

Battle of Carchemish

Carchemish was the eastern capital of the ancient Hittite empire. It was a highly strategic military and commercial center of Northern Syria for many centuries, under one ruler or another. It lay on the Euphrates river, about 65 miles northeast of Aleppo.

There were several battles fought at Carchemish, the most decisive of which is the so-called “Battle of Carchemish,” in which the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians, who were led by Pharaoh Necho.

Assyria had lost its capital at Nineveh to the Babylonians in 612 BC. The capital was moved to Haran, but the Babylonians captured that city in 610 BC, forcing the Assyrians to set up another headquarters in Carchemish, about 35 miles east of Haran.

Pharaoh Necho was allied with the Assyrians, and he was on his way to Carchemish to help them fight the Babylonians when King Josiah moved the Jewish forces into his path at Megiddo as a delaying action. Josiah was killed in the battle of Megiddo

(**2 Chron. 35:20**).

Necho’s army was delayed again at Riblah (**2 Kings 23:31**), and when he finally approached Carchemish, he was too late. Nebuchadnezzar had surprised the Assyrians and had captured Carchemish. He turned on the Egyptians and thoroughly defeated them. He pursued them to Hamath and killed almost all of the Egyptian combatants.

The Battle of Carchemish was the end of the Assyrian Empire, and Egypt was reduced to a second-rate power. Babylon was master of the Middle East.

The site of Carchemish was excavated during 1912 to 1914 by Sir Leonard Wooley and T. E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) for the British Museum. They found substantial remains of that powerful city, with forts, palaces, temples, market places, and a great wall sculptured with a procession of warriors, with the king and crown prince celebrating a great victory.