

Dr. David B. Schreiner, Pondering the Spade, Session 1, Setting the Stage Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Schreiner, Pondering the Spade, Session 1, Setting the Stage, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. David Schreiner's "Pondering the Spade" lecture series, specifically session one, introduces the complex relationship between **archaeology and Old Testament studies**. Schreiner, an associate professor, uses a personal anecdote to illustrate the popular but often inaccurate ways archaeology is applied to biblical interpretation. He then provides a historical overview of archaeological methodology, highlighting key figures and developments, emphasizing the evolution from treasure hunting to a sophisticated, multidisciplinary field. Finally, he introduces his framework of "narrow" and "broad convergences" to explain how archaeological findings interact with and inform biblical scholarship. The lecture sets the stage for subsequent sessions exploring specific archaeological discoveries and their implications.

2. 23 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Schreiner, Pondering the Spade, Session 1 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Introduction & Languages → Introductory Series → Archaeology).



**Schreiner_Ponderin
g_Session01.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Schreiner_Pondering_EN_Session01.pdf":

Briefing Document: Pondering the Spade, Session 1 - Setting the Stage

Overview: This document summarizes the key points of the first session of Dr. Schreiner's course, "Pondering the Spade," focusing on setting the stage for understanding the relationship between archaeology and Old Testament studies. Dr. Schreiner uses a personal anecdote, a review of the history of archaeology and a discussion of the nature of archaeology itself to demonstrate the need for a nuanced understanding of how the two fields can mutually inform one another. The lecture lays the foundation for the following three sessions by introducing the concept of "convergence" – both broad and narrow – as a framework for examining the relationship between archaeological findings and biblical interpretation.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. The Intersection of Archaeology and Old Testament Studies is Crucial:

- Dr. Schreiner emphasizes the importance of understanding the relationship between archaeology and Old Testament (OT) studies, noting that ancient Israel was the channel for much of God's revelation.
- He asserts that unpacking the cultures of ancient Israel through archaeology is “absolutely imperative” for a deeper understanding of the Bible.
- He believes that this interaction is often misunderstood, and that this misunderstanding requires a proper discussion.

1. A Telling Vignette: Misapplication of Archaeological Knowledge:

- Dr. Schreiner recounts an experience where a Sunday school teacher, while enthusiastic about archaeology, incorrectly applied archaeological findings (e.g., the work of Kathleen Kenyon, Ami Mazar) to biblical periods, mixing up dates and cultural transitions.
- This vignette illustrates the popular interest in the relationship between archaeology and the Old Testament but also the potential for misunderstanding and misapplication of archaeological data.

- "He messes everything up because he's applying Kathleen Kenyon's study on the early bronze age, middle bronze age transitions to the period of the Israelite settlement. So, he's mixing up all the dates..."

1. **Popular Interest vs. Methodological Rigor:**

- There's a clear popular fascination with archaeology's link to biblical studies, demonstrated by the prevalence of related shows on TV networks like the History Channel and Discovery Channel.
- This popular interest also includes the spectrum of legitimate scholarship and less rigorous approaches.
- Dr. Schreiner notes, "...there is a popular concern for archaeology and how that helps us understand scripture, okay? This experience proved that. However, it also showed the unfortunate side of that reality. This is a relationship, the popular notion of how these two disciplines fuse is often misunderstood."

1. **The Nature of Archaeology:**

- Dr. Schreiner defines archaeology as "the study of stuff in order to understand a particular culture or a particular place."
- Archaeology encompasses more than just digging; it includes the use of advanced technology (ground-penetrating radar, computer algorithms, DNA profiling) to analyze material culture and understand past societies.
- He uses examples such as *ostraca* (potsherds with writing), such as the Meshad Hashevyahu Ostraca, the Lachish Letters, the Samaria ostraca, and Arad Ostraca to demonstrate the diverse nature of archaeological finds and how they illuminate daily life and practices.

1. **Three Phases of Archaeological Development:**

- **Phase One: Inception of Palestinian Exploration (Early Methodologically Crude):** Characterized by treasure hunting and rudimentary methods, often driven by individuals like Napoleon Bonaparte (who was instrumental in discovering the Rosetta Stone) and Sir Edward Robinson (father of biblical geography). "It's glorified treasure hunting. This is Indiana Jones looking for the lost Ark."

- **Phase Two: Rise of Systematic Archaeology (Early 1900's):** A transition towards more methodological precision, using seriation/pottery chronology, focusing on understanding tells as layers of settlement. Key figures include Sir Flinders Petrie and William F. Albright (the articulator of the conquest model). Yigal Yadin (the articulator of the Solomonic Footprint) and Dame Kathleen Kenyon were also important figures.
 - **Phase Three: Today's Archaeology (Modern, Methodologically Conscientious):** Emphasizes digging methods (Kenyon-Wheeler vs. Reisner-Fisher), is multidisciplinary, utilizes new technologies, and is influenced by "new archaeology," which has turned archaeology into an anthropological discipline. The emphasis is on how you dig, not just where you dig. "...archaeology today is very specialized, and it's very multidisciplinary."
1. **Redefining "Biblical Archaeology":**
 - The term "biblical archaeology" has become controversial due to perceptions that it's overly apologetic and tries to "prove" the Bible.
 - Dr. Schreiner suggests that a correct understanding of the term would mean that "archaeology that bears upon the Bible can be called biblical archaeology."
 - He emphasizes it's not about proving or disproving the Bible, but about utilizing archaeology to inform the understanding of the Bible, whether that impact is direct or indirect.
 - He notes, "It is not about proving the Bible or disproving the Bible, alright? It is about archaeology that informs our understanding of the Bible, directly or indirectly."
 - **Convergence: Broad and Narrow:** Dr. Schreiner introduces the concept of convergence, building on the work of William Deaver, to explain how archaeology and biblical studies intersect.
 - **Narrow Convergence:** Specific instances where archaeological findings directly relate to specific passages, places, or events in the Old Testament.
 - **Broad Convergence:** Instances where archaeological research provides a broader understanding of the cultural, social, and historical contexts of the biblical world, impacting worldview and societal structures.
 - He will be using these two categories to help define the ways in which Archaeology can add another level to scriptural interpretation and understanding.

- "...narrow convergences are the specific times when archaeological research specifically and directly impacts, bumps up against, or intersects with a passage, with a place, or something specific in our Old Testament. Conversely, broad convergences are going to be the places where archaeological research is going to impact and fine-tune our understanding in more broad and general terms."
- **Criteria for Choosing Archaeological Examples:** Dr. Schreiner will select archaeological examples for subsequent lectures based on three main criteria:
- **Ripple Effect:** Did the find significantly alter scholarly understanding?
- **Widespread Interest:** Did the find generate interest beyond academic circles?
- **Impact:** Did the find significantly impact the understanding of Scripture?

Implications for Future Lectures:

- The lecture sets the stage for the following sessions by laying out the importance of understanding the relationship between archaeology and Old Testament studies.
- The upcoming lectures will delve into specific archaeological finds, analyzing their implications for biblical understanding through the lens of broad and narrow convergence.
- The approach will involve discussion of both the artifact and the story of its finding.

Conclusion:

Dr. Schreiner's first session provides a clear framework for the course. He emphasizes the importance of methodological rigor while recognizing the value of archaeology in enriching our understanding of the Bible. By exploring both direct and indirect connections between these fields, he hopes to equip the audience with the knowledge necessary for a balanced and informed interpretation of Scripture.

4. Schreiner, Pondering the Spade, Session 1, Setting the Stage

Pondering the Spade: A Study Guide

Short Answer Quiz

1. What is the central problem Dr. Schreiner identifies with the popular understanding of the relationship between archaeology and Old Testament studies?
2. Explain what ostraca are and why they are significant to archaeological studies.
3. Describe the key differences between Phase One and Phase Two of the development of archaeology, as presented in the lecture.
4. Who is Sir Flinders Petrie and why is he important in the history of archaeology?
5. Briefly describe the main contributions of William F. Albright to the field of biblical archaeology.
6. What is the Kenyon-Wheeler method of excavation and how does it differ from the Reisner-Fisher method?
7. According to Schreiner's lecture, why has archaeology shifted from being primarily a theological pursuit to an anthropological one?
8. How does Schreiner define archaeology and what is meant by "biblical archaeology?"
9. Explain Schreiner's concepts of "broad convergence" and "narrow convergence" and how they are used in the context of the relationship between archaeology and biblical studies.
10. What criteria does Dr. Schreiner use to choose which archaeological finds to focus on in this series of lectures?

Answer Key

1. Dr. Schreiner argues that the popular understanding often misunderstands how archaeology and Old Testament studies interact, leading to methodological problems and misinterpretations of the data. This leads to incorrect conclusions about the biblical text.

2. Ostraca are broken pieces of pottery with writing on them. They are significant because they provide insights into daily life, legal practices, administrative activities, and even military correspondence of the cultures that produced them.
3. Phase One (Inception of Palestinian Exploration) is characterized by crude methods, glorified treasure hunting, and a focus on finding spectacular artifacts. Phase Two (Rise of Systematic Archaeology) is marked by more methodological precision, a greater concern for stratigraphy, and the development of pottery chronology.
4. Sir Flinders Petrie is important for refining seriation or pottery chronology, recognizing the tell as a layered site of settlement, and developing ways to date and understand these layers.
5. William F. Albright was known for developing the conquest model of the Israelite settlement in Canaan and for emphasizing the relationship between archaeology and the Bible. He also influenced many notable biblical scholars.
6. The Kenyon-Wheeler method focuses on digging in small, controlled squares to carefully track stratigraphy, whereas the Reisner-Fisher method prioritizes large-scale exposure to uncover broader site features, though it sacrifices some control of the data.
7. New Archaeology emphasized archaeology as an anthropological discipline, shifting the focus from theology to the broader study of cultures, societal structures, and daily life based on material remains.
8. Schreiner defines archaeology as the study of material culture to understand a particular culture or place. Biblical archaeology is the application of archaeology to understand ancient Israelite culture and inform biblical studies, but not to prove or disprove the Bible.
9. Broad convergences are indirect applications of archaeology that fine-tune our understanding of cultural and societal structures in the biblical world, while narrow convergences are direct points of intersection between archaeology and specific passages, places, or events in the Old Testament.
10. Schreiner's criteria include the ripple effect of the find, widespread public interest in the find, and its impact on understanding Scripture, specifically if the find significantly influenced understanding of biblical text, history, or culture.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the evolution of archaeological methods from the early days of "treasure hunting" to the current multidisciplinary approach. How have these changes impacted our understanding of the ancient world?
2. Analyze the contributions and criticisms of William F. Albright and how his work shaped the field of biblical archaeology. How do his contributions still influence contemporary perspectives?
3. Explore the tension between archaeology as an independent discipline and its role in informing biblical studies. Is it possible to maintain objectivity in the analysis of archaeological data when engaging with the biblical text?
4. How do the different methods of excavation (Kenyon-Wheeler vs. Reisner-Fisher) reveal the complexities of archaeological inquiry? How does this inform modern digging methods?
5. Discuss the significance of the concepts of "broad convergence" and "narrow convergence" in understanding the relationship between archaeology and the Old Testament. Give specific examples of both broad and narrow convergences, real or imagined, to illustrate how they enhance our understanding of biblical studies.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Ostraca:** Broken pieces of pottery (potsherds) with writing on them, often used for everyday communication or administrative purposes in the ancient world.
- **Tell:** An artificial mound formed by the accumulation of successive layers of habitation and debris at an ancient site.
- **Seriation:** The process of ordering artifacts or sites into a chronological sequence based on their relative styles or features; also called pottery chronology, in this instance.
- **Conquest Model:** A theory developed by William F. Albright, that describes the Israelite settlement in the land of Canaan as a result of a quick military blitzkrieg.
- **Solomonic Footprint:** The consistent architectural style of building projects (such as city gates, walls, and fortifications) at sites such as Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer associated with King Solomon, as identified by Yigal Yadin.

- **Kenyon-Wheeler Method:** An excavation method that emphasizes digging in small, controlled squares to meticulously document stratigraphy and data.
- **Reisner-Fisher Method:** An excavation method that prioritizes large-scale exposure of a site to uncover the broader architectural layout and features, potentially sacrificing some control of precise stratigraphic data.
- **New Archaeology:** A methodological movement in the 1970s and 80s that shifted the focus of archaeology from artifact-centered study to a more anthropological approach focused on understanding cultural systems.
- **Biblical Archaeology:** The branch of archaeology that focuses on the cultures of the biblical world, particularly ancient Israel, and how archaeological finds inform understanding of the Bible.
- **Broad Convergence:** The indirect ways in which archaeology influences our understanding of the Bible by providing a broader cultural and societal context; these convergences do not impact specific textual claims.
- **Narrow Convergence:** The direct connections between archaeological evidence and specific details, places, or passages in the Bible; these convergences often support, question, or clarify particular claims in the biblical text.
- **In situ:** A Latin term that describes an artifact or feature found in its original position of deposition, thus providing important context.
- **Stratigraphy:** The study of layered deposits (strata) at an archaeological site, which provides a relative chronological framework for understanding the site's history.
- **Material Culture:** The physical objects, artifacts, and structures created and used by a society, which provide insights into that society's beliefs, practices, and daily life.
- **Epigraphist:** A person who studies ancient inscriptions on objects, walls, and monuments.

5. FAQs on Schreiner, Pondering the Spade, Session 1, Setting the Stage, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on the Intersection of Archaeology and Old Testament Studies

- **What is the main idea behind the concept of "Pondering the Spade"?**
- "Pondering the Spade" is a way of thinking about the relationship between archaeology and Old Testament studies. It emphasizes that understanding the cultures of ancient Israel is vital to interpreting the Bible because God used ancient Israel as a channel for his revelation. This approach highlights the need to examine disciplines that unpack these ancient cultures. The goal is to understand how archaeological findings can enrich our understanding and interpretation of the Old Testament, moving beyond a simplistic or overly literal reading of the text. It's about recognizing archaeology as a tool to provide cultural context and nuance to biblical studies.
- **Why is it important to understand the relationship between archaeology and Old Testament studies?**
- If we believe that God used ancient Israel as a vessel for revelation to humanity, then it's imperative that we engage with disciplines like archaeology that help us understand their culture and context. The relationship between archaeology and Old Testament studies provides essential historical and cultural context for interpreting Scripture. It can offer a deeper understanding of the daily life, social structures, and political realities of ancient Israel, which in turn helps us grasp the meaning of the biblical text. By understanding this interaction, archaeology can provide a more nuanced and informed perspective of the Bible.

- **What are "ostraca," and why are they important in archaeological studies?**
- Ostraca are broken pieces of pottery (potsherds) that were used for writing. They are frequently found at archaeological sites in ancient Israel and are valuable because they offer insights into daily life, legal practices, administrative tasks, and military communications. They provide primary source material that helps us understand the day-to-day workings of ancient societies, sometimes even containing details that directly relate to or illuminate biblical practices and laws. Ostraca are also subjected to modern scientific techniques like computer algorithms to learn more about the writing styles and authors, further adding to their significance.
- **How has the discipline of archaeology evolved over time?**
- Archaeology has evolved through three primary phases: 1. **Inception of Palestinian Exploration:** This early phase, marked by figures like Napoleon Bonaparte and Sir Edward Robinson, was characterized by an interest in treasure hunting and geographical identification. Methods were crude, and the focus was on finding artifacts for museum collections. 2. **Rise of Systematic Archaeology:** Figures like Sir Flinders Petrie and William F. Albright brought a more systematic and methodologically rigorous approach to the field. Petrie introduced pottery chronology and emphasized the importance of understanding tells (ancient mounds) as layers of urban occupation. Albright sought to use archaeology to support biblical narratives. 3. **Today's Archaeology:** This modern phase is highly specialized, multidisciplinary, and focuses on the "how" of digging as much as the "where". It incorporates sophisticated techniques like ground-penetrating radar, DNA analysis, and computer algorithms. Digging methods, like Kenyon-Wheeler and Reisner-Fisher, guide precise excavation. New archaeology has also shifted archaeology to an anthropological discipline.

- **What is the difference between the Kenyon-Wheeler and the Reisner-Fisher methods of excavation?**
- The **Kenyon-Wheeler method** emphasizes digging in small, controlled sections (typically 5-foot by 5-foot squares) to gain precise control over stratigraphy (the layering of soil and artifacts) and the context of findings. In contrast, the **Reisner-Fisher method** focuses on large-scale exposure, aiming to uncover as much of a site as possible. Modern archaeologists often use a hybrid approach that combines the controlled methods of Kenyon-Wheeler with the broad exposure of Reisner-Fisher. The goal is to understand both the detailed context and the larger spatial patterns.
- **What is "biblical archaeology," and why is the term controversial?**
- "Biblical archaeology" is archaeological research that specifically informs our understanding of the Bible and ancient Israelite culture. The term carries some historical baggage and is controversial because in the past, it was associated with attempts to "prove" the Bible historically, often with a preconceived theological agenda. This approach has led to some misuse and misinterpretations of the data. Modern "biblical archaeology" is, therefore, less about proving or disproving the Bible and more about understanding the cultural and historical context that shapes the biblical narratives. It is a subset of archaeology but it should not be conflated with theology or apologetics.
- **What does "convergence" mean in the context of archaeology and biblical studies, and what are the two types of convergence?**
- Convergence refers to the points where archaeology and biblical studies intersect and inform each other. There are two types of convergence: 1. **Narrow Convergence:** This refers to instances where archaeological discoveries directly relate to specific people, places, or events mentioned in the Old Testament. This could be a specific inscription, building, or artifact mentioned in a biblical passage, and how these findings may corroborate or challenge our reading. 2. **Broad Convergence:** This involves the indirect applications of archaeological research to biblical interpretation, including using archaeological discoveries to understand the broader societal structures, cultural norms, and worldviews of ancient Israel and its surrounding cultures. This can shed light on why the biblical authors framed narratives in specific ways.

- **What criteria does the lecturer use to select specific archaeological findings for discussion in the upcoming lectures?**
- The lecturer chooses archaeological findings based on three key criteria: (1) the "ripple effect" of a discovery, meaning its impact on further research and thinking in the field, (2) the level of widespread interest generated by the finding, including public interest, and (3) its impact on reshaping our understanding of the Old Testament. The chosen findings move the conversation forward in significant ways by providing new cultural context, or offering new insight into past research, and are thus suitable for a detailed study of the intersection of Old Testament studies and archaeology.