

## Dr. Jeffrey Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 21, An Archaeologist Looks at Uzziah's Reign Resources from NotebookLM

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

### 1. Abstract of Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 21, An Archaeologist Looks at Uzziah's Reign, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Jeffrey Hudon examines the reign of King Uzziah of Judah, exploring the intersection of biblical accounts (primarily 2 Kings 14 and 2 Chronicles 26) and archaeological evidence. **The lecture addresses scholarly skepticism** regarding the historical reliability of the Book of Chronicles, particularly concerning its late composition date. **Hudon presents archaeological findings** from various sites—including Eilat, Gath, Ashdod, and Jerusalem—to **support the historical accuracy** of Chronicles' depiction of Uzziah's extensive building projects, military campaigns, and territorial expansion. He argues that the archaeological evidence corroborates Chronicles' account of Uzziah's reign in the 8th century BCE, challenging the view that the book is historically worthless.

**2. 26 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 21 – 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\_Ses  
sion21.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes, ideas, and facts from the provided source, "Hudon\_BibArch\_EN\_Ses21.pdf":

#### **Briefing Document: An Archaeological Examination of the Reign of King Uzziah of Judah**

##### **Overview:**

This lecture by Dr. Jeffrey Hudon examines the reign of King Uzziah of Judah (8th century BCE) by comparing the biblical accounts (primarily 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles) with archaeological findings. The lecture aims to assess the historical reliability of the Book of Chronicles, which has been historically viewed with skepticism due to its late composition (Persian period, 6th-5th century BC) and its inclusion of information not found in the earlier Book of Kings. The central question driving this analysis is: Does archaeological evidence support the additional details about Uzziah's reign found in Chronicles, and if so, does this enhance the credibility of the text?

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

##### **1. The Significance of Uzziah's Reign:**

- Uzziah reigned for 52 years (792-740 BC), the second longest reign of a king of Judah, and coincided with the reign of Jeroboam II of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
- His reign is often overlooked, but it represents a period of significant expansion and prosperity for Judah.
- The lecture argues that some building and fortification projects often attributed to Hezekiah were likely initiated by Uzziah, based on archaeological findings.

##### **1. The Debate Surrounding the Book of Chronicles:**

- Chronicles was written much later than Kings, leading to skepticism about its historical accuracy, particularly concerning details not found in Kings.
- Scholars like Baruch de Spinoza, Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette, and Julius Wellhausen questioned Chronicles' reliability and authorship.
- The lecture highlights the core question regarding Chronicles: if it was written hundreds of years after the events, how did the Chronicler know information not present in Kings?

- Later scholars, such as Martin Noth and Peter Velten, had differing views on Chronicles' historical worth, while Hugh Williamson and Anson Rainey argued that the chronicler used reliable archival sources from the monarchic period based on archaeological evidence.
- Israel Finkelstein's recent challenge dates the work to the Hasmonean period (late 2nd-early 1st century BC) and deems it historically worthless.
- The reign of Uzziah presents an opportunity to test the reliability of the Chronicles text.

#### 1. **Uzziah's Expansion and Military Campaigns:**

- **Eilat (Red Sea Port):** Uzziah's control over Eilat is mentioned in both 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles and it provided him with access to trade. It is supported by 8th-century archaeological evidence at Tell el-Khalifeh and Tamar (Ein Hatziva).
- Quote: *"Hegemony over Eilat, of course, would enable Uzziah access to Red Sea trade and a port. Since it's mentioned in both the Book of Kings and the Book of Chronicles, Rainey has suggested that this was the highlight of Uzziah's reign."*
- **Fortifications and Infrastructure:** Fortified sites such as Tamar (Ein Hatziva), Kadesh-Barnea (Ein Kades), and construction techniques at Tell el-Khalifeh support a large Judahite military presence along trade routes.
- Quote: *"The fact that the construction techniques very closely match the site of Tell el-Khalifeh to the south seems to point to a common builder. And that would be Amaziah and, in the case of Khalifeh, Uzziah."*
- **Campaigns in Philistia:** Chronicles (2 Chronicles 26) mentions Uzziah's campaigns against Philistine cities like Gath, Yavneh, and Ashdod.
- Quote: *"the Hebrew text says, he went out and he warred against the Philistines and he burst through or broke down the walls of Gath, the walls of Yavneh, and the wall of Ashdod."*

#### 1. **Archaeological Evidence and its Interpretation:**

- **Yavneh:** A favisa (repository pit) with temple artifacts near Yavneh suggests a temple of Philistine and Judahite influence existed before or early in Uzziah's reign, but the site itself doesn't show clear evidence of early 8th-century destruction.

- **Gath (Tel es-Safi):** While the site was destroyed by Hazael in the 9th century, a large Judahite settlement was built in the mid-8th century (end of Uzziah's reign), but there is no early 8th-century destruction layer present prior to the Judahite settlement. This suggests the Gath mentioned might have been Gath-Gitayim (Tel Ras Abu Hamid).
- Quote: *"In the mid-8th century, right towards the end of Uzziah's reign, we have a large 60-acre settlement with clear Judean material culture being erected at the site."*
- **Ashdod:** The presence of a six-chamber gate (similar to those found in Israel and Judah) and evidence of Judahite control (lamelek stamped handle, Hebrew inscriptions) indicate Uzziah's influence. An earlier 8th-century destruction layer outside the city at Ashdod may point to Uzziah's actions even though the gate itself appears to be built by Uzziah after occupation.
- Quote: *"That earlier 8th-century destruction layer, I believe, is our proof that Uzziah destroyed the city. Even though it's outside of the city, it was destroyed. And that, I believe, is our smoking gun for Ashdod."*
- **Expansion of Settlements:** The 8th-century survey of the region shows new settlements like Yavne Yam, Rishon Litzion, etc., that indicate Judahite expansion around Philistia under Uzziah.
- Quote: *"So these sites, these new sites that have been surveyed and partially excavated, may have served Uzziah as new Judahite settlements around Philistia and near Ashdod."*

#### 1. Other Geographical and Political Indicators:

- **Maunites:** The mention of the Maunites, only found in the Bible and the annals of Tiglath-Pileser III, supports the 8th-century context of Chronicles.
- Quote: *"The Maunites are unknown outside the biblical text. They remained unknown until, I think it was 1970, when Chaim Tadmor read their name in the annals of Tiglath-Pileser III."*
- **Expansion into the Desert:** The creation of fortresses and cisterns in the Judean desert, with sites like Qumran, Ein Gedi, and others, matches the Chronicles text.
- Quote: *"So Uzziah attempted to settle and cultivate some of the Judean wilderness, the Judean desert, so to speak, east of Jerusalem."*

- **Kuntillet Ajrud:** This site, located at the border with Egypt, demonstrates joint Judahite and Israelite occupation, reflecting the claim in Chronicles, "...and his name, literally his name, which we assume we could translate fame, knowledge of his name, spread even to the border of Egypt, for he became very strong." The lecture argues that the site was a geopolitical border site and trading post rather than a religious pilgrimage site as some scholars believe.
- Quote: *"I believe this was actually a border site, a trading post, and a way station along the caravan routes between the Hajjahs and the Mediterranean. It was not a site of religious pilgrimage."*
- **Jerusalem:** Uzziah's building of towers in Jerusalem is supported by archaeological finds, such as the gate discovered along the Ophel, which is likely the work of Uzziah.
- Quote: *"So he fortified Jerusalem and possibly completed the rebuilding of the wall that was knocked down during the reign of his father."*
- **Ramat Rachel:** Uzziah was confined outside of the palace due to a skin disease, and Ramat Rachel (Beit Hakerem), a palace between Bethlehem and Jerusalem, is a likely candidate for this location.
- Quote: *"And Ramat Rachel would have been an ideal location, which is a Judean palace between Bethlehem and Jerusalem."*

### **Conclusions:**

- The preponderance of evidence from both written and archaeological sources strongly supports an 8th-century geopolitical context for the account of Uzziah's reign in Chronicles.
- The references to the Philistines, Ammonites, Edomites, and especially the Maunites, reflect well-documented 8th-century entities.
- The archaeological findings of rapid expansion of Judahite settlements, the destruction at Ashdod, the Judahite settlement at Tel es-Safi, the expansion of Jerusalem, joint maneuvers at Kuntillet Ajrud and Judahite influence at Tel Jalul all align with the Chronicles narrative, indicating that Chronicles was likely based on archival sources and not invented.
- The detailed knowledge of 8th-century topography demonstrated in Chronicles makes it unlikely to have been written during the late Persian or Hellenistic period. The presence of the Meunites in the text, which are only known in the 8th century from Tiglath-Pileser's inscriptions and the Bible, serves as further evidence of the early archival sources used by the Chronicler.
- The lecture concludes that the archaeological data, when interpreted thoughtfully, does support the narrative in Chronicles and lends credibility to it.

### **Implications:**

This lecture challenges the traditional skepticism surrounding the Book of Chronicles and suggests that it holds historical value and is likely to have drawn from authentic archival sources. It highlights the importance of comparing biblical texts with archaeological evidence for a more accurate understanding of the past. It also reminds of the fact that just because something was written later, doesn't mean it was completely invented, and there are ways to test if such texts have some historical underpinnings.

## 4. Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 21, An Archaeologist Looks at Uzziah's Reign

### The Reign of Uzziah: A Study Guide

#### Quiz

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

1. What is significant about the length of Uzziah's reign compared to other kings of Judah?
2. Name the writing prophets who lived during the reign of Uzziah.
3. Why is the Book of Chronicles often viewed skeptically by historical scholars?
4. According to the lecture, what is the significance of the site of Tell el-Khalifeh?
5. Describe the evidence that supports Uzziah's expansion into Philistia.
6. What is a *favis*, and why is it significant for the site of Yavneh?
7. Why is the site of Tel es-Safi, identified as Gath, problematic for the narrative of Uzziah's conquests?
8. What architectural features of the gate at Ashdod suggest a Judahite presence?
9. Besides the Philistine territories, where else did Uzziah expand his influence and how is it supported archaeologically?
10. What evidence suggests that Kuntilet Ajrud was more than just a religious site during Uzziah's reign?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. Uzziah's reign of 52 years was the second-longest reign of a king of Judah. His long reign is a focus of the lecture because it allows for the expansion and influence that are attributed to him.
2. The writing prophets who lived during Uzziah's reign were Hosea, Amos, Jonah, and a young Isaiah. These prophets provide a different perspective on the events of Uzziah's time.
3. The Book of Chronicles is often viewed skeptically due to its late date of composition, in the Persian period (5th or 6th century BC). This raises questions

about the accuracy of its historical data, as the author lived 400 years after the events it describes.

4. Tell el-Khalifeh, located at the Red Sea port of Eilat, shows 8th-century occupational evidence that aligns with Uzziah's reign. The site has similar architectural styles to the fort of Tamar indicating a shared construction initiative under Uzziah or his father.
5. Archaeological evidence of a strong Judahite presence in the Shephelah, Negev, and coastal plain supports Uzziah's expansion into Philistia, showing city-building and fortifications. This coincides with Chronicles' description of Uzziah's military campaigns in the area, with new settlements around Ashdod.
6. A *favisa* is a repository pit containing ceremonially buried temple artifacts. At Yavneh, the discovery of a favisa implies the existence of a temple and possibly Judahite influence in the late 9th/early 8th centuries.
7. Tel es-Safi, identified as Gath, shows no evidence of a destruction layer in the early 8th century, before the Judahite settlement was erected there. This challenges the narrative of Uzziah's attack on Gath, suggesting the need to consider another "Gath."
8. The six-chamber gate at Ashdod is similar to those found at Solomonic sites in Israel and Judah, which suggests Judahite control. Additionally, a *lamelek* stamped handle and Hebrew inscriptions indicate the site's Judahite administration.
9. Besides Philistine territories, Uzziah expanded influence into the central Jordanian plateau and cultivated the Judean wilderness. This is evidenced by inscriptions found in Jordan, and also by fortified settlements and irrigation works in the Judean desert.
10. Kuntillet Ajrud shows evidence of both Israelite and Judahite pottery, as well as its location along caravan routes between the Haggahs and the Mediterranean. This suggests it was a geopolitical border site and trading post, not just a pilgrimage site.

## Essay Questions

**Instructions:** Answer these questions in essay format, using detailed information from the source material.

1. Discuss the debate surrounding the historical reliability of the Book of Chronicles, and how the archaeological evidence related to Uzziah's reign contributes to this discussion.
2. Analyze the archaeological evidence related to Uzziah's expansion into Philistia. Consider the sites of Yavneh, Gath, and Ashdod. What challenges and support do these sites offer to the biblical narrative in Chronicles?
3. Evaluate the role of trade and border control during Uzziah's reign, using the sites of Eilat, Kadesh Barnea, and Kuntillet Ajrud as evidence.
4. How does the lecture use archaeological evidence to support Uzziah's building and settlement projects in various regions, such as the Judean wilderness, Philistia, and Jerusalem?
5. Based on the archaeological and textual evidence presented in the lecture, argue for either a skeptical or a more trusting perspective regarding the accuracy of the Book of Chronicles' account of Uzziah's reign.

## Glossary

**Archives:** A collection of historical records, especially those providing information about a place, institution, or group of people.

**Documentary Hypothesis:** A theory that the Pentateuch (first five books of the Old Testament) is a composite work derived from multiple originally independent sources.

**Favisa:** A repository pit, often found near temples, used for the ritual burial of sacred or broken objects.

**Hegemony:** Leadership or dominance, especially by one country or social group over others.

**Iron Age IIB:** A specific period in the Iron Age, roughly from the 9th to 6th centuries BC, characterized by particular cultural and material patterns in the Levant.

**Lamelek:** A Hebrew phrase meaning "belonging to the king," often found on stamped jar handles in ancient Israel.

**Migdalim:** Hebrew for “towers,” often used to describe defensive structures.

**Ophel:** The area in Jerusalem located south of the Temple Mount and north of the City of David.

**Pithos:** A large clay storage jar.

**Polity:** An organized society, often a state or political entity.

## 5. FAQs on Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 21, An Archaeologist Looks at Uzziah's Reign, [Biblicalelearning.org](http://Biblicalelearning.org) (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions about Uzziah's Reign

1. **Why is the reign of King Uzziah of Judah considered significant in biblical archaeology?**
2. Uzziah's reign, while often overlooked, provides a valuable case study for examining the intersection of biblical texts and archaeological evidence. His 52-year rule, the second longest in Judah, is detailed in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, with Chronicles providing additional information not found in Kings. This presents a challenge to scholars regarding the historicity of Chronicles and offers a window into 8th century Judahite expansion and political life. The reign is also associated with a notable earthquake mentioned by multiple prophets, adding another dimension to the study of this time period.
3. **What is the historical debate surrounding the Book of Chronicles and how does it relate to Uzziah's reign?**
4. The Book of Chronicles is a later text, likely written during the Persian period (late 6th-5th century BC), which has led to skepticism about its historical reliability, especially when it contains information absent from the earlier Book of Kings. Critics question how the chronicler could accurately record details of events that occurred 300-400 years prior without reliable sources. The additional information about Uzziah's reign in Chronicles, such as his expansion into Philistia, building projects, and control of Eilat, is considered by some as potentially unreliable. However, some scholars argue that the chronicler used archival sources from the monarchic period, and they seek archaeological evidence to support this theory.

5. **What archaeological evidence supports the biblical account of Uzziah's reign, particularly his expansionist policies?**
6. Archaeological findings offer substantial support for the accounts of Uzziah's reign and expansion. The fortified sites of Tell el-Khalifeh (potentially Eilat), Tamar (Ein Hatziva), and Kadesh-Barnea show similar 8th-century construction styles, suggesting a coordinated building program. The establishment of Judahite settlements and fortresses throughout the Shephelah, Negev, and coastal plain, as well as the Judean desert, also provide physical proof of this expansion. Notably, at Ashdod, a Judahite-style gate, Hebrew inscriptions, and evidence of an earlier 8th-century destruction point to the impact of Uzziah's campaign.
7. **How does the control of Eilat, a Red Sea port, fit into the narrative of Uzziah's reign, and what archaeological evidence backs this up?**
8. Both 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles mention Uzziah's control over Eilat, a strategic Red Sea port, which is significant because it provided access to lucrative trade routes. This achievement is described as a highlight of his reign, which can be supported through finds at Tell el-Khalifeh which show 8th century occupation and fortifications, as well as finds of a similar nature at Tamar. These sites, along with those such as Kadesh-Barnea, demonstrate the extent to which Uzziah asserted Judah's presence in the region.
9. **What does the archaeological record reveal about Uzziah's campaign into Philistia, and how does it align with the biblical account?**
10. The biblical account in Chronicles describes Uzziah's campaign against the Philistine cities of Gath, Yavneh, and Ashdod. The evidence at Yavneh is inconclusive due to the limited nature of excavations. At Tel es-Safi (identified as Gath), there is no evidence of a destruction layer during the time period of Uzziah, but there is evidence of a Judean settlement built on top of earlier ruins, perhaps indicating a change in control. The destruction found at Ashdod, along with the construction of a Judahite gate and stamped handles, supports a level of Judahite control and conquest. It is noted that these events at Ashdod do not follow what was originally concluded in older publications. The lack of evidence at Tel es-Safi led to the consideration that Gath-Gitayim may be the Gath mentioned in Chronicles. This aligns with the text and underscores Judahite power in the region.

- 11. How do the newly discovered sites and surveys help understand Uzziah's control and influence?**
12. Archaeological surveys of the region, especially around Ashdod and throughout the Philistine plain, have uncovered multiple 8th-century Judahite settlements and fortifications at places like Yavne Yam and Rishon Litzion, illustrating the extent of Judah's control over the region during Uzziah's reign. This supports the idea that Uzziah not only conquered but also established administrative and settlement structures in the areas he controlled.
- 13. Besides his military campaigns, what other significant activities did Uzziah undertake that are supported by archaeology?**
14. Beyond military campaigns, Uzziah undertook significant infrastructure projects. He is recorded in Chronicles to have built towers in Jerusalem and fortified them, with a gate excavated along the Ophel wall potentially showing his work. He is described to have created cisterns in the Judean wilderness, where evidence of irrigation and fortified settlements have been discovered at sites like Qumran and Ein Gedi, suggesting his attempts to develop and protect these areas. The presence of Judahite material at sites like Tel Jalul indicates influence on the eastern side of the Jordan. Further, the site at Kuntillet Ajrud shows some level of joint operation between Judah and Israel, showing a larger sphere of influence.
- 15. What is the significance of the mention of the "Meunites" in the context of determining the historical reliability of Chronicles?**
16. The mention of the "Meunites" in Chronicles, a people otherwise unknown outside the Bible until their appearance in the annals of Tiglath-Pileser III, is critical in arguing for the historicity of the book. This detail, a specific 8th-century reference, suggests that the chronicler had access to archival documents or a knowledge of an 8th-century political landscape that would have been virtually impossible for a writer of the Persian or Hellenistic period to have accurately reconstructed. This particular reference is seen by some scholars as the smoking gun that proves the historical nature of Chronicles.