

Like many other ancient sacred books upon which religions are based, the Bible has been criticized as being largely a work of fiction and myth. However, many discoveries have proven otherwise. Archaeological documents mentioning Omri, king of Israel, have been discovered, and have added to the growing mountain of evidence favoring the Bible's authenticity.



Artifacts discovered confirm some of the detailed facts the Bible mentions about Israelite king Omri.

“Then the people of Israel were split into two factions; half supporting Tibni son of Ginath for king, and the other half supported Omri. But Omri’s followers proved stronger than those of Tibni son of Ginath. So Tibni died and Omri became king. In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned twelve years, six of them in Tirzah. He bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver and built a city on the hill, calling it Samaria, after Shemer, the name of the former owner of the hill. But Omri did evil in the eyes of the LORD [Yahweh] and sinned more than all those before him. He followed completely the ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat, committing the same sin Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit, so that they aroused the anger of the LORD [Yahweh], the God of Israel, by their worthless idols. As for the other events of Omri’s reign, what he did and the things he achieved, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? Omri rested with his ancestors and was buried in Samaria. and Ahab his son succeeded him”—1 Kings 16:21-26 NIV

Omri reigned from about 886 BCE to 874 BCE, after a coup takeover from the previous king Tibni. After he solidified his power, he bought **“the hill of Samaria”**, 34 miles north of Jerusalem. He transferred the capital of the northern kingdom there, a location that was easily defended, because it is on a high high hill, rising about 300 feet above the surrounding

fertile valleys., which was perhaps his most significant accomplishment. Excavators have unearthed Omri's royal citadel on the acropolis. Archaeologists have discovered that Omri and his successor, son, Ahab, adorned Samaria with magnificent structures to rival those of Solomon in Jerusalem.

Omri's palace was surrounded by a 5 foot thick wall enclosing a four-acre area. The wall was constructed of fine ashlar (cut) masonry laid in header-stretcher fashion (alternating narrow-face and wide faced placement of rectangular blocks). On the SW side of the enclosure was a palace constructed around a central courtyard. The preserved portion is 78 feet by 88 feet in size. Outside the royal quarter was a lower city built on the slope of a hill.

Omri is identified in the Bible as one of Israel's most evil kings, a terrible spiritual leader, but appears prominently, as someone who is famous, in nonbiblical pagan records. Reflecting the fact that Omri subdued Moab, its king Mesha included Omri's name in the Mesha stele (circa 846-7 BCE), stating that "Omri had occupied the land of Media (northern Moab), and had dwelt there in his time". About five years later, the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III referred to Jehu, a later Israelite king, as the "son of Omri". Sargon II (circa 721 BCE), in his annals, referred to Israel as "Omri-Land". Tiglath-Pileser III (circa 732 BCE) spoke in his annals about "the house of Omri".

All this evidence shows that Israelite king Omri was very famous and successful in a worldly sense, yet the Bible pays him virtually no attention. In sharp contrast, political success, in the eyes of Bible writers, under God's direction, counted for nothing worthwhile if an individual did not serve the true Almighty God. **"Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked"** (Psalm 84:10 NIV).

From this we also learn that the more time that passes, the stronger the case becomes for the authenticity of God's Word, the Bible, whereas other works need to be corrected and updated, etc. **"All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the**

field; the grass withers and the flowers fall off, but the word of the Lord endures forever” (1 Peter 1:24,25 NIV).