

The Bible and World History

Historical documentation consistently supports biblical accounts

Compiled by George Pytlik

In comparison to the giant political powers of Assyria, Egypt, and Mesopotamia, Israel was tiny. If not for the demonstrations of God's power, this minute country would probably have been completely ignored in the surviving literature of the great empires. However, Israel made an impact far exceeding its comparative size. As a result, many historical accounts have been discovered relating to Israel. Here are a few examples of historical records involving Israel, with biblical accounts shown in parallel.

Date/Writer	Secular Account	Biblical Account
circa 924BC Amon temple inscription, Karnak (Egypt)	"Victories of Sheshonq I (Shishak) over the Asiatics of distant foreign countries..." followed by list of cities in Palestine and Syria	"In the fifth year of king Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem..." (I Kings 14:25)
c853BC Shalmaneser III, on monolith from Kurkh (Assyria/Iraq)	"He brought along to help him... 2,000 chariots, 10,000 foot soldiers of Ahab the Israelite... I fought with them... I did inflict a defeat upon them... With their corpses I spanned the Orontes before there was a bridge."	<i>No mention of this particular battle in the Bible, but the mention of Ahab confirms his reign.</i>
c841BC Shalmaneser III, on black obelisk from Nimrud (Assyria)	"The tribute of Jehu, son of Omri; I received from him silver, gold... tin, a staff for a king."	<i>No mention of this event in the Bible, but the mention of both Jehu and Omri confirm their reign in Israel.</i>
c830BC Mesha, king of Moab. On stela found at Dibon (Jordan)	"As for Omri, king of Israel, he humbled Moab many years... And his son followed him... but I have triumphed over him... while Israel has perished forever!"	"Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheep breeder; and he had to deliver annually to the king of Israel 100,000 lambs... but when Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel." (II Kings 3:4-5)
738BC Tiglath-Pileser III, on inscription at Nimrud	"I received tribute from... Rezon of Damascus, Menahem of Samaria, Hiram of Tyre... and Zabibe, the queen of Arabia..."	"...and Menahem gave Pul [Tiglath-Pileser] a thousand talents of silver..." (II Kings 15:19)
734BC Tiglath-Pileser III, on a building inscription on clay from Nimrud	"[I received] the tribute of... Jehoahaz of Judah..."	"So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, saying, 'I am your servant...' Ahaz also took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord... and sent a present to the king of Assyria." (II Kings 16:7-8)

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732BC Tiglath-Pileser III, on inscription at Nimrud	"They overthrew their king Pekah and I placed Hoshea as king over them."	"In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came... then Hoshea made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and struck him down... and reigned in his stead..." (II Kings 15:29-30)
722BC Sargon II, on inscription at Khorsabad (Assyria/Iraq)	"I besieged and conquered Samaria, led away as booty 27,290 inhabitants of it."	"In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria captured Samaria, and he carried the Israelites away to Assyria." (II Kings 17:6)
712BC Sargon II, on inscription at Khorsabad	"Azuri, king of Ashdod, had schemed not to deliver tribute [any more]... On account of the misdeeds which he committed I abolished his rule... I besieged and conquered the cities of Ashdod, Gath [and] Asdudimmu."	"In the year that the commander in chief, who was sent by Sargon the king of Assyria, came to Ashdod and fought against it and took it..." (Isaiah 20:1)
701BC Sennacherib, on a text from Nineveh (Assyria/Iraq)	"As to Hezekiah, the Jew, he did not submit to my yoke. I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities... I drove out [of them] 200,150 people... Himself I made prisoner in Jerusalem... like a bird in a cage... Hezekiah himself did send me, later... 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver..."	"And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, 'I have done wrong; withdraw from me; whatever you impose on me I will bear.' And the king of Assyria required of Hezekiah... three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold." (II Kings 18:14). <i>More silver may have been paid later</i>
597BC Nebuchadnezzar II, on a tablet from Babylon (Mesopotamia/Iraq)	"The king of Addad... laid siege to the city of Juda... and the king took the city... He appointed in it a [new] king of his liking, took heavy booty from it and brought it into Babylon."	"And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to the city, while his servants were besieging it; and Jehoiachin the king of Judah gave himself up to the king of Babylon... the king of Babylon took him... and carried off all the treasures of the house of the Lord... And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah... king in his stead." (II Kings 24:11-17)

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Date unknown Nebuchadnezzar, inscription on tower of Babel in Babylon (Mesopotamia/Iraq)	"...the most ancient monument of Babylon... this edifice, the house of the seven lights of the earth, the most ancient monument of Borsippa. A former king built it (they reckon 42 ages past) but he did not complete its head. Since a remote time, people had abandoned it, without order expressing their words."	"As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there... Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens... The Lord said... "Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth." (Genesis 11:2-8)
Approx 1800BC Inscription on marble tablet, Hadramaut (Arabia/Yemen)	"We dwelt in this castle seven years of good life—how difficult for memory its description! Then came years barren and burnt up: when one evil year had passed away, then came another to succeed it. And we became as though we had never seen a glimpse of good."	"During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully. Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure... The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food." (Genesis 41:47-57)
Approx 1800BC Tajah, a wealthy Arabian woman, from an inscription on her tomb (Arabia/Yemen)	"I Tajah, the daughter of Dzu Shefar, sent my steward to Joseph, and he delaying to return to me, I sent my hand maid with a measure of silver, but not being able to procure it, I sent her with a measure of gold: and not being able to procure it, I sent her with a measure of pearls: and not being able to procure it, I commanded them to be ground: and finding no profit in them, I am shut up here."	"When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. And all the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the world." (Genesis 41:56-57)

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<p>Date unknown From an ancient inscription at Wadi Sidri on the west side of the Sinai next to the Red Sea. Written in a curious combination of Egyptian hieroglyphics and Hebrew, this inscription was already considered ancient by historian Diodorus Siculus (10BC). The inscription covers a wall 100 feet high. (Sinai)</p>	<p>"The wind blowing, the sea dividing into parts, they pass over. The Hebrews flee through the sea; the sea is turned into dry land. The waters permitted and dismissed to flow, burst rushing unawares upon the astonished men, congregated from all quarters banded together to slay treacherously being lifted up with pride. The leader divides asunder the sea, its waves roaring. The people enter, and pass through the midst of the waters. Moses causes the people to haste like a fleet-winged she-ostrich crying aloud; the cloud shines brightly, a mighty army propelled into the Red sea is gathered into one; they go jumping and skipping. Journeying through the open channel, taking flight from the face of the enemy. The surge of the sea is divided. The people flee, the tribes descend into the deep. The people enter the waters. The people enter and penetrate through the midst. The people are filled with stupor and perturbation. Jehovah is their keeper and companion. Their enemies weep for the dead, the virgins are wailing. The sea flowing down overwhelmed them. The waters were let loose to flow again. The people depart fugitive. A mighty army is submerged in the deep sea, the only way of escape for the congregated people."</p>	<p>"Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. During the last watch of the night the Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion... Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen." Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the Lord swept them into the sea. The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived." (Exodus 14:21-28)</p>
<p>Date unknown An ancient Sinai inscription at Wadi Sidri (Sinai)</p>	<p>"Miriam, prophetess of lying lips and deceitful tongue. She causes the tribes to conspire against the pillar and prince of the people. Convoked for tumult, perverted, full of strife, the people revile the meek and generous man. They lead with reproaches the blessed one of God."</p>	<p>"Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses?" they asked. "Hasn't he also spoken through us?" And the Lord heard this. (Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.)" (Numbers 12:1-3)</p>

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Date unknown An ancient Sinai inscription at Wadi Sidri (Sinai)	"Bitten and destroyed by fiery, hissing serpents, the Hebrews are wounded for their crimes. Jehovah makes a stream flow from the stony rock."	"They spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!" Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died." (Numbers 21:5-6)
Date unknown An ancient Sinai inscription at Wadi Sidri (Sinai)	"Congregating on all sides to ensnare them, the people voraciously devour the quails. Binding the bow against them, bringing them down. Eagerly and enormously eating the half raw flesh, the pilgrims become plague-stricken."	"All that day the people went out and gathered quail. No one gathered less than ten homers. Then they spread them out all around the camp. But while the meat was still between their teeth and before it could be consumed, the anger of the Lord burned against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague." (Numbers 11:31-33)
Date unknown Tombstone inscription in a graveyard at Kibroth-hattaavah known as "Turbet es Yahoud" [the graves of the Jews]. Many of the tombs contain engravings of quail. (Sinai)	"The apostates smitten with disease by God, by means of feathered fowls. Smitten by God with disease in the sandy plain, (when) exceeding the bounds of moderation. Sickenng, smitten by God with disease; their marrow corrupted by God by means of the feathered fowls. The people, given over to destruction, cry aloud. God pours down deep sleep, messenger of death, upon them. The tomb is the end of life to the sick, smitten with disease by God."	"But while the meat was still between their teeth and before it could be consumed, the anger of the Lord burned against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague. Therefore the place was named Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had craved other food." (Numbers 11:33-34)
AD26-36 Commemorative stele to Tiberias Caesar	Stone engraved with the name of Pontius Pilate, once considered a biblical myth because no other records existed to confirm his position as governor of Judea.	" In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—" (Luke 3:1)

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Date/Writer	Secular Account	Biblical Account
200BC-AD70 Remains of a crucifixion	First physical evidence that crucifixion was practiced by the Romans. Heel bone pierced with nail and wood from a cross demonstrate that the foot was nailed through the heel. Discovered at Givat Hamivtar tomb in 1968.	"Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.' When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet." (Luke 24:39-40)
AD42-43 Ossuary containing remains of Caiaphas, high priest	First physical evidence of the existence of the high priest who presided over the trial of Jesus. Ossuary (Jewish burial coffin) discovered in 1990 contained his name engraved on the sides.	"Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him." (Matthew 26:3-4)
AD73 Wine label from King Herod's private collection	The name and title of King Herod, tetrarch of Judeah in the time of Christ, was discovered on a wine label at Masada in 1996.	"At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus..." (Matthew 14:1-2)
690BC Stone inscription at Tel Miqne	Stone engraved with the name of the Philistine city of Ekron and the names of two of its kings including Achish. Until this discovery in 1996, many archeologists doubted the biblical accounts of Achish king of Ekron because there was no physical evidence. King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Ekron in 603BC.	"Then David said to Achish, "If I have found favor in your eyes, let a place be assigned to me in one of the country towns, that I may live there. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you? So on that day Achish gave him Ziklag, and it has belonged to the kings of Judah ever since. David lived in Philistine territory a year and four months." (1 Samuel 27:5-7)