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53 People in the [Hebrew] Bible Confirmed Archaeologically

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53 People in the [Hebrew] Bible Confirmed Archaeologically
A web-exclusive supplement to Lawrence Mykytiuk's Biblical Archaeology Review articles identifying real Hebrew Bible people

Lawrence Mykytiuk

04/12/2017 This Bible History Daily feature was originally published in 2014. It has been updated.—Ed.

In “Archaeology Confirms 50 Real People in the Bible” in the March/April 2014 issue of Biblical Archaeology Review (BAR), Purdue University Professor Lawrence Mykytiuk lists 50 figures from the Hebrew Bible who have been confirmed archaeologically. His follow-up article, “Archaeology Confirms 3 More Bible People,” published in the May/June 2017 issue of BAR, adds another three people to the list. The identified persons include Israelite kings and Mesopotamian monarchs as well as lesser-known figures. Mykytiuk writes that these figures “mentioned in the Bible have been identified in the archaeological record. Their names appear in inscriptions written during the period described by the Bible and in most instances during or quite close to the lifetime of the person identified.” The extensive Biblical and archaeological documentation supporting the BAR study is published here in a web-exclusive collection of endnotes detailing the Biblical references and inscriptions referring to each of the figures.

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53 Bible People Confirmed in Authentic Inscriptions

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### Figures: The Biblical and Archaeological Evidence

#### Egypt

1. **Shishak (≡ Sheshonq I), pharaoh, r. 945–924, 1 Kings 11:40 and 14:25**, in his inscriptions, including the record of his military campaign in Palestine in his 924 B.C.E. inscription on the exterior south wall of the Temple of Amun at Karnak in Thebes. See *OROT*, pp. 10, 31–32, 502 note 1; many references to him in *Third*, indexed on p. 520; Kenneth A. Kitchen, review of *IBP, SEE-J Hiphil* 2 (2005), [www.see-j.net/index.php/hiphil/article/viewFile/19/17](http://www.see-j.net/index.php/hiphil/article/viewFile/19/17), bottom of p. 3, which is briefly mentioned in “Sixteen,” p. 43 n. 22. (Note: The name of this pharaoh can be spelled Sheshonq or Shoshenq.)

Sheshonq is also referred to in a fragment of his victory stele discovered at Megiddo containing his cartouche. See Robert S. Lamon and Geoffrey M. Shipton, *Megiddo I: Seasons of 1925–34, Strata I–V*. (Oriental Institute Publications no. 42; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), pp. 60–61, fig. 70; Graham I. Davies, *Megiddo* (Cities of the Biblical World; Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1986), pp. 89 fig. 18, 90; *OROT*, p. 508 n. 68; *IBP*, p. 137 n. 119. (Note: The name of this pharaoh can be spelled Sheshonq or Shoshenq.)
Egyptian pharaohs had several names, including a throne name. It is known that the throne name of Sheshonq I, when translated into English, means, “Bright is the manifestation of Re, chosen of Amun/Re.” Sheshonq I’s inscription on the wall of the Temple of Amun at Karnak in Thebes (mentioned above) celebrates the victories of his military campaign in the Levant, thus presenting the possibility of his presence in that region.

A small Egyptian scarab containing his exact throne name, discovered as a surface find at Khirbat Hamra Ifdan, now documents his presence at or near that location. This site is located along the Wadi Fidan, in the region of Faynan in southern Jordan.

As for the time period, disruption of copper production at Khirbet en-Nahas, also in the southern Levant, can be attributed to Sheshonq’s army, as determined by stratigraphy, high-precision radiocarbon dating, and an assemblage of Egyptian amulets dating to Sheshonq’s time. His army seems to have intentionally disrupted copper production, as is evident both at Khirbet en-Nahas and also at Khirbat Hamra Ifdan, where the scarab was discovered.

As for the singularity of this name in this remote locale, it would have been notable to find any Egyptian scarab there, much less one containing the throne name of this conquering Pharaoh; this unique discovery admits no confusion with another person. See Thomas E. Levy, Stefan Münger, and Mohammad Najjar, “A Newly Discovered Scarab of Sheshonq I: Recent Iron Age Explorations in Southern Jordan. Antiquity Project Gallery,” Antiquity (2014); online: http://journal.antiquity.ac.uk/projgall/levy341.

2. So (= Osorkon IV), pharaoh, r. 730–715, 2 Kings 17:4 only, which calls him “So, king of Egypt” (OROT, pp. 15–16). K. A. Kitchen makes a detailed case for So being Osorkon IV in Third, pp. 372–375. See Raging Torrent, p. 106 under “Shilkanni.”

3. Tirhakah (= Taharqa), pharaoh, r. 690–664, 2 Kings 19:9, etc. in many Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions; Third, pp. 387–395. For mention of Tirhakah in Assyrian inscriptions, see those of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal in Raging Torrent, pp. 138–143, 145, 150–153, 155, 156; ABC, p. 247 under “Terqaqah.” The Babylonian chronicle also refers to him (Raging Torrent, p. 187). On Tirhakah as prince, see OROT, p. 24.


5. Hophra (= Apries = Wahibre), pharaoh, r. 589–570, Jeremiah 44:30, in Egyptian inscriptions, such as the one describing his being buried by his successor, Ahmose II (= Amasis II) (Third, p. 333 n. 498), with reflections in Babylonian inscriptions regarding Nebuchadnezzar’s defeat of Hophra in 572 and replacing him on the throne of Egypt with a general, Ahmes (= Amasis), who later rebelled against Babylonia and was suppressed (Raging Torrent, p. 222). See OROT, pp. 9, 16, 24; Third, p. 373 n. 747, 407 and 407 n. 969; ANET, p. 308; D. J. Wiseman, Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings (626–556 B.C.) in the British Museum (London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1956), pp. 94-95. Cf. ANEHST, p. 402. (The index of Third, p. 525, distinguishes between an earlier “Wahibre i” [Third, p. 98] and the 26th Dynasty’s “Wahibre ii” [= Apries], r. 589–570.)

MOAB
6. Mesha, king, r. early to mid-9th century, 2 Kings 3:4–27, in the Mesha Inscription, which he caused to be written, lines 1–2; Dearman, Studies, pp. 97, 100–101; IBP, pp. 95–108, 238; “Sixteen,” p. 43.

ARAM-DAMASCUS

7. Hadadezer, king, r. early 9th century to 844/842, 1 Kings 22:3, etc., in Assyrian inscriptions of Shalmaneser III and also, I am convinced, in the Melqart stele. The Hebrew Bible does not name him, referring to him only as “the King of Aram” in 1 Kings 22:3, 31; 2 Kings chapter 5, 6:8–23. We find out this king’s full name in some contemporaneous inscriptions of Shalmaneser III, king of Assyria (r. 858–824), such as the Black Obelisk (Raging Torrent, pp. 22–24). At Kurkh, a monolith by Shalmaneser III states that at the battle of Qarqar (853 B.C.E.), he defeated “Adad-idri [the Assyrian way of saying Hadadezer] the Damascene,” along with “Ahab the Israelite” and other kings (Raging Torrent, p. 14; RIMA 3, p. 23, A.0.102.2, col. ii, lines 89b–92). “Hadadezer the Damascene” is also mentioned in an engraving on a statue of Shalmaneser III at Aššur (RIMA 3, p. 118, A.0.102.40, col. i, line 14). The same statue engraving later mentions both Hadadezer and Hazael together (RIMA 3, p. 118, col. i, lines 25–26) in a topical arrangement of worst enemies defeated that is not necessarily chronological. On the long-disputed readings of the Melqart stele, which was discovered in Syria in 1939, see “Corrections,” pp. 69–85, which follows the closely allied readings of Frank Moore Cross and Gotthard G. G. Reinhold. Those readings, later included in “Sixteen,” pp. 47–48, correct the earlier absence of this Hadadezer in IBP (notably on p. 237, where he is not to be confused with the tenth-century Hadadezer, son of Rehob and king of Zobah).

8. Ben-hadad, son of Hadadezer, r. or served as co-regent 844/842, 2 Kings 6:24, etc., in the Melqart stele, following the readings of Frank Moore Cross and Gotthard G. G. Reinhold and Cross’s 2003 criticisms of a different reading that now appears in COS, vol. 2, pp. 152–153 (“Corrections,” pp. 69–85). Several kings of Damascus bore the name Bar-hadad (in their native Aramaic, which is translated as Ben-hadad in the Hebrew Bible), which suggests adoption as “son” by the patron deity Hadad. This designation might indicate that he was the crown prince and/or co-regent with his father Hadadezer. It seems likely that Bar-hadad/Ben-hadad was his father’s immediate successor as king, as seems to be implied by the military policy reversal between 2 Kings 6:3–23 and 6:24. It was this Ben-Hadad, the son of Hadadezer, whom Hazael assassinated in 2 Kings 8:7–15 (quoted in Raging Torrent, p. 25). The mistaken disqualification of this biblical identification in the Melqart stele in IBP, p. 237, is revised to a strong identification in that stele in “Corrections,” pp. 69–85; “Sixteen,” p. 47.

9. Hazael, king, r. 844/842–ca. 800, 1 Kings 19:15, 2 Kings 8:8, etc., is documented in four kinds of inscriptions: 1) The inscriptions of Shalmaneser III call him “Hazael of Damascus” (Raging Torrent, pp. 23–26, 28), for example the inscription on the Kurbail Statue (RIMA 3, p. 60, line 21). He is also referred to in 2) the Zakkur stele from near Aleppo, in what is now Syria, and in 3) bridle inscriptions, i.e., two inscribed horse blinders and a horse frontlet discovered on Greek islands, and in 4) inscribed ivories seized as Assyrian war booty (Raging Torrent, p. 35). All are treated in IBP, pp. 238–239, and listed in “Sixteen,” p. 44. Cf. “Corrections,” pp. 101–103.

11. Rezin (= Raḥianu), king, r. mid-8th century to 732, 2 Kings 15:37, etc., in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, king of Assyria (in these inscriptions, Raging Torrent records frequent mention of Rezin in pp. 51–78); OROT, p. 14. Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III refer to “Rezin” several times, “Rezin of Damascus” in Annal 13, line 10 (ITP, pp. 68–69), and “the dynasty of Rezin of Damascus” in Annal 23, line 13 (ITP, pp. 80–81). Tiglath-pileser III’s stele from Iran contains an explicit reference to Rezin as king of Damascus in column III, the right side, A: “[line 1] The kings of the land of Hatti (and of) the Aramaeans of the western seashore . . . [line 4] Rezin of Damascus” (ITP, pp. 106–107).

NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL
12. Omri, king, r. 884–873, 1 Kings 16:16, etc., in Assyrian inscriptions and in the Mesha Inscription. Because he founded a famous dynasty which ruled the northern kingdom of Israel, the Assyrians refer not only to him as a king of Israel (ANET, pp. 280, 281), but also to the later rulers of that territory as kings of “the house of Omri” and that territory itself literally as “the house of Omri” (Raging Torrent, pp. 34, 35; ANET, pp. 284, 285). Many a later king of Israel who was not his descendant, beginning with Jehu, was called “the son of Omri” (Raging Torrent, p. 18). The Mesha Inscription also refers to Omri as “the king of Israel” in lines 4–5, 7 (Dearman, Studies, pp. 97, 100–101; COS, vol. 2, p. 137; IBP, pp. 108–110, 216; “Sixteen,” p. 43.


14. Jehu, king, r. 842/841–815/814, 1 Kings 19:16, etc., in inscriptions of Shalmaneser III. In these, “son” means nothing more than that he is the successor, in this instance, of Omri (Raging Torrent, p. 20 under “Ba’asha . . . ” and p. 26). A long version of Shalmaneser III’s annals on a stone tablet in the outer wall of the city of Aššur refers to Jehu in col. 4, line 11, as “Jehu, son of Omri” (Raging Torrent, p. 28; RIMA 3, p. 54, A.0.102.10, col. 4, line 11; cf. ANET, p. 280, the parallel “fragment of an annalistic text”). Also, on the Kurba’il Statue, lines 29–30 refer to “Jehu, son of Omri” (RIMA 3, p. 60, A.0.102.12, lines 29–30).


15. Joash (= Jehoash), king, r. 805–790, 2 Kings 13:9, etc., in the Tell al-Rimah inscription of Adad-Nirari III, king of Assyria (r. 810–783), which mentions “the tribute of Joash [= Iu’asu] the Samarian” (Stephanie Page, “A Stela of Adad-Nirari III and
16. Jeroboam II, king, r. 790–750/749, 2 Kings 13:13, etc., in the seal of his royal servant Shema, discovered at Megiddo (WSS, p. 49 no. 2; IBP, pp. 133–139, 217; “Sixteen,” p. 46).

17. Menahem, king, r. 749–738, 2 Kings 15:14, etc., in the Calah Annals of Tiglath-pileser III. Annal 13, line 10 refers to “Menahem of Samaria” in a list of kings who paid tribute (ITP, pp. 68–69, Pl. IX). Tiglath-pileser III’s stele from Iran, his only known stele, refers explicitly to Menahem as king of Samaria in column III, the right side, A: “[line 1] The kings of the land of Hatti (and of) the Aramaeans of the western seashore . . . [line 5] Menahem of Samaria.” (ITP, pp. 106–107). See also Raging Torrent, pp. 51, 52, 54, 55, 59; ANET, p. 283.

18. Pekah, king, r. 750(?–732/731, 2 Kings 15:25, etc., in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III. Among various references to “Pekah,” the most explicit concerns the replacement of Pekah in Summary Inscription 4, lines 15–17: “[line 15] . . . The land of Bit-Humria . . . . [line 17] Peqah, their king [I/they killed] and I installed Hoshea [line 18] [as king] over them” (ITP, pp. 140–141; Raging Torrent, pp. 66–67).

19. Hoshea, king, r. 732/731–722, 2 Kings 15:30, etc., in Tiglath-pileser’s Summary Inscription 4, described in preceding note 18, where Hoshea is mentioned as Pekah’s immediate successor.


SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH


In the second inscription, the Mesha Inscription, the phrase “house of David” appears in Moabite in line 31 with the same meaning: that he is the founder of the dynasty. There
David’s name appears with only its first letter destroyed, and no other letter in that spot makes sense without creating a very strained, awkward reading (André Lemaire, “‘House of David’ Restored in Moabite Inscription,” BAR 20, no. 3 [May/June 1994]: pp. 30–37.


The third inscription, in Egyptian, mentions a region in the Negev called “the heights of David” after King David (Kenneth A. Kitchen, “A Possible Mention of David in the Late Tenth Century B.C.E., and Deity *Dod as Dead as the Dodo?” Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 76 [1997], pp. 39–41; IBP, p. 214 note 3, which is revised in “Corrections,” pp. 119–121; “Sixteen,” p. 43).

In the table on p. 46 of BAR, David is listed as king of Judah. According to 2 Samuel 5:5, for his first seven years and six months as a monarch, he ruled only the southern kingdom of Judah. We have no inscription that refers to David as king over all Israel (that is, the united kingdom) as also stated in 2 Sam 5:5.

22. Uzziah (= Azariah), king, r. 788/787–736/735, 2 Kings 14:21, etc., in the inscribed stone seals of two of his royal servants: Abiyaw and Shubnayaw (more commonly called Shebanyaw); WSS, p. 51 no. 4 and p. 50 no. 3, respectively; IBP, pp. 153–159 and 159–163, respectively, and p. 219 no. 20 (a correction to IBP is that on p. 219, references to WSS nos. 3 and 4 are reversed); “Sixteen,” pp. 46–47. Cf. also his secondary burial inscription from the Second Temple era (IBP, p. 219 n. 22).

23. Ahaz (= Jehoahaz), king, r. 742/741–726, 2 Kings 15:38, etc., in Tiglath-pileser III’s Summary Inscription 7, reverse, line 11, refers to “Jehoahaz of Judah” in a list of kings who paid tribute (ITP, pp. 170–171; Raging Torrent, pp. 58–59). The Bible refers to him by the shortened form of his full name, Ahaz, rather than by the full form of his name, Jehoahaz, which the Assyrian inscription uses. Cf. the unprovenanced seal of ’Ushna’, more commonly called ’Ashna’, the name Ahaz appears (IBP, pp. 163–169, with corrections from Kitchen’s review of IBP as noted in “Corrections,” p. 117; “Sixteen,” pp. 38–39 n. 11). Because this king already stands clearly documented in an Assyrian inscription, documentation in another inscription is not necessary to confirm the existence of the biblical Ahaz, king of Judah.

24. Hezekiah, king, r. 726–697/696, 2 Kings 16:20, etc., initially in the Rassam Cylinder of Sennacherib (in this inscription, Raging Torrent records frequent mention of Hezekiah in pp. 111–123; COS, pp. 302–303). It mentions “Hezekiah the Judahite” (col. 2 line 76 and col. 3 line 1 in Luckenbill, Annals of Sennacherib, pp. 31, 32) and “Jerusalem, his royal city” (ibid., col. 3 lines 28, 40; ibid., p. 33) Other, later copies of the annals of Sennacherib, such as the Oriental Institute prism and the Taylor prism, mostly repeat the content of the Rassam cylinder, duplicating its way of referring to Hezekiah and Jerusalem (ANET, pp. 287, 288). The Bull Inscription from the palace at Nineveh (ANET, p. 288; Raging Torrent, pp. 126–127) also mentions “Hezekiah the Judahite” (lines 23, 27 in Luckenbill, Annals of Sennacherib, pp. 69, 70) and “Jerusalem, his royal city” (line 29; ibid., p. 33).
During 2009, a royal bulla of Hezekiah, king of Judah, was discovered in the renewed Ophel excavations of Eilat Mazar. Imperfections along the left edge of the impression in the clay contributed to a delay in correct reading of the bulla until late in 2015. An English translation of the bulla is: “Belonging to Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, king of Judah” (letters within square brackets [ ] are supplied where missing or only partly legible). This is the first impression of a Hebrew king’s seal ever discovered in a scientific excavation.


The oldest part of Jerusalem, called the City of David, is the location where the Bible places all four men named in the bullae covered in the present endnotes 26 through 29. Analysis of the clay of these bullae shows that they were produced in the locale of Jerusalem (Eran Arie, Yuval Goren, and Inbal Samet, “Indelible Impression: Petrographic Analysis of Judahite Bullae,” in The Fire Signals of Lachish: Studies in the Archaeology and History of Israel in the Late Bronze Age, Iron Age, and Persian Period in Honor of David Ussishkin [ed. Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na’aman; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011], p. 10, quoted in “Sixteen,” pp. 48–49 n. 34).


30. Jehoiachin (= Jeconiah = Coniah), king, r. 598–597, 2 Kings 24:5, etc., in four Babylonian administrative tablets regarding oil rations or deliveries, during his exile in Babylonia (Raging Torrent, p. 209; ANEHST, pp. 386–387). Discovered at Babylon, they are dated from the tenth to the thirty-fifth year of Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylonia and conqueror of Jerusalem. One tablet calls Jehoiachin “king” (Text Babylon 28122, obverse, line 29; ANET, p. 308). A second, fragmentary text mentions him as king in an immediate context that refers to “[. . . so]ns of the king of Judah” and “Judahites” (Text Babylon 28178, obverse, col. 2, lines 38–40; ANET, p. 308). The third tablet calls him “the son of the king of Judah” and refers to “the five sons of the king of Judah” (Text Babylon 28186, reverse, col. 2, lines 17–18; ANET, p. 308). The fourth text, the most fragmentary of all, confirms “Judah” and part of Jehoiachin’s name, but contributes no data that is not found in the other texts.


After cautiously observing publications and withholding judgment for several years, I am now affirming the four identifications in notes 31 through 34, because I am now convinced that this bulla is a remnant from an administrative center in the City of David, a possibility suggested in “Corrections,” p. 100 second-to-last paragraph, and “Sixteen,” p. 51. For me, the tipping point came by comparing the description and pictures of the nearby and immediate archaeological context in Eilat Mazar, “Palace of King David,” pp. 66–70, with the administrative contexts described in Eran Arie, Yuval Goren, and Inbal Samet, “Indelible Impression: Petrographic Analysis of Judahite Bullae,” in Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na’aman, eds., The Fire Signals of Lachish: Studies in the Archaeology and History of Israel in the Late Bronze Age, Iron Age, and Persian Period in Honor of David Ussishkin (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011), pp. 12–13 (the section titled “The Database: Judahite Bullae from Controlled Excavations”) and pp. 23–24. See also Nadav Na’aman, “The Interchange between Bible and Archaeology: The Case of David’s Palace and the Millo,” BAR 40, no. 1 (January/February 2014), pp. 57–61, 68–69, which is drawn from idem, “Biblical and Historical Jerusalem in the Tenth and Fifth-Fourth Centuries B.C.E.,” Biblica 93 (2012): pp. 21–42. See also idem, “Five Notes on Jerusalem in the First and Second Temple Periods,” Tel Aviv 39 (2012): p. 93.
33. Pashhur, father of Gedaliah the official, late 7th century, Jeremiah 38:1 and
34. Gedaliah, official during Zedekiah’s reign, fl. within 597–586, Jeremiah 38:1 only, both referred to in a bulla discovered in the City of David in 2008. See “Corrections,” pp. 92–96; “Sixteen,” pp. 50–51; and the preceding endnote 31 and 32 for bibliographic details on E. Mazar, “Wall,” pp. 24–33, 66; idem, Palace of King David, pp. 68–71) and for the comments in the paragraph that begins, “After cautiously …”

ASSYRIA

35. Tiglath-pileser III (= Pul), king, r. 744–727, 2 Kings 15:19, etc., in his many inscriptions. See Raging Torrent, pp. 46–79; COS, vol. 2, pp. 284–292; ITP; Mikko Lukko, The Correspondence of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II from Calah/Nimrud (State Archives of Assyria, no. 19; Assyrian Text Corpus Project; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2013); ABC, pp. 248–249. On Pul as referring to Tiglath-pileser III, which is implicit in ABC, p. 333 under “Pulu,” see ITP, p. 280 n. 5 for discussion and bibliography.

On the identification of Tiglath-pileser III in the Aramaic monumental inscription honoring Panamu II, in Aramaic monumental inscriptions 1 and 8 of Bar-Rekub (now in Istanbul and Berlin, respectively), and in the Ashur Ostracon, see IBP, p. 240; COS, pp. 158–161.

36. Shalmaneser V (= Ululaya), king, r. 726–722, 2 Kings 17:2, etc., in chronicles, in king-lists, and in rare remaining inscriptions of his own (ABC, p. 242; COS, vol. 2, p. 325). Most notable is the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle series, Chronicle 1, i, lines 24–32. In those lines, year 2 of the Chronicle mentions his plundering the city of Samaria (Raging Torrent, pp. 178, 182; ANEHST, p. 408). (“Shalman” in Hosea 10:14 is likely a historical allusion, but modern lack of information makes it difficult to assign it to a particular historical situation or ruler, Assyrian or otherwise. See below for the endnotes to the box at the top of p. 50.)


A scholarly challenge is the identification of Sennacherib’s successor, Esarhaddon, as a more likely assassin in Andrew Knapp’s paper, “The Murderer of Sennacherib, Yet Again,” February 2014 SBL/AOS/ASOR Midwest regional conference, Bourbonnais, Ill.
On various renderings of the neo-Assyrian name of the assassin, see *RIA* s.v. “Ninlil,” vol. 9, pp. 452–453 (in German). On the mode of execution of those thought to have been conspirators in the assassination, see the selection from Ashurbanipal’s Rassam cylinder in *ANET*, p. 288.


41. Merodach-baladan II (=Marduk-apla-idinna II), king, r. 721–710 and 703, 2 Kings 20:12, etc., in the inscriptions of Sennacherib and the Neo-Babylonian Chronicles (*Raging Torrent*, pp. 111, 174, 178–179, 182–183. For Sennacherib’s account of his first campaign, which was against Merodach-baladan II, see *COS*, vol. 2, pp. 300-302. For the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle series, Chronicle 1, i, 33–42, see *ANEHST*, pp. 408–409. This king is also included in the Babylonian King List A (*ANET*, p. 271), and the latter part of his name remains in the reference to him in the Synchronistic King List (*ANET*, pp. 271–272), on which see *ABC*, pp. 226, 237.

42. Nebuchadnezzar II, king, r. 604–562, 2 Kings 24:1, etc., in many cuneiform tablets, including his own inscriptions. See *Raging Torrent*, pp. 220–223; *COS*, vol. 2, pp. 308–310; *ANET*, pp. 221, 307–311; *ABC*, p. 232. The Neo-Babylonian Chronicle series refers to him in Chronicles 4 and 5 (*ANEHST*, pp. 415, 416–417, respectively). Chronicle 5, reverse, lines 11–13, briefly refers to his conquest of Jerusalem (“the city of Judah”) in 597 by defeating “its king” (Jehoiachin), as well as his appointment of “a king of his own choosing” (Zedekiah) as king of Judah.

43. Nebo-sarsekim, chief official of Nebuchadnezzar II, fl. early 6th century, Jeremiah 39:3, in a cuneiform inscription on Babylonian clay tablet BM 114789 (1920-12-13, 81), dated to 595 B.C.E. The time reference in Jeremiah 39:3 is very close, to the year 586. Since it is extremely unlikely that two individuals having precisely the same personal name would have been, in turn, the sole holders of precisely this unique position within a decade of each other, it is safe to assume that the inscription and the book of Jeremiah refer to the same person in different years of his time in office. In July 2007 in the British Museum, Austrian researcher Michael Jursa discovered this Babylonian reference to the biblical “Nebo-sarsekim, the Rab-saris” (*rab ša-rēši*, meaning “chief official”) of Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 604–562). Jursa identified this official in his article, “Nabu-šarrūssu-ukīn, *rab ša-rēši*, und Ṭ Nebusarsekim’ (Jer. 39:3),” *Nouvelles Assyriologiques Breves et Utilitaires* 2008/1 (March): pp. 9–10 (in German). See also Bob Becking, “Identity of Nabusharrussu-ukīn, the Chamberlain: An Epigraphic Note on Jeremiah 39,3,” with an Appendix on the Nebu(!)sarsekim Tablet by Henry Stadhouders, *Biblishe Notizen* NF 140 (2009): pp. 35–46; “Sixteen,” p. 47 n. 31. On the correct translation of *rāb ša-rēši* (and three older, published instances of it having been incorrect translated as *rab šaqē*), see *ITP*, p. 171 n. 16.

44. Nergal-sharezer (= Nergal-sharuṣur the Sin-magir = Nergal-šarru-uṣur the simmagir), officer of Nebuchadnezzar II, early sixth century, Jeremiah 39:3, in a


PERSIA

48. Cyrus II (=Cyrus the great), king, r. 559–530, 2 Chronicles 36:22, etc., in various inscriptions (including his own), for which and on which see ANEHST, pp. 418–426; ABC, p. 214. For Cyrus’ cylinder inscription, see Raging Torrent, pp. 224–230; ANET, pp. 315–316; COS, vol. 2, pp. 314–316; ANEHST, pp. 426–430; P&B, pp. 87–92. For larger context and implications in the biblical text, see OROT, pp. 70-76.

49. Darius I (=Darius the Great), king, r. 520–486, Ezra 4:5, etc., in various inscriptions, including his own trilingual cliff inscription at Behistun, on which see P&B, pp. 131–134. See also COS, vol. 2, p. 407, vol. 3, p. 130; ANET, pp. 221, 316, 492; ABC, p. 214; ANEHST, pp. 407, 411. On the setting, see OROT, pp. 70–75.


51. Xerxes I (=Ahasuerus), king, r. 486–465, Esther 1:1, etc., in various inscriptions, including his own (P&B, p. 301; ANET, pp. 316–317), and in the dates of documents
from the time of his reign (COS, vol. 2, p. 188, vol. 3, pp. 142, 145. On the setting, see OROT, pp. 70–75.


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“Almost Real” People (Not Certain, but Reasonable):
The Biblical and Archaeological Evidence

In general, the persons listed in the box at the top of p. 50 of the March/April 2014 issue of BAR exclude persons in two categories. The first category includes those about whom we know so little that we cannot even approach a firm identification with anyone named in an inscription. One example is “Shalman” in Hosea 10:14. This name almost certainly refers to a historical person, but variations of this name were common in the ancient Near East, and modern lack of information on the biblical Shalman makes it difficult to assign it to a particular historical situation or ruler, Assyrian or otherwise. See Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, Hosea (The Anchor Bible, vol. 24; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1980), pp. 570–571. A second example is “Osnappar” (=Asnapper) in Ezra 4:10, who is not called a king, and for whom the traditional identification has no basis for singling out any particular ruler. See Jacob M. Myers, Ezra-Nehemiah (The Anchor Bible. vol. 14; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1981), p. 333.

The second category of excluded identifications comes from the distinction between inscriptions that are dug up after many centuries and texts that have been copied and recopied through the course of many centuries. The latter include the books of the Bible itself, as well as other writings, notably those of Flavius Josephus in the first century C.E. His reference to Ethbaal (=’Ittoba’al =’Ithoba’al), the father of Jezebel (1 Kings 16:31), is not included in this article, because Josephus’ writings do not come to us from archaeology. See IBP, p. 238 n. 90; cf. Raging Torrent, pp. 30, 115–116 (p. 133 refers to an Ethbaal appointed king of Sidon by Sennacherib, therefore he must have lived a century later than Jezebel’s father).

AMMON
Balaam son of Beor, fl. late 13th century (some scholars prefer late 15th century), Numbers 22:5, etc., in a wall inscription on plaster dated to 700 B.C.E. (COS, vol. 2, pp. 140–145). It was discovered at Tell Deir ‘Allā, in the same Transjordanian geographical area in which the Bible places Balaam’s activity. Many scholars assume or conclude that the Balaam and Beor of the inscription are the same as the biblical pair and belong to the same folk tradition, which is not necessarily historical. See P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., “The Balaam Texts from Deir ‘Allā: The First Combination,” BASOR 239 (1980): pp. 49–60; Jo Ann Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Allā (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1984),

Although it contains three identifying marks (traits) of both father and son, this inscription is dated to ca. 700 B.C.E., several centuries after the period in which the Bible places Balaam. Speaking with no particular reference to this inscription, some scholars, such as Frendo and Kfoed, argue that lengthy gaps between a particular writing and the things to which it refers is not automatically to be considered refutations of historical claims (Anthony J. Frendo, Pre-Exilic Israel, the Hebrew Bible, and Archaeology: Integrating Text and Artefact [New York: T&T Clark, 2011], p. 98; Jens B. Kfoed, Text and History: Historiography and the Study of the Biblical Text [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005], pp. 83–104, esp. p. 42). There might easily have been intervening sources which transmitted the information from generation to generation but as centuries passed, were lost.


NORTHERN ARABIA

Despite thorough analyses of the Qainu bowl and its correspondences pointing to the biblical Geshem, there is at least one other viable candidate for identification with the biblical Geshem: Gashm or Jasm, son of Shahr, of Dedan. On him, see Frederick V. Winnett and William L. Reed, Ancient Records from North Arabia (University of Toronto
Press, 1970), pp. 115–117; *OROT*, pp. 75. 518 n. 26. Thus the existence of two viable candidates would seem to render the case for each not quite firm (*COS*, vol. 2, p. 176).

**SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH**

**Shebna, the overseer of the palace,** fl. ca. 726–697/696, *Isaiah* 22:15–19 (probably also the scribe of 2 Kings 18:18, etc., before being promoted to palace overseer), in an inscription at the entrance to a rock-cut tomb in Silwan, near Jerusalem. There are only two marks (traits) of an individual, and these do not include his complete name, so this identification, though tempting, is not quite firm. See Nahman Avigad, “Epitaph of a Royal Steward from Siloam Village,” *IEJ* 3 (1953): pp. 137–152; David Ussishkin, *The Village of Silwan* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993), pp. 247–250; *IBP*, pp. 223, 225; “Sixteen Strong,” pp. 51–52.

**Hananiah and his father, Azzur, from Gibeon,** fl. early 6th and late 7th centuries, respectively, *Jeremiah* 28:1, etc., in a personal seal carved from blue stone, 20 mm. long and 17 mm. wide, inscribed “belonging to Hananyahu, son of ‘Azaryahu” and surrounded by a pomegranate-garland border, and *(WSS*, p. 100, no. 165). This seal reveals only two marks (traits) of an individual, the names of father and son, therefore the identification it provides can be no more than a reasonable hypothesis (*IBP*, pp. 73–77, as amended by “Corrections,” pp. 56–57). One must keep in mind that there were probably many people in Judah during that time named Hananiah/Hananyahu, and quite a few of them could have had a father named ‘Azariah/’Azaryahu, or ‘Azzur for short. (Therefore, it would take a third identifying mark of an individual to establish a strong, virtually certain identification of the Biblical father and/or son, such as mention of the town of Gibeon or Hananyahu being a prophet.)

Because the shapes of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet gradually changed over the centuries, using examples discovered at different stratigraphic levels of earth, we can now date ancient Hebrew inscriptions on the basis of paleography (letter shapes and the direction and order of the strokes). This seal was published during the 19th century (in 1883 by Charles Clermont-Ganneau), when no one, neither scholars nor forgers, knew the correct shapes of Hebrew letters for the late seventh to early sixth centuries (the time of Jeremiah). We now know that all the letter shapes in this seal are chronologically consistent with each other and are the appropriate letter shapes for late seventh–century Hebrew script—the time of Jeremiah. This date is indicated especially by the Hebrew letter nun (n) and—though the photographs are not completely clear, possibly by the Hebrew letter he’ (h), as well.

Because the letter shapes could not have been correctly forged, yet they turned out to be correct, it is safe to presume that this stone seal is genuine, even though its origin (provenance) is unknown. Normally, materials from the antiquities market are not to be trusted, because they have been bought, rather than excavated, and could be forged. But the exception is inscriptions purchased during the 19th century that turn out to have what we now know are the correct letter shapes, all of which appropriate for the same century or part of a century (*IBP*, p. 41, paragraph 2) up to the word “Also,” pp. 154 and 160 both under the subheading “Authenticity,” p. 219, notes 23 and 24).

Also, the letters are written in Hebrew script, which is discernably different from the scripts of neighboring kingdoms. The only Hebrew kingdom still standing when this
inscription was written was Judah. Because this seal is authentic and is from the kingdom of Judah during the time of Jeremiah, it matches the setting of the Hananiah, the son of Azzur in Jeremiah 28.

Comparing the identifying marks of individuals in the inscription and in the Bible, the seal owner’s name and his father’s name inscribed in the seal match the name of the false prophet and his father in Jeremiah 28, giving us two matching marks of an individual. That is not enough for a firm identification, but it is enough for a reasonable hypothesis.

**Gedaliah the governor, son of Ahikam**, fl. ca. 585, 2 Kings 25:22, etc., in the bulla from Tell ed-Duweir (ancient Lachish) that reads, “Belonging to Gedalyahu, the overseer of the palace.” The Babylonian practice was to appoint indigenous governors over conquered populations. It is safe to assume that as conquerors of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E., they would have chosen the highest-ranking Judahite perceived as “pro-Babylonian” to be their governor over Judah. The palace overseer had great authority and knowledge of the inner workings of government at the highest level, sometimes serving as vice-regent for the king; see S. H. Hooke, “A Scarab and Sealing From Tell Duweir,” *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement* 67 (1935): pp. 195–197; J. L. Starkey, “Lachish as Illustrating Bible History,” *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement* 69 (1937): pp. 171–174; some publications listed in *WSS*, p. 172 no. 405. The palace overseer at the time of the Babylonian conquest, whose bulla we have, would be the most likely choice for governor, if they saw him as pro-Babylonian. Of the two prime candidates named Gedaliah (= Gedalyahu)—assuming both survived the conquest—Gedaliah the son of Pashhur clearly did not have the title “overseer of the palace” (Jeremiah 38:1), and he was clearly an enemy of the Babylonians (Jeremiah 38:4–6). But, though we lack irrefutable evidence, Gedaliah the son of Ahikam is quite likely to have been palace overseer. His prestigious family, the descendants of Shaphan, had been “key players” in crucial situations at the highest levels of the government of Judah for three generations. As for his being perceived as pro-Babylonian, his father Ahikam had protected the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 26:24; cf. 39:11–14), who urged surrender to the Babylonian army (Jeremiah 38:1–3).


**Jaazaniah (= Jezaniah)**, fl. early 6th century, 2 Kings 25:23, etc., in the Tell en-Naṣbeh (ancient Mizpah) stone seal inscribed: “Belonging to Ya’azanyahu, the king’s minister.” It is unclear whether the title “king’s minister” in the seal might have some relationship with the biblical phrase “the officers (Hebrew: sarîm) of the troops,” which included the biblical Jaazaniah (2 Kings 25:23). There are, then, only two identifying marks of an individual that clearly connect the seal’s Jaazaniah with the biblical one: the seal owner’s name and the fact that it was discovered at the city where the biblical “Jaazaniah, the son of the Maacathite,” died. See William F. Badè, “The Seal of Jaazaniah,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 51 (1933): pp. 150–156; *WSS*, p. 52 no. 8; *IBP*, p. 235; “Sixteen Strong,” p. 52.

**Hezir (= Ḥezîr)**, founding father of a priestly division in the First Temple in Jerusalem, early tenth century, 1 Chronicles 24:15, in an epitaph over a large tomb complex on the
western slope of the Mount of Olives, facing the site of the Temple in Jerusalem. First the epitaph names some of Ḥezîr’s prominent descendants, and then it presents Ḥezîr by name in the final phrase, which refers to his descendants, who are named before that, as “priests, of (min, literally “from”) the sons of Ḥezîr.” This particular way of saying it recognizes him as the head of that priestly family. See CIIP, vol. 1: Jerusalem, Part 1, pp. 178–181, no. 137.

Also, among the burial places inside that same tomb complex, lying broken into fragments was an inscribed, square stone plate that had been used to seal a burial. This plate originally told whose bones they were and the name of that person’s father: “‘Ovadiyah, the son of G . . . ,” but a break prevents us from knowing the rest of the father’s name and what might have been written after that. Immediately after the break, the inscription ends with the name “Ḥezîr.” Placement at the end, as in the epitaph over the entire tomb complex, is consistent with proper location of the name of the founding ancestor of the family. See CIIP, vol. 1, Part 1, p. 182, no. 138.

As for the date of Ḥezîr in the inscriptions, to be sure, Ḥezîr lived at least four generations earlier than the inscribing of the epitaph over the complex, and possibly many more generations (CIIP, vol. 1, Part 1:179–180, no. 137). Still, it is not possible to assign any date (or even a century) to the Ḥezîr named in the epitaph above the tomb complex, nor to the Ḥezîr named on the square stone plate, therefore this identification has no “airtight” proof or strong case. The date of the engraving itself does not help answer the question of this identification, because the stone was quarried no earlier than the second century B.C.E. (CIIP, Part 1, p.179, no. 137–138). Nevertheless, it is still a reasonable identification, as supported by the following facts:

1) Clearly in the epitaph over the tomb complex, and possibly in the square stone plate inscription, the Ḥezîr named in the epitaph is placed last in recognition of his being the head, that is, the progenitor or “founding father” of the priestly family whose members are buried there.

2) This manner of presenting Ḥezîr in the epitaph suggests that he dates back to the founding of this branch of the priestly family. (This suggestion may be pursued independently of whether the family was founded in Davidic times as 1 Chronicles 24 states.)

3) Because there is no mention of earlier ancestors, one may observe that the author(s) of the inscriptions anchored these genealogies in the names of the progenitors. It seems that the authors fully expected that the names of the founders of these 24 priestly families would be recognized as such, presumably by Jewish readers. In at least some inscriptions of ancient Israel, it appears that patronymic phrases that use a preposition such as min, followed by the plural of the word son, as in the epitaph over the tomb complex, “from the sons of Ḥezîr,” functioned in much the same way as virtual surnames. The assumption would have been that they were common knowledge. If one accepts that Israel relied on these particular priestly families to perform priestly duties for centuries, then such an expectation makes sense. To accept the reasonableness of this identification is a way of acknowledging the continuity of Hebrew tradition, which certainly seems unquenchable. See the published dissertation, IBP, p. 214, note 2, for 19th- and 20th-century bibliography on the Ḥezîr family epitaph.
Jakim (=Yakîm), founding father of a priestly division in the First Temple in Jerusalem, early tenth century, 1 Chronicles 24:12, on an inscribed ossuary (“bone box”) of the first or second century C.E. discovered in a burial chamber just outside Jerusalem on the western slope of the Mount of Olives, facing the site of the Temple. The three-line inscription reads: “Menahem, from (min) the sons of Yakîm, (a) priest.” See CIIP, vol. 1, Part 1, pp. 217–218, no. 183, burial chamber 299, ossuary 83. As with the epitaph over the tomb complex of Ḥezîr, this inscription presents Yakîm as the founder of this priestly family. And as with Ḥezîr in the preceding case, no strong case can be made for this identification, because the inscriptive Yakîm lacks a clear date (and indeed, has no clear century). Nevertheless, it is reasonable to identify Yakîm with the Jakim in 1 Chronicles 24 for essentially the same three reasons as Ḥezîr immediately above.

Maaziah (= Maʻaziah = Maazyahu = Maʻazyahu), founding father of a priestly division in the First Temple in Jerusalem, early 10th century, 1 Chronicles 24:18, on an inscribed ossuary (“bone box”) of the late first century B.C.E. or the first century C.E. Its one-line inscription reads, “Miriam daughter of Yeshua‘ son of Caiaphas, priest from Maʻaziah, from Beth ‘Imri.”

The inscription is in Aramaic, which was the language spoken by Jews in first-century Palestine for day-to-day living. The Hebrew personal name Miriam and the Yahwistic ending —iah on Maʻaziah, which refers to the name of Israel’s God, also attest to a Jewish context.

This inscription’s most significant difficulty is that its origin is unknown (it is unprovenanced). Therefore, the Israel Antiquities Authority at first considered it a potential forgery. Zissu and Goren’s subsequent scientific examination, particularly of the patina (a coating left by age), however, has upheld its authenticity. Thus the inscribed ossuary is demonstrably authentic, and it suits the Jewish setting of the priestly descendants of Maʻaziah in the Second Temple period.

Now that we have the authenticity and the Jewish setting of the inscription, we can count the identifying marks of an individual to see how strong a case there is for the Maʻazyahu of the Bible and the Maʻaziah being the same person: 1) Maʻazyahu and Maʻaziah are simply spelling variants of the very same name. 2) Maʻaziah’s occupation was priest, because he was the ancestor of a priest. 3) Maʻaziah’s place in the family is mentioned in a way that anchors the genealogy in him as the founder of the family. (The inscription adds mention of ‘Imri as the father of a subset, a “father’s house” within Maʻaziah’s larger family.)

Normally, if the person in the Bible and the person in the inscription have the same three identifying marks of an individual, and if all other factors are right, one can say the identification (confirmation) of the Biblical person in the inscription is virtually certain. But not all other factors are right. A setting (even in literature) consists of time and place. To be sure, the social “place” is a Jewish family of priests, both for the Biblical Maʻazyahu and for the inscriptive Maʻaziah. But the time setting of the Biblical Maʻazyahu during the reign of David is not matched by any time setting at all for the inscriptive Maʻaziah. We do not even know which century the inscriptive Maʻaziah lived in. He could have been a later descendant of the Biblical Maʻazyahu.
Therefore, as with Ḥezîr and as with Yakîm above, we cannot claim a clear, strong identification that would be an archaeological confirmation of the biblical Ma‘azyahu. We only have a reasonable hypothesis, a tentative identification that is certainly not proven, but reasonable—for essentially the same three reasons as with Ḥezîr above. See Boaz Zissu and Yuval Goren, “The Ossuary of ‘Miriam Daughter of Yeshua Son of Caiaphas, Priests [of] Ma‘aziah from Beth ‘Imri’,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 61 (2011), pp. 74–95; Christopher A. Rollston, “‘Priests’ or ‘Priest’ in the Mariam (Miriam) Ossuary, and the Language of the Inscription,” Rollston Epigraphy (blog), July 14, 2011, [www.rollstonepgigraphy.com/?p=275](http://www.rollstonepgigraphy.com/?p=275), accessed October 10, 2016; Richard Bauckham, “The Caiaphas Family,” *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 10 (2012), pp. 3–31.

**Symbols & Abbreviations**


*B.C.E.* before the common era, used as an equivalent to B.C.

*BAR* *Biblical Archaeology Review*

*BASOR* *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*

*c.* century (all are B.C.E.)

*ca.* circa, a Latin word meaning “around”

*cf.* compare


*esp.* especially

*fl.* flourished

*ibid.* (Latin) “the same thing,” meaning the same publication as the one mentioned immediately before

*IBP* Lawrence J. Mykytiuk, *Identifying Biblical Persons in Northwest Semitic*

idem (Latin) “the same one(s),” meaning “the same person or persons,” used for referring to the author(s) mentioned immediately before.

IEJ Israel Exploration Journal

ITP Hayim Tadmor, The Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, King of Assyria (Fontes ad Res Judaicas Spectantes; Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2nd 2007 printing with addenda et corrigenda, 1994).

n. note (a footnote or endnote)

no. number (of an item, usually on a page)


Pl. plate(s) (a page of photos or drawings in a scholarly publication, normally unnumbered,)

r. reigned


RIMA a series of books: The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Assyrian Periods

RIMA 3 A. Kirk Grayson, Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC, II (858–745 BC) (RIMA, no. 3; Buffalo, N.Y.: University of Toronto Press, 1996).


WSS Nahman Avigad and Benjamin Sass, Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Israel Exploration Society, and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, The Institute of Archaeology, 1997).

Date Sources

This table uses Kitchen’s dates for rulers of Egypt, Pitard’s for kings of Damascus (with some differences), Galil’s for monarchs of Judah and for those of the northern kingdom of Israel, Grayson’s for Neo-Assyrian kings, Wiseman’s for Neo-Babylonian kings and Briant’s, if given, for Persian kings and for the Persian province of Yehud. Other dates
follow traditional high biblical chronology, rather than the low chronology proposed by Israel Finkelstein.

References

(end)