

Dr. Elaine Phillips, Introduction to Biblical Studies, Session 2, Focus on Archaeology Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Phillips, Introduction to Biblical Studies, Session 2, Focus on Archaeology, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture from Dr. Elaine Phillips' "Introduction to Biblical Studies" course focuses on archaeology in the context of historical geography of ancient Israel. **Key terms** like "tell" and "stratigraphy" are defined, illustrating how archaeological layers reveal historical settlements. The lecture **explores the chronological periods** relevant to biblical history, including the Bronze and Iron Ages. **Debates** within the field are addressed, particularly the contrast between "biblical archaeology" and "Syro-Palestinian archaeology," and the "minimalist" perspective on the historicity of the biblical accounts of David and Solomon. Finally, the lecture **examines various archaeological methods** and presents examples of artifacts and sites that provide insights into ancient life and political entities.

**2. 38 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Phillips, Introduction to Biblical Studies, Session 2 –
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 →
Introduction to Biblical Studies).**



**Phillips_IBS_Session
02.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes, ideas, and facts from the provided source, "Phillips_IBS_EN_Session02.pdf":

Briefing Document: Introduction to Biblical Studies - Session 2: Focus on Archaeology

I. Introduction & Overview

- This lecture focuses on archaeology as it relates to understanding the biblical text and historical developments.
- It aims to unpack what we know about archaeology, covering definitions, chronological periods, advantages and limitations of archaeological data, and archaeological approaches and methods.
- Key themes to be addressed include:
- Definitions of archaeological terms.
- Overview of chronological periods impacting biblical understanding.
- Advantages and limitations of archaeology in biblical studies.
- Archaeological methods and approaches.
- Debates surrounding the term "biblical archaeology" versus "Syro-Palestinian archaeology".
- The revision of biblical history through the lens of archaeology and chronological developments

II. Key Definitions

- **Archaeology:** The study of ancient things or antiquities. William Dever defines it as "the scientific study of material remains of past human life and activities."
- **Tell:** An artificial mound representing a particular site built up over time due to repeated destruction and rebuilding. Tels are common in Israel due to the combination of water sources and defensibility attracting repeated settlements, resulting in built-up layers (strata).
- **Stratum/Strata:** Singular and plural terms referring to the layers of settlement that constitute the history of a site within a tell. "Layers represent different kinds of settlement over the centuries."

- **Stratigraphy:** The study of the buildup of soil, refuse (pottery, building debris, etc.) in the ground as it relates to its context.

III. Understanding Tels & Stratigraphy

- Tells develop due to the repetitive cycle of destruction and rebuilding at strategic locations, typically near water sources.
- The slope of a tell is caused by gravity working on the debris of collapsed structures over time.
- Archaeologists use surveys, including identifying pottery shards, to determine the period in which a site was inhabited.
- Excavations are done by sectioning off areas of a tell to determine what is below the surface.
- Water sources within a tell were a key feature of the location. In many cases, tunnels would be dug to ensure water was safely accessible in times of conflict or siege.

IV. Geographical Scope

- Biblical archaeology extends beyond the land of Israel to include the surrounding regions, such as Egypt and Mesopotamia, and acknowledges the influence of Hellenistic and Roman cultures on the region, noting that the area is “the land between” several major geopolitical powers.

V. Chronological Periods

- The periods are defined by technologies. Early periods use stone, then bronze, then iron. Later periods are named for the dominating empire.
- **Stone Age:** (Broad) includes Paleolithic and Neolithic periods. Not explicitly related to biblical events. The exception mentioned was a tower at Jericho.
- **Chalcolithic:** Copper and stone tools.
- **Bronze Age:Early Bronze:** Significant cultural development in Canaan, no Israelites yet. (3500-2200 BC approx.)
- **Middle Bronze:** Potential overlap with the time of Abraham (~2100-2000 BC), and the Israelite migration to Egypt.

- **Late Bronze:** Time of the Exodus and the Conquest. Around 1200 BC, major upheavals occur in the Eastern Mediterranean area.
- **Iron Age:Iron Age 1:** Period of the Judges (1200-1000 BC), marked by smaller settlements in the hill country.
- **Iron Age 2:** The United and Divided Monarchy (1000-586 BC).
- **Later Empires:** After the Iron Age, empires dominate and define the period
- **Babylonian/Persian**
- **Hellenistic/Hasmonean** Very significant, especially for the archaeology of Jerusalem.
- **Roman:** (63 BC - AD 360), with the Herodian period being important for understanding the Gospels.
- **Byzantine:** Important for understanding the archaeology of Jerusalem
- **Islamic/Crusader/Ottoman Empires**

VI. Advantages and Limitations of Archaeology

- **Advantages:**Provides tangible corroboration of biblical texts. “Not improving, but corroborating.”
- **Limitations:**Archaeology is not an exact science, requiring interpretation.
- “The science of digging a square hole and the art of spinning a yarn from it” - Anson Rainey.
- Artifacts removed from their original context are more difficult to interpret.
- Only a small number of sites are excavated.
- Comprehensive excavations are rare, with archaeologists focusing on specific areas.
- Limited extra-biblical documents and inscriptions are available, creating challenges when attempting to correlate them with artifacts.
- Inherent subjectivity in where to excavate.

VII. What Archaeologists Look For

- **Past Focus:** Evidence of central governments, geopolitical entities, and statehood (walls, gates, water systems, temples, palaces).
- Religious artifacts like altars, standing stones, figurines, inscriptions, and coins.
- **Current Focus:** Continuities and changes in settlements reflecting economic and cultural shifts (house styles, pottery, burial practices, decoration, metals).
- Destruction layers and inscribed pot shards.
- Daily life and the more nuanced aspects of culture

VIII. Archaeological Methods of Investigation

- **Surface Surveys:** Walking around tells to collect pottery sherds which help establish a chronology for the site.
- **Excavation:** Carefully excavating specific areas of a tell to reveal the different strata. Excavation is “destruction” as it is impossible to re-excavate a site.
- **Dating:** Dating of artifacts and structures through stratigraphic analysis, pottery analysis, and increasingly, lab analysis of pollen, bones, metals, and other organic materials.

IX. Hot Topics in Biblical Archaeology

- **Biblical Archaeology vs. Syro-Palestinian Archaeology:** **Biblical Archaeology:** Presupposes the Bible as a resource for understanding ancient Israel’s history, and archaeology is used to corroborate biblical narratives.
- **Syro-Palestinian Archaeology:** Intentionally separates archaeology from biblical studies to create an academic dialogue. It is more inclusive with a wider geographical scope and less emphasis on the biblical text.
- **Historical Minimalism & Revisionism:** **Minimalism:** Questions the historical accuracy of the biblical narrative, suggesting it is a theological construction written during the Persian period and therefore useless as a historical source. Minimalists claim the United Monarchy of David and Solomon is a myth, and that there is no monumental architecture from the 10th century.
- **Low Chronology:** Proponents of minimalism re-date artifacts, and claim that major structures in Gezer, Megiddo, and Hazor date from a century later than traditionally thought, and that they were not constructed by Solomon.

- **Counter Evidence:** The Tel Dan inscription, discovered by Avraham Biran, references the "House of David" which counters the claim that David was mythical. Other evidence includes:
- Jerusalem's significance in the Amarna texts.
- A large structure in the City of David, possibly a palace.
- A Merneptah stele that mentions the presence of Israel in the land.
- The discovery of bullae, seal impressions referencing Hezekiah, and a possible reference to Isaiah.
- The discovery of a fortress at Khirbet Qeiyafa from ~ 1000BC with a massive wall and two gates.

X. Conclusion

- Archaeology plays a vital role in understanding the biblical world by uncovering physical evidence from the past.
- It can corroborate the biblical narrative but also presents limitations and requires careful interpretation.
- Ongoing debates about the nature of biblical history and the interpretation of archaeological evidence underscore the complexity of this field.

4. Phillips, Introduction to Biblical Studies, Session 2, Focus on Archaeology

Biblical Archaeology: A Study Guide

Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What is the definition of archaeology, according to the lecture?
2. What is a "tell" in the context of archaeology, and how do they form?
3. What is stratigraphy and how does it contribute to archaeological understanding?
4. What is the difference between "biblical archaeology" and "Syro-Palestinian archaeology"?
5. Why is the study of pottery so important in archaeological digs?
6. What are some of the "big" things archaeologists look for when excavating a site?
7. What are some of the smaller, more nuanced aspects of daily life that archaeologists now examine?
8. How did the Roman's impact the infrastructure of the region? Give two examples.
9. What is the core dispute between those who subscribe to "high chronology" and "low chronology" when interpreting biblical history and archaeological finds?
10. What is the significance of the Tel Dan inscription in relation to minimalist views of biblical history?

Answer Key

1. Archaeology is the scientific study of the material remains of past human life and activities, focusing on ancient things or antiquities. It involves careful examination of artifacts within their context to understand past human behavior and societies.
2. A "tell" is an artificial mound that forms over time as a site is repeatedly destroyed and rebuilt, with each new settlement layer adding to the mound's height. They are common in Israel and reflect the principles of toponymy: a need for water and defensibility.
3. Stratigraphy is the study of the layers (strata) of soil, refuse, building debris, and other materials within a tell, and helps archaeologists understand the historical

sequence of a site. Examining these layers, in context, can reveal changes in settlement, technology, and culture over time.

4. Biblical archaeology is an approach that assumes the Bible is a good resource for understanding ancient Israel's history and aims to corroborate biblical accounts with archaeological finds, while Syro-Palestinian archaeology seeks to separate archaeology from biblical studies and focus on the broader ancient Near Eastern cultures, considering a wider geographic and chronological scope.
5. Pottery is crucial because it changes over time, reflecting shifts in technology, culture, trade, and social practices. By examining pottery sherds, archaeologists can date layers, understand connections between cultures, and identify periods of settlement or absence of it at a particular site.
6. Archaeologists look for evidence of central governments and statehood, including fortifications like walls and gates, water systems, and large structures such as temples and palaces. They also look for religious objects like altars, standing stones, and figurines, along with official documents and coins.
7. Archaeologists are increasingly studying nuanced aspects of daily life, such as house styles, burial practices, jewelry, metal objects, and small items used for decoration. They examine the way people lived, where they lived on the tell, and how their daily life was affected by economic and cultural shifts over time.
8. The Romans improved travel by creating a road system, as evidenced by milestones that marked distances. They also developed complex water systems, such as aqueducts, like in Caesarea, to transport water to cities that lacked local sources.
9. Those adhering to "high chronology" tend to view the biblical text as an accurate account of ancient Israelite history, including the united monarchy, while those who subscribe to "low chronology" often question the reliability of the biblical text, particularly in the 10th century BCE, proposing that the narratives were written later and are not reliable historical sources.
10. The Tel Dan inscription is significant because it contains the phrase "House of David," supporting the existence of a Davidic dynasty, something that minimalist scholars had disputed. Its discovery contradicts the minimalist position that David and Solomon were mythical figures or that the United Monarchy was an invention from a later period.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the limitations of archaeology as a historical discipline, citing specific examples of challenges that archaeologists face when interpreting material evidence.
2. Explain the methodological differences between biblical archaeology and Syro-Palestinian archaeology and how those differences impact the interpretation of archaeological findings.
3. Analyze the role of material culture (e.g., pottery, coins, house styles) in understanding ancient daily life, as described in the lecture, and give examples.
4. Compare and contrast the arguments of scholars who advocate for high chronology with those who advocate for low chronology, and explain the implications of each position on our understanding of the biblical narrative.
5. How does the study of tells and their stratigraphy contribute to our understanding of the history and culture of ancient Israel and neighboring regions?

Glossary of Key Terms

Archaeology: The scientific study of material remains of past human life and activities.

Tell: An artificial mound formed by the accumulation of debris from repeated cycles of settlement, destruction, and rebuilding at the same site.

Stratigraphy: The study of the layered deposits (strata) within an archaeological site, used to determine the chronological sequence of human activity at that location.

Biblical Archaeology: An approach to archaeology that emphasizes the correlation of archaeological finds with biblical narratives.

Syro-Palestinian Archaeology: An approach to archaeology that focuses on the broader geographical and cultural context of the Levant, encompassing regions outside of those explicitly detailed in the Bible.

Toponymy: The study of place names, including the significance of water sources and defensible locations.

High Chronology: An approach that accepts the biblical timeline as broadly accurate and uses it to interpret archaeological data.

Low Chronology: An approach that questions the historical accuracy of the biblical timeline, often dating major structures and events to a later period than traditional interpretations.

Minimalism: A scholarly viewpoint that questions or minimizes the historical accuracy of the biblical narratives, often seeing them as later constructions.

Potsherd: A broken piece of pottery, often used by archaeologists to determine the date and cultural context of a site.

5. FAQs on Phillips, Introduction to Biblical Studies, Session 2, Focus on Archaeology, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Biblical Archaeology

- What is archaeology, and how does it contribute to our understanding of the Bible?** Archaeology is the scientific study of the material remains of past human life and activities. It involves examining artifacts, structures, and other physical evidence left behind by ancient civilizations. In the context of the Bible, archaeology provides tangible evidence that can illuminate the cultural, political, and social contexts in which biblical events occurred. It helps us understand the world of the Bible, adding depth to our understanding of the text and historical developments, without proving the Bible to be true.
- What is a 'tell,' and why are they significant in archaeology?** A tell is an artificial mound created by successive layers of human settlement built up over time. These mounds are particularly common in Israel because sites with access to water and defensibility are destroyed and rebuilt on top of the ruins, causing a slow build-up of debris and refuse. Each layer, or stratum, within a tell represents a different period of habitation, allowing archaeologists to study the site's history. Tells are important because they provide a chronological record of human activity in a specific location.
- What are the different chronological periods used in biblical archaeology, and how do they relate to biblical events?** Biblical archaeology uses several chronological periods, defined primarily by the tools used in that period: Stone Age, Chalcolithic (copper/stone), Bronze Age (Early, Middle, Late), and Iron Age (1, 2). These are followed by periods defined by empires: Babylonian, Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Islamic, Crusader, and Ottoman. The Bronze Age is particularly relevant to the patriarchs (like Abraham), the Israelite sojourn in Egypt, the Exodus, and the Conquest. The Iron Age aligns with the period of the Judges and the Israelite monarchies. Later periods, like the Roman era, are crucial for understanding the New Testament context. It is important to remember that these dates are approximate and open to debate.

- **What are the limitations of using archaeology to understand biblical history?**

While archaeology is valuable, it has limitations. It is not an exact science, and the interpretation of findings is subjective. Artifacts can be removed from their stratigraphic context, making analysis challenging. Only a small fraction of archaeological sites have been excavated, and comprehensive excavations of sites are rare, meaning that crucial evidence might be missed. Additionally, the availability of extra-biblical documents and inscriptions that are used in conjunction with the archaeological finds is limited, and at times can be difficult to interpret.

- **What kinds of things are archaeologists looking for when they excavate?**

Archaeologists look for a wide range of things. They initially focus on evidence of central governments, such as city walls, fortifications, water systems, gates, palaces, and temple structures. They also examine altars, standing stones, figurines, inscriptions, and coins. Additionally, archaeologists investigate things relating to the daily life of ancient peoples, such as house styles, pottery, burial practices, jewelry, metalwork, evidence of destruction, and inscribed potsherds. More modern archaeology also focuses on the economic, social, and cultural shifts over time as reflected in these items.

- **What is the difference between "Biblical Archaeology" and "Syro-Palestinian Archaeology"?** "Biblical Archaeology" is an approach that views the Bible as a reliable historical source and seeks to correlate archaeological findings with the biblical narrative, and often focuses on periods of the Bible in the land of Israel. "Syro-Palestinian Archaeology," on the other hand, intentionally separates archaeology from biblical studies to allow both disciplines to inform each other through dialogue. This approach studies the broader ancient Near Eastern cultures and covers a wider geographic scope, with less emphasis on the corroboration of biblical text, and more on exploring the full picture of ancient Near Eastern culture.

- **What is "historical minimalism," and how does it challenge traditional views of biblical history?** Historical minimalism is a scholarly perspective that questions the historical accuracy of the biblical narratives, particularly regarding the united monarchy of David and Solomon. Minimalists suggest that the biblical texts are largely theological constructions written much later, primarily in the Persian period, and are not reliable historical records, particularly the earlier periods. They dispute the existence of monumental architectural structures from the 10th century (David and Solomon's time) and posit that any significant structures date to later times or to other peoples.
- **What evidence exists to challenge the claims of historical minimalists?** Several key archaeological finds challenge historical minimalism. The Tel Dan inscription, for example, includes the phrase "House of David," suggesting the historicity of David. Additionally, substantial monumental structures have been found in Jerusalem, indicating a centralized monarchy in the 10th century BCE. The Merneptah Stele, which predates the Israelite monarchy, also mentions the existence of Israel in the land at that time. Finally, other extra-biblical evidence shows that Jerusalem was a significant city earlier than the minimalist position claims.