

# Archaeology and the Bible

*“Archaeology cannot form faith,  
but it can help inform faith.”*



Picture: 'Ain Dara (Syria): Giant temple very similar to Solomon's temple described in 1 Kings 7:15-22

Something **survives**

An area is **surveyed**

Part of that area is **excavated**

Each discovery is **examined**

The notable discoveries get **published**

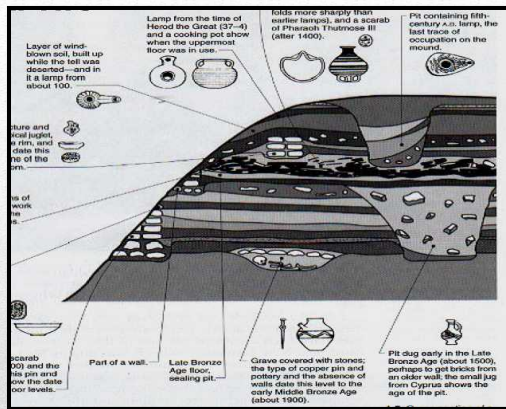


## **Overview of the Archaeological Process**

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Survive: (existed, got buried before total destruction, remained buried till today)

Picture Copied from Dr. Barrick class – cf “Archaeological Excavation.pdf”

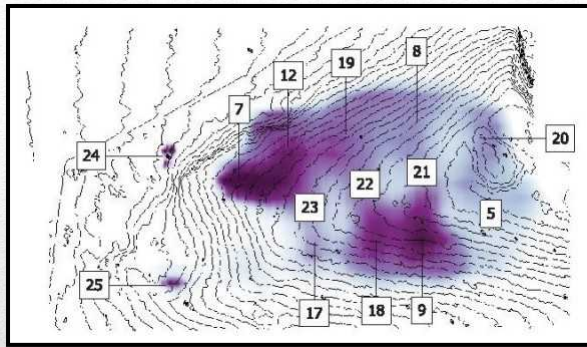


# 1. Survive

1. Things get buried before they can be destroyed, then years and years go by, things get buried on top of other things, etc. Obviously very rare, but it happens, especially at cities that have often been captured, and are not just a piece of land.
2. Example of something that survived – but, for now in the process, there are things like this buried across the world

Mound cut-through picture: Copied from Dr. Barrick class – cf “Archaeological Excavation.pdf”

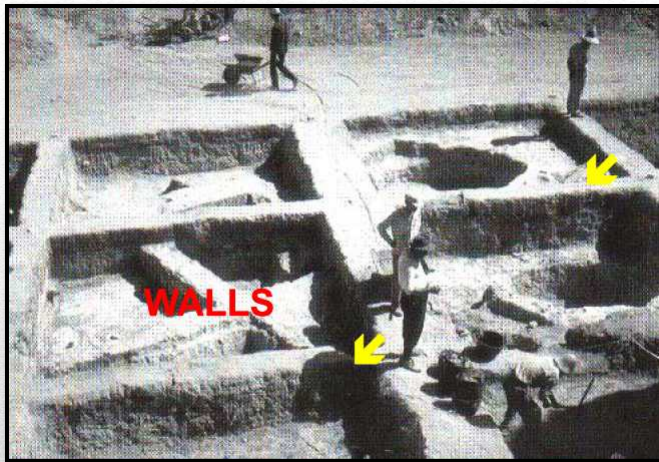
Sir Leonard Wooley (1880-1960) at Ur (1922-1934) Copied from Dr. Barrick class – cf “Archaeological Excavation.pdf”



## 2. Survey

A site where worthy surviving elements might exist is surveyed for an archaeological dig using all kinds of scanners and sensors. The picture on the left is a scan of a large mound indicating various possible remains. The picture on the right is a magnetic scanner to find things beneath the ground. Much goes into the survey process as funds are very limited, permissions from local authorities can be tricky, and the probability of something significant needs to be high.

Both photo credit: <http://www.dayofarchaeology.com/tag/geophysical-survey/> [accessed 5 July 2016]

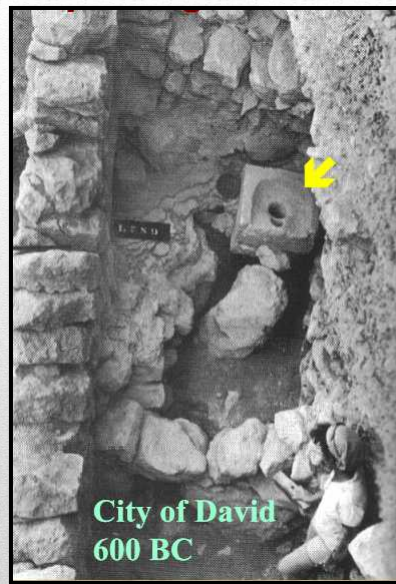


### **3. Excavate**

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The surveyed site is divided into squares and not everything is excavated (walkways remain – yellow arrows) so nothing is destroyed accidentally. Note the walls excavated that cut through the walways.

Copied from Dr. Barrick class – cf “Archaeological Excavation.pdf”

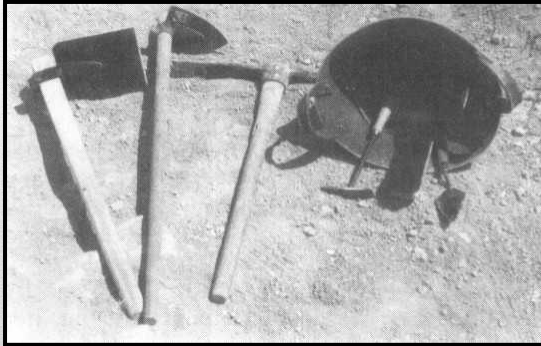


### 3. Excavate

1. Trench: Whole site is never excavated. Especially if multiple layers (civilisations) of surviving remains exist. A trench is often dug allowing all areas to be studied while leaving enough of the site untouched for future excavation (more advanced technology etc.)
2. When artifacts are discovered they are carefully exposed and left in place. This picture is from Jerusalem, the city of David section, and these exposed artifacts date to about 600 BC (end of King Josiah, Habbakuk, Jeremiah)

Both pictures copied from Dr. Barrick class – cf “Archaeological Excavation.pdf”

## Qumran – Copper Treasure Scroll



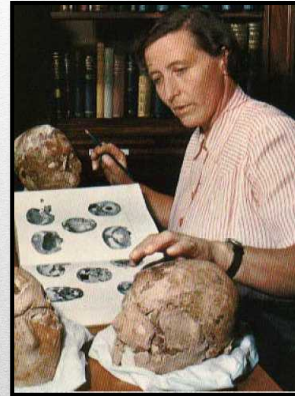
### 3. Excavate

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Although a significant find might appear perfectly preserved, great care is taken as the slightest of movements could make it all fall apart into dust.

Left: Elwell, Walter A., and Barry J. Beitzel. *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988.

Right: Copied from Dr. Barrick class – cf “Archaeological Excavation.pdf”



## 4. Examine

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Significant discoveries are then taken to experts to examine for age and significance. This is where pottery is analysed, inscriptions are deciphered, and attempts to verify the age and authenticity of the find are confirmed.

Left: Youngblood, Ronald F., F. F. Bruce, and R. K. Harrison, Thomas Nelson Publishers, eds. *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1995.

Right: Copied from Dr. Barrick class – cf "Archaeological Excavation.pdf"



## 5. Publish

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If all things go well, and the find is worth the extra time and attention, then it is published in some formal way. (Journals, etc.)

And that, is the process.

*“If you claim that the Bible contains so much real historical details, then why do we find so little of it in archaeology?”*



## **Criticism on the Bible**

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With that being the process, and a fair number of discoveries making it through the whole process, the criticism on the Bible is then made along these lines ...

Picture: Dockery, David S., Trent C. Butler, Christopher L. Church, Linda L. Scott, Marsha A. Ellis Smith, James Emery White, and Tenn.) Holman Bible Publishers (Nashville. *Holman Bible Handbook*. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1992.

Using very favourable percentages ...  
If 1/10 of everything that existed **survives**,  
and if 1/10 of everything that survives is **surveyed**  
for archaeological work,  
and if 1/10 of every surveyed land is **excavated**,  
and if 1/10 of every excavated item is **examined**,  
and if 1/10 of every examined item is **published**,  
then the whole collection of published items is only  
0.00001% of what existed originally.

## **Review of Process**

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Now, before we investigate this criticism, let's first again review the process to find out how much of all things that existed in times past make it to publication level in modern archaeology.

Picture: Negev, Avraham. *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land*. New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1990.

- 10% survived
- x 10% surveyed
- x 10% excavated
- x 10% examined
- x 10% published
- = 1/100 000 odds of learning something from any event in history.

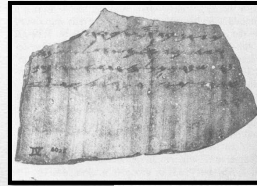


## **Review of Process**

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Picture: Brand, Chad, Charles Draper, Archie England, Steve Bond, E. Ray Clendenen, Trent C. Butler, and Bill Latta, eds. *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003.

That we find anything at all, should be surprising!



*Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.*



## **Answer to criticism on the Bible**

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If we never find anything that matches the Bible, then it should be no surprise, because even if every detail in the Bible is true, the change of archaeology finding evidence of it is so very slim

If, however, anything whatsoever is found matching any detail of Scripture no matter how remote, then every historical detail in all of Scripture is probably true.

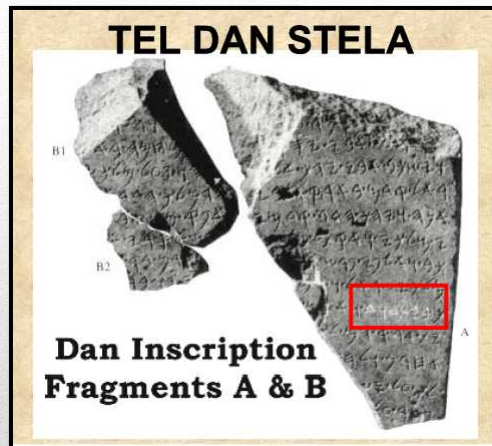
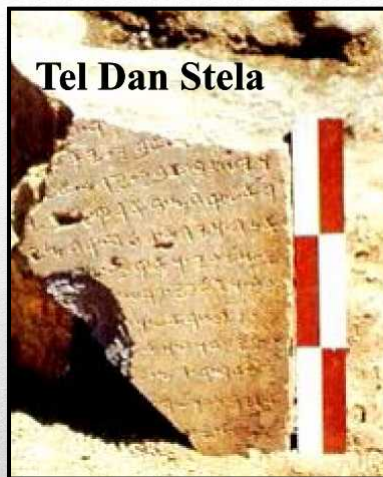
Are there Biblically relevant discoveries?...

Top picture: Myers, Allen C. *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987.

Bottom picture: Negev, Avraham. *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land*. New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1990.



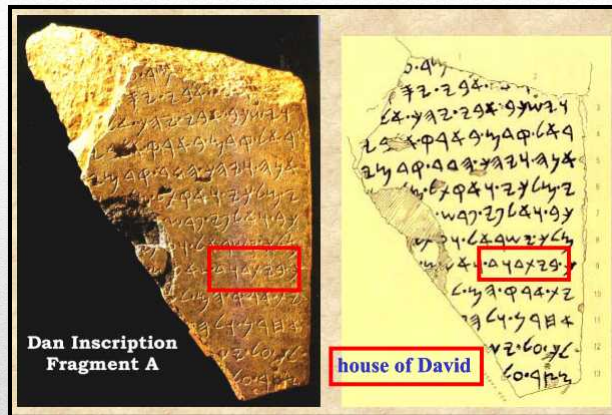
1. **Code of Hammurap(b)i**: famous law-code very similar to Moses' Law (1700 BC)
  2. **Merneptah Stela**: Egyptian record of the nation of "Israel" (1220 BC)
  3. **Gezer calendar**: A calendar in the Hebrew script (925 BC)
  4. **Moabite stone**: History of 2 Kings 3 and King Omri (840 BC)
  5. **Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III**: Reference to King Jehu of Israel (840 BC)
- ...many more



## A very significant Biblical find

1. The Tel Dan Stela – found in 1993-4 in the city wall of the city of Dan (Galilee). This wall was reconstructed by Israelites during the early 600's B.C. After their recapture of it from the Assyrians. This stone stela dates from about 840 B.C. It can currently be seen in the Israel Museum.
2. There are a few fragments of the original piece, but fragment A has a very, very significant reference to Biblical details.

Copied from Dr. Barrick class – cf “d\_evidence.pdf”



## A very significant Biblical find

On the left is a photograph of the tablet.  
 On the right is a re-drawing for the sake of making the text clearer. It is an old form of Hebrew.  
 And in that marked rectangle, is the text “BYTDWD” which is “house of David” spelled the same way Isaiah 7:2 spells it. It is a record of an unknown king boasting of his military conquest which included some Israeli kings – IOWs, kings from “the house of David”  
 This is the first historical find mentioning King David and his dynasty!

Copied from Dr. Barrick class – cf “d\_evidence.pdf”

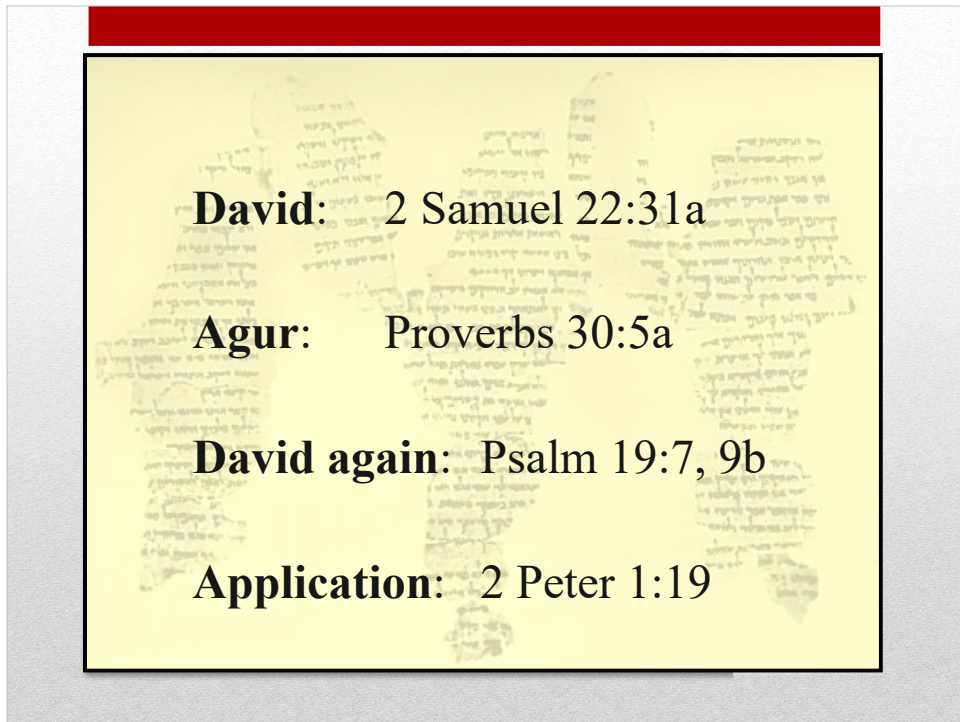


## A very significant Biblical find

In other words, a mere 200 years after king David's dynasty began, his kingdom's name was inscribed on a tablet. Then, for 1800 years it was lost to us, but, then it was discovered only 23 years ago! Just because Christians living in 1992 didn't have this tablet discovered yet, didn't mean David and his kingdom was fiction. The Bible would be perfectly true even if nothing was ever found. But a find like this is so rare, that if it confirms the truth of one detail in a book, then that whole book might well be true!

We as Christians believe the Bible is true, and we await with anticipation as archaeology catches up to the truth.





Manuscript from the Dead Sea area of Qumran, 1QIsa-b, showing Isaiah 46:3-47:14.

Picture from Elwell, Walter A., and Philip Wesley Comfort. *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*. Tyndale reference library. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001.