

# Dr. Jeffrey Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 19, Last Years of Judah, Archaeology of Destruction Resources from NotebookLM

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

## 1. Abstract of Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 19, Last Years of Judah, Archaeology of Destruction, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Jeffrey Hudon on Biblical Archaeology focuses on the final years of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, specifically examining the archaeological evidence of their destruction. **The lecture uses the Assyrian conquests, particularly Sennacherib's siege of Lachish, as a primary example,** illustrating Assyrian brutality and the impact on Judah. **It also explores the discovery and significance of various artifacts,** such as royal jars, the Ketef Hinnom amulets (the oldest known biblical texts), and Baruch's seal, connecting these finds to biblical narratives and historical events. **Furthermore, the lecture addresses misconceptions in earlier archaeological interpretations** and discusses the evidence for continued Judean presence after the Babylonian exile. Finally, it highlights the location of Solomon's Temple and its later reuse of materials.

**2. 18 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 19 – 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 → Archaeology).**



**Hudon\_BibArch\_Session19.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided lecture excerpt by Dr. Jeffrey Hudon on the last years of Judah and the archaeology of destruction:

#### **Briefing Document: The Last Years of Judah and the Archaeology of Destruction**

##### **Overview:**

This lecture by Dr. Hudon focuses on the period of the late Kingdom of Judah, specifically from the Assyrian invasions through the Babylonian destruction, and the archaeological evidence supporting the biblical narratives. Dr. Hudon emphasizes the brutal nature of these empires and their impact on Judah, highlighting key archaeological finds that illuminate this tumultuous period.

##### **Main Themes and Key Ideas:**

##### **1. Assyrian Atrocities and Psychological Warfare:**

- The lecture opens with a discussion of the Assyrian empire's brutality, using Isaiah's words to illustrate the fear they instilled.
- Assyrian tactics included psychological warfare, demonstrated by Rabshaka's speech outside the walls of Jerusalem during Sennacherib's siege. Rabshaka spoke in Hebrew to demoralize the Judeans, bypassing their leadership.
- Examples of Assyrian atrocities included impalement, skinning alive, and the smashing of pregnant mothers and infants against rocks. *"Think of a hot dog at a weenie roast on a stick. That would be you."*
- Assyrian foreign policy involved demanding vassalage and tribute, with resistance leading to attacks, deportations, and the installation of loyal leaders.

##### **1. The Siege of Lachish:**

- The siege of Lachish was Sennacherib's "crowning achievement" and prominently featured in his palace art. *"But the siege of Lachish by Sennacherib was the crowning achievement, because of its place in his palace, of his reign."*
- Lachish, the second largest city in Judah, was depicted in detail in the Lachish reliefs, possibly created by artists on-site, highlighting various aspects of the siege: siege machinery, defenders, captives, and brutal consequences.

- Archaeological evidence, including the Assyrian siege ramp and Judean counter-ramp, confirms the intensity of the battle.
- A depiction of defenders lowering chains to try and thwart battering rams was found during the Starkey excavations at Lachish, showing a literal connection between art and archaeology.

#### 1. **Lamelek Jars and Royal Administration:**

- The lecture explores Lamelek (royal) jars, which had stamps indicating royal property.
- These jars were stamped with two-winged, four-winged, and concentric circle symbols, bearing the inscription “lamelek” plus one of four site names: Soho, Ziph, Hevron, and Memshat. *“But they say Lamelek on the upper register, two or four the king or royal property; perhaps you could translate that.”*
- Memshat is not identifiable with any known site, and Hudon proposes it may have been a royal estate near Ramat Rachel.
- While most scholars date these to Hezekiah's reign, Hudon argues that they likely originated in the time of Uzziah, pointing to thumb-printed jars predating the stamped jars.
- After the Assyrian retreat, the jars transitioned to a thinner, elongated shape with rosette seal impressions, which Hudon associates with Josiah's religious reforms.

#### 1. **The Impact of Sennacherib's Invasion (701 BC):**

- Sennacherib's invasion was a major turning point in Judah's history, leading to widespread destruction and deportation. *“...Sennacherib boasts that he took 46 cities and deported 200,000 people.”*
- Despite Jerusalem's survival, much of the country, especially the Shephelah region, was devastated. The book of Micah is referenced to illustrate the social injustice of the Jerusalem elite during this time, oblivious to the suffering in the countryside.
- Archaeological evidence reveals that the destruction layers from 701 BC at various sites align, characterized by “Lachish III pottery.”
- Judah took decades to recover. Manasseh's reign, though marked by apostasy, saw economic recovery through trade with the Phoenicians.

- The material culture after the destruction was less vigorous than during the 8th century, with less sturdy architecture.

#### 1. **William Foxwell Albright's Mistakes:**

- Dr. Hudon details the errors of the prominent archaeologist William Foxwell Albright, specifically his misdating of a stratum at Tel beit-Mirsim based on a misidentification of a seal impression (Joachim as Jehoiakim) and a fictitious Babylonian campaign in 597 BC. *"Joachim was not Jehoiakim. It was another person who lived during the time of Hezekiah, not Jehoiakim"*.
- Albright's mistakes led to decades of incorrect interpretation of Iron Age stratigraphy, and were finally corrected with the publication of Lachish III.
- This serves as a cautionary tale about overstating evidence to force connections between archaeology and the Bible.

#### 1. **Archaeological Finds in Jerusalem:**

- Excavations in Jerusalem revealed a house (The house of Ahiel) built on top of the earlier step stone structure associated with David's Palace.
- This house had indoor plumbing including a stone toilet and a cesspit. The cesspit provided a window into the diseases present in Jerusalem before the city's fall to the Babylonians.
- Below the house, bullae (seal impressions on clay) were found. These provided personal names and titles. The papyrus documents these bullae were attached to were destroyed by the fire but the seal impressions were preserved.

#### 1. **Josiah's Reforms and Death:**

- Josiah, the last righteous king, expanded the kingdom and instituted religious reforms after discovering the Book of Deuteronomy in the Temple.
- He centralized worship in Jerusalem and was lamented by the prophet Jeremiah at his death.
- Josiah was killed at Megiddo while confronting Pharaoh Necho of Egypt, possibly while attempting to block Necho's forces from aiding the Assyrians.
- The Mesad Hashavyahu ostrakon, a petition for the return of a cloak, and an ostrakon describing a tithe to the temple, are discussed in relation to Josiah's reign and military activity.

### 1. Ketef Hinnom Amulets:

- The discovery of two silver amulets at Ketef Hinnom is discussed. These amulets contained the oldest known fragments of scripture, the Priestly Benediction from Numbers. *“And in that text, in the book of Numbers, the divine name appears three times. And it just, everything fell together.”*
- These amulets provide evidence that the Pentateuch was revered well before the Persian period.
- They may have been worn as talismans by a priest's family.

### 1. Babylonian Destruction and Exile:

- The Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC is confirmed by archaeological evidence in and around Jerusalem including a defensive tower in the Jewish quarter and arrowheads.
- Most Judeans were deported to Babylon, marking the end of a long-reigned kingdom.
- Nebuchadnezzar's name stamped on bricks was a common practice, and his Ishtar Gate is a prominent example of Babylonian architecture.
- The lecture briefly mentions the theory that the Hanging Gardens of Babylon were actually at Nineveh.

### 1. After the Destruction:

- The lecture dispels the notion that the land was completely empty after the Babylonian exile. People continued to live, die, and be buried in Judah during the Babylonian period, as evidenced by finds at Ketef Hinnom.
- There were Babylonian governors, like Gedaliah, and the provincial capital was moved to Mitzpah.
- The ruins of Solomon's Temple were still clearly visible when the exiles returned, confirming the location of the second temple.
- Cedar beams from Solomon's Temple may have been reused in the construction of the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount.
- Reused stone in Herod's Temple Mount walls may be stones from Solomon's temple.

- The lecture ends with discussion of the Nabonidus stela and the Cyrus Cylinder, which facilitated the return of Judeans to their homeland.

### Key Quotes:

- *"Think of a hot dog at a weenie roast on a stick. That would be you."* - On Assyrian torture tactics.
- *"But the siege of Lachish by Sennacherib was the crowning achievement, because of its place in his palace, of his reign."* - On the importance of the Siege of Lachish to Sennacherib.
- *"But they say Lamelek on the upper register, two or four the king or royal property; perhaps you could translate that."* - On the inscription on the lamelek jars.
- *"...Sennacherib boasts that he took 46 cities and deported 200,000 people."* - On the impact of Sennacherib's invasion.
- *"Joachim was not Jehoiakim. It was another person who lived during the time of Hezekiah, not Jehoiakim".* - On the errors of William Foxwell Albright.
- *"And in that text, in the book of Numbers, the divine name appears three times. And it just, everything fell together."* - On the discovery of the Ketef Hinnom Amulets.

### Conclusion:

Dr. Hudon's lecture provides a comprehensive overview of the archaeological discoveries related to the last years of Judah, effectively connecting biblical narratives with material evidence. The lecture highlights the violence and complexity of the period while cautioning against over-interpretation of archaeological data. The lecture emphasizes the importance of both historical and archaeological research to better understand this pivotal period of history.

## 4. Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 19, Last Years of Judah, Archaeology of Destruction

### The Last Years of Judah and the Archaeology of Destruction: A Study Guide

#### Quiz

1. Describe the Assyrian practice of psychological warfare as it relates to the siege of Jerusalem.
2. What was significant about the Assyrian conquest of Lachish, and how was it depicted in Sennacherib's palace?
3. What were the two main types of "Lamelek" seal impressions found on storage jars, and what is the scholarly debate about their purpose?
4. Explain the significance of the destruction layers found at various sites in Judah, and what major event do they all correspond to?
5. How did Judah recover economically after the Assyrian invasion, and what does the material culture suggest about this recovery?
6. What were the three major mistakes William Foxwell Albright made concerning the archaeology of this period, and how were these errors corrected?
7. What did the excavations of the House of Ahiel reveal about the living conditions in Jerusalem during the final days before its fall to the Babylonians?
8. What actions did King Josiah take as a reformer, and what event led to his death?
9. What was discovered in the cemetery at Ketef Hinnom, and what makes these artifacts so significant?
10. What evidence suggests that the location of Solomon's Temple was never forgotten, even after the Babylonian exile?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. The Assyrians used psychological warfare by having Rabshakeh speak to the people of Jerusalem in Hebrew, bypassing the king and officials, to instill fear and encourage surrender, using graphic depictions of the violence that awaited them if they resisted.
2. The siege of Lachish was Sennacherib's crowning achievement, depicted prominently in his palace through detailed wall murals which showed the entire

siege, from the construction of ramps to the capture of Judean civilians and their deportation.

3. The two main types of “Lamelek” seal impressions are two-winged and four-winged scarabs, and the scholarly debate revolves around whether they were tax markers, royal store markers, or used for royal vineyard production, with no conclusive answer to date.
4. The destruction layers found at sites like Lachish are significant because they are all dated to 701 BCE, coinciding with the Assyrian invasion of Sennacherib. They include similar pottery assemblages (Lachish III pottery) and represent a widespread destruction of cities across Judah.
5. Judah recovered economically after the Assyrian invasion by selling grains and olives to their old allies, the Phoenicians, but the archaeological record shows that the material culture of the kingdom became less vigorous and vibrant after the Assyrian invasion.
6. Albright made three major mistakes by misidentifying a seal impression as belonging to King Jehoiakim, incorrectly dating a destruction layer to 597 BC and subsequently creating a fictional Babylonian campaign against Judah, all of which was later corrected by Tufnell, Aharoni, and Ushishkin.
7. Excavations of the House of Ahiel revealed the presence of indoor plumbing (a stone toilet) and a cesspit that provided insight into the diseases and starvation plaguing the inhabitants of Jerusalem during the Babylonian siege, showing that people were suffering inside the city walls.
8. Josiah discovered the book of Deuteronomy in the Temple, celebrated the Passover, destroyed high places, and centralized worship in Jerusalem; Josiah was killed when he attempted to intercept the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho at Megiddo.
9. In the Ketef Hinnom cemetery, the rolled-up silver plaques (amulets) were found, which contained the oldest known fragments of biblical text (the Priestly Benediction), predating the Dead Sea Scrolls by centuries and demonstrating that the Pentateuch was revered and read much earlier than previously thought.
10. Archaeological and biblical evidence suggests the location of the temple was never forgotten because there were people who remained in the land after the exile, some of whom witnessed the destruction, and returned to build the Second Temple on the same site.



## Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast the Assyrian and Babylonian methods of conquest, focusing on their treatment of conquered peoples, and the implications for the Kingdom of Judah.
2. Discuss the significance of the archaeological record from the late 8th century BCE in Judah, particularly in light of the Assyrian invasions, with an analysis of how this period of destruction impacted material culture.
3. Analyze the importance of inscriptions and textual evidence (including the Bible) in understanding the history of the Kingdom of Judah, specifically considering the "Lamelek" seals and the Ketef Hinnom amulets.
4. Evaluate the impact of royal ideology on the history of Judah, discussing the actions of kings like Hezekiah, Manasseh, and Josiah, in relation to the theological and political implications of their reigns.
5. Assess the lasting impact of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BCE, considering not only the archaeological evidence but also its effects on religious and social life in Judah.

## Glossary

- **Assyria:** An ancient Mesopotamian empire known for its military might, brutal tactics, and practice of deporting conquered populations.
- **Babylon:** A major city-state and empire in Mesopotamia that conquered Judah in 586 BCE.
- **Cuneiform:** An ancient writing system using wedge-shaped marks on clay tablets, primarily used in Mesopotamia.
- **Hezekiah:** King of Judah (c. 715-686 BCE), known for his religious reforms and his resistance to Assyria.
- **Josiah:** King of Judah (c. 640-609 BCE), who initiated major religious reforms after the discovery of the Book of Deuteronomy.
- **Ketef Hinnom:** An Iron Age cemetery located on the slopes of the Hinnom Valley, where significant biblical artifacts were discovered.

- **Lachish:** A major city in Judah, second only to Jerusalem, that was besieged and destroyed by Sennacherib.
- **Lamelek Jars:** Storage jars with seal impressions found in Judah that translate to "belonging to the king" or "royal property."
- **Manasseh:** King of Judah (c. 697-643 BCE), considered one of the most apostate kings in the history of Judah.
- **Nebuchadnezzar:** King of Babylon (c. 605-562 BCE), who led the Babylonian army that destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BCE.
- **Ostrakon:** A piece of pottery used as a writing surface, typically for informal or everyday texts.
- **Paleo-Hebrew:** An ancient form of the Hebrew alphabet used in the Iron Age.
- **Priestly Benediction:** A blessing found in the book of Numbers, which is part of the Torah, and was discovered on the Ketef Hinnom amulets.
- **Rabshakeh:** An Assyrian official who delivered a speech to the people of Jerusalem during Sennacherib's siege.
- **Sennacherib:** Assyrian king (c. 705-681 BCE) who besieged Jerusalem and conquered Lachish.
- **Shephelah:** The foothills region between the coastal plain and the central mountains of Judah.
- **Tiglath-Pileser:** Assyrian king (c. 745-727 BCE) who expanded the empire's territory and implemented new policies of annexation.
- **Yehud:** The Persian province formed after the Babylonian exile, which included the land of Judah.

## 5. FAQs on Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 19, Last Years of Judah, Archaeology of Destruction, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions About the Last Years of Judah and the Archaeology of Destruction

1. **What were some of the brutal tactics employed by the Assyrian Empire, and how did they use fear as a weapon?**
2. The Assyrians were notorious for their brutality, employing tactics such as impaling people on poles, skinning captives alive, and even building people into walls. They engaged in psychological warfare by publicizing these atrocities and directly addressing populations under siege with graphic warnings about what would happen if they resisted. They aimed to inspire fear and submission in their enemies, often offering vassal status and tribute as an alternative to their horrifying methods of warfare. The Assyrians' reputation for cruelty contributed to their rapid decline once their military strength began to wane.
3. **What is the significance of the Lachish reliefs, and what do they reveal about the Assyrian siege warfare and the fate of Judeans?**
4. The Lachish reliefs are a series of wall murals from Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh, depicting the Assyrian siege and conquest of the Judean city of Lachish. These detailed reliefs show the Assyrian siege machinery (battering rams, ramps), the Judean defenders, and the aftermath, including the capture of the city, the skewering of people, and Judeans being taken into exile. The reliefs also show Judeans bowing before Sennacherib. These reliefs are significant not only for the details of the siege, which may have been drawn on site, but also because they demonstrate the importance of Lachish in Sennacherib's mind. It was the second largest city in Judah after Jerusalem, yet Jerusalem itself was never conquered by Sennacherib.

5. **What are the "Lamelek" jars, and what do they tell us about the kingdom of Judah during the time of Hezekiah?**
6. "Lamelek" jars are storage jars discovered throughout Judah that bear royal seal impressions. These impressions typically read "Lamelek," meaning "belonging to the king" or "royal property," followed by the name of one of four sites (Soho, Ziph, Hebron, and Memshat). They also have two-winged or four-winged scarab symbols and sometimes concentric circles. While the exact purpose is debated, most scholars believe they were used primarily during the reign of Hezekiah to store royal goods, taxes, or to supply military efforts in preparation for Sennacherib's invasion. The consistent use of the stamps points to a centralized royal administration. They evolved from unmarked or thumb-imprinted jars. After the Assyrian threat, the seal impressions changed to a rosette design.
7. **How did the Assyrian invasion of 701 BCE impact Judah, and what was the social and political situation in its aftermath?**
8. Sennacherib's invasion of 701 BCE was a major catastrophe for Judah. While Jerusalem was not captured, the Assyrians destroyed 46 cities and deported around 200,000 people. This resulted in widespread destruction across the Shephelah, the Judean foothills, and the overall economy was severely impacted. Judah took decades to recover. In its aftermath, the borders of Judah were diminished and it became a vassal of Assyria. They recovered by growing food and trading with the Phoenicians. Despite this devastation, a "royal Zion theology" emerged, asserting that God would never allow Jerusalem to fall, a theology proven wrong by the later Babylonian conquest in 586 BC.
9. **How did a misinterpretation of a seal impression by William Albright skew the chronology of the Iron Age in the Southern Levant?**
10. William Foxwell Albright, a prominent archaeologist, incorrectly identified a seal impression found at Tel Beit Mirsim. He believed the name on it was a servant of Jehoiakim, and as a result he dated the entire stratum to 597 BC. This led him to believe there was a Babylonian campaign against Judah in 597, which didn't exist and it resulted in a misreading of an earlier, 701 destruction layer. This error persisted for decades until Olga Tufnell and others correctly dated the destruction layers to 701 BC. This demonstrates that even prominent scholars can make errors, especially when they are overly eager to connect archaeological finds with biblical narratives.

**11. What archaeological discoveries in Jerusalem, specifically in the City of David, shed light on daily life and conditions before the Babylonian destruction?**

12. Excavations in the City of David have uncovered the remains of houses, including the house of Ahiel, built against a step stone structure. One notable find is an early example of an indoor stone toilet and its associated cesspit. Analysis of the cesspit contents revealed details about diseases and parasites affecting Jerusalem's inhabitants during the Babylonian siege, highlighting the suffering people endured during that time. Additionally, bullae (seal impressions) from burned papyrus documents found in another room provide insights into personal names and titles of that period in Jerusalem before the 586 BCE destruction.

**13. Who was Josiah, what religious reforms did he institute, and what led to his death?**

14. Josiah was the last righteous king of Judah and instituted sweeping religious reforms. He centralized worship in the Temple in Jerusalem, destroyed high places, and had the Book of Deuteronomy read to the people. Josiah also expanded the kingdom. His death remains somewhat of a mystery: he confronted the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho at Megiddo and died there. This death occurred while Necho was on his way to assist the weakening Assyrian Empire against the rising Babylonian Empire. The circumstances surrounding his death are debated. The fact he was lamented by Jeremiah indicates how the biblical writers viewed his reign as righteous.

**15. What are the Ketef Hinnom amulets, why are they significant, and what do they tell us about the beliefs of the people of Judah?**

16. The Ketef Hinnom amulets are two tiny, rolled-up silver plaques discovered in a burial cave repository in the Hinnom Valley. These plaques contain the priestly benediction from the book of Numbers. They are the oldest known fragments of biblical scripture ever found, pre-dating the Dead Sea Scrolls by 300 years. The amulets provide evidence of the importance of the Pentateuch and the priestly tradition in the pre-exilic period, suggesting that these traditions were well established and revered during the time of the First Temple. They may have been worn as talismans and demonstrate the significance of religious texts in daily life.