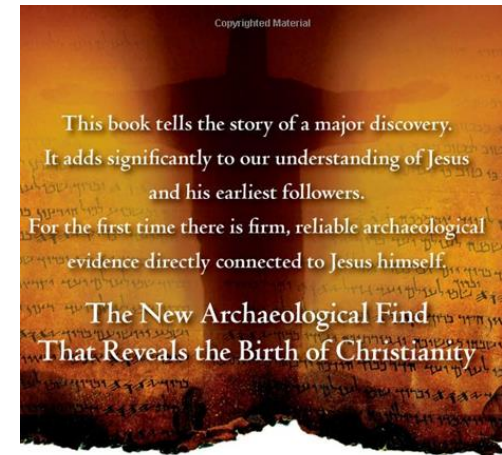


Modern developments in archaeology and the Bible record

Dr Karin Sowada

Purported image of Jonah from the Patio Tomb



THE JESUS DISCOVERY

JAMES D. TABOR *and* SIMCHA JACOBOVICI

Copyrighted Material

Released 2012

Principles in interpreting archaeological data in relation to the Bible

- *‘The service of archaeology is mainly to provide the stage props for the script which is in the Bible.’* - Professor A.R. Millard

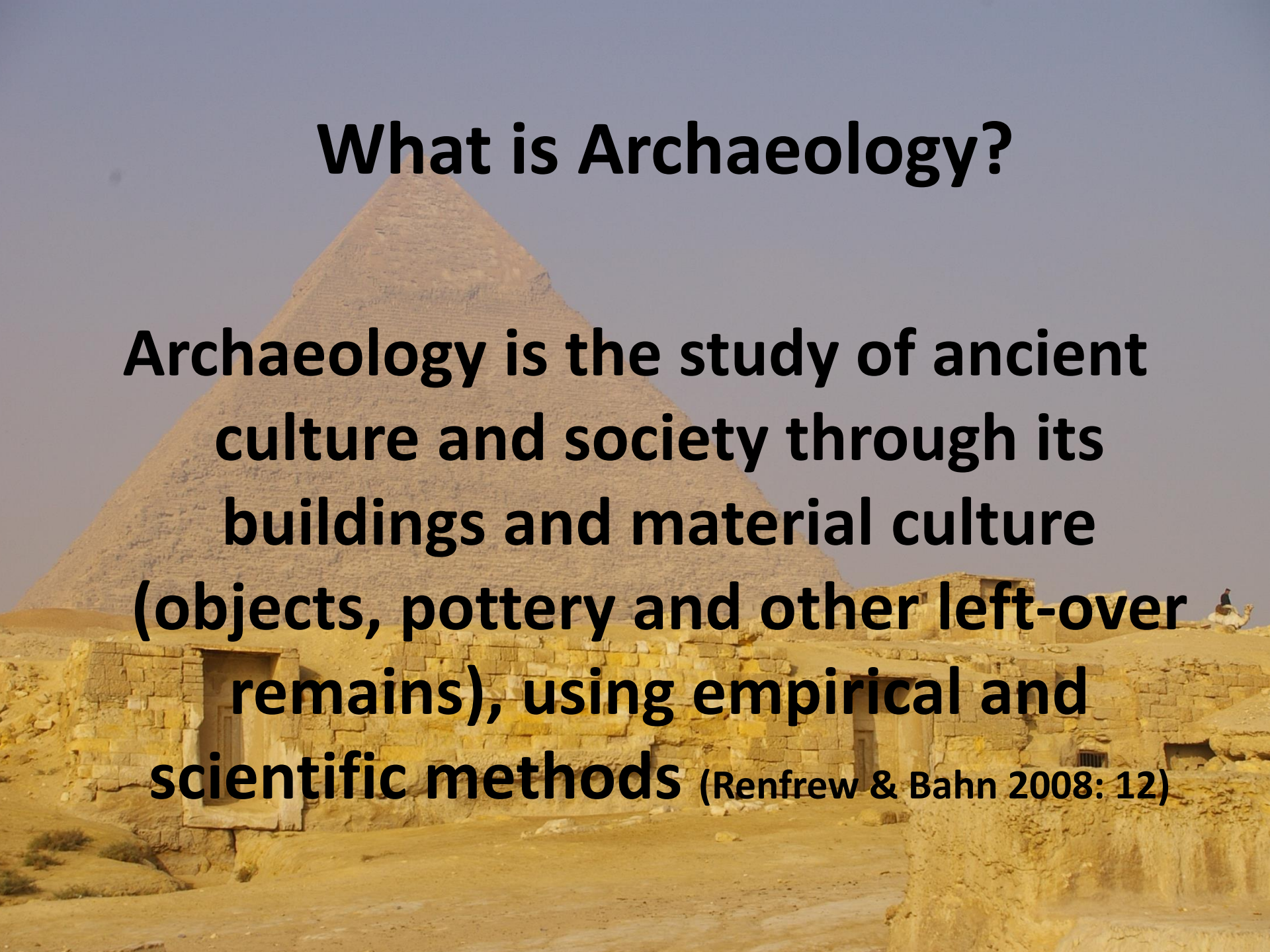
School of Archaeology Classics and Egyptology,
University of Liverpool

- Archaeology helps illuminate the social, historical and cultural setting of the Bible
- Cannot always verify historical persons or events
- Cannot illuminate metaphysical story of the Bible



What is Archaeology?

Archaeology is the study of ancient culture and society through its buildings and material culture (objects, pottery and other left-over remains), using empirical and scientific methods (Renfrew & Bahn 2008: 12)



Types of archaeological sites

- Habitation sites: cities/tells, settlements, campsites, cave sites with or without fortifications
- Cemeteries: e.g. simple graves, built tombs, rock-cut tombs
- Religious sites: temples, cultic structures
- Underwater sites e.g. shipwrecks, submerged buildings
- Other e.g. quarries, mines, canals, dams and other man-made structures



Large volumes of archaeological data ...



The importance of pottery



Issues with the use of archaeological data

- Data is fragmentary and disjointed
- Uneven transmission of data over time
- Conditions of preservation vary from region to region
- Archaeology is based on accurate observation and recording not textual criticism/analysis
- In the Bible lands, many key sites were poorly excavated in the 19th and early 20th century and much data has been lost
- Archaeology and Biblical text often appear in conflict with each other

Archaeology of the Old Testament



V.

Archaeology of the New Testament



Source: Hoffmeier 2008

Archaeological aspects of Graeco-Roman archaeology in the Ancient Near East (ANE)

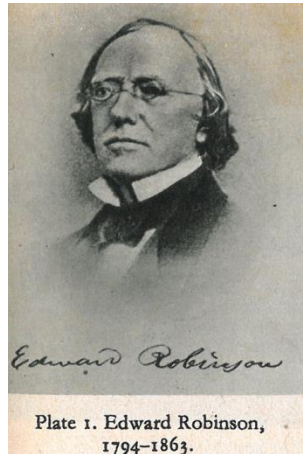
- More historical documents from this period – easier to link archaeological sequences to historical chronologies
- Enduring nature of Roman & Byzantine footprint in the region means that remains are plentiful
- Archaeological remains are often better preserved and have been re-used (e.g. public buildings are constructed of stone not mudbrick)
- Archaeology of the period is relatively well-understood as later remains are closer to the surface



Source: Hoffmeier 2008

Roots of archaeological research

- 19th century archaeological discoveries in Mesopotamia reveal possibilities of external evidence for biblical narrative eg Nineveh
- Objects arrive in European museums
- Translation of hieroglyphs, Akkadian cuneiform
- Edward Robinson conducts first surveys in Palestine in 1838 & 1852, identifies many Biblical sites - 'Father of Biblical Geography'



Source: Albright 1949

Sumerian Flood myth

Source: www.britishmuseum.org

- 'The Flood Tablet'
- XIth Tablet, part of the Epic of Gilgamesh, a legendary hero and ruler of Uruk
- Written in Akkadian cuneiform on fired clay, Width 15.24cm
- Famous story, well-known across ancient Near East, longest piece known
- From Nineveh, Nth Iraq, library of King Ashurbanipal (669-631 BC)
- 7th century BC, but story originally composed early 2nd mill. BC
- British Museum K3375, content was read in 1872



Excavations in the 19th century



Source: Layard, *A Popular Account of Discoveries at Nineveh*



Tell el Yahudiyeh, Egypt, 1890

Source: Drower 1995

Nineveh (modern Iraq), 19th century

Modern excavations at Tell Yarmuth, Israel

<http://www.arcane.uni-tuebingen.de/rg1/index.html>



William Foxwell Albright (1891-1971)

- Linguist, historian, biblical scholar, archaeologist
- Considered the father of the biblical archaeology movement
- Looked to archaeology to help construct historical basis of Bible; his student G.E. Wright (Shechem) continues his legacy
- Notable achievements –
 - directed work at Tell Beit Mirsim (among many sites that he worked at);
 - identified authenticity of Dead Sea Scrolls,
 - identified the importance of pottery and developed a chronological pottery typology of Bronze Age Palestine the basis of which is still used;
 - developed the role of integrated topographical survey and pottery studies; this was blended with his linguistic knowledge thus aiding the identification of sites.
 - wrote many influential books; laid modern foundation for understanding the archaeology of Palestine.

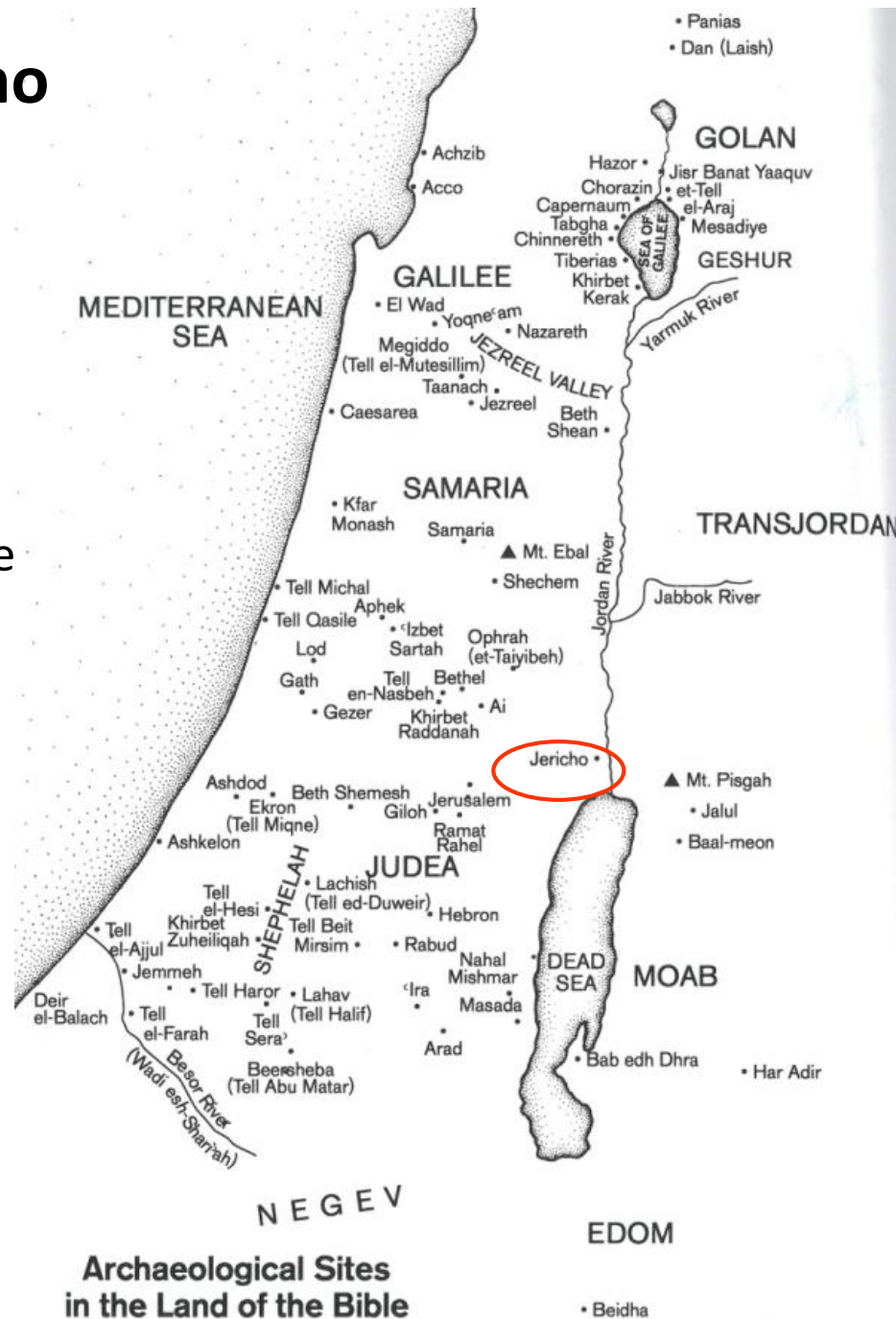


Kathleen Kenyon at Jericho

- * Excavations commenced in 1952
- * Developed *Wheeler-Kenyon Method* of excavation
- * Continued work at site of previous excavators, extensive material from early periods but evidence of the Late Bronze Age town is meagre



http://www.archaeowiki.org/Kathleen_Kenyon



William Dever

- American archaeologist, University of Arizona
- Worked with G.E. Wright at Gezer
- Rejects interpretive framework for Syro-Palestinian archaeology based on the Bible
- Prefers scientific-anthropological approach



Developments in archaeology and the Bible

- Scholarship has moved away from 19th and early 20th century methods of attempting to 'prove' the Bible using archaeology
- The Old and New Testaments are now seen as one of a number of sources about the history of the ancient Near East and viewed much more in context of the wider tapestry of the ancient world
- Recognition that archaeological evidence was often silent on historical issues – but can track demographic shifts, economic systems, and the development of cultural, human and social complexity, what makes societies change
- More controversy over OT issues than NT eg history and emergence of early Israel –Exodus, Judges and United Monarchy
- Increasing application of scientific approaches to assess big archaeological datasets

Archaeology and the Bible – parallel but sometimes intersecting

‘... archaeological evidence is scattered, random, and incomplete, just as the Bible’s record is selective, ancient and theologically oriented... there are perceived contradictions between text and archaeological evidence, but also reasonable congruencies’

(John N. Monson, Assoc. Prof. OT, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School)

The Big Debate on the reliability of the Bible as a source

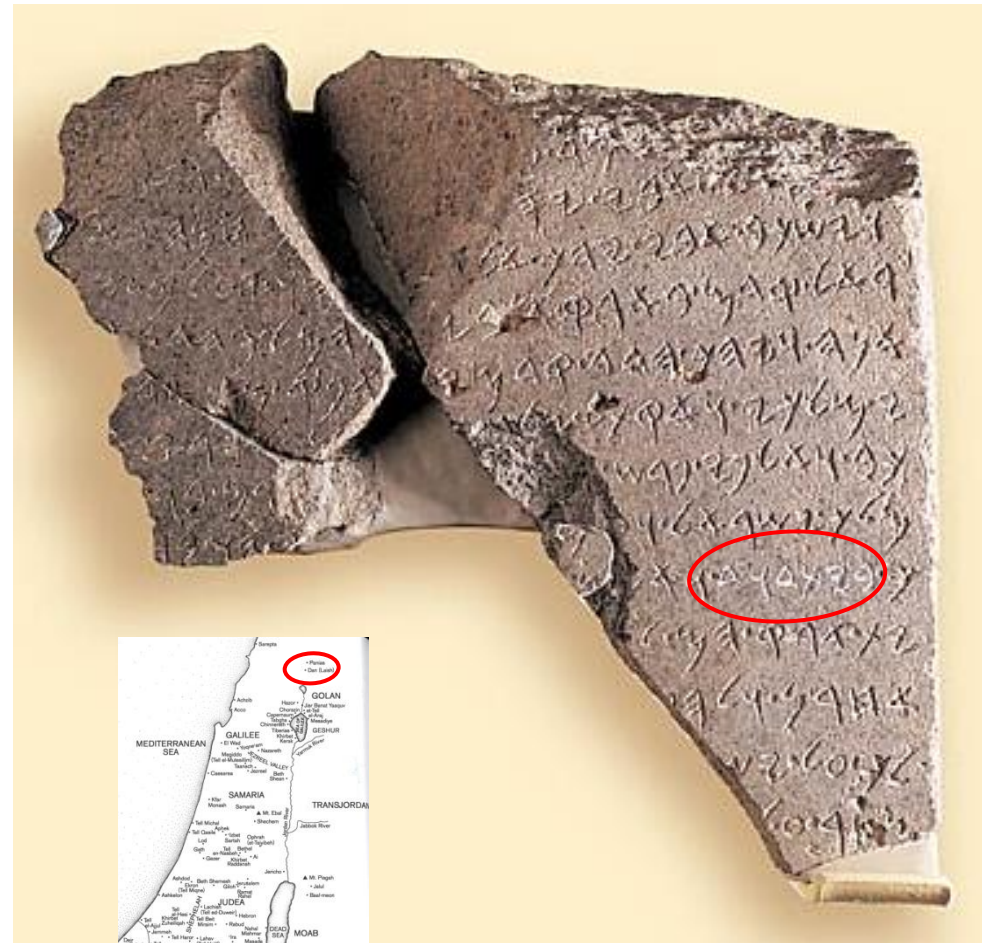
- Different positions over the historicity of the period of the Judges and United Monarchy, Iron Age I - IIA period (c. 1200-925 BC)
- Orthodox/conservative position sees the OT as an important source for the understanding of the history of early Israel
- Alternative approach sees aspects of the OT as a retrospective construction of post-Exilic Jewish thought and therefore not relevant to an understanding of early Israel.
- Debate affected by apparent lack of 10th cent. BC evidence for United Monarchy, chronological/ceramics debates, nature and extent of the state centralisation under David and Solomon, emergence of Israel
- Iron Age IIB 9th-8th centuries BC has more evidence

United Monarchy – Iron Age IIA

- 1 Kings 9:15 ‘Here is the account of the forced labour King Solomon conscripted to build the LORD’s temple, his own palace, the supporting terraces, the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer.’
- This verse links constructions at these sites to Solomonic era, 10th century BC
- BUT external evidence for David and Solomon is a thin but growing dataset, especially in Jerusalem

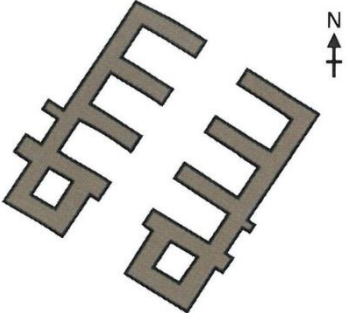
The Tel Dan Stela

- Three fragments of a basalt stela (two join, the largest does not)
- Found re-used in a wall at Tel Dan in 1993-4
- Written in Aramaic
- Part of a monumental victory stela probably erected by Hazael king of Aram-Damascus or his son Bar Hadad, proclaiming his victory over the kingdoms of Judah and Israel
- Date 9th century-early 8th century BC
- Mentions '*bt dwd*' or 'House of David', first non-Biblical reference to David
- Text is related to 2 Kings 8:7-15, 2 Kings 8:28 and 2 Kings 9:15-16
- Largest fragment is 32x22cm
- Now in Israel Museum

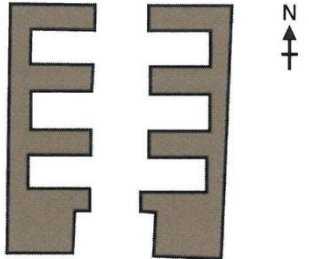


Emerging data – civic planning at Khirbet Qeiyafa – late 11th-10th cent. BC (Biblical Sha`arayim)

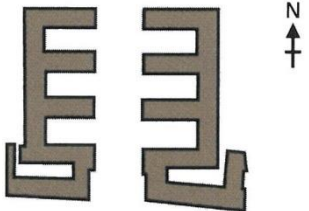
Iron Age IIA chambered gates: an archaeological hallmark of the United Monarchy? (eg 1 Kings 9:15-19) <http://qeiyafa.huji.ac.il/>



Hazor



Megiddo



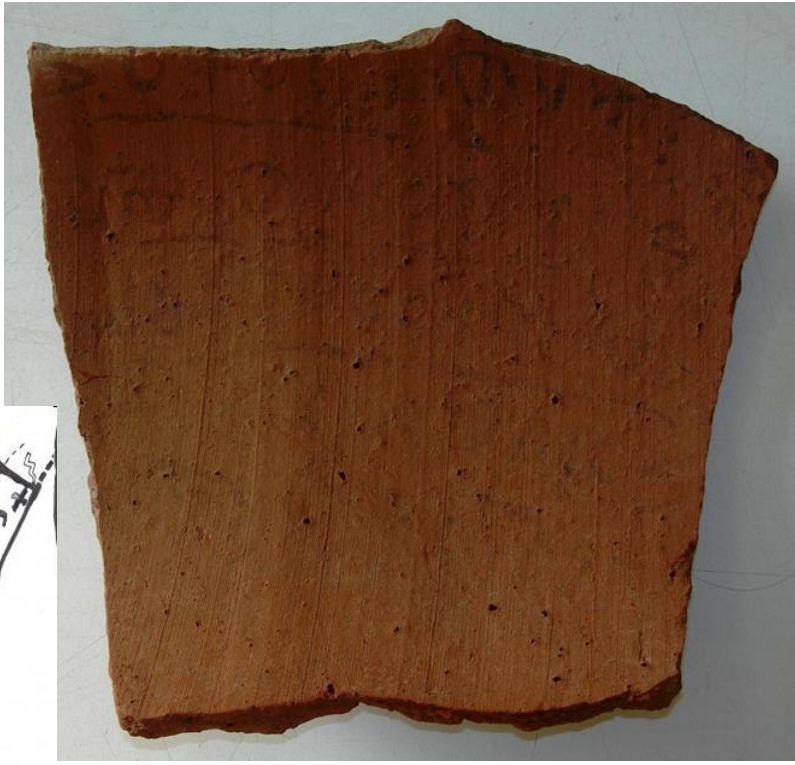
Gezer

Emerging data for early literacy - Khirbet Qeiyafa ostrakon

- Ceramic ostrakon
15x16.5cm inscribed in ink with Proto-Canaanite or old Phoenician script. Some scholars declare it to be early Hebrew.
- Translation is hotly debated
- BUT indicates capacity for high-level literacy in early Iron Age



<http://qeiyafa.huji.ac.il/>



Two silver amulet scrolls

- Found in a burial Cave 24 at Ketef Hinnom, Jerusalem in 1979, Bar-Ilan University excavations
- KH1 (27 x 97 mm) and KH2 (11 x 39mm) inscribed with priestly blessing from Book of Numbers 6:24-26 in paleo-Hebrew
- Probably used as protective amulets
- Dated to ca. 600 BC on palaeography and associated ceramics
- According to the excavators, they 'preserve the earliest known citations of texts found in the Hebrew Bible and ... the earliest examples of confessional Statements concerning Yahweh'
- Now located in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem



Emerging data:

The archaeology of the United Monarchy - Jerusalem/City of David

Where is the evidence for
Jerusalem of the United
Monarchy?

Splendour of Jerusalem
per 1 Kings 10:27
hard to find
archaeologically



A way forward?

- Archaeology is still a relatively **new discipline**
- Archaeology **cannot** 'prove' the Bible
- Much to be learned from the application of **new scientific techniques**
- Work to be done unravelling mistakes from past excavations and extracting what might be useful from them
- Avoid engaging with objects that have **no provenance**
- **New discoveries** can change the picture very quickly eg. Tel Dan Stela
- Important to see the archaeology of the Bible as **part of a bigger cultural and geographic picture**
- Culture change driven by a wide range of factors, of which the story of the Biblical narrative may or may not be a part. Hard to establish this from archaeology anyway.
- Need for a Christian hermeneutic which can be applied to explain the past