

is Iron Age I, which dates to about 3200 years ago. Two houses from this period were excavated in earlier seasons. This summer, excavators began to uncover several other houses. They found a deep, fiery destruction layer overlying the houses. Under the destruction were many crushed pottery vessels, mostly large storage jars. A team of excavators also explored the ancient city wall from this time period. It stands almost five m high and they have not yet found the base.

Another team was able to clear an Iron Age II B house (ca. 2800 years old). It had both cobble and dirt floors with walls preserved over a meter high.

Two other teams discovered Persian-period houses. Their rooms contained typical domestic goods and bins for storage. One building contained a large tabun almost a meter in diameter and preserved almost 40 cm high.

Small finds from the various parts of the excavation include nine seals, figurine heads of humans and animals, jewelry, and pottery vessels. (Larry G. Herr and Douglas R. Clark)



Vaughn Lecture

Dr. Andrew Vaughn, Executive Director of American Schools of Oriental Research, presented a lecture entitled “The Success of Hezekiah: A New Look at Hezekiah’s Success Following Sennacherib’s Campaign in 701 BCE.” on Monday, December 3, 2007 at Andrews University.

Dr. Vaughn began the lecture by giving some background on Hezekiah, mentioning his reforms, including centralizing worship in Jerusalem. The king is looked upon favorably by the Chronicler, but it is the events surrounding the middle of his reign, when Sennacherib came from Assyria in 701 BC, that in some ways shaped the biblical perspective. Hezekiah’s reign has usually been viewed by scholars as a failure. However, Vaughn believes that even though Judah was



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almost completely destroyed, there was enough of the kingdom left to be rebuilt. If this was the case, then Hezekiah was “partially” successful.

Sennacherib almost completely destroyed Judah. This destruction is graphically represented by the siege ramp found at Lachish (Level III). The Assyrian Annals say he laid siege to 46 cities in Judah. The Shephelah, where many of these sites were located, was the breadbasket of Judah. When Judah was strong it was reflected in the strength of the Shephelah. Archaeological surveys indicate that during the first part of Hezekiah’s reign the Shephelah was very strong, but after Sennacherib’s campaign there was a dramatic drop in development. The consensus view is that Judah didn’t grow again until Josiah’s reign and then not as much because the Shephelah didn’t grow. However Vaughn doesn’t believe this was the case.

He sees a significant problem with viewing Hezekiah as a complete failure. First, Hezekiah was the only ruler in the area who escaped with his life. Sennacherib was not known as a gracious conqueror; he killed anyone who revolted. The reason Sennacherib didn’t kill him was because he couldn’t. Hezekiah began a large economic build up several years before Sennacherib came to Judah. It is incorrect to view the *LMLK* jars as an isolated occurrence at the end of the 8th century BC. They are important for understanding Hezekiah’s reign. Their distribution is evidence of a kingdom-wide infrastructure based around strong cities. Vaughn believes that Hezekiah began to

prepare the kingdom in 715 BC. While doing so he also improved Jerusalem. He reconstructed a stronger city wall, as evidenced by the “Broad Wall,” that excluded extramural settlements. Second, the siege of Lachish and other fortified cities drained the Assyrians to the point that Jerusalem could be saved. Third, Manasseh could not have taken part in the building project described in Chronicles if Judah had been completely wiped out. Thus, it seems that a remnant of Judah was left for such a quick rebuilding effort.

In the last section of his lecture Vaughn focused on the site of Ramat Rachel. He argues that the site was initially built by Hezekiah and then rebuilt just after the destruction in 701 BC. There are two Iron Age strata at the site; Level 5a (the later one, with parallels to Lachish II) destroyed in the early 6th century BC, and the earlier, Level 5b, 8th century BC stratum, with architectural features that include proto-Aeolic capitals and header-stretcher masonry, typical of the Phoenician-influenced palaces at Samaria. Vaughn believes that Hezekiah was the last king of Judah to know of the glorious palaces in Samaria. It is even possible that builders and artisans fled to Judah after the destruction of Samaria in 722 BC. After the destruction of Ramat Rachel, in 701 BC, either Hezekiah or his son, Manasseh, restored the site and built the Level 5a palace. Level 5b architectural elements were reused in this palace, and there is evidence of rebuilding, renovation and different use phases. The Level 5a palace was in use for around another 100 years.

Vaughn concludes that Hezekiah was not a complete failure. After 701 BC important parts of his kingdom remained and other parts were rebuilt. Understanding the results of Hezekiah’s reign in such a manner helps us better understand the accounts from 2 Kings and Chronicles, and also the prophecies of Isaiah and how the city of Jerusalem was restored in the 7th century BC and later. (Owen Chesnut)

