

Lesson 8: The Hezekiah Defense



THE HEZEKIAH DEFENSE

WHEN IN TIME

Archaeological Periods Levant	Chronological Date	Historical Events	Biblical Historical Event	Bible Periods
Late Bronze Age III	1300-1200 BC			Judges
Iron Age IA	1200-1150 BC	Philistine Invasion of Egypt 1177 BC		Judges
Iron Age IB	1150-1000 BC			Judges/United Kingdom
Iron Age IIA	1000-925 BC	Syrian Threat	Shishak Invasion ~925 BC	United Kingdom
Iron Age IIB	925-722 BC	Assyrian Empire		Divided Kingdom
Iron Age IIC	722-586 BC	Assyrian Empire	Fall of Northern Israel 722 BC	Judah Alone
Babylonian Period	586-538 BC	Babylonian Empire	Fall of Jerusalem 586 BC 1 st Return to Judah 538 BC	Exile/Captivity

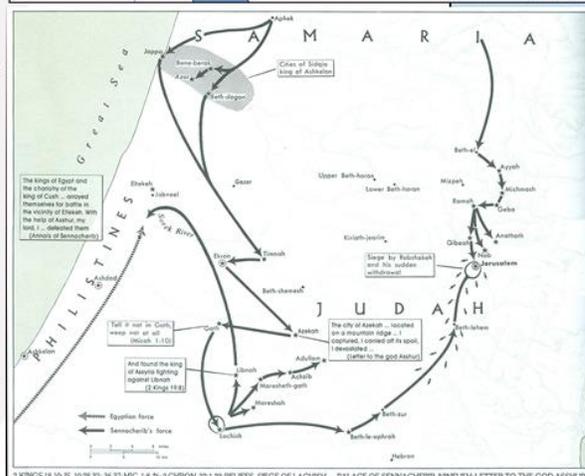
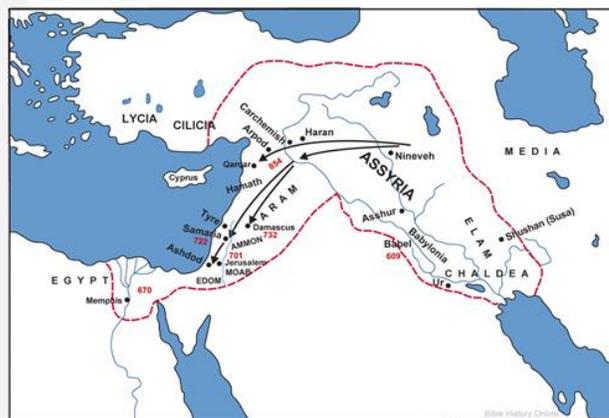
PROFILE-EASTON ILLUSTRATED DICTIONARY

Hezekiah, Son of Ahaz (2Ki 18:1; 2Ch 29:1), whom he succeeded on the throne of the kingdom of Judah. He reigned twenty-nine years (B.C. 726-697). The history of this king is contained in 2Ki 18:20; Isa 36-39, and 2Ch 29-32. He is spoken of as a great and good king. In public life he followed the example of his great-grandfather Uzziah. He set himself to abolish idolatry from his kingdom, and among other things which he did for this end, he destroyed the "brazen serpent," which had been removed to Jerusalem, and had become an object of idolatrous worship (Num 21:9). A great reformation was wrought in the kingdom of Judah in his day (2Ki 18:4; 2Ch 29:3-36).

On the death of Sargon and the accession of his son Sennacherib to the throne of Assyria, Hezekiah refused to pay the tribute which his father had paid, and "rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not," but entered into a league with Egypt (Isa 30; Isa 31; Isa 36:6-9). This led to the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib (2Ki 18:13-16), who took forty cities, and besieged Jerusalem with mounds. Hezekiah yielded to the demands of the Assyrian king and agreed to pay him three hundred talents of silver and thirty of gold (2Ki 18:14).

But Sennacherib dealt treacherously with Hezekiah (Isa 33:1), and a second time within two years invaded his kingdom (2Ki 18:17; 2Ch 32:9; Isa 36). This invasion issued in the destruction of Sennacherib's army. Hezekiah prayed to God, and "that night the angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000 men." Sennacherib fled with the shattered remnant of his forces to Nineveh, where, seventeen years after, he was assassinated by his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer (2Ki 19:37).

WHERE



Hezekiah Reigns in Judah: 2 Kings 18:1-9

Hezekiah, unlike his father, Ahaz, trusted the Lord throughout his reign and introduced radical reforms by removing the high places, destroying idolatrous symbols, and centralizing worship in Jerusalem. He inherited vassal status from Ahaz but Hezekiah rebelled against Sargon (compare Isa 20:1) and his successor Sennacherib. Hezekiah is given high commendation (2 Kgs 18:5).
 .From the bible passage what archaeology remains might give us further insight into the passage?

Mark what you expected to be added to Bible by archaeology?

Archaeology can add to Bible Event:	
Build confidence in general trustworthiness, historical nature and reliability of Bible	
Confirm events described in Bible	
Clarify/Correct/Provide Understanding about our assumptions and conclusions about the past	
Complement or Enhance our knowledge of events, customs and people	
Prove a given event or people mentioned in the Bible	

Sennacherib and Hezekiah: 2 Chronicles 32:1-33

The Chronicler focuses on Hezekiah’s religious contributions compared to 2 Kings 18:13-19:37 and Isaiah 36:2-37:38. The Lord delivered Jerusalem in 701 b.c. from the Assyrian armies of Sennacherib (705-681 b.c.) because of Hezekiah’s faithfulness. Hezekiah made preparations for war (32:1-5). The king encouraged the people to remain faithful because the Lord was more powerful than the Assyrians or their gods (32:6-8). An Assyrian delegation addressed the people of Jerusalem in their native Hebrew. They threatened the city by ridiculing Hezekiah’s dependence on the Lord (32:9-19). The Assyrian derision of Israel’s God who likened the Lord to an idol, "the work of men’s hands" (32:19) with the result of a great Assyrian defeat.

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Hezekiah and the Envoys: 2 Kings 20:12-21

Hezekiah became deathly ill, and the Lord sent Isaiah to tell the king to prepare to die. But Hezekiah prayed earnestly, and the Lord through the prophet Isaiah promised to prolong Hezekiah’s life for fifteen years. Merodach-Baladan, the king of Babylon (721-710 b.c.) and a chieftain of southern Chaldea who led a successful rebellion against Sargon. He sent a delegation to congratulate Hezekiah for his recovery. Merodach-Baladan sent envoys to learn of Judah’s strength and lure Hezekiah into an alliance. Isaiah condemned Hezekiah for his sinful pride in openly displaying his treasures. The prophet continued with a divine oracle in which he prophesied that Judah’s treasures and people would be carried away to Babylon From the bible passage what archaeology remains might give us further insight into the passage?

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Digging Deeper into Bible and Archaeology – The following material is provided as reference material or as a deeper discussion and is optional for preparation for the class.

One of the most significant changes in the religious life of ancient Israel occurred during the reign of the Judahite king Hezekiah, in the late eighth century B.C.E. The Bible provides us with this image: “He removed the high places, broke down the pillars, and cut down the sacred pole (asherah). He broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it” (2 Kings 18:4). In doing so, explains the Bible, the faithful king Hezekiah simply “did what was right in the sight of the Lord.” The Biblical text is sparse on details of Hezekiah’s reform in Judah, but we can turn to archaeology for assistance.

The archaeological remains come from Tel Arad, Tel Motza, Beer-Sheba, Tell Halif and Lachish—settlements with ninth- and eighth-century cultic places. Archaeology reveals that, with the exception of Tell Halif these sites were part of the official Judahite cult and it appears that they were all dismantled and buried. Arad’s earlier Canaanite village was transformed into a fortress with a shrine and altar in the 10th century B.C.E. The altar was then abolished in the late eighth century by Hezekiah but the shrine remained in use until the end of the seventh century, when it was partly dismantled by King Josiah. It is assumed that this was evidence of two different cultic reforms under two different kings—a view supported also by the Bible (2 Kings 23).

Beer-Sheba. A large ninth-century horned altar was discovered there—already dismantled. Three of its four horns were found intact, embedded in a wall. Their secondary use indicates that the stones were no longer considered sacred. The horned altar was dismantled during Hezekiah’s reign, which we know because some of its stones were reused in a public storehouse that was built when the Assyrians threatened Judah¹ and was destroyed by the Assyrian army in 701.



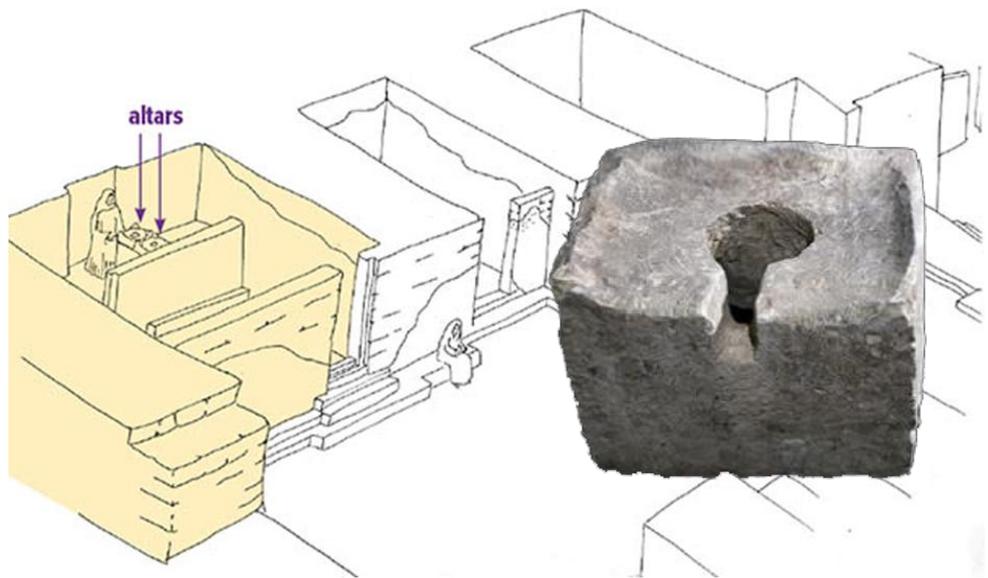
In 2016, an eighth-century B.C.E. cultic place at Lachish was uncovered next to the main city gate. Archaeologists have called this cultic place a “gate-shrine.” In it were found two small horned altars, whose horns had been cut off and embedded in an adjacent wall. Further, a square toilet was found installed in the shrine but was never used. The toilet was more of a symbolic act of desecration (see 2 Kings 10:27)—part of Hezekiah’s cultic reforms.

Archaeology suggests that three different kinds of cultic changes or reforms took place in the Kingdom of Judah:

- (1) Official sanctuaries (together with their cultic objects) were partly dismantled and buried because of their sacred character. This scenario played out at Arad and Motza.
- (2) Cultic objects, such as the altar at Beer-Sheba, and, probably, the shrines at Beer-Sheba and Lachish, were completely removed. If this really occurred at Lachish, it was before Hezekiah’s reign, like at Motza.
- (3) Household shrines, such as at Tell Halif, were tolerated by the central authority because nothing more “dangerous” was being sacrificed than incense.

He fortified Jerusalem’s western hill and secured the Siloam Pool, and he built a new tunnel from the Gihon Spring and new storehouses at Lachish and other sites.

The excavations at Tel Lachish fully exposed the massive city gate complex, which measures about 80 feet by 80 feet. Discovered at the complex were remnants of storage jars—including some that bore the stamp lmlk (“[belonging] to the king”)—that may be evidence of Hezekiah’s preparations against Assyrian king Sennacherib’s



impending attacks. Part of this gate complex, the archaeological team found, was a large room that appears to have been a shrine. The room contained two four-horned altars, whose horns had been intentionally damaged, and several ceramic lamps, bowls and stands. In one corner of the room, the archaeologists discovered a seat carved of stone with a hole in the center that is believed to be a toilet. Laboratory tests conducted in the spot where the stone toilet was placed suggest it was never used. The placement of the toilet had been symbolic, after which the holy of holies was sealed until the site was destroyed by the Assyrians. This latrine was unquestionably a form of desecration of this shrine room—a practice described in the Bible: “Then they demolished the pillar of Baal, and destroyed the temple of Baal, and made it a latrine to this day” (2 Kings 10:27). BAR 43.6 (2017)

In preparation for the Assyrian king Sennacherib’s attack on Jerusalem King Hezekiah of Judah dug his famous tunnel to ensure the city besieged would have adequate water. The city’s only supply of fresh water, the Gihon Spring, lay outside the city wall, so Hezekiah’s tunnelers excavated a remarkable 1,750-foot, S-shaped tunnel under the city that connected the spring to the Siloam Pool on the other side of the city. While the Israelites cut a long water tunnel through solid rock, to divert water from the Gihon Spring to a new inner-city reservoir meanwhile in the upper city Hezekiah set to work building up the entire wall that was broken down, and raised towers on it, and outside it he built another wall. The massive foundation wall in this area, unearthed by Israeli archaeologists in the 1970s. Its remarkable thickness of 7.5 meters, or 23 feet, also suggests that it is the “Broad Wall” referred to by Nehemiah. Within its outward-facing side are the foundations of a house. The dwelling was there first, and the city wall was forced to slice through it. Here’s how Isaiah described the practice: “You counted the houses of Jerusalem, and you broke down the houses to fortify the wall.”

