



Lesson 1: Introduction to Bible Archaeology

The Bible describes at least 2938 people, describes countless events and hundreds of places and all are seen more clearly when viewed with the information of archaeological discoveries. Most books dealing with archaeology and the Bible will repeat the Bible narrative and then include some pictures associated with the period but not directly related them to the passages. In this class we will follow a path through the Bible generally rich in archaeological finds and use those finds to enhance our understanding of the readings.

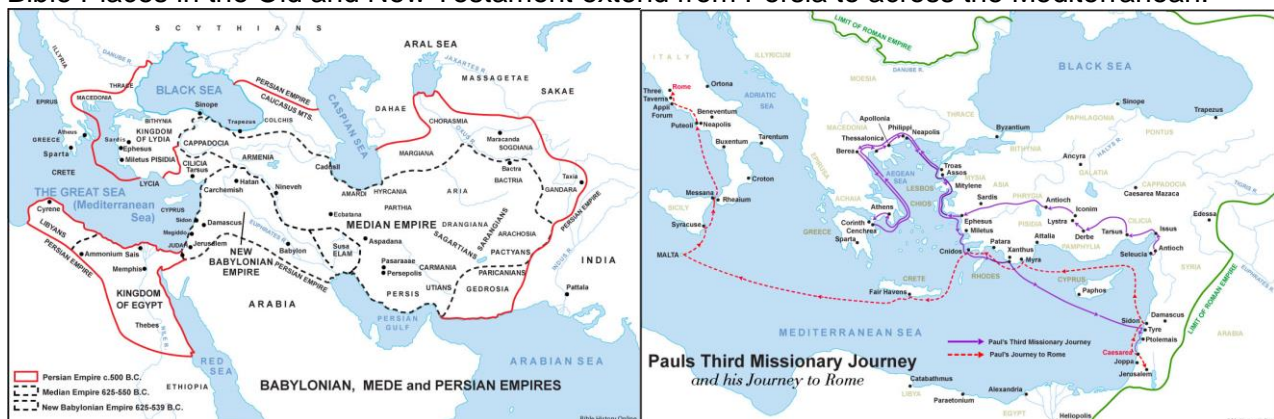
In this class we will go thru the Bible in 13 lessons looking at different Bible narratives/events and looking to see what archaeology can add to what we read. The objective of the class is to remind us the Bible is about real people, real places and real events and strengthen our faith by examining the physical remains/evidence of the Bible world. Also, the class will help improve your knowledge of the Bible Timeline, Geography, and People as each lesson will seek to place the events in time and location.

For most lessons, you will be asked to read various Bible passages and speculate on what physical evidence you expect to find if you went digging. You will also be asked to evaluate how the discoveries of archaeology we discuss could add to your readings (see below table). Many of the lessons will also include some information that will be helpful for the class discussion and as reference material. Consider this to be optional reading material.

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

Traditionally, biblical archaeology is the name given to the study of the archaeological aspects of the history of the Jewish and Christian churches as provided in the Judeo-Christian Bible. Biblical archaeology therefore is looking at the past biblical evidences of man's civilizations. It is confined to Biblical places (are details accurate), Biblical people (are details accurate and trustworthy), and Biblical periods (do the accounts fit within proposed time period).

Bible Places in the Old and New Testament extend from Persia to across the Mediterranean.





Biblical Peoples

The Bible mentions many different peoples such as the Romans, the Greeks, the Galatians, the Cretans, the Jews, the Samaritans, the Philistines, the Hittites, the Egyptians, the Syrians, the Assyrians the Babylonians, the Persians and more.

Biblical Periods

Bible Period	Books of the Bible	Class Lesson (* extra class material)
Creation and Fall	Genesis 1-11:26	
The Patriarchs	Genesis 11:26-50:26	2 Patriarchs and Camels 4 Shechem a City for All Times
Exodus & Conquest	Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua	3 Joshua and the Conquest 4 Shechem a City for All Times
Judges	Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel 1-7	4 Shechem a City for All Times 5 David, Samson and the Philistines
United Kingdom	1 Samuel 8-22, 2 Samuel 1 Kings 1-11, 1 Chronicles 10-29, 2 Chronicles 1-9, Poetry	5 David, Samson and the Philistines 6 Solomon the Builder
Divided Kingdom	1 Kings 12-22, 2 Kings 2 Chronicles 10-36, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, & Zephaniah, Poetry	7 Ahab and the Northern Kingdom 8 The Hezekiah Defense 9 Jeremiah and the Last Days of Judah
Exile & Return	Poetry, Lamentation, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Elijah Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi	14 Daniel and the Kingdoms*
Between the Testaments	Daniel 11	14 Daniel and the Kingdoms*
New Testament	New Testament Books	4 Shechem a City for All Times 10 In the Days of Jesus 11 Crucifixion and Burial 12 Cities of Paul and John
Early Church Fathers		17 Archaeology and the Bible Text*
Bible Archaeology		1 Introduction to Bible Archaeology 13 Bible Museums and Key Bible Finds* 15 Finding People in the Bible Outside 16 Archaeology in Jerusalem*

Archaeology is a compound word from the Greek “Archaio” and “Logos thus strictly meaning “the study of ancient things”. Plato uses the word in this manner when he describes the Lacedaemonians as archaeologists since they were fond of genealogies and foundations of cities, along with Thucydides, who used it to summarize the early history of Greece, and Josephus who employed it for the history of the Jews. It was in the early 19th century that Archaeology” was used to describe the “digging up” of objects

Different definitions for Archaeology include:

John Currid: The study of objects used by past societies.

Roland De Vaux: Archaeology seeks, describes, and classifies ancient materials

Stuart Piggott: Archaeology is the science of rubbish

Randall Price: Archaeology is understood as a branch of historical research that seeks to reveal the past by seeking to reveal the past by a systematic recovery of its surviving a systematic recovery of its surviving remains

Webster’s Dictionary: Archaeology the systematic study of past human life and culture by the recovery and examination of remaining material evidence.

Rusty Osborne: the use of modern archaeological methods to study the material remains of sites and civilizations related to the biblical text, with an intent to understand how those findings interact with the biblical record



Unreferenced: Telling a story based on a what was dug up in a square of dirt.

Kenyon: Archaeology is simply the recovery of man's past by systematically discovering, recording and studying the surviving material remains that he has left behind.

The early days of archaeology was uncovering the palaces and tombs of kings. Today the aim of archaeology is to discover, rescue, observe, and preserve buried fragments of antiquity and to use them to help reconstruct ancient life to give us insights of the common man and everyday life. Archaeology can help us understand how people built their houses, how they made their pottery, how they did agriculture. It can also help us understand the setting of the stories in the scriptures.

A limitation of archaeology is the fractional nature of finds. For instance, of the approximately 2900 people named in the Bible only about 50 have been identified via archaeological finds or 1.7%. We need to remember:

- A fraction of remains survive to be discovered.
- A fraction of ancient sites have been surveyed.
- A fraction of known sites have been meaningfully excavated.
- A fraction of what has been found has been academically published.
- A fraction of what has been discovered and published pertains to the Bible.

By its very nature archaeological evidence is fragmentary and is often disconnected. Only a fraction of the evidence has survived, has been excavated, surveyed, examined, and published. Although archaeology in its descriptive phase deals with concrete objects and employs exact measurements, we cannot claim it is an exact science. Archaeology's interpretive aspects involve too many judgments of probabilities to secure the certainty of chemical experiments. On the other hand, certain principles of excavation command general acceptance
~Edwin Yamauchi - The Stones and the Scriptures



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.

Archaeology with regards to digging started with the major excavations at Pompeii Italy in 1748 to uncover the ash laden (20 ft) city destroyed by the volcanic eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in AD 79. Another spark giving birth to biblical archaeology was the school of biblical criticism which assumed miracles were impossible that developed in Germany beginning in the second half of the 19th century with Julius Wellhausen (1878) as a leading figure. In this age of questioning the Bible and equating it to myth just like the Iliad as nothing more than myth Heinrich Schliemann went hunting for the real Troy and found it in 1870. The response to this criticism was to also go to the Bible lands and prove the Bible by excavating the sites. This approach came to be known as biblical archaeology with fundamental goal to use archaeological excavations and their finds to demonstrate the correctness of biblical accounts—that is, to prove that the Bible is historically accurate. And much of digs did show that the Bible was correct and gave us better insight to the Old Testament accounts it also could not really prove most account because the evidence was just not present in the remaining material; the patriarchs were nomads leaving little trace and Joshua did not leave a card saying we took this city. Today secular archaeologist do not believe in miracles and many are hostile to the Bible as a literary source to have been compiled in the 400 BC with modifications to the 160's BC and therefore not a reliable source.



In the aftermath of the Enlightenment, the Bible and its reliability had come under attack. To counter this, Protestant Christians used the new “science” of archaeology to provide support for the Bible’s historical accuracy. The remains of ancient Israel and its neighbors could be dug up from the ground at sites in the Holy Land, the Middle East, and the eastern Mediterranean. From its origins, archaeology in the Holy Land was subordinated to the Bible and became an important weapon in the fight of faith. The first excavators in Jericho and Shechem (Nablus) were biblical researchers who were looking for the remains of the cities cited in the Bible. Archaeology assumed momentum with the activity of William Foxwell Albright, who mastered the archaeology, history and languages of the Land of Israel and the ancient Near East. Albright, an American whose father was a priest of Chilean descent, began excavating in Palestine in the 1920's. His stated approach was that archaeology was the principal scientific means to refute the critical claims against the historical veracity of the Bible stories, particularly those of the Wellhausen school in Germany. Albright believed that the Bible is a historical document, which, although it had gone through several editing stages, nevertheless basically reflected the ancient reality. He was convinced that if the ancient remains of Palestine were uncovered, they would furnish unequivocal proof of the historical truth of the events relating to the Jewish people in its land.

In this class we fully agree the Bible to be the inspired word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We do not believe that archaeology is needed to “prove” the Bible is true. It is better to speak of archaeology illustrating, illuminating, supplementing or confirming the Biblical record (see table at start of lesson). Generally speaking, the finds of archaeology have been friendly to the Bible, but some problem areas do exist, and we will address some of those issues in our lessons. The only class that deals with the approach of “proving” is the lesson on Joshua and Jericho and this due to many critics saying this event proves the Bible to be in error. It’s like Spurgeon said: “To prove the Bible is like trying to defend a lion.” It can defend itself.

The Documentary (or JEDP) Hypothesis

Doubting criticism started on a large scale with G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831), a German philosopher who taught that religion, like the rest of civilization, developed gradually. These theories influenced Hegel’s student, K.H. Graf (1815-1868), and his student Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918). They developed the “JEDP Documentary Hypothesis” of higher criticism, which said that the early parts of the Old Testament couldn’t have been written during the times they described based on the belief that writing (that is sagas, epics, poetry etc.) had not evolved until about 1000 BC.

Julius Wellhausen controversial theory about the Pentateuch—that it is a compilation of four literary sources (J, Jahwist; E, Elohist; D, Deuteronomist; and P, Priestly Editor), laid the foundation for most subsequent Old Testament criticism. The historicity of the Bible stories were challenged and claims made that biblical historiography was formulated, and in large measure actually 'invented', during the Babylonian exile. Bible scholars, the Germans in particular, claimed that the history of the Hebrews, as a consecutive series of events beginning with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and proceeding through the passage to Egypt, the enslavement and the exodus, and ending with the conquest of the land and the settlement of the tribes of Israel was no more than a later reconstruction of events with a theological purpose.

- **J documents** are the sections, verses, or in some cases parts of verses that were written by one or more authors who preferred to use the Hebrew name *Jahweh* (Jehovah) to refer to God. It is proposed that this author wrote about 900–850 B.C.
- **E documents** are the texts that use the name *Elohim* for God and were supposedly written around 750–700 B.C.
- **D** stands for Deuteronomy, most of which was written by a different author or group of authors, perhaps around the time of King Josiah’s reforms in 621 B.C.



- **P** stands for Priest and identifies the texts in Leviticus and elsewhere in the Pentateuch that were written by a priest or priests during the exile in Babylon after 586 B.C.
- Then around 400 B.C. some redactors (i.e., editors) supposedly combined these four independently written texts to form the Pentateuch as it was known in the time of Jesus and modern times. Also, many would add additions as late as the 160's B.C. to allow all prophetic messages to be generated after the fact but still have problems with Messianic prophecy.

Tenets of the Documentary Hypothesis

- (1) The Bible is not a revelation from a personal God who is interested in the welfare of men, intervenes miraculously in human affairs, and foretells future events of the history
- (2) The Bible was composed by uninspired men of pious intent who were seriously handicapped by primitive or backward notions. All apparent fulfillments of prophecy were recorded only after those fulfillments had already taken place, and therefore amounted to nothing more than pious fraud.
- (3) No Hebrew author could have employed more than one style or choice of vocabulary, nor could he have written in more than one literary form.
- (4) The Hebrews were originally idolatrous and polytheistic and did not become committed to strict monotheism until the time of Amos in 755 B.C.
- (5) The Hegelian scheme of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis could be validly used to sort out the true succession of movements and events in the history of Israel's religion. All of the written material in Scripture could be dated with validity by matching it with the assumed scheme of evolutionary development.

Advocates of historical criticism say fulfilled prophecies must be written after the events:

1. In Isaiah 44-45, the prophet predicts the Persian king Cyrus three centuries before his birth; therefore this prophecy must be dated to the Persian period.
2. Jesus predicts the fall of Jerusalem (AD 70) in Matthew 24:3 and Luke 21:6; therefore, Matthew and Luke must be written after AD 70.

One of the major weaknesses of the radical higher critical school was that in much of their analysis were based almost exclusively upon their own subjective theories regarding the history of Israel and the probable development and compilation process of the supposed sources. They failed to refer adequately to the more objective and verifiable information provided by archaeology. With the rise of modern archaeological investigation, the entire structure of the Liberal Establishment has been dealt a crushing blow. So thoroughly have the assumptions, conclusions, and deductions of the architects of the Documentary Hypothesis been discredited and proved false by modern discovery that well-informed scholarship is compelled to abandon most, if not all of those "assured results of modern scholarship." Following are a few outstanding evidences against the Documentarian conclusions from Archaeology: The Stones Cry out. Tabletalk Magazine, May 1989: by Gleason Archer

The vastly greater knowledge of the religious literature of Israel's neighbors beyond that available to the architects of the Documentary Theory, it has become apparent that none of the nations in the Near East maintained single-name designations of their high gods. All of this demonstrates that the supposition that there was once a J-author who referred to God only as *Yahweh* and an E-author who knew of Him only as *Elohim* is without foundation in the light of comparative literature. Therefore, all source-division that still adheres to J and E and P (who uses only *Elohim*) is a mere figment of theoretical imagination.

The archaeological evidence from Ras Shamra (Ugarit) has furnished a large library of clay tablets that set forth the customs and religion of a northern outpost of Canaanite culture dating back to the 15th and 14th centuries B.C. (time of Moses). According to Wellhausen's theory of the evolutionary development of Israel's religion, the Levitical priesthood did not develop technical terms for sacrifice until the age of Ezekiel and the post-exilic era of Zerubbabel and Ezra (520–445 B.C.). But we know



now that the Canaanites a thousand years before Ezra developed technical terms in a language closer to Hebrew than any other Semitic dialect. The only reasonable conclusion to draw from this archaeological evidence is that Wellhausen was completely mistaken about the late development of the ritual law and priestly ordinances recorded in Exodus through Deuteronomy. The so-called P (Priestly) material is as old as the 15th century B.C., judging from the data of comparative literature.

The discoveries by Paolo Mattei in 1974 at Tell Mardikh (ancient Ebla) in Syria, where an entire library of cuneiform tablets was discovered. Approximately 14,000 tablets were uncovered. This means that written historical records were commonly kept during Abraham's era—a fact completely unknown to the Documentarian theorists of the 19th century—and that the events and contacts which Abraham experienced can be verified as entirely compatible with the Genesis account of his life. The valid and close parallels to the social customs of the Patriarchs come from documents of the nineteenth to fifteenth centuries B.C. (agreeing with an early-second-millennium origin for this material in Genesis), and not from Assyro-Babylonian data of the tenth to sixth centuries B.C. (possible period of the supposed “J,” “E” sources).

Likewise, for Genesis 23, the closest parallel comes from the Hittite laws which passed into oblivion with the fall of the Hittite Empire about 1200 B.C. The covenant-forms which appear in Exodus, Deuteronomy and Joshua follow the model of those current in the thirteenth century B.C.—the period of Moses and Joshua—and *not* those of the first millennium B.C. (Kitchen, AOOT, 25)

Archaeology can lend greater understanding to the chronological, historical, material, social, cultural, and religious backgrounds of the Bible. The Lexham Bible Dictionary provides a good outline of the historical development of Biblical Archaeology.

Development of Archaeology

Palestine relates to the world of the Bible by location and Archaeology can lend greater understanding to the chronological, historical, material, social, cultural, and religious backgrounds of the Bible. The material culture can demonstrate how and why the region changed over time. Methods for identifying and dating artifacts from different time periods have developed and improved over time. Methods for interpreting what these artifacts mean in the reconstruction of Palestine's ancient history and culture have also changed. The history of Syro-Palestinian archaeology can be divided into five stages:

1. Individual Archaeological Exploration (1838–1865)
2. Archaeological Exploration by Society (1865–1890)
3. Tell Archaeology (1890–1914)
4. Methodological Archaeology (1918–1967)
5. The New Archaeology (1967-Present)

Stage 1: Individual Archaeological Exploration (1838–1865)

Stage 1 consisted primarily of individual explorers, many of whom were travelers or treasure hunters. Those who examined sites focused primarily on visible ruins, which dated primarily to Roman periods and later. The archaeological study of Palestine began with topographic surveys and historical-geographical studies during the 19th century (1838–1865). The first to conduct systematic surface surveys of the land was Edward Robinson (1794–1863), known as the founder of the scientific topography of Palestine. Robinson investigated specific sites and made a number of singularly important discoveries, such as “Robinson's Arch.” His primary goal was to produce a systematic description of the geography and topography of Palestine in its entirety. In 1838, he and Eli Smith began systematic exploration throughout the southern Levant. They used Arabic place



names to make correlations with ancient biblical place names. Many of their identifications, recorded in *Biblical Researches in Palestine and in the Adjacent Regions*, are correct.

Many individual explorers followed Robinson and Smith, though few yielded substantive information. Contributions include:

- Victor Guérin carried out explorations in Palestine from 1852–1875, which he published as *Geography of Palestine* (1868–1875). Many of his identifications were incorrect.
- Frédéric de Saulcy excavated several sites, such as the Tombs of the Kings outside Jerusalem (1850–1851 and 1863). His methods were primitive, and most of his conclusions were incorrect.
- Lynch, an American explorer, led an expedition to the Dead Sea in 1947–1948. He mapped the route of the Jordan River from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea and determined that the Dead Sea was the lowest point on earth.

Stage 2: Archaeological Exploration by Society (1865–1890)

Stage 2 of biblical archaeology (1865–1890) was marked by explorations by learned societies. The first such society was the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF), which launched a British expedition to Palestine in 1865 under the leadership of Captain Charles Wilson. Their goal was to identify sites worthy of further investigation.

In 1867, the PEF sent Charles Warren with the assignment of studying the area around the Haram esh-Sharif—the site where the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aksa mosque are located. This site is traditionally associated with the Solomonic Temple. By making cuts outside the platform and digging towards it, Warren concluded that this was the foundation of Herod's temple. Warren also dug several dozen shafts in the areas to the south and west of the Haram esh-Sharif. At the bottom of one of his shafts outside the southeastern corner of the Temple Mount, Warren found the remains of a massive city wall that was leading southwards—away from the walls of the Old City. This discovery indicated that there had been a settlement outside the medieval walls, which Warren suggested had originally been David's capital. Warren also discovered a tunnel leading to the Gihon Spring—this became known as Warren's Shaft.

In 1871, the PEF launched an ambitious survey of Palestine, with the goal of mapping all of Palestine west of the Jordan River. This project was carried out under the direction of Lieutenants Claude Conder and H. H. Kitchener. They conducted their explorations from 1871–1877 and covered a total of about 6,000 square miles. Their findings were published in 1880. In 1870, America founded The American Palestinian Exploration Society (APES). The APES first sent John Paine on an expedition, which is best known for its identification of the ancient site of Pisgah. A decade later, the APES sent Gottlieb Schumacher to survey the Golan, east of the Galilee. The French founded their society, the Ecole Biblique et Archéologique Française, in 1890. This is now the oldest research center in biblical and archaeological research for Palestine.

Stage 3: Tell Archaeology (1890–1914)

Stage 3 (1890–1914) marks the beginning of the “scientific study” of archaeology in Palestine. It is characterized by new archaeological techniques, including the adaptation of tell concepts and pottery chronology. In his excavations at Troy, Heinrich Schliemann had discovered that Troy was a “Tell”—an artificial mound created by the buildup of stratified layers of walls and cultural debris. In 1890, Sir William Flinders Petrie adopted this concept in the excavation of Tell el-Hesi (Petrie, *Tell El-Hesi*, 1989). This site was cut in half by a stream, exposing the center of the tell. When Petrie cleaned the stream cut and drew a cross-section of the tell, he noticed that the pottery forms changed through time. By using the distinctive shapes and designs of pots from different levels/time periods at Tell el-Hesi, Petrie could date pots found at similar levels at other sites. Through this



approach, he created one of the first pottery chronologies for Palestine and came to be known as the “father of pottery chronology.”

The new understanding of Tells showed that the earlier survey work of Robinson and Conder had missed some of the most fundamental sites of antiquity. This resulted in outbreak of excavations, including those at:

Site	Date	Site	Date
Taanach	(1901–1904)	Beth Shemesh	(1911–1912)
Jericho	(1907–1909)	Megiddo	(1903–1905)
Gezer	(1902–1909)	Samaria	(1908–1910)

Excavations continued at Tell el-Hesi as well. The new understanding of the tell and the excavations that followed also allowed for a rough outline of the history and culture of ancient Palestine to be developed by about 1914.

Stage 4: Methodological Archaeology (1918–1967)

Stage 4 is sometimes referred to as “the golden age of biblical archaeology.” The key methods that would become foundational to its practice were advanced during this period. Critical methodological progress had already been made in the excavations at Samaria under George A. Reisner and C. S. Fisher from 1908–1910. Reisner began his archaeological career excavating the Old Kingdom cemeteries surrounding the three great pyramids of Giza in 1902. When he began excavations at Samaria in 1908, he recognized the inadequate methods being used in Palestinian archaeology and implemented new practices:

- He devised a detailed system of classification for different excavation layers, including:
 - geological debris
 - mason’s debris
 - occupational debris
 - decay debris
 - dumped debris
 - silt
- He observed that various layers do not neatly lay one on top of the other but may have been disturbed by later intrusions such as removal of stones, erosion, foundation trenches, and cisterns or silos.
- He improved documentation to include the use of an excavation diary—the careful drawing of a site that included: the meticulous rendering of each stone, the documentation and numbering of each find according to a gridwork of numbers and letters, and the use of photographs.

Reisner’s innovations made it possible to locate the exact spot at which an artifact had been found. Being able to place an artifact within a building also meant that the ruins could be connected to a stratum, thereby making it possible to pinpoint the date of the ruins. This new method of strata analysis came to be known as the “Reisner—Fisher method” and the “architectural method,” since it was aimed at the exposure of wide areas and complete buildings. Other major archaeological contributors during this period include:

- William Foxwell Albright (1891–1971), who excavated Tell Beit-Mirsim, honed the pottery chronology that Petrie had first pioneered in 1891 (Machinist, “William Foxwell Albright,” 385–403). Albright trained many great archaeologists of the 20th century, including G. Ernest Wright, who some have regarded as Albright’s successor.
- G. Ernest Wright conducted excavations at Shechem (1956–1974), Tell Gezer (1964–1965), and at Idalion, Cyprus (1971–1974). He became an influential leader in American archaeology and likewise trained many of the great archaeologists of the 20th century.



- Yigael Yadin directed excavations in Hazor with the James A. Rothschild from 1955–1958 and again from 1968–1970. This excavation became the training ground for a generation of Israeli archaeologists, including Yohanan Aharoni and Ruth Amiran.

Little archaeological work was carried out during the years between WWII and the Israeli war of independence (1948). After that date, however, archaeological work resumed. The principle development took place at the excavations of Jericho (1952–1958) and Jerusalem (1961–1967) under Dame Kathleen Kenyon. Kenyon dug in small squares (5 X 5 meters) within a grid, leaving intervening catwalks—balks—in order to be able to see the debris in the various sections. She learned this approach from her work under Mortimer Wheeler from 1930–1935. Instead of focusing on architectural units and assigning finds to those units, she focused on the analysis of the various layers of debris and occupation. This Wheeler—Kenyon method, as it came to be called, viewed the tell as an accumulation of phases in various stages rather than the buildup of layers of occupation determined by buildings. With these new criteria, the profile of the section became the crucial issue. Throughout this period, the two systems were both used. Much of the literature of this period focuses on the question of which approach was best (Moorey, *A Century of Biblical Archaeology*, 97–99).

- Wright adopted the Wheeler—Kenyon Method in his excavations at Shechem (1956–66). Shechem was the training ground for the next generation of American archaeologists, who also adopted the Wheeler—Kenyon Method.
- Israeli archaeologists, such as Yigal Yadin at Hazor (1955–68), continued to adhere to the architectural approach. By following the architectural approach, Israeli excavations were able to expose vast areas, but at the same time they lost some stratigraphic control.

Stage 5: The New Archaeology (1967–)

Stage 5 is marked by a synthesis of the Reisner—Fisher approach and the Wheeler—Kenyon method. This synthesis is known as the “New Archeology,” and often involves a multidisciplinary approach. Contemporary approaches seek both to expose wide areas and analyze their stratigraphy.

In the early 1960s, biblical archaeology began to develop into a separate discipline, distinct from biblical studies. This resulted in the adoption of a multidisciplinary approach. Two excavations led the way in this development:

1. In Israel, the excavations at Gezer (1964–1973) under G. E. Wright, W. G. Dever, and J. D. Seger adopted a multidisciplinary approach. Excavation at Gezer involved scholars from a broad range of disciplines and data analysis, including botanists, geologists, zoologists, and osteologists.
2. In Jordan, excavations at Hesban (1967–) were also marked by a multidisciplinary approach. They were originally launched with “a narrow focus on biblical events associated with the city of Heshbon,” but over time transformed to “a broad focus on changes over time in how successive generations of people occupying the tell of Hesban provided food, water and security needs”.



This “New Archaeology” is heavily influenced by New World archaeology and anthropology. It is often referred to as “anthropological archaeology”. Six major emphases within the New Archaeology

1. The use of cultural-evolutionary paradigms
2. A multidisciplinary orientation
3. The necessity for a holistic approach
4. The adoption of scientific methods for the formulation and testing of laws of cultural change
5. The value of ethnography and modern material culture studies
6. The potential of archaeology for elucidating patterns of human thought and action

He suggests that the ultimate goals of archaeology are to investigate and explain culture—defined as a specific people group’s adaptation to the environment, their patterned individual and social responses, and the recognition that these features of culture are ever changing.

The integration of anthropological tools has also meant a shift away from “Tell archaeology” to a broader, regional approach that includes the study of the area surrounding the tell. This approach is much older than excavation and goes back to the early history of biblical archaeology. The surveys around a given site provide a comprehensive archaeological context for the site being excavated.

The Future of Biblical Archaeology

Today Biblical Archaeology is often divided into two camps: The “minimalists” tend to downplay the historical accuracy of the Bible, while the “maximalists,” who are in the majority and are by and large not religious, tend to suggest that archaeological evidence supports the basic historicity of the Bible text. The relationship between biblical studies and archaeology continues to be debated. Archaeology has developed into an independent scientific discipline, rather than being dependent on biblical studies. Some have argued that archaeology concerned with the lands traditionally associated with the Bible should no longer be referred to as “Biblical Archaeology,” but as Near Eastern or Syro-Palestinian archaeology. Rosen notes that “the role of archaeology as an independent discipline within the historical sciences still apparently requires legitimization”. He argues that texts are biased, while archaeology is unbiased—thus archaeology should be used to reconstruct history without texts. However, instead of trying to give either archaeology or the Bible priority, the limitations of both must be recognized. A holistic approach will take both data sets into account and seek to interpret them in relation to one another. Dever suggests that the future of biblical archaeology should include dialogue between archaeology and biblical studies.