

Dr. Don Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Session 14, Sea Peoples, Audio Podcast Overview

Sponsored by Biblicalelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

All right, so we're going deep today, deep into the ancient world. And we're talking about a time that makes rush hour traffic look like a walk in the park. Oh, wow.

It's the Sea Peoples. The Sea Peoples. And this is around 1250 to 1150 BC.

Okay, so over a hundred years. Yeah. Yeah.

And these guys, they turned the Mediterranean upside down. Yeah. They weren't messing around.

No. No. They completely redrew the map.

Basically. Yeah. Yeah.

And that's what we're going to be looking at. Cool. Our guide for this deep dive is a lecture by Dr. Donald Fowler, who's a specialist in Old Testament backgrounds.

Right. And it's fascinating; it really gives you a feel for just how crazy this period was. I can imagine.

And he makes it really clear why it's so important, especially for the Israelites. Right. Because you've got all this upheaval, and that creates opportunity.

It's like the Sea Peoples' movements just cleared the way for the Israelites to become a major power. It's like a chain reaction, you know? Yeah. You wouldn't think these things would be connected, but- But they are.

But they are. Yeah. History's full of surprises.

That's the truth. So let's start with who these Sea Peoples actually were. Okay.

Yeah. Who are we talking about here? Dr. Fowler mentions that Egyptian inscriptions name a bunch of different tribes, especially ones from Pharaohs Merneptah and Ramesses III. Ah, so we're going right to the source.

Right to the source. Primary sources. And two that really jump out are the Shardana-Shardana.

Who might be connected to Sardinia. Okay. And the Shekelesh, who might be from Sicily.

Interesting. It's like a giant historical puzzle, and each name is a piece. Yeah.

And you're trying to fit them all together. Exactly. See the big picture.

But there's one group that's super interesting, the Palisades. Palisades. Now, they later became known as the Philistines.

Ah, the Philistines. Yes. And guess what? They're the ones who gave their name to Palestine.

Wow. Talk about a legacy. I know, right? But their origin story, that's a mystery.

Oh, really? The Bible says they came from Kaphtor. Kaphtor. Which is probably Crete, but nobody knows for sure.

Huh. So we've got their name and where they ended up, but not where they came from. Pretty much.

It's like the middle of the story is missing. And that's not the only mystery. Oh.

What else? Why did all these people decide to pack up and migrate? Yeah. Good question. Well, Dr. Feller has a few theories.

Lay them on me. One is that some massive catastrophe happened, like a volcanic eruption or a huge earthquake, and that set off a chain reaction. Like people were forced to move.

Exactly. Interesting theory. But here's the thing.

What's that? There's not much evidence for it archaeologically. So it's kind of shaky then. Yeah.

Okay. So what's another theory? Well, what about a domino effect of migrations? Okay. I can see that.

Maybe starting in the Balkans? So one group pushes another group and so on. And so on. Like a wave.

Yeah. Creating all this unrest. Makes sense.

But these migrations were so huge and so complex, it's really hard to say for sure if that's what happened. Yeah. It'd be like trying to untangle a giant knot.

A giant knot. Of string. A knot made of history.

Exactly. But Dr. Feller thinks the best explanation is what he calls the climatic view. Okay.

The climatic view. What's that all about? This is where the science comes in. Oh, I like science.

He says there was this massive drought. A drought. A big one.

And how do we know that? Well, they used something called dendrochronology. Dendrochronology. Now that's a mouthful.

It's basically studying tree rings to understand the climate in the past. So, like, how old trees are? And more than that, they can tell what the climate was like. Really? Just from the rings? Yeah.

So by looking at the rings, they found this long period of drought that would have messed things up big time. Okay. So, like, crops failing, people struggling.

Exactly. That kind of pressure can make civilizations crumble. Yeah, I could see that.

And it would have forced people to find better land. So where'd they go? Well, where would you go if you were desperate for resources? Somewhere with plenty of food and water. Bingo.

And guess who had that? Let me guess. Egypt. Egypt.

They had the Nile? Right. The Nile. Always reliable.

Well, mostly. Mostly. Yeah.

There could be diseases, or the floods could be unpredictable. Oh, yeah. So even Egypt wasn't perfect.

No places. Sure. But compared to everywhere else, Egypt looked pretty good.

Makes sense. But Dr. Fowler also mentions that people might have made the drought worse. Really? How? He says deforestation could be one reason.

So as the population grew, they cut down more trees. Exactly. And they needed the wood.

Of course. But that might have led to desertification. And that just makes the drought worse.

Exactly. That's a vicious cycle. It is.

And he also mentions goat herding. Goat herding? What's wrong with goats? Well, goats are different from sheep. How so? Sheep mostly graze on grass.

Right. But goats, they tend to pull plants up by the roots. Oh, so they're hard on the environment.

Yeah. And if there are too many goats, it can damage the ecosystem. And that can make desertification worse, too.

Exactly. Wow. So even something like raising goats can have a big impact.

That's the point. Even small changes can have huge impacts. It's all connected.

And in this case, it seems like all these factors together created the perfect storm. Leading to? The Sea Peoples. And all the chaos that came with them.

Right. We're talking about empires collapsing: the Hittites, the Mycenaeans. And the Minoans.

The Minoans on Crete. Wiped out, or at least really weakened. Yeah.

And that's where things get really interesting. Oh, why is that? Because when these empires fall, it creates an opportunity. An opportunity for what? For someone else to take their place.

Like a power vacuum. Exactly. And someone was ready to step in.

Who? The Israelites. No kidding. Yep.

This whole time of chaos coincides with the rise of the Israelite kingdom. So they seized the moment. It's like history was just waiting for them to make their move.

But it wasn't all easy, was it? Well, that's what we'll be looking at in the next part of our deep dive. Okay. So stay tuned.

We'll see how the Israelites dealt with this chance, what challenges they faced, and what they left behind. Okay. Looking forward to it.

Yeah. It's a fascinating story. It is.

And it all starts with the Sea Peoples. Those mysterious Sea Peoples. Changing the course of history.

One wave at a time. All right. So last time we left the ancient world in chaos, thanks to the Sea Peoples.

Yeah. Empires falling. Migrations everywhere.

And right in the middle of it all, there's this power vacuum just waiting for someone to step in. Right for the taking. Exactly.

So now we get to see what the Israelites did with this, well, this golden opportunity. It's like a game of risk, you know? Historical risk. Yeah.

But with real consequences. High stakes. Definitely high stakes.

So did the Israelites just waltz in and take over? Not exactly. It's all about timing here. Oh, okay.

The Sea Peoples- their migrations wrapped up around 1150 BC. Right. And then boom, just a century later.

A century. Saul becomes the first king of Israel. In 1050 BC.

That's no coincidence. Wow. So the Sea Peoples clear the way, and then the Israelites rise up.

With the big guys out of the picture, it was their chance. Like the understudy finally getting their big break. Exactly.

And they were more than ready. This is the United Monarchy, right? Yep. Saul, David, and Solomon.

The golden age of Israel. Well, sort of. Sort of.

It wasn't all sunshine and rainbows. They're a problem. Even with all the expansion, all the power, there were internal struggles too.

Oh, so it wasn't just smooth sailing? Not at all. This period represents the peak of their political power, but it was short-lived. It's like that saying, nothing gold can stay.

Yeah, something like that. So it's a bittersweet story. Definitely bittersweet.

What about the kings themselves? Saul, David, Solomon- what were they like? David really stands out. David. Yeah, he was a brilliant strategist.

Okay, I can see that. He took advantage of the situation, consolidated his power, and expanded the kingdom. Ambitious.

And he even made Jerusalem the capital. Jerusalem, wow. He wasn't just a warrior; he had a vision.

A real leader. Exactly. What about his son, Solomon? Ah, Solomon.

Famous for his wisdom. And his wealth. Right, he brought prosperity to the kingdom.

So, a good king. He had his downsides. He actually planted the seeds for the kingdom's downfall.

How so? Well, let's just say, his decisions weren't always the best for unity. Ah, so even with all that wisdom, he made mistakes. Happens to the best of us.

So the kingdom was strong, but not unbreakable. And that's what's interesting about how Dr. Fowler presents this period. How so? He sees it through the lens of the Bible.

Okay. And from that perspective, this was a chance, a divine opportunity for the Israelites to achieve greatness. Wow, a chance given by God.

But they didn't quite make the most of it. They fumbled the ball. In a way, yeah.

After Solomon died in 930 BC, the kingdom split. 930, so that's the end of the united monarchy. And the end of their dominance.

It makes you wonder, what if they had made different choices? What if? Right, what if they had stayed united? It's hard to say what might have been. History is full of what ifs. It is.

But was it just their internal problems that caused the kingdom to fall apart? Well, around the same time that the Israelite kingdom was declining, another power was on the rise. Ah. Assyria.

Assyria, they were a force to be reckoned with. It's almost like the Sea Peoples; by weakening the old empires, they accidentally helped create a new superpower. Unintended consequences.

Exactly. So in the end, it was Assyria that benefited from all the chaos. You can see it that way.

But what about the Philistines? Ah, yes, the Philistines. What happened to them after all the migrations? They didn't just disappear. They stuck around.

Oh yeah, and they became a real problem for the Israelites. A problem. Remember, the Egyptians settled them on the coast.

Right. So they were right next door to the Israelites. And they didn't get along.

Not really. There was a lot of conflict. So they were more than just a nuisance.

They were a constant threat. But there's something that doesn't quite add up. What's that? The Philistines are mentioned in the Bible, in Genesis.

Right. But Genesis takes place way before the Sea Peoples showed up. That's true.

It creates a bit of a puzzle. And a historical head-scratcher. Dr. Fowler has a few ideas about how to explain this.

Okay, I'm all ears. One theory is that the name Philistine might have been attached to the land before the Sea Peoples even got there. So they took on the name of the place where they settled? It's possible.

Makes you wonder, were they the Philistines before they were the Philistines? It's a mind-bending thought. It is. Another possibility is that those mentions in Genesis are what we call anachronisms.

Anachronisms. Basically, later additions to the text. Oh, so maybe a scribe added them in later.

Trying to make the story more relevant to his own time. So the Bible we read today might not be exactly the same as the original. That's right.

Ancient texts can change over time. It's like a game of historical telephone. Kinda.

But there's one more theory, right? Yes. It's possible there was an earlier wave of migration. Before the Sea Peoples.

Yes. A smaller group, maybe from the same area. Like proto-Philistines.

You could call them that. And they were already settled in the land when the main group arrived. It's a possibility.

So many layers to this story. It's like an onion. A historical onion.

With every layer, you uncover something new. But no matter how you slice it. The Philistines were important.

They played a key role in this whole saga. And that's part of what makes the Sea Peoples so fascinating. Yeah, there's still so much we don't know.

So many mysteries. Their origins, their motivations, their impact. They really make us rethink the past.

So we've seen how the Sea Peoples changed the game. Turning the world upside down. Creating both opportunities and challenges.

For the Israelites and everyone else. And their story reminds us that history is rarely simple. It's messy.

It's unpredictable. It's full of surprises. And it's up to us to try and make sense of it all.

So what can we learn from all this? That's the big question, right? How do these ancient events connect to us today? That's what we'll be exploring in the final part of our deep dive. So stay tuned. Welcome back to our deep dive.

It's the final part. It is. The grand finale.

The climax. And we've come a long way. We have.

From the Sea Peoples' migrations. To the rise and fall of the Israelite kingdom. A lot of history.

But now it's time to shift gears a little. Okay. We've uncovered the story, but what can we actually learn from it? Yeah, what's the takeaway? Is there something relevant for us today in the 21st century? I think there is.

You do? I do. Okay, I'm intrigued. The Sea Peoples, their story, it's more than just ancient battles and empires.

It is. It's a reminder that civilizations, they're all connected. Yeah, and what happens in one place can affect things thousands of miles away.

It's like that butterfly effect. Exactly. But with a lot more upheaval.

So what you're saying is... We're not isolated. We're not. What happens over there? Can affect us over here.

Even if it seems completely unrelated. Right. And that's true across time too, not just geography.

So the Sea Peoples, they're still affecting us today. In a way, yes. Okay, I'm starting to see it.

We might not be facing armies with swords and chariots. Thankfully. But we do have our own challenges.

Right. Globalization, climate change, technology changing faster than ever. It can be a bit overwhelming.

Yeah, it's like we're in uncharted waters. Trying to navigate this constant change. And just like those ancient civilizations, we have a choice.

A choice. We can resist change, cling to the old ways, or we can adapt, innovate, and find new ways to thrive. Like sink or swim.

Exactly. So we can't just bury our heads in the sand. No, we have to be proactive.

Be resourceful. And be ready for anything. Because change is coming, whether we like it or not.

And the Sea Peoples, they teach us something else too. What's that? The power of the environment. How it can shape history.

Right, the drought. It might have been a trigger for all those migrations. And it led to all that chaos.

And it's a warning for us today. Climate change, yeah. We can't ignore it.

Because if we do. We might end up repeating history. And nobody wants that.

So the question is, are we learning from the past? That's a good question. Are we doing enough to protect our planet? To prevent another disaster. Because the Sea Peoples show us what can happen when we don't.

It's a sobering thought. It is, but it's not meant to scare us. No.

It's meant to make us think. To act. To realize that we're all connected.

To the planet, to each other. And to history. So, as we wrap up this deep dive.

What's the one thing you want our listener to remember? About the Sea Peoples. I think the most important lesson is this. History isn't over.

It's not. It's a continuous flow. And we're part of it.

We're shaping the future. Every single day. Just like the Sea Peoples shaped the past.

Their choices affect us. And our choices will affect the future. It's both humbling and inspiring.

It is. It's like we have this incredible responsibility. To make the world a better place.

To learn from the mistakes of the past. And to create a better future. So to our listeners out there.

Remember the Sea Peoples. Their story, their resilience. And let their example guide you.

In our own uncertain times. Because change is inevitable. But we have the power to choose how we respond.

And to make a difference. And that, my friends, concludes our deep dive into the world of the Sea Peoples. It's been a journey.

It has. Thanks for joining us. Keep exploring.

Keep learning. And keep asking those big questions. Until next time.