



Bible and Archaeology

The Hittite Empire

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The Amazing Hittite Empire

The Scripture talks much about the Hittites. However, secular historians were never able to locate these people either in historical records or in archaeology. So they simply denied the existence of the Hittites. They even claimed that it is a figment of imagination by writers of the Bible. However, eventually the Bible was proved right.

The Bible mentions the Hittites in several books, including Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Joshua. In the book of Genesis, the Hittites are described as

descendants of Heth, the son of Canaan, who is a grandson of Noah. The Hittites were one of the tribes that inhabited the land of Canaan before the Israelites arrived.

In the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Joshua, the Hittites are mentioned as one of the tribes that the Israelites encountered during their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. The Israelites were instructed by God to drive out the Hittites and other tribes from the land of Canaan in order to take possession of the land. The Bible describes the Hittites as a powerful and warlike people, but also notes that some Hittites

became part of the Israelite community and were accepted as equals.

The Bible also mentions the Hittites in relation to specific individuals and events. For example, in the book of Joshua, it is mentioned that the city of Gibeon made a treaty with Joshua and the Israelites, and that they were Hittites. The book of 2 Samuel also mentions Uriah the Hittite, a soldier in King David's army.

The Bible also describes the Hittites as being skilled metal workers, in 1 Kings 7:14 it is mentioned that Solomon used Hittite metalworkers to make the

various objects for the temple in Jerusalem. Overall, the Bible portrays the Hittites as powerful people that were in the land of Canaan before the Israelites.

Discovery of the Hittite Empire

The discovery of the Hittite Empire was a gradual process that began in the late 19th century and continued into the early 20th century. One of the key figures in the discovery of the Hittite Empire was Heinrich Schliemann, a German archaeologist who is best known for his excavations at the site of Troy in modern-day Turkey. In 1873, Schliemann discovered a wealth of artifacts at Troy,

including a number of clay tablets inscribed with an unknown script. Another important figure in the discovery of the Hittite Empire was Paul Emil von Sachau, an Austro-German archaeologist who worked in the Ottoman Empire during the late 19th century. In 1906, von Sachau discovered a large number of clay tablets at the site of Boğazköy (also known as Hattusa), located in modern-day Turkey. These tablets were inscribed with a script that was later identified as Hittite, an ancient Indo-European language spoken by the Hittites. The discovery of the Hittite language and the subsequent

translation of the clay tablets found at Boğazköy and other sites revealed the existence of a powerful ancient civilization that had flourished in Anatolia and parts of the Near East during the 2nd millennium BCE. The Hittite Empire was one of the great powers of the ancient world and was known for its sophisticated culture, advanced technology, and military might.

Further excavations and research over the years have expanded our understanding of the Hittite Empire and its culture, history, and political and military achievements. Scholars have also been able to decode the Hittite

hieroglyphs, which allowed them to read the inscriptions on the monumental stone statues, seals and other objects found in the empire, providing a deeper understanding of the empire and its society. The discovery of the Hittite Empire has greatly expanded our understanding of the ancient world and has played an important role in the study of archaeology and history.



The area of the Great Temple with storerooms surrounding the temple proper, Hattusa, capital of the Hittite Empire [Creative Commons picture by Carole Raddato from FRANKFURT, Germany]

Who Were The Hittites

The Hittites were an ancient civilization that emerged in Anatolia (modern-day Turkey) around 1600 BCE. They were one of the great powers of the ancient world and were known for their sophisticated culture, advanced technology, and military might. The Hittites were skilled in metalworking and were known to have used iron weapons, which gave them a significant military advantage over their opponents. They were also skilled in the use of chariots in warfare, which allowed them to move quickly and strike their enemies with great force.

The Hittites were skilled in the arts of governance and diplomacy, and they established a powerful empire that controlled much of Anatolia and parts of the Near East. They built a complex network of alliances and vassal states that allowed them to exert control over a wide area. They were also known for their impressive monumental architecture and their use of hieroglyphs, a form of writing that was used to record important historical events and religious texts.

The Hittites were polytheistic and worshiped a wide variety of gods

and goddesses. Their religious beliefs were closely tied to their political system, and the king was considered to be the chief priest and the representative of the gods on earth. They also practiced human sacrifice, which was seen as a way of appeasing the gods and ensuring the protection of the kingdom.



Map of the Hittite Empire at its greatest extent under Suppiluliuma I (c.1350–1322) and Mursili II (c.1321–1295).
[Public Domain]

The Hittite civilization reached its peak of power and influence in the 16th century BCE, but it was eventually conquered by the Assyrians in the 12th century BCE. Despite this, the Hittites left a lasting legacy and their civilization had a significant impact on the ancient world. Their empire and culture influenced the development of other civilizations in the Near East, and their writing and hieroglyphics system was an important source of information on the ancient world. Their knowledge in metallurgy and iron working was also passed on to the neighboring civilizations.

Hittite Paganism

The Scripture speaks much against adopting the gods of pagans around Israel. Hittites were one of these groups. The Hittites were a polytheistic society and worshiped a wide variety of gods and goddesses. Their gods were divided into two main categories: the weather gods and the earth gods. The weather gods were considered to be the most powerful, and they were responsible for controlling the forces of nature such as the sun, the rain, and the storms. The most important weather god was Teshub, who was the god of

thunder and storms. He was considered to be the king of the gods and the protector of the Hittite kingdom.

The earth gods were considered to be less powerful than the weather gods, but they were still important in Hittite religion. These gods were responsible for protecting specific aspects of the natural world, such as the fertility of the land, the growth of crops, and the protection of animals. The most important earth god was Telipinu, who was the god of fertility and growth. He was responsible for ensuring the

fertility of the land and the growth of crops.



Ivory Hittite Sphinx, 18th century BC
[Public Domain Picture]

The Hittites also worshiped a number of goddesses, many of whom were associated with specific aspects of the natural world. The most important goddess was the mother goddess, who was considered to be the source of all life and fertility. She was also associated with the earth and was responsible for the protection of animals and the growth of crops. Another important goddess was the sun goddess, who was considered to be the consort of the sun god and was responsible for bringing light and warmth to the world.

The Hittites believed that their gods were capable of intervening in human affairs, and they believed that the gods could be propitiated through offerings and sacrifices. The king of the Hittites was considered to be the chief priest and the representative of the gods on earth. He was responsible for performing religious ceremonies, offerings, and sacrifices to the gods on behalf of the people. The Hittite gods and goddesses were an integral part of the Hittite society and played a significant role in the daily lives of the people.

The Hittite Library

The Hittite Empire was known for its sophisticated culture, advanced technology, and rich history, and one of the most important contributions of the Hittite civilization was their library. The Hittite library was a collection of texts written in the Hittite language, which was used to record important historical events, religious texts, legal codes, and other information. The library was located in the capital city of Hattusa, and it was considered to be one of the most important cultural and intellectual centers of the ancient world.

The Hittite library was composed of clay tablets that were inscribed with cuneiform script. These tablets were made by pressing a stylus into soft clay, which was then allowed to dry and harden. The texts on the tablets were written in a variety of languages, including Hittite, Akkadian, and Sumerian. The library held thousands of tablets, covering a wide range of subjects, from religious texts to legal codes, from scientific treatises to historical annals.



Egypto-Hittite Peace Treaty (c. 1258 BC) between Hattusili III and Ramesses II, the earliest known surviving peace treaty, sometimes called the Treaty of Kadesh after the Battle of Kadesh (Istanbul Archaeology Museum)[GNU Free Documentation License]

The texts in the Hittite library provide valuable insights into the history, culture, and society of the Hittite Empire. They include important historical records, such as the Annals of Hattusili I, which provide detailed accounts of the major events and achievements of the empire. They also include religious texts, such as the Kumarbi Cycle, which is a creation myth that describes the struggles of the gods and goddesses and the origins of the world. Additionally, the library holds legal texts, such as the laws of the Hittite Empire, which provide an understanding of the legal

system, and the society's moral and ethical principles.

The Hittite library was an important source of information for scholars and researchers, and it continues to be an important resource for understanding the ancient world. The texts in the library provide valuable insights into the history, culture, and society of the Hittite Empire and have played a vital role in the study of archaeology and history. The Hittite library was one of the oldest known examples of a library and it continues to be an important source of knowledge about the ancient world.

The Israelites and the Hittites

The Hittites and the Israelites were two ancient civilizations that existed in the Near East during the same period of time. The Hittites were one of the great powers of the ancient world and controlled much of Anatolia and parts of the Near East, while the Israelites were a smaller, emerging civilization that settled in the region of Canaan.

Historical records show that the Hittites and the Israelites had contact with each other, and there are several references to the Hittites in the Bible. The Hittites are mentioned in the book of

Genesis as descendants of Heth, the son of Canaan, and they are also mentioned in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Joshua. In these texts, the Hittites are described as a powerful and warlike people who inhabited the land of Canaan before the Israelites arrived.

The Hittites and the Israelites also had a significant impact on each other's culture and history. The Hittites were known for their sophisticated culture, advanced technology, and military might, and they likely had an influence on the Israelites. The Israelites, in turn, were known for their

monotheistic beliefs and their strong sense of national identity, and they likely had an influence on the Hittites.

The Hittites and the Israelites also had a complex relationship with each other. At times, they were allies and had peaceful relations, while at other times they were enemies and engaged in conflicts. For example, the Bible mentions the treaty between the Hittite king, Suppiluliuma, and the Israelite king, Abimelech. The treaty was made to establish peace between the two nations, and it was recorded on a clay

tablet found in the Hittite capital of Hattusa.

Despite the complex relationship, the Hittites and Israelites had with each other, it is clear that they had a significant impact on each other's culture and history. The Hittites were a powerful and sophisticated civilization, while the Israelites were an emerging civilization with a strong sense of national identity. Both civilizations contributed to the development of the ancient world, and the interaction between them played a role in shaping the history of the region.

Summary

Obviously, the Hittites were a great nation that remained undiscovered by secular historians and archaeologists till the end of 1800s. Critics chose to attack the Hittite passages of the Bible, instead of waiting for more information to come forth. When such information came forth at the end of 1800s, the critics were silenced and Bible believers were strengthened

Cover Picture: The İnandık vase also known as Hüseyindede vases, a Hittite four-handled large terracota vase with scenes in relief depicting a sacred wedding ceremony, mid 17th century BC, İnandıktepe, Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara [Carole Raddato from Frankfurt, Germany]

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Dr. Johnson C. Philip is a prolific



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