

Archaeology and the Old Testament

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Intro:

I. Creation Account: Enuma Elish

- A. Dates to the Second millennium BC before the fall of Sumer (1750 BC)
- B. Babylonian and Assyrian creation account written in Akkadian means “When on High.”
- C. 7 tablets which were published in 1876 by archaeologist George Smith
- D. There is an Egyptian version and a Mesopotamian version.
- E. Similarities with the Genesis account
 - 1. A creator who creates all things
 - 2. The creator brings order out of the chaos
 - 3. The creator battles the darkness represented by the waters of the deep.
 - 4. Natural elements are the same: water, firmament, land, sun, moon, stars, and humans.
- F. Accounting for similarities.

- G. Reasons Moses was not dependent on these myths
 - 1. One monotheistic God who is creator of all things rather than many gods.
 - 2. In EE, humans are made from the blood of a rebel god and are seen as slaves who serve and feed the gods.
 - 3. In EE, the gods are subject to the laws of the universe
 - 4. The wrong direction
 - 5. Early creation myths are not about creation but exalting a god.

II. Gilgamesh Epic

- A. Mesopotamian flood story
- B. Story originated in 2600 BC from Sumerian tradition.
- C. Flood story similar to the Bible
 - 1. In fear of his own death, Gilgamesh seeks out the immortal Utnapishtim to ask how he can also attain immortality.
 - 2. Utnapishtim tells Gilgamesh the flood story.
 - 3. He encourages Gilgamesh to abandon his quest for eternal life and live a happy life.
- D. The parallels to the biblical account are striking.
 - 1. First, the flood was the result of man's disobedience to the god and gods.
 - 2. Second, a hero is warned by the gods of the coming disaster.
 - 3. Third, the hero is ordered to build a huge ship and bring aboard animals.
 - 4. Fourth, the flood kills everyone not on the ship.
 - 5. Fifth, the flood last 6 days and nights.
 - 6. Sixth, birds are sent out to check the conditions of the earth.
 - 7. Seventh, the ship lands on a mountain.
 - 8. Eight, a sacrifice to the gods is made by the hero.
 - 9. Finally, there is a promise made of no more future floods.

III. Tower of Babel

- A. Ziggurats
 - 1. There are over 30 ziggurat tower remains throughout the Mesopotamian region.
 - 2. Building materials
- B. Sumerian Legend Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta (2100 BC)
 - 1. The story
 - a) Features two kings, Enmerkar who ruled Uruk and the King of Aratta (east of Uruk)
 - b) A portion of the epic, "The spell of Nudimmud" speaks of a time when there was one language.
 - 2. This may be recounting the story of Babel

- C. End of the Chalcolithic Period (4900-3900 BC) and Tower of Babel

IV. Ebla Tablets (2300 BC)

- A. Kingdom of Ebla was in present day Syria
- B. Discovered in 1970's
- C. 15,000 tablets and significant fragments have been discovered
- D. Provided information of language, customs, culture, and geography of the patriarchal period.
- E. The tablets contained names found in Genesis such as Adam, Ishmael, and Israel.
- F. Locations such as Megiddo, Hazor, Gaza, Shechem and Jerusalem
- G. Deities such as Dagan, El, Baal, Molech, Ya are mentioned

V. Sodom and Gomorrah

- A. Northeast of the Dead Sea
- B. Location is Tal el-Hammam

VI. Hittites

- A. Appear in Genesis 15 & 1 Kings 10:24
- B. In 1876 a discovery led to further digs resulting in the finding of five temples, a fortified citadel, sculptures and tablets, all belonging to the Hittite empire.
- C. In 1906 in Turkey a place called Bog haz Coy, this was Hattusas, the capital, the Hittites were found
- D. Hittite language was discovered to be the early relative to the Indo-european languages

VII. Balaam Inscription (800 BC)

- A. Exodus 22:22-40 tells the account of Balaam
- B. In 1967 a crumbled plaster Aramaic text was found in an ancient building in Deir Alla (Jordan).
- C. Text reads: Warning sayings from the Book of Balaam, the son of Beor. He was a seer of the gods.

VIII. Merneptah Stele.

- A. In 1896, a 10 foot tall inscribed monument was found recounting the victories of Pharaoh, Merneptah, who reigned from 1213 to 1203 BC.
- B. The last three lines on the Stele, *"Israel is wasted, its seed is not."*
- C. The Mernepteh Stele dated in 1210 BC describes his victory over the cities of Canaan and mentions the nation of Israel.
- D. This is the first extra-biblical artifact that mentions the Israelites in the land of Canaan.

IX. King David

- A. Tel Dan Stele
 - 1. In 1993 at a site in Northern Galilee called Tel Dan, archaeologist discovered a stele (plaque) with thirteen lines of inscription written in Aramaic.
 - 2. This was a victory plaque created by King Hazael King of Aram Damascus in the 9th century B.C. (1 Kings 15:9)
 - 3. Line 9 mentions his victory over the "king of Israel of the House of David."
- B. David's Palace
 - 1. 2005 south of the Temple Mount, remains of a large palatial building was found.
 - 2. Date is 10th to 9th century BC.
 - 3. Archaeologist Abraham Mazar believes this to be the palace of King David.

X. Mesha Stele (Moabite stone)

- A. In 1868, a black basalt stone monument in Jordan with an inscription recording the acts of Mesha, King of Moab around 840 BC.
- B. 3 feet tall by 2 feet
- C. The Mesha Stele contains 34 lines of text written in Moabite that describes the same event as 2 Kings 3.
- D. This passage tells the account of how Moab had once been subject to Israel, but had rebelled (2 Kings 3:4-6)
- E. The Moabite stone is significant for three reasons:
 - 1. The stele corroborates events in 2 Kings 3 and other biblical passages.
 - 2. It contains a reference to YHWH.
 - 3. It may also contain a reference to the "house of David."

XI. Sargon II

- A. Sargon II was considered a Biblical myth throughout modern history until the archaeological excavations of the French scholar, Paul Emile Botta.
 - 1. Botta unearthed Sargon's mighty palace at Dur Sharrukin (Khorsabad), (northeast Iraq) just north of Nineveh near the Tigris river was discovered (1842).
 - 2. This remarkable discovery had inscriptions on palace walls which proved many events in history and those mentioned in the Bible.
- B. Isaiah 20:1

XII. Lachish Relief

- A. 70 ft of a wall relief was discovered in Nineveh
- B. Depict Sennacherib's capture of Lachish in 701 BC.
- C. 2 Kings 18 while Sennacherib was besieging Lachish he sent a delegation to Hezekiah.

XIII. Sennacherib's Prism

- A. Date of Artifact: 690 BCE
- B. Location: Nineveh
- C. Date of Finding: 1830
- D. **Biblical passages related:** 2 Kings 19:9-10 | Isaiah 37:1-38 | 2 Kings 18:1-19:37 | 2 Chronicles 32:33

XIV. Hezekiah's Seal discovered in 2011

- A. Hezekiah ruled the kingdom of Judah from around 715 and 686 BCE.
- B. Seal was discovered at the archaeological dig at the southern end of the Temple in 2009.

XV. Black Obelisk of Shalmeneser III (858-824 BC)

- A. 6 feet tall
- B. King Jehu (2 Kings 9:1)
- C. This obelisk had the citation of King Jehu of Israel.

XVI. Jehoiachin in Exile

- A. Although carried away to Babylon, many in Judah considered him the true king (Ezek. 1:2)
- B. WF Albright discovered stamp seals of Eliakim steward of Yaukin.
 - 1. The records indicate Jehoiachin remained in Babylon and was assigned rations.

2. There is a reference to an ethnic group Judean (Iauda) and Jehoiachin (Yaukin) and his five sons, eight anonymous and five named Jews.
3. These sons were born to Jehoiachin while he was in captivity.

XVII. Dead Sea Scrolls

- A. Qumran Community were a group of Essenes who left Jerusalem in 200 BC. because of the corruption of the religious system.
- B. When the war with the Romans broke out in 66 AD, they hid their writings in the mountains of the Dead Sea valley.
- C. Discovered in 1947
- D. Fragments from every book of the OT, except for Esther was found
- E. Dated as early as the 4th century BC to 1st Century AD

Conclusion

- Thousands of discoveries affirm the historical integrity of the Old Testament.
- New discoveries continue to be found.
- We can reasonably conclude the OT is a historical document that tells us of God's activity in History.