

Dr. Jeffrey Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 20, Archaeology of the Great Eighth Century BC Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 20, Archaeology of the Great Eighth Century BC, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Jeffrey Hudon's lecture on Biblical Archaeology, session 20, focuses on the tumultuous 8th century BC, termed the "Great Eighth Century." **The lecture examines the geopolitical landscape**, including the weakness of Egypt and the rise of Assyria, alongside the simultaneous flourishing and subsequent decline of the Israelite kingdoms of Judah and Israel. **Key archaeological sites** such as Kuntillet Ajrud and the importance of prophetic voices like Isaiah and Hosea are discussed within this historical context. The lecture also highlights significant events, such as Sennacherib's invasion of Judah and the subsequent survival of Jerusalem, and connects these events to archaeological findings.

2. 19 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 20 – 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).



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3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided lecture transcript by Dr. Jeffrey Hudon on the Archaeology of the Great Eighth Century:

Briefing Document: Archaeology of the Great Eighth Century

Introduction:

This document summarizes Dr. Jeffrey Hudon's lecture on the 8th century BC, often called the "Great Eighth Century," a period of significant political, social, and religious upheaval in the ancient Near East, particularly impacting the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The lecture utilizes both biblical texts and archaeological evidence to provide a detailed overview of this era.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. The "Great Eighth Century" (c. 792-701 BC):

- This period, designated as Iron Age 2B by archaeologists, is characterized by significant events and transformations in the Levant. Dr. Hudon places the beginning of this period at 792 BC, marking the shift from Amaziah to Uzziah as king of Judah after Amaziah's defeat and capture.
- The term "Great Eighth Century" is attributed to the scholar Philip King.
- The century is marked by a tumultuous period of growth and decline in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, followed by the rise of Assyria and their devastating impact.
- **Quote:** "Many people call it the Great Eighth Century, and foremost among those was the late scholar Philip King, who gave the SBL President's Address way back in the 1980s and published that in JBL, the eighth, the greatest of centuries, and there's an argument definitely that that could be correct."

1. Early Prosperity and Expansion (790-740 BC):

- Both the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah experienced a resurgence, expanding their political borders and economic strength.
- This era is described as a "second golden age," following the United Monarchy, with critique from prophets like Hosea, Amos, and Isaiah.

- **Quote:** "from about 790 to 740, both kingdoms became very, very strong and flexed their muscles and expanded both politically, their political borders, and their economic strength. This is really, in some ways, a second golden age, following the United Monarchy of Israelite and Judahite culture and society, and these are critiqued, noted, and critiqued in some of the prophets, notably Hosea, Amos, and the important passage in Isaiah 5."

1. **Geopolitical Context:**

- **Egypt:** Weak and fragmented during the Third Intermediate Period (23rd-25th Dynasties), Egypt did not play a major role in international affairs. This weakness allowed regional kingdoms to gain strength.
- **Quote:** "Egypt simply did not play a major role in international affairs until the 26th or Saite dynasty in the late 7th century BC."
- **Assyria:** Initially weak in the first half of the 8th century, confined to northern Mesopotamia. The rise of Tiglath-Pileser III in the third quarter of the century marked Assyria's re-emergence as a global power.
- **Quote:** "And it was only during the reign, as we've seen before, of Tiglath-Pileser III, who came to the throne in the third quarter of the 8th century, that Assyria reasserted itself as a world global empire."

1. **Key Figures and Events:**

- **Prophets:** Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah provide insight into the social and religious conditions of this period. Jonah is also mentioned with an early 8th century context.
- **Kings of Israel:** Jeroboam II oversaw a prosperous period with expansion into Transjordan and Syria, however the biblical text is brief on his reign.
- **Quote:** "The reign of Jeroboam of Israel was very prosperous. Again, he was part of the Jehu dynasty, and he was able to expand the borders of the northern kingdom, including parts of Transjordan, up into Syria, up into the Aramean, Damascus area."
- **Kings of Judah:** Amaziah's defeat at Beit Shemesh marked a key point of transition to his son Uzziah's reign. Uzziah and his successors continued this period of success until Ahaz, and then finally Hezekiah, who faced the Assyrian invasion.

- **Assyrian Kings:** Tiglath-Pileser III conquered most of Galilee, Shalmaneser III and Sargon II destroyed the Northern Kingdom, and Sennacherib invaded Judah.

1. **The Battle of Beit Shemesh and its Significance:**

- The defeat of Judah at Beit Shemesh by the Kingdom of Israel resulted in the sacking of Jerusalem, and the capture of Amaziah.
- This event, and the subsequent change in leadership from Amaziah to Uzziah, is used by Hudon as a marker for the transition from Iron Age IIA to Iron Age IIB, which he dates to 792 BC.
- **Quote:** "Interestingly enough, the Beit Shemesh that arises out of this battle is unfortified, and that, I think, speaks pointedly to the fact that later on in the century, Judah expanded, and this was no longer a border city as it had been for a number of years, a long length of time."

1. **Kuntillet Ajrud:**

- This isolated site in eastern Sinai, occupied for a short period in the late 9th and early 8th century BC, contained a mixture of northern Israelite and Judahite pottery and inscriptions.
- Inscriptions on storage jars mentioning "Yahweh of Samaria and his Asherah" suggest syncretistic religious practices, blending Canaanite and Yahwistic beliefs.
- Dr. Hudon emphasizes the geopolitical importance of the site, indicating a joint Israelite and Judahite garrison on the Egyptian border.
- **Quote:** "What you've got here is a northern Israelite garrison serving apparently with a Judahite garrison on the border of Egypt, and it will impact us more when we specifically talk about Uzziah, the reign of Uzziah."

1. **Fall of Israel and Rise of Samaritans:**

- The Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed by Shalmaneser V and Sargon II, with the population deported.
- The Assyrians imported people from their northern provinces into the land, resulting in the emergence of the Samaritans.

- **Quote:** "And Tiglath or Tiglath-Pileser's successors, these two kings, Shalmaneser and Sargon, imported peoples from the northern provinces of Assyria into the land to replace the people they deported. And hence we have the beginning of the Samaritans, these so-called half-breeds of people that inhabit northern Israel after the fall of Samaria."

1. **Growth of Jerusalem:**

- During the 8th century, Jerusalem expanded to include the western hill, requiring the construction of a new city wall.
- The wall destroyed by Jehoash and later rebuilt by Uzziah and successors, enclosed the western hill.
- **Quote:** "But in the 8th century, and I believe early in the 8th century, perhaps even in the late 9th century, you've got extramural suburbs here on the western hill. There is much better real estate, by the way, here than here. But they finally fortified it with a wall."

1. **Hezekiah's Reign and Sennacherib's Invasion:**

- Hezekiah, while a vassal of Assyria, fortified Judah, built supplies, and excavated a water channel (Hezekiah's Tunnel).
- The Siloam Inscription provides details about the construction of the water tunnel.
- **Quote:** "But he brought water from the Gihon Spring outside of the city into the city, into the Siloam Pool, so the people of the western hill and the city of David could get water without going outside the wall."
- Hezekiah joined a revolt against Assyria after the death of Sargon II, resulting in Sennacherib's invasion of Judah in 701 BC.
- The Assyrian army systematically destroyed cities of Judah, culminating at Lachish.
- Jerusalem was besieged but miraculously spared.
- **Quote:** "No destruction layer in Jerusalem, which again supports the miraculous event recorded in the Old Testament. The only destruction layer in Jerusalem is the Babylonian destruction of 586 by Nebuchadnezzar. Nothing earlier has been found."

- Sennacherib's campaign is well-documented in both biblical texts and Assyrian records.

1. **Shebnayahu's Tomb Inscription:**

- The inscription from the tomb of Shebnayahu (likely Shebna), a royal steward, found in Silwan, provides insights into the period. The inscription, deciphered by Nachman Avigad, mentions a royal steward and a "slave wife," and has a curse on anyone who would open the tomb. It also indicates a degree of literacy among the Judean population.
- **Quote:** "It says this is the tomb of Shebnayahu or Yahu. We don't have the first part of the name because of this hole here cut. Who is over the house? This is a term Hebrew tomb for royal steward. There is nothing here but his body and the body of his slave wife. Cursed be the man who opens this tomb."
- **Consequences of the Sennacherib Invasion:** Although Jerusalem was spared, the rest of Judah was devastated and became an Assyrian vassal state under Manasseh.
- The rise of a "royal Zion theology," which held that Jerusalem was inviolable due to God's presence, is another result. However, this theology is later shown to be false.
- **Quote:** "So, Judah and Hezekiah survive, but the kingdom is devastated and later becomes an Assyrian vassal state during the reign of Manasseh."

Conclusion:

The 8th century BC was a critical period in the history of Israel and Judah, characterized by both periods of prosperity and devastating conflict. The lecture highlights the importance of both biblical texts and archaeological evidence in understanding this complex era, including significant political, religious, and social shifts. The rise and fall of regional powers, the interactions between kingdoms, and the devastating impact of the Assyrian Empire are all brought into clear focus by this presentation.

This briefing document aims to give a concise overview of the key points covered in the lecture, highlighting both important dates, figures, and ideas.

4. Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 20, Archaeology of the Great Eighth Century BC

The Archaeology of the Great Eighth Century: A Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What are the date ranges of the Iron Age 2B according to the lecture, and what major event does Dr. Hudon use to mark the beginning of this period?
2. What are the key characteristics of the 8th Century BCE in Israel and Judah, in terms of their political and economic situation? How did this change later in the century?
3. What role did Egypt play in the geopolitical landscape during the 8th century, and how did its weakness impact the region?
4. How did the Assyrian Empire's influence shift throughout the 8th century, and which Assyrian rulers were significant during this period?
5. Name three prophets who were active in the 8th century, and briefly describe their messages and/or backgrounds.
6. What was the significance of the battle at Beit Shemesh, and what event does it directly connect to?
7. What is Kuntillet Ajrud, and what is its significance for understanding the religious and political landscape of the 8th Century Israel and Judah?
8. What was the Syro-Ephraimite War, and how did King Ahaz of Judah react to the conflict?
9. What happened to the northern kingdom of Israel in the 8th century, and what was the outcome of that?
10. Describe Hezekiah's preparations before Sennacherib's invasion and the fate of Sennacherib's army in Jerusalem.

Quiz Answer Key

1. The Iron Age 2B dates are roughly 800-701 BCE according to most scholars, or 792-701 BCE according to Dr. Hudon. Hudon marks the start of this period with the defeat of Amaziah at Beit Shemesh, leading to Uzziah's rise to power in Judah.

2. In the early 8th century, both Israel and Judah experienced a resurgence of political and economic strength, which Dr. Hudon calls a second golden age. Later in the century, the Assyrian Empire's expansion brought turmoil and subjugation to both kingdoms.
3. Egypt was weak and fragmented during the 8th century, not playing a major role in international affairs. This allowed regional kingdoms like Israel and Judah to expand and exert their influence for a short time.
4. Assyria began the 8th century with weak leadership, confined to northern Mesopotamia, and rose to become a powerful empire under Tiglath-Pileser III. Significant Assyrian rulers include Tiglath-Pileser III, Shalmaneser V, Sargon II, and Sennacherib.
5. Amos, a Judahite, preached against Israel and the nations at Bethel; Hosea, a northern prophet, used his marriage as an analogy for Israel's relationship with God; and Isaiah, a court prophet in Jerusalem, wrote prophecies that reflect the circumstances of the late 8th century.
6. The battle at Beit Shemesh resulted in the defeat of Judah, the sacking of Jerusalem, and the capture of King Amaziah. This event directly led to Uzziah taking the throne of Judah and a destruction layer at the site.
7. Kuntillet Ajrud was a small, isolated fort on the Sinai border, jointly garrisoned by Israelites and Judahites, which suggests a level of cooperation not often seen. It was also important for the religious inscriptions found there with the phrase "Yahweh of Samaria and his Asherah."
8. The Syro-Ephraimite War was a conflict where other kingdoms pressured Judah to resist Assyria, but Ahaz of Judah instead sought Assyrian help, which is an act that Isaiah condemned. He became a vassal of Tiglath-Pileser III for protection.
9. The northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed by Shalmaneser V and Sargon II, with its population deported and replaced by people from other parts of the Assyrian Empire. This led to the start of the Samaritan people.
10. Hezekiah fortified cities, stockpiled supplies, built Hezekiah's Tunnel to secure water, and formed alliances to revolt against Assyria. However, Sennacherib's army was decimated outside Jerusalem according to the Biblical record. He eventually returned home without conquering the city.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer each question in an essay format using your knowledge of the source material.

1. Discuss the socio-political factors that led to the rise and fall of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah during the 8th century BCE. Consider the roles of both internal factors and external pressures such as the Egyptian and Assyrian empires.
2. Analyze the significance of archaeological sites such as Beit Shemesh, Kuntillet Ajrud, and Lachish in illuminating the history of the 8th century BCE. How do these sites provide insights that complement or challenge the biblical record?
3. Examine the roles and messages of the 8th-century prophets, such as Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah. How did they respond to the political and religious realities of their time, and what were their impacts on the development of Israelite religion and thought?
4. Compare and contrast the reigns of Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah, noting the strengths and weaknesses of their rule, and analyzing how these contributed to the larger trends of the 8th century BCE.
5. Evaluate the significance of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah in 701 BCE, based on both the archaeological and biblical evidence. How did this event impact the kingdom of Judah and influence the development of royal Zion theology?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Iron Age 2B:** An archaeological period dating roughly from 800-701 BCE (or 792-701 BCE according to Dr. Hudon) in the Southern Levant.
- **Beit Shemesh:** A city in the Shephelah where a battle took place between Israel and Judah, marking the start of the Iron Age 2B period in Hudon's view.
- **Kuntillet Ajrud:** A small, isolated site in eastern Sinai with archaeological remains suggesting an Israelite/Judahite presence and possible syncretistic religious practices.
- **Tiglath-Pileser III:** An Assyrian king who expanded the Assyrian empire in the 8th century BCE, conquering much of the Northern Kingdom.
- **Sennacherib:** An Assyrian king who invaded Judah, devastating many cities in the Southern Kingdom, but failing to conquer Jerusalem.
- **Syro-Ephraimite War:** A conflict in the 8th Century in which Syria and Israel attempted to force Judah into an alliance against Assyria.
- **Hezekiah's Tunnel:** A water tunnel built in Jerusalem, possibly by King Hezekiah, to secure a water supply inside the city walls.
- **Lachish:** A major Judean city that was sieged and conquered by Sennacherib and documented in Assyrian reliefs.
- **Royal Zion Theology:** The belief that God would never allow Jerusalem to be conquered due to God's presence there, which was later proven to be false.
- **Third Intermediate Period:** A period of division and instability in Ancient Egypt between the end of the New Kingdom and the Late Period.
- **Ashdod Ware:** Pottery style associated with the Philistines during the 8th century, found throughout the Shephelah.
- **Samaritans:** A mixed population group living in the former territories of the northern kingdom after its defeat.

5. FAQs on Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 20, Archaeology of the Great Eighth Century BC, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions About the 8th Century BCE in Biblical Archaeology

1. **Why is the 8th century BCE considered a "Great Century" in biblical archaeology?** The 8th century BCE, specifically the period roughly between 792-701 BCE, is often called the "Great Eighth Century" due to the significant political, economic, and prophetic events that occurred. Initially, both the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah) experienced a resurgence of power and prosperity, expanding their territories and economic influence in a period that could be considered a second golden age. This period of strength, however, was followed by the rise of the Assyrian empire, leading to conflict and devastation including the eventual fall of the Northern Kingdom. This century was also a key period for major prophetic voices like Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah, who provide valuable insights into the socio-political climate. It is also an important time period because of its wealth of archaeological data including destruction layers, fortifications, and inscriptions related to the events that are described in the Bible.
2. **What was the geopolitical landscape of the 8th century BCE, and how did it impact Israel and Judah?** The 8th century BCE saw a fragmented Egypt, which was in its Third Intermediate Period and relatively weak. This allowed the regional kingdoms, including Israel and Judah, to grow and exert their influence for a brief period. However, the rise of the Assyrian Empire under Tiglath-Pileser III was the most significant geopolitical shift. Assyria, initially weak, reasserted its power, conquering much of the Levant including the Northern Kingdom of Israel which was eventually destroyed, and subjugating Judah. This shift created a period of immense pressure on the region and dramatically altered its political makeup.

3. **What are some key archaeological sites and discoveries that shed light on the 8th century BCE?** Several archaeological sites offer critical insights into the 8th century BCE. Kuntillet Ajrud, an isolated site in eastern Sinai, provides evidence of a possible joint garrison of northern Israelites and Judahites on the Egyptian border, and inscriptions reflecting syncretistic religious beliefs. Beit Shemesh experienced destruction and a change of leadership correlating with the shift to the Iron Age IIB, and the site itself later shows signs of becoming less fortified as Judah expands its borders. Megiddo provides a visual representation of city planning and architecture at this time. Additionally, the discovery of the Siloam Tunnel, and the Siloam inscription, shed light on the engineering and defenses of Jerusalem under King Hezekiah. Further, the Lachish reliefs in Assyria provide a visual description of the Assyrian siege of that city. Finally, the tomb of Shebna found at Silwan is another crucial archaeological find which matches a person described in the biblical book of Isaiah.
4. **How did the reigns of Jeroboam II and Uzziah contribute to the prosperity of their respective kingdoms during this century?** Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah both presided over periods of prosperity. Jeroboam II expanded the borders of the Northern Kingdom into Transjordan and Syria, although biblical descriptions of his reign are brief. Uzziah, who ruled for 52 years after Amaziah's captivity, also brought considerable success to Judah. They both oversaw a period of relative peace and economic growth for their kingdoms, following the initial battle of Beit Shemesh. Evidence for this includes the seal of Shema, servant of Jeroboam, and the Ivories of Samaria, both of which indicate the wealth and prestige of the northern kingdom during this time.
5. **What led to the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and what was the fate of its inhabitants?** The Northern Kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians towards the end of the 8th century BCE. The Assyrian kings Shalmaneser V and Sargon II conquered and destroyed Samaria, its capital, after a long siege. The population was deported to other parts of the Assyrian Empire. This deportation of the Israelites and the resettlement of foreign peoples in the area led to the emergence of the Samaritans, who were considered half-breeds. The fall of Israel is a major turning point in the Bible and its history.

6. **What was the Syro-Ephraimite War, and how did it involve Ahaz of Judah?** The Syro-Ephraimite War was a conflict in which the kingdoms of Syria and Israel (often referred to as Ephraim) attempted to force Judah into an alliance against Assyria. Ahaz, the king of Judah, instead of trusting in God as advised by the prophet Isaiah, sought the help of Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria to counter the alliance. This resulted in Judah becoming a vassal state of Assyria and opened the door for Assyrian influence and control over the region which began with the conquest of the northern kingdom by Tiglath-Pileser. This decision by Ahaz also led to the rise of the Philistines, who took over part of the western Shephelah.
7. **How did King Hezekiah of Judah respond to the Assyrian threat, and what significant actions are attributed to his reign?** King Hezekiah of Judah prepared for resistance against Assyria and specifically revolted. Hezekiah fortified Jerusalem, built up his military, amassed supplies, and is traditionally credited with the building of Hezekiah's Tunnel, bringing water from the Gihon Spring into the city to ensure the water supply during a siege. He also participated in a regional revolt against Assyria following the death of Sargon II. Despite these preparations, Sennacherib's invasion devastated the Judean countryside and its cities and forced Hezekiah to surrender. However, Jerusalem was spared.
8. **What evidence suggests that Jerusalem was not conquered by Sennacherib, and what are the implications of this event?** Archaeological evidence does not show any destruction layer in Jerusalem dating to Sennacherib's campaign in 701 BCE, which is consistent with the biblical account of a miraculous deliverance. In contrast, many other cities of Judah, like Lachish, display destruction layers from this time. The Assyrian records and reliefs, while describing Sennacherib's conquests in Judah, conspicuously do not record the conquest of Jerusalem. These combined factors point to a non-military conclusion to the siege of Jerusalem. The deliverance is interpreted as a sign of divine intervention that led to the later rise of a royal Zion theology, suggesting that Jerusalem was unconquerable because of God's presence, a belief later disproved by the Babylonian destruction of 586 BCE.