The document also details the impact of the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian empires on the Israelite kingdoms, including the capture of Samaria, the campaigns of Sennacherib, and the eventual destruction of Jerusalem.

Key Ideas and Facts:

- **Monarchy's Origins:** The shift to monarchy may have been influenced by the need for a unified military response to the Philistine threat. This led to the appointment of Saul as the first king, followed by the complex figure of David, a transitional figure in Israel's history.
- **Lack of Contemporary Inscriptions:** The absence of inscriptional evidence from the 11th and 10th centuries mentioning David, Solomon, or kingdoms of Israel/Judah is a major challenge for connecting archaeology to the biblical narrative. The first mention of Israel outside of the Bible is the Merenptah Stele, but then not again until the 9th century.
- **Shishak's Campaign:** The Egyptian campaign of Shashank (biblical Shishak), provides some correlation to biblical place names during the transition between Solomon and Rehoboam, suggesting some kind of presence in the region during that time period.
- **Solomon's Kingdom:** The biblical depiction of Solomon as a powerful king with a vast empire is questioned due to the lack of contemporary archaeological and inscriptional evidence. The debate over the dating of monumental architecture is central to this discussion.

- **Radiocarbon Dating Challenges:** The radiocarbon dating is cited as a major source of debate due to its error range, which roughly corresponds to the chronological differences between the high and low chronologies. This leads to competing interpretations of the same data.
- **City of David Excavations:** Recent excavations in the City of David have uncovered massive architecture dated to periods earlier than the 9th century, potentially supporting a 10th-century Solomonic presence. However, the area's political context adds complexity to the interpretation.
- **Kirbit Qeiyafa:** The discovery of the early 11th or 10th century site, Kirbit Qeiyafa, is a significant site to argue for an early monarchy with the ability to project power out into the valleys of Israel.
- **Copper Production in the Arava Valley:** Evidence of extensive metal production in the Arava Valley dating back to the 11th and 10th centuries is significant, indicating a complex social organization that may not align with a traditional understanding of a monarchy. The question is raised of whether a nomadic model of clan organization is more suitable for understanding this.
- **Tel Dan Stele:** The Tel Dan Stele explicitly mentions the "house of David," providing crucial evidence for the existence of the Davidic dynasty, though it originates from a time after David and Solomon.
- **Mesha Stele:** The Mesha Stele mentions the Omride oppression of Moab, confirming the dynasty's power and presence in the region. It also mentions the house of David, but this is a more debated reconstruction of the fragmented text.
- **Omride Power:** The Omride dynasty is depicted as a major power in the region, with extensive building projects that continue through to the 8th century, with or without accepting the high or low chronology.
- **Jehu and the Black Obelisk:** The mention of Jehu on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, potentially depicted kneeling before him, provides another point of connection between the biblical and archaeological record.
- **Hezekiah's Seal Impression:** The discovery of seal impressions of King Hezekiah adds an important detail to the historical record, as well as the corroborating inscriptions of Sennacherib.

- **Sennacherib's Campaign:** The lecture notes the close correspondences between Sennacherib's inscriptions and the biblical account of his campaign against Hezekiah, particularly his siege of Lachish. Sennacherib claims to have imprisoned Hezekiah in Jerusalem, while the biblical account says an angel destroyed his army.
- **Judah's scribal activity:** The growth in scribal activity during the time of Hezekiah and Josiah is highlighted as a potential period in which biblical texts were composed and compiled.
- **Babylonian Destruction:** The Neo-Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the temple under Nebuchadnezzar II is also documented archaeologically.

Quotes:

- *"It used to be thought that we'd think about the monarchy in terms of some kind of medieval paradigm that's marked out by monumentality, grand structures, and elaborate hierarchies, where new research is suggesting that it's a lot closer relationship to some of the social structures that are operational within these similar societies that practice nomadism."* (Introduction to the monarchy)
- *"So, during the 11th and the 10th centuries, there isn't any mention of a kingdom of Israel or a kingdom of Judah or David or Solomon or any such entity that we might connect with directly with the biblical text."* (Lack of inscriptional evidence)
- *"So, when we turn to archaeology, most of the connection with Solomon has come from a connection of monumental architecture that springs on the scene in what has traditionally been dated to the 10th century, and the problem is that there is a raging debate over the 10th century"* (Introduction to the architecture debate)
- *"There do seem, at least to my mind, many archaeological factors that would lead one to lean toward the high chronology, or at least Mazar's modified conventional chronology, that maybe asks us to shift our dates a bit while still recognizing a space between these different architectural phases that have traditionally been understood as the 10th and the 9th century."* (Dr. Greer's tentative view on chronology)
- *"The Tel Dan Stele found at Tel Dan, yes. The Mesha Stele, the first of which, the Tel Dan Stele, explicitly mentions the house of David."* (Significance of the inscriptions)

- *"So, this is in the complementary relationship of archaeology and the Bible. Some of the details are not one-to-one, but very much this large picture of convergence of biblical and archaeological data."* (The goal of understanding history and text together)

Conclusion:

This lecture highlights the ongoing and complex nature of archaeological interpretation in understanding the history of the Hebrew kingdoms. It emphasizes the need to consider multiple lines of evidence, including monumental architecture, inscriptions, and radiocarbon dating, while also acknowledging the inherent limitations and debates within the discipline. The lecture also suggests a need to re-evaluate our paradigms about monarchy in that period, moving away from medieval notions and thinking in more nomadic terms, as that would make more sense of the archaeological evidence in the region. It shows that the Bible is often complimentary with the archaeological record while still not being a direct one-to-one correlation.

4. Greer, Archaeology and the Old Testament, Session 4, Hebrew Kingdoms

The Hebrew Kingdoms: A Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. What is the main challenge in correlating the biblical narratives of the early monarchy with the archaeological record?
2. Describe the "high chronology" and "low chronology" debate concerning the dating of monumental architecture in ancient Israel.
3. What role does the city of Kirbet Qeiyafa play in the discussion of the early monarchy?
4. What is the significance of the Tel Dan Stele and the Mesha Stele?
5. How do the biblical accounts of Solomon's empire and the archaeological evidence challenge each other?
6. What does the biblical narrative suggest about the reasons for the split of the kingdoms into Northern Israel and Southern Judah, and what is the archaeological evidence for this split?
7. How did the Omride dynasty demonstrate their power, according to both the Bible and the archaeological record?
8. How did King Hezekiah prepare for the Assyrian invasion, and what archaeological evidence supports these preparations?
9. What was the fate of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and how does archaeology confirm the biblical record?
10. What role did the Neo-Babylonian Empire play in the history of the Southern Kingdom of Judah?

Answer Key

1. The main challenge is the lack of contemporary inscriptional evidence that mentions the kingdom of Israel, Judah, or figures like David and Solomon during the 10th and 11th centuries BCE. This absence makes it difficult to confirm the biblical descriptions of their rule.

2. The "high chronology" traditionally dates monumental architecture, like casemate walls and six-chambered gates, to the 10th century BCE, attributing them to the reign of Solomon. The "low chronology" re-dates these structures to the 9th century BCE, associating them with the Omride dynasty of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
3. Kirbet Qeiyafa is a fortified site from either the 10th or 11th centuries BCE that provides potential evidence of a centralized government existing outside of Jerusalem during the time of the early monarchy. Its presence suggests a unified military and administrative presence in the valleys outside the hill country.
4. The Tel Dan Stele, an Aramean inscription, refers to the "house of David," thus providing extra-biblical confirmation of a Davidic dynasty in the 9th century BCE. The Mesha Stele, from the Moabites, mentions their oppression by the Omride dynasty, linking a biblical account with the historical record.
5. The biblical narrative portrays Solomon's empire as vast and powerful, marked by grand building projects and wealth. However, archaeological evidence, especially the absence of inscriptions from Solomon's time, leads some to question if the empire was that impressive.
6. The biblical narrative describes a split due to Rehoboam's refusal to listen to the people's demands, leading Jeroboam I to establish the Northern Kingdom, with cult places at Dan and Bethel. Archaeology confirms the presence of these sites, especially at Dan, as well as the different building patterns in the North and South.
7. The Omride dynasty demonstrated its power through extensive building projects like the city of Jezreel and architecture at Megiddo. The Mesha Stele also corroborates their dominance over Moab and their regional power.
8. King Hezekiah prepared for the Assyrian invasion by constructing the Broad Wall and digging the Hezekiah Tunnel to safeguard the water supply. He also stored up goods, as evidenced by *lamelek* jar handles, and all of this is supported by archaeological evidence.
9. The Northern Kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Neo-Assyrian Empire, and though extensive destruction evidence is missing from Samaria, textual evidence from the Bible and Assyrian records corroborate this destruction.
10. The Neo-Babylonian Empire ultimately conquered and destroyed Jerusalem, including the temple in 587/586 BCE. The Babylonian Chronicle records the first

incursion in 597 BCE, with evidence found in Babylon of Judahites living there in exile.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer each question with an organized and well-supported essay.

1. Discuss the methodological challenges and complexities of using both biblical text and archaeology to understand the history of the early Hebrew kingdoms (Iron I and early Iron II), particularly during the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon.
2. Analyze the significance of the "high chronology" versus "low chronology" debate in the context of the 10th century and its impact on the interpretation of the Israelite monarchy.
3. Evaluate the reliability and limitations of using extra-biblical sources, such as Egyptian and Assyrian inscriptions, to verify biblical narratives about the Hebrew kingdoms, and discuss the benefits and problems in this interdisciplinary approach.
4. Compare and contrast the development and political importance of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, focusing on both biblical and archaeological evidence to highlight their different trajectories.
5. Discuss the interplay between archaeology, political motivations, and biblical interpretation, using the example of the ongoing debates about excavations in the City of David.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Casemate Walls:** A type of defensive wall construction consisting of two parallel walls with cross-walls dividing the space into compartments that could be filled with rubble or used for storage or other purposes.
- **High Chronology:** An archaeological dating system that assigns monumental architecture (casemate walls, six-chambered gates) to the 10th century BCE and the time of Solomon.
- **Low Chronology:** An archaeological dating system that re-dates monumental architecture to the 9th century BCE and attributes it to the Omride dynasty of the Northern Kingdom.
- **Merneptah Stele:** An Egyptian inscription dating to the late 13th century BCE that contains the earliest known mention of "Israel," a people group.
- **Omrides:** The ruling dynasty of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, whose power and influence are attested to both biblically and archaeologically.
- **Radiocarbon Dating (C14):** A method for dating organic materials by measuring the decay of carbon-14, which is subject to error ranges.
- **Shishak:** An Egyptian pharaoh, mentioned in the Bible, whose campaign into the Levant is a point of reference for dating the destruction layers in archaeological sites.
- **Six-Chambered Gate:** A specific architectural design for city gates characterized by six guard rooms, often associated with the Solomonic period in traditional interpretations.
- **Stepped Stone Structure:** A large retaining wall built in the City of David used to prevent the city from sliding down into the Kidron Valley.
- **Tel Dan Stele:** A 9th-century Aramean inscription that mentions the "house of David," providing extra-biblical confirmation of the Davidic dynasty.
- **Mesha Stele:** A Moabite inscription mentioning the oppression of Moab by the Omride dynasty of Israel, confirming the biblical account of their dominance in the region.
- **Lamelek jars:** storage jars with royal seal impressions from the time of Hezekiah.

5. FAQs on Greer, Archaeology and the Old Testament, Session 4, Hebrew Kingdoms, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on the Archaeology of the Hebrew Kingdoms

1. **How has the understanding of the early Israelite monarchy changed in recent years?** Traditionally, the monarchy was viewed through a medieval lens, emphasizing grand architecture and rigid hierarchies. However, recent research suggests a closer connection to social structures of nomadic societies. This implies that the early Israelite monarchy may have been less about massive building projects and more about unifying existing tribal structures, a shift that has been influenced by a reevaluation of archaeological data and a closer examination of the societal context.
2. **What challenges do archaeologists face when trying to connect the biblical narrative of the Hebrew kingdoms to archaeological evidence?** A major challenge is the scarcity of inscriptions from the 11th and 10th centuries that mention Israel, Judah, David, or Solomon. While Egyptian records like the Shishak campaign do mention towns that correlate to biblical cities, there's no explicit mention of these figures. This lack of direct inscriptional evidence, particularly for Solomon's purported empire, makes the correlation between the archaeological record and the biblical stories difficult, leading to debates about dating and interpretation of discovered structures.
3. **What is the "chronology debate" regarding the dating of monumental architecture in the region, and who are the key figures in this debate?** The chronology debate revolves around whether the monumental architecture, such as casemate walls and multi-chambered gates, traditionally attributed to the 10th century and the reign of Solomon, should instead be dated to the 9th century and the Omride dynasty. This debate is often framed as the "high chronology" (traditional dating to the 10th century) versus the "low chronology" (dating to the 9th century). Prominent figures in this debate include Ami Mazar (who favors a modified conventional chronology) and Israel Finkelstein (who supports the low chronology), whose differing interpretations of archaeological data, particularly pottery styles and C14 dating, underpin the core of the disagreement.

4. How does radiocarbon dating (C14) play a role in this chronological debate?

Radiocarbon dating is a crucial tool in determining the age of archaeological remains, but its inherent margin of error, approximately 7,500 years, often aligns with the time difference between the high and low chronologies. This means that C14 dating, while useful, can be interpreted differently by archaeologists supporting the different sides of the debate. Therefore, the interpretation of C14 data becomes a key battleground, with proponents of both chronologies offering competing analyses.

5. How have recent archaeological discoveries, such as those in the City of David and at Khirbet Qeiyafa, contributed to our understanding of early Israel?

Excavations in the City of David have unearthed substantial structures that, based on pottery analysis, appear to date to the 10th century, potentially supporting the traditional high chronology. Additionally, the step-stone structure discovered there suggests the presence of significant architecture. Khirbet Qeiyafa, another debated site, has been dated to the 11th or 10th century, and its strategic location in a valley implies the possibility of centralized government during the time of David. These discoveries, while subject to ongoing interpretation, have become crucial in discussions about the structure and capabilities of early Israelite society.

6. What evidence exists for the copper production and trade routes during the early monarchical period? Archaeological evidence in the Arava Valley, specifically around sites like Fainan and Timna, has revealed massive copper production during the 11th and 10th centuries. This includes over 100,000 tons of slag, numerous smelting sites, and deep mine shafts, indicating a robust and organized economic activity that was likely conducted by nomadic groups. These findings tie in with the idea of early Israel being involved in significant trade, possibly reflected in stories like that of the Queen of Sheba.

7. How do the Tel Dan Stele and the Mesha Stele contribute to our historical understanding of the Hebrew kingdoms? The Tel Dan Stele, dating to the 9th century BC, provides the first extra-biblical mention of the "house of David," confirming the existence of a Davidic dynasty within a few generations of David's purported time. The Mesha Stele, from Moab, mentions King Mesha of Moab, Yahweh, and also possibly the "house of David". It also mentions the Omride oppression of Moab, which highlights the regional power of this dynasty. These inscriptions offer vital corroboration of biblical figures and events from non-Israelite perspectives.

8. How does the archaeological record support or challenge the biblical narratives of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah?

Archaeology provides evidence for the power of the Omride dynasty in the Northern Kingdom, as seen in building projects at Jezreel and Megiddo and their international presence mentioned in Assyrian inscriptions and the Mesha Stele. The end of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC, its subjugation by the Neo-Assyrian Empire, and the subsequent destruction of Samaria is supported both in the Bible and by outside sources. For the Southern Kingdom of Judah, the seal of King Hezekiah, his preparation for the Assyrian invasion (such as the construction of Hezekiah's tunnel and broad wall), and the defeat at Lachish described by Sennacherib, are well supported by both biblical and archaeological data, demonstrating a broad alignment of historical and biblical accounts. However, details, like the precise number of talents of gold and silver given to Sennacherib by Hezekiah, differ, highlighting the unique perspective of each set of records.