

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

Kyle Butt, M.A.

A man wearing a leather vest and a broad-rimmed hat wraps a ripped piece of cloth around an old bone, sets it on fire, and uses it as a torch to see his way through ancient tunnels filled with bones, rats, bugs, and buried treasure. Close behind him lurks the dastardly villain, ready to pounce on the treasure after the hero has done all the planning and dangerous work. We have seen this scenario, or others similar to it, time and again in movies like *Indiana Jones* or *The Mummy*. And although we understand that Hollywood exaggerates and dramatizes the situation, it still remains a fact that finding ancient artifacts excites both young and old alike. Finding things left by people of the past is exciting because a little window of their lives is opened to us. When we find an arrowhead, we are reminded that Indians used bows and arrows to hunt and fight. Discovering a piece of pottery tells us something about the lives of ancient cultures. Every tiny artifact gives the modern person a more complete view of life in the past.

Because of the intrinsic value of archaeology, many have turned to it in order to try to answer certain questions about the past. One of the questions most often asked is, "Did the things recorded in the Bible really happen?" Truth be told, archaeology cannot always answer that question. Nothing material remains from Elijah's ascension into heaven, and no physical artifacts exist to show that Christ actually walked on water. Therefore, if we ask archaeology to "prove" that the entire Bible is true or false, we are faced with the fact that archaeology can neither prove nor disprove the Bible's

validity. However, even though it cannot conclusively prove the Bible's veracity in every instance, archaeology can provide important pieces of the past that consistently verify the Bible's historical and factual accuracy. This month's *Reason and Revelation* article is designed to bring to light a small fraction of the significant archaeological finds that have been instrumental in corroborating the biblical text of the Old Testament.

HEZEKIAH AND SENNACHERIB

When Hezekiah assumed the throne of Judah, he did so under extremely distressing conditions. His father Ahaz had turned to the gods of Damascus, cut into pieces the articles within the house of Jehovah, and shut the doors of the temple of the Lord. In addition, he created high places "in every single city" where he sacrificed, and offered incense to other gods (2 Chronicles 28:22-27). The people of Judah followed Ahaz, and as a result, the Bible records that "the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had encouraged moral decline in Judah and had been continually unfaithful to the Lord" (2 Chronicles 28:19).

Upon this troubled throne, King Hezekiah began to rule at the youthful age of just twenty-five. He reigned for twenty-nine years, and the inspired text declares that he "did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done" (2 Chronicles 29:2). Among other reforms, Hezekiah reopened the temple, reestablished the observance of the Pass-

over, and appointed the priests to receive tithes and administer their proper duties in the temple. After completing these reforms, Scripture states that "Sennacherib, king of Assyria entered Judah; he encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win them over to himself" (2 Chronicles 32:1).

It is here that we turn to the secular record of history to discover that the powerful nation Assyria, under the reign of King Sargon II, had subdued many regions in and around Palestine. Upon Sargon's death, revolt broke out within the Assyrian empire. Sennacherib, the new Assyrian king,

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Inside view of Hezekiah's tunnel, displaying the thick limestone through which workers had to dig. Credit: Todd Bolen (www.BiblePlaces.com).

was determined to maintain a firm grasp on his vassal states, which meant that he would be forced to invade the cities of Judah if Hezekiah continued to defy Assyria's might (Hoerth, 1998, pp. 341-352). Knowing that Sennacherib would not sit by idly and watch his empire crumble, King Hezekiah began to make preparations for the upcoming invasion. One of the preparations he made was to stop the water from the springs that ran outside of Jerusalem, and to redirect the water into the city by way of a tunnel. Second Kings 20:20 records the construction of the tunnel with these words: "Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah—all his might, and how he made a pool and a tunnel and brought water into the city—are they not written in the book of chronicles of the kings of Judah?"

The biblical text from 2 Chronicles 32:30 further substantiates the tunnel construction with this comment: "This same

Hezekiah also stopped the water outlet of Upper Gihon, and brought the water by tunnel to the west side of the City of David." The tunnel—known today as "Hezekiah's tunnel"—stands as one of the paramount archaeological attestations to the biblical text. Carved through solid limestone, the tunnel meanders in an S-shape under the city of Jerusalem for a length of approximately 1,800 feet. In 1880, two boys swimming at the site discovered an inscription (about 20 feet from the exit) that provided exacting details regarding how the tunnel had been constructed:

...And this was the account of the breakthrough. While the laborers were still working with their picks, each toward the other, and while there were still three cubits to be broken through, the voice of each was heard calling to the other, because there was a crack (or split or overlap) in the rock from the south to the north. And at the moment of the breakthrough, the laborers struck each toward the other, pick against pick. Then water flowed from the spring to the pool for 1,200 cubits. And the height of the rock above the heads of the laborers was 100 cubits (Price, 1997, p. 267).

Of the inscription, John Laughlin wrote that it is "one of the most important, as well as famous, inscriptions ever found in Judah" (2000, p. 145). Incidentally, since the length of the tunnel was about 1,800 feet, and the inscription marked the tunnel at "1,200 cubits," archaeologists have a good indication that the cubit was about one-and-

a-half feet at the time of Hezekiah (Free and Vos, 1992, p. 182). Dug in order to keep a steady supply of water pumping into Jerusalem during Sennacherib's anticipated siege, Hezekiah's tunnel stands as a strong witness to the accuracy of the biblical historical record of 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles.

In addition to Hezekiah's tunnel, other amazingly detailed archaeological evidence provides an outstanding record of some of the events as they unfolded between Hezekiah and Sennacherib. Much of the information we have comes from the well-known Taylor Prism. This fascinating, six-sided



The Siloam inscription commemorates the excavation of Hezekiah's Tunnel. Archaeological Museum, Istanbul, Turkey. Credit: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.

clay artifact stands about 15 inches tall, and was found in Nineveh in 1830 by British colonel R. Taylor. Thus, it is known as the "Taylor Prism" (Price, pp. 272-273). The prism contains six columns covered by over 500 lines of writing, and was purchased in the winter of 1919-1920 by J.H. Breasted for the Oriental Institute in Chicago (Hanson, 2002).

Part of the text on the Taylor Prism has Sennacherib's account of what happened in his military tour of Judah.

As to Hezekiah, the Jew, he did not submit to my yoke, I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities, walled forts and to the countless small villages in their vicinity, and conquered (them) by means of well-stamped (earth)ramps, and battering-rams brought (thus) near (to the walls) (combined with) the attack by foot soldiers, (using) mines, breeches as well as sapper work. I drove out (of them) 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, big and small cattle beyond counting, and considered (them) booty. Himself I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage. I surrounded him with earthwork in order to molest those who were leaving his city's gate (Pritchard, 1958a, p. 200).

At least two facts of monumental significance reside in Sennacherib's statement. First, Sennacherib's attack on the outlying cities of Judah finds a direct parallel in 2 Chronicles 32:1: "Sennacherib king of As-

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syria came and entered Judah; he encamped against the fortified cities....” The most noteworthy fortified city that the Assyrian despot besieged and captured was the city of Lachish. Second, Sennacherib never mentions that he captured Jerusalem.

Lachish Under Siege

When we turn to the biblical account of Sennacherib’s Palestinian invasion in 2 Kings 18, we learn that he had advanced against “all the fortified cities of Judah” (vs. 14). At one of those cities, Lachish, King Hezekiah sent tribute money in an attempt to assuage the Assyrian’s wrath. The text states: “Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, ‘I have done wrong; turn away from me; whatever you impose on me I will pay’” (vs. 14). Of Lachish, Sennacherib demanded 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold, which Hezekiah promptly paid. Not satisfied, however, the Assyrian ruler “sent the Tartan, the Rabsaris, and the Rabshakeh from Lachish, with a great army against Jerusalem, to King Hezekiah” (vs. 17) in an attempt to frighten the denizens of Jerusalem into surrender. The effort failed, “so

the Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah, for he heard that he had departed from Lachish” (19:8). From the biblical record, then, we discover very scant information about the battle at Lachish—only that Sennacherib was there, laid siege to the city (2 Chronicles 32:9), and moved on to Libnah upon the completion of his siege.

From Sennacherib’s historical files, however, we get a much more complete account of the events surrounding Lachish. The Assyrian monarch considered his victory at Lachish of such import that he dedicated an entire wall (nearly seventy linear feet) of his palace in Nineveh to carved reliefs depicting the event (Hoerth, p. 350). In the mid-1840s, renowned English archaeologist Henry Layard began extensive excavations in the ruins of ancient Nineveh. He published his initial finds in an 1849 bestselling volume titled *Nineveh and Its Remains*, and in three subsequent volumes: *The Monuments of Nineveh* (1849), *Inscriptions in the Cuneiform Characters* (1851), and *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh* (1853) [see Moorey, 1991, pp. 7-12 for more about Layard’s work]. Since Layard’s early discover-



Assyrian warriors shown impaling Jewish prisoners. Part of a relief from the palace of Sennacherib. British Museum, London. Credit: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.

ies, archaeologists have located and identified thousands of artifacts from at least three different palaces. The remains of ancient Nineveh are located in two mounds on opposite banks of the Hawsar River. One of the mounds, known as Kouyunjik Tepe, contained the remains of the palaces of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal. The other mound, Nebi Younis, held the relics of the palace of Sennacherib. These palaces were built on raised platforms about 75 feet high (Negev and Gibson, 2001, p. 369).

One of the most outstanding artifacts found among the ruins of Nineveh was the wall relief depicting Sennacherib’s defeat of the city of Lachish. Ephraim Stern offered an excellent description of the events pictured in the relief:

The main scene shows the attack on the gate wall of Lachish. The protruding city gate is presented in minute detail, with its crenellations and its special reinforcement by a superstructure of warriors’ shields. The battering rams were moved over specially constructed ramps covered with wooden logs. They were “prefabricated,” four-wheeled, turreted machines. The scene vividly shows frenzied fighting of both attacker and defender in the final stage of battle (2001, 2:5).

Stern also discussed the flaming firebrands that the defenders of Lachish launched at their attackers, the long-handled, ladle-like instruments used to douse the front of the battering rams when they were set on fire, slingmen, archers, and assault troops with spears. One of the most striking features of the relief is the depiction of the tortures inflicted on the inhabitants of the Lachish.



Assyrians attack the Jewish fortified town of Lachish. Part of a relief from the palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh. British Museum, London. Credit: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.

Several prisoners are pictured impaled on poles, while women and children from the city are led past the victims (Stern, 2:5-6). The epigraph that accompanied the relief read: "Sennacherib, king of the world, king of Assyria, sat upon a *nimedu*- throne and passed in review the booty (taken) from Lachish (*La-ki-su*)" [Pritchard, 1958a, p. 201, parenthetical item in orig.].

Of further interest is the fact that archaeological digs at the city of Lachish bear out the details of Sennacherib's wall relief. Extensive archaeological digs at Lachish from 1935 to 1938 by the British, and again from 1973 to 1987 under Israeli archaeologist David Ussishkin and others, have revealed a treasure trove of artifacts, each of which fits the events depicted by Sennacherib. Concerning the Assyrian siege of Lachish, William Dever noted:

The evidence of it is all there: the enormous sloping siege ramp thrown up against the city walls south of the gate; the double line of defense walls, upslope and downslope; the iron-shod Assyrian battering rams that breached the city wall at its highest point; the massive destruction within the fallen city.... Virtually all the details of the Assyrian reliefs have been confirmed by archaeology.... Also brought to light by the excavators were the double city walls; the complex siege ramp, embedded with hundreds of iron arrowheads and stone ballistae; the counter-ramp inside the city; the destroyed gate, covered by up to 6 ft. of destruction debris; huge boulders from the city wall, burned almost to lime and fallen far down the slope... (2001, pp. 168-169).

The Assyrian monarch's siege of Lachish is documented by the biblical text, and the destruction of the city is corroborated by the massive carving dedicated to the event in Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh, as well as the actual artifacts found in stratum III at Lachish.

Jerusalem Stands Strong

Of special interest in Sennacherib's description of his Palestinian conquest is the fact that he never mentioned seizing the city of Jerusalem. On the Taylor Prism, we find the writings about his conquest of 46 outlying cities, in addition to "walled forts" and "countless small villages." In fact, we even read that Hezekiah was shut up in Jerusalem as a prisoner "like a bird in a cage." It also is recorded that Hezekiah sent more tribute to Sennacherib at the end of the campaign (Pritchard, 1958a, pp. 200-201). What is **not** recorded, however, is any list of booty that was taken from the capital city of Judah. Nor is an inventory of pris-

oners given in the text of the Taylor Prism. Indeed, one would think that if the city of Lachish deserved so much attention from the Assyrian dictator, then the capital city of Judah would deserve even more.

What we find, however, is complete silence as to the capture of the city. What happened to the vast, conquering army to cause it to buckle at the very point of total victory? Hershel Shanks, author of *Jerusalem: An Archaeological Biography*, wrote: "...although we don't know for sure what broke the siege, we do know that the Israelites managed to hold out" (1995, p. 84).

The biblical text, however, offers the answer to this historical enigma. Due to Hezekiah's faithfulness to the Lord, Jehovah offered His divine assistance to the Judean King. In the book of Isaiah, the prophet was sent to Hezekiah with a message of hope. Isaiah informed Hezekiah that God would stop Sennacherib from entering the city, because Hezekiah prayed to the Lord for assistance. In Isaiah 37:36, the text states:



On the left, a bulla with Hebrew writing in a slightly oval impression. On the right, a stamp seal with the name of the owner or scribe. Credit: The Schøyen Collection MS 1912 and MS 5160/1.

"Then the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh." Sennacherib could not boast of his victory over the city of Jerusalem—**because there was no victory!** The Lord had delivered the city out of his hand. In addition, as Dever observed: "Finally, Assyrian records note that Sennacherib did die subsequently at the hands of assassins, his own sons..." (2001, p. 171). Luckenbill records the actual inscription from Esarhaddon's chronicles that describe the event:

In the month Nisanu, on a favorable day, complying with their exalted command, I made my joyful entrance into the royal palace, an awesome place, wherein abides the fate of kings. A firm determination fell upon my brothers.

They forsook the gods and turned to their deeds of violence plotting evil. ...To gain the kingship they slew Sennacherib, their father (Luckenbill, 1989, 2:200-201).

These events and artifacts surrounding Hezekiah, Sennacherib, Lachish, and Jerusalem give us an amazing glimpse into the tumultuous relationship between Judah and her neighbors. These facts also provide an excellent example of how archaeology substantiates the biblical account.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BULLAE

The ancient Israelites used several different media to record their information. Among the most popular were scrolls of papyrus and leather. When a scribe had completed writing his information on a scroll, he often would roll the papyrus or leather into a cylinder shape and tie it securely with a string. In order to seal the string even more securely, and to denote the author or sender of the scroll, a bead of soft clay (or soft wax or soft metal) was placed over the string of the scroll. With some type of stamping device, the clay was pressed firmly to the scroll, leaving an inscription in the clay (King and Stager, 2001, p. 307). These clay seals are known as bullae (the plural form of the word bulla). Over the many years of archaeological excavations, hundreds of these bullae have been discovered. *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land* provides an extensive list of bullae that have been unearthed: 50 in Samaria during the 1930s; 17 at Lachish in 1966; 51 in Jerusalem in digs conducted by Yigal Shiloh; 128 in 1962 found in the Wadi ed-Daliyeh Cave and a large cache of 2,000 bullae found in 1998 at Tel Kadesh (Negev and Gibson, 2001, pp. 93-94).

Most of the bullae that have been discovered are small, oval, clay stamps that contain the name of the person responsible for the document that was sealed (and occasionally the father of that person), the title or office of the sealer, and/or a picture of an animal or some other artistic rendering. One of the most interesting things about the bullae that have been discovered is the fact that certain names found among the clay seals correspond with biblical references. For instance, from 1978 to 1985, Yigal Shiloh did extensive digging in the city of Jerusalem. In 1982, in a building in Area G of Jerusalem, he discovered a cache of 51 bullae. Because of these clay inscriptions, the building is known in archaeological circles as the "House of Bullae." This building was burned during the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

Unfortunately, the intense heat of the fires burned all the leather and papyrus scrolls. Yet, even though it destroyed the scrolls, the same fire baked the clay bullae hard and preserved them for posterity (King and Stager, p. 307).

One interesting bulla, and probably the most famous, is connected to the scribe of Jeremiah—Baruch. Hershel Shanks, the editor of *Biblical Archaeology Review*, gave a detailed account of a landmark cache of over 250 bullae. In October 1975, the first four bullae were purchased by an antiquities dealer in east Jerusalem. The dealer took these bullae to Nahman Avigad, a leading Israeli expert on ancient seals at Hebrew University. More and more bullae came across Avigad’s desk that fit with the others. On more than one occasion, a fragment from one collection would fit with a corresponding fragment from another dealer’s collection. Ultimately, Yoav Sasson, a Jerusalem collector, came to acquire about 200 of the bullae, and Reuben Hecht obtained 49 pieces (Shanks, 1987, pp. 58-65).

The names on two of these bullae have captivated the archaeological world for several decades now. On one of the bulla, the name “Berekhyahu son of Neriyaahu the scribe,” is clearly impressed. Shanks wrote concerning this inscription: “The common suffix *-yahu* in ancient Hebrew names, especially in Judah, is a form of Yahweh. Baruch means “the blessed.” Berekhyahu means “blessed of Yahweh.” An equivalent form to *-yahu* is *-yah*, traditionally rendered as “-iah” in our English translations. Neriaah is actually Neri-yah or Neriyaahu.

Eighty of the 132 names represented in the hoard (many names appear more than once on the 250 bullae) include the theophoric element *-yahu* (1987, p. 61). Shanks (along with the general consensus of archaeological scholars) concluded that the bulla belonged to Baruch, the scribe of Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 36:4, the text reads: “Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriaah....” The name on the bulla corresponds well with the name in Jeremiah. Concerning the bulla, Hoerth wrote: “This lump of clay... used to close a papyrus document, was sealed by none other than ‘Baruch son of Neriah’ (Jer. 36:4). Baruch’s name here carries a suffix abbreviation for God, indicating that his full name meant ‘blessed of God’ ” (1998, p. 364).

To multiply the evidence that this inscription was indeed the Baruch of Jeremiah fame, another of the inscriptions from a bulla in the cache documented the title “Yerahme’el, son of the king.” This name corresponds to King Jehoiakim’s son “who was sent on the unsuccessful mission to arrest Baruch and Jeremiah” (Shanks, 1987, p. 61). Indeed, the biblical text so states: “And the king commanded Jerahmeel the king’s son...to seize Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet, but the Lord hid them” (Jeremiah 36:26). In commenting on the bulla, Amihai Mazar, who is among the most noted of archaeologists, stated in regard to Jerahmeel the king’s son: “We presume [he] was Jehoiakim’s son sent to arrest Jeremiah (Jeremiah 36:26)” [1992, pp. 519-520]. [As a side note, the Hebrew letter *yod* is represented by Y and J, which often

are used interchangeably in the English transliteration of Hebrew names—a fact that can be seen easily in the Hebrew name for God, which is written variously as Yahweh or Jehovah.] Another bulla in the hoard contained the title “Elishama, servant of the king.” And in Jeremiah 36:12, the text mentioned a certain “Elishama the scribe.” While professor Avigad thinks it would be a dubious connection, since he believes the biblical text would not drop the title “servant of the king” (because of its prestige), Shanks commented: “I would not reject the identification so easily” (1987, p. 62).

One of the names inscribed on a bulla was the Hebrew name “Gemaryahu [Gemariah] the son of Shaphan.” Price noted: “This name, which appears a few times in the book of Jeremiah, was the name of the scribe who served in the court of King Jehoiakim” (1998, p. 235). Jeremiah 36:10 records that Jeremiah’s scribe, Baruch, read from the words of the prophet “in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe....” It also is interesting to note that Gemariah was a scribe, which would have put him in precisely the position to produce bullae. Also among the collection from the “House of Bullae” was a bulla that was sealed with the name “Azaryahu son of Hilqiyahu”—a name that easily corresponds with Azariah son of Hilkiyah found in 1 Chronicles 9:10-11 (Laughlin, 2000, p. 153).

We have then, among this phenomenal cache of bullae (which dates to the time of the events in the book of Jeremiah), two names and titles that correspond almost identically to Baruch, the son of Neriaah, plus Jerahmeel, the son of Jehoiakim, and a third, Elishama, whose name appears in Jeremiah 36. What, then, does this prove? While it is the case that several men in ancient Israel could be named Baruch or Jerahmeel, it becomes almost absurd to suggest that these bullae just happen “coincidentally” to correspond so well to the biblical text. Such evidence points overwhelming to the accuracy of the biblical text and its historical verifiability. At the very least, such finds demonstrate these biblical names to be authentic for the time period. [As an added note of interest on the Baruch bulla, Shanks wrote a follow-up article in *Biblical Archaeological Review* in 1996, in which he discussed another bulla with Baruch’s title on it that also contains a fingerprint—possibly of the scribe himself. This bulla is in the private collection of a well-known collector named Shlomo Maussaieff (Shanks, 1996, pp. 36-38).]

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Eric Lyons

March 4	Montgomery, AL	(334) 272-5820
April 17-18	Atwood, TN	(731) 662-7485

THE MOABITE STONE

Another important archaeological find verifying the historicity of the biblical account is known as the Moabite Stone. It is true that writing about a rock that was discovered almost 150 years ago certainly would not fit in a current “in the news” section. In fact, so much has been written about this stone since 1868 that very few new articles pertaining to it have come to light. But the real truth of the matter is that, even though it was discovered more than a century ago, many people do not even know it exists, and thus need to be reminded of its importance.

The find is known as the Moabite Stone, or the Mesha Inscription, since it was written by Mesha, King of Moab. A missionary named F.A. Klein first discovered the stone in August of 1868 (Edersheim, n.d., p. 109). When he initially saw the black basalt stone, it measured approximately 3.5 feet high and 2 feet wide. Upon learning of Klein’s adventure, a French scholar by the name of Clermont-Ganneau located the antiquated piece of rock, and copied eight lines from the stone. He then had an impression (known as a “squeeze”) made of the writing on its surface. A squeeze is made by placing a soggy piece of paper over the inscription, which then retains the form of the inscription when it dries (Pritchard, 1958b, p. 105). From that point, the details surrounding the stone are not quite as clear. Apparently (for reasons unknown), the Arabs who were in possession of the stone decided to shatter it. [Some have suggested that they thought the stone was a religious talisman of some sort, or that they could get more money selling the stone in pieces. However, LeMaire claims that these reasons are “apocryphal,” and suggests that the Arabs broke it because they hated the Ottomans, who were attempting to purchase the stone (1994, p. 34).] By heating it in fire and then pouring cold water on it, they succeeded in breaking the stone into several pieces. The pieces ended up being scattered, but eventually about two-thirds of the original stone ended up being relocated, and currently reside at the Louvre in Paris (Jacobs and McCurdy, 2002).

The written inscription on the stone provides a piece of outstanding evidence that verifies the Bible’s accuracy. Mesha, had the stone cut in c. 850 B.C. to relate his



numerous conquests and his re-acquisition of certain territories that were controlled by Israel. In the over 30-line text (composed of approximately 260 words), Mesha mentioned that Omri was the king of Israel who had oppressed Moab, but then Mesha says he “saw his desire upon” Omri’s son and upon “his house.” Mesha wrote:

I (am) Mesha, son of Chemosh-[...], king of Moab, the Dibonite—my father (had) reigned over Moab thirty years, and I reigned after my father, —(who) made this high place for Chemosh in Qarhoh [...] because he saved me from

all the kings and caused me to triumph over all my adversaries. As for Omri, king of Israel, he humbled Moab many years (lit., days), for Chemosh was angry at his land. And his son followed him and he also said, “I will humble Moab.” In my time he spoke (thus), but I have triumphed over him and over his house, while Israel hath perished forever (Pritchard, 1958a, p. 209).

The Mesha stele cites Omri as the king of Israel, just as 1 Kings 16:21-28 indicates. Furthermore, it mentions Ahab, Omri’s son, in close connection with the Moabites, as does 2 Kings 3:4-6. In addition, both the stele and 2 Kings 3:4-6 list Mesha as King of Moab. Later in the inscription, the stele further names the Israelite tribe of Gad, and the Israelite God, Yahweh. While the references to the Israelite kings are quite notable in and of themselves, Pritchard has pointed out that this reference to Yahweh is one of the few that have been found outside of Palestine proper (1958b, p. 106).

Another important feature of the Moabite stone is the fact that it “gave the solution to a question that had gone unanswered for centuries.” The biblical record chronicles the Moabite subjugation under King David and King Solomon, and how the Moabites broke free at the beginning of the divided kingdom. However, the Bible also mentions (2 Kings 3:4) that Ahab was receiving tribute from Moab. As Alfred Hoerth has remarked: “Nowhere does the Bible state how or when Moab was reclaimed, for Ahab to be receiving such tribute. The Moabite Stone provides that information, telling, as it does, of Omri’s conquest from the Moabite point of view” (1998, p. 310).

From the end of the quoted portion of the Mesha Inscription (“while Israel hath perished forever”), it is obvious that Mesha exaggerated the efficacy of his conquest—a common practice among ancient kings. Pritchard noted that historians agree that “the Moabite chroniclers tended generally, and quite understandably, to ignore their own losses and setbacks” (1958b, p. 106). Free and Vos document the works of John D. Davies and S.L. Caiger, which offer a harmonization of the Moabite text with the biblical record. Davies, formerly of the Princeton University Seminary, accurately observed: “Mesha is in no wise contradicting, but only unintentionally supplementing the Hebrew account” (as quoted in Free and Vos, 1992, p. 161).

As a further point of interest, French scholar André LeMaire, in an extensive article in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, “identified the reading of the name *David* in a formerly unreadable line, ‘House of D...,’ on the Mesha Stele (or Moabite Stone)” [Price, 1997, p. 171; see also LeMaire, 1994, pp. 30-37]. Whether or not this identification is accurate, has yet to be verified by scholarly consensus. Even liberal scholars Finkelstein and Silberman, however, acknowledged LaMaire’s identification, along with the Tel Dan inscription documenting the House of David, and concluded: “Thus, the house of David was known throughout the region; this clearly validates the biblical description of a figure named David becoming the founder of the dynasty of Judahite kings in Jerusalem” (2001, p. 129).

Taken as a whole, the Moabite stone remains one of the most impressive pieces of evidence verifying the historical accuracy of the Old Testament. And, although this find has been around almost 150 years, it “still speaks” to us today (Hebrews 11:4).

THE CYRUS CYLINDER

Cyrus, King of the Medo-Persian Empire, is among the most important foreign rulers of the Israelite nation. In fact, many Old Testament prophecies revolve around this monarch. The prophet Isaiah documented that the Babylonian Empire would fall to the Medes and the Persians (Isaiah 13; 21:1-10). Not only did Isaiah detail the particular empire to which the Babylonians would fall, but he also called Cyrus by name (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1-5). Amazingly, Isaiah’s prophecy was made roughly **150 years before Cyrus was born** (Isaiah prophesied in about 700 B.C.; Cyrus took the city of Babylon in 539 B.C.). To add to Cyrus’ significance, Isaiah predicted that Cyrus would

act as the Lord's "shepherd." In fact, Isaiah recorded these words of the Lord concerning Cyrus: "And he shall perform all My pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, 'You shall be built,' and to the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid'" (Isaiah 44:28).

In 1879, Hormoz Rasam found a small clay cylinder (about nine inches long, and now residing in the British Museum) in the ancient city of Babylon. Upon the clay cylinder, King Cyrus had inscribed, among other things, his victory over the city of Babylon and his policy toward the nations he had captured, as well as his policy toward their various gods and religions. Price recorded a translation of a segment of the cuneiform text found on the cylinder:

...I returned to [these] sacred cities on the other side of the Tigris, the sanctuaries of which have been in ruins for a long time, the images which [used] to live therein and established for them permanent sanctuaries. I [also] gathered all their [former] inhabitants and returned [to them] their habitations. Furthermore, I resettled upon the command of Marduk the great lord, all the gods of Sumer and Akkad whom Nabonidus has brought into Babylon to the anger of the lord of the gods, unharmed, in their [former] chapels, the places which made them happy. May all the gods who I have resettled in their sacred cities ask daily Bel and Nebo for long life for me and may they recommend me...to Marduk, my lord, may they say thus: Cyrus, the king who worships you and Cambyses, his son, [...] all of them I settled in a peaceful place (pp. 251-252).

The policy, often hailed as Cyrus' declaration of human rights, coincides with the biblical account of the ruler's actions, in which Cyrus decreed that the temple in Jerusalem should be rebuilt, and that all the exiled Israelites who wished to join in the venture had his permission and blessing to do so (Ezra 1:1-11). The little nine-inch-long clay cylinder stands as impressive testimony—along with several other archaeological finds—to the historical accuracy of the biblical text.



The Cyrus Cylinder

CONCLUSION

The archaeological evidence presented in this article that confirms biblical history is, in truth, only a tiny fraction of the evidence that could be amassed along these lines. In fact, volumes of hundreds of pages each have been produced on such matters, and with every new find comes additional information that will fill archaeology texts for decades to come. The more we uncover the past, the more we discover the truth that the Bible is the most trustworthy, historically accurate document ever produced. As the poet John Greenleaf Whittier once wrote:

We search the world for truth; we cull the good, the pure, the beautiful, from all the old flower fields of the soul; and, weary seekers of the best, we come back laden from our quest, to find that all the sages said is in the Book our mothers read.

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TUNE IN—AGAIN!

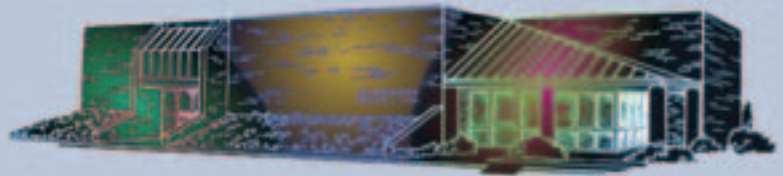
In my "Note from the Editor," in the February issue of *Reason & Revelation*, I mentioned that we had prepared 17 one-minute spots for use on radio stations. Each spot was professionally produced and digitized in order to ensure the highest quality possible. We offered the CD free of charge to anyone who wanted a copy.

The response to our offer has been absolutely incredible. Requests have poured in from all over the country. In fact, the response was so enthusiastic that we decided to go back to the recording studio and prepare additional radio spots.

We have now done exactly that—bringing the total number of available spots to 25. And, in keeping with the non-profit nature of our work, **we once again are making them available at no charge.**

If you would like a copy of the CD (containing all 25 of the spots), simply call us toll free at 800/234-8558 (or e-mail us at mail@apologeticspress.org) to request one. We'll do the rest. And by all means (if you'll pardon the pun) "stay tuned." We have a lot more planned for later this year (and beyond) in regard to multi-media presentations available to our readers.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR



ANNOUNCING A NEW BOOK: DINOSAURS UNLEASHED

Every so often, a book comes along that has the potential to affect, in an extremely positive way, the lives of thousands of people. Apologetics Press is pleased to announce the publication of just such a book. In fact, we believe that this book is going to have a tremendous impact, not only on this generation, but also on future generations as its young readers devour its fascinating contents.

For years, parents and grandparents have encouraged us to write a book for children that teaches them the truth about the coexistence of dinosaurs and humans. Finally, that book is a reality with the publication of *Dinosaurs Unleashed*. This gorgeous, full-color hardback book will enthrall even the most discriminating young reader. We commissioned talented Canadian artist Lewis Lavoie to illustrate the book for us, and the results are absolutely stunning! Although it was written mainly with children in mind, I can assure you that this is a book that will capture the attention (and imagination!) of people of **all** ages as they experience the life-like pictures of these “terrible lizards,” and learn about how they lived with humans—not all that long ago.

Written by Kyle Butt (our Director of Biblical Research) and Eric Lyons (our Director of Research), this book takes children on an exciting, adventuresome excursion through fossil graveyards, the ark of Noah, and the world of dinosaurs as they interacted with humans. With luscious artwork and illustrations, and an accompanying text that is almost as spine-tingling as the dinosaurs themselves, we believe that this is one of the most fascinating books ever produced by creationists on the subject of dinosaurs. [You can examine the book, and judge for yourself if you think we’re right.]



As most people are well aware, for decades, dinosaurs have been laden with a backbreaking load of evolutionary baggage. They have been exploited by evolutionists, and used to force-feed children false evolutionary propaganda. The topic of dinosaurs is something that children are going to learn—from someone. Whether it is from us, or from the evolutionists, children **will** learn about these marvelous creatures. Those of

us associated with the work of Apologetics Press feel that the time has come for creationists to “take back” the use of dinosaurs as an educational tool. This 84-page, 8.5x11-inch book arms children with the correct information about dinosaurs, so that when they are bombarded with evolutionary propaganda, they will be able to defend themselves with the truth.

Normally, I never would be so brash in my “Note from the Editor” as to suggest what someone “needs” to do. But just this once, I feel completely justified in suggesting that you definitely **need** to order a copy of *Dinosaurs Unleashed*—not just for your own children or grandchildren, but also for neighborhood kids or friends and relatives as well.

This is a book that **is going to have an impact!** In fact, it already **has**. Since we announced its availability on the home page of our Web site, we have been literally inundated with orders (just ask my secretaries), and have broken all previous sales records for a single day (or week)! The books are practically leaping off the shelves as parents, grandparents, creationist organizations, and bookstores place orders for their copies. Call us with a credit card (toll free) at 800/234-8558 to order your copies. **Only \$10.95 each!**

Bert Thompson