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*Archaeology and history of eighth-century  
Judah*

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# ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY OF EIGHTH-CENTURY JUDAH

Edited by  
Zev I. Farber  
and Jacob L. Wright

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Society of Biblical Literature  
Centro de Estudios de Historia del Antiguo Oriente (UCA)

ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY OF  
EIGHTH-CENTURY JUDAH

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Edited by  
Edited by Zev I. Farber and Jacob L. Wright



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*To Oded Borowski*



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## Editors' Preface

It is a great honor to present this volume to our colleague/teacher, Oded Borowski, on the occasion of his retirement from Emory University after a long and successful career. The idea for the project began with a symposium we organized in Oded's honor in February 2014. Our aim all along has been to present a multifaceted study of a single point in time that was both critical to the formation of the Hebrew Bible and that Oded's archaeological research has done much to illuminate. The volume thus focuses on Judah in the eighth century BCE. It includes a wide and representative array of studies for this crucial period, introducing students to the diverse questions and methods that inform current archaeology and how they provide the necessary framework for conducting biblical research. With students and their instructors in mind, we opted to publish the volume in an open-access format.

We have taken our inspiration for this project from Oded, who has been a colleague for one editor and a teacher/mentor for the other. He was born in 1939 in what was then Palestine. As a member of Kibbutz Lahav in the Negev, he worked in the field and orchards. He graduated from Ohel-Shem Municipal High School in Ramat Gan before going on to study at the Absalom Institute in Tel Aviv, a school dedicated to the study of all physical and historical aspects of the land of Israel.

Oded eventually came to the US to continue his education, receiving a Bachelor in Hebrew Letters and a teaching certificate from the College of Jewish Studies in Detroit (1968); a BA in History and Anthropology from Wayne State University (1970); and an MA and PhD in Near Eastern Studies from the University of Michigan (1972 and 1979). Two years before finishing his PhD, he accepted an offer from Emory University in Atlanta and taught there until his retirement in 2018. He founded and chaired the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Languages and Literatures, which was later renamed "Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies," and he was an important member of the Tam Institute of Jewish Studies since its beginning.

Oded spent much of his time in the field, laboratory, and library. He took part in excavations at Tell Gezer (1971–1973), Tell Dan (1974), Ashkelon (1995),

Beth Shemesh (1997), has been a member of the Senior Staff of the Lahav Research Project (Tell Halif) since its inception in 1975, and has developed remote sensing technologies and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) with NASA. Spending much of his time in research and writing at the Albright Institute in Jerusalem, he is known to many from two books, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel* (1987, 2002, 2009) and *Daily Life in Biblical Times* (2003), which continue to be widely used in the classroom.

The land of Israel has been Oded's interest since his early days on the kibbutz, and throughout his career, he has worked to demonstrate the importance of material culture and daily life for the study of the Hebrew Bible. Treating all facets of the land at a pivotal moment in its history, we hope this volume will pay tribute to Oded's distinguished contributions.

We are beholden to J.W. Rice for capably seeing the project to completion, and to Alexandra Daley and Ebo Quainoo for help with the formatting and editing of this volume.

The conference and publication of this book has been generously underwritten by the Tam Institute of Jewish Studies at Emory University. Many thanks to the director, Eric Goldstein, and his staff.

Jacob L. Wright and Zev I. Farber

## Abbreviations

<i>ANET</i>	Pritchard, James B., ed. <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> . 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University, 1969.
<i>COS 1</i>	Hallo, William W., and K. Lawson Younger Jr., eds. <i>The Context of Scripture</i> . Vol. 1: <i>Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World</i> . Leiden: Brill, 2002.
<i>COS 2</i>	Hallo, William W., and K. Lawson Younger Jr., eds. <i>The Context of Scripture</i> . Vol. 2: <i>Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World</i> . Leiden: Brill, 2003.
<i>KAI</i>	Donner, Herbert, and Wolfgang Röllig. <i>Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften</i> . 2nd ed. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1966–1969.
<i>KRI V</i>	Kitchen, Kenneth A. <i>Ramesside Inscriptions: Historical and Biographical</i> . Vol. 5. Oxford: Blackwell, 1983.
<i>KTU</i>	Dietrich, Manfred, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín, eds. <i>Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit</i> . AOAT 24.1. Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1976. 2nd enlarged ed. of <i>KTU: The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani, and Other Places</i> . Edited by Manfred Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995.
<i>NEAEHL</i>	Stern, Ephraim, ed. <i>New Encyclopedia for Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land</i> . 5 vols. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993–2008.
<i>OEBA</i>	Master, Daniel M., ed. <i>The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Archaeology</i> . 2 vols. London: Oxford University, 2013.
<i>RIMA 2</i>	Grayson, A. K. <i>Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC (1114–859 BC)</i> . Vol. 2 of <i>The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Assyrian Periods</i> . Toronto: University of Toronto, 1991.
<i>RIMA 3</i>	Grayson, A. K., ed. <i>Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC II (858–745 BC)</i> . Vol. 3 of <i>The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Assyrian Periods</i> . Toronto: University of Toronto, 1996.
<i>RINAP 1</i>	Tadmor, H., and S. Yamada. <i>The Royal Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 BC), and Shalmaneser V (726–722 BC), Kings of Assyria</i> . RINAP 1. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011.
<i>RINAP 3/1</i>	Grayson, A. K., and J. Novotny. <i>The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, King of Assyria (704–681 BC), Part 1</i> . RINAP 3/1. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012.

AA	<i>American Antiquity</i>
AASOR	<i>Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
AB	Anchor Bible
ABS	Archaeology and Biblical Studies
ABD	Freedman, David Noel. <i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ADAJ	<i>Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan</i>
A.J.	Josephus, <i>Antiquitates judaicae</i>
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
ANEM	Ancient Near East Monographs
ADPV	Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BIFAO	<i>Bulletin de l'institut français d'archéologie orientale au Caire</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
BZAR	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
C. Ap.	Josephus, <i>Contra Apionem</i> .
CAH	The Cambridge Ancient History
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CdE	<i>Chronique d'Égypte</i>
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
Erlsr	<i>Eretz-Israel</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und literature des Alten und Neuen Testaments
Hist.	Herodotus, <i>Histories</i> .
HS	<i>Hebrew Studies</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCM	Monographs of the Hebrew Union College
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
JANER	<i>Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religion</i>
JEA	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hebrew Scriptures</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JPOS	<i>Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
LÄ	<i>Lexikon der Ägyptologie</i>
Monograph Series	Monograph Series of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University
NEA	<i>Near Eastern Archaeology</i>
OBO	<i>Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis</i>

<i>Od.</i>	Homer, <i>Odyssey</i>
<i>Or</i>	<i>Orientalia</i>
<i>PEFQS</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement</i>
RBS	Resources for Biblical Study
<i>RSO</i>	<i>Rivista degli studi orientali</i>
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBL SBS	Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
<i>SEL</i>	<i>Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici</i>
<i>Sem</i>	<i>Semitica</i>
SHCANE	Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
StudOr	Studia orientalia
<i>Theog.</i>	Hesiod, <i>Theogony</i>
<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WAW	Writings from the Ancient World
WO	Die Welt des Orients
<i>ZABR</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte</i>
<i>ZÄS</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die deutsche Palästina-Vereins</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>



## Introduction

*Jacob L. Wright*

*The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,  
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;  
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,  
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.*  
—Lord Byron, “The Destruction of Sennacherib”

As a student of biblical literature, I am interested in learning about who wrote the Bible, when, where, and why? Most scholars agree that the genesis of this corpus of writings was a protracted and complex process, one that was propelled by the conquests of imperial armies from Mesopotamia. The most impactful moment of military crisis dates to the decade of 597–587 BCE, when the Babylonians subjugated the kingdom of Judah and razed Jerusalem to the ground. This defeat marks a watershed in the making of the Bible. As a vanquished nation struggled to come to terms with the decree of history, some of its members were convinced that the keys to collective survival were to be found in a body of writings. Over the course of the next several centuries, a small corpus of texts would grow, take shape, and steadily begin to make itself felt in sundry communities.

But there would be no biblical texts to speak of were it not for the catastrophe that struck Judah’s northern neighbor some 130 years earlier. The kingdom of Israel was a powerful state, and it had long exerted its influence over Judah. However, its existence came to an end more than a century before the Babylonians conquered Judah. In the late eighth century, its kings provoked the ire of the Assyrian Empire, Babylon’s direct predecessor. Piece by piece, Assyria’s highly effective war machine dismembered the kingdom of Israel. In 722 BCE, after a lengthy siege, its capital finally capitulated.

The several centuries of this kingdom’s existence likely would have been long forgotten had it not been for Judah. A handful of texts from Israel continued to be read, copied, and embellished by scribes from the conquered kingdom of Israel. It is these literary antiquities from Judah’s defeated partner (and often competitor) that constitute the bedrock of the biblical tradition.

Assyria incorporated the conquered kingdom of Israel into its system of provinces. Meanwhile, Judah's kings seized the opportunity to become major players in the region, filling the vacuum that Israel's conquest left. Their ill-advised maneuverings raised eyebrows at the imperial court, and once again "the Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold." This time, though, it was not an utter loss. Sennacherib and his Assyrian armies lifted their siege of Jerusalem and left the kingdom of Judah intact. Even if the enemy returned home, the bout proved pivotal in Judah's history. In the years leading up to Sennacherib's military campaign, Hezekiah instituted preparatory measures that modernized, or at least thoroughly transformed, his kingdom. Few areas of life and society remained unaffected. Boosting the impact of these social changes was the devastation that the Assyrian armies wrought on the Judahite countryside, effectively reducing the kingdom to a city-state of Jerusalem and its environs.

To appreciate the pivotal bout between Sennacherib and Hezekiah, we have to begin with the story of Assyria's westward expansion in the reigns of Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE) and Shalmaneser III (859–824 BCE). As recounted in K. Lawson Younger's essay, the former undertook an excursion into the Levant probably around 870 BCE. But it was his son Shalmaneser III who established a new precedent by campaigning repeatedly (some nineteen times) beyond the traditional borders of Assyria's homeland. A period of decline followed Shalmaneser's reign (827–745 BCE), and it lasted until Tiglath-pileser III ascended the throne (745–727 BCE). Under the leadership of this impressive warrior, Assyria received tribute from Levantine states, including Israel (the "Northern Kingdom").

Later the king of Damascus formed a coalition with Israel, Gaza, Ashkelon, and the Arabs. Together they set their sights on the growing Arabian trade network, and these economic interests directly clashed with Assyria's. When the coalition attempted to force Judah to join, Judah called on Tiglath-pileser for help, paying a high fee for protection. As the Assyrian king punished Damascus, he annexed Israel's territories in the Galilee and the Gilead, reducing Israel to a rump state consisting of its capital Samaria. In the reign of Shalmaneser V (727–722 BCE), Israel's king Hoshea rebelled and appealed to Egypt for help. The rebel was incarcerated and deported. After a three-year siege, in 722 BCE, Israel's capital Samaria was conquered. A couple years later, it was reconquered by Sargon II (722–705 BCE), who made Samaria and its surroundings into an Assyrian province and subjugated much of the southern Levant (including Judah).

When Sargon unpredictably fell on the battlefield, the empire was riveted by major revolts in Babylonia and the Levant. The king of Babylon appears to have coordinated his resistance with Hezekiah in Judah. Against both, Sennacherib marched with formidable force, punishing both and establishing Assyrian hegemony for decades to come. In the reigns of his son Esarhaddon (680–669 BCE) and grandson Ashurbanipal (668–626), the Assyrian empire reached its zenith and no longer felt the need to conduct regular military campaigns in the Levant.



The Assyrian conquests were accompanied by the promotion of foreign trade. In her chapter, Sandra Blakely discusses this development from the perspective of Greece and the Aegean world. Sennacherib had opened the door to Aegean entrepreneurs, and they continued to benefit directly from Assyrian hegemony. From this point, we witness increased mercantile and mercenary Greek presence in the East. (Mercenaries were important bearers of cultural exchange, and Blakely surveys what we know about their activities in the East.) The Greek presence was, however, much more pronounced in areas far removed from Judah (such as Syria and Egypt). In Judah (and elsewhere), cultural goods of exchange were not only confined by and large to the elite, but they also appear disproportionately in ritual and feasting contexts, which are rich in symbolic communication. As Blakely points out, the seventh century witnessed an explosion of exchange between East and West, but this heyday would not have been possible without the late eighth century developments.

The focus of this volume is on Judah, and the chapters of part 1 set the scene by profiling the states that neighbored Judah. The most influential of Judah's neighbors was Israel, and in his chapter, Gilad Itach discerns three phases in this kingdom's evolution in the eighth century: (1) as one of the most powerful kingdoms in the Levant; (2) as a kingdom under Assyrian siege; and (3) as a province of deportees.

The reign of Jeroboam II brought Israel to its pinnacle of prominence, while boasting a size three times as large as Judah. It was home to several well-planned cities with fortifications, monumental public buildings, walls, water supply systems, and residential buildings. Some of the remarkable cities include its capital Samaria, the administrative center Shechem, and the impressive trade city of Megiddo. Besides urban areas, the kingdom had rural settlements, which bolstered the economy through the production of olive oil. As a stratified society, the traditional kinship-based social structures prevailed in the rural sector, while the nuclear family systems became the norm in urban centers. The cities also appear to have been much more ethnically heterogeneous than the rural sites.

During the 730s and 720s, Assyrian campaigns systematically destroyed almost every city, village, and farm in the kingdom. This destruction was meted out as punishment after Israel's king Pekah withheld tribute payments to Assyria. The kingdom of Israel finally ceased to exist in 721/0 when Sargon II conquered Samaria. In dismantling the state, the Assyrians adopted an aggressive deportation policy. Its purpose was to prevent revolts, increase the size of the army, and provide labor for construction projects (such as cities) and agricultural work. The empire annexed Israel's territories and made them a part of the Assyrian empire, appointing governors who were expected to guard Assyrian interests. These provinces became the site of resettlement for deportees from other regions.

The region of the Galilee was annexed to the Assyrian Empire by Tiglath-pileser III in 734–32 BCE, and Rami Arav takes us through the history of Bethsaida, an important site in the lower Golan where he has led excavations for many

years. Bethsaida began as an impressively planned capital for the kingdom of Geshur, and it ended in a dramatic conflagration at the hands of Assyrian soldiers. It is one of the best-preserved capital cities from the Iron Age, and as such, it offers a rare glimpse of urban life in the Levant during the eighth century. The terraced layout of the mound (unique to this site) witnesses to expert city-planning; most towns emerged as natural outgrowths from earlier, smaller settlements. If Arav is right to draw comparisons to the Roman Empire, the width of the road (suitable for carts and wagons) suggests that the region was pacified and enjoyed the rule of law in the years before its destruction. The city's crown jewel is its well-preserved gate. It illustrates, perhaps better than any other site in the Levant, how gates served as the center of political and religious life in Iron Age cities. Royal granaries, cultic paraphernalia, and seats for city elders have all been uncovered at there.

Philistia is an important region lying west of Judah along the southern Mediterranean coast. From the perspective of Philistine pottery, Seymour Gitin offers us an instructive look at changes the region underwent in the wake of Assyria's military campaigns. Gitin surveys the finds related to a wide array of vessel types (bowls, scoops, chalices, kraters, cooking pots, jar-kraters, storage jars, hole-mouth jars, amphora, jugs, and joggles). What he discovers by comparing Iron Age IIB (eighth century) and IIC (seventh century) assemblages are concrete expressions of the new Assyrian world order, with Philistia benefitting from commercial exchanges with the Phoenicians. The developments there contrast with what we witness in Judah, where the Assyrians destroyed most of the major cities and did little if anything to promote its economic recovery.

Bruce Routledge turns our attention across the Jordan, to the three kingdoms (Ammon, Moab, and Edom) that neighbored Judah to the east. These kingdoms fall into the category of Assyria's subjugated client states, but it was not until 734 BCE that they became a regular part of the Assyrian Empire with each state delivering tribute to Tiglath-pileser III. In contrast to Judah, the three Transjordanian kingdoms survived the end of the eighth century relatively unscathed and were not targeted during Sennacherib's momentous campaign. Even so, they operated on a world stage that Assyria shaped.

In the empire's penumbra, their kings could continue their rule and engage in large-scale building projects, especially in their capital cities. Small farmsteads and hamlets were founded to allow residents to live closer to their farms; this phenomenon, known as "settlement dispersal," intensifies during and immediately after the period of the Assyrian hegemony. Most towns were fortified with walls and gateways with houses laid out along the arc of the town wall. In other areas, clusters of buildings are organized around shared courtyards and irregular alleys. Textiles (with complex patterns) were produced for exchange as part of a cottage industry. Ritual activities included visits and pilgrimages to isolated cultic sites, setting up figurines and/or symbolic stones, sprinkling and

purification, the use of aromatics, and the presentation of offerings in miniature vessels.

For Egypt, Donald Redford draws a fascinating image of the country's political and cultural turmoil that undermined any aspirations it may have had on the world stage. Egypt had long been a place of refuge for those in the Levant. When the Assyrians appeared on the horizon, Judah and neighboring states in the Levant were forced to serve as a buffer to Egypt, now ruled by Libyan kings who were reluctant to assimilate to Egyptian ways. In the Hebrew Bible, we hear often of delegations from Judah pleading for Egyptian assistance. While those calls for help went mostly unheeded, Egypt still made itself felt in the southern Levant. That impact turns out to be more mercantile than military: As Egypt could no longer meet its own commercial demands, it came to depend more heavily on trade abroad. The eighth century was characterized by lethargy and disinterest in foreign involvement, and by the end of the century, the Delta and Middle Egypt had become a virtual political vacuum. The vacuum was eventually filled by the sudden rise of a new regime: Kush (Nubia). This new cast of rulers set their sights on the old imperial terrain of the New Kingdom. The most important figure is Taharqa, who came to the "help" of Hezekiah when the Assyrians invaded Judah. But Taharqa's imperial pretensions in the Levant went unrealized: The Assyrians drove him back to the Nile valley, where he focused his efforts on restoring the greatness that Egypt had remembered from the New Kingdom period. In the early seventh century, Egypt continued to meddle abroad until Assyria (under Esarhaddon) finally invaded the country and installed puppet kings and governors.

The chapters in part 2 of this volume focus on large-scale developments in Judah. Avraham Faust begins by offering a big-picture analysis of trends. Over the course of the eighth century, the kingdom of Judah underwent dramatic changes—in demographic growth, technological advances, increased international exchange, and economic disparity. Like its neighbors, a complex settlement hierarchy and stratification characterized Judah's society, with cities like Jerusalem at the top, administrative centers below it, followed by field towns, villages and hamlets, and finally the small farmsteads that dotted the countryside.

Judah had long lagged behind Israel's urban development, and the increased urbanization that we witness during this period was prompted by several factors: the expansion of the olive oil industry, the mass-production of pottery, and the development of a robust bureaucracy, as evidenced by the *LMLK* jar handles (discussed by Lipschits and Vaughn in this volume). While many flocked to urban centers, others moved to repopulate a countryside that had largely been abandoned after the Iron Age I. According to Faust, these demographic changes brought a shift from the extended family unit (*bet 'av*) to the nuclear family and the individual, and the rock-hewn family tombs that become popular at this time reflect an attempt to preserve extended familial ties.

Yuval Gadot and Efrat Bocher discuss the different styles of buildings in eighth-century Jerusalem and Judah, helping us understand what they tell us about

the people living during that period. Their contribution treats the Open-Courtyard Building, a two-winged house with an uncovered enclosure in between. By focusing on this edifice, Gadot and Bocher can demonstrate how the beginning of its use in and around Jerusalem coincides with increasing Assyrian control in the region. The floor plan differs from earlier building types, like the Four-Room House, which have more enclosed, private courtyards. The Open-Courtyard Buildings were likely administrative centers, with their accessible courtyards as public spaces.

Examining the various forms in which these edifices were built opens a window into eighth-century social and familial patterns. Instead of just copying the layout from the Assyrians, Judah's architects adapted it to geographical and topographical, as well as cultural expectations. The appearance of the Open-Courtyard Building in Jerusalem sheds light on the extent of Assyrian power and influence over the city, even if the Assyrians never fully conquered it. Understanding the architecture is important not just for an eighth-century Judahite context: Many of these buildings, such as one found in Mamilla (just west of Jerusalem's Old City), continued to be used in the Persian Period, and some at Khirbet Er-Ras even stayed functional into the late Roman and early Byzantine periods. Others, such as one on Jerusalem's Southeastern Ridge, were abandoned after the Babylonian destruction of 587 BCE.

Tell el-Hesi is a site from the region of Judah where three topographical regions of Judah come together: the sand dunes and loessal lowlands of the coastal plain, the rolling limestone hills of the Shephelah, and the arid environs of the Negev Desert. Jeffrey A. Blakely and James W. Hardin, who surveyed this site and have excavated another one nearby (Khirbet Summeily), demonstrate what we can learn from the Hesi region for the eighth century when we view it against the backdrop of 3,000 years of its history.

While Hesi, on the border between Judah and Philistia, has long been considered farmland, Blakely and Hardin note that no farmsteads or other signs of farming life have been found in the area. In reevaluating the evidence—in an exemplary historical-comparative fashion—they show that aside from the Roman and Byzantine periods, the region's climate and soil for the last 3,000 years could not support any long-term sedentary settlements. They then proceed to show how the site was likely a center of shepherding and pastoral lifestyle during the ninth and eighth centuries.

Support for this conclusion—an impressive display of data sets from fields such as geology, geography, and climatology—demonstrates the effectiveness and importance of cross-disciplinary studies when reconstructing the history of a region. In examining the available archaeological data in particular, the two archaeologists note that while charred seeds have been discovered in the region, they are not present at all sites, and no farming implements have been recovered despite sifting through all excavated soil. Rather than farming towns and villages, many sites in the area such as Tell el-Hesi appear to have been built as forts to

secure the border against Philistia. They served to protect what must have been an expansive area of pasturage for goats, sheep, and horses under the control of Judah's government.

Part 3 covers matters of material culture and daily life, one of the areas in which the volume's honoree, Oded Borowski, has made many landmark contributions. The shifting of archaeological focus from moments in (biblical) history to the daily lives of common people has been pivotal. Discussing the history of this breakthrough, Jennie Ebeling begins her chapter by noting how the first generations of archeologists approached the topic with assumptions about "the unchanging East," in which habits and practices have remained essentially the same across millennia. Ebeling then introduces a new way of integrating the archaeological study of ancient Near Eastern life with the ethnographic study of modern inhabitants of this region.

While ceramic pottery has been the focus of much attention (due to its diagnostic character that helps us date occupation layers), other objects of daily life are only beginning to receive the attention they deserve. The increasing academic importance of the domestic sphere has also allowed more opportunities to examine the role of women in ancient society. As a case study, Ebeling uses a house excavated at Tel Halif (where Oded Borowski has led excavations for many years). The destruction of at this site by the Assyrians in 701 BCE preserved many artefacts of daily life. Working through room-by-room reconstructions of a house excavated at the site demonstrates how different archaeological disciplines come together to offer a broad picture of ancient domestic life.

Cynthia Shafer-Elliott guides us through yet other aspects of everyday life in her chapter on food, cooking, and feasting in eighth-century Judah. Drawing from textual and archaeological evidence, Shafer-Elliott presents a picture of food practices that encompasses diet, food preparation, baking, cooking, and feasting.

In the late eighth century, the Judahite economy was stretched thin from paying annual tribute to the Assyrians. As the burden was felt across all sectors of society, meat became a rarity in the diets of common people (aside from feast times). In its place, grains and vegetables made up the bulk of the diet—in the form of breads, cereals, soups, and stews. Most people spent time in production work, either in food preparation or in industries requiring animals that could otherwise have been slaughtered for their meat.

In Ebeling's and Shafer-Elliott's contributions, we glean insights from "household archaeology," which looks at the material, social, and behavioral aspects of life in the ancient home. Turning from daily life to building practices, Assaf Avraham explores the different methods used to build the widely-discussed Four-Room house. This construction type, characteristic of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah during the Iron Age, varied in material according to the topography of the region: Stone was common in the hill country and mudbrick in the lowlands. Mudbrick or stone walls were built upon a stone foundation. Each material had

its own unique construction techniques to ensure stability and longevity. Mud-brick walls were built upon a few layers of stone to protect the lower areas from water, and then covered in plaster. Roofs were built in typical Levantine style, plastering over reeds and twigs laid over wooden beams.

Hayah Katz examines an important piece of what these conquerors left sealed within the rubble: the remains of ancient pottery. Pottery, a staple of everyday life in the ancient world, doesn't break down or decay over time like organic materials such as wood or papyrus and is thus critical evidence for archaeologists. Katz offers a peek into the ancient world through the different types of Levantine pottery, ranging from small bowls to massive storage jars.

During the eighth century, pottery as a whole shifted from individual production to an industrialized process. The different types of pottery thus became more standardized, with a lighter shade and more-systematic forms than those of previous periods. Katz follows her descriptions of such characteristics with lists of the sites tied to each pottery type, painting a broad picture of Judah's landscape and everyday life in its settlements.

Another important object from late eighth-century Judah are the *lmlk* stamps. These are impressions on over 2,000 jar handles that bear the Hebrew letters *lmlk* (pronounced "LeMelekh," with the meaning "belonging to the king"), often with an accompanying symbol and/or name. Understanding the dating and function of these handles is fundamental for any historical reconstruction of late eighth-century Judah. Until recently, the consensus was to date all these handles to the time of Hezekiah, as part of an administrative system put in place to prepare for an Assyrian invasion. But Oded Lipschits argues that the *lmlk* system began earlier than Hezekiah and that their variations correspond to different stages in their development.

Lipschits maintains that handles bearing the image of a four-winged scarab were replaced sometime around the death of Sargon II in 705 with the image of a two-winged sun disk. The shift from the scarab to the sun-disk corresponds to a shift in iconographic influence from Egyptian to Assyrian culture. Many of the seals were found at Tel Lachish, suggesting that Lachish was itself a distribution center before its destruction at the hands of Sennacherib in 701. Jars filled with agricultural goods would be sent to Lachish from other areas in the kingdom, identified on the seals as Hebron, Ziph, Socoh, and Mamshit. They would be sold for gold and silver, which then covered the cost of the annual tribute imposed by the Assyrians. Lipschits argues that after Lachish's destruction, the government in Jerusalem built a new facility in Ramat Raḥel, where the seals continued to be used into the early seventh century. He notes how the beginnings of the *lmlk* system are part of a larger pattern of Judah's administrative and economic transformation during the eighth century, which can be witnessed particularly in the standardization of weights and pottery manufacturing.

In contrast to Lipschits, Andrew G. Vaughn argues that the earlier consensus should be maintained: *all* the *lmlk* handles date to Hezekiah's reign, and more

precisely, to the period before the siege of Jerusalem when Hezekiah prepared for an Assyrian invasion. Vaughn criticizes the new position of Lipschits and others as one primarily from silence and assumption. Thus, Vaughn argues that all the *lmlk* handles discovered at Lachish show evidence of a late eighth-century origin. (This older consensus had been brought into question because of the excavation history at Lachish.) While Vaughn argues that the whole *lmlk* system begins and ends with Hezekiah, he and Lipschits agree that it testifies to a strong, centralized government in Judah at the end of the eighth century.

Part 4 of this book treats matters of religion and ritual. In discussing burial practices in eighth-century Judah, Elizabeth Bloch-Smith takes archaeological evidence and analyzes it in conjunction with biblical and anthropological research. Estimated population numbers for eighth-century Judah suggest the existence of large-scale communal burial sites that have yet to be discovered. From the graves we have been able to study, it seems that burial practices remained relatively standardized during the period. Various smaller-scale rock-cut tombs have been uncovered across the Judahite landscape, and in these tombs, interment appears to have been based on family ties, with items often left with the corpses.

Appealing to the anthropological research of Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner, Bloch-Smith suggests a tripartite progression through stages of death at work in the Judahite burial practice, with decomposition in a tomb a time of transition between departure and, in Hebrew idiom, “being gathered to one’s ancestors.” The ideal tomb reflects familial norms both relationally and materially, with the memory of one’s ancestors securing historical ties to the land, and biblical texts point to increasing veneration (or even divinization) of the dead.

Kuntillet ‘Ajrud is a site located in the Sinai Peninsula, on the road from Gaza to Eilat. It serves as an excellent, if also mysterious, window into eighth-century Judahite religion because of its short span of habitation. The site continues to be a hot topic of debate because a jar found there bears a drawing of human-animal hybrid figures, with a blessing inscribed next to it in the name of “YHWH and his Asherah.” The figures in the accompanying drawing are commonly interpreted as YHWH (and his Asherah). While much has been made of these finds in the forty years since its excavation, Brent Strawn and Joel LeMon offer a strong word of caution against drawing too many conclusions from a data set that is (and will likely continue to be) incomplete. One must necessarily turn to comparative approaches. Yet even then, as Strawn and LeMon stress, any reconstructions of a thought-world so far removed from our own are bound to be imprecise, and special care must be taken to avoid hasty speculation.

What Strawn and LeMon demonstrate in their chapter is exemplary method, detailing the procedural steps they have both developed over the past years in their innovative iconographic analyses. In treating the relationship between the depicted figures and the accompanying text in this important find, they draw important points for the interpretation of the biblical texts. Not least, they point



out that the worship of goddesses should not be surprising given that the Hebrew Bible presupposes it, even while censuring it as deviant.

One of the most remarkable items found in strata from eighth-century Judah are the numerous miniature statues, made of terracotta and depicting women holding their breasts or other items. These statues are conventionally called the Judahite/Judean Pillar Figurines or JPFs. An expert on these mysterious objects, Erin Darby offers a balanced discussion of the what, the who, and the why questions surrounding their conception, production, and proliferation. While similar figurines have been found across the ancient Near East, the Judahite variety has distinctive features. Darby argues that the figurines probably did not represent any fertility goddess of the West Semitic pantheon, as many claim, but likely rather mid-range deities involved in rituals of healing and protection for both men and women. It appears that even temple authorities possessed them and may have directed their ritual use among the broader populace.

Building upon the groundbreaking research of Darby and others, Kristine Henriksen Garroway situates the JPFs in relation to a larger discussion of enculturation—the act of passing on information to the next generation. The household encompasses the most basic socioeconomic unit of society. The degree to which children were considered members of the household was also contingent upon where they were in the process of being enculturated. Since children were the future of the household, enculturation was of incomparable importance. This could be achieved through written texts, but likely was more commonly done through cultural objects, such as the JPFs.

According to Garroway, the proliferation of JPFs was an attempt by the state to preserve its identity against the invasion of foreign cultures. These objects served as symbols and transmitters of culture, helping children to understand themselves as valuable members of the household and larger society. The same can be said for cultural memories and morals as inscribed in (proto-)biblical texts, which in their canonized form function as a pedagogical program for both younger and older members of the nation.

While taking a broad view of what we know about Israelite and Judahite religion from archaeology and diachronic studies of the biblical text, Zev Farber narrows in on what appear to have been core features of Judah's religion in this period. He argues that Judahites in the late eighth century were already YHWH-centric. This is clear from the percentage of Yahwistic theophoric names, from the biblical texts that likely date to this period, and from archaeological data. That said, the attitude towards YHWH differed from what we find in most biblical texts. YHWH was likely seen as a patron god (among other gods) who had a consort, Asherah.

Judah seems to have had an official priesthood by this period, of which women were not a part. The exact constitution of this priestly group, and its relationship to the Levites, the Aaronides, and the position of firstborn males was probably still fluid. The Judahites also made use of various forms of divination,



some of which would have been part of the priestly cult. In addition to YHWH worship at the Jerusalem temple, biblical and archaeological evidence points to local worship sites (mostly open areas and not temples) and home worship niches.

Holidays followed the moon cycle (full and new) and the agricultural cycle (spring and fall harvest holidays), with the weekly Sabbath not yet normative. A focus on purity, which becomes the cornerstone of much of the Priestly legislation, was practiced in this period, and was influenced by—and had influence on—the way houses were constructed. It was also likely during this period that the spring apotropaic sacrifice of a goat called the “pesah” began to be identified with the national myth of the exodus from Egypt, and that this story began to merge with another national myth, YHWH’s finding of his people in the wilderness. This merging of stories was part of the merging of the identities of Israel and Judah, after the conquest and collapse of the former polity (see contributions by Kratz and Fleming).

Part 5, the final section of this volume, examines scribal practices and (biblical) writings in late eighth-century Judah. This was a time of political and religious tumult, but it was also an age of literary floruit in scribal culture in the two kingdoms.

As discussed by the epigrapher Christopher Rollston, various archaeological finds (such as the Siloam inscription from Jerusalem) point to a strong, centralized scribal institution in use by the government of Judah. Some of the most important Old Hebrew inscriptions hail from the eighth century, including the Kuntillet Ajrud inscriptions mentioning “Yahweh and his Asherah,” the economic dockets from the Israelite capital of Samaria, the burial inscriptions from Khirbet el-Qom, the Siloam Tunnel Inscription dating to the time of Sennacherib’s siege, and the Royal Steward Inscription from Jerusalem. Rollston calls the script and orthography of these texts “very impressive,” with some of them employing complicated (Egyptian) Hieratic numerals.

Additional evidence for the erudition of the scribes is provided by cuneiform texts from Mesopotamia: Some of the events documented in these texts are also known from the Hebrew Bible, which reveals the familiarity of Hebrew scribes with other writing systems. This point bears directly on the historicity and reliability of putative archival materials in the biblical book of Kings.

Turning to examples of scribal productions, Shawn Zelig Aster keys in on how various biblical texts echo Assyrian imperial ideology. Because the power of the king was associated with the power of Assur (the head of the Assyrian pantheon), payment of tribute was an act of submission to not only the empire but to its god(s) as well. This realization caused an ideological crisis in Judah, according to Aster.

The death of Sargon II in 705 gave Judah an occasion to revolt, and Aster brings to bear biblical texts that support the material evidence for the rebellion (including the Siloam Tunnel, the Broad Wall in Jerusalem, and the distribution

of the LMLK jars). What is arguably more significant is how Judahite scribes turned a military conflict into a theological one, and as an expert on biblical and cuneiform literature, Aster reveals the biblical scribes' impressive literary and intellectual finesse.

In discussions of the Bible's formation, the late eighth century BCE has long been left in the shadows, with the destruction of Judah in the early sixth century looming large and serving as the point of departure for many recent reconstructions. But as Konrad Schmid argues, the beginnings of biblical literature must be viewed in relation to the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BCE. Schmid surveys a wide variety of biblical texts: the ancestral narratives from Genesis, the Moses-Exodus story, various legal traditions, stories from the book of Judges, prophetic writings, psalms, and wisdom literature. What he finds to be characteristic of these writings is the (relative) absence of the king. Thus, the ancestral stories of Genesis and the Moses-Exodus narrative focus on the people and have little or no place for the role of a native king. Schmid argues that the profile of these texts (with the people in the place of the king) is a direct result of the Assyrian conquest of Israel in 722 BCE.

The late eighth century is a time when we witness a profusion of Hebrew writings in the archeological record. The fall of the Northern Kingdom prompted an extensive political and theological reevaluation of the status quo, and these intellectual achievements paved the way for Judahite scribes to do the same after the fall of their kingdom in 587 BCE. Even if 722 BCE marks the point of departure for key biblical texts, it is the Babylonian conquest of Judah in 587 BCE that marks the terminus a quo for the shaping of these texts in their present (expanded) forms. Schmid bolsters his argument by taking on recent linguistic theories about the dating of "Classical Biblical Hebrew."

In his contribution, Reinhard Kratz explores the origins of the "pan-Israelite identity" that embraced the inhabitants of both the northern and southern kingdoms. The name "Israel" has two basic meanings in the Hebrew Bible: (1) the whole people of Israel (including Judah) as the people of YHWH; and (2) the political entity of the northern kingdom of Israel (Samaria) in contrast to the southern kingdom of Judah (Jerusalem). The latter meaning must be the original one, according to Kratz. The name was reinterpreted after the downfall of the northern monarchy in 722 BCE. At that time, "Israel" slips its political mooring as a reference to the Northern Kingdom and becomes a designation for the people of YHWH. The end of Israel as the monarchy thus became the beginning of Israel as a people that included communities from both the Northern Kingdom of Israel proper and the Southern Kingdom of Judah (as well as from the emerging diaspora).

Kratz argues that this shift of meaning has its origins in the prophetic literature of the late eighth century BCE. This literature is a remarkable phenomenon: Prophets usually did not write books. The point of departure for this achievement—and by extension the biblical tradition as a whole—was nothing less than

the prophets' pronouncement that "the end has come for my people Israel" (Amos 8:2). This prophetic discourse on the name "Israel" paved the way for the biblical narrative, the *historia sacra*, that reconstructs the history of Israel as YHWH's people. Finally, both prophetic literature and historical narrative served as the foundation for Mosaic law, which translates the prophetic standards of justice in terms of divine commandments.

Daniel Fleming offers a different theory for how the name "Israel" came to refer to inhabitants of both the Northern and Southern kingdoms. Discussing some of the same texts treated by Kratz, Fleming argues that the broader meaning of the name has its origins in the collective worship of Yahweh at Jerusalem. He traces the origins of this worship to the historical David, the head of Judah's royal dynasty. Against a rising consensus, Fleming argues that Israel and Judah were indeed united under David's rule and that after the split between North and South, David's grandson Rehoboam still claimed legitimate sovereignty over Israel. The name came to be used primarily by the Northern Kingdom, but it survived in Judah as the traditional designation for the assembly of worshippers in Jerusalem.

The present volume includes a survey of the scientific methods that contemporary archaeologists use to gain more information from excavations than was possible in the past. In the appendix, Yair Sapir and Shani Libi treat the range of the most current tests and methods, which include carbon dating, remote sensing, archaeomagnetism, geoarchaeology, archaeominerology, paleobotany, and zooarchaeology. Sapir and Libi explain the science behind these methods as well as their utility and what is learned from each, making the complex science accessible to nonexperts.

Many of the claims presented in this book are controversial and will provoke debate among the experts. Yet they all are presented in a way that allows non-experts and especially students to consider the evidence, bringing the newest techniques of archaeological research into conversation with the interpretation of the biblical texts that emerged from the dramatic events of the late eighth century.



## Part 1

### JUDAH'S NEIGHBORS NEAR AND FAR



# 1

## Assyria's Expansion West of the Euphrates (ca. 870–701 BCE)

*K. Lawson Younger Jr.*

### INTRODUCTION

This essay will offer an overview of Assyria's advance and interest in the Levant from the campaign of Aššurnāširpal II around 870 BCE until Sennacherib's invasion of Judah in 701 BCE. It starts with Aššurnāširpal II because he was the first Neo-Assyrian monarch to campaign west of the Euphrates. Other Assyrian kings followed after him with ever deepening penetrations into and subjugations of the Levant. The essay concludes with Sennacherib because through his campaign of 701 he completed the subjugation of the Levant to the Assyrian yoke. Thus he serves as an excellent terminus for this study (see table 1 below).

For over sixty years prior to 870, the kings of Assyria had conducted wars to restore the boundaries of the Assyrian kingdom to where they had been during the Middle Assyrian Period (1353–935 BCE).<sup>1</sup> This meant that they needed to concentrate primarily on the reconquest of the land east of the Euphrates river, that is the Jezirah.<sup>2</sup> This steppe region was Assyria's natural hinterland. It was crucial for Assyria's economic growth and development for two reasons. First, it was a major breadbasket that could supply food to Assyria's core. Second, it had major east-west and north-south trade routes that traversed it, routes to which Assyria craved access. Trade was one of the driving factors in all periods of Assyrian history.

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1. For an excellent survey of this period, see Liverani 2014, 347–63, 463–67. Assyrian history is typically divided into the following periods: Old Assyrian Period (1900?–1354); Middle Assyrian Period (1353–935); and Neo-Assyrian Period (934–609).

2. Jezirah is the Arabic word meaning “island,” since its location is between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

The Neo-Assyrian Period		
	Dates (BCE)	Length (Years)
<b>Period of Initial Recovery</b>	934–884	
Aššur-dan II	934–912	23
Adad-nērārī II	911–891	21
Tukulti-Ninurta II	890–884	7
<b>Early Imperial Period</b>	883–824	
Aššurnāširpal II	883–859	25
Shalmaneser III	859–824	35
<i>Revolt of Aššur-da''in-apla</i>	827–824	
<b>Period of Autonomous Rulers</b>	823–745	
Šamšī-Adad V	823–811	13
Adad-nērārī III	810–783	28
Shalmaneser IV	782–773	10
Aššur-dan III	772–755	18
Aššur-nērārī V	754–745	10
<b>Late Assyrian Empire</b> (Resurgence to Zenith)	745–627	
Tiglath-pileser III	745–727	18
Shalmaneser V	727–722	5
<i>Sargonids:</i>		
Sargon II	722–705	17
Sennacherib	705–681	24
Esarhaddon	680–669	12
Aššurbanipal ( <i>Zenith</i> )	668–626	42
<b>Decline and Fall</b>	626–609	
Aššur-etel-ilani	630?–627?	?
Sîn-šumu-lišir	623?	?
Sîn-šar-iškun	623?–612	?
Aššur-uballiṭ II	611–609	3

Table 1: The Neo-Assyrian Period. Author's own table.

One of the catalysts for Assyria's renewed militarism and expansion at the beginning of the first millennium was the result of the pressure created by the Aramean penetrations and invasions in the Jezirah at the end of the Middle Assyrian Period (Joannès 2004, 25–26). The years when the Euphrates was the frontier to the west had not been forgotten. Since the Assyrians considered the



Jezirah to be their land, they saw the Arameans as intruders, squatters on their territory. Thus the early Neo-Assyrian monarchs were heavily influenced by a royal ideology of divine authority, and especially a piety to the national deity Aššur, that manifested itself in a strong emphasis on the conquest of territory for this deity. Aššurnāširpal II (d. 859 BCE) was the last in a line of four monarchs who labored to achieve the goal of the reconquest of the Jezirah.<sup>3</sup> By the end of his reign, the Jezirah had become part of “Assyria proper” (Postgate 1992).

One means of ensuring the complete submission of their enemies was an “ideology of terror,”<sup>4</sup> both in reality and in their textual and visual propaganda. This meant the implementation of certain calculated atrocities (e.g., beheading, impalement, cutting off of extremities, blinding, etc.) in order to conduct psychological warfare and maintain subjugation. However, in their interest in maximal profit from the lands that they controlled or bordered, the Assyrians’ goal was *šulmu*, “a state of peace and order,” that eventually resulted in a type of *pax Assyriaca*.<sup>5</sup>

#### ASSYRIA’S FIRST EXPANSION INTO THE LEVANT (870–827 BCE)

The two Assyrian kings who accomplished Assyria’s initial expansion into the Levant were Aššurnāširpal II (883–859) and Shalmaneser III (859–824). Aššurnāširpal II campaigned once in the region; Shalmaneser nineteen times. Aššurnāširpal II’s foray west of the Euphrates, the first Neo-Assyrian campaign into the Levant, is not dated in his annals. However, since it must have occurred between 875–867 BCE, it is often rounded by scholars to 870 BCE. However, this was not the first Assyrian penetration into the Levant. Back in the Middle Assyrian Period, Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076) had a campaign to Mount Lebanon.<sup>6</sup> A little later, Aššur-bēl-kala (1073–1056) also conducted a *razzia* into the region.

Aššurnāširpal’s campaign was more like a “reconnaissance in force,” and on the whole, the expedition was peaceful (at least as the king’s “Annals” present it).<sup>7</sup> It began with a march to the Euphrates following the main route. After crossing the Euphrates, Aššurnāširpal received the impressive tribute of Sangara, the king of Neo-Hittite city-state of Karkamiš (Sangara is called “the king of the land of Hatti” and ruled roughly 870–848 BCE). While the Assyrian annals do not mention any fighting between the Assyrians and Karkamiš, four bronze bands from the Balawat gates give depictions along with epigraphs of Assyrian military action against Karkamiš. This demonstrates a phenomenon encountered often in

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3. The earlier three kings were Aššur-dan II (934–912), Adad-nērārī II (911–891), and Tukulti-Ninurta II (890–884). These kings comprise the initial phase of Neo-Assyrian history.

4. Oppenheim 1964, 120; Saggs 1963; Liverani 1979; Fuchs 2011; and Radner 2015.

5. Fales 2008; 2009; 2010; Younger 2015.

6. For discussion, see Younger 2017.

7. The campaign is found in *RIMA* 2:216–219, iii.56b–92a.

the Assyrian historical documentation: the complementary nature of the written and artistic records, with neither recording all the events of a king's reign.

From Karkamiš, Aššurnāširpal marched into the territory of another Neo-Hittite state of Patina, which offered no resistance and allowed safe passage through its territory. This granted Aššurnāširpal an opportunity to campaign still further south. He marched to Aribua, a fortress located on the Orontes River on Patina's southern border. From Aribua, he launched an attack on Luḫuti (an entity situated to the east) with the obvious objective of plunder, especially grain. According to his "Annals," this was the only military action taken on the campaign. Luḫuti is usually identified with Lu'aš (mentioned in the Old Aramaic inscription of Zak-kur) and with the second millennium polity of Nuḫašše.

Aššurnāširpal II concluded his campaign by marching to Lebanon (the term is used in its general sense). He probably crossed the Jebel Ansariyah through the Bdama Pass, and reached the Mediterranean near the modern city of Latakia. The result was the influx of tributes from many of the Phoenician city-states (including Tyre, Sidon, Byblos, and Arvad).<sup>8</sup> Although Israel and Aram-Damascus did not pay tribute at this time, there can be little doubt that they became acutely aware of the new Assyrian threat to their security.

As an inadvertent result, Aššurnāširpal's penetration west of the Euphrates probably helped Aḫuni, the ruler of Bīt-Adīni. By weakening the area west of the Euphrates (or at least undermining the status quo), the region was vulnerable to Aḫuni. From the inscriptions of Shalmaneser III, Aḫuni has holdings on both sides of the Euphrates, undoubtedly the result of his expansion after this campaign of Aššurnāširpal II.

Shalmaneser III was the son of Aššurnāširpal II. His political program was different and far more ambitious than his father's. Since the previous kings had successfully campaigned in a project of restoration *inside* of the perceived "traditional borders" of Assyria, Shalmaneser III was able to campaign *outside* these borders in an attempt to expand Assyrian power (Liverani 2004, 215). No previous Assyrian king campaigned beyond the "traditional borders" like Shalmaneser III. His campaigns outside the borders met with great success, not only in the Levant but in many other directions as well.

Shalmaneser's inscriptions present him as facing three significant polities that acted as corks or bottle-stoppers to his westward expansion: (1) Bīt-Adīni (the major power on the western Euphrates), (2) Hamath (the major power in North and Central Syria), and (3) Aram-Damascus (the major power in South Syria). With the removal of one cork, Shalmaneser faced another, and then another. He was successful, after much effort, in removing the first two, in which he faced coalitions that put significant numbers in the field of battle against him. But in the case of the third, as much as he declared victories over Damascus in his

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8. For a discussion of this campaign, see Younger 2016, 324–29.

inscriptions, Shalmaneser III ultimately failed. In the latter part of his reign, Damascus recovered all of its territory, and even created its own, short-lived, empire—that of Hazael, “the son of a nobody.”<sup>9</sup>

In the case of the first bottle-stopper, Shalmaneser III faced the tribal confederation of Bīt-Adīni which was led by the energetic ruler Aḥuni. This polity's most important city was Til-Barsib, located at a strategic point on the Euphrates River. Til-Barsib (modern Tell Aḥmar)—also known as Masuwari in hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions—had been the capital of a Neo-Hittite city-state until sometime in the last years of Aššurnāṣirpal II, when Bīt-Adīni seized it and made it one of its most important possessions.<sup>10</sup>

From 858 to 856, Shalmaneser campaigned against Bīt-Adīni and Aḥuni. He implemented a special dual strategy. While maintaining pressure upon the capital city of Til-Barsib through siege, he cut off and isolated Bīt-Adīni, capturing its most important towns on both sides of the Euphrates and defeating all the polities west of that city that might have given support to Aḥuni. Thus, Til-Barsib was captured and occupied by the Assyrians in 856. Aḥuni himself was finally defeated and captured in 855.

The second cork (the land of Hamath) was popped by means of a war of attrition that eventually brought it to the point of capitulation (Younger 2007). The king of Hamath,<sup>11</sup> Urhulina (called Irḫulēni in the Assyrian texts), formed a powerful Levantine coalition comprised of over fifteen entities, though typically described in the Assyrian inscriptions as “twelve.” Two of the leading coalition partners aiding Hamath were Aram-Damascus and Israel. This coalition successfully resisted Assyrian attacks in 853, 849, 848, and 845. At the battle of Qarqar in 853, Aram-Damascus was led by Hadad-ezer (Adad-idri), while the Israelites were led by Ahab (*COS* 2, 263–64).

Although Shalmaneser III claimed a smashing victory over the coalition in this initial battle, scholars agree that this was, in fact, an Assyrian defeat. The campaigns of 849, 848, and 845 failed to undo the coalition, although each time Hamath lost bits and pieces of its territory. Aram-Damascus and Israel were crucial members of the coalition. So with the usurpation of Hazael in Damascus and Jehu in Israel, the coalition collapsed. This collapse, combined with the gnawing away of his land, convinced Urhulina to make peace with Assyria sometime before 841, since in that year Shalmaneser had clear passage through Urhulina's territory to attack Damascus.

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9. For the inscriptions of Shalmaneser III, see RIMA 3:5–179 and Yamada 2000.

10. Fales (2014, 36) argues that it is crucial not to conflate the history of Til-Barsib/Masuwari with Bīt-Adīni. Other than the mention of Til-Barsib in Shalmaneser III's early campaigns, there is no other evidence that Bīt-Adīni ever controlled the city. Nowhere are Bīt-Adīni and Masuwari equated with one another. For further discussion, see Younger 2016, 141–46, 322–29.

11. For a history of this polity, see Younger 2016, 429–503.

The third cork for Shalmaneser III was Aram-Damascus. Hadad-ezer (Adad-idri) had been a crucial member of the coalition, but his dynasty had been usurped by Hazael (Younger 2005). Shalmaneser attempted to implement the same strategy against Damascus that he had used against Bīt-Adīni: cut off and isolate it while maintaining pressure on the city. However, unlike Til-Barsib, which fell to the Assyrian pressure, Damascus was able to hold out. His first campaign against Hazael occurred in 841 (see *COS* 2, 266–67). According to Shalmaneser’s inscriptions, he thoroughly defeated Hazael in an open-field battle and then besieged him in Damascus.

During this campaign, Shalmaneser secured the submission of Israel through the tribute payment of Jehu who had seized the Israelite throne from the Omride dynasty.<sup>12</sup> This tribute payment is visualized on the famous Black Obelisk (*COS*, 2, 269), where Jehu is portrayed as bowing in front of Shalmaneser with the Israelite tribute being conveyed behind Jehu.<sup>13</sup> Shalmaneser campaigned against Hazael again in 838–837 when he plundered a number of cities south of Damascus. A black and white marble cylinder from the temple of the Aramean moon deity Sahar was taken back to the city of Assur (*COS* 2, 271).

Even so, Shalmaneser III ultimately failed in uncorking Hazael and Aram-Damascus. His campaigns did not bring Damascus under the Assyrian heel. In the latter part of Shalmaneser III’s reign and the first part of his son’s reign (Šamšī-Adad V), there was a revolt and civil war (827–821). Damascus under Hazael seems to have quickly recovered from Shalmaneser’s campaigns. Soon after, Hazael conquered much territory, north and south of Aram-Damascus, creating his own empire (Younger 2016, 595–636). Hazael died around 803 BCE.

#### THE PERIOD OF AUTONOMOUS RULERS (827–745 BCE)

Starting with the revolt at the end of Shalmaneser III’s reign, there was a period of decline in Assyrian power. This was the result of both internal and external factors. The internal issue was systemic. As the empire expanded, Shalmaneser III delegated power to various members of the Assyrian cabinet (e.g., the *turtānu*, “commander-in-chief”) and the provincial governors. Invested with power, some of these officials pursued their own independent political ambitions. Therefore, this period has been coined the “period of local autonomy” (Brinkman 1968, 218–19). Externally, on Assyria’s northern border, the rise of the kingdom of Urartu/Biainili was a major factor in the decline in Assyrian power.<sup>14</sup> A little over

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12. See Lamb 2007; Hasegawa 2012.

13. See Uehlinger 2007, 201–10; Younger 2007, 268–69.

14. Urartu, also known in native inscriptions as Biainili, was a major power ca. 830–708 BCE. For further study, see the essays in Kroll, Gruber, Hellwag, Roaf, and Zimansky 2012.

eighty years later, the advent of Tiglath-pileser III (745 BCE) brought an end to this period. He curbed the power of the officials and defeated Urartu/Biainili.

The initial decline occurred with the revolt and continued throughout the reign of Šamši-Adad V (823–811). It was followed by a partial recovery under Adad-nērārī III (810–783). However, even during his reign there were indications that the monarchy was not as powerful (e.g., the power of his mother, Sammu-ramat,<sup>15</sup> as well as that of his turtānu, Šamši-ilu). But then under Adad-nērārī's three sons (Shalmaneser IV, Aššur-dan III, and Aššur-nērārī V), there was again a general weakness in Assyrian royal power. During this period in the Levant, there was a renewed independence among the Aramean and Neo-Hittite polities. In many respects, this was a period in which these polities flourished.

When Adad-nērārī III began his program to restore Assyrian sovereignty in the northern Levant, he faced significant opposition. He campaigned in the Levant four times (805, 804, 803, and 796). In 805, a coalition of “eight kings” led by Attār-šumkī I of Arpad (Bīt-Agūsi) fought Adad-nērārī III and his mother Sammu-ramat in an open-field battle at Paqarḥubuni (modern Gaziantep) (see *COS* 2, 273). This battle was clearly not decisive because during the next two years, the Assyrians campaigned in north Syria: at the city of Ḥazāzu (modern Tall ‘Azāz) in 804 and at Ba‘alu (site unknown) in 803. Even so, with these limited successes, Bīt-Agūsi/Arpad was by no means done as a political and military force.

The year 796 was a watershed in the history of the Levant. Mari’/Bar-Hadad, the son of Hazael, had organized an alliance of sixteen polities that joined in a siege of Zakkur, the king of Hamath and Lu‘aš (Luḡath), at the city of Ḥaḍrak/Ḥatarikka.<sup>16</sup> Zakkur was a usurper who had seized power sometime around 803. Adad-nērārī III came to Zakkur's aid. After relieving the siege of Ḥaḍrak/Ḥatarikka, he inflicted a major defeat on Damascus at the site of Manšūāte (probably located in the Beqa‘ Valley). It was such a disastrous outcome that Mari’/Bar-Hadad was compelled to open the gates of the city of Damascus to the Assyrian conqueror and render up massive tribute from the treasures of the capital itself (see *COS* 2, 276). This was truly an unprecedented humiliation.

Thus, from roughly 803 to 796, Damascus had gone from the most powerful kingdom in the Levant under Hazael to a much-weakened kingdom. It now faced potential losses in its southern territories, namely to a renewed Israel under Joash/Jehoash. Even though Israel (specifically Joash) had also paid tribute to Adad-nērārī III in 796 (*COS* 2, 276), it had not suffered the heavy losses in men and material in battle against the Assyrians or paid the massive tribute that Damascus had.

15. The basis for the legendary Semiramis. See *COS* 2, 277 and Bernbeck 2008.

16. For a discussion of the date of the siege of Ḥaḍrak, see Younger 2016, 485–89.

Yet Assyria's interests and agenda in the region meant that Zakkur, who had been a loyal vassal, would be handled about a decade later in a rather ruthless fashion. This is seen in the Antakya Stela (probably dating to 786, or slightly later).<sup>17</sup> This source records the reassignment of the border between Arpad and Hamath by Adad-nērārī III and his new *turtānu*, Šamši-ilu, in favor of Arpad and at the expense of Zakkur. The Assyrians' goal was to drive a wedge between Arpad and Hamath, as well as to maintain a level of desired cooperation with Arpad/Bīt-Agūsi due to that kingdom's strategic position at the node of trade routes of northern Syria and Anatolia.

A few words should be said about one of the most important of the autonomous officials of this period, especially because of his Levantine involvements. Šamši-ilu was the commander-in-chief (*turtānu*) during the reigns of Adad-nērārī III, Shalmaneser IV, Aššur-dan III, and Aššur-nērārī V. His own contemporary inscriptions attribute to him accomplishments which would normally belong to the king alone, thereby indicating the relative weakness of Assyrian royal power at this time. He served as eponym for the years 780, 770, and 752. It is now clear that Šamši-ilu became the *turtānu* in 786 and served in this office until, at the latest, 746 BCE.<sup>18</sup> It is doubtful that he should be equated with "the one who grasps a scepter from the house of pleasure (*bēt 'eden*)" (Amos 1:5), since the Hebrew phrase, *bēt 'eden*, should not be connected with the long-extinct polity of Bīt-Adīni (Younger 2016, 370–75).

In 773 BCE, according to an inscription of Shalmaneser IV (782–773) and the Assyrian Eponym Chronicle, Šamši-ilu campaigned against Ḥaḍyān II (Ḥadiānu) of Damascus. Perhaps connected with or the result of Šamši-ilu's action, Israel experienced some political expansion at the cost of Damascus during the reign of Jeroboam II (first half of the eighth century BCE). Whether there was an agreement between Jeroboam II and Šamši-ilu is not clear, though some have speculated that there may have been (Lipiński 2000, 312–13). In any case, the Assyrian incursions weakened Damascus, making the Israelite move northward easier (Kuan 2001). In 772, Šamši-ilu led a campaign against the city of Ḥaḍrak/Ḥatarikka. Further campaigns to this same place were required in 765 and 755.

Šamši-ilu continued in his office throughout the reigns of the next two Assyrian monarchs, Aššur-dan III (772–755) and Aššur-nērārī V (754–745). The former was perhaps the weakest during this period. The latter led an Assyrian campaign against Arpad in 754, which resulted in a subordination treaty between

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17. COS 2, 272. Fuchs (2008, 131–35) argues that Šamši-ilu was not appointed *turtānu* before 787/786 so the stela would date after this since it mentions Šamši-ilu.

18. For Šamši-ilu, see Fuchs 2008; Younger 2016, 359–66.

Aššur-nērārī V and Mati'-'El, king of Arpad. However, recent study has demonstrated that in the next year (753), Aššur-nērārī V was defeated in a battle by Sarduri II, king of Urartu/Biainili.

#### ASSYRIA'S SECOND EXPANSION LEADING TO ITS ZENITH (745–626 BCE)

This defeat in battle, coupled with internal problems, resulted in a revolt in the Assyrian capital city of Kalḫu in 746. The revolt brought to the throne Tiglath-pileser III (745–727).<sup>19</sup> With his accession, Assyria experienced a resurgence that culminated in the Late Assyrian Empire's peak of power (705–630). For four years in a row (743–740), Tiglath-pileser conducted campaigns against Mati'-'El, king of Arpad/Bīt-Agūsi. In 743, he engaged a significant anti-Assyrian coalition which included Urartu (led by Sarduri II) and a number of north Syrian polities. Tiglath-pileser's surprise attack routed the coalition armies. However, it took him three more years to settle accounts with Mati'-'El. In 740, Tiglath-pileser III finally succeeded in conquering the city of Arpad.

Nothing is known about the fate of Mati'-'El, except that in 2 Kgs 19:13 (// Isa 37:13) the Assyrian chief cupbearer (*rab šaqē*) before the wall of Jerusalem rhetorically queries "where is the king of Arpad?" (implying a gruesome fate). Arpad became an Assyrian province. This was a policy, introduced by Tiglath-pileser III, which had tremendous implications for the Levant, namely the complete loss of independence. At the end of this campaign, many in the region paid tribute.

Even so, resistance continued. In 738, the Assyrian king had to suppress a revolt led by Tutamuwa of Patina/'Umq/Unqi, whose capital was Kinalua (Tell Tayinat). Tiglath-pileser put down this revolt and Patina/Unqi became another Assyrian province.

Among those who had joined this revolt (*COS* 2, 285) was a leader named Azriyau (the "–*yau*" element in the name is the Yahwistic theophoric). The identity of this person is still uncertain, though perhaps he was a ruler based in the city of Ḥadrak/Ḥatarikka. Excavations at Tell Afis demonstrate the construction of a massive defensive wall, which the excavators date to the time Tiglath-pileser III or Sargon II (Soldi 2009, 104). Unfortunately, this entire episode remains an enigma. What is clear is that after this campaign, Ḥatarikka was made an Assyrian province, along with other entities that had joined the revolt. All of them experienced bidirectional deportations that displaced thousands all over the empire. States further south in the Levant paid tribute to Tiglath-pileser III, including Aram-Damascus and Israel (*COS* 2, 287).

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19. For Tiglath-pileser III's inscriptions, see RINAP 1.



During the next three years while the Assyrian king conducted campaigns elsewhere, an anti-Assyrian coalition took shape under the leadership of Rezin/Raḏyān, king of Damascus (2 Kgs 15:37; 16:5, 7; Isa 7:1, 5, 8–9; 8:6). It included Damascus, Tyre, Israel, Gaza, Ashkelon, and the Arabs. These entities had interest in the economic benefits of the growing Arabian trade network. But so did Assyria.

However, Ahaz, king of Judah, refused to join this coalition. This led to a war in which Damascus and Israel (led by Pekah) attacked Judah with the objective of unseating Ahaz from the throne (this event is called by biblical scholars “the Syro-Ephraimite War,” despite the confusion that such a designation causes). Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-pileser III and paid tribute to him. (As far as is known, this is the first tribute that a Judahite king paid to Assyria.)

Since Egypt could have lent military aid to the coalition, Tiglath-pileser III conducted a swift campaign through Philistia to the Egyptian border in 734, thereby eliminating Egyptian assistance. Tiglath-pileser’s campaigns of 733 and 732 were directed primarily against Damascus, since Rezin was the ringleader of the coalition. In 733, he routed the army of Rezin/Raḏyān near a river. Then Tiglath-pileser besieged Damascus. The (live) impaling of numerous high officials did not bring about the capitulation of the city. Realizing that they could not succeed in taking the city in that year, the Assyrians wasted much of the surrounding territory including Rezin’s birthplace.

Thus, while Damascus underwent this siege, a two-pronged attack was launched by the Assyrians on Israel in the Galilee and Gilead regions (2 Kgs 15:29; 1 Chr 5:26). Both areas were annexed and became part of the Assyrian provincial system. Hoshea usurped the throne of Israel, which by now had been reduced to the city of Samaria and its territory. No Assyrian sources for the year 732 survived. However, it is clear that Damascus was captured, with its inhabitants being deported and Rezin executed (2 Kgs 16:9). This was the end of an independent Aram-Damascus, and the city became an Assyrian provincial capital.

When Shalmaneser V (727–722) succeeded his father, Tiglath-pileser III, Hoshea, the king of Israel, continued to make tribute payments (2 Kgs 17:4). But then Hoshea sent messengers to So, king of Egypt (his identity is debated, perhaps Osorkon IV), and rebelled against Shalmaneser V. Hoshea was arrested and taken prisoner to Assyria at the very beginning of the siege of Samaria. The Israelite king probably came forth to plead for forgiveness from Shalmaneser, hoping to be reinstated (which occasionally the kings of Assyria did). But in this case, he was sadly mistaken. After a three-year siege, Shalmaneser V conquered Samaria in 722 BCE.

A few years later (720 BCE), Sargon II recaptured the city after its brief rebellion in connection with Yau-bi’di of Hamath. There is much uncertainty



surrounding the accession of Sargon II (722–705).<sup>20</sup> While it seems that Shalmaneser V died of natural causes in 722, the ensuing internal struggles for the throne point to a less than legitimate power seizure by Sargon (Younger 1999, 468; Melville 2016, 56–61).

With these internal struggles, Sargon was unable to conduct a foreign campaign until his second year (720) when he attempted the recovery of Babylonia. (Babylon had been lost at Sargon's accession when Marduk-apla-iddina II [the biblical Merodach-baladan] seized the throne.) Although Sargon claimed victory at the battle of Der, it seems that the battle was a strategic loss since Marduk-apla-iddina ruled unchallenged until 710.

Yau-bi'di (also called Ilu-bi'di) had seized control of Hamath. In 720, likely encouraged by the battle of Der, this ruler organized a coalition against Sargon. It included the states of Arpad, Šimirra, Damascus, Hatarikka, and Samaria (Samaria is always listed last). Sargon defeated this coalition at Qarqar, where Shalmaneser III had fought a western alliance 133 years earlier. (Yau-bi'di's public flaying, while he was still alive, is depicted in realistic detail on one of Sargon's reliefs.) Soon after this battle, Sargon recaptured Samaria and it became an Assyrian province.<sup>21</sup>

After the reconquest of Samaria, Sargon captured Gibbethon and Ekron, and defeated an Egyptian army, destroying the Egyptian border city of Raphia (deporting 9,033 captives). He also reconquered Gaza (capturing its king Ḥanunu and deporting him). Judah submitted.

In 716/715 BCE, Sargon was again in the southern Levant, namely Philistia (Younger 2002, 312–13). This campaign was more commercial than military, and Šilkanni (Osorkon IV), the king of Egypt, sent Sargon twelve magnificent horses as a gift. Isa 19:23 may refer to this expedition.

In 712/711, the Philistine city of Ashdod rebelled, removing its pro-Assyrian king and replacing him with a commoner named Yamani. Sargon dispatched his *turtānu*, who besieged and conquered Ashdod, Gath and Ashdod-Yam. Isaiah 20:1 refers to this campaign.<sup>22</sup> Although Yamani escaped to Egypt, a new inscription records his delivery into Assyrian hands (*COS* 2, 299–300).

In 706, Sargon completed his new capital, Dūr-Šarruken ("Fort Sargon," modern Khorsabad). An Assyrian letter records that Israelite deportees were involved in the city's construction. Only a year later in 705, Sargon was unexpectedly killed on the battlefield in Anatolia, and his body was not recovered. Sargon

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20. While Sargon declares himself in one inscription to be "the son of Tiglath-pileser" and there is a letter that seems to identify Tiglath-pileser III as "your (Sargon's) father," there is otherwise a total lack of recognition of this filiation in his inscriptions.

21. There are different views about the fall of Samaria (see Younger 1999; 2002).

22. While Sargon is explicitly mentioned only once in the Hebrew Bible (Isa 20:1), his impact is reflected in numerous passages throughout the first part of the book of Isaiah, as well as in 2 Kgs 17:1–6, 24, 29–31 and 18:9–12.

was the first and only Assyrian king killed on the battlefield (Melville 2016, 187–92).

Sennacherib (705–681 BCE) succeeded his father to the throne (Frahm 2002). The way his father died prevented the traditional royal burial that was so important for the Assyrian kings. Therefore, upon his accession, which was anything but normal, Sennacherib moved the capital to Nineveh; he was motivated, at least in part, by the fear that Sargon’s ghost might still be present at Dūr-Šar-ruken.

While Sennacherib inherited a vast empire from his father, Sargon’s death precipitated significant revolts, particularly in Babylonia and the Levant. It took Sennacherib until 700 BCE to put down these revolts. The bulk of his attention was given to Babylonia where Marduk-apla-iddina II (the same enemy faced by Sargon) led the resistance. Known as Merodach-baladan in 2 Kgs 20:12–15,<sup>23</sup> this ruler sent envoys to Hezekiah, possibly to coordinate the resistance to Assyria.

Throughout 704–702, Sennacherib campaigned to crush the rebellion in the south. The campaign began with the conquest of the city of Cutha. This was followed by the defeat of Marduk-apla-iddina and his Aramean, Elamite, and Arabian allies at Kish, though Marduk-apla-iddina escaped (see *COS* 2, 300–302). Cutha’s deportation, which followed this initial success, as well as other mass deportations from Babylonia, is likely referred to in 2 Kgs 17:24, 30 (Younger 2004).

In 701, Sennacherib campaigned against the rebellious states in the west. This campaign (labelled in his inscriptions as his “third campaign”) is Sennacherib’s best known and most discussed military operation. The reason is twofold: it is the most detailed description of an Assyrian campaign to the Levant in the cuneiform sources; and it is the most well-attested event in the Bible, famous for Sennacherib’s threatened attack on Jerusalem.<sup>24</sup>

The campaign is attested in Sennacherib’s annals,<sup>25</sup> in the Bull inscriptions (composite Bull 2/3 and Bull 4), and possibly in the so-called “Azekah” Inscription (*COS* 2, 304–5)—though there is debate whether this text belongs to Sennacherib or to Sargon II. In addition, there are Assyrian reliefs from the South-West Palace at Nineveh that illustrate the capture of the Judahite city of Lachish, clearly identified by an epigraph (Russell 1999, 287–91). The biblical texts that refer to the campaign are: 2 Kgs 18:13–19:36 (usually divided into an A source:

23. This passage is not in chronological order, but has a literary arrangement.

24. Noting some of the differences between Sennacherib’s account of his third campaign and the biblical materials, several scholars have suggested that Sennacherib undertook a second campaign against Judah after 689; but there is simply no real evidence for this idea (Cogan 2001).

25. There are seven textual exemplars, the earliest being the Rassam Cylinder, dated to 700 BCE; see RINAP 3/1, 55–69; *COS* 2, 302–3.

2 Kgs 18:13–16; and a B source: 2 Kgs 18:17–19:37); Isa 36:1–37:37; and 2 Chr 32:1–23. There are also allusions to the campaign (e.g., throughout Isa 1–35 and in Mic 1). Moreover, there are Greek accounts in Herodotus (*Hist.* 2.141) and Josephus (*A.J.* 9.283–287), quoting Menander. The campaign also left much evidence in the archaeological record, most notably at sites like Lachish (destruction layer in Level III and evidence of a siege ramp, see Ussishkin 2004; 2014), Beth-Shemesh, and Timnah.

Hezekiah appears to have been preparing for the revolt: rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, strengthening and reorganizing his military (2 Chr 32:5–6), building storehouses for food and stalls for animals (vv. 28–29), and constructing the Siloam tunnel (*COS* 2, 145–46) to transport water from the Gihon spring to inside the city walls (2 Kgs 20:20; 2 Chr 32:30). The *lmlk* jar handles appear to date to the reign of Hezekiah and indicate his preparations for the invasion.

Both the biblical and Assyrian accounts of this campaign have sophisticated literary, ideological, and religious features, complicating the historical reconstruction of the campaign (Younger 2003). While both follow an overall chronology, neither account follows a strict chronological order (some events are clearly out of order). In the Assyrian narration, the presentation starts with the easiest victories and culminates with the most difficult, demonstrating the Assyrian king's invincibility.

The biblical text gives a summary (2 Kgs 18:13–16) followed by a backtrack and overlap narrative (2 Kgs 18:17–19:37) that gives a detailed narration of the Assyrian king's actions, hubris, and Yahweh's intervention. Sennacherib's name is possibly employed in a word-play in 2 Kgs 19:16–17, 24 (= Isa 37:17–18, 25) with the Hebrew roots for "shame" (*hrp*) and "destroy" (*hrb*) (Garsiel 1991, 46). Neither account is free from the biases imposed by its own ideological agenda, but together they can produce a reasonable reconstruction (Gallagher 1999; Younger 2003; Cogan 2014).

The campaign can be divided into two phases: the Phoenician phase and the Southern Levantine phase. In the first phase, Lulli, king of Sidon, being overwhelmed with fear, fled from Sennacherib's force to Cyprus; Tuba'alu was installed in his place; and eight kings of the region submitted with payment of their tribute. In the second phase, the Assyrian army captured some of the cities of Ashkelon; Šidqa', its king, was captured and deported along with his family; and Šarru-lū-dāri was installed in his place. The citizens of Ekron, who had handed over their king Paḏī (a pro-Assyrian monarch) to Hezekiah, petitioned Egypt and Nubia for aid, but Sennacherib defeated this coalition at the battle of Eltekeh. Ekron was captured and its citizens tortured. The Assyrian attack on the land of Judah is the last episode of the campaign. Forty-six Judahite cities were conquered (including Lachish), and Jerusalem was placed under siege. Although failing to take the city, the Assyrians forced Hezekiah to release Paḏī, who was reinstalled at Ekron. Hezekiah was required to pay a heavy tribute to the Assyrian king.

With this campaign, Sennacherib crushed the revolt in the Levant. For the remainder of his rule, which lasted to 681, the Assyrian army did not need to visit this region. Babylonia demanded much of his attention, as did his building projects (especially in Nineveh, his new capital). After 689, there were no major foreign threats. However, the domestic situation apparently deteriorated because of a struggle for the succession (Melville 1999, 19–22). In 683, Sennacherib chose to designate a younger son—perhaps even his youngest son—as crown prince: Esarhaddon, a child of his wife Naqi’a. But a conspiracy developed, and in 681 Sennacherib was assassinated by his son, Urdu-Mullissu, and his accomplices, who may have stabbed him to death between the bull colossi of a temple at Nineveh. The biblical accounts (2 Kgs 19:37; Isa 37:38; 2 Chr 32:31) link Sennacherib’s violent death—allegedly accomplished in the temple of Nisroch (*nsrk*, that is, Nusku or Ninurta?)—with his campaign against Judah. They also mention another son, Sharezer, as being involved. The murderers fled, seeking refuge in the kingdom of Urartu as Esarhaddon ascended the throne.

## POSTSCRIPT

In a daring march, Esarhaddon (680–669) led his troops down mountain passes in mid-winter to take his brothers’ troops by surprise and secure the throne. He and his son, Aššurbanipal (668–626), oversaw further conquests that brought the Assyrian empire to its zenith.<sup>26</sup> Overall, the Levant was under Assyrian domination and so both kings’ major campaigns were in other regions of the empire’s borders. (Manasseh, king of Judah, is mentioned in Esarhaddon’s inscriptions.) With the death of Aššurbanipal, the empire entered into a rapid period of decline, meeting its final demise in the reigns of Šîn-šar-iškun (623?–612) and Aššur-uballiṭ II (611–609).

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26. Esarhaddon and Aššurbanipal are mentioned in Ezra (4:2; 9–10).

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## 2

# Images, Merchants, and Mercenaries: Aegeans and Southern Judah in the Eighth Century BCE

*Sandra Blakely*

### INTRODUCTION: UZZIAH AND THE OLYMPIADS

In the forty-fifth year of Uzziah's rule of Judah, the best athletes of Greek settlements around the Mediterranean trekked across the waves to Elis to compete in the first Olympiad. So claimed the Byzantine scholar George Syncellus, writing some 16 centuries after these events (*Canon Chronicus Genearchum*, 197). The Olympiads were one of the thousands of historical moments he sought to bring into chronological relationship in order to demonstrate the cumulative progress of the various Mediterranean civilizations—Greek and Hebrew, Roman and Syriac—which culminated in the Christian empire of Byzantium.

Syncellus linked Uzziah to the Olympiads for purely chronological reasons: he implied neither contact nor cause. Their juxtaposition, however, highlights the distance between Judah and the Aegean in the mid-eighth century: a desert kingdom and its dynastic ruler, and independent Greek poleis characterized by geographic distance, mutual competition and the ongoing invention of the city-state.

Josephus, in the late first century CE, emphasized the mutual incompatibility of these two groups, and attributed it to the maritime nature of the Greeks as much as the cultural isolationism of the Jews. Greek settlements were never far from the shore; sea travel meant that Greeks met Egyptians and Phoenicians in the context of trade, Medes and Persians through robbery and foreign wars, and Thracians and Scythians when they traveled to the edges of their territory (*C. Ap.* 1.60–68). Josephus seems here to ventriloquize the Greek conception of the sea as simultaneously the locus of cultural corruption and the highway to economic prosperity, and maritime skill as the defining element of Greek culture.

Claims of an absolute separation between Greek and Jew have held little sway, however, in the long academic investigation of the two cultures which gave

the western tradition the canonical texts of Homer and the Bible. Scholarship devoted to parallels, analogies and patterns of influence in law, myth, civic structures, iconographies and ceramics has flourished since the nineteenth century, not infrequently informed by a generalized “orientalism” which informed ancient authors as well. The most robust evidence comes from periods long before or immediately after Uzziah’s eighth century context.

Models for trade, conquest and invasion have linked the fall of the Late Bronze Age Aegean palaces to the cultural genesis of the Philistines. Early Iron age exchanges were enabled by Phoenician intermediaries, whose travels linked the Levant with Northern Aegean, the Greek mainland, Crete, Sicily and Spain. And evidence in both Greece and the Levant for interactions between the two cultures rises precipitously after 701.

In the East, Sennacherib’s conquest opened the door to increased mercantile and mercenary Greek presence, legible in ceramics at coastal sites such as Ashkelon. In Greece, the Geometric period yields to the Orientalizing with the onset of the seventh century, as the aesthetic influences which had trickled in prior to that time found wide expression in the ceramics which themselves became objects of long distance trade. The arenas for these interactions, moreover, are geographically as well as chronologically removed from southern Judah, with the bulk of archaeological evidence and textual tradition coming from Syria in the north, Egypt in the south, or the offshore kingdoms of Cyprus. The desert king, it seems, would have little first-hand knowledge of the Aegean athletes who were his contemporaries, though rulers before and after him, and contemporaries in other regions, knew them as traders, mercenaries and settlers.

Viewed in this light, Southern Judah in the second half of the eighth century seems anomalous in terms of its Aegean connections from the broader picture of the Levantine coast. This kind of distinction invites investigation: it has been attributed to scholarly cultures, archaeological accident, the biases of textual sources or extraordinary historical conditions (Waldbaum 1997). The crafted items which moved between Greece and the Levant in this period suggest that these exchanges were characterized by mediation, mercantilism and mobility, and that these patterns were more advantageous for Hellenic interests in the region than the colonial models which proved productive in the Black Sea, Ionia and the West.

The southern exchanges highlight myths of heroic mercenaries, the productivity of ancient imprecision in ethnic designations, and ancient narratives which praise a cultural isolationism which counters current scholarly emphases on trade, connectivity and networks. I offer here a discussion of some of the images, artifacts and myths which cast light on these exchanges as a tribute to my colleague Oded Borowski, who in his scholarship, teaching, and friendship has been a continuing source of inspiration to me.

IMAGES OF THE EAST: ICONOGRAPHY AND IMPORTS IN  
EIGHTH-CENTURY GREECE

Two images—a lion and a goddess—offer iconographic pathways into the Levantine presence in eighth century Greece. The images have Near Eastern roots; debate has centered on whether they represent Bronze Age memories or fresh cultural input from eighth century merchants and artisans. Exchange between the Aegean and the Levant flourished in the Middle and Late Bronze Age, from 2000–1150 BCE. Raw materials, finely worked goods, and intellectual stowaways in the form of granulation, niello, glassmaking and divine iconographies arrived in Crete; leather, bronze weapons, and silver and gold vessels moved east to Mari from Minoan workshops (Betancourt 2010; 1998). Aegean style wall paintings were commissioned for Tell el Dab’a in the sixteenth century BCE, Rekhmire’s tomb in the early Eighteenth Dynasty, and Tel Kabri in the Galilee coastal plain, bringing the international elite of the Late Bronze age onto the shores of the Galilee (Bietak 2000).

The creators of these paintings have been seen as historical analogues for the mythic Kothar-wa-Hasis who arrived from Caphtor or Crete in order to build a palace for Baal. His myths have roots in the Middle Bronze Age, recorded in Ugaritic mythological poems of 1400–1350 (Morris 1999, 73–101). The international reach of the Minoan palaces was taken up by their Mycenaean conquerors; their fall, in turn, was consigned to myth and memory most famously in the epic poems attributed to Homer and the eighth century BCE.

Some time around 750 BCE, an elite Athenian family interred one of its own with a gold diadem worthy of Pandora herself, and of the long tradition of Aegean-Levantine exchange (Ohly 1953, 9; 19; see fig. 1).

Lionesses attack grazing deer on the 3 cm wide band: two ambush their prey from behind, while a third makes a frontal assault on its victim. A vertical border in the center of the diadem suggests it was made by impressing the gold on a mold with vertical sides, very likely one used for making metal ornaments for wooden boxes. Diadems are known in Greek contexts from the Bronze Age onward, as signs of royalty, athletic triumph, or as gifts to the dead (Stevenson 1995). The thinness of this band has prompted suggestions that it was created exclusively for funerary use.

The material as well as the imagery of this diadem suggest a journey into Greece from the east. Gold and bronze had nearly vanished in the period between 1025–950 BCE but reemerged in the eighth century BCE (Coldstream 2003a, xxiv). More than fifty gold diadems have now been found from this period. While made in Greece, their decoration points to the infusion of motifs from the east, suggesting either immigrant craftsman, imported matrices, or Greek artisans who trained overseas. The choice of animals, their organization in a file and the depiction of successive actions reflect Near Eastern aesthetic conceptions.



**Fig. 1:** Gold Band, NAM Athens, A 726, 37 cm x 3 cm. Source: DEA/G. Dagli Orti (De Agostini Collection)/Getty Images.

The motif of a lion taking down its prey or a combatant is widespread in the Levant, with roots into third millennium Mesopotamia and an appearance on Greek soil in Minoan and Mycenaean sealing rings, weapons, ship's prows, and monuments (Thomas 2004). The lions on this frieze may thus evoke Bronze Age memory, Homeric similes, or contemporary Near Eastern iconography. The latter seems most likely. First-hand familiarity with lions is particularly unlikely, as faunal evidence suggests that the animals were almost completely extinct in Greece by the eighth century BCE. Both files of deer and attacking lions figure in contemporary Greek vase painting of the eighth century BCE: their longevity suggests the lasting effect of oriental objects on the course of Greek visual arts. The deer which graze in a file across the vase of the Dipylon workshop have a home

in the orient, in the work of Phoenician and Syrian ivory carvers of the ninth and eighth centuries found in Samaria, Arslan-Tash, Assur and Nimrud (see fig. 2).

The diadem's depiction of not just figures, but the interaction among them, is a step toward the visual depiction of narrative which takes shape in the scenes of battle, mourning and shipwreck on geometric vases. Whether the gold bands or the ceramics showed the oriental influence first is a matter of debate (Carter 1972, 33; 39; 43). The scenes on geometric ceramics are at once Homeric and self-reflective, aligning the dead with the heroic past and the aristocratic present.

Contemporary regard for the diadem's frieze may be detected in another text with Near Eastern roots. The eighth century BCE poet Hesiod describes the creation of the first woman, Pandora, as the revenge of an angry god on an unsuspecting human race (*Theog.* 578–584). Hephaistos creates her diadem as the finishing touch for the “beautiful evil” who exemplifies the disjuncture between content and form. The god decorates the band with animals which seem to live and to speak:



**Fig. 2:** *Decorative Plaque: Browsing Stag*, Phoenician, Iraq, Nimrud, ninth–eighth century BCE, ivory, overall: 4.5 x 8.9 cm (1.75 x 3.5 in). Source: The Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund 1968.49. © The Cleveland Museum of Art.

And around her head she placed a golden headband,  
 Which the much-renowned Lame One made himself...  
 On this were contrived many designs, highly wrought,  
 A wonder to see, all the terrible monsters the land and the sea nourish;  
 He put many of these into it, wondrous, similar to living animals  
 Endowed with speech, and gracefulness breathed upon them all.  
 (*Theog.* 578–584)



**Fig. 3:** Ivory statuette from Dipylon necropolis, Athens, Greece, eighth century BCE.  
 Source: DEA/G. Nimatalla (De Agostini collection)/Getty Images.

The crown is described as a “*thauma*” or “wonder,” a term that emphasizes the viewers’ inability to understand what they see. Gazing at a *thauma* takes the viewer into a world full of creatures not usually accessible to the human eye (Papalexandrou 2010). In Hesiod’s description, the new visual vocabulary from the East—the fluid, interactive forms of the Kerameikos diadem—become analogous to the magical animation of Zeus’ own metallurgist. The newly deceased woman who wore this Orientalizing diadem for her interment added the aesthetic impact of *thauma* to the theater of eighth century burials.

Five very different crowned females went into the grave some thirty years later, in an exceptionally rich burial near the Dipylon gate of the Kerameikos cemetery (Lapatin 2001, 18, 44–45). These are ivory statuettes, 24 in tall (see fig. 3); four of them are very well preserved, while one is known only from a fragment of the left arm and leg. They were not free-standing figurines: iron pins through their bases suggest a function as handles, furniture ornament, or attachments to larger vessels.

The women are slender, with triangular torsos, small waists, and the proportions appropriate to contemporary vase paintings. The warm tones of the ivory would have suggested the fair skin tones associated with women on fifth-century vases. The ivory women stand upright, legs pressed together, arms straight at their sides: the forward gaze of their large

eyes, worked directly into the ivory, duplicates the rigid frontality of the bodies. Their hair hangs in neat vertical rows down their backs, its texture suggested by criss-cross patterns. Each of them wears a polos, a pillbox-style hat: some show signs of incisions around the neck which suggest that they were originally interred with a necklace of some sort. Apart from hat and jewelry, these little embodiments of ideal femininity are nude, a striking exception to the Greek ideals of the ensuing eras for the women of elite families.

The figures seem Greek in their style and manufacture. The proportions and clear articulation of body parts echo the local Geometric canon, and are paralleled on contemporary Attic bronzes and vases. Iron rivets, and the use of a maeander to decorate one of the poloi, signal adaptation to local taste and production by a Greek craftsman. The figures are carved whole, possibly from a single tusk. Two of them have separately carved ears, which were dowelled onto their heads. This technique of joining was known in the Near East, but not used at this small scale. The choice suggests a concern among Greek craftsmen to conserve the costly imported material.

The material, the polos, and the nudity of these figurines, however, reflect Near Eastern origins and elite cultural value. Ivory was imported to Greece from the Near East in the Bronze Age, when it provided the materials for furniture inlays, carved boxes, and sword hilts (Hughes-Brock 1992). It reappears ca. 850 BCE, in Attic burials and votives in the Idaian cave on Crete. The prophets Amos (3:15, 6:4) and Ezekiel (27:6) railed against the excesses of those who used ivory furniture and lived in ivory houses; in Athens, the prestige of these objects would have been increased through the distance it traveled and its relative rarity (Winter 1976; Nijboer 2013). It is clear that the family who buried this woman was eager, at the point of burial, to announce their own international connectivity.

Levantine analogies for the ivory females have been recovered in ivory, metal and terracotta forms. Naked women worked in ivory, possibly intended as mirror handles, were recovered from ninth- and eighth-century BCE contexts in Nimrud (see fig. 4). They duplicate the pose and iconography of the Dipylon figures, and even show analogous indications of necklaces. Two-dimensional representations of this figure decorate metallic horse trappings, shields, bronze bowls, jewelry and ivories found in Greek sanctuaries, imported from Syria, Phoenicia, and Cyprus. The least expensive and most numerous articulations of a standing naked female, however, are terracotta, in both the Greek west and in every major excavation in Palestine from the Middle Bronze Age (2000–1500) to the Early Iron II 900–600.

The figure type enters the Greek world along with the coroplastic techniques which were transmitted to the Greeks first on the Syro-Phoenician coast, then in Cyprus, and eventually as far west as Italy (Ammerman 1991). These are elegant, jewelry-wearing, forward-facing females, with slender waists, elaborate hair and exaggerated, naked pudenda (Riis 1948; see fig. 5). The figures appear chiefly in





**Fig 4:** Woman with a Crown.  
Ivory Statuette from Kalakh  
(Nimrud). Ivory, H13 cm, tenth  
century BC. British Museum,  
London, UK. Leemage  
(Universal Images Group) /  
Getty Images.

sanctuaries devoted to great local goddesses, including the Artemision of Ephesos, the Heraion of Samos, and the sanctuary of Hera Limenia at Perachora.

The same plaques have been identified as the origin for one of the most contested elements of religion in Southern Judah, the small, free-standing, pillar figurines whose arms cradle their pronounced breasts (see fig. 5). These share with their northern counterparts a plurality of potential divine names: Anat, Astarte, Ashera (Hadley 2000, 63–65). In contrast to their northern counterparts, they seem to be clothed. Their low cost, find places, and great abundance has suggested a role in folk religion, though these interpretations are highly contested. What is clear is the rejection with which she was met by the religious authorities:

So then, tear down their altars, break their sacred stone pillars in pieces, cut down the symbols of their goddess Asherah, and burn their idols. (Deut 7:5)

Tear down their altars and smash their sacred stone pillars to pieces. Burn their symbols of the goddess Asherah and chop down their idols, so that they will never again be worshipped at those places. (Deut 12:3)

Darby has demonstrated that it is the goddess worked in silver, ivory and precious materials whom the prophets reject: when made in clay, she was used for healing rituals (Darby 2014). An identification with Asher-ah, however, was an opportunity to reject her as a foreigner, part of the religion of Jezebel and an embodiment of the edges of Israelite identity.

Asherah seems to have had deep roots within Judah's own traditions. A ninth to eighth century inscription from Kuntillet 'Ajrud names Asherah as the consort of Jahweh; an inscription from Khirbet el-Qom of the mid-eighth century BCE refers to Yahweh and his Asherah (Day 1986). An identification as a foreigner would demand an argument, and the highly mobile, broadly celebrated goddess





**Fig. 5:** “Astarte” figurines, Judah, seventh–sixth century BCE. H 12.5–17.2 cm. W 6.3–11 cm. Extended loan from the Reifenberg Family, Haifa. Collection of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Collection of the Israel Antiquities Authority. Photo © The Israel Museum, by Meidad Suchowolski.

supported this (Wilson 2012). A position at the edges of cultures is one of the most substantial commonalities between her presence in Greek and Judahite contexts. What the prophets argued, the Greeks would see, in the imported material and frontal nudity of the Dipylon ivories and their parallels. In the Greek world, however, that border crossing constitutes a source of value, complemented by other imported materials as a gift to the best among the dead.

#### EAST OF EUBOIA: GREEKS, POTS, AND LEGENDS IN THE EIGHTH CENTURY

The appearance of these images in the Greek world was contemporary with the establishment of Greek colonies from the Black Sea to Libya to Italy. These ventures summoned a range of myths to ensure their success: these claimed divine authority for the colony, and communicated to the Greeks, no matter where they lived, a shared heritage of gods and narratives. The myths include the *nostoi*, “homecomings” of the Greek warriors returning from Troy; the Ionian migration of the eleventh century; the trails of the Argonauts into the Black Sea; and the divinely sanctioned oikists who claimed Apollo as their guide.

All of these enable claims to territorial rights through semi-divine genealogies, heroic burials, gifts and brides exchanged between local kings and legendary

travelers, and the ritual authority enabled by Apollo. These wove a web of cultural imagery with practical political usefulness which linked Greeks to Greeks, and created a middle ground between Greeks and foreigners. The reliance on this cultural imaginarium grew in strength with geographic distance: the more distant from the Greek mainland, the more elaborate the web of gods, myths and shared symbols (Malkin 2004; Hodos 2006).

The legends are notably absent, however, in Palestine and southern Judah, though there is no absence of Greek imports (Waldbaum 1994). These are ceramic only, rather than the luxury goods which moved from east to west. Scholarly debates have focused on the distribution and quantity of the finds, their chronology, initiative in manufacture and transportation, appropriateness as an index of resident Greek merchants, settlers or mercenaries, and adoption by Levantine populations.

The materials are found in sites from Cilicia and Syria to Ashkelon and Tel Dor. The total number of Greek sherds in most of the sites is very small: Wenning proposes an average of forty sherds per site, compared to the thousands of non-Greek sherds (Wenning 1991). A hundred-year gap distinguishes high from low chronologies proposed for these vases, as Late Protogeometric pottery dated to the tenth century in Greece, to the eleventh in the Levant (Fantalkin 2001, Coldstream 2003b).

Initiative for these exchanges has been assigned to Euboians, Phoenicians and Cypriots: the role of each of these groups remains under debate. Both the design and the fabric of the vases suggest Euboian manufacture. The Euboian skyphos, painted with pendent semicircle design, is the dominant form for Greek imported pottery in the ninth and eighth century Levant (see fig. 6). The concentration of Levantine imports at Lefkandi, evidence for Euboian primacy in overseas ventures to the far West, and a local receptiveness to Near Eastern traditions, reflected in Hesiod's *Theogony*, further recommend an active Euboian role.

The richest finds of these vessels in the east come from Cyprus, particularly the port of Amathus on the south coast. Debates on whether Euboian or Phoenician ships carried the wares have yielded, in some degree, to a view of Euboians and Phoenicians as two maritime peoples, both impelled by the limited resources of their territory to undertake overseas commerce and colonization (Coldstream 2008; Lemos 2002, 228; Papadopoulos 1997).

Colonial, mercantile and mercenary models have been proposed as the historical reality behind these ceramics. All three have been brought to Al Mina in Syria. Sir Leonard Woolley, its first excavator, came to the site seeking the Bronze Age port through which Minoans conducted their exchanges with the palatial cultures of the hinterland. The site exceeds the norm of ceramic evidence; as Woolley assumed there was no local appetite for imported Greek goods, these were taken as evidence for resident Greeks (Graham 1986; Boardman 1990). Boardman and



**Fig. 6:** Euboian Skyphos, Geometric period, first half of eighth century BCE. H 8.6 cm. The Cesnola Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 74.51.589.

Woolley added to the ceramics the legendary account of Amphilochus who wandered south from Pamphylia with the Greek seer Mopsos and founded a city named Posidoneia (Scheer 1993, 153–73, 222–71).

The legend (later assigned to Tell Sukas), the ceramics, and evidence that imports increased at Al Mina when they declined along the rest of the coast were taken together to identify Al Mina as a leader in Greek-Levantine interactions. The data have proven insufficient, however, to support a residential model. There are no houses, tombs, or Greek inscriptions, and the ceramic types are limited to drinking ware. Absent from the ceramics are the domestic vessels, lamps, storage and cooking vessels associated with settlements. The quantity of Greek vessels found at Tyre suggest the potential for local Phoenicians to have used and valued these Greek vessels, which they include among their gifts to the dead (Coldstream and Bikai 1988, 38). While Al Mina seems an exceptional center for Greek commerce, it is not a colony in the traditional sense.

A new analysis of Al Mina's material, combined with a new survey of Greek ceramics in the hinterland, offers a more nuanced model of the site as a port of trade and revises the hypothesis of its singularity. Luke identifies Al Mina as a port controlled by a hinterland power whose interests it serves—one of Polanyi's types for ports of trade (Luke 2003). Around 738 BCE, the neo-Aramaean kingdom of Unqi established control over Al Mina, and exchanges began to take on

more regular form. This complements the model of Al Mina's Greeks as the protégés of inland powers who used them to break the Phoenician monopoly on trade with the west (Helm 1980, 91).

The pattern of a seaport funneling elite imported drinking vessels into the hinterland can be traced in ports and centers further south, where Greek ceramics are deposited in temples, palaces, public buildings and elite burials—locations of carefully constructed socially competitive display. The predominance of fine drinking vessels suggests a market oriented toward elite consumers who took up the habits of feasting in the Greek fashion (Kearsley 1999; Luke 1994). Large Middle Geometric kraters found in Tyre, Samaria, Hamat and Amathus indicate the extent to which forms and iconography were adapted to local tastes, even adding an image of the tree of life (Catling and Lemos 1990, 25–31).

Aegean-styled feasts, however, drew the ire of the prophets no less than did the hint of an exotic Asherah. Amos, the prophet of Judah under Uzziah, writes:

I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall come to an end, says the Lord. (Amos 3:15)

Wo to those who lie upon bed of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches ... who drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the finest oils. (Amos 6:12)

The gatherings served by these couches are the *Marzeah*, a cultural practice with roots in fourteenth century BCE Ugarit and a duration through the sixth century BCE (Nijboer 2013). Ugaritic, Elephantine, Phoenician, Nabataean and Palmyrene texts refer to the practice and identify the gods they honored, including Hurrian Ishtar and Anat. The cultural boundaries they crossed included, ultimately, those between the Levant and the Greeks.

Striking analogies in both gear and cultural practice link Cretan *syssition* and Greek *symposion* to their eastern counterparts, including a focus on drinking, the celebration of warrior virtues, the exclusion of women and a restriction to the upper classes. The inlaid ivory couches which Amos uses to embody the *marzeah* have analogy in the Greek *kline* which is fundamental to the iconography of Greek drinking parties. These are considered an oriental import to the west; in the east, archaeological confirmation has come in the form of ivory plaques excavated at Samaria, Salamis, Nimrud, and Ugarit which would have turned wooden furniture into ivory beds. The themes on these plaques include rebirth, fertility and eternal life, appropriate for the life-giving side of Astarte and Asherah. Feasting 'à la grecque' was thus pursued with gear as well as customs which were as much at home in the east as on Aegean shores: common to both contexts was the exchange

of gifts, the use of imported luxury goods, and stories which celebrated warrior virtues (Carter 1997).

A third category of overseas Aegean—the mercenary soldier—has also been proposed as a cultural intermediary between Greece and the Near East in the eighth century (Dezsö-Vér 2013, 330). The Greeks who were engaged with commerce in the northern Levantine coast in the ninth and eighth centuries were operating in a context of constantly shifting coalitions. The establishment of Assyrian control extended not only to the Mediterranean coast, but the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and Arabia, Anatolia, the *Via Maris* and all the way to the Far East along the Silk Route.

Within these regions, foreigners could trade only under Assyrian supervision and strict rules. Not all subjects were willing: while Tiglath-pileser III achieved direct rule over Northern Syria and Phoenicia between 740–740, Assyrian records mention Ionian Greeks who challenged Assyrian control on the sea and in the ports. A letter dated 738–732 from Qurdi-Assur-lamur, an Assyrian governor, to Tiglath-pileser III reports that Ionians were attacking the Levantine towns of Sam-simuruna and Harisu from the sea.

Analogous upsets are recorded on the walls of the capital of Sargon II, showing that the attacks continued (Lanfranchi 2000; Dezsö 2013). Sargon’s annals describe his victory over the Ionians who live in the midst of the sea, who “since long in the past used to kill the inhabitants of the city of Tyra and the land of Que (northern Syria) and interrupt commercial traffic” (Annals lines 117–1179; Luraghi 2006, 31 and n. 46). Other texts refer to Sargon catching these people like fish. The references to these men in Assyrian accounts, though variable, suggest that they are not members of the Cilician, North Syrian or Phoenician states; they are mobile groups, and not aligned to political units (Kearsley 1999, 121–22).

The piratical activities of these Greeks are a reminder of the thin line between trade and piracy in the ancient world: the same people could fall on both sides of the divide. Thucydides notes that in ancient times there was no offense in asking a traveler if he was a pirate (1.5.1–2). Pirates shared with Homeric princes skills in raiding and armed conflict, and Odysseus himself claims that he conducted raids on Egypt (*Od.* 14.199–359; Emanuel 2012). The pattern of the displaced Phoenicians who turn from trade to piracy is a typical one (Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.163–7).

This blend is in evidence at Lefkandi and Eretria, where burials celebrate the combination of martial skill and merchant enterprise (Popham 1994; Bérard 1970, 70). The prince in the central building of Lefkandi, cremated and encased in a bronze cauldron worthy of Homer, had an iron sword wrapped around the vessel that held his ashes, while imports in faience, Phoenician seals, and an engraved bronze bowl reflect his international reach.

These Euboians may have been among those who resisted the Assyrians: the Assyrian term “Ionian” was not geographically specific, and could be used of anyone claiming to be Greek (Brinkman 1989). The Greek traders in Northern Syria,

and the Greek pirates who attack Cilicia and Phoenicia, are likely the same, part of what Luraghi has characterized as an enduring nexus of trade, piracy and mercenary service in the story of the Mediterranean (Luraghi 2000, 386–88).

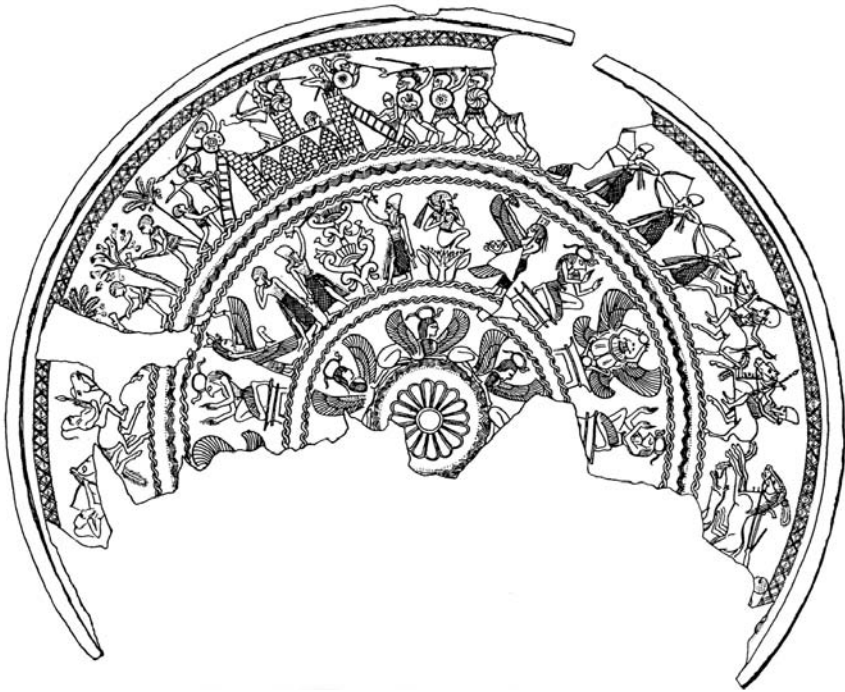
These figures may also be the predecessors of the mercenaries known from seventh and sixth century sources. That pirates could become mercenaries is suggested in Herodotus's account of Psammetichus who, driven from power into the marshes, inquired of the oracle at Buto what he should do. The oracle said he would have vengeance when he saw men of bronze coming from the sea. When Ionians and Carians, "voyaging for plunder," put in at the coast, Psammetichus greeted them as the fulfillment of the oracle, and offered great rewards for their aid. With their help, he deposed the kings who had overthrown him (2.152).

An inscription on a statue dedicated by a mercenary named Pedon near Priene suggests the extent to which pay, not merely friendship, motivated these men: "Pedon dedicated me, the son of Amphinneus, having brought me from Egypt: to him the Egyptian king Psammetichus gave as a reward of valor a golden bracelet and a city, on account of his virtue" (Moyer 2011, 57). Other evidence for Ionians in Egyptian service include the armor dedicated by the Pharaoh Necho at Branchidae, suggesting his thanks to Apollo and the Ionians who fought alongside him in 608 (Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.159; cf. Jer 46:9).

The Greek lyric poet Alkaios describes his brother Antimenidas serving as a mercenary for the Babylonians (Fantalkin and Lytle 2016). Sennacherib lists Yadnaanean sailors alongside the Tyrians and Sidonians he captured in his 701 campaign; if he followed Assyrian practice, and incorporated them into his own ranks, these Greeks may have eventually fought for Sennacherib himself (Helms 1980, 147). Locations for these groups have been identified at Tel Kabri, Mesad Hashavyahu, and fortresses in southern Palestine, including Ziklag, Timnah, and Arad; evidence for Aegean mercenaries at the royal court of Judah dates as early as the ninth century BCE (Niemeier 1994; Naveh 1962; Kestemont 1985, 143).

Material evidence in the form of bronze horse trappings, helmets, shields and Phoenician bowls support the arguments for mercenaries in the eighth century. A bronze horse frontlet found at the sanctuary of Hera on Samos and a blinker from the sanctuary of Apollo at Eretria both bear inscriptions identifying them as part of the booty taken by King Hazael, king of Damascus in 842, from Unqi. A second blinker in stratified context affirms its deposition with a *terminus ante quem* of the late eighth century. They are analogous in style to four blinkers and one frontlet from Samos: the Samos frontlet is decorated with four naked standing females.

The route from Damascus to the Greek sanctuaries was most likely initiated by Tiglath-pileser's conquest of the city in 732. Votive dedications, however, represent weapons looted from the enemy, so those who offered these trappings as votives would have fought in the army of Tiglath-pileser himself. Greek helmets of the eighth century may reflect personal familiarity with Assyrian military practices: a late Geometric helmet from Argos with a crescent-shaped crest, for



**Fig. 7:** Amathus bowl, from Nino Luraghi, “Trader, Pirates, Warriors: The Proto-History of Grek Mercenary Soldiers in the Eastern Mediterranean,” *Phoenix* 60 1.2 (2006): 48, pl. 1. Image reproduced by kind permission of Phoenix and Nino Luraghi.

example, has its strongest parallel in Assyrian helmets known from the frescoes of the Assyrian provincial palace of Til Barsip. Narrative scenes on Phoenician silver bowls offer confirmation that the vocabulary of Greek hoplite warriors was known to the manufacturers of these bowls in the late eighth century.

A silver bowl recovered from a tomb near Amathus, dating 710–675 BC, includes along with its Egyptianizing and Assyrianizing repertoire a scene of a Near Eastern city under siege; Greek hoplites in phalanx formation are among the warriors under attack, following a man with a pointed Assyrian helmet; additional hoplites help defend the city, surrounded by their Near Eastern colleagues (see fig. 7). Greeks could evidently be found fighting on many sides in the eastern Mediterranean, and their techniques were sufficiently familiar that Phoenician craftsmen could use them to mark ethnic origins in the late eighth century (Luraghi 2006; Dezsö 1998).



Mobile, militarily skilled, and working outside the confines of political units, the Greek mercenaries are part of the vocabulary of myth as well as the visual arts. The most evocative were wandering strongmen like Herakles, who served more than one foreign king and whose analogies to Samson have long been noted. They appear at the edges of the myths of Odysseus, conducting a raid on Egypt, or sacking Ismarus after leaving Troy (Golden 1986; Barb 1972).

These episodes in the heroic experience suggest models more appropriate for the Greek interactions in the eighth century Levant than the *oikists* provide. They also resonate in significant ways with the visual and material signature at warrior graves in Euboea, the region which most led the Greeks in Levantine interactions. If we take Hercules and Odysseus as models, however, we are reminded that their paths covered the entire length of the Mediterranean. This suggests the heuristic potential in the mobile warrior in regions beyond the Levant, where colonial founders have overshadowed other mythic types.

In Levantine contexts, the objections of the prophets on the one hand, the eager adoption of Hellenic styles on the other, suggest that Aegeans were “good to think with”; the Greek myths which focus on the permeable boundaries between profit motive, mobility and military action may have provided an analogous matrix for processing the Levantine experience in the Greek imaginarium.

### CONCLUSION: ISOLATION, MEDIATION, AND MOBILITIES

The relative dearth of archaeological evidence for Greeks in the eighth-century southern Levant, combined with the wrath of the prophets, casts down the question—can we take Josephus at face value, and posit a space and a moment of genuine, if relative, cultural isolation? There is value in exploring the idea seriously.

Among the most robust contemporary paradigms for history and archaeology are those inspired by the hyper-networked experiences of our own world. These have opened new perspectives on antiquity, at the same time they run the risk of imposing an etic lens on the object of investigation. Amos’ fulminations remind us of the potential for resistance to that specific perspective among our subject ancient cultures.

At the same time, the voice of the prophets—however unrealized their cultural orthodoxy—underscores the political weight of imported goods and Aegean-wide cultural norms (Hardin 2014). There was in both Greece and Judah an ancient “jet set” whose feasts and rituals achieved their cultural work in part through material objects which signaled their origins, the distances they traveled, and their adaptation to local tastes.

There are singularities in the story of the Greeks in the Levant: the colonial paradigm which stretches from the Black Sea to Italy is not in evidence in the stretch of territory which had been part of Greek trade circuits since the Middle



Bronze Age. The control exercised by local authorities over Levantine Greeks would limit their capacity to prosper as Greek settlements did elsewhere. These conditions were, however, adaptable to the emporium, and to a symbiosis with a range of mediators who shared the Greeks' mercantile ambitions, and enabled high mobility of goods as well as individuals.

Debates about the priority of Greek or Levantine sailors in bringing goods into their respective ports have yielded to examinations of shared experiences among groups with high maritime skills, great geographic reach, and restricted natural resources in their home territory. The scholarly recognition of the fuzziness of ancient ethnic designations complements this view of an ancient world in which the pragmatics of profit were as great a driving force as political alliance.

In the end, the archaeological material for the late eighth century is a very small percentage of the total cultural debitage in both East and West. The examples from Euboea and the Levant often fall at the elite levels of the cultural strata, and in ritual and feasting contexts in which communicative functions are key. These factors suggest a semantic weight inversely proportionate to their numerical dominance, and could perhaps offer some pardon to the overemphasis Classicists have placed on this material.

The increase in evidence in the seventh century, however, dwarfs the eighth century material on both sides of the Mediterranean. With the start of the seventh century comes the Orientalizing era in Greece, in which the visual signatures of eastern artists reshape the pictorial vocabulary of vases and metalwork, feasting and votive practice. In the east, Sennacherib's devastation of Judah in 701 is followed by an energetic promotion of foreign trade and settlements in the lands he annexed, extending his reach into the Aegean, and opening the floodgate for Aegean entrepreneurs who benefited directly from Assyrian hegemony (Lanfranchi 2000).

Sennacherib, ultimately, was good news for the Aegeans—and in this regard, it seems that Amos was right. Hardin has noted that the orthodoxy proposed in the biblical texts was not the norm, a reality born out by the archaeological record (Hardin 2014, 13). That orthodoxy does, however, represent a powerful voice in the social identity of southern Judah.

In terms of our approaches to the archaeological record, it reminds us of the role of agency exercised by cultural groups about the boundaries of their own identity. The absence of Aegean initiatives in the southern Levant reflects local decision as well as the actions of the Greeks. The military and political coincidence of Aegean culture and Judahite destruction offers weight to the prophetic demand for a cultural isolation, however untenable in the long term, and reminds us of the limitations of our own academic perspectives.

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### 3

## The Kingdom of Israel in the Eighth Century: From a Regional Power to Assyrian Provinces

*Gilad Itach*

### INTRODUCTION

The eighth century BCE was a time of dramatic changes in the kingdom of Israel. In the first half of the eighth century BCE the kingdom of Israel was one of the most powerful kingdoms in the Levant. Dozens of cities along with hundreds of villages and farms were inhabited. The economic and demographic growth allowed the creation of a complex administrative system. The society in the kingdom of Israel was stratified and heterogeneous; apart from the Israelites themselves, Canaanites and other ethnic groups lived in its territory. These were times of great growth for the kingdom of Israel. But this prosperity did not last for long. In three major Assyrian campaigns to the west—led by Tiglath-pileser III in the 730s and by Shalmaneser V and Sargon II in the 720s—the kingdom of Israel was destroyed. Almost every town and village was devastated. Many people were killed during the Assyrian campaigns, and others died later from epidemics and disease. Part of the population that survived the war was deported from their land. The Assyrian empire established a number of provinces, and deportees from the enlarged empire were resettled in the former kingdom and joined the remaining population. Settlement, however, was sparse and much of the territory lay desolate.

### 1. THE GLORY DAYS

The kingdom of Israel began to prosper during the Iron Age IIA, but scholars disagree about exactly when it began growing stronger. It is agreed, however, that in the first half of the eighth century BCE the kingdom of Israel flourished in many ways: political, demographic, military, architectural, and social complexity.

The relative weakness of both the Assyrian empire and the kingdom of Aram at the time allowed the kingdom of Israel to grow (fig. 1).

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The end of the ninth century BCE coincided with the middle of the Nimshide dynasty, according to the chronology in the book of Kings. The first kings of this dynasty, its founder Jehu and his son Jehoahaz, lived under Aramean domination (2 Kgs 13:3–5), the next king, Jehoash (or Joash; 2 Kgs 13:10–14; 804–788 BCE), can be considered the first king of the eighth century.

The book of Kings recounts that a battle between Israel and Judah occurred in the northern Shephelah, in Jehoash's days, and ended with Israel's victory. Judah was defeated, Amaziah its king, captured, and the temple treasure taken to Samaria (2 Kgs 14:8–16). Nevertheless, King Jehoash did not always prevail. An Assyrian stela from the days of Adad-nirari III (810–783 BCE), king of Assyria, mentions that Jehoash paid tribute to the Assyrian king (Page 1968).

After the reign of Adad-nirari III, it appears that the influence of Assyria on the region diminished. Jeroboam II (788–748 BCE), son of Jehoash, took advantage of the relative weakness of the Assyrian empire and the kingdom of Aram, expanding the kingdom of Israel to the north and east (2 Kgs 14:23–29) (Barkay 1992, 327; Rainey and Notley 2006, 217). Towards the end of his reign or shortly after his death, the kingdom entered a period of instability.

Jeroboam's son, Zechariah, ruled briefly in Samaria, yet he was murdered by a usurper, Shallum (2 Kgs 15:8–11), who was himself murdered by another usurper, Menachem, son of Gadi (possibly Menachem of the tribe of Gad, 2 Kgs 15:13–15). During this period the Assyrian empire renewed their influence on the area, and once Menachem of Israel began paying tribute to Assyria in ca. 740 BCE (2 Kgs 15:17–22; Tadmor 1994, 68–71), the kingdom of Israel was de facto a vassal state.

#### GEOGRAPHY AND DEMOGRAPHY

The kingdom of Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II was a large kingdom, almost three times as large as Judah and possessing access to the sea, which Judah lacked. To the north of Israel lay the kingdoms of Phoenicia and Aram Damascus, to the east lay the kingdom of Ammon, and to its south the kingdoms of Judah and Philistia (Finkelstein 2013, 129–31, figs. 1, 35).

The kingdom of Israel was not only large, but was also populated. Discussing the total population of the kingdom of Israel prior to the Assyrian campaigns, Broshi and Finkelstein (1992, 54) estimate it to have been approximately 350,000, while the population in the kingdom of Judah was only a third of this number. There are justifiable doubts about the numbers themselves and a different calculation can easily give different results. But more important than the absolute





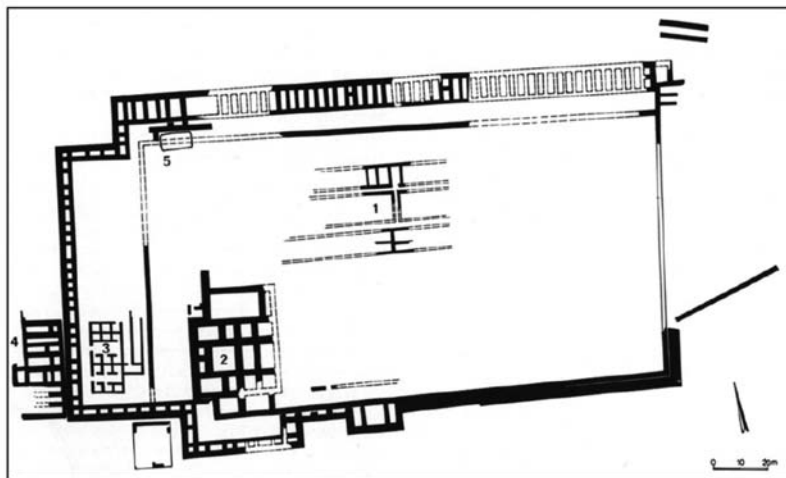
**Fig. 1:** Israel and Judah in the eighth century BCE. Source: Finkelstein 2013, fig. 1. Courtesy of Israel Finkelstein, the Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University.

numbers is our ability to examine the ratio between the populations in both kingdoms, which shows the relative strength of the northern kingdom.

#### THE URBAN SETTLEMENT

During the Iron Age II, dozens of well-planned cities were established in the kingdom. Many of them were widely inhabited during the eighth century BCE. Some were fortified, containing monumental public buildings, walls, water supply systems and residential buildings (Mazar 1990, 406–16, 469–91; Barkay 1992, 319–23, 329–34; Herzog 1997, 221–36). We will describe some of them briefly.

The capital, Samaria, was founded by Omri in the middle of the ninth century BCE. In the context of the southern Levant, it was a huge city, probably about 60 hectares in size. To date, only a small part of the heart of the city has been excavated, including a casemate wall and the royal palace (fig. 2). Other important cities in the region of Samaria included Shechem (stratum VII) that was probably an administrative centre, the fortified site at Kh. Marjameh and Tel el-Far'ah (N) (stratum VIId). Also of note is Tel Gezer (stratum VI), which was located at a strategic point in the southern part of the kingdom.



**Fig. 2:** The acropolis in Samaria. Source: Herzog 1997, fig. 5.22. Courtesy of Ze'ev Herzog, the Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University.

In the northern areas of the kingdom, Megiddo was a very important city, at a strategic location adjacent to the international road. Stratum IVA represents the last Israelite city. It is well planned, surrounded by a wall, with public buildings

and a water supply system. Near the Sea of Galilee, one of the main sites was Tel Kinrot (stratum II). Another central city located further north was Hazor, stratum VI, dated to the middle of the eighth century BCE. Several public buildings, an impressive water supply system, and a large number of houses have been excavated in various areas across the site. In the far north, Tel Dan (stratum II) formed an important center and along the coastal plain, Dor served as the main port of the northern kingdom.

The kingdom of Israel was also present along the Jordan Valley. Two of the main cities were Tel Rehov (stratum III) and Tel Bet She'an (stratum P7). Further south, Tel es-Sa'idiyeh, stratum V, represents the city of the mid-eighth century BCE. It was surrounded by a wall with towers. The excavations have also yielded a unique block of twelve virtually identical Four-Room Houses.

#### THE RURAL SETTLEMENTS

Besides the urban settlements, many rural sites were established during the Iron Age II. Some excavations and many surveys conducted in recent decades, revealed the distribution of the rural settlements. From these studies, we can see that settlement distribution in the Iron Age reached its highest peak in the Iron Age IIB.

Several surveys have identified hundreds of Iron Age II rural sites. The largest surveys are the Manasseh hill country survey (Zertal 2001) and the southern Samaria survey (Finkelstein, Lederman, and Bunimovitz 1997). Other surveys were conducted in the Lower (or southern) Galilee (Gal 2009), in the Upper (or northern) Galilee (Frankel et al. 2001) and other areas. In addition to these surveys, excavations have been conducted in a small number of rural sites that reveal much about their character.

Rural settlement can be divided into three main categories: large villages, small villages, and farms (Faust 2012, 128–77):

**LARGE VILLAGES:** The large villages can reach an area of several hectares, larger than some of the cities. Only two well-known examples are familiar in the area of the kingdom, but this is probably because the large villages were “underrepresented in archaeological literature” (Faust 2012, 145). The site of Deir el-Mir, located in western Samaria, can exemplify this type. It was five hectares in size, probably surrounded by a wall. The survey located 75 buildings. General plans of two buildings were published, showing that both were Four-Room Houses. A few agricultural installations were also found (Faust 2012, 145–48).

**SMALL VILLAGES:** A few small villages were excavated in the Samaria region and in the northern part of the kingdom. The village excavated at H. Beit Aryeh (Riklin 1997), on the southern bank of Nahal Shilo, exemplifies this phenomenon. It covered an area of 0.5 hectares and was encompassed by a wall, into which a gate was set in the northeastern corner. Approximately ten residential structures of the

Four-Room House type were found, as well as 33 agricultural installations, just outside the village, most employed for oil production (fig. 3).



**Fig. 3:** The village of H. Beit Aryeh in the Iron Age II. Source: Riklin 1997, fig. 2.  
Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

**FARMS:** The evidence for farms within the boundaries of the kingdom of Israel comes largely from surveys, and very few were excavated. In the Manasseh hill country survey alone, at least 131 farms from the Iron Age II were found. Zertal defined them "by their plans as family farmsteads, comprising a house or houses for the family and its associated structures and courtyard(s) for the animals" (Zertal 2001, 45, fig. 2.2).

#### COMPLEX ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

The complexity and administrative system are reflected in the impressive public buildings, constructed as a result of royal initiative. These include: well-planned cities, some of which were fortified and surrounded by walls; large city gates; impressive water-supply systems; fortresses that were established in strategic key

points; stables; warehouses; and public grain silos (Yeivin 1992; Barkay 1992, 329–34; Faust 2012, 190–207).

This administrative system is also reflected in the Samaria ostraca (Rainey 1988). The 63 ostraca, found in a storeroom in the royal complex, demonstrate that wine and oil that were brought from rural sites were stored in the city of Samaria; these ostraca reflect a complex administrative system in the kingdom, probably at the beginning of the eighth century BCE (Faust 2012, 193).

The administrative system developed in response to the increase in the kingdom's population and, concomitantly, its agricultural products. Lying on the main ancient trade routes and possessing extensive agricultural areas, the kingdom developed and prospered partly as a result of its participation in international trade. This participation can be exemplified by the “torpedo” storage jar, originating in Phoenicia and becoming very common in the kingdom in the Iron Age IIB (Finkelstein 2013, 131–38; but see Gilboa, Sharon, and Bloch-Smith 2015).

A large number of Iron Age IIB olive-oil and wine installations have been unearthed in several archaeological excavations, others were only surveyed, mostly in the hill country (Eitam 1979). The rural settlements clearly produced quantities that exceeded local needs, allowing them to export the surplus to urban communities within the kingdom and probably also to other areas in the southern Levant and beyond.

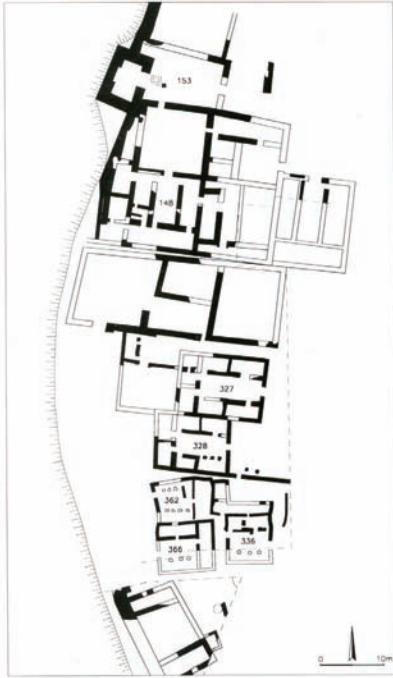
#### SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND SOCIOECONOMIC STRATIFICATION

Like many traditional societies, the Israelite society in the eighth century was kinship-based (Reviv 1993, 43–60; Faust 2012; Schloen 2016). The basic social organization consisted of large kinship units, clans, and lineages (the biblical *mishpahah*), each composed of extended, multigenerational families (the biblical *bet av*), which in itself was comprised of a number of nuclear families. This structure can be identified archaeologically, and the reconstruction is supported by biblical texts along with information supplied by the Samaria ostraca.

The large Four-Room Houses, which were typical of the rural sector in the kingdom of Israel at the time, appear to have been homes to extended families. This can be learned from their size (compared with other houses), inner division, and the finds unearthed in them. The houses are very similar to one another, and there is no clear evidence for stratification or social differentiation (for detailed discussion see Faust 2012, 213–29; see also Dever 2017, 461–81).

The extended families were organized into larger units, corresponding to the above-mentioned lineages. The larger organizational unit was also responsible for the daily management of the villages, including the building of the villages' outer walls, agricultural-industrial areas, and more. This can be seen in the village at H. Beit Aryeh and Kh. Jemein, where some of the Four-Room Houses are integrated into the villages' outer walls. The villagers collectively planned where to locate agricultural-industrial areas and where to locate residential areas (Faust 2012,

134–42). Furthermore, the Samaria ostraca strongly suggest that groups of villages were organized into a larger framework of a *mishpaḥah* (which may or may not reflect actual genetic relationships of the residents).



**Fig. 4:** Tel el-Far'ah stratum VIIId.

Source: Herzog 1997, fig. 5.23. Courtesy of Ze'ev Herzog, the Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University.

When we turn to cities from this period, we can observe the parallel existence of a different pattern. In these urban settings, many, perhaps even most, families were small nuclear families, and there is clear evidence for socioeconomic stratification. In most towns one can identify large and well-built houses, inhabited by the wealthy (also living as extended families), along with medium-sized (and medium quality) structures and many small, poorly built adobes of the urban poor (probably living as nuclear families). Examples can be seen in Hazor and Tel el-Far'ah (N) (fig. 4) (De Vaux 1992, 1301; Faust 2012, 58–63; for a different approach, see Schloen 2016).

According to this reconstruction, therefore, although in the rural sector the traditional kinship-based social structure prevailed, in the cities changes were taking place, and many families were not—in practice at least—living as part of larger kinship units. Israelite society thus became more stratified during the eighth century BCE although not uniformly.

#### ETHNIC COMPLEXITY

In ethnic terms, the society in the kingdom of Israel seems to be heterogeneous. Apart from Israelites, Canaanites and other ethnic groups lived in the kingdom. This is in contrast to the society in the kingdom of Judah, which appears to have been much more homogeneous (Finkelstein 2013, 112).

This ethnic complexity is best evidenced in the northern valleys of the Land of Israel, where most scholars believe that there were hardly any signs for Israelite presence during the Iron Age I. When these territories became part of the kingdom



of Israel during the Iron Age II, the local population continued to live there, probably in the same sites (Finkelstein 2013, 109–12).

Indeed, while changes took place in the region's central settlements, it appears that in the small, rural sites the population was non-Israelite throughout the era. For example, the sites at Tel Qiri, Tel Amal, and Tel Hadar in northern Israel are different from the typical Israelite village in several key ways. First, the Four-Room House was totally absent in those three northern sites. In addition, some of those sites were open with no surrounding walls, differing from the ones found in villages in the Samaria region. Also, public buildings were exposed in those sites, and such buildings are not found in villages in the Samaria highlands. Furthermore, the presence of pig bones and some ceramic types can help us distinguish these (and some other) villages from the typical Israelite village (Faust 2012, 234–48; see also Munger 2013).

In contrast, at some of the central sites in these regions, evidence suggests heterogeneous populations. In Tel Hazor stratum VI, a large group of small buildings were found, which were not built according to an orderly plan. In the same strata, impressive Four-Room House type buildings and medium to small buildings with some planning were observed. It has been suggested, with due caution, that a Canaanite-Phoenician population of a lower economic class lived in the poor buildings with no orderly plan. At the same time, an Israelite upper and middle class lived in the large to medium planned buildings (Faust 2012, 250–51). Mixed population probably existed in additional central sites in the region, but the population in some, like Tel Rehov, was probably mainly Canaanite (see also Mazar 2015; Faust 2017).

The reason for the difference between the heterogeneous population in the urban sites and the homogeneous population in the rural sites may be quite simple. During the expansion of the kingdom of Israel, many Canaanite cities and villages became part of the kingdom. Military and administrative personnel settled in some of the central Canaanite cities (and in time their families also settled there). However, the poor rural sector in this region did not attract Israelite population, and the population remained non-Israelite. Moreover, in the cities there were also processes of assimilation, in which some of the Canaanite population became Israelite (presumably mainly the elite), but these processes were likely much weaker in the poorer villages (Faust 2012, 230–54).

#### NEARING THE END

The first half of the eighth century BCE constituted a time of great growth in the kingdom of Israel, contributing to its status as one of the largest and most powerful kingdoms in the Levant. While Jeroboam II may not have been able to imagine the fate his kingdom would suffer just three decades later, the prophet Amos, or at least the oracles attributed to him, warned of impending doom:

Hear this word, ye cows of Bashan, who are in the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to their masters, "Bring, and let us drink." The Lord GOD has sworn by his holiness: "Behold, days will come upon you in which you will be carried away with hooks and your children with fishhooks." (Amos 4:1–2)

## 2. THE ASSYRIAN DESTRUCTION

The Assyrian campaigns in the 730s and in the 720s systematically destroyed or led to the abandonment of almost every city, village, and farm in the kingdom of Israel (Stern 2001, 3–10). The campaigns are well documented in Assyrian and biblical texts. A similar picture emerges from the analysis of the results of archaeological excavations.

### THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

Ascending to the Assyrian throne in 745 BCE, Tiglath-pileser III almost immediately began expanding westward. His aim was to build up the empire by conquering land, subjugating the inhabitants of the defeated kingdoms, and collecting taxes (Becking 1992, 8–19).

As we mentioned before, once Menachem of Israel began paying tribute to Assyria, the kingdom of Israel became *de facto* a vassal state. This continued into the short reign of his son, Pekahiah. Everything changed in 734 BCE, when Pekah ben Remalaiah took control of the kingdom from Pekahiah and repudiated Israel's vassal status along with other kings and failed to pay tribute to Assyria.

As a result of these rebellions, Tiglath-pileser III campaigned against the kingdom. Between 733 and 732 BCE, he conquered the northern territories, the Galilee and the Gilead, as well as the city of Gezer (2 Kgs 15:30; Tadmor 1994, 80–83, 186–89). Many people were killed during the battles and sieges of the cities. At this time, Hoshea son of Elah was appointed king instead of Pekah, who was killed. Only the hill country around the city of Samaria remained in Israel's control. The Assyrians expected Hoshea to be loyal to Assyria, but at some point, after 727 BCE, Hoshea rebelled and sought Egypt's protection.

This led to Shalmaneser V's invasion. The Babylonian Chronicle tells us that he damaged the city of Samaria, and this fits with 2 Kgs 17:1–5. Shalmaneser V died in 722 BCE, before enjoying the fruits of victory. Upon his death or shortly before, revolts erupted all over the empire. Sargon II usurped the throne of Assyria and started a ruthless campaign to restore the stability in the empire. In 721 or 720 BCE, Sargon II conquered the city of Samaria, and the kingdom of Israel ceased to exist (2 Kgs 17:5–6; Becking 1992, 33–38; see a slightly different view in Park 2012). Once again many people died during the siege and the war, and others probably escaped south to the kingdom of Judah (Finkelstein 2013, 154–55).



## THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Destruction layers dating to the Assyrian conquests were found in many sites (Herzog 1997, 221–36; Stern 2001, 4–9; see also Faust 2015, 767–73); We will mention some of them briefly. In the northern part of the kingdom we find evidence for destruction at Tel Dan (stratum II) as well as Tel Hazor (stratum V). The Tel Kinrot excavations reveal what may be two destruction layers, one assigned to the 733–732 BCE campaign, the other to the end of the eighth century BCE. Tel Megiddo stratum IVA was apparently destroyed or at least badly damaged.

The region of Samaria was also badly damaged. Although the texts cited above indicate that the Assyrians captured the city of Samaria, it is not clear whether it was destroyed; subsequent construction activities (mostly from the Roman period) make this question difficult to determine. Other cities in the region that were badly damaged or destroyed include Tel el-Far'ah (N) (stratum VIIId), Shechem (stratum VII), Kh. Marjameh, and along the Jordan Valley Tel Rehov (stratum III), Tel Bet She'an (stratum P7) and Tel es-Sa'idiyeh (stratum V).

The Assyrian conquest left its mark in rural sites as well. Although few have been excavated, the picture is clear. In the northern part of the kingdom, archaeological evidence for the Assyrian destruction was found in H. Rosh Zayit and H. Malta. In the region of Samaria, signs of destruction were found at H. Beit Aryeh, Kh. Jeme'in, as well as Kh. Deir Daqla, Kh. Dawwar, and others (Faust 2015, 768–71).

## 3. THE DAYS OF ASSYRIAN RULE

The cities, villages, and farms in the kingdom were badly damaged during the Assyrian campaigns. Most of the devastated sites were not rebuilt. In some of the cities, a poor settlement presence was identified and no evidence exists of fortified sites, following the Assyrian destruction. The state administration was gone, and the industrial centers shifted to other countries in the vicinity, such as Judah and Philistia (Faust 2011). In what follows, we will discuss the reality in the former kingdom after the Assyrian conquest. This includes also the seventh century BCE in some cases.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The biblical narrative related to this period is 2 Kgs 17:7–40. It describes the region of Samaria in the wake of the Assyrian conquest. According to this narrative, the Assyrians brought deportees from southern Mesopotamia to the region of Samaria and settled them in place of the Israelite population that was deported to other areas in the empire (2 Kgs 17:24). Some scholars (Talmon 1973) believe that this story is a later addition to the text of Kings, to prove that the population

of Samaria during the Persian period descended from deportees (as Ezra 4:2, 9–10). However, some evidence for Assyrian diction can also be found in the story (Aster 2008). It seems that 2 Kgs 17:7–40 may contain an early base text that was edited in later periods (for a detailed discussion see Oded 1987; Knoppers 2013, 45–70).

Several Assyrian texts reflect the narrative the Assyrian empire sought to promulgate (Becking 1992, 25–33). In addition to describing the military battles, the royal inscriptions describe briefly the immediate steps taken by the Assyrian kings after the area was conquered. One of the most important texts regarding the former kingdom of Israel is the royal inscription found in the palace of Khorsabad in which Sargon II describes the conquest of Samaria and its consequences:

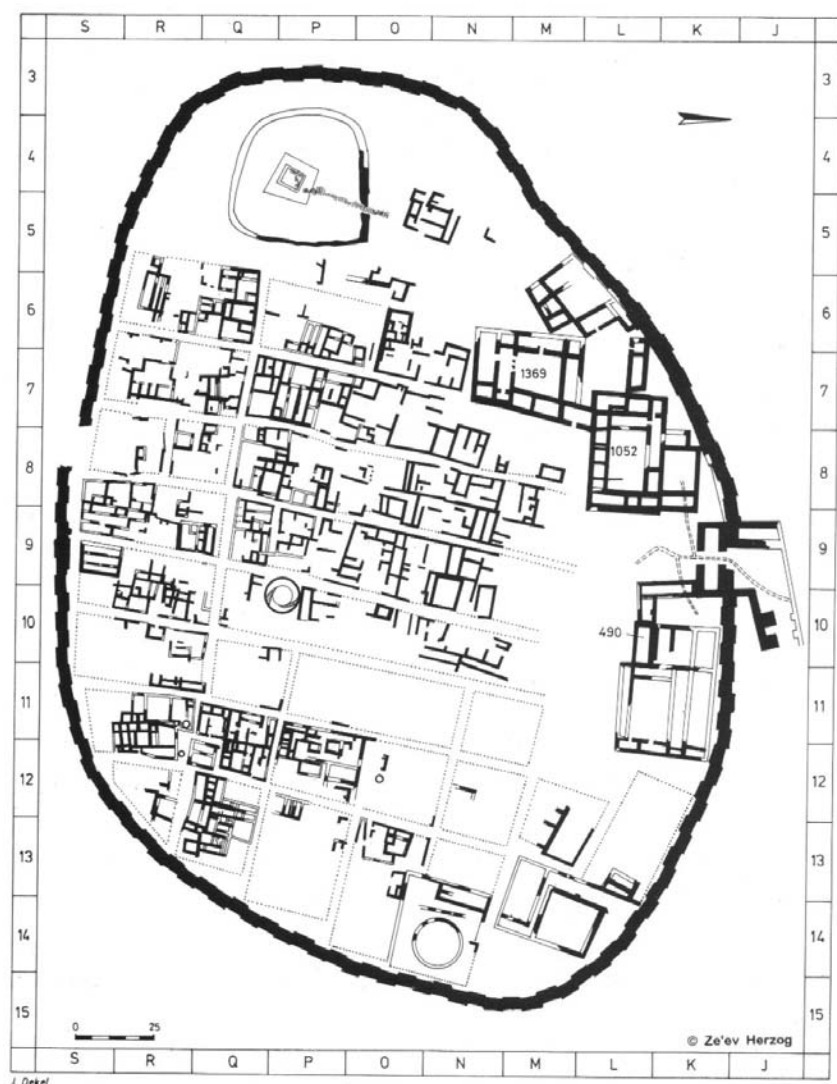
At the begi[nning] of my royal rule I ... the town of the Sama[r]ians ... I led away as prisoners [27,290 inhabitants of it (and) [equipped] from among [them] 50 chariots for my royal corps ... [The town I] re[built] better than (it was) before and [settled] therein people from countries [I] myself [had con]quered. I placed an officer of mine as governor over them and imposed upon them tribute as (is customary) for Assyrian citizens. (*ANET* 284, 10–17)

These sources, although they are severely partial, can help us understand the historical background in the region after the Assyrian conquest and the establishment of the provinces.

#### THE FOUNDATION OF THE PROVINCES

The areas Tiglath-pileser III conquered were annexed to the Assyrian empire and organized into provinces. The precise organization is still debated. We know that a province of Megiddo was organized, which presumably included the Galilee. Some scholars have hypothesized that the Transjordanian provinces were named Gilead and Karnaim, but we lack any clear information. Others argue that an additional province was organized around the coastal city of Dor, though it is far from certain (Na'aman 2009). Following the final destruction of the kingdom of Israel, Sargon II founded the province of Samaria, most likely in 721 or 720 BCE (for detailed discussion see Rainey and Notley 2006, 234–36).

The provinces were ruled by governors who were expected to work for the interests of the Assyrian empire. However, the governors often enriched themselves by various business enterprises. Their task was to extract taxes from the agricultural produce in the province and to demand customs duties from trade in the province. The proceeds from these taxes and duties were intended to provide for the empire's needs, but at times governors arrogated these resources to themselves (Pecirkova 1977; Zilberg 2018).



**Fig. 5:** Megiddo stratum III. Source: Herzog 1997, fig. 5.35. Courtesy of Ze'ev Herzog, the Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University.

## EVIDENCE FOR ASSYRIAN ADMINISTRATION

The only city the Assyrians rebuilt in the former kingdom was Megiddo stratum III (Herzog 1997, 255–57) (fig. 5). Although the archaeological evidence is very limited, it is clear that Samaria was the capital of another province. Other administrative centers were probably established at Tel Dan (stratum I), Tel Hazor (stratum III), Tel Gezer (Stratum V), and maybe also at Tel el-Far'ah (N) (stratum VIIe). Zertal suggests the possible existence of some administrative centers in the region of Samaria (Zertal 2003, 387–91).

The fragments of royal stela found in the city of Samaria and in the western Samarian region can demonstrate Assyrian presence. Also found in the western Samarian region were administrative tablets at Tel Gezer, Tel Hadid, and Kh. Kusiya (Horowitz and Oshima 2006, 55–64, 100–101). This shows not only Assyrian presence but also Assyrian administration in the area. On the other hand, the small number of texts found across the kingdom and their concentration in the western region of Samaria on the margins of the empire suggest that the administrative system in the provinces of Megiddo and Samaria was rather weak (Aster and Faust 2015).

## THE ASSYRIAN DEPORTATION POLICY

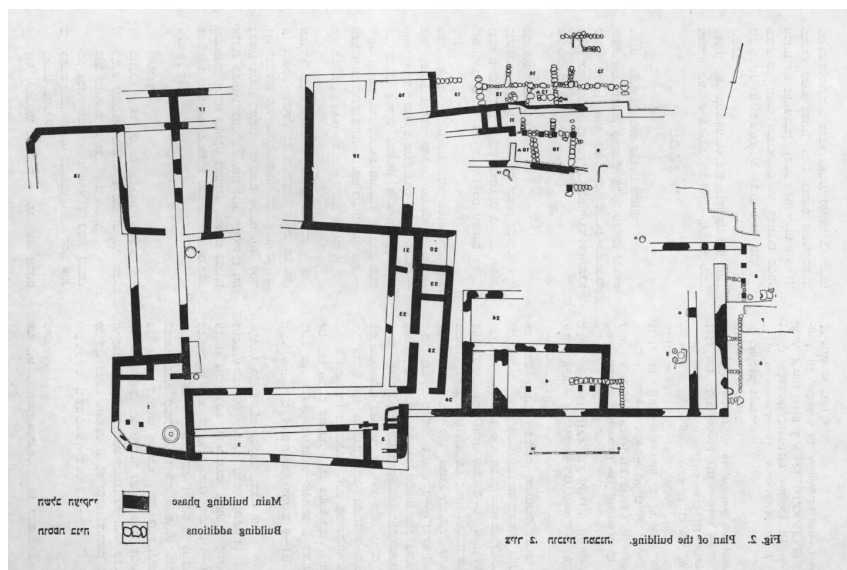
Part of imperial Assyrian policy was to deport populations from conquered territories and to send them to other parts of the empire. Mass deportations began as early as the days of Tiglath-pileser III, and his successors continued this policy (Oded 1979; Na'aman 1993). The Assyrian system of deportation served three principal goals: (1) political—to prevent possible revolts against Assyria; (2) military—to strengthen the army, by conscripting deportees; and (3) economic—providing labor to build cities and work in agriculturally-remote areas (Becking 1992, 61).

It should be noted that most of the population that was exiled was deported to the center of the empire in Assur and only a small percentage was deported to remote areas (Oded 1979, 28). From this policy we can learn much about the priorities of the Assyrian empire. The center of the empire, which was located in Assyria, was of course the first priority, while the rehabilitation of the remote areas was of secondary importance (Parker 2001, 72; see also Faust 2011).

## NEW RURAL SETTLEMENTS: SETTLING THE DEPORTEES?

According to Assyrian and biblical sources, the Assyrians brought foreign inhabitants to the region of Samaria possibly as early as the days of Sargon II. In the northern Samaria region, an interesting settlement pattern, dating to the late Iron Age, has been identified (Zertal 1989). Bowls with unusual impressions were found in many small rural sites in the Samaria region, but also in Samaria (the city), Shechem, and Tel el-Far'ah (N). Zertal suggests that a group of deportees

from Mesopotamia brought to the Samarian region the idea of the wedge-impressed bowls. Data from excavated sites suggests strongly that this type of vessel appeared almost exclusively after the Assyrian destruction. New research confirms Zertal's suggestion. It shows that the bowls were probably produced locally and it offers a functional explanation for this phenomenon (Itach, Aster and Ben-Shlomo 2017).



**Fig. 6:** Farm house at Tirat Yehuda, probably established post-Assyrian conquest Source: Yeivin and Edelstein 1970, fig. 2. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

In the southwestern region of Samaria, mostly between Tel Aphek and Tel Hadid, excavations and surveys reveal that dozens of small farms first appeared at the end of the eighth century BCE (Finkelstein 1981). Since Four-Room Houses were totally absent from these sites (fig. 6), it has been suggested that the origin of the inhabitants might be foreign (Faust 2006). The two tablets from Tel Hadid (Na'aman and Zadok 2000) (fig. 7) support this possibility. They prove that deportees from Babylon were brought to the western Samaria region, probably already at the end of the eighth century BCE. Moreover, this is the only area in the former kingdom of Israel where an increase in population after the Assyrian conquest was observed. Most of the farms are located south of the Aphek pass and along the international road. This area constitutes the southwestern edge of the empire and it had strategic importance for safeguarding the border, collecting

tribute from the client states, and as a starting point for campaigns against the empire's enemies in the south. These farms likely supplied food (mostly grain) for administrative centers built by Assyria and to the passing Assyrian army in times of need (for detailed discussion see Aster and Faust 2015).

In the northern and eastern parts of the former kingdom, evidence for settling deportees is much less clear. From the written sources we do not have information about deportations to the Galilee and Gilead. Rural sites that deportees may have settled have been discovered in the Galilee, at Yiftachel, and at a small site near 'En Zippori (Gal 2009).

#### CHANGES IN MATERIAL CULTURE

The material culture that is found in the late Iron Age (eighth and seventh century BCE) settlements shows great continuity. However, some changes in the material culture can be observed as a result of the Assyrian conquests (Stern 2001, 14–41).

The Four-Room House that was very common in the kingdom of Israel, in both urban and rural settlements, completely disappeared during the Assyrian period. Although they were not very common, some architectural traditions originating from Mesopotamia appeared in the area from this time on. These can be seen, for example, at Tel Megiddo, complex 1052/1369, Tel Hazor building 3002, Tel Kinrot building 737, and perhaps also at Tel Dan, although some of the buildings were built only after the Neo-Assyrian period (for a detailed study, see Kertai 2018). In addition, some of the new rural sites found in southwestern Samaria (and elsewhere) were composed of a courtyard complex, which seems alien to the local architectural tradition of Samaria (Faust 2006).

The Iron Age IIC pottery (Iron Age III) appears to be a continuation of the Iron Age IIB, although some new types of pottery do appear (Tappy 2015). Imitation Assyrian vessels, some of which are known as “Palace Ware,” have been found in many sites across the former northern kingdom (Singer-Avitz 2007; Stern 2015). Usually they can be found in very small quantities, appearing for the first time just prior to the kingdom's final destruction. Although scholars previously agreed that the “Palace Ware” pottery found in the region was probably used



**Fig. 7:** Cuneiform Tablet from Tel Hadid dated 698 BCE. Source: Israel Antiquities Authority collection. Photo by Peter Lenny. © Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

by Assyrian officials, it seems that the matter is much more complex and most (if not all) of the Assyrian pottery unearthed was produced locally and it is only an imitation of the Assyrian ware. It is likely that most of the pottery found was used by local people who wished to imitate Assyrian pottery and perhaps even Assyrian behavior. While the Assyrian officials in the new provinces likely used such pottery, a set of Assyrian Palace Ware belonging to them has yet to be found (for detailed discussion see Hunt 2015).

In burial customs, a new burial style was observed. While most of the population probably continue to bury in simple pit graves, the “bathtub coffin” appears for the first time. This type of burial involves placing the dead in large clay coffins, imitating the metal coffins used in Assyria (Wicks 2015). Only a few such clay coffins were found in the territory of the former kingdom of Israel (Stern 2001, 33–34), suggesting that only a small number of inhabitants (maybe Assyrian officials) used this form of burial.

## CONCLUSION

The eighth century BCE was a tumultuous time for the kingdom of Israel. The first half of the eighth century were the glory days during which the kingdom of Israel prospered and was one of the most powerful states in the Levant. The prosperity also led to negative socioeconomic processes: namely the concentration of wealth in the hands of the elite, which harmed the more vulnerable members of society and weakened the social fabric of the kingdom.

Irresponsible political decisions of the kingdom's leaders in the second half of the eighth century sealed the kingdom's fate. The Assyrian campaigns between 734 and 720 BCE destroyed or severely damaged almost every city and village in the area, leading to its decimation. The Assyrian conquest thus dramatically changed the lives of the kingdom's population. The area of the former kingdom of Israel was transformed into provinces in a matter of decades, and all the signs of the once independent state disappeared. Many people died in wars and others were deported. The Assyrian empire did not invest in rebuilding the provinces. While some deportees were brought in as settlers, joining the existing population, most of Israel's land lay desolate.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## Bethsaida: The Capital City of the Kingdom of Geshur

*Rami Arav*

### LOCATION

Bethsaida is located north of the Sea of Galilee on the eastern bank of the Jordan River near the entry into the Sea of Galilee. The region to the east of the Jordan River, known as the Golan Heights, is in fact a basalt plateau. The plateau declines gradually from an altitude of 1000 m at the foothills of the Hermon Mountain in the northeast, to 200 m below sea level at the Sea of Galilee. This decline extends over a relatively short distance of only about 50 km (Meiler 2011).

The basalt plateau is geologically and geographically connected to the eastern region of the Bashan and the Hauran farther to the east. The terrain is rugged in the north northeast but turns into fertile, agricultural land in the south and the east. The part of the plateau that is above sea level was covered in the past with Tabor oak forests, some remnants of which still exist.

### IDENTIFICATION

The ancient name Bethsaida was not preserved to the present day. Travelers and cartographers recorded the name as et-Tell, meaning the mound, since it is the most prominent mound in this area. Other names recorded for this site are Tel Amriya (the constructed mound), Tel Shafi (the mound of health), Tel el-Talawiyah (the mound of the Bedouin tribe of Arab el Talawiyah, or the Arabs of the mounds).

The identification of et-Tell with Bethsaida is based on the testimony of Josephus. His precise description of the location of Bethsaida, at the lower Golan near the estuary of the River Jordan, is compatible with the location of et-Tell and with the Roman remains excavated there. However, there were some confusions due to the Gospel of John 1:44, which states that Bethsaida is located in Galilee.

Wishing to compromise this contradictory testimony, travelers and scholars suggested that there were two Bethsaidas, one of Josephus, located at et-Tell and the other of John, located in Galilee. For more than a century travelers and scholars have been searching for the Galilean Bethsaida with no avail.<sup>1</sup> Among the sites proposed were Capernaum, Tabgha (Byzantine site), Al Minya (An Umayyad site), Masudiya (Byzantine) and Huseniya (Byzantine) and al Araj (Byzantine, Medieval).

The Iron Age name for this site is even more difficult to reconstruct. However some years ago, I proposed identifying the place-names Zer (צר), or Zed, mentioned in Josh 19:35, as one of the fishermen cities located around the Sea of Galilee, with et-Tell. I also proposed interpreting the word הצידיים in this verse as “the fishermen” (Arav 1995, 193–201). The translation of this verse, in this proposal is: “The fortified cities of the fishermen were Zer, Hamat, Raqat and Kineret.”

The Bethsaida excavations have revealed a great fortified city, surrounded by two concentric city walls and a very large city gate.<sup>2</sup> The size of the city (20 acres) and the unparalleled massive city gate, may indicate that the city served as the capital of the kingdom of Geshur mentioned in the Bible. Yet, the borders of this kingdom are not easily defined. While the western and the southern borders clearly are demarcated by the rivers, the Jordan and the Yarmuk respectively, the northern border is poorly understood but probably ran in the foothills of the Hermon Mountain. The eastern borders are the hardest to define. However, if the moon-god steles found in southern Syrian sites are indication for the eastern boundaries of this culture, then the eastern extent of the kingdom was in the Syrian Desert (fig. 1). If the above suppositions are true, then the kingdom of Geshur extended over a territory similar to the kingdom of Judah, that is, about 700 km<sup>2</sup>.

Still, not only are the borders uncertain, even the name Geshur is not definite. The name, derived from the Bible, is not attested as such by any other source. The names preserved, one in El Amarna letter (no. 254) and the other, in the Assyrian stele of Shalmaneser III are incomplete in their spelling. Therefore, it is not improbable that the name *Gether*, mentioned in Gen 10:23, as one of the sons of

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1. The identification of Bethsaida was a topic of much research, see a summary in Arav 2011a, 92–97.

2. The results and the results of the excavations were published in the past. See latest: Arav 2009, 1–122.

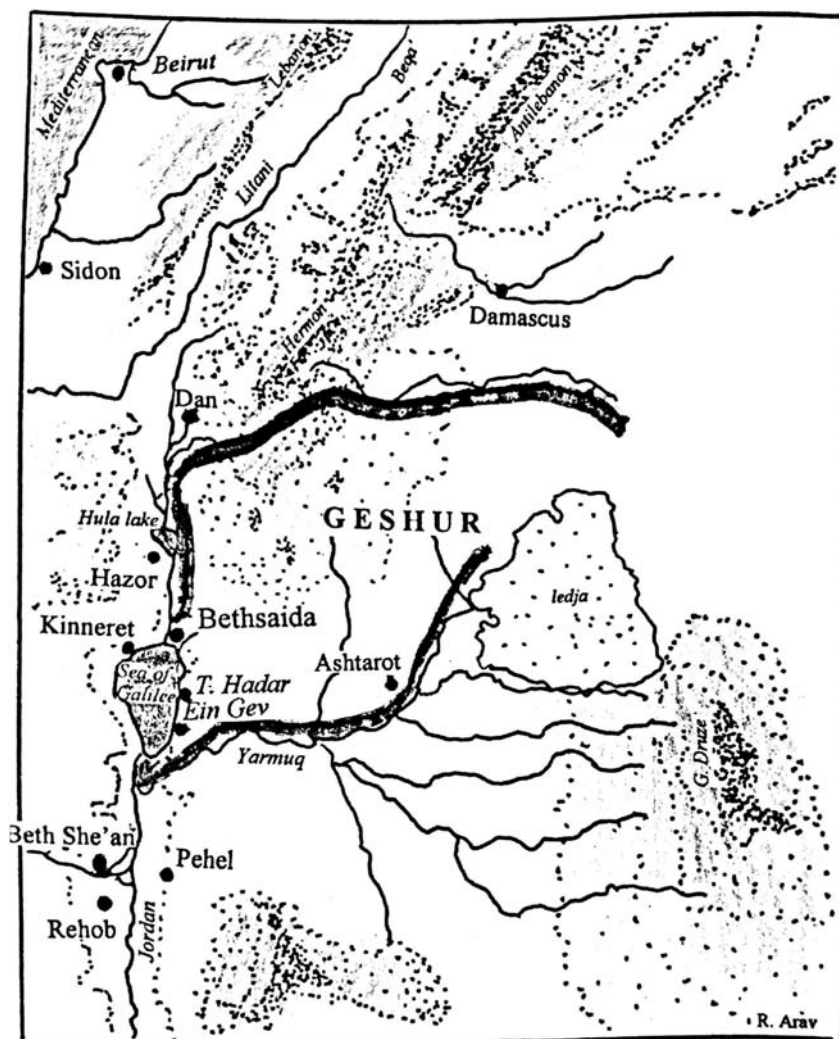


Fig 1: The postulated kingdom of Geshur. Courtesy of the author and Bethsaida Excavations Project.

Aram, “brother” to *Ootz*, *Huli* and *Mash*, was the Aramean name and *Geshur* a corrupt version of it.<sup>3</sup>

## HISTORY

A few branches of the international trade routes connected Geshur to the major thoroughfare between Damascus and Egypt, perhaps the *Via Maris*, the Sea Road.<sup>4</sup> Most probably by these routes the Arameans emerged from the north and first set foot in the area during the twelfth and eleventh centuries BCE. Obviously, they were not the first migrants to take this route (Arav 2013, 1–29). A few centuries earlier the Hurrian kingdom of Mitani collapsed, and some groups of refugees may have fled to the south and settled in this area. This hypothesis is supported by the Hurrian names Talmai and Ami-Hud (Hur?) that are preserved in the biblical texts as the kings of Geshur (Hess 2004, 49–62).

We have no ancient sources that discuss Geshur other than the Bible, which must be used cautiously. Moreover, the Bible only discusses Geshur as it pertained to tenth century political realities, so we are completely in the dark about the later Iron Age periods. Thus, this paper will focus on the archaeological side. Apparently during the end of Iron Age I (1150–1000 BCE), Aramean society experienced a significant transformation in the social and political dimensions, as they shifted from a chiefdom to a statehood system (Pitard 1987; Lipinski 2000, 347–407; Liverani 2014, 434–41).

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3. The kingdom of Geshur gained scholarly attention in the recent years after a long period of paucity. Since Mazar’s article on Geshur and Maacah published in 1943 (reprint in 1976), there was almost no further research done until the late 1980’s when the Tel Aviv University launched the Land of Geshur Excavation Project headed by M. Kochavi and The Golan Research Institute launched the Bethsaida Excavations Project (BEP) headed by me. Until 2016 the BEP is operated under the Consortium for the Excavations of Bethsaida housed at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and headed by me. For the latest research on the Arameans of the southwest, see Lipinski 2001, 336; J. Pakkala 2010, 159–77; Na’aman 2012, 88–101 and Pakkala 2013, 226–46. Pakkala’s arguments are primarily textual and ignore the results and the historical implications of the archaeological research in Bethsaida, Tel Hadar, Ein Gev, Tel Dover, and Tel Kinorot. These sites present a unique material culture that extends to the Syrian Desert and is substantially different from Cistjordanian cultures of Dan, Hazor, Megiddo, Beth She’an, Rehov. In the absence of any other contender the name Geshur is the most appropriate one.

4. For the road network in the Iron Age see Rainey 2006, 165–66.



## THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

According to the biblical account, the kingdom of Israel under King David and the kingdom of Geshur under Talmai shared a good mutual relationship. This perhaps even included some kind of a peace treaty, since the Bible relates a royal marriage between King David and Maacah the daughter of Talmai (Spanier 1999, 295–306). Absalom and Tamar (2 Sam 3:3) were the offspring of this union. According to the narrative, following his assassination of the Crown Prince Amnon, Absalom fled to his grandparents in Geshur and stayed there for four years before being called back to Jerusalem. While Absalom never became a king, his daughter Maacah, named after her grandmother, married her half cousin, Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, and became his most beloved wife (2 Chr 11:21). During the next generation, Maacah was queen mother of kings Abiam and Asa. The latter gained his fame by destroying the “abomination” that the queen mother brought to Jerusalem, and we might wonder whether or not that episode refers to any Geshurite/Aramean religious influence that she may have brought into Judah (2 Chr 15:16). Thus, from the biblical point of view, the Geshurites were involved in the Davidic dynasty for some generations.

It is further conjectured that the kingdom of Geshur lost its independence during the expansion of the kingdom of the Arameans of Damascus under Hazael in the mid-ninth century BCE (Mazar 1976). However, the effects of this political act and the nature of any resulting new government at Bethsaida are far from clear. It is uncertain whether Geshur was annexed by Damascus or instead became a vassal kingdom with restricted administrative maneuverability. The historical and archaeological testimonies cannot support any irrefutable conclusion. On one hand, Geshur is never mentioned again in the biblical narratives after the tenth century BCE, but on the other hand, from the archaeological record, Bethsaida became a thriving city from the first half of the ninth century BCE and was only destroyed in the collapse of the kingdom of Damascus during the military campaign of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III in 734–732 BCE.

## ARCHAEOLOGY

Extending over 8 hectares and heavily fortified, Bethsaida’s size exceeds most of biblical cities situated inland and meets the requirements for the capital city of the kingdom of Geshur (fig. 2). Unfortunately, no other capital city from the tenth—eighth centuries BCE was preserved to same extent as Bethsaida so that we cannot compare remains, though most probably Bethsaida would not have been exceptional. A short survey of the remains of capital cities in this region reveals the uniqueness of Bethsaida’s archaeology (Arav 2009a, 4–7).

Although a powerful capital of a strong kingdom, capable of threatening Assyria, Iron Age Damascus had gone through centuries of massive destructions and

rebuilding so that no tangible remnant of the Iron Age city is preserved. Iron Age Damascus, most probably, is lost forever from the archaeological spade. The stratum, including the date of the construction and date of the destruction. Generally, of the two, it is often easier to find the date of destruction; the more interesting magnificent Iron Age city of Tyre only provided a small portion that could be excavated; while important for its published pottery, its remains reveal little about its urban architecture (Bikai 1978). Samaria, the capital city of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, was built in the ninth century BCE, but, very little of the Iron Age city is preserved. Our knowledge about its city walls and gates is totally lost. Jerusalem is even less well known in this period. The Iron Age site of Rabbat Ammon, the capital city of the Ammonites, was totally destroyed without a trace. Even the location of Dibon the capital city of the Moabites is elusive, as is that of Selah, the capital city of the kingdom of Edom. In the light of this unfortunate picture, one can see that a discovery of an intact capital city is rather exceptional. Only the Philistine cities yield a comparable state of preservation in general, and four of the famous “Philistine pentapolis” of the Bible have been excavated extensively (Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, and Gath). Even so, the most prominent of these cities, Gaza, is still unknown.



**Fig. 2:** An aerial photograph of Bethsaida looking south. Courtesy of the author and Bethsaida Excavations Project.

The table below presents the two main Iron Age II strata that were excavated at Bethsaida.<sup>5</sup> The excavation was clear enough to provide two dates for each out date of the construction is frequently also more difficult to establish. The dates for the destruction of strata VI and V at Bethsaida are based on both pottery and C<sup>14</sup> dating of the grain found in the granaries that were destroyed during conquests of the city.

The date of the construction of Stratum VI is based on pottery analysis, particularly on pottery from foundation trenches arguably dumped by the construction workers. Carbon-dating grain from the infrastructure of Stratum V, suggest that there was a gap of about fifty years between the destruction of Stratum VI and the construction of V in the gate and walls area.

Stratum	Date of construction	Date of destruction
VI	ca. eleventh century BCE	ca. 920 BCE
Gap	ca. 920– ca.875 BCE	
V	ca. 875 BCE	732 BCE

#### TRAITS OF AUTHORITY IN ARCHAEOLOGY OF BETHSAIDA

Prior to the construction of the capital city at Bethsaida, the Geshurites flourished in small settlements. One of those settlements was Tel Hadar, which yielded impressive finds (Kochavi 1996). During the first half of the eleventh century BCE, about the time Tel Hadar settlement was destroyed Bethsaida was founded. From its initial construction, it can be seen that Bethsaida was predetermined to function as a capital city and the residence of the ruler.

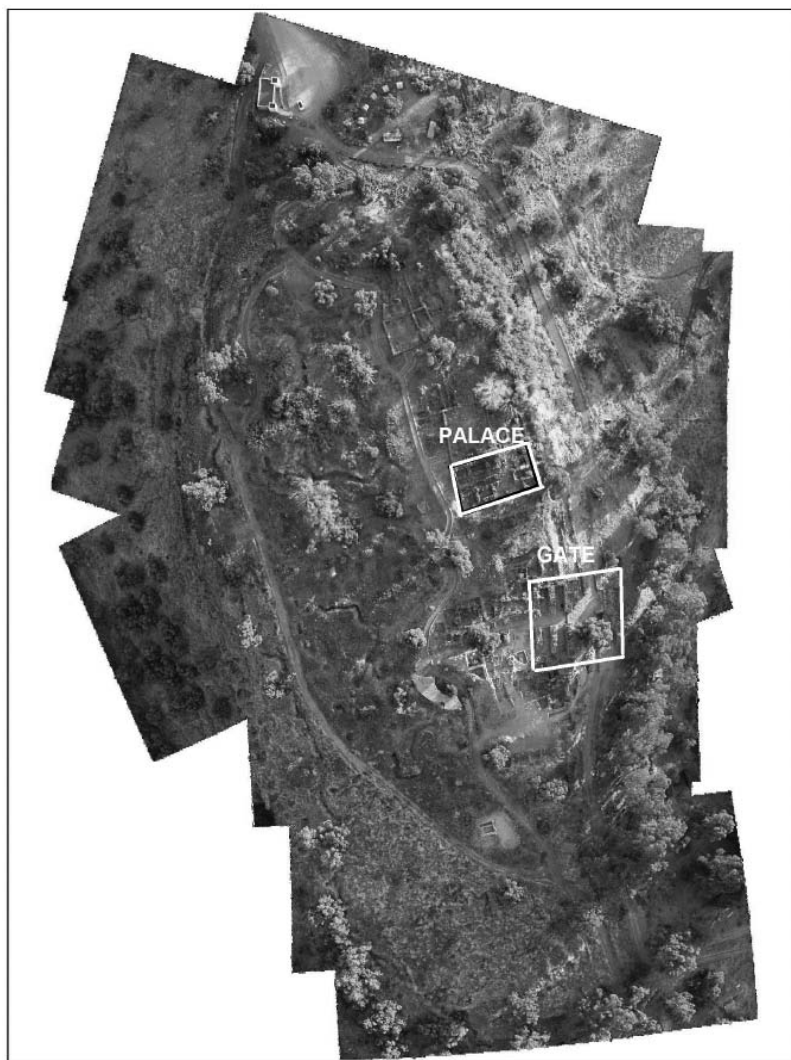
Preplanning a city is not a very common feature of the Iron Age IIA settlements. Many cities grew organically from villages or small settlements into larger cities (fig. 3). However, the features observed at Bethsaida clearly indicate careful city preplanning and not an organic growth. Some compelling arguments for this conclusion are as follows:

1. The original hillock that was strewn with large boulders that were impractical to move. Thus, the alternative was to bury them with massive amounts of dirt supported by retaining walls.
2. The hillock had cliffs of 2–8 m in height impossible to level. The solution was to create a series of terraces built on top of one other, which provided flat leveled areas for construction.
3. Four terraces each composed of well-built retaining walls can be observed on the mound.

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5. For detailed information and the historical contenders for the construction and destructions of Strata VI and V see Arav 2004, 15–18.

4. The paved road leading to the city gate was constructed on the third terrace counting up from the bottom of the hill.
5. This road and the third terrace overlooking a drop of about 25 m to the ravine.



**Fig 3:** An aerial photograph of Bethsaida. Notice the proximity of the palace and the gate. Courtesy of the author and Bethsaida Excavations Project.

The massive investment in bringing dirt and creating terraces can only be the result of preplanning and government funding. Moreover, the city gate had to have been constructed after the terraces were built, which also only makes sense with preplanning and not from natural growth from a small settlement into a large fortified city.

Further features indicate that the city was the seat where the governing body exercised authority. Authority and law enforcement have definite physical manifestations that are embodied in mortar and bricks, and some of the most important features of law and order at Bethsaida are of a physical nature, such as its road system.

An important indication found in the design of the city infrastructure is the discovery of the four-meters-wide road that leads to the tenth century BCE city gate which had a similar entry span. A road this wide was clearly built for wheeled vehicles in contrast to a path that merely accommodated horses or donkeys. A road suitable for wheeled vehicles is physical evidence for the presence of law and order, essential for every kingdom.<sup>6</sup>

The classic example of roads as the symbol and manifestation of law and order comes from the Roman Empire. During the *Pax Romana*, when law and order were enforced all over the empire, the Roman roads system became the hallmark and the emblem of the empire.<sup>7</sup> Roman roads were the privilege of the official emissaries, military and commercial transportation. The empire invested a great deal in their construction and maintenance. Large portions were covered with cobblestones, rock-cut passages were paved in mountains, bridges, mile stones, military and customs posts were constructed, and road-maps were drawn. They were maintained regularly as dedicatory inscriptions on mile stones show.

After the Muslim conquest, and especially after the Crusade period, the Roman roads system was neglected. They fell into disuse and deteriorated. Bridges collapsed and the roads, one time the pride of the empire, turned into horse-back trails and pathways. Bernard Lewis has suggested that lack of law and order during the Mameluke period, contributed significantly to this situation. He contends that peasants would not invest in carts and other wheeled vehicles when law and order were not enforced (Lewis 2002, 175–76, 192). Thus, employing this paradigm, wide roads which could be used by wheeled vehicles, such as the ones at tenth century BCE Bethsaida, are the silent witnesses to law and order.

The unlikely location of the city gate, atop the third terrace above the ravine, is another indication of preplanning and statehood. An enemy planning to charge

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6. In the mid-eighth century BCE, the Moabite king Mesha boasted, in his stele, of paving a road in the Arnon, perhaps as part of his royal undertakings (ואנך עשתי המסלת) (בארנן) (Ahituv 1992, 249–61).

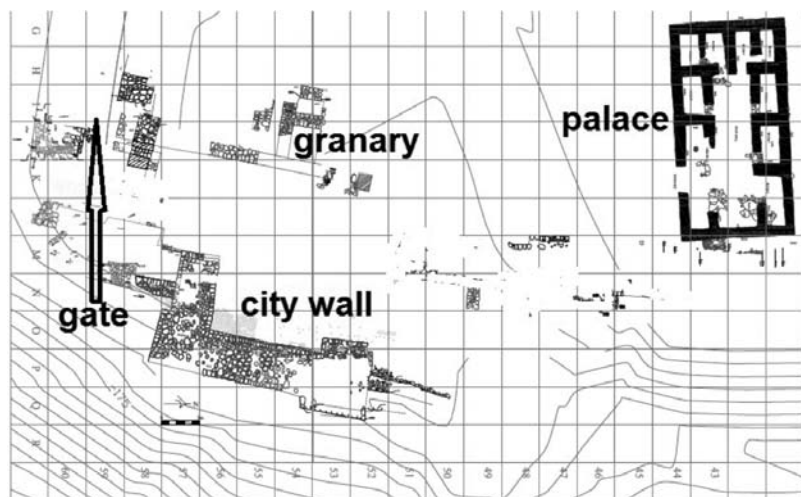
7. See short entry in Robert 2005, 657–58, and all the Roman roads in the Roman Empire Talbert 2000.

the city walls had to contend with either crossing the deep ravine or advancing in the shadow of the highly fortified city walls, exposing their unprotected right arms to the defenders situated on the top of the walls.

### GRANARY

The remains of the city gate of Stratum V were remarkably preserved. The inner-city gate, positioned at a right angle to the outer city gate, and located on the west side of a large courtyard, consisted of two robust towers and four deep chambers arranged symmetrically, with two on each side of the central passageway and abutting the two towers.

Previous scholarship had speculated that the chambers of city gates served military purposes as barracks, or staging areas, or as overnight lodging accommodations for merchants.<sup>8</sup> Yet the extraordinary state of preservation of Bethsaida's city gate clearly indicates that the four chambers served as granaries. One chamber was filled up with barley, two others contained emmer wheat, and the fourth chamber stored offerings brought to the high places, in different sorts of vessels.



**Fig 4:** Stratum VI ground plan, notice the proximity of all the symbols of authority, palace city walls, city gate, granary, city cult. Courtesy of the author and Bethsaida Excavations Project.

8. See discussion in Arav 2009, 34–40.

Furthermore, contrary to a common assertion that granaries were public buildings, it should be noted that these chambers most probably were not for public use, but were instead royal property, serving as a place where taxes were collected and distributed. Their proximity to the palace is a strong indicator that they were closely supervised by the authorities. Tax collection and distribution is another important indicator for law and order.

Stratum VI had a different type of granary (fig. 4). Grain was not stored in the chambers of the gate; similar to the granaries at Tel Hadar, it was stored in a separate building near the city gate and near the palace. The granary of Stratum VI was similar in its architecture to Tel Hadar and contained a high threshold that separated the storage room from the passageway.

The Bethsaida granary, however, was twice the size of the granary at Tel Hadar. The increased storage capacity in Stratum VI means that compared with the eleventh century BCE Tel Hadar, the tax collection of the tenth century BCE was doubled. This change apparently owes to improvements in agricultural technology, iron tipped plows having replaced wooden plows, as well as the emergence of a more robust administration.

## CITY CULT

The five high places and seven stelae discovered in Stratum V at Bethsaida clearly indicate that the city gate also served as a city's cult center.<sup>9</sup> Similar to the city gate and the granaries, the proximity of the religious center to the palace points to a special affinity of the city cult with the governing body of the kingdom during the ninth to the eighth centuries BCE (Stratum V, fig. 5). This proximity was discerned also in the previous period of Stratum VI and shows that during Stratum V this tendency intensified, but it did not originate in this later period.

Despite the fact that Stratum V exhibits components that show vibrant religious practices, the city cult of Stratum VI is not completely understood. A very large high podium, a possible high place, a stele found in secondary use in Stratum V, and some fragments of a fenestrated clay altar are thus far the only remains of the earlier cult center.<sup>10</sup>

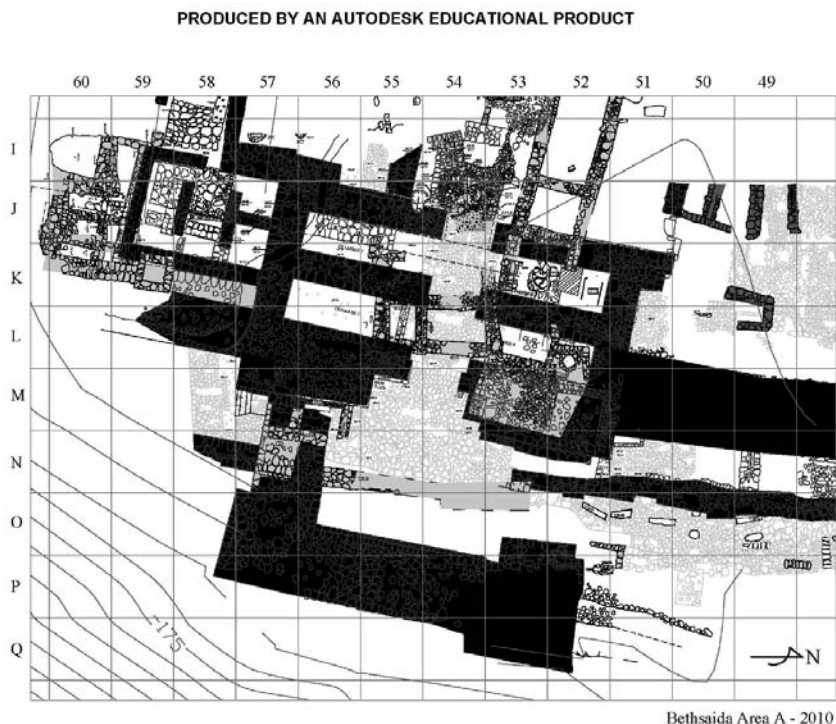
In conclusion, the traits of authority, hallmarks of law and order typical to statehood, are obviously pronounced in Stratum V, but have their origin in eleventh century Stratum VI and conform to the common notion that by the tenth century BCE, statehood emerged at the Southern Levant (Rainey and Notley 2006, 157–89).

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9. The city gate was rather big, about 850 sq. m. The high places are actually small installations. For detailed descriptions see: Arav 2004, 17–39; 2008, 102–108; 2009, 40–50; 2013, 20–27.

10. For preliminary report see 2011 Field Report at: <http://world.unomaha.edu/bethsaida/reports.php>, accessed 2/26/2014



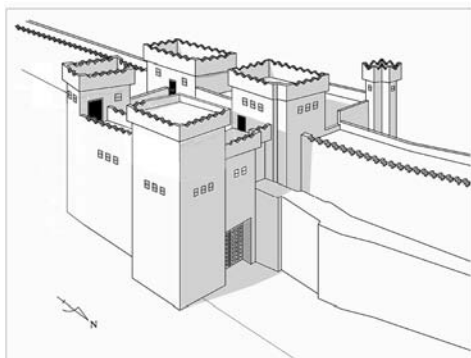


**Fig. 5:** Ground plan of Stratum V city gate. Courtesy of the author and Bethsaida Excavations Project.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CITY GATE IN THE BIBLE AND IN ARCHAEOLOGY

City gates are the most important establishment of a biblical city (Herzog 1992, 852; Herzog 1997; Blomquist 1999; Arav 2009a, 23–27; fig. 6). They are the juridical center where the elders of the city located their seats and judged cases, even capital cases, as in Deut 21:18–21. The biblical texts indicate for example that parents could bring complaints a son's bad behavior (stubborn, rebellious, gluttonous, or drunkenness) to the attention of the elders seated at the city gate who were to pass judgment to stone him to death. The "woman of valor" from Prov 31 works hard day and night so that her husband may be seated together with the elders at the city gate.





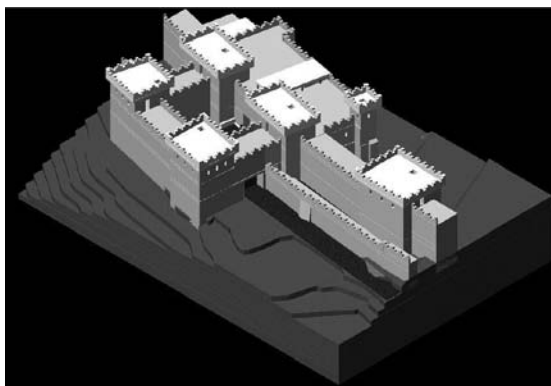
**Fig. 6:** A reconstruction of Stratum V city gate. Courtesy of the author and Bethsaida Excavations Project.

The gates were also the commercial centers where transactions regularly took place. When Abraham negotiated the purchase of the cave of Machpela from Ephron the Hittite, the transaction took place at the city gate (Gen 23). The same protocol was followed when Boaz purchased from Naomi all the property of Elimelek, Kilion, and Mahlon, and acquired Ruth as his wife (Ruth 4:1–12). Political decisions that were under the jurisdiction of the elders also took place at the gates. When Gideon chased the Midianites,

he asked provisions from the elders of the city of Succoth seated at the gate of the city (Judg 8:4–17). At Bethsaida, benches measuring 25 meters in total length were discovered along the walls of the inner courtyard; these benches would have provided seating for about 50 elders.

The city gate served also as the bulletin board of the community where news was disseminated. When David awaited the result of the battle with his rebellious son Absalom, he was at the courtyard of the city gate of Mahanaim (2 Sam 18:24–33; fig. 7 3D reconstruction of the city gate).

The Bible also preserves information about religious functions performed at the city gate. Three annual pilgrimage visits to the temple in Jerusalem are prescribed in the Bible. Pilgrims were expected to bring offerings and never to come empty handed (Deut 16:16–17). Yet, in cases when individuals could not make the pilgrimage, the biblical narrative instructs them to place their



**Fig. 7:** A 3D reconstruction of the city gate. Courtesy of the author and Bethsaida Excavations Project.

offerings at the city gate where they were to be collected by the priests of the city (Deut 18:28–29).

As stated above, in addition to the juridical and commercial functions, Bethsaida preserves evidence for some religious rituals. The five high places and seven stelae that were discovered at the city gate were found at the different sections of the gate. The high places were of three types. We dubbed two of them “stepped high places,” which had steps leading to a podium. Two did not have steps and were dubbed “direct access high places,” and one was a sacrificial high place.

Since the inner gate was constructed of two symmetrical wings, the positioning of the types was symmetrical too. One stepped high place and one direct access were discovered in each wing of the gate, and at the back, inside the city, there was the sacrificial high place. Most probably, these high places received offerings which were collected and placed in the northeastern chamber of the city gate (Chamber 4). The offerings included vessels of all types, hippo jars, jugs, bowls, craters, and tripod perforated cups. Remains of grain at the floor of the chamber may allude to the content of these vessels (fig. 8).



**Fig 8:** Offering vessels from Chamber 4 at the city gate. Courtesy of the author and Bethsaida Excavations Project.

We found two pottery vessels of the type, dubbed “the three-legged perforated cup,” in the basin on top of the stepped high place. We propose that they served as water libation vessels (Arav 2009, 87–94; 2011, 357–69).

Among the seven steles at the gate, one stele depicted an icon (fig. 9). The stele was placed atop the podium of the stepped high place nestled in the niche of the northwestern tower. This icon has been identified as the moon god or Haddad, or the combination/syncretization of both.<sup>11</sup> It was impossible to determine what other deities may have been worshiped at the other high places. The sacrificial high place consisted of a low and large paved rampart abutting the southwestern wall of the city gate. A four-horned altar, a large flat slab of basalt stone, and a few basalt craters were discovered on the rampart. Near it there was a deep pit filled to the brim with ashes and animal bones. Analysis of the bones revealed that all were “kosher” animals (cattle, sheep, and goats), all complying with Lev 11 and Deut 14. The pit did not contain pig bones or other non-kosher animals (see the detailed discussion in Arav 2004, 23–29). It suffices to note that the deity, to whom the sacrifice at Bethsaida was offered, shared similar prescribed sacrifices with the Israelites’ God.



**Fig. 9:** The iconic stele found on the top of the Stepped High Place at Stratum VI niche of the northwestern tower of the city gate. Currently located at the Israel Museum Jerusalem. Courtesy of the author and Bethsaida Excavations Project.

### THE CITY GATE AS THE HUB OF THE CITY

An interesting question is raised when one observes the significance of the ancient Near Eastern city gate as compared to Greco Roman civic centers. Those civic centers, whether the Greek Agora or the Roman forum, were always in the physical center of the city. The biblical city’s civic center, however, was located at the gate, the edge of the city, far removed from its physical center. What may have

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11. For detailed discussion see: Misch-Brandl 1997; Burnett and Keel 1998; Ornan 2001, 25; Arav 2009, 47–48.

been the reason for this? Why would people make all their transactions at the gate and not in the physical center of the city? Why would the elders of the city be seated at the liminal portion of the city and not in the midst of it? These questions are even more acute when comparing the city gates in the Iron Age with gates in the Middle Bronze Age. In the latter, the city gates were just an opening in the city wall. Many other city gates present strong watchtowers built as a fort to guard the entrance and perhaps to serve as the last stand in case the entire city falls into the hands of the enemy. This fort could be locked from the outside by a heavy strong door, and curiously, it was locked in the same way also from inside. In a few cases, a few successive doors were built to secure the defense of the watchtower.

This city gate system certainly did not evolve into the Iron Age city gates. Therefore, the question is what caused this unusual phenomenon?

A few years ago, we attempted to answer this question during a conference in Omaha, Nebraska. We examined the view of a few ancient sources related to urbanism. The sources selected were the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint (LXX), the Dead Sea Scrolls, the New Testament, and Classical Greek philosophers.

The Hebrew Bible was examined by N. Roddy who based his theory on the French philosopher and theologian Jacques Ellul. This theory proposed that the Hebrew Bible almost unanimously views the city as a negative entity. Contrary to the Mesopotamians, the cities in the Bible were not conceptualized as descended to mankind from heaven but were rather founded by humans. The first city was said to be founded by none other than Cain, the forefather of all criminals. The city, therefore, from this perspective is stained with crime, corruption, and unfairness. The biblical prophets raise their complaints about social injustice against the backdrop of urban life. Jeremiah wished to live in the desert:

For they are all adulterers a band of traitors.  
They bend their tongues like bows;  
they have grown strong in the land for falsehood, and not for truth;  
for they proceed from evil to evil. (Jer 9:1–2 [NRSV])

Isaiah calls to leave the city go back to the desert and start all over again:

A voice cries out:  
“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” (Isa 40:3 [NRSV])

Amos condemns the city dwellers of Samaria:

You cows of Bashan who are on Mount Samaria,  
who oppress the poor, who crush the needy,  
who say to their husbands, “Bring something to drink!” (Amos 4:1 [NRSV])

The New Testament has a similar attitude, although it is considered to be an urban composition. Jesus never visited any city, although he was near Sepphoris, Caesarea Philippi and the Decapolis (Williams 2008, 23–37). The LXX and the Greek philosophers present totally a different attitude. The LXX, written in an urban environment, translated the Hebrew word for a tent into a house (Green-spoon 2008, 39–52). The Dead Sea Scroll sect followed Isaiah's call and left Jerusalem to dwell in the desert awaiting the apocalyptic battle between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness. The Greek philosophers, with the exception of Diogenes, envisioned urban life in terms of shelter and safety, and maintained that they could not be creative and thrive outside the city. The Stoics were active in the *stoats* (covered walkways) of the *agora* or town market; Socrates preferred death to leaving the city and presented a paradigm for Greek philosophers (Grams 2008, 53–65).

Archaeological surveys indicate a situation. The reality was that most people did not live in cities. Moreover, compared with the large Philistine cities, the towns of Judah and Israel were rather small, hardly over 5 hectares.<sup>12</sup> The Shishak campaign (925 BCE) lists 150 place names conquered in Judah and Israel, few were cities and most were small rural settlements. It seems therefore that the cities with their formidable fortifications were viewed as a threat. Most people wished to avoid the city centers and to carry out their business at the gates of the cities rather than in the core of the city.

This was not the first time in the history of the Southern Levant that animosity, xenophobia, and fear of city dwellers is encountered. The population of the majestic cities of the Middle Bronze Age, which were by far much larger than the Iron Age cities, dwindled during the Late Bronze Age as a growing number of dissidents left the cities to live in the country. This disposition was ubiquitous all over the Ancient Near East and is known as the phenomenon of Habiru and Apiru.

Therefore, the small size of the cities, compared with the Philistine and Greek cities, the development of the city gates as the hub of urban life can be explained as a general reluctance of the populace to negotiate with the city dwellers.

## THE ASSYRIAN CONQUEST AND THE END OF THE ERA

Life at Bethsaida and the kingdom of Geshur came to a complete end in 734–732 BCE with the military campaign of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III. The conquest and destruction of Bethsaida was total and overwhelming. Never again did Bethsaida attain the grandeur it held during the Iron Age.

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12. Exceptional is Jerusalem that in the eighth century BCE grew to 60 hectares as a result of population from the northern kingdom of Israel fleeing the Assyrian conquest (Faust 2013, 205–6).

As much as the destruction was tragic for the people of Bethsaida in the eighth century BCE, it was fortunate for archaeology. It gave us an unusual opportunity to excavate a city that was destroyed rapidly rather than being abandoned gradually. Despite the thorough destruction, and perhaps even because of that destruction, the city was preserved as if it had been stored in a time capsule. Even the phases of conquest and destruction can be remarkably traced and examined (Arav 2009a, 64–70; 2009b). The conquest and destruction were, after all, not executed in one blast. The siege was carried on in stages, ending in battle and finally destruction. The process took was ongoing, with some time spanning each stage.

Unlike Sennacherib's conquest of Lachish three decades later (701 BCE), no ramparts were built over the city walls of Bethsaida and the siege took place on the city gate itself. It seems that the siege was quite lengthy since the granaries including wheat were totally emptied and only the barley chamber was full. The Assyrians managed to break into the city using battering rams, and the battle at the city gate was fierce, which would explain the dozens of iron arrowheads discovered there.<sup>13</sup>

In the next stage, the Assyrians plundered the remains of the chambers at the gate, while destroying the content of one of the chambers and thoroughly destroying the storage house abutting the city gate from the south. In this stage, they perhaps allowed survivors to dispose of the dead. No human remains were discovered at the gate.

The next stage was setting fire to the entire gate. The blaze was extremely hot, perhaps intensified by bitumen brought from Assyria that caused the bricks and stone to melt down and create clinkers (stony residue created by conflagration). The fire caused a collapse of the structure.

In the following stage, a demolition team collected the remains of the gate and dumped it into the ravine. They removed the entire eastern sections of the gate including digging about two meters below the floor of the stratum. Tens of tons of debris appeared to have been removed in a process that must have taken several weeks. Our excavations reveal the Roman level, Stratum II, directly above Stratum VI in the eastern section of the gate.

With the completion of the demolition the Iron Age city of Bethsaida came to its end.

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13. For analysis of the projectiles found at the gate see Arav 2009a, 109–12.

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## 5

# Philistia in the Late Iron Age II: The Development of the Ceramic Assemblage\*

*Seymour Gitin*

## DEDICATION

It is a pleasure and an honor to contribute to the *Festschrift* for my dear friend Oded Borowski. Our friendship goes back to the early 1970s, when we were staff members at the Gezer excavations. Since then, I have followed Oded's meticulous archaeological fieldwork at Lahav, and have learned much from his many publications.<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

The late Iron Age II Philistine ceramic assemblage is a development of the material culture of the group of Sea Peoples who originally settled on the southern coastal plain of what is modern-day Israel in the first quarter of the twelfth century BCE (Gitin 2010, 311). Of Aegean origin, the Philistines conquered the Canaanites and established the Pentapolis of Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath, and Gaza at the same time as the Israelites settled in the hill country (Josh 13:2–3; 1 Sam 6:17). The Philistines' distinctive pottery was influenced by Mycenaean styles, and their temples and shrines at Ashdod, Ekron, and Tel Qasile included a variety of Aegean architectural and cultic elements (Dothan 1998, 153–58).

The Philistines soon came into conflict with the Israelites, and in the eleventh century, were eventually able to occupy part of the Judean hill country (Judg 14–

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\* Figs. 1–17 are by Marina Zeltser. Images from *Ashkelon 3* are courtesy of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon; *Ashdod II–III*, *IV*, and *VI* are courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority; from *Beer-Sheba I* and *Lachish I–V*, and *V* are courtesy of the Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University; from *Safi-Gath* are courtesy Tell es-Safi-Gath Archaeological Project of Bar Ilan University; from *En-Gedi I* and *Tinnah II* are courtesy of the Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. This article was copyedited by Edna Sachar.

1. I do, however, have one piece of advice: Oded, stay off the roof!

16). They were finally defeated by the Israelite King David at the beginning of the tenth century (1 Chr 18:1), and after the establishment of the divided kingdoms of Judah and Israel at the end of that century, the Philistines often engaged in border battles with the two kingdoms (1 Kgs 15:27; 16:15; 2 Chr 21:16–17; 26:6–7).

With the expansion of the Neo-Assyrian Empire in the ninth/eighth century, the Assyrian kings exacted tribute from the Philistines (*ANET*, 282), and by the early part of the seventh century, the remaining four Philistine capital cities of Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, and Gaza became Assyrian vassals, as did the kingdom of Judah (Machinist 1992, 74; *ANET*, 291); in the last quarter of that century, these cities came under the influence of Egypt (Gitin 2010, 312).

Following the conquests in Syria and Palestine during the reign of the Babylonian King Nebuchadrezzar (605–562 BCE), the Philistines and the Judeans were taken into captivity (Eph'al 1978, 80, 82; Rainey and Notley 2006, 263–64); the Philistines eventually disappeared from the pages of history, while the remnants of Judah returned to their homeland (Gitin 2003, 76).

In the Iron I and IIA of the twelfth–ninth centuries, Philistine material culture was influenced by both Phoenicia and Judah, as reflected in the development of the ceramic assemblage (Gitin 2015a, 259). As a result, by the Iron IIB of the eighth century, Philistine pottery had changed significantly. It is this assemblage that serves as the point of departure for the study of the continuity and discontinuity of Philistine pottery types of the Iron Age IIB and IIC (the eighth and seventh centuries BCE). It is intended to serve as a general introduction on the subject for students, as befits the overall purpose of this *Festschrift*.<sup>2</sup> This continuity and discontinuity is primarily the result of Assyria's rise to dominance in the eastern Mediterranean basin in the seventh century (Oded 1974) and Philistia's consequent favored-nation status at the expense of Judah (*ANET*, 288).

Due to the limitations in excavation, quality of data, and the state of publications, the ceramic corpus for the Iron IIB and IIC comes primarily from the inner Coastal Plain sites of Tel Miqne-Ekron (Strata II–I) and Tel Batash (Timnah) (Strata III–II), the daughter city of Ekron, and the Philistine coastal sites of Ashdod (Strata VIII–VI) and Ashkelon (the 604 BCE destruction phase) (Gitin 2015a, 257; 2015b, 353).<sup>3</sup> These sites reflect not only chronological, but also regional differences in Philistia. As for the lower Shephelah site of Tell eš-Šafi/Gath on the eastern edge of Philistia, the major Iron II Philistine representation is in the Iron IIA, and the Iron IIB ceramic assemblage is minimal and mostly Judean; the site apparently was not occupied in the seventh century (see Gitin 2015a, 258).

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2. See Gitin 2015a; 2015b. For more detailed analyses, see *Timnah II*, ch. 2; Gitin 2017.

3. When a type has thus far been found at only one of these two coastal sites, it is referred to as attested on the coast.

Therefore, the Şafi/Gath materials are referenced only for whole examples of a type attested exclusively by fragments in the Iron IIB.

The Iron IIB is best represented by pottery assemblages from Ekron, Timnah, and Ashdod (Gitin 2015a, 257). At Ekron, a well-stratified sequence of Strata IIA and IIB floors and drainage systems in the upper city (Field I) produced a significant ceramic assemblage (*NEAEHL* 5, 1995). Timnah Stratum III follows a gap in occupation, and is represented by large-scale rebuilding in the early eighth century. A substantial part of the Stratum III ceramic assemblage found in the destruction by Neo-Assyrian King Sennacherib during his 701 BCE campaign (*ANET*, 287–88) is in the Philistine coastal tradition (*Timnah II*, 157), marking the period in which Timnah was under the influence of Ekron (*Timnah II*, 279–810). Ashdod Stratum VIIIB in Area D, with well-defined stratigraphy and architectural units, is dated to the eighth century (*Ashdod II–III*, 88–89),<sup>4</sup> as is Stratum VIII in Area M (*Ashdod IV*, 28, 57). Although Stratum VIII in Area H was almost completely eroded away, the bulk of the ceramic assemblage can be dated to the end of the eighth century (Mazar and Ben-Shlomo 2005, 44; Ben-Shlomo 2005, 213). The Iron IIB material from Ashkelon is somewhat fragmentary, and has yet to be published.

The Iron IIC pottery corpus from Philistia reflects the continuity of Iron IIA–B southern Coastal Plain ceramic traditions, as well as discontinuity and the introduction of new ceramic types. This is best illustrated by the examples from Ekron, with its three securely-dated stratigraphic divisions of seventh/sixth century Strata IC, IB, and IA, represented mainly by pottery from the elite zone (Field IV) (Gitin 1997, 87–92) and the industrial zone (Field III) (Gitin 1989, 48). The pottery from Ashdod Strata VII and VI comes primarily from Areas D and M, the former dated to the end of the eighth/seventh century and the latter the the end of the seventh century (*Ashdod II–III*, 114–15). Complementary ceramic forms come from Areas H and K (*Ashdod II–III*, 86–124; *Ashdod IV*, 28–42, 56–58; Ben-Shlomo 2005, 217–35). The pottery from Ashkelon is from the 604 BCE Babylonian destruction (Stager 2011, 11). The examples from Timnah come from the destruction of Stratum II, also dated to 604 BCE (*Timnah II*, 281–82).

A number of pottery types common in but not exclusive to Philistia augment the limited Iron IIB assemblage. They represent an interregional group found at both Philistine and Judean Shephelah sites, such as bowls (fig. 1:7–9). These include Philistine ceramic traditions that exhibit influences from neighboring Judah and from Phoenicia, by virtue of imports through maritime trade. Table 1 presents a summary of the illustrated examples of continuity/discontinuity.

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4. For the division of this stratum into VIIIA and VIIIB, the latter destroyed by Neo-Assyrian King Sargon II in 712 BCE, see *Ashdod II–III*, 21, 115; for further support for this division, see Ben-Shlomo 2005, 200.

TYPE	CONTINUITY		DISCONTINUITY	
	IRON IIB	IRON IIC	IRON IIB	IRON IIC
Bowl	Fig. 1:1–6	Fig. 1:10–15	Fig. 1:7–9	Figs. 1:16–17; 2:1–2
Scoop	Fig. 2:3–4		—	—
Chalice	Fig. 3:1–2	Fig. 3:3–4		Fig. 3:5
Krater	Figs. 4:1, 3; 6:1	Figs. 5:1–2; 6:2	Fig. 4:2, 4	—
Cooking pot	Fig. 6:4		—	Fig. 7:2–3
	Fig. 6:3, 5 Fig. 7:1		—	—
Jar-krater	—		—	Fig. 8:1
Storage jar	Fig. 8:2–3, 5	Fig. 9:1–3	Fig. 8:4	Fig. 9:4–5
Holemouth jar	Fig. 9:9			Fig. 9:6–8
Amphora	Fig. 10:3	Fig. 12:1	Figs. 10:1–2; 11:1	Figs. 11:2–3; 12:2
Jug	Fig. 13:1–2	Fig. 14:2–3	Figs. 13:3–4; 14:1	Figs. 14:4; 15:2
Juglet	Fig. 15:1, 3	Fig. 15:7–9	Fig. 15:4–6	Fig. 15:10–12
Stand	—		—	Fig. 16:1
OTHER TYPES				
Decanter	Fig. 16:2		—	—
Storage jar	Fig. 16:3		—	—
Lamp	—		—	Fig. 17:5
Phoenician storage jar	—		—	Fig. 16:4
East Greek skyphos	—		—	Fig. 17:2

Cypriot mortarium	Fig. 17:3	—	—
Assyrian- type bowl	Fig. 11:1	—	—
Assyrian- type bottle	—	—	Fig. 17:4

**Table 1:** Continuity and discontinuity of ceramic types in the Iron IIB and Iron IIC.

## BOWLS

There are three main Iron IIB Philistine bowl types that have antecedents in the Iron I and continue to develop through the Iron II. The most common type, which appears throughout Philistia, is a small to medium-size round-sided bowl with an incision or groove immediately below the tapered rim and a short ring or disc base (fig. 1:1). It first appears at the end of the Iron I and continues through the Iron IIC, also as the most common bowl (fig. 1:10–11). A smaller red-slipped and occasionally burnished form (fig. 1:3) may also be attested by plain examples. A deeper form with a wider incision (fig. 1:2) is the forerunner of an Iron IIC type (fig. 1:12).

The second most common type, found only on the inner Coastal Plain, is a small, slightly carinated bowl with an outwardly-angled upper sidewall and a simple rounded or tapered rim (fig. 1:4); it is occasionally red-slipped. First attested at the end of the Iron I, it develops through the Iron IIC (fig. 1:13). A larger Iron IIB variant has a shallow bowl, an outwardly-angled upper sidewall, a tapered and slightly everted, incised rim, and a short ring base (fig. 1:5); examples may be red-slipped. Occurring only on the inner Coastal Plain, it is the antecedent of one of the predominant bowl types in the Iron IIC (fig. 1:14).

The third primary type, although not as well attested as the other two, is a medium-size, round-sided bowl with an in-set, profiled rim with a groove below it (fig. 1:6). It developed from an Iron I form and appears throughout Philistia in the Iron IIA–B, except in the lower Shephelah, and is the antecedent of an Iron IIC bowl (fig. 1:16).

Two types common in the Iron IIA–B do not continue into the Iron IIC. One is a sharply carinated red-slipped and usually hand-burnished bowl (fig. 1:7). It is first attested in Philistia at the end of the Iron I, as is a variant distinguished by the position of its high carination (fig. 1:8). The other is a medium-size to large round-sided bowl with a flattened, multiple-grooved rim, usually red-slipped and hand-burnished (fig. 1:9). It also first appears at the end of the Iron I. Both are interregional types not only found throughout Philistia, but well attested in the Judean Shephelah in the early and late Iron IIA (Zimhoni 1997, fig. 3.21:15; 2004b, 1660, Type B-5).

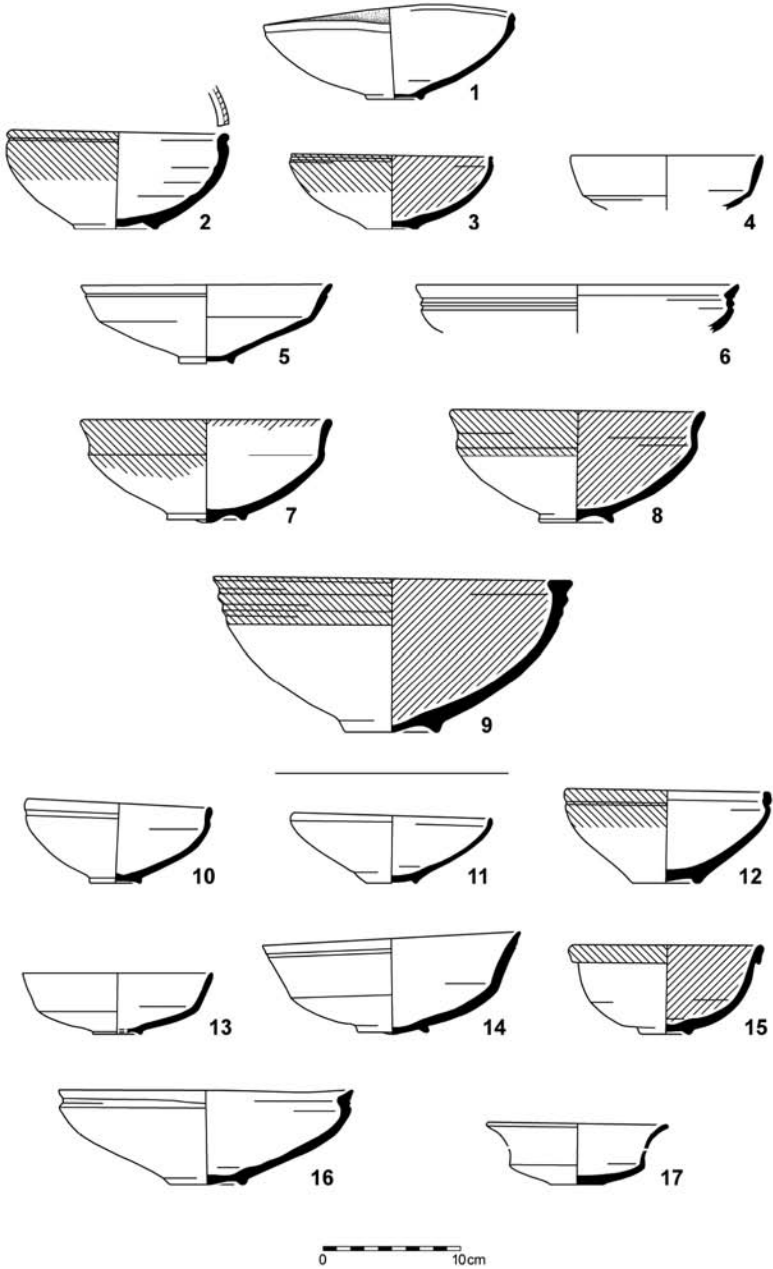


Fig. 1: Bowls.

	Vessel	Site	Stratum	Reference
1.	Bowl	Ekron	IIA	Reg. No. ISW.4.109.11, L. 4028
2.	Bowl	Ashdod	VIII	<i>Ashdod IV</i> : Fig. 13:5
3.	Bowl	Timnah	III	<i>Timnah II</i> : Pl. 89:1
4.	Bowl	Timnah	III	<i>Timnah II</i> : Pl. 24:3
5.	Bowl	Ekron	IIA	Reg. No. ISW.28.254.1, L. 28035
6.	Bowl	Timnah	III	<i>Timnah II</i> : Pl. 57:18
7.	Bowl	Ashdod	VIII	<i>Ashdod II–III</i> : Fig. 88:9
8.	Bowl	Timnah	III	<i>Timnah II</i> : Pl. 28:1
9.	Bowl	Timnah	IV	<i>Timnah II</i> : Pl. 82:11
10.	Bowl	Ekron	IB	Gitin 2016: Fig. 4A.1:15
11.	Bowl	Ekron	IC	Gitin 2016: Fig. 4A.1:1
12.	Bowl	Ashdod	VI	<i>Ashdod IV</i> : Fig. 26:6
13.	Bowl	Ekron	IC	Gitin 2016: Fig. 4A.2:30
14.	Bowl	Ekron	IC	Gitin 2016: Fig. 4A.3:7
15.	Bowl	Timnah	II	<i>Timnah II</i> : Pl. 31:26
16.	Bowl	Ekron	IB	Gitin 2016: Fig. 4A.4:10
17.	Bowl	Ashkelon	Grid 38 Phase 14	<i>Ashkelon 3</i> : Fig. 5.20

**Fig. 1:** Bowls.

While some bowl types with antecedents in the Iron I develop through the Iron II (fig. 1:1–6), representing continuity in the pottery corpus in Philistia, two Iron IIB types (fig. 1:7–9) do not continue into the Iron IIC, and four other types only appear in the Iron IIC (figs. 1:15, 17; 2:1–2). The last include a small to medium-size carinated bowl with an outwardly-curving upper sidewall, an everted, overhanging rim, and low ring or disc base, usually red-slipped on the interior and rim exterior and wheel-burnished on the interior (fig. 1:15). Other Iron IIC types are influenced by Assyrian traditions—for example, the medium-size bowl with a low carination, a out-curved upper sidewall, an everted, tapered rim, and a wide disc base (fig. 1:17)—or by Phoenician traditions—for example,

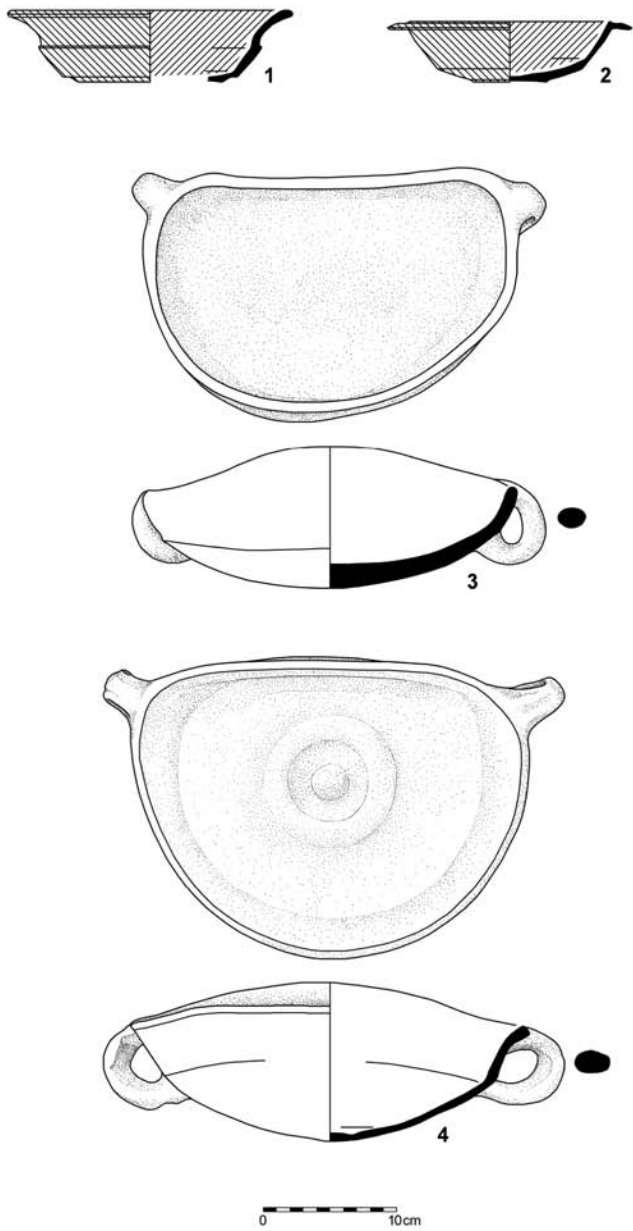


Fig. 2: Bowls and scoops.



	Vessel	Site	Stratum	Reference
1.	Bowl	Ashkelon	Grid 50 Phase 7	<i>Ashkelon 3</i> : Fig. 5.14
2.	Bowl	Ashkelon	Grid 50 Phase 7	<i>Ashkelon 3</i> : Fig. 5.7
3.	Scoop	Timnah	III	<i>Timnah II</i> : Pl. 14:16
4.	Scoop	Ekron	Pre-IC	Gitin 2016: Fig. 4A.9:2

**Fig 2:** Bowls and scoops.

the red-slipped and burnished medium-size bowl with a sharp, ridged carination at mid-point on the body, a strongly splayed upper sidewall, an everted, rounded rim, and a rounded or flattened base (fig. 2:1). Another Phoenician-tradition bowl has a sharp, low carination and a thin ledge-like rim (fig. 2:2). Of all of the above types, one type is limited to the inner Coastal Plain (fig. 1:15) and the others (figs. 1:17; 2:1–2) to the coastal cities.<sup>5</sup>

## SCOOPS

The scoop is an asymmetrical bowl with one sidewall bent to create a curved or vertical back wall. There are two types: composite and standard. The composite type has a rounded rim and two large loop handles extending from the rim to the rounded base (fig. 2:3). It first appears in the Iron I on the inner Coastal Plain, continues through the late Iron IIA, and is rare in the Iron IIB (Gitin 1993, fig. 5:1) and Iron IIC. The more common mass-produced standard type has an out-turned rim and large loop handles attached from the rim to the carination (fig. 2:4). In Philistia, the standard type only appears at inner Coastal Plain sites. The largest assemblages of standard scoops belong to the interregional Philistine/Judean Shephelah group and come from contexts dated to the end of the Iron IIB at Timnah and Ekron, as well as at Lachish in Judah (Zimhoni 2004b, fig. 26.15:4; see also Gitin 1993, 123\*).<sup>6</sup> By the Iron IIC, the standard scoop is essentially attested only at inner Coastal Plain sites.

5. The latter typical at Ashkelon.

6. The presence of significant numbers of scoops at frontier sites is related to their function in large-scale food distribution necessitated by impending military crises (Gitin 1993, 106\*–8\*).

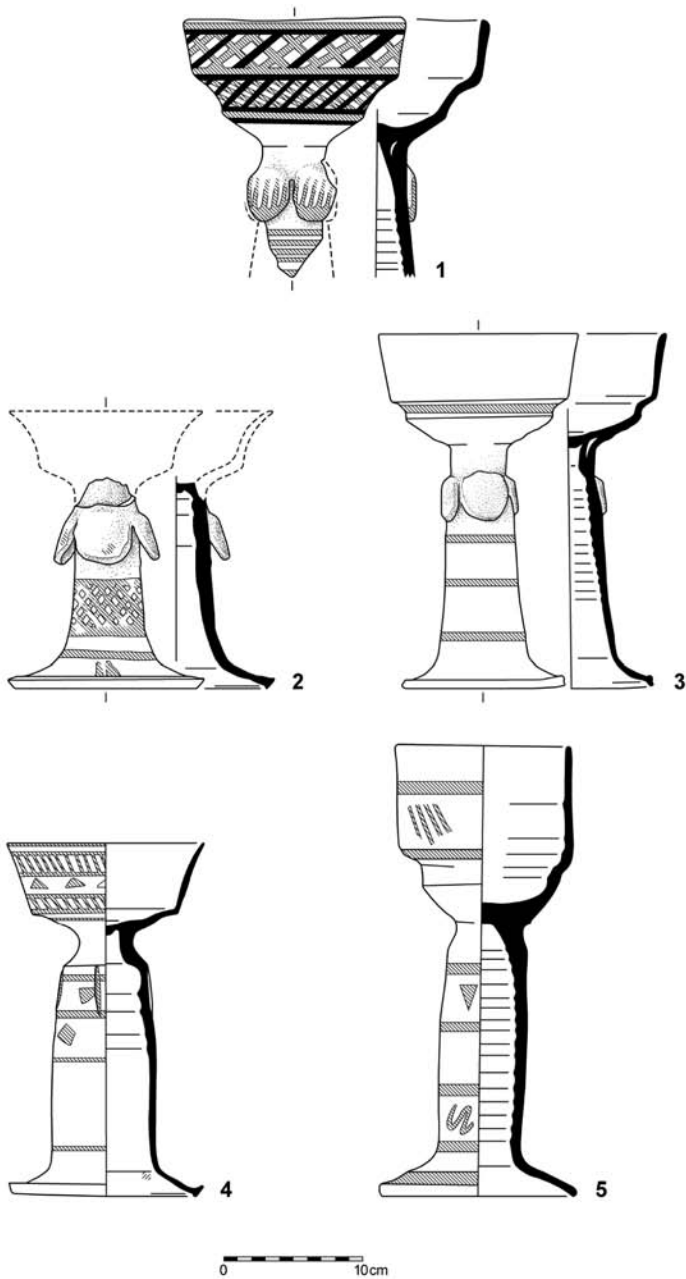


Fig. 3: Chalices.

	Vessel	Site	Stratum	Reference
1.	Chalice	Ekron	III–II	Reg. No. ISW.4.90.21, L. 4026
2.	Chalice	Ekron	III–II	Reg. No. INW.43.227.1, L. 43059
3.	Chalice	Ekron	IB	Gitin 2016: Fig. 4A.11:1
4.	Chalice	Ekron	IB	Gitin 2016: Fig. 4A.11:2
5.	Chalice	Ekron	IB	Reg. No. IIISE.15.17.1, L. 15000

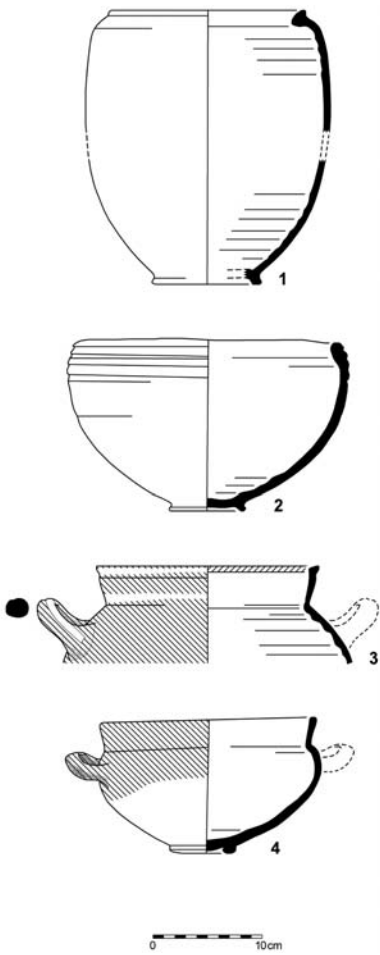
**Fig 3:** Chalices.

### CHALICES

Chalices are not common in the Iron II, but two examples appear in mixed early/late Iron IIA and Iron IIB contexts at Ekron. One has a bowl with an almost vertical upper sidewall, a simple rim, and a curved lower sidewall stepped towards a base attached directly to the top of the trumpet stand. It has a red and black decoration of a dense net pattern with bands of hatching and a finger-impression-like design on the almost flat-lying applied debased petals (fig. 3:1). The other has a trumpet-base stand with a net pattern and bands of hatching in red paint on white wash, as well as applied drooping petals (fig. 3:2).<sup>7</sup> In the Iron IIC, chalices appear primarily on the inner Coastal Plain, represented by both decorated and undecorated examples. One has a bowl with a low carination and a deep groove between the carination and the rounded lower sidewall. It is set on or into a high stand/pedestal connected to the bowl by a curved neck, and the flaring base of the stand has a sharply everted end-point. Decoration consists of red painted lines, bands, and designs, incised lines, and applied petals (fig. 3:3). The knobs may be a debased form of the applied petals typical of earlier Iron II chalices in Philistia. Another Iron IIC chalice has a different bowl shape with a curved upper sidewall and a tapered rim. The decoration consists of red painted diagonal lines and triangular designs between thin horizontal bands on the bowl, and thin vertical painted lines, horizontal bands, and diamond-shaped designs on the stand (fig. 3:4). A third Iron IIC chalice has a taller, vertical, narrow, cup-shaped bowl and a narrower stand, and is decorated with bands, triangles, a wiggle design, and angled lines (fig. 3:5). The last two are attested only at Ekron.

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7. While petal decoration appears elsewhere in the southern Levant (May 1935, 21, fig. 6), the chalices found in Philistia clearly belong to the Philistine ceramic assemblage, based on their distinctive decoration, bowl forms, and applied petals.



	Vessel	Site	Stratum	Reference
1.	Krater	Ashdod	VIII	<i>Ashdod II–III</i> : Fig. 47:5
2.	Krater	Ashdod	X	<i>Ashdod IV</i> : Fig. 7:11
3.	Krater	Ashdod	VIII	Ben-Shlomo 2005: Fig. 3.89:3
4.	Krater	Ashdod	VIII	<i>Ashdod IV</i> : Fig. 13:19

Fig 4: Kraters.

## KRATERS

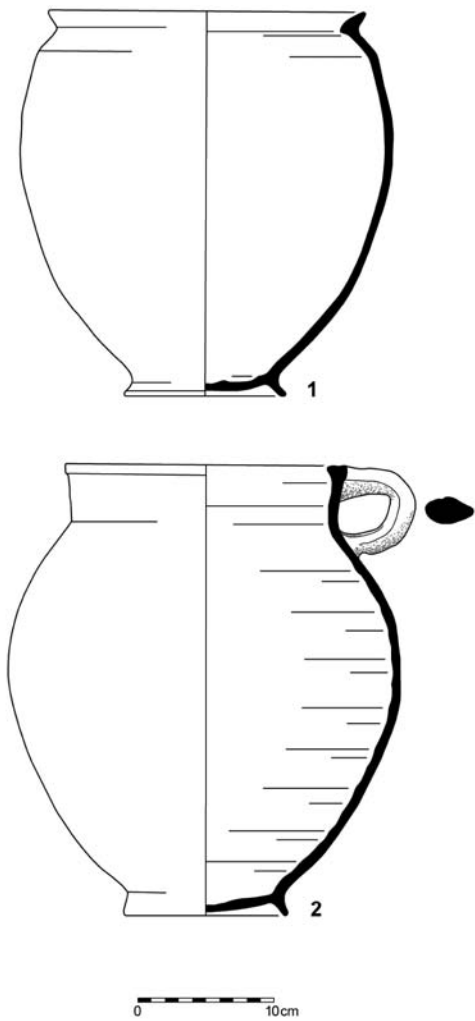
There are four main krater types. The medium-size to large krater with a deep globular body, an inverted, downwardly-angled, tapered hammerhead rim, and a footed ring base is attested on the inner Coastal Plain in the late Iron IIA/Iron IIB and on the coast in the Iron IIB (fig. 4:1). It is the antecedent of the somewhat larger and more globular Iron IIC krater attested primarily on the inner Coastal Plain as one of the most ubiquitous vessels (fig. 5:1). The second type has a round-sided bowl with a thickened, inverted, grooved rim and a short ring base (fig. 4:2). It first appears in Philistia at the end of the Iron I, and continues through the Iron IIB on the coast. The third type is medium-size to large with a deep, wide, round-sided body, a slightly outwardly-inclined neck, a flat horizontal rim, and horizontal loop handles (fig. 4:3). Both plain and red-slipped examples appear in the Iron IIB, when it is one of the predominant Philistine kraters, and a variant continues as such into the Iron IIC (fig. 5:2). The fourth type has a prominent, high, rounded carination, a slightly outwardly-inclined, wide neck, a rounded rim, a short ring base, and horizontal loop handles. It is usually red-slipped and hand-burnished (fig. 4:4), and may be decorated with black painted bands in the Late Philistine Decorated Ware (LPDW) style (Ben-Shlomo, Shai, and Maeir 2004). It is first attested in the late Iron IIA in the lower Shephelah, and continues into the Iron IIB on the coast.

A large neckless krater with a globular body, wide mouth, hammerhead rim, ring base, and four handles appears in the late Iron IIA in the lower Shephelah and in the Iron IIB on the inner Coastal Plain (fig. 6:1). Its antecedent seems to be a large ovoid krater with multiple handles attested at the end of the Iron I. A large deep variant has a short, inwardly-inclined neck, a thickened, hammerhead rim, a concave base, and 11 single-ribbed, elbow-shaped handles. An applied band with incisions around the bottom of the neck represents rope molding, and the vessel has two holes at mid-point on the body (fig. 6:2).<sup>8</sup> It is attested on the inner Coastal Plain in the Iron IIC.

Continuity of kraters from the Iron IIB through Iron IIC is represented by two types: one with a globular body and an inverted, downwardly-angled, tapered hammerhead rim (fig. 4:1), and the other with a wide round-sided body, a slightly outwardly-inclined neck, and a flat horizontal rim (fig. 4:3). A variant of the latter continues into the Iron IIC (fig. 5:2). The large, deep Iron IIB krater with multiple handles (fig. 6:1) appears in a number of variations in the Iron IIA–B at sites in

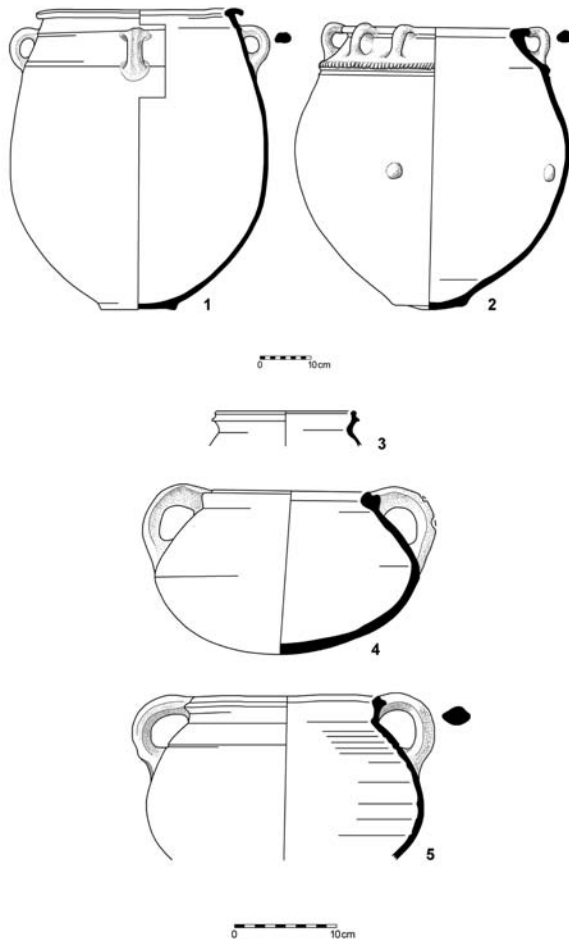
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8. Given that this vessel was found in an olive oil industrial building and that it has intentionally pierced holes in the body, it is assumed to have been used in the process of oil separation: the pressed olive liquid would have been placed in the vessel to allow the oil to rise to the top and the watery lees to drain out through the holes.



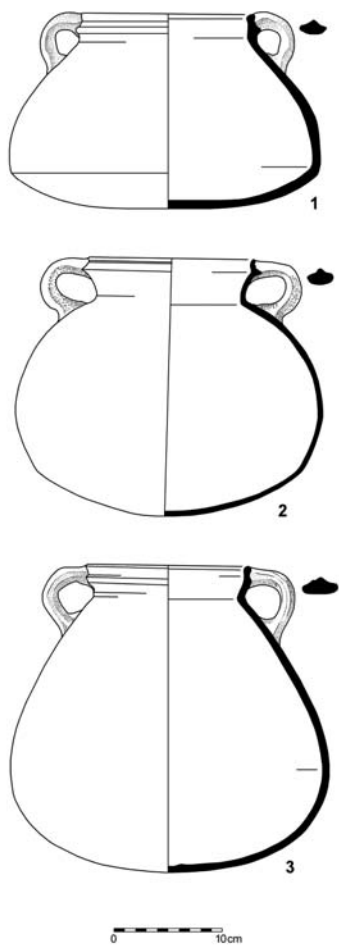
	Vessel	Site	Stratum	Reference
1.	Krater	Timnah	II	<i>Timnah II</i> : Pl. 42:6
2.	Krater	Ekron	IB	Gitin 2016: Fig. 4A.13:7

Fig. 5: Kraters.



	Vessel	Site	Stratum	Reference
1.	Large krater	Timnah	III	<i>Timnah II</i> : Pl. 28:7
2.	Large krater	Ekron	IB	Reg. No. IIISE.14.104.1, L. 14007
3.	Cooking pot	Ekron	IIA	Reg. No. ISW.4.200.15, L. 4065
4.	Cooking pot	Beersheba	II	<i>Beer-sheba I</i> : Pl. 60:78
5.	Cooking pot	Ashdod	VIII	Ben-Shlomo 2005: Fig. 3.90:1

**Fig. 6:** Large kraters and cooking pots.



	Vessel	Site	Stratum	Reference
1.	Cooking pot	Beersheba	II	<i>Beer-sheba I</i> : Pl. 61:87
2.	Cooking pot	Timnah	II	<i>Timnah II</i> : Pl. 43:3
3.	Cooking pot	Ekron	IB	Reg. No. III.SE.14.102.55, L. 14007

Fig. 7: Cooking pots.



Philistia and the lower Shephelah, and is the antecedent of the Iron IIC type attested on the inner Coastal Plain (fig. 6:2).

The Iron IIB krater with a thickened, inverted, grooved rim (fig. 4:2) and the form with the high, prominent carination (fig. 4:4) do not continue into the Iron IIC.

### COOKING POTS

In the Iron IIB, the ridged-rim cooking pot common throughout Philistia (fig. 6:4) was part of a shared Cisjordanian and Transjordanian tradition. The predominant Philistine cooking pot in the Iron IIC may first have appeared at the very end of the Iron IIB. The evidence from Philistia is fragmentary and not securely stratified, but examples represent a clear departure from the traditional Iron IIB cooking pot type, with some form characteristics that may be related to subsequent Iron IIC types.<sup>9</sup> These include a cooking pot with an everted neck and a sharply profiled beveled rim (fig. 6:3, 5). A more securely-dated potential antecedent from the second half of the eighth century is the prominent cooking pot at Beersheba. It has all the features of the most common Philistine Iron IIC cooking pot, except for the low carination (fig. 7:1).<sup>10</sup>

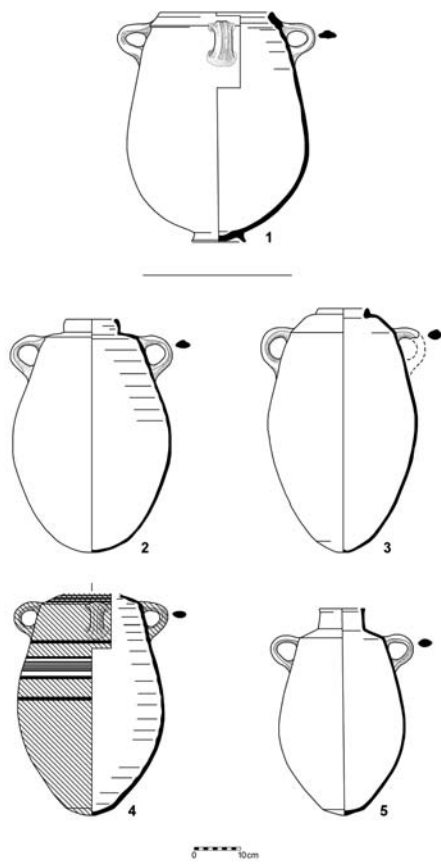
The primary Iron IIC cooking pot type in Philistia is small to medium-size with a globular body, an everted neck, a sharply profiled, beveled rim, and two ribbed handles (fig. 7:2). The second most common cooking pot at Ekron has a bag-shaped body, a short, outwardly-inclined neck, a slightly pinched, profiled rim, and two double-ribbed handles (fig. 7:3). The primary seventh century Philistine cooking pot type (fig. 7:2) appears to a limited extent in seventh and seventh/sixth century contexts at sites in other regions: at Lachish in Judah (Zimhoni 2004a, fig. 26.55:13), at the Beersheba Valley site of Qitmit (Freud and Beit-Arieh 1995, fig. 4.6:21), in the northern Sinai at Kadesh-Barnea (Bernick-Greenberg 2007, fig. 11.99:7–11), and in the north at Dan (Pakman 1992, 235, fig. 4:7).

The difference between the Iron IIB and Iron IIC cooking pots in Philistia represents one of the clearest examples of ceramic type discontinuity between the two periods.

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9. The Iron IIC Philistine cooking pot represents a radical change in terms of size and shape from Iron IIA–B types, presumably reflecting modifications in dietary practices. This could be related to changes in the political and economic status of Philistia as it became more integrated into the Neo-Assyrian Empire following the military campaigns of Sargon II and Sennacherib in the Levant at the end of the eighth century (Gitin 2010, 312–17).

10. Lily Singer-Avitz (1999, 16) has suggested that the cooking pot published in *Beer-sheba I*: pl. 61:87 is an early form related to the main Iron IIC cooking pot.



	Vessel	Site	Stratum	Reference
1.	Jar-krater	Timnah	II	<i>Timnah II</i> : Pl. 67:8
2.	Storage jar	Timnah	III	<i>Timnah II</i> : Pl. 20:1
3.	Storage jar	Timnah	III	<i>Timnah II</i> : Pl. 20:3
4.	Storage jar	Ashdod	VIII	<i>Ashdod II–III</i> : Fig. 43:5
5.	Storage jar	Timnah	III	<i>Timnah II</i> : Pl. 20:6

**Fig. 8:** Jar-kraters and storage jars.

## JAR-KRATERS

The minimal evidence for Iron IIA–B jar-kraters in Philistia precludes establishing a corpus. Those that are attested are primarily Judean types (Zimhoni 2004a, fig. 26.5:10). Generally, jar-kraters specific to Philistia appear only in the Iron IIC. The main type is known primarily on the inner Coastal Plain, where it is found in limited numbers; it is neckless with an elongated, sack-shaped body, a wide mouth, an inverted concave rim, a short, footed ring base, and four double-ribbed handles (fig. 8:1).

## STORAGE JARS

Of the two main storage jar types in Philistia in the Iron IIB, one has a wide oval-shaped body with a bulge at mid-point, a high, carinated shoulder, an inwardly-curved neck, a rounded, slightly inverted rim, a rounded base, and two thick loop handles (fig. 8:2). The other is neckless with an elongated oval body, a short stub rim, a high, rounded shoulder, a rounded base, and two thick loop handles (fig. 8:3).

Two minor types have limited distribution in the Iron IIB. One has an ovoid body, carinated shoulder, rounded base, and four loop handles (fig. 8:4). The red slip, vertical burnish, and painted black and white bands are typical of LPDW.<sup>11</sup> The other has an ovoid body, a short carinated shoulder, a high neck, a rounded rim, a rounded base, and two upwardly-angled loop handles (fig. 8:5). Both types are attested throughout Philistia.

The two main storage jar types in Philistia in the Iron IIC have an ovoid body with a short, sharply-angled carinated shoulder, a pointed base, and two large, often upwardly-angled loop handles with a horizontal oblong hole.<sup>12</sup> One has a short inclined or splayed neck and a thickened simple or out-turned rim (fig. 9:1). The other is neckless with a tapered stub rim (fig. 9:2). Other types include a necked storage jar that first appears in the Iron IIB (fig. 8:2), as does a similar neckless type (see fig. 8:3).<sup>13</sup> The latter is the most common storage jar at Lachish in Judah in the early sixth century (Zimhoni 2004a, fig. 26.46:1–11); in the Negev, it is found in eighth/seventh and seventh/sixth century contexts at 'Ira (Freud 1999,

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11. For further discussion of this jar type, see Ben-Shlomo, Shai, and Maeir 2004, 5–6; 11.

12. The upwardly-angled handles on most storage jar types that resulted in the slight distortion of the shape of the handle hole, making it oblong rather than round, may have served to balance the weight of the jar contents, facilitating lifting and moving.

13. The presence or absence of a neck on storage jars may indicate different methods of capping or sealing, suggesting a specific use either to store or to transport different kinds of dry or liquid produce.

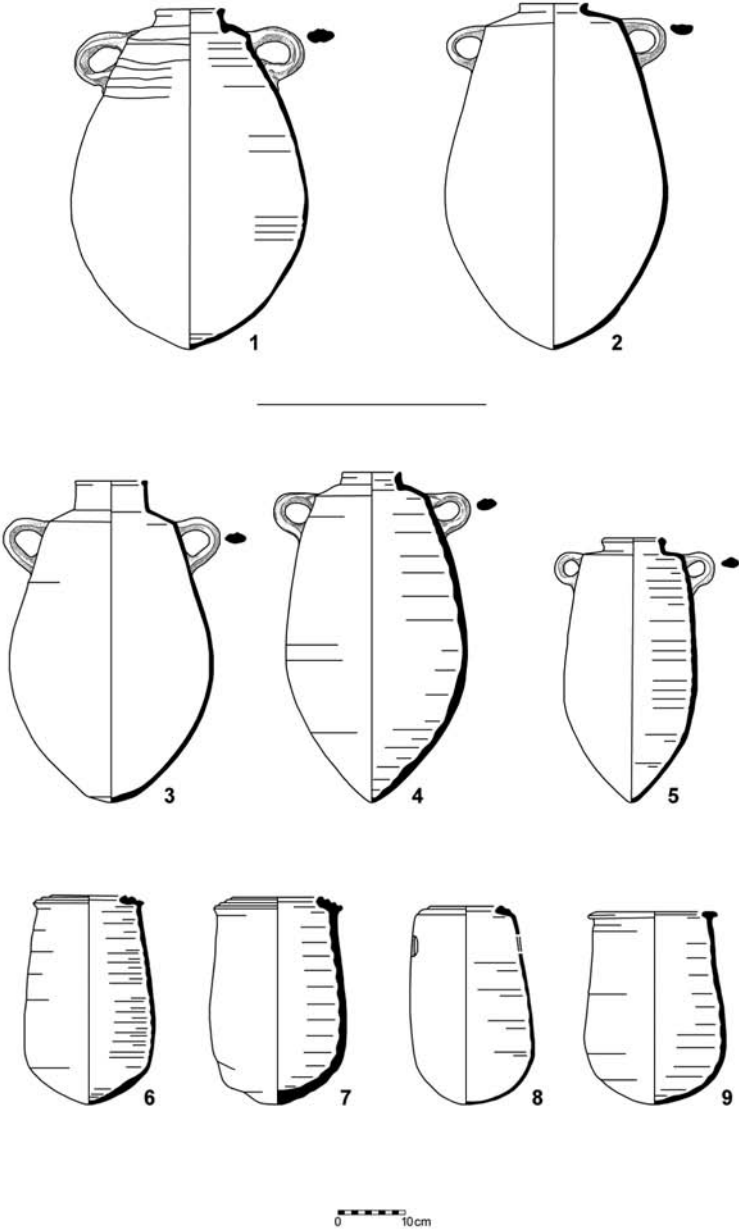


Fig. 9: Storage and holemouth jars.

	Vessel	Site	Stratum	Reference
1.	Storage jar	Ekron	IB	Gitin 2016: Fig. 4A.18:3
2.	Storage jar	Timnah	II	<i>Timnah II</i> : Pl. 35:4
3.	Storage jar	Timnah	II	<i>Timnah II</i> : Pl. 20:4
4.	Storage jar	Ekron	IB	Reg. No. INE.33.74.15, L. 33012
5.	Storage jar	Ekron	IB	Gitin 2016: Fig. 4A.20:1
6.	Holemouth jar	Ekron	IB	Reg. No. IVNE.48.57.1, L. 48025
7.	Holemouth jar	Timnah	II	<i>Timnah II</i> : Pl. 73:6
8.	Holemouth jar	Ekron	IA	Reg. No. IIINE.8.36.7, L. 8004
9.	Holemouth jar	Ekron	IB	Reg. No. IVNE.48.53.1, L. 48025

**Fig. 9:** Storage and holemouth jars.

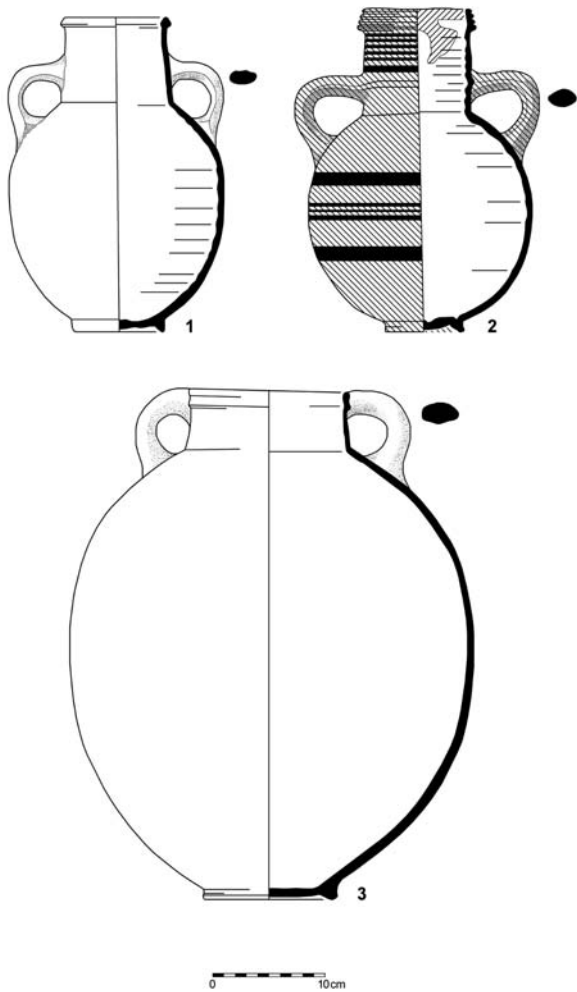
fig. 6.101:8); and in the seventh/sixth century, it is very common at Kadesh-Barnea in northern Sinai (Bernick-Greenberg 2007, fig. 11.88:1–2). It is also attested at sites in the western Mediterranean basin (Barako 2008, 443).

In the Iron IIC, the high-necked type with an ovoid body and rounded base is found only at Timnah (fig. 9:3), and a short-necked type with a narrow, elongated, ovoid body, a short shoulder, an out-curved, tapered rim, a pointed base, and two large double-ribbed loop handles appears exclusively at Ekron (fig. 9:4). However, it is the second most common storage jar type at Ekron, and may be a local variation of the imported Phoenician bullet-shaped storage jar attested in small numbers in Philistia (fig. 9:5).

Continuity between the Iron IIB and IIC is represented by the neckless storage jars (figs. 8:3; 9:2, the latter one of the main Iron IIC types) and the necked storage jars (figs. 8:5; 9:3, the latter primarily attested at Timnah). The storage jars with a wide oval-shaped body (figs. 8:2; 9:1) may represent a development of this type through these two periods. Discontinuity between the Iron IIB and IIC is indicated by the LPDW storage jar (fig. 8:4) that appears only in the Iron IIB, and the narrow, profiled, ovoid jar attested exclusively in the Iron IIC at Ekron (fig. 9:4).

## HOLEMOUTH JARS

The main holemouth type is a medium-size, cylindrical, handleless jar with a straight, rounded, or slightly curved sidewall, a downwardly-angled double- or



	Vessel	Site	Stratum	Reference
1.	Amphora	Timnah	III	<i>Timnah II</i> : Fig. 22:20
2.	Amphora	Ahdod	X–IX	Ben-Shlomo 2005: Fig. 3.73:2
3.	Amphora	Timnah	III	<i>Timnah II</i> : Fig. 28:9

Fig. 10: Amphorae.

triple-grooved rim with a short external ridge, and a rounded or slightly pointed base. Since it is a well-established pottery type in Judah in the Iron IIA–B (see *Gezer III* [HUC]: fig. 16:6) and since its distribution is limited in Philistia in this period, it is considered a Judean type. In the Iron IIC, however, while the cylindrical holemouth jar continues in Judah, it becomes one of the major jar types in Philistia (fig. 9:6–7). It decreases in frequency at the end of the Iron IIC, when it has a less prominent rim with only two grooves and no external ridge (fig. 9:8). The greater frequency of the main holemouth jar type at inland Coastal Plain sites may be due to its association with the olive oil industry, especially at Ekron, the center for the mass production of olive oil after the oil-producing Shephelah sites had been destroyed in Sennacherib's 701 BCE campaign (Gitin 1995, 62, 69).

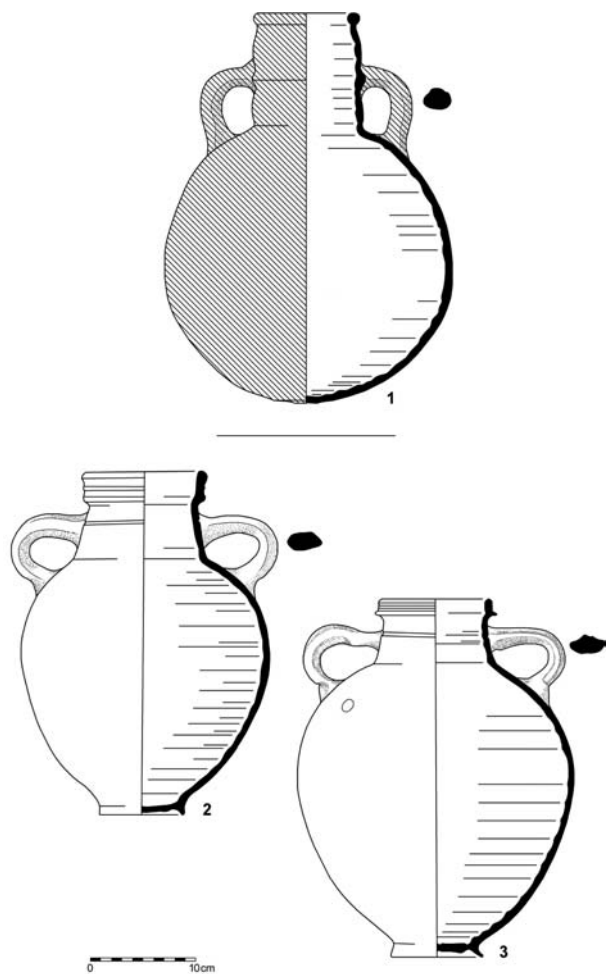
The second holemouth jar type has a horizontal hammerhead rim (without grooves). It is first attested in the Iron IIB at Ekron and in Judah (see *TBM I*, fig. 52A:5), and continues in limited quantities in the Iron IIC (fig. 9:9), perhaps exclusively at Ekron.

## AMPHORAE

In Philistia, amphorae are attested by only a limited number of types and examples, primarily on the inner Coastal Plain. In the Iron IIB, one medium-size amphora has a globular body with a spade-shaped rim and a low ring base (fig. 10:1). Another is very large with a globular body, a medium-height, wide, vertical neck, a thin profiled rim, a short ring base, and handles attached from the rim to the shoulder (fig. 10:3). Both appear at Timnah. A third type, attested only by fragments on the inner Coastal Plain, developed from one of the main Iron IIA amphora types, the best example of which comes from the lower Shephelah site of Şafi/Gath (fig. 10:2). It is medium-size with a globular body and a high, wide, vertical ridged neck, a ridged profiled rim, a concave ring base, and two (sometimes elbow-shaped) handles attached from the neck ridge to the shoulder.

The red slip, vertical burnish, and black and white painted bands are typical of LPDW. A minor type with the same general characteristics has a much larger body and is red-slipped and vertically burnished (fig. 11:1).

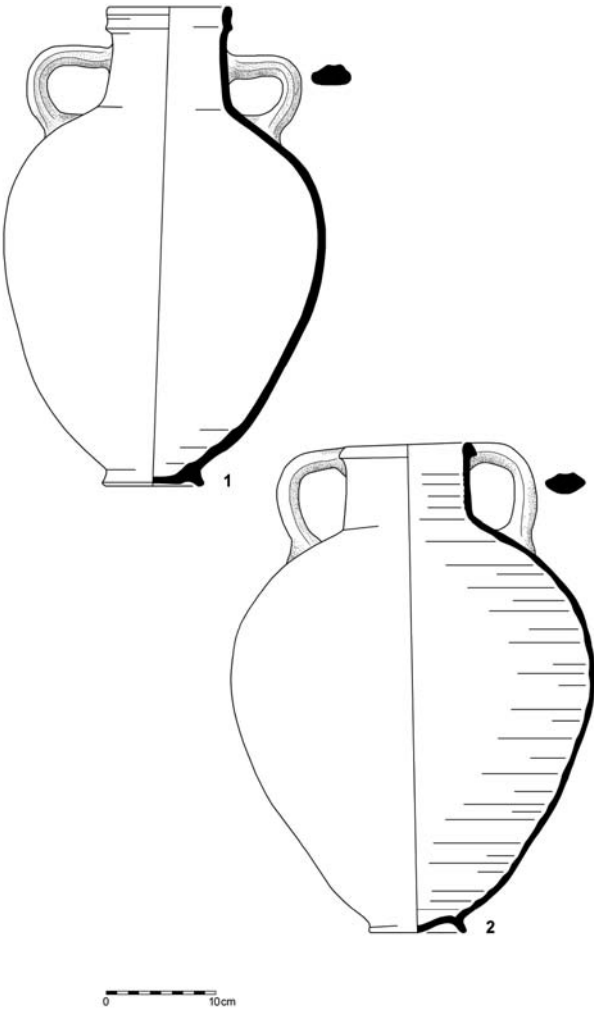
The main Iron IIC amphora, primarily attested on the inner Coastal Plain at Ekron, is medium-size to large with a globular body, a high, wide, slightly inclined neck, a vertical, profiled, ridged rim, a low, convex ring base, and two double-ribbed elbow-shaped handles with horizontal oblong holes, which extend from mid-point on the neck to the shoulder (fig. 11:2). A somewhat larger example appears at Timnah (fig. 12:1), and a variation with a pointed protrusion on the rim comes from at Ekron (fig. 11:3). A minor amphora type attested at Ekron



	Vessel	Site	Stratum	Reference
1.	Amphora	Şafi/Gath	3A	Shai and Maeir 2012: Pl. 14.9:6
2.	Amphora	Ekron	IB	Gitin 2016: Fig. 4A.24:1
3.	Amphora	Ekron	IB	Gitin 2016: Fig. 4A.24:6

Fig. 11: Amphorae.





	Vessel	Site	Stratum	Reference
1.	Amphora	Timnah	II	<i>Timnah II</i> : Pl. 68:1
2.	Amphora	Ekron	IA	Reg. No. IIINE.8.39.54, L. 8004

Fig. 12: Amphorae.

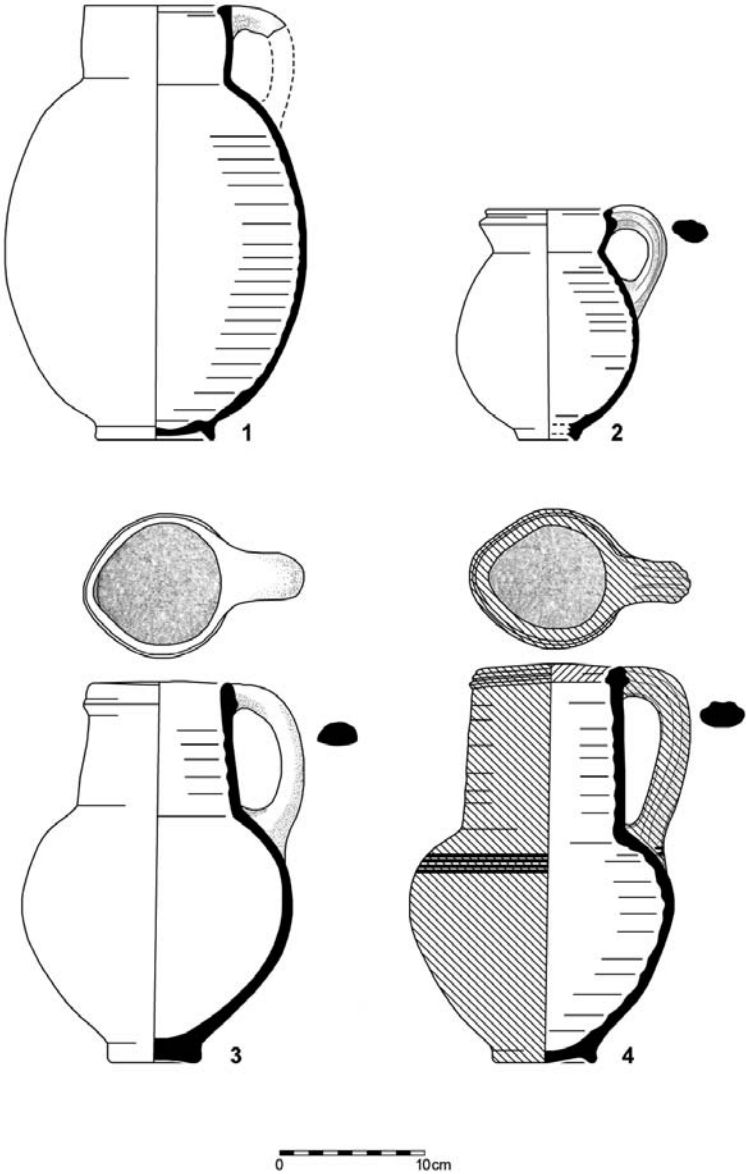


Fig 13: Jugs.

	Vessel	Site	Stratum	Reference
1.	Jug	Ashdod	VIII	<i>Ashdod II–III</i> : Fig. 46:1
2.	Jug	Ashdod	X–IX	Ben-Shlomo 2005: Fig. 3.85:7
3.	Jug	Timnah	III	<i>Timnah II</i> : Pl. 29:1
4.	Jug	Ashdod	VIII	<i>Ashdod II–III</i> : Fig. 41:25

**Fig 13:** Jugs.

has a large ovoid body with a high, wide, vertical neck, a thick, profiled, overhanging rim, a footed concave ring base, and two double-ribbed elbow-shaped handles extending from the rim to the shoulder (fig. 12:2).

Because the sample is so small, observations on continuity/discontinuity are only tentative. The continuity between Iron IIB and Iron IIC amphorae is represented primarily by the type of vertical profiled rim (figs. 10:3; 12:1). Discontinuity is represented by the absence of LPDW in the Iron IIC.

### JUGS

The primary jug type appears in large numbers and variations throughout the Iron IIB in both geographic regions of Philistia. It is medium-size with a globular body, a high, wide, vertical neck, a thickened rounded or flattened rim, a ring base, and a handle extending from the rim to the upper shoulder (fig. 13:1). The second most common jug type is small with an elongated rounded body, a short, outwardly-angled neck, a stepped or thin profiled rim, a ring base, and a handle extending from the rim to the upper shoulder (fig. 13:2).

Minor types are represented by medium-size jugs, one with a squat globular body, very high, wide, vertical neck, slightly profiled or grooved rim, slightly concave disc base, and elbow-shaped handle extending from the rim to the shoulder. A plain example appears at Timnah (fig. 13:3) and an LPDW example at Ashdod (fig. 13:4). Another type has a globular body, a medium-height, wide, inclined neck, a profiled, grooved rim, and a handle extending from the rim to the shoulder; it is best represented by an Iron IIB LPDW example (fig. 14:1) that occurs primarily on the coast.

The two main Iron IIC jug types appear throughout Philistia. The most common is medium-size with a globular body, a high, wide, vertical neck, a rim flattened to form a short hammerhead shape or an interior or exterior protrusion, a ring base, and a handle extending from the rim to the upper shoulder (fig. 14:2). The other is small with an elongated, rounded body, a short, outwardly-angled

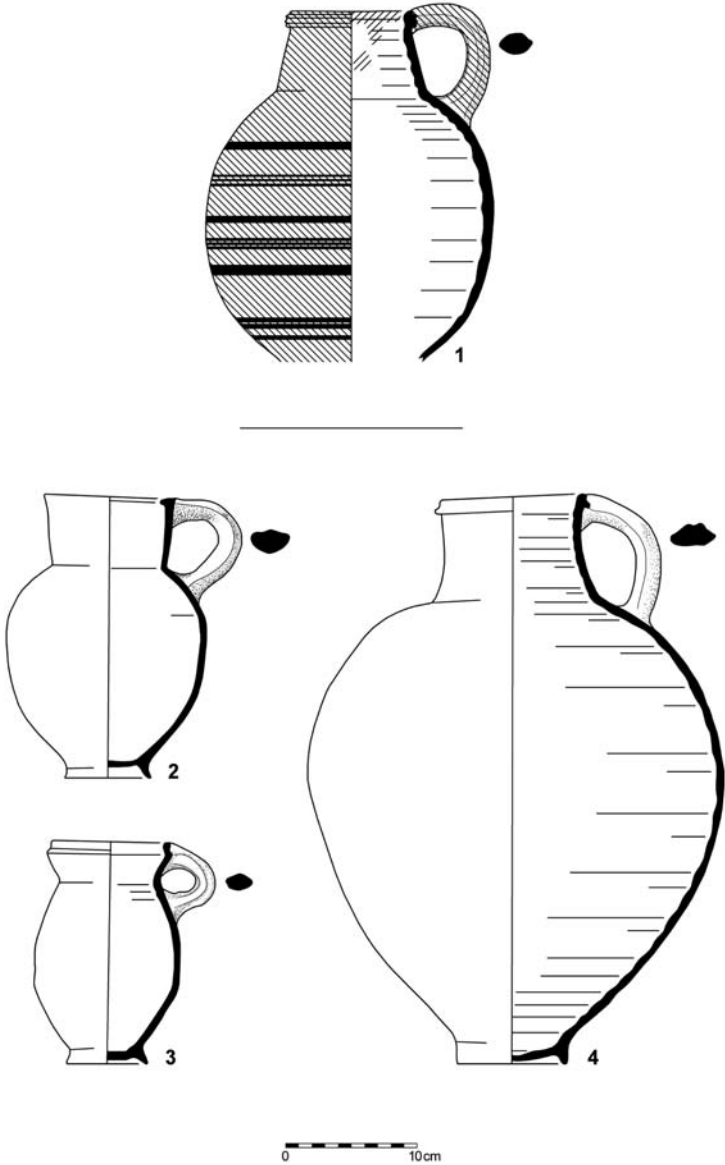


Fig. 14: Jugs.

	Vessel	Site	Stratum	Reference
1.	Jug	Ashdod	VIII	<i>Ashdod II–III</i> : Fig. 41:26
2.	Jug	Ekron	IB	Gitin 2016: Fig. 4A.25:4
3.	Jug	Ekron	IB	Gitin 2016: Fig. 4A.26:2
4.	Jug	Ekron	IB	Reg. No. IIISE.27.115.9, L. 27027P

**Fig. 14:** Jugs.

neck, a stepped, profiled rim, a ring base, and a ribbed handle extending from the rim to the upper shoulder (fig. 14:3).

Two minor jug types also occur in the Iron IIC, one only at Ekron. It is large with a globular ovoid body, a high, wide, in-curved neck, an overhanging rim, a concave ring base, and a double-ribbed elbow-shaped handle extending from the rim to the shoulder (fig. 14:4). The other is medium-size with an ovoid body, a high, narrow, inwardly-inclined neck, a vertical, multiple-ridged rim, a low ring base, and a handle extending from the rim to the upper shoulder; the illustrated example is decorated with red and black painted bands (fig. 15:2). Examples appear throughout Philistia.

The size of the jug sample is sufficient to determine the relationship between the most common Iron IIB and IIC forms. Continuity is represented by the examples of the jug with a globular body, vertical neck, and flattened rim in the Iron IIB (fig. 13:1) and Iron IIC (fig. 14:2), and by the appearance in both periods of the small jug with an elongated rounded body, a short, outwardly-angled neck, and a stepped, profiled rim (figs. 13:2; 14:3). Discontinuity is represented by the absence of the LPDW in the Iron IIC.

## JUGLETS

Based on the limited available evidence, only two Iron IIB juglet types can be identified, one of which occurs throughout Philistia and the other only on the coast. The former is a small, medium-size, or large dipper juglet with a cylindrical body, a slightly angled neck, a pinched mouth with a simple rim,<sup>14</sup> a round base, and a handle extending from the rim to the shoulder; some examples are red-slipped and burnished (fig. 15:1, 3). The second type is a small juglet with a piriform body, a slightly angled neck, a simple, rounded rim, a rounded, pointed, or button base, and an over-size elbow-shaped handle extending up above the rim

14. Although the pinched or trefoil mouth is common in the Iron IIA, it is very rare in the Iron IIB and IIC (*Timnah II*, 126).

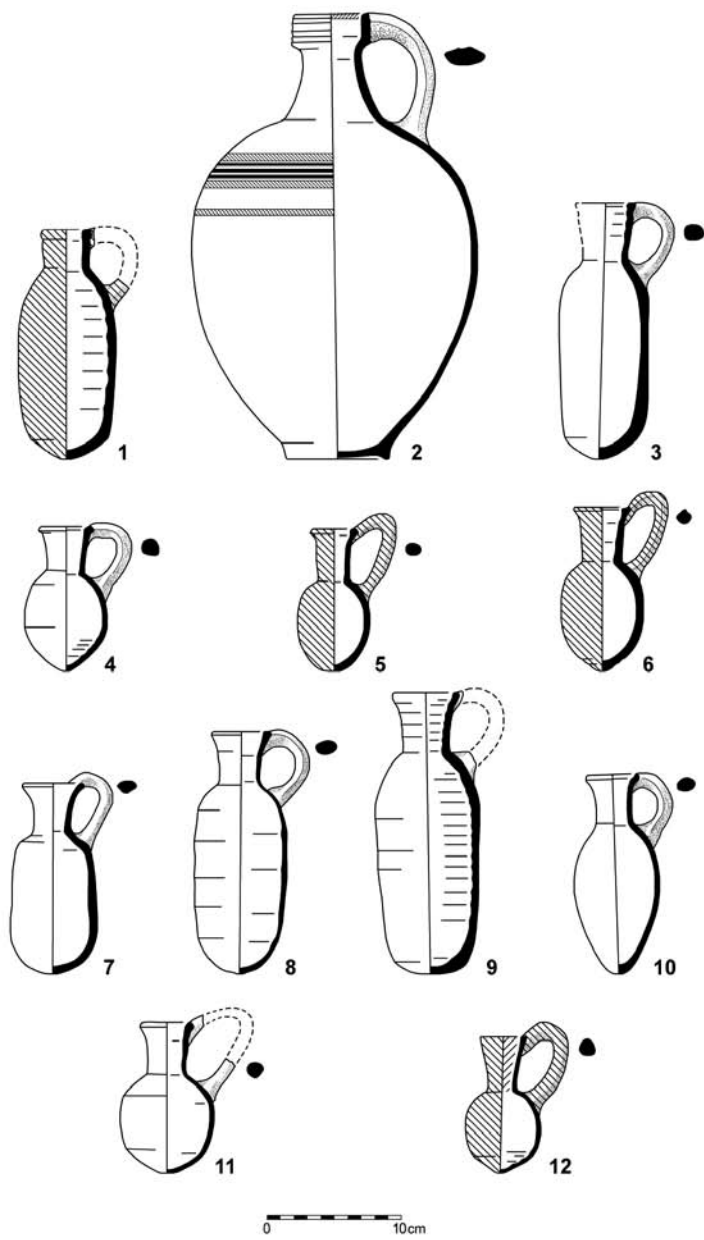


Fig. 15: Jugs and juglets.

	Vessel	Site	Stratum	Reference
1.	Juglet	Ashdod	VIII	<i>Ashdod II–III</i> : Fig. 45:31
2.	Jug	Ekron	IB	Gitin 2016: Fig. 4A.26:8
3.	Juglet	Timnah	III	<i>Timnah II</i> : Pl. 21:27
4.	Juglet	Ashdod	VIII	<i>Ashdod II–III</i> : Fig. 45:22
5.	Juglet	Ashdod	VIII	<i>Ashdod II–III</i> : Fig. 45:19
6.	Juglet	Ashdod	VIII	<i>Ashdod II–III</i> : Fig. 41:17
7.	Juglet	Ashkelon	Grid 50 Phase 7	<i>Ashkelon 3</i> : Fig. 5.67: left
8.	Juglet	Ashdod	VII–VI	<i>Ashdod II–III</i> : Fig. 77:7
9.	Juglet	Ekron	IB	Gitin 2016: Fig. 4A.28:21
10.	Juglet	Ekron	IB	Reg. No. IIISE.13.36.62, L. 13004
11.	Juglet	Ashkelon	Grid 38 Phase 14	<i>Ashkelon 3</i> : Fig. 5.66: left
12.	Juglet	Ashdod	VII	<i>Ashdod II–III</i> : Fig. 50:10

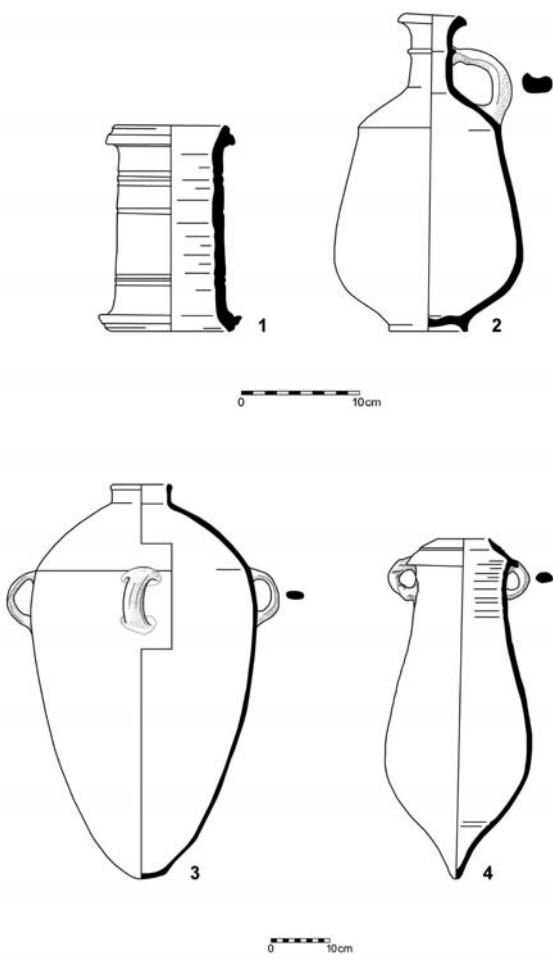
**Fig. 15:** Jugs and juglets.

and down to the shoulder. It is usually red-slipped and burnished (fig. 15:4–6), and appears only on the coast in the Iron IIB.

Three juglet types appear in the Iron IIC in Philistia.<sup>15</sup> The most widely distributed is the dipper juglet with a cylindrical round-sided or bottle-shaped body, splayed neck, simple rounded rim, round base, and handle extending from the rim to the shoulder; it may be small, medium-size, or large (fig. 15:7–9). It is the only dipper juglet type that is well represented throughout Philistia.

The second type is a dipper juglet with an oval body, a vertical neck, a simple, everted rim, a pointed or rounded base, and a handle attached from the rim to the shoulder (fig. 15:10). Although it is well attested at Ekron, it is rare at other sites. The third type has a piriform body with a rounded or pointed base, an outwardly-angled neck, a simple, rounded rim, and an over-size elbow-shaped handle extending upward above the rim and down to the shoulder (fig. 15:11–12). It is attested primarily on the coast.

15. The second most frequent type at Timnah—the bag-shaped juglet—is excluded, because it is the most common dipper juglet found throughout the country and has a long history beginning in the Iron I (*Timnah II*, 124–25).



	Vessel	Site	Stratum	Reference
1.	Stand	Ekron	IB	Reg. No. IVNW.94.77.1, L. 94006
2.	Decanter	Lachish	II	<i>Lachish V</i> : Pl. 49:6
3.	Storage jar	Lachish	II	Zimhoni 2004a: Fig. 26.44:8
4.	Storage jar	Ashkelon	Grid 50 Phase 7	<i>Ashkelon 3</i> : Fig. 6.10

Fig. 16: Other ceramic types.



Continuity of juglets between the Iron IIB and IIC is represented by dipper juglets of all sizes (fig. 15:1, 3, 7) and by the piriform juglets (fig. 15:4–6, 11–12). Discontinuity is represented by the appearance the oval dipper juglet only in the Iron IIC (fig. 15:10).

## STANDS

A number of stands that are not common elsewhere occur at Ekron in the Iron IIC, for example, a tall stand with a thick vertical sidewall and an everted rim and base (fig. 16:1). They are distinguished from the somewhat smaller Judean “hourglass” form found throughout the Iron II (see Zimhoni 2004b, fig. 26.1:11).

## OTHER CERAMIC TYPES

Other ceramic types that appear in Philistia in the Iron IIC are either locally-produced forms copying the traditions of other regions or imports. Of the former, types that originate in the south, for example, are represented by the decanter (fig. 16:2), the *lmk* storage jar (fig. 16:3), and the lamp with a high disc base (fig. 17:5). Both locally-made and imported types in the Phoenician, Cypriot, and Assyrian traditions are attested. These include the Phoenician elongated, severely-waisted storage jar with a very sharply carinated shoulder overhanging the body that tapers to a thin stub base and a flat or convex, angled, folded rim (fig. 16:4). An East Greek import, the two-handled skyphos referred to as an Ionian cup has a relatively deep body, a sharply everted rim, and a low ring foot. The simple linear decoration consists of various groupings of dark horizontal lines, bands, and solid areas on a reserved background. The illustrated example has white-red-white lines added over black (fig. 17:2). It first appears at the end of the Iron IIC in Philistia (Waldbaum 2015, 513). Cypriot imports include the mortarium—a large, heavy, bowl-like form with a thick, grooved, outwardly-angled, straight sidewall, a profiled, D-shaped, folded rim, and a slightly concave base that often bears distinct finger impressions (fig. 17:3). It first appears at the end of the Iron IIB in Philistia (*Ashdod II–III*, fig. 45:15).<sup>16</sup> Vessels with Assyrian characteristics are represented by a small shallow bowl with a prominent low carination, a long, splayed upper sidewall, a tapered rim, and a rounded base; it is red-slipped, wheel-burnished, and highly polished (fig. 17:1). Another is the balloon bottle with a globular body, a very short, narrow, sharply-splayed neck ending in a pointed, pinched ridge, a concave rim, and a round base (fig. 17:4).

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16. Petrographic analysis indicates that the vast majority of mortaria originated on Cyprus (Zukerman and Ben-Shlomo 2011, 91–100).

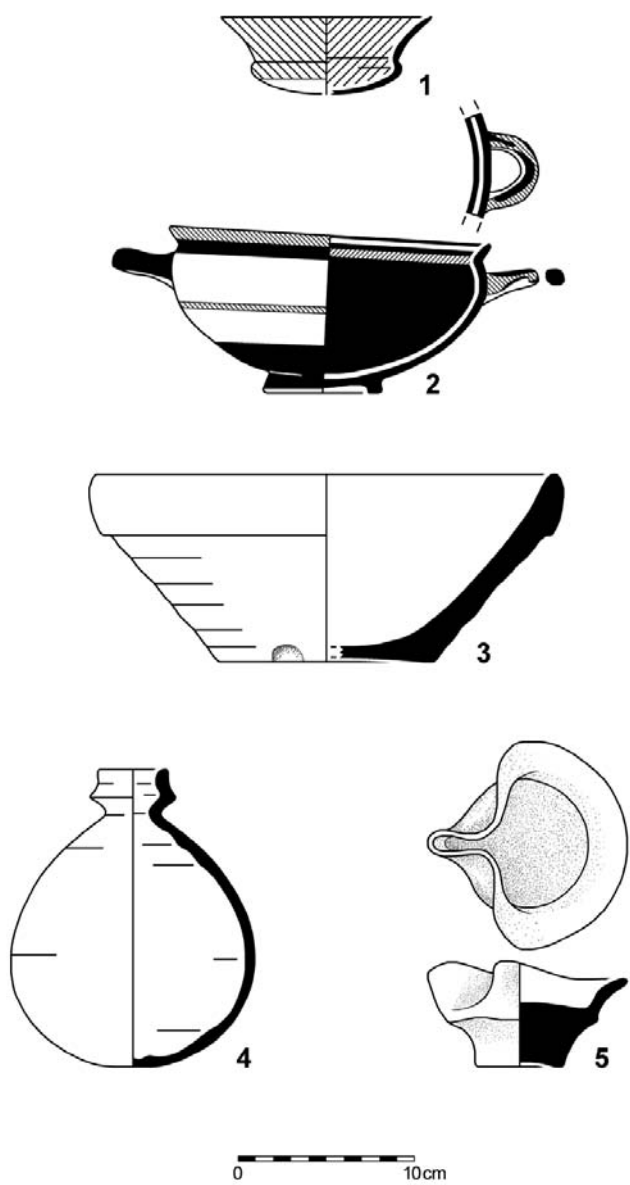


Fig. 17: Other ceramic types.

	Vessel	Site	Stratum	Reference
1.	Bowl	Ekron	IB	Reg. No. IVNW.28.55:1, L. 28004
2.	Skyphos	Ekron	IB	Gitin 2016: Fig. 4A.6:13
3.	Mortarium	Ekron	IA	Reg. No. IIINE.7.24.17, L. 7006
4.	Bottle	Ekron	IB	Gitin 2016: Fig. 4A.30:1
5.	Lamp	En-Gedi	V	Yezerki 2007: Pl. 11:10

**Fig. 17:** Other ceramic types.

## CONCLUSIONS

With the advent of the *pax Assyriaca* at the end of the eighth century and extending through most of the seventh century, Philistia became an integral part of the new Assyrian world order, benefiting from commercial exchange with the Phoenicians, the agents of Assyrian commerce in the Mediterranean basin (Gitin 2012, 225). The Philistine capital cities of Ashdod and Ekron, together with Timnah, provide the most definitive evidence from both the Iron IIB and Iron IIC, best demonstrating continuity and discontinuity for these periods.

Ashdod reached its maximum physical growth in the eighth century, and had significant industrial activity in the seventh century, when it changed from an independent Philistine city to an Assyrian administrative center (*NEAEHL* 1, 98, 100). As for Ekron, it was a small independent 10-acre settlement confined to the Northeast Acropolis in the Iron IIB, but under Assyrian influence in the Iron IIC, the city expanded to encompass the entire 85-acre tell, and became the largest olive oil production center in antiquity known to date (Gitin 2010, 341).

A similar transformation, albeit on a much smaller scale, occurred at Timnah, which in the Iron IIC moved from the orbit of Judah to become a daughter-city of Ekron (*Timnah II*, 279–81). On the other hand, while Ashkelon became a major depot for international commerce (*NEAEHL* 5, 1584) and Gaza became an Assyrian *kāru*, a center for the incense trade from Arabia to Egypt (Elat 1978, 27), in Iron IIC, little is known about these cities in the Iron IIB.

Historical developments in Judah were very different. Most of the major Iron IIB Israelite cities, like Lachish, Beersheba, and Beth-Shemesh, were destroyed by the Assyrians (Ussishkin 2004, 71; *NEAEHL* 5, 1648), and although Judah also became a vassal of the Assyrian Empire, it was of only minor importance for most of the seventh century (Machinist 1992, 74). While Lachish did undergo a resurgence at the end of the seventh century (Ussishkin 2004, 91), Beersheba survived

as only a small off-tell settlement (Gophna and Yisraeli 1973, 115–16) and Beth-Shemesh was not resettled at all (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2011, 48).

Both Philistia and Judah were conquered by the Babylonians and their cities destroyed in the campaigns of 604 and 586 BCE (Gitin 2010, 319; Ussishkin 2004, 91, respectively). These dramatic political and economic changes are reflected in the break in ceramic traditions between the Iron IIB and Iron IIC. Despite the continuity of some ceramic traditions, the break is illustrated by the discontinuity in the Iron IIC (table 1). While this analysis only includes a summary of pottery types, it does provide an overall picture of ceramic development in the last phase of the Iron II in Philistia, one which I hope will prove useful to students interested in the archaeology of Philistia.

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## 6

# Transjordan in the Eighth Century BCE

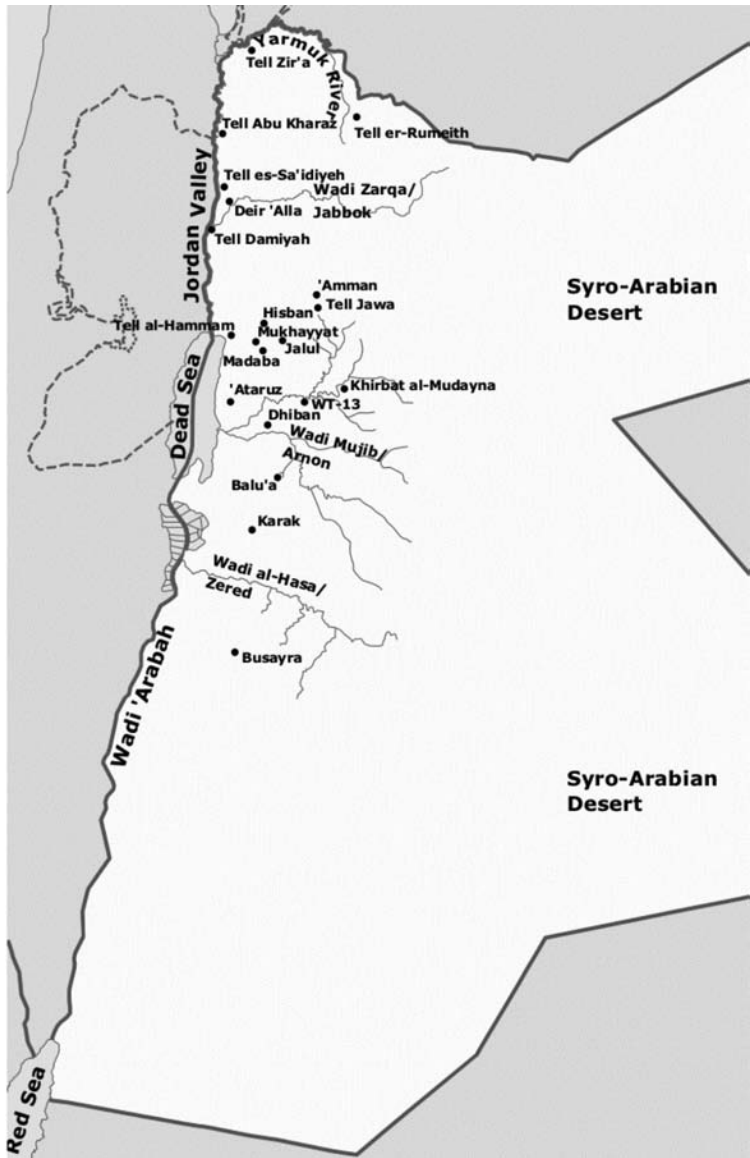
*Bruce Routledge*

In the eighth century BCE, Transjordan was home to the kingdoms of Ammon, Moab, and Edom, as well as the contested territory of Gilead. These kingdoms were similar in organization, culture, and geopolitical position to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and served as their neighbors and rivals.

### GEOGRAPHICAL BOUNDARIES

Transjordan is not a term of self-description. It likely originates with Latin translations of the Hebrew phrase “ever haYarden” or “beyond Jordan,” and indeed “Trans-Jordan” implies someone looking across the Jordan River from the West. That said, the territory to which Transjordan refers is geographically coherent, even if the precise location of its social and political boundaries is difficult to determine for the Iron Age.

In the south and the east, Transjordan is framed by the Red Sea and the Syro-Arabian desert (see fig. 1). To the north, the Yarmouk river divides the modern states of Syria and Jordan, and may have divided Gilead from Bashan in the Iron Age. To the west, the deep rift (Arabic *Ghor*) constituted by the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River, the Dead Sea, and the Wadi Arabah represents both a physical barrier to travel and, in the Hebrew Bible, a social and symbolic barrier. Indeed, in Judg 12:5–6 pronouncing the word “shibboleth” identified whether one belonged west or east of the Jordan River. At the same time, barriers are relative to the way in which you move about the landscape. The Wadi Arabah may have been a barrier to the armies and officials of sedentary kingdoms, but it was also part of an east-west conduit for nomadic pastoralists and caravans linking the Mediterranean with the Red Sea, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Persian Gulf (Bienkowski 2006).



**Fig. 1:** Map of Transjordan showing sites mentioned in the text. Base map authored by “NordNordWest/Wikipedia” under creative commons licence CC-BY-SA-3.0-DE (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/de/legalcode>).

Cutting across the central plateau of Jordan from east to west and emptying into the *Ghor* are a series of immense canyons that were known to biblical authors. The southernmost is the Wadi al-Ḥasa, or Zered in the Hebrew Bible; next is the Wadi al-Mujib, or Arnon and finally, just north of Amman, the Wadi Zarqa or Jabbok (McDonald 2000). The relationship between these undeniable physical boundaries and the political boundaries of Iron Age Transjordan is problematic.

The kingdom of Edom, centered at the site of Busayra (ancient Bozrah, near modern Tafilah), seems to have dominated the south of Transjordan, from the Gulf of Aqaba to Wadi al-Ḥasa. Settlement patterns suggest that Edom was a network of small sites linked to Busayra, rather than a continuously administered territory, so the idea of a border may be anachronistic (Bienkowski 2002, 480). Nonetheless, north of Wadi al-Ḥasa we do seem to be in the territory of the kingdom of Moab. Biblical narratives involving the conquest of the kingdom of Sihon during the Exodus (e.g., Num 21:21–26; Deut 2:24–37; Judg 11:14–27) attempt to limit Moab to the Karak Plateau between the Wadi al-Ḥasa and Wadi Mujib. However, elsewhere in the Bible and in other ancient texts (e.g., the Mesha Inscription), Moab spans both sides of the Mujib.

North of Moab, centered on the Amman Citadel (al-Qal'a, ancient Rabbath-Ammon), was the kingdom of Ammon. Exactly where Moab ended and Ammon began is not clear to us today and indeed may not have been clear in the eighth century either (Dearman 1996). In particular, the political status of the town of Heshbon (modern Ḥisban) may have changed during the Iron II period (MacDonald 2000, 157–70). The northern border of the kingdom of Ammon is conventionally drawn north of Amman at the Wadi Zarqa.

The Bible claims allotments in Transjordan for the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and part of Manasseh. Whatever we make of the historical reality of these references, by the eighth century BCE, these Israelite tribes were not primary factors in the geopolitics of Transjordan. Where Israel did have a role was in the territory of Gilead. It is difficult to define the boundaries of Gilead based on the Hebrew Bible, although references seem to include territory both north and south of the Wadi Zarqa (Finkelstein et al. 2011; MacDonald 2000, 195–208). The kingdom of Israel contested with Damascus to control Gilead in the ninth and eighth centuries BCE (Finkelstein et al. 2011).

Neo-Assyrian inscriptions (Tadmor and Yamada 2011, 105, 131, 134) seem to indicate that in 732 BCE, Tiglath-pileser III took most of the land of Gilead from Damascus; Gilead may then have been under the political control of Damascus despite the earlier military success of Jeroboam II (2 Kgs 14; see Djikstra and Vriezen 2014, Finkelstein et al. 2011; Na'aman 1995). This active competition between regional powers may explain why Gilead was not the locale of an independent kingdom during the Iron Age.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The eighth century BCE was a tumultuous period. It begins with the death of Hazael of Damascus, who, taking advantage of a lull in Assyrian imperialism, had expanded the power of his city-state at the expense of most of the other kingdoms of the Levant. It ends with a series of campaigns by successive Neo-Assyrian kings that result in all the kingdoms of the Levant being either disassembled and replaced by provinces or subjugated and circumscribed as client states.

Damascus (732 BCE) and Israel (722 BCE) are examples of kingdoms converted into Assyrian provinces. At this time, Gilead was incorporated into an Assyrian province of some sort, although our sources do not make the parameters of this arrangement at all clear (cf. Bienkowski 2000; Dijkstra and Vriezen 2014; Oded 1970). The Transjordanian kingdoms, along with Judah and most of the Phoenician and Philistine city-states, fall into the category of subjugated client states of Assyria. Edom is listed as paying tribute to Adad-Nirari III in 796 BCE (Grayson 1996, 213), but it is not until 734 BCE, when Ammon, Moab, and Edom each deliver tribute to Tiglath-pileser III that Transjordan becomes regular part of the Assyrian Empire. The tribute list of Tiglath-pileser III from 728 BCE gives us the rulers' names for all three kingdoms (Sanipu—Ammon; Salamanu—Moab; Qos-malaka—Edom; Tadmor and Yamada 2011, 122–23).

This new relationship is reflected in the movement of emissaries carrying messages and tribute. Representatives from Edom and Moab are listed amongst dignitaries receiving rations of wine in the Assyrian capital of Nimrud (ancient Calah) during the reign of Tiglath-pileser III or Sargon II (Dalley and Postgate 1984, 246–47, 252–53), while an emissary of Moab is detained with several others for entering the Assyrian heartland without permission (Saggs 2001, 182–184). Assyrians show concern for the internal security of these kingdoms in a letter from an Assyrian official to Tiglath-pileser III concerning a raid against a Moabite city by what were probably pastoral nomads (Saggs 2001, 160–61).

Moab and Edom, along with Judah, appear to have joined a rebellion against Sargon II led by Yamani of Ashdod in 711 BCE. But unlike Ashdod, they do not appear to have been attacked directly in retribution (Luckenbill 1927, 105). The Transjordanian kingdoms did not rebel for long, delivering tribute to Sargon II in the form of horses (e.g., Saggs 2001, 219–21), gold (Fales and Postgate 1995, 30), and what seems to be silver (Fales and Postgate 1992, 72).

In 701 BCE, Ammon, Moab and Edom along with Ashdod, Gaza, and several northern Phoenician city-states, deliver four times the normal tribute to Sennacherib at the outset of his third campaign, which was directed at Palestine and the Mediterranean coast (Grayson and Novonty 2012, 64, 114, 131, 175, 192). Besides giving us the names of three more kings (Budi-il of Ammon; Kammūsunadbi of Moab and Aya-rāmu of Edom), this event makes clear that the Transjordanian kingdoms did not join the rebellion of Tyre, Sidon, Ashkelon, Judah, and

Ekron. Hence, in contrast to Judah, the kingdoms of Ammon, Moab, and Edom were left alone during Sennacherib's devastating campaign and survived the end of the eighth century relatively unscathed.

Indigenous historical sources for eighth-century Transjordan are very limited. The "Amman Statue Inscription" is inscribed on the base of a statue of a male

figure from the Amman Citadel; he probably represents a deceased ruler (fig. 2a). The inscription names the figure as Yarḥa'zar; it also names his father and grandfather (Aufrecht 1989, 106–9). The grandfather is named Shanib, and it has been suggested that he is the Ammonite king Sanipu named in Tiglath-pileser III's tribute list (Zayadine 1974). If true, then we may have a list of three Ammonite kings ruling from 734 BCE onward. As the name of Yarḥa'zar's father can be reconstructed as [Za]kir, both father and son would need to precede Budi-il, ruling after 734 and before 701 BCE, to fit these names into the sequence of Ammonite kings known from Neo-Assyrian inscriptions.

More recently, a damaged inscription on a pillar base was purchased

on the antiquities market and loaned to the Israel Museum (Ahituv 2003). Scholars have classified this as a Moabite inscription whose palaeography suggests it was composed in the eighth century. It mentions carrying out building projects with Ammonite prisoners, including the building of a gate and what might be either a moat or a water reservoir. If authentic, it does seem to have the characteristics of a royal memorial inscription, recounting events from the career of an unnamed eighth-century Moabite king, including military conflict with Ammon and a public building program (Gass 2012).

## PRIMARY TOWNS AND SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

The largest sites from the eighth century range from 12.5 (Tell Dhiban) to 16 hectares (Tell Madaba). The extent of Rabbath Ammon in Iron IIB is unclear but may have been more than 20 hectares. Applying a conventional population figure (250 people/hectare) suggests that even the largest towns had only 3,000–5,000 residents. Populations densities could be higher than the figures used here, but not



**Fig 2a:** Statue of Yarḥa'zar; **Fig. 2b:** Ammonite statue with atef crown. Drawings by Tom Norman.

to the extent of transforming these towns into metropolises. At the same time, the largest sites do sit at the pinnacle of a local settlement hierarchy.

Each of the kingdoms of Ammon, Moab, and Edom had a “capital” city that served as the seat of royal authority. For Ammon, this was Rabbath Ammon (the Amman Citadel); for Moab, this was Dibon (modern Tell Dhiban); and for Edom, this was Bozrah (modern Busayra). At each of these “capital” cities there is evidence for growth and investment in the eighth century, although for the Amman Citadel (Humbert and Zayadine 1992) and Busayra (Bienkowski 2002) the evidence is primarily in the form of abundant eighth century pottery found in the foundation layers of seventh and sixth century BCE “palaces” and related non-domestic structures. Tell Dhiban provides us with more direct evidence, although it is only now in the process of being published.

Since 2004, my colleagues and I in the Dhiban Excavation and Development Project (DEDP) have explored the site and, although the Iron Age is difficult to access, it is now clear that there is evidence for large-scale building projects during the Iron IIB period across the entire 12.5 hectares of the mound. For example, a podium of about 0.75 ha in area and more than 11 meters in depth artificially extended the mound on its south-eastern side (Tushingham and Pedrette 1995). At the highest point of the tell, excavations from the 1950s revealed a large, multi-room building called “Mesha’s Palace” (Morton 1989; Routledge 2004, 161–68). The many small rooms of this structure are reminiscent of the palace at Samaria and parts of Palace C at Lachish.

Our work, adjacent to Morton’s old trench, has confirmed that this is an eighth century building with several phases of thick plaster floors. Unfortunately, the building is heavily disturbed by later occupation (Porter et al. 2010, 28–30; 2012, 122–25). In this building, Morton’s excavations uncovered an Iron Age offering stand and two female figurines (Morton 1989, figs. 14–16). Our adjacent excavations have also found two Iron Age figurine fragments, a head associated with the latest floor of the large building (Porter et al. 2012, fig.10) and a torso redeposited in a Middle Islamic context (unpublished). We will address the significance of these and other “cultic” finds from Transjordan below.

Other evidence for public construction projects include a large open-air reservoir. This reservoir consists of a plastered wall that frames a natural depression in the bedrock located at the base of the tell (Routledge 2013). The form of this reservoir recalls Mesha’s description of building “the retaining walls of the reservoir for the waters in the midst of the city” in line 23 of his inscription. The capacity of this reservoir would have been several thousand cubic meters of water, enough to meet the annual water needs of more than 100 people. Large, open-air reservoirs have also been excavated at the sites of Hisban (ancient Heshbon) and Tall Jalul within the kingdom of Moab (Routledge 2013).

In terms of settlement, beyond these “capital” cities, there are some long-term trends that likely began in the eighth century BCE, even if they are most fully

attested in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE. Key amongst these is the dispersal and the eastward expansion of settlement. Settlement dispersal, meaning the founding of small farmsteads and hamlets, is a trend noted across the Near East during and immediately after the period of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (Routledge 2004, 191–201; Wilkinson et al. 2005). Settlement dispersal is thought to be linked to the intensification of agro-pastoralism because it allows one to live closer to one's fields and thereby have the time to use more intensive methods resulting in greater output per unit of land, or to use of more marginal land.

For the Middle Jordan Valley, Eva Kaptijn (2009) has argued that Iron Age settlement patterns imply the existence of irrigation agriculture and that this intensified during the ninth and eighth centuries BCE. On the plateau in Transjordan, where agriculture was dependent on rainfall, intensification is marked by the increase in single period sites from the seventh and sixth centuries BCE. However, settlement dispersal is also dependent on security for isolated settlements as well as market centers that facilitate the exchange of surplus production. Hence, this might be marked by the small fortresses (see Routledge 2004, 191, fig. 9.3) and regional market centers (e.g., Daviau 2006) that were founded in the eighth century and occupied throughout the seventh century BCE.

## HOUSES, NEIGHBORHOODS, AND TOWN PLANS

### FORTIFICATIONS

Most towns were fortified with walls and gateways. Where documented, most settlements were fortified with casemate wall systems, where two parallel walls encircle the settlement, with the space in between the walls subdivided into casemate rooms. Often, these rooms form part of buildings built against the inner fortification wall. Examples from the eighth century include Tell Abu al-Kharaz (Fischer 2013, 190–91), Tell Jawa South (Daviau 2003, 66–93), and Khirbat al-Mudayna, where the casemate is associated with a 25 m wide glacis (Daviau et al. 2012, 274–277). Tell Dhiban (Tushingham 1972, 5–9) also had an Iron Age casemate wall, but dating it more precisely is difficult from the published evidence. In some cases, such as Tell Madaba (Harrison et al. 2007) and Tell Zir'a (Häser and Vieweger 2012, 260–263), older fortification systems were renovated and continued in use.

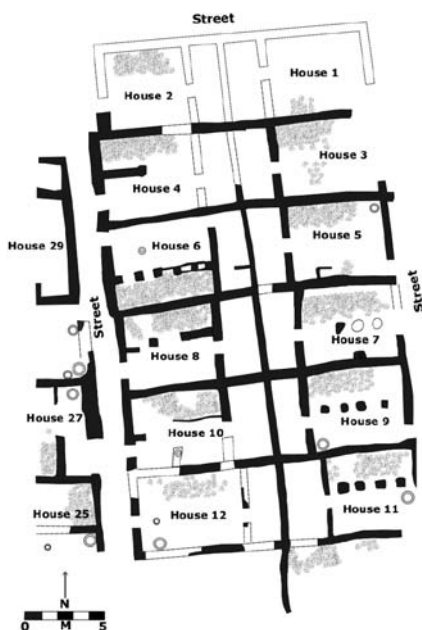
The upper mound of Tall al-Ḥammam, at the north end of the Dead Sea, appears to have been fortified with a solid wall and a simple gate with flanking towers (Collins et al. 2015, 234–36). This fortification system may have been built during Iron IIA, but it appears to have remained in use during Iron IIB. At Khirbat al-Mudayna, a six-chambered gateway has been excavated (Chadwick 2009). This appears to have been built at the beginning of the eighth century BCE as a four-chambered gate but subsequently expanded to six chambers (Chadwick 2009, 205). At Tell Jalul, east of Madaba, a flagstone paved road rising on an artificial

ramp from the exterior of the mound seems to represent an entryway to the settlement spanning the ninth to seventh centuries BCE (Yunker at al. 2007). Architectural fragments associated with this road have been interpreted as an inner and outer gatehouse, however, the plan of neither gatehouse can be reconstructed.

## HOUSES

In the Middle Jordan Valley, houses dated to the eighth century have been excavated at Tell Deir 'Alla (biblical Succoth or Penuel?), Tell es-Sa'idiyah (biblical Zarethan?), and Tell Abu al-Kharaz (biblical Jabesh-Gilead?). The best known is Stratum V from Tell es-Sa'idiyah, where excavations (Pritchard 1985; Tubb 1988; Tubb and Dorrell 1991) revealed several insulae containing at least 15 mudbrick houses built on stone foundations that faced onto narrow streets (see fig. 3). These houses are small, averaging c. 40 m<sup>2</sup> in area, and laid out as Three-Room Houses, a smaller version of the Four-Room House that figures so prominently in discussions of Israelite domestic architecture (e.g., Faust and Bunimovitz 2003).

The organization of these houses in a grid of rectilinear blocks is unusual, although Tel Batash (Timnah) and Tel Qasile in Israel may provide further examples. Normally, Iron Age houses are laid out along the arc of the town wall, especially when their backrooms are integrated into a casemate fortification system. It is interesting in this regard that Tell es-Sa'idiyah had a solid wall and houses were separated from the fortification walls by what may have been an access route. Avraham Faust (2002, 306–10) has noted this pattern for larger settlements in the kingdom of Israel (such as Hazor) where he argues



**Fig. 3:** Stratum V houses from Tell es-Sa'idiyah, redrawn from Pritchard 1985, figs. 178–79.



that the placement of houses and fortifications were less constrained by the amount of available land.

The introduction of the “Three Room House” seems to be an innovation of Stratum V, as houses from the earlier Stratum VII are “linear” (two or three rooms lined up front to back) or “broadroom” (a front broad-room with two small back rooms) in design, albeit still laid out along a rectilinear system of streets (see Pritchard 1985, fig. 177; Tubb and Dorrell 1991). These same simple house designs were used over a wide area during the Iron Age, from northern Syria to northern Israel. Avraham Faust (2000) has designated these as “Canaanite-Phoenician” houses and treated them as ethnic markers of rural communities in northern Israel that retained non-Israelite populations. However, presuming this one-to-one relationship between house form and ethnicity requires us to posit an otherwise unattested ethnic shift between Str. VII and V at Tell es-Sa’idiyeh and fails to account for the variability in domestic architecture we find elsewhere in Transjordan.

In Stratum XIV at Tell Abu al-Kharaz, a set of five houses were uncovered. Although their backrooms were poorly preserved, they all appear to be Four-Room Houses attached to a casemate wall, albeit with solid internal walls rather than two rows of pillars (Fischer 2013, fig. 182a). These houses are almost twice the size of those from Stratum V at Tell es-Sa’idiyeh, measuring 70–80 m<sup>2</sup> in area and following the arc of the town’s fortification wall.

At Tell Deir ‘Alla, the southernmost of these sites, we find an entirely different settlement layout (van der Kooij and Ibrahim 1989, 82–89; Ibrahim and van der Kooij 1991). Stratum IX at Deir ‘Alla is not fully published, but it is well-known because the unusual “Balaam Text” (see below) was found in one of its buildings. Stratum IX dates early in Iron IIB, close in time to Stratum VII at Tell es-Sa’idiyeh. Because of the dense clustering of rooms, some without obvious entrances, individual house units are hard to define. Those that can be distinguished are “linear” or “broad-room” in plan and very small (< 40m<sup>2</sup>). However, unlike the rectilinear arrangement of streets and insulae seen at Tell es-Sa’idiyeh, at Tell Deir ‘Alla we find clusters of buildings organized around shared courtyards and irregular alleys (Ibrahim and Van der Kooij 1991). The clearly religious nature of the “Balaam Text” has led to debate over whether all, or part, of Stratum IX might have functioned as a temple. However, the overwhelming predominance of artifacts related to food production and weaving suggests that this is a domestic context that included ritual activity (see below).

The few complete house plans published from the plateau exhibit what Daviau and Dion (2007, 302) call an “agglutinative” form, meaning that rooms appear have been added and subdivided in a piecemeal manner according to the life-history of each house. Examples include Stratum VIII at Tell Jawa (Daviau 2003), Stratum 9A at Tell Zir’a (Häser and Vieweger 2012, 260–63) and also Strata VI and VIB at Tell er-Rumeith (perhaps biblical Ramoth-Gilead; Barako

and Lapp 2015, 46–62), where eighth century houses were built on top of the rectangular fort of the Iron IIA period. At Tell Jawa and Tell Zir‘a, the houses are roughly rectangular and have their back rooms integrated into the fortification wall, so they resemble standard Four-Room Houses in their positioning, despite their irregular internal spatial arrangements.

Comparing eighth century domestic architecture across Transjordan reveals considerable variability in house form, size, and neighborhood structure. Whether this variability reflects differences in the longevity of occupation, lifestyles, wealth, or identity is not at all clear. What is clear is that the situation is complex, socially interesting, and in need of further investigation.

## PRODUCTION AND TRADE

### FOOD PRODUCTION

Direct evidence for how people made a living in eighth-century Transjordan is quite limited. The only published final report on an animal bone assemblage is from Tell Hīsan, but unfortunately the sub-periods of Iron Age II are not distinguished (LaBianca and von den Driesch 1995). Preliminary reports on animal and plant remains from the Iron IIB period are available in the case of Tell Deir ‘Alla in the Middle Jordan Valley (van Es 2002; Neef 1989), and on animal bones from eighth-century contexts at Tell Jawa (Popkin 2009) and Tell Madaba (Harrison et al. 2003, 138–42). In general, environmental conditions and the possibility of irrigation seem to play a role in agricultural strategies, with Deir ‘Alla in the Jordan Valley presenting evidence for pomegranates, hemp, flax, and an important role for cattle, in contrast to the focus on barley, sheep, and goats more typical of the plateau. Interestingly, at Deir ‘Alla sesame seeds as well as seeds from the spices cumin, nigella, fenugreek, and coriander were also recovered from Straum IX.

### CRAFT PRODUCTION

The one economic activity for which we have abundant evidence is weaving (Boertien 2013). Rows of loom weights indicating the past location of a loom have been found in eighth-century houses at Tell es-Sa‘idiyeh (Pritchard 1985, 15–38), Tell Abu Kharaz (Fisher 2013, 189, fig. 181; 205, fig. 186), Tell Jawa (Daviau 2002, 191–98), Tell er-Rumeith (Boertien 2015) and Tell Deir ‘Alla, where there were estimated to be 24 looms across 15 domestic structures (Boertien 2013, 147). Tell Deir ‘Alla IX is particularly interesting because;

1. there is evidence for the weaving of hemp and linen as well as wool;
2. the presence of three or more rows of weights from a single loom suggests the layered weaving of complex patterned textiles;

3. while weaving is located within domestic structures the number of looms indicates the capacity of production for exchange rather than just auto-consumption (Boertien 2013, 144–47).

In addition to loom weights, each of these sites has also yielded further evidence for textile production in the form of spindle whorls, bone spatulas, and other weaving tools. While Brendan Burke (2010, 166–67) has labelled the Stratum V houses at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh an “industrial area” dedicated to textile production, the separation this implies between work space and living space seems inappropriate for the evidence reviewed above. Instead, the production of textiles for exchange within eighth-century households in Transjordan appears to follow the long history of specialized textile production as a “cottage” industry prior to the institution of textile mills in the nineteenth century.

While not on the same scale as the evidence for weaving, finds of iron slag and a tuyère fragment in Stratum XIV at Tell Abu-Kharaz may suggest small-scale metal working in, or adjacent, to domestic dwellings (Fischer 2013, 209). The presence of “raw glass” beads in one of the Iron IIB houses at Tell Zir'a may be another case of household craft production (Häser and Vieweger 2012, 260; fig 14.). Other prominent crafts include the carving of limestone cosmetic palettes (Fisher 2013, 535–37) and basalt mortars with tripod feet (Lapp 2015a, 295–97; Fischer 2013, 403, fig.397; van der Kooij and Ibrahim 1989, 101).

#### TRADE

Trade goods are not common in our eighth-century assemblages. Cypro-Phoenician (that is, Black on Red and White Painted Ware) and Phoenician Red Slip pottery has been noted. The identification of these imported wares is difficult because imitations of each were also produced locally in Transjordan during the eighth century (e.g., Daviau 2013a). Unfortunately, no scientific provenance studies such as neutron activation analysis have been carried out, so the identification of imported wares depends on the visual judgement of the analyst.

An interesting possible import, found at both Tell er-Rumeith (Lapp 2015b, 317–20) and Tell Deir 'Alla (van der Kooij and Ibrahim 1989, 101), is a “spoon” in steatite, the underside of which is carved in the form of a hand. These “spoons” have a tube-like hollow handle that connects through a hole in the bowl, suggesting that they were attachments used to dispense aromatics from small containers. Stone “spoons” are particularly associated with northern Syria and could be imports, or local products reflecting the cultural influence of Syria on the north of Transjordan.

Inscribed shekel weights indicative of standardized units of exchange are known from seventh century contexts in Transjordan (Daviau and Dion 2002, 37–40; Kletter 1998, 57). None are known for the eighth century, but Eph'al and Naveh (1993) have suggested that a jar and stone from Deir 'Alla IX inscribed in

Aramaic should be read as “(jar) of the gate” and “stone of the gate” referring to a local system of measure used in the market, as these were located adjacent to city gates in the Iron Age. Raz Kletter (1998, 147–48) doubts this could represent a coherent system as only one similar inscription has been found outside of Deir ‘Alla (Tell el-‘Oreimeh/ Tel Kinrot) and suggests instead that the objects are inscribed with the personal name Shar‘a or the title “gatekeeper.” A key question is just how local a system of measure can be, and how ubiquitous it needs to be, in order to properly facilitate exchange? Would a system of measure specific to Deir ‘Alla still be effective?

## RELIGION AND RITUAL

### DOMESTIC RELIGION?

While the Iron IIA temple at Khirbat ‘Ataruz remains in use in a diminished state during the eighth century (Ji 2011, 570–73), evidence for ritual activity is primarily dispersed in domestic contexts or concentrated in isolated “pilgrimage” sites. Michèle Daviau (2014) has noted the presence of miniature and zoomorphic vessels; male, female, and zoomorphic figurines; a stone pillar; chalices; tripod cups; ceramic strainers; ceramic statue fragments; as well as slipped and painted vessels; amongst the domestic assemblages of houses from Stratum VIII at Tell Jawa. This leads her to suggest that ritual activities in these houses included setting up figurines and/ or symbolic stones, sprinkling or purification, the use of aromatics and the presentation of offerings, especially food and drink in miniature vessels (Daviau 2014, 116).

### BALAAM TEXT

The “Balaam Text” from Tell Deir ‘Alla is written in ink on wall plaster that was found in pieces on the floor of a Stratum IX building. Scholars disagree on the ordering of these fragments and the text is linguistically obscure in places, being written in a very unusual dialect of Aramaic (see Hoftijzer and van der Kooij 1991). The text opens by stating that it is a message of misfortune taken from the book of Balaam son of Beor, a divine seer (see Levine 2003 for a translation). The text goes on to recount a vision of impending disaster orchestrated by a council of adversarial gods, given to Balaam on behalf of the chief god El.

Balaam son of Beor is the name of the prophet hired by the king of Moab to curse Israel in Num 22–24; Balaam also lived on as an archetypal (false) prophet in a variety of post-biblical traditions (van Kooten and van Ruiten 2008). While this inter-textual connection is surprising enough on its own, the fact that the inscription was written on the wall of a small domestic building in a small site only adds to the mystery. Deir ‘Alla Stratum IX appears to be another example of ritual activity closely integrated with domestic life, even if this ritual activity is unexpected and somewhat perplexing.

## PILGRIMAGE SITES

Towards the end of the eighth century, we do find evidence for specialized ritual contexts in the form of small pilgrimage sites, namely site WT-13 in eastern Moab (Daviau 2012; Dolan 2007; 2009) and Tell Damiyah in the Middle Jordan Valley (Petit and Kafafi 2016). Both sites consist of small isolated buildings with large numbers of unusual finds, including human and animal figurines, clay anthropomorphic statues, and clay architectural models (“model shrines”). While the primary period of deposition at each site is Iron IIC (c. 700–550 BCE), eighth century material has been uncovered beneath these later deposits (Dolan 2007; Petit and Kafafi 2016, 25) suggesting continuity in their use as offering sites.

Neither site could have housed many permanent residents, rather each seems to have functioned as a shrine that received votive offerings. The unusual anthropomorphic statues that are essentially inverted store jars with attached arms and heads, connect not only Tell Damiyah and WT-13 but also the shrines at Horvat Qitmit and Ein Haseva in the Negev. This raises the possibility of a “network” of shrine sites connected by mobile worshippers, something that may be supported by the presence at Tell Damiyah of a kind of female figurine otherwise primarily attested in Moab (see below).

## FIGURINES

One of the distinct find categories at WT-13 and Tell Damiyah is figurines. While there are a wide variety of figurines attested in Transjordan (Daviau 2013b), those of a woman holding a disk are the most common. As David Sugimoto (2008) has shown, female figurines holding a disk most likely represent a female worshipper playing a frame drum (see also Paz 2007). Sugimoto divides these figurines according to whether they have plaque-based (mould-made) or pillar-based bodies, characterizing the former as nude except for a belt/ sash and ankle bracelets with their drum held flat against their chest and the latter as clothed with their drum held out parallel to their body. The former type is associated by Sugimoto with Israel before the eighth century (but continuing in Transjordan) and the latter is associated with Phoenician sites on the Mediterranean coast from the eighth century onward.

However, if we look closely at the Transjordanian examples we can identify a subset of figurines from the eighth and seventh centuries that share very specific facial features cutting across Sugimoto’s two categories. In particular, one finds figurines with large almond shaped eyes, a pointed chin and large ears, behind which plaits or long strands of hair extend down to the shoulder. These figurines appear to be clothed and most hold their drum flat against their chest, although examples with the drum out parallel to the body are known (Daviau 2013b, fig. 3:2–3).

Until recently, figurines holding a disk with these specific facial features were found only in the territory of Moab, between Tell al-Hammam in the north (Kobs et al. 2011) and Balu'a (Worschech 1995) in the south. However, the recent publication of two examples from Tell Damiyah (Petit and Kafafi 2016, figs. 17, 20) raises questions regarding their distribution. Either our current distribution map is distorted by accidents of discovery or this is evidence for travel and pilgrimage from Moab to the site of Tell Damiyah.

#### AMMONITE STATUES

While not at all common, a male figurine head from Stratum VIII at Tell Jawa is of interest because it wears an Egyptian *atef* crown, creating a link between this miniature item in clay and the much larger stone statuary found in and around Amman (Daviau and Dion 1994). A group of 21 limestone and basalt heads and 11 full body statues have been found in secondary use in, or near to, Amman (Burnett 2016, 60). Most of these are smaller than life-size, but in 2010, a basalt statue of a male, preserved more than 2 meters in height, was found reused in the Roman Forum of Amman (Burnett 2016).

While many of the male statues and heads wear *atef* crowns, the statue of Yarḥa'zar and the new monumental statue do not (fig. 2). Inversely, the statues without an *atef* crown grip a drooping lotus flower in their hand while those with an *atef* crown do not. These patterns suggest that the *atef* crown is worn by gods (Daviau and Dion 1994) and the drooping lotus flower is held by kings (Burnett 2016; Routledge 2004, 181–82), possibly dead kings if one follows van Loon's suggestion (1986) that the drooping lotus was the symbol of a dead king in Syro-Anatolian art. Perhaps, as is the case in the Iron Age Northern Levant, these statues were set up to receive funerary offerings of food and drink (see Hermann and Schloen 2014).

Unfortunately, none of these statues have been recovered from primary contexts in controlled excavations, hence it is difficult to be confident about their date. If we accept Yarḥa'zar's royal ancestry (see above), then this statue should date to the late eighth century. The stylistic coherence of the Ammonite statues as a group would suggest that they should date close together in time, so perhaps from the late eighth through the seventh centuries BCE.

#### BURIAL AND FUNERARY CUSTOMS

While offerings may or may not have been made to the statues of dead Ammonite kings, we know that funerary customs in the eighth century typically involved multiple, successive burials in modified caves or rock-cut tombs. These collective burials involved remembering, returning, and reopening the same tombs over multiple generations in order to inter the dead, along with grave offerings.

The best evidence we have for eighth (or eighth to seventh) century practices come from burials in Moab at Dhiban (Winnett and Reed 1964, 57–60; Tushingham 1972, 86–105) and Nebo/Kh. Muḥayyat (Saller 1966). At neither site were excavators able to systematically recover and analyze human bones, but their estimates based on teeth and skulls suggest large numbers of individuals were interred in each tomb (Dhiban J3= 45; Nebo T. 84 = 250; Nebo T.20 = 750; but highly uncertain!). Hundreds of oil lamps and dozens of large craters, tripod censers, and small perfume juglets were found in several of the tombs, suggesting that presenting food, burning aromatics, anointing the dead with perfumed oil, and lighting lamps played an important role in eighth century funerary rituals.

At Dhiban, recesses and pits seem to have served as bone repositories, suggesting secondary mortuary practices also occurred. Although we do not know what determined who was buried together, these remains suggest rituals that revolved around connecting the living with the dead, and the amalgamation of the individual body into the collective dead of the tomb. This seems in keeping with a general system of identification and social organization based on genealogy and descent, something suggested many times for Iron Age Transjordan (e.g., LaBianca and Younker 1995).

At the same time, evidence for some internal differentiation in funerary practices is also evident. In tomb J3 at Dhiban, a clay coffin with a schematic human face applied to its lid was found (Winnett and Reed 1964, pl. 52:2; 53:1–2; 96–97). Fragments of clay coffins, some with handles, were found in a number of other tombs (Dhiban J4, J5, J6; Nebo T.84 and T.20), although none of these had human features. It appears that clay coffins were used regularly in eighth century Moab, but not for every interment. Indeed, the low-level, but near continuous, use of clay coffins and sarcophagi from the end of the Bronze Age through to the early years of Achaemenid Persian rule is a distinct feature of burial practices in Transjordan, despite the possibility that specific forms (anthropoid sarcophagi, “bathtub” coffins) reflect foreign influences from separate sources (e.g., Egypt, Mesopotamia). More unusual are apparent episodes of cremation in both T. 84 and T. 20 at Nebo (Saller 1966, 181). This practice is uncommon in Transjordan, but evident at various times and places in the Levant (e.g., Bloch-Smith 1992, 52–55).

## SUMMATION

Eighth-century Transjordan was constituted by small-scale communities, built both socially and economically around households, and probably extended vertically and horizontally via lineages or tribes. At the same time, it was home to three kingdoms that acted along with their peers on a world stage increasingly shaped by the expansion of Assyria. In this capacity, Transjordanian kings were able to accumulate sufficient economic and cultural resources to engage in public works,

represent themselves visually and verbally in the international language of kingship, secure their rule for the entire century, and more.

The mechanics of how this was done escapes us at present. The links we can draw between excavated settlements and the texts and statues of kings remain speculative. What is needed is more intensive, better quality, investigation of the “nuts and bolts” of everyday life in order to understand how the production of food and crafts and the reproduction of households and families link to the actions of kings and the dynamics of empires. Essentially, we need more of the sort of research on which our honoree, Oded Borowski, has built his career.

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## Egypt and Judah in the Eighth Century BCE

*Donald Redford*

The eighth century in Levantine history spans the time of the revitalization of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) under Jeroboam II, through the extinction of that state in 722 BCE, to the desperate attempts by Judah and its neighbors to ward off the growing Assyrian menace. In Egypt roughly the first third of the century is taken up by the major part of the long, fifty-two-year reign of Sheshonk III and the forty-odd years of ‘Akheperre Sheshonk IV.<sup>1</sup> Only during the last quarter of the century do new entities of political power and territorial control—Sais, Assyria, Kush—suddenly assert themselves in north-east Africa, and catapult the country once again into the “mainstream” of history.

### THE EGYPTIAN SOURCES

Until one tries to piece together the history of northeast Africa in the Libyan period (the so-called “Third Intermediate Period”), one can never appreciate the debt we owe to the monuments of the great ruin-fields of Thebes, Memphis, and Saqqara, dating from the New Kingdom. For that five-hundred-year time span, the centuries of empire, we possess a wealth of day-book excerpts (Redford 1986), “triumph”-stelae (Schott 1990, no. 108; Klug 2002), battle reliefs (Heinz 2001), construction stelae (Grallert 2001), “Song”-stelae (Redford 2002; 2017), and a host of private, biographical statements (Gnirs 1996). In the latter, the writers are keen on painting a picture of their outstanding role in society, which draws on careers in life and thus often provides historical detail.

Administrative papyri also abound (Quirke 2001), especially in the Twentieth Dynasty, leading up to the collapse of the state. Diplomatic correspondence (Moran 1992, Beckman 1999, Bryce 2003) conveys across the millennia details and

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1. Often termed “Sheshonk V,” cf. Von Beckerath 1999, 191. I do not intend herein to deal with the confusion which has been introduced into the Twenty-Third Dynasty by studies over the past two decades.

motivation of which even contemporaries would have been ignorant of. Finally, a vibrant King-list tradition (Gardiner 1959; Redford 1986) reached a point of culmination (though not termination) during the Nineteenth Dynasty.<sup>2</sup>

With the end of the Twentieth Dynasty, c. 1070 BCE, silence falls. It is as though a great portcullis has descended, and common genres suddenly lose their popularity or cease altogether. At the root of the problem lies a demographic-political shift in status: The New Kingdom's association with Thebes (traditional pharaonic obsequies in the Valley of the Kings; the connexion with the Amun priesthood) and Pi-Ramesses (now derelict and abandoned) spelled doom for the old regime's physical and ideological legitimacy. At once, as our excavations in East Karnak demonstrate (Redford 1994, 15–21), large swaths of domestic occupation in Thebes came to an end, as villas were abandoned; and Thebes sank to the status of a provincial town. Similarly in the Delta, Pi-Ramesses was replaced by a new city: Tanis, cloned from earlier, New Kingdom settlements, but entirely new in association and demographics.

Moreover, the Egypt of the eleventh century and beyond lacked a true elite with real accomplishments, apart from sacerdotal place-holders; and since in the old days, the imperial elite, king and nobility, had celebrated its mighty deeds in scenes and texts for public consumption, graphic and textual records grew suddenly scarce. The desire for display and commemoration was absent, and consequently a once reliable source for historians fails us. That a new regime, Libyan in origin and reluctant to assimilate to Egyptian ways (Leahy 1985; O'Connor 1990), should be in the ascendant from ca. 930 BCE, did not augur well for the tradition of hieroglyphic display.

The sources for the history of the Twenty-First and Twenty-Second Dynasties confirm the dismal picture painted above. With next to no construction work in progress, there can be no wonder that quarry- and building-inscriptions are scarce (exceptions: Porter and Moss 1974, 170; Caminos 1950). Withdrawal from former geographic spheres of military interest resulted in a drastic reduction in records of campaigns. One glaring exception, the campaign of Sheshonk I against Judah (Ritner 2009, 193–213), is highly formulaic and derivative of Thutmosid traditions.

The effect on the Egyptian historical memory of an alien ruling elite can be illustrated by recourse to the King-list tradition. Although there is good evidence that scribal precision continued to inform the practice of keeping such a list, in popular transmission the sequence and identity of the names was sometimes mauled (Lloyd 1975, 177–78; Redford 1986, 304–5). With the diminution of certain genres of text, and the extinction of others, we are in a weak position to speak of Egypt's relations with the Levant in the eighth century BCE. The interests of

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2. How great a debt does such “chronicling” owe to the antiquarian interests of the great Khamwese, fourth son of Ramesses the Great (Gomaa 2001), must remain moot.



the Libyan kings are focused inwards, on the parochial scene (Myśliwiec 2000; Bares 2010; Becker 2012), and there is scarcely a hint of foreign involvement. When reference is made to foreign themes, the terms used are banal, generic, and vague. When, for example, Sheshonk IV (Gauthier 1912, 374[ix]) takes the title “the Brave,” and claims that “fear of him is in the hearts of foreigners” (Montet 1966, no. 65), can we discern any underlying historical reality that might have occasioned this choice of epithet?

### THE VICISSITUDES OF THE PHARAONIC MODEL

The nature and condition of the Pharaonic monarchy, at any point in the nation’s history, provides the key to understanding Egypt’s culture and mindset. Rooted in a fossilized “Big Man” system (rather than a chiefdom), passing directly to “nation state,” ancient Egypt was embodied in the figure of *Pharaoh*, a true “big man” or “Anthropos” (Ἀνθρωπος) spanning earth and heaven. When to the demands of this role is added the historic person of a true larger-than-life “son of god,” one has all the ingredients for the creation of a veritable super being, rivalling the gods themselves.

Such a one was Ramesses the Great. Sixty-seven years on the throne, conqueror, diplomat, builder, and explorer, Ramesses cast a long shadow, dominating and obscuring the six centuries following his death. One has only to examine the relief depictions of Twenty-First and Twenty-Second Dynasty kings to appreciate how sculptors slavishly reproduced his aquiline profile,<sup>3</sup> and lector priests, called upon to fashion titulary, were mesmerized by the titles of the great king.<sup>4</sup>

It was during the Twenty-First and Twenty-Second Dynasties that memories of empire, informed by the specifics of the *res gestae* of Thutmose III and Ramesses II, began to coalesce into the figure of Sesostriis (Lange 1954; Malaise 1966; Froidefond 1971). Derived from the sobriquet of Ramesses, *Ssy-rc*, by the late period the final result was the legendary figure of the World Conqueror, a foil to the pretensions of others such as Cyrus, Darius and Sargon who aspired to similar glories. It may be that the Sesostriis template can be detected elsewhere, for example, as the informing pattern of the legendary Solomon.

But Sesostriis is legend, not an eschatological hope. The mythic world emperor is relegated to the past; the *Königsnovelle* is essentially dead.<sup>5</sup> In its place, a cold Realpolitik has asserted itself: People know the fraudulence of “kingship” as an ideological construct. “Kings” can be created by clergy or the nobility, but

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3. Myśliwiec 1988, pl. XII–XIII (Siamun); XIV–XVI (Sheshonk I), XXIIa (Sheshonk III), XXIV (Osorkon III).

4. In particular *Wsr-m3ct-rc Mry-Imn* and the ubiquitous *stp.n* + DN forms (with Re, Amun, or Ptah): von Beckerath 1999, 179–97.

5. Hofmann 2004. The term is an unfortunate one, for it is not a genre designation.

they lack legitimacy. Only Amun, the king of the gods, bestows charisma on the true king (Redford 2004, 106–7).

This introduces us to a new source of political legitimacy. Whereas in the age-old scenario Geb or Osiris had granted the inheritance of world-rule to the king (Sethe 1906; Bedier 1995, 196–203), now a supernal, ineffable being becomes king-maker and power source in this world and the next:

“Indeed, thou hast let every land and foreign country know that thou art the champion of Pharaoh, l.p.h (= life, prosperity, health), thy son, against every land and foreign country! Thou it is that hast made the land of Egypt strong, thy land alone—and that’s not by the agency of any army, but (by) thy great might!” (KRI V, 244: 10–12)

Amun-re, the great, celestial power of the sun, looked down upon the king, his son, his “living image” on earth. The relationship is rooted in the past: Twice Amun had championed a Theban “underdog” on the field of battle and politics, against the inroads of a much more powerful polity on the north, and on each occasion (Eleventh and Fifteenth Dynasties) Thebes had won out. (In the mid-ninth century, a third act of resistance was backed by Amun, but with a different outcome; see below.) The Judaeans and the world at large knew of Amun and his city Thebes largely as a citadel of nationalism (Koehler and Baumgartner 1974, 621), the destruction of which spelled political doom for the country. For the Egyptians, Thebes was the quintessential “city,” the primordial source of urban creation.<sup>6</sup>

#### AMUN AND ISAIAH’S EGYPT OF THE EIGHTH CENTURY BCE

If Nahum, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel could gloat over the fate of the great southern city, it had much to do in fact with the fatal cul-de-sac into which Amun and his southern domain had led the country. The Thebans nursed a strong aversion to Libyan tribesmen, whom they had expelled from the Thebaid by the twelfth century BCE. But Libyan migrants, settled in the north between Oxyrrynchos and the shores of the Mediterranean (Perdu 2002, 33), went from strength to strength. When Sheshonk, commander-in-chief of Egyptian armed forces, slid into the kingship through nepotism and intermarriage, the Thebans expressed their displeasure by denying him both cartouche and titulary (Kruchten 1989, 49). Inevitably, with grievances unaddressed, the animosity of the South increased, and by the middle of the ninth century, had issued in a prolonged open rebellion (Caminos 1958).

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6. “The city, the mother through whom the gods and all countries were born, whose soil congealed to found the earth; and on account of her they are (all) called ‘City.’” Firthow 1957, 13.

The rebellion wrought havoc in the south and has left its mark in destruction levels in East Karnak (Redford 1994, 14). It did not succeed in unseating the Libyan authorities, but it severely weakened them. By the eighth century, the Twenty-Second Dynasty incumbant had been reduced to a *primus inter pares* (first among equals), and the Delta apportioned among a number of “Great Chiefs of the Me(shwesh),” and several “kings,” apparently unrelated to the reigning house. All of these constituted introspective, self-promoting principalities of parochial interest, with no broader, national vision.

This is the Egypt pictured and derided by Isaiah in chapters 19 and 31 (Ahituv 1998, 3–9). Criticism focuses on Memphis and Tanis, the latter remaining the political hub of the land, and the Libyan principalities (called “tribes” in v. 13: Hoch 1994, 277–78). The Thebaid, now a predominantly regional jurisdiction, with connections through the Amun cult with Kush, lay beyond the prophet’s ken or concern. One should note the absence of any reference to שׂס, “Sais”: Tefnakhte’s bid to unify the land has not yet occurred, and the pericope thus predates 724 BCE.

#### EGYPT AND THE LEVANT: THE VIEW FROM THE NILE

Regardless of the fact that the Libyan rulers had adopted a Ramesside persona in art and titulary, any fantasies they may have entertained of emulating the great “Sesy-ra” did not achieve historical reality. Only one certain military campaign, that of Sheshonk I (Sagrillo 2015), can be attested during the Twenty-Second Dynasty (Schipper 1999, 119ff; Finkelstein 2002; Evian 2011). Although one might counter that the contention hangs on an *argumentum e silentio*, the archaeological sphere shows little that may be the result of imperial activity.

The hope was still expressed that prince so-and-so, when he came to the throne, would make all those foreigners kow-tow (Edwards 1960, 49), but the whole had a hollow ring. Osorkon II has been promoted as one who cultivated friendly relations with Israel (Redford 1992, 339–40) and contributed to the coalition that fought at Qarqar (but see Klengel 1992, 198 and n. 72). Nonetheless, he would appear to be the exception that proves the rule.

Why should it be that the Twenty-Second Dynasty had virtually signed off on an involvement in Asia? Several arguments suggest themselves. First, the Libyans did not acculturate well. They kept to themselves, were reluctant to learn the language, and were thus indifferent to native traditions. The persona New Kingdom pharaohs had created meant little to them, although their Egyptian promoters trotted out the usual ideological baggage.

Second, there is reason to believe that, although not expressed in words, Libyan ties and loyalties continued to reside in the west, the land whence they had come from. When the crisis came in 655 BCE, the identity of the “Temehu” (an obsolescent term for Libyans), their clans and the townships they occupied, and

their place of origin could easily be identified, preparatory to their being expelled back to where whence they came from (Perdu 2002).

Third, although to call the Twenty-Second Dynasty “feudal” arises from a council of despair, the overriding interests of the Great Chiefs of the Me were definitely parochial in the extreme. They were not interested in answering the call of the paramount ruler, viz. the king in Tanis to contribute to action beyond the boundaries of their principalities. If one adds to all this the deleterious effects of the Theban rebellion, one can perhaps appreciate why the local Libyan “Poohbah”s kept to themselves and jealously guarded their own turf. It was a gross miscalculation, but almost inevitable.

### EGYPT AND THE LEVANT: EXCHANGE OF POPULATION AND GOODS

From time immemorial the prospect of “going down” to Egypt had always been an attractive option, whether to alleviate food shortages, to seek employment or, temporarily, to pasture livestock. When the empire came to an end, and the northern border withdrew to the Sinai frontier, a “going down” to the banks of the Nile often took the form of a flight to safety by a political fugitive (Schipper 1999, 186–91). When the expansion of a hostile and aggressive power from beyond the Tigris threatened the Levant, the West-Semitic speaking city states realized that their erstwhile role as part of an Egyptian sphere of influence had changed into that of a buffer—to their own discomfiture and Egypt’s benefit (Schipper 2011, 268–70). Now those who descended to Egypt were legations pleading for assistance to resist the wave of destruction from the north.

Although the prophets excoriated the authorities for these diplomatic probes, which they considered ineffectual, their words did not prevent exchange of population and small scale commerce. From the Third Intermediate Period and the Saite period, one occasionally hears of groups from Western Asia settling in the Delta and lower Nile Valley (Winnicki 2009, 66–69), but the scribal tendency to use rather archaic, generic terms such as *Kharu* or *Shasu* (Giveon, 1971) conceal specific places of origin. Still, for most of the Third Intermediate Period and late eighth century, the weakened Libyan state of the Twenty-Second Dynasty could offer very little to migrants from the north in terms of mercenary or commercial employment. The reverse flow—Egyptian migrants going north into the buffer states of the southern Levant—was virtually nonexistent.

“Small scale commerce” may be a misnomer, since there are flashes of major exchange during the eighth century. Free-market economy is a poor model for the international commerce of ancient Egypt. The modern idea of a despatch of goods without a prior regard for the ultimate consumer is not applicable in antiquity; targeted trade was the norm (Salles 1991). Moreover, the government of Pharaoh was much too astute to let foreign trade escape its jurisdiction (Liverani 2003). Pharaoh or his high-ranking ministers could both authorize or interdict foreign

trade, whether carried in Egyptian or alien bottoms (Berdan 1989). If trade in a particular commodity (grain, olive oil, resin, linen, etc.) was deemed vital to the prosperity of the state, Pharaoh simply took it over (Katz 2008; Bareš 2008). Besides, the market that Egypt offered the world was so substantial that its presence and interest is immediately recognizable.

If the southern Levant, in the vicinity of Ekron and Ashkelon, shows signs of major industrial development, it means that at the turn of the century, Pharaoh's commercial demands had created a gigantic market that parochial development could not meet. A similar explanation is to be sought for the volume of shipments of wine, destined undoubtedly for Egypt, evidenced off the coast of Ashkelon (Ballard 2002; cf. Hartung and others 2007, 118). Egyptian (and Egyptianizing) objects abroad, however, throughout the coast lands of the Mediterranean, owe nothing to any Egyptian initiative. The distribution is the result of expanding networks of Phoenician trade, and the appetite of cities and elites in the central and western Mediterranean for eastern exotica, especially that originating in northeast Africa (Parcerisa 1983; Leclant 1991; Pernigotti 1997; Markoe 2000).

#### MENDES, THE "BAD BOY" OF THE DELTA, AND A JUDEAN CONNEXION

Those parts of Lower Egypt familiar to Judaeans and Israelites during the eighth century, it has been argued, chart a course down the Pelusiac branch and scattered points in the eastern and western Delta (Redford 1992, 335–36).<sup>7</sup> Those sites that are missing, such as Sebennytyos, Busiris, Pi-hboye and especially Mendes, all sites in the central Delta, were clearly not frequented by Judaeans. This might mean that, before the Kushite-Saite period, for whatever reason, the Mendesian branch and the central branch (the "Great River") were inimical to navigation from the Mediterranean.

Mendes, a city of long-standing and prehistoric origins (Redford 2010), figures prominently in Egyptian history from the close of the New Kingdom into the fourth century BCE. The founder of the Twenty-First Dynasty, Smendes, undoubtedly hailed from the city (von Beckerath 1984), and during the ninth and eighth centuries, under the leadership of the Harnakht family, the city achieved primacy of place in the Delta (Gomaa 1978). The city plays the role of the villain in a romance which, although in the written version dates from centuries later, is historically rooted in events of the time of "the family of Hornakht, son of Smendes," and a king of Tanis named Petubastis (Hoffmann 1996, 19:30–32).

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7. It seems unlikely that a circuitous land route through the Negeb and the inland route to the Bitter Lakes was extensively used at this time. Strategic defenses in the vicinity of the Shi-Hor (i.e., the Horus Canal), which would have signaled the presence of such a route, are lacking before the next century.

Whether the bone of contention is, in fact, a dispute over the armor of a deceased hero called Inaros, is quite unknown and irrelevant. What is clear is that for some reason—we may here be missing a “page of history”—Mendes and its outlying faubourgs had become whipping-boys in a blame-game post-dating the late eighth century. The general of Mendes is dismissed as a “curly-headed gum-eater” (Hoffmann, 162).

Curiously Mendes, though not mentioned in any biblical text, does appear in a tradition relating to Solomon and the building of the temple. In Eupolemos (Charlesworth 1985, 2:867), “Waphres” is said to have lent Solomon 80,000 men for the building of the temple in Jerusalem. The composition of this contingent is as follows: 20,000 men each from Mendes and Sebennytos, and 10,000 each from Sethroe, Busiris, Leontopolis, and Athribis. The list *sounds like* a pseudo-census of townships in the eastern Delta. But one is struck by the consonance of assertions in the Inaros epic and those of Eupolemos regarding population density. In the latter, Mendes and Sebennytos account for half of the manpower of the region; in the Inaros story, the army of Mendes is called numerous (Hoffmann 1996, 19:1–2) and, with its outlying settlements, the strongest in Egypt (Hoffmann 1996, 24:9).

While Waphres is most plausibly identified as Apries (588–570 BCE), the size of the manpower pool may be a reflection of population size and distribution at an earlier date. From the tenth century BCE, Mendes was on an upward trajectory, growing in size and political importance. However distorted and anachronistic, could the tradition in Eupolemos conceal a “lost page” in Egypto-Judaean relations?

## THE BUTIC CANAL

The lethargy and disinterest in foreign involvement that characterized most of the eighth century in Egypt was decisively shattered about the turn of the third quarter of that century. By 725 BCE the Delta and Middle Egypt had become a virtual political vacuum, a prize for the “highest bidder.” Of these, only three stand out as significant contenders at this international auction: the city of Sais, and the empires of Kush and Assyria. Sais stole a march on the other two by attempting to unify Lower and Middle Egypt under its hegemony by force; and even if we view Tefnakhte through the eyes of his enemies and detractors, he laid a firm political foundation. Although temporarily discomfited by the Kushite and Assyrian invasions, Sais and the dynasty Tefnakhte had founded were to persevere and survive in the form of the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty (wrongly begun *apud* Mantho with the reign of Psammetichos I).<sup>8</sup>

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8. Miśliwiec 2000, 106–7; On the artificial nature of divisions in the Egyptian king-list as it was transmitted through the Late Period, see Redford 1986, 326–27.

And now, with the rise of Sais, one senses a revival of political energy, focusing on a new orientation in foreign policy. The unexpected incursions of the Assyrians (734–32 BCE), reaching down the Levantine coast as far as Gaza, were sufficiently alarming to send client kings scurrying, some to surrender and change allegiance, others to resist with Egyptian help (Grayson 1993, 77–79). And it is precisely at this time, c. 725 BCE, that Sais enters the picture as the growing Nilotic power and the obvious source of military aid for Hoshea of Israel in his projected rebellion against Shalmaneser V (2 Kgs 17:4).<sup>9</sup> This date must fall, therefore, at the time when Tefnakhte was at the height of his powers, that is, before the invasion of Piankhy (Myśliwiec 2000, 73–109).

Viewed from an Egyptian vantage point, the sudden “real and present” threat of the Assyrian incursions (732 BCE) to the eastern frontier of Egypt called forth a new strategic provision. In the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period, access to and departure from the political center of Egypt, the Memphis-Heliopolis axis, was had by proceeding up the eastern, Pelusiac branch, or the Mendesian branch. If Sais and the western Delta were to be the final destination, a further trip down the Western River would be necessary, doubling the travel time.

If the eastern frontier were now to become the point of strategic crisis, this old, lengthy and indirect path of communication would simply not suffice: Troops had to be rushed directly from the west Delta to the combat zone, and military and political control exercised as quickly as possible. Such considerations forced the creation of a more direct route, straight across the northern Delta, from the Saite district where power now resided, to the Sile (Tel Hebwa) frontier north east of Mendes. This was the *Butic Canal*, which was designed to facilitate west-east movement and communication, such as would have been imperative only in the last quarter of the eighth century and not before.<sup>10</sup>

Paralleling the absence of textual evidence for significant political contact between Egypt and Israel or Judah in the Third Intermediate Period, the archaeological data show little if any contact across the Sinai and into the Negeb in Iron I–II (Mumford 1999, 744–49; cf. Morris 2005, 691–800). But with the rise of Sais and its energetic ruler Tefnakhte, both contemporary evidence and later tradition point to a revived interest in the coastal “Ways of Horus,” the Sinai crossing and the Negeb (Redford 1992, 345–47). In this context the canal made sense militarily,

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9. סַיִס = Sais; Koehler-Baumgartner 1983, 703; Redford 1986, 323; Tadmor 1994, 277–78. For *s* used in place of *š* see Garr 2004, 29; cf. *P3-n-S3w*, “he of Sais”: Segal 1983, 47 ln. 4, and *passim*; Krahmalkov, 2000, 65, 67; Lipinski 2001, 13.10

10. On the Butic Canal see Bietak 1975, 27, 65, 92–93; Schenkel 1980; Carrez-Maratray 1999, 403–4. Excavation has now demonstrated that the course of the canal, in the vicinity of Mendes, was not directed toward Tel Timai (Thmuis) on the south, but skirted the northern edge of the site, where a harbor was located, then veered north-east towards Sinai.

although it seems not to have been much used for commercial or cultural contact by land.

### THE END OF THE CENTURY AND THE ADVENT OF KUSH

The end of the eighth century brought Egypt within the penumbra of the politics of the south-eastern Mediterranean littoral in unexpected ways. The sudden rise of Kush and its expansion north to fill the political vacuum that was Egypt had obvious repercussions in the southern Levant. Once again a Nilotic power was setting its sights on the old imperial terrain of the New Kingdom.

With the discovery of the Tang-I Var inscription of Sargon II, the chronology of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty (Von Beckerath 1997, 91–93) has become a little clearer (Frame 1999; Redford 1999). Shebitku was on the throne in 705 BCE and Taharqa in 690 BCE, and thus the former enjoyed fourteen years on the throne, dying in his fifteenth. This is in agreement of Africanus' version of the *Epitome* of Manetho. Shabaka remains a problem, but Africanus helps again; he gives Shabaka 8 years of sole rule, which would carry us back to 713 BCE.<sup>11</sup> Beyond the singular case of BM 24429 (Leclant 1954, pl. V), suspect on other grounds, year 10 seems to be the highest date of the reign (Malinine 1983, no. 6), which would have Shabaka passing away in 703 BCE, the very year of Shebitku's "appearance" (that is, his assumption of sole rule) in the Karnak graffito.

If then Shabaka's "active" years encompass the decade from 713 to 703 BCE, what evidence is there for involvement in international affairs in this time slot? Unfortunately the evidence is sparse and stereotypical (Redford 1992, 348–354). Sealings from Nineveh (Leclant, 1984, 512 n. 97) suggest correspondence with Sargon, implying perhaps a degree of friendship with the Asiatic empire; and the extradition of Yamani could not have been construed as a hostile act. All the more puzzling, then, is the sudden *volte face* of 701 BCE. Whatever the motive, Senacherib appears to have been "blind-sided" by the unexpected Kushite intrusion. Whether, and to what extent, Hezekiah had made contact with Egypt for support in his insurrection, the Assyrian officials' statement (2 Kgs 18:19–25) could be taken as a logical surmise on their part: What other great power was there in the offing which Judah might turn to for assistance, if not Egypt?

Finally, the incursion of Kush into the politics and society of the Levant at the close of the eighth century planted the seeds for a version of the Mosaic tradition that was fully to blossom in the Ptolemaic period. This fastened upon the

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11. The inscriptions of a year 14 (Malinine 1968, nos. 123–24) usually attributed to Shabaka, lack royal attribution and could easily date to Shebitku. Inscriptions of year 12 and 13 in the eastern desert (Cuyat-Montet 1912, no. 187) belong, not to Shabaka, but to the divine adoratrices.



archetype of the “great siege” as the watershed in the tradition history of the Israelites, and was shaped by historic investments of great significance: Nefrusy, Avaris, Sharuhén (Polz 2007), Megiddo (Redford 2003), and particularly those of more recent occurrence such as Hermopolis and Memphis (Grimal 1981). Each by its very nature recounts the breaking of confinement and the egress of the confined.

With each is associated the figure of a hero-leader: with the first three individuals bearing *-m(se hypocoristica, (ka)-mase, (ah)-mase, (Thut)-mase*, with the final pair military leaders who could be qualified by the Libyan *mosu*, “master, lord, leader” (Yoyotte 1958; Chevereux 1985, 41 n. b; Knigge 2004, 55). Herein lies the root of the later tales of Moses as lord of the land, victor at Hermopolis, and husband of a Sudanese princess. Significantly the Pentateuch *already knows* of this tradition (Num 12); it is not a later, Alexandrian, creation (Redford 2011, 313–15).

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Part 2  
THE LAND OF JUDAH





## Society and Culture in the Kingdom of Judah during the Eighth Century

*Avraham Faust*

The eighth century BCE, prior to the Assyrian destructions of the last third of this century, is regarded as a demographic and economic peak in the history of the Land of Israel, one that will be reached again only centuries later. The urbanization process of the Iron Age II reached a new zenith at the time. Many cities and towns are known to scholarship through excavations, and hundreds of settlements have been identified in surveys. Despite the differences between the different polities that existed in the region at the time, one can identify a complex settlement hierarchy, from mega-cities, like Jerusalem (in Judah), through administrative centers, field towns, villages and hamlets, to small farmsteads that dotted the countryside. This was a complex society with clear evidence for socioeconomic hierarchy, economic specialization, and administration. It is the aim of the present paper to analyze the social and economic reality in the kingdom of Judah during the eighth century BCE, and to briefly discuss some of the processes that led to the creation of this complex society.

### JUDAH IN THE EIGHTH CENTURY: SOCIETY AND ECONOMY

#### SETTLEMENT AND DEMOGRAPHY

Many studies of the Iron Age have noted that the eighth century (or Iron Age IIB)<sup>1</sup> is a peak in term of both settlement and demography (e.g., Broshi and Finkelstein 1992). This is clearly the situation in the north, which was devastated following the Assyrian conquests (e.g., Dever 2007; Faust 2015b). Although in many parts

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1. The Iron Age IIB covers approximately the years 840/830–700 BCE (roughly, following Mazar 2011). Although the ceramic assemblage of this period probably continues into the seventh century, we find the drastic changes brought about by the Assyrian conquests far more significant in determining the end of this period.

of Judah, the seventh century was even more densely settled than the eighth (Faust 2008), it is clear that here, too, the eighth century was the apex of a long process of settlement growth and development. Furthermore, as noted by Vaughn (1999, 71–78), Thareani-Sussely (2007), and others (Faust 2008, and references), it is clear today that the expansion into some of the marginal and arid parts of Judah—the Judean Desert and the Negev—started already in the late eighth century (even if peaking in the seventh century).

Broshi and Finkelstein (1992, 53) estimated the population of the entire country (west of the Jordan River) in the mid-eighth century (before the Assyrian conquests) as 400,000, and that of Judah alone as some 110,000 (Broshi and Finkelstein 1992, 52). Later studies suggested that these figures are too low and, on the basis of similar density coefficients, Dagan (2000, 266, graph 25) suggested that the population of the Shephelah alone was some 108,000. This is not the place for extensive discussion of these figures, nor of the methods employed in reaching them. Still, although the estimates of ancient population figures can, and should be doubted (Postgate 1994; Faust 2005), the trends and *relative* numbers are somewhat more reliable (Faust 2014a). It is clear, therefore, that the eighth century was a demographic peak in Judah, exceeding any previous era.

#### RESETTLING THE COUNTRYSIDE

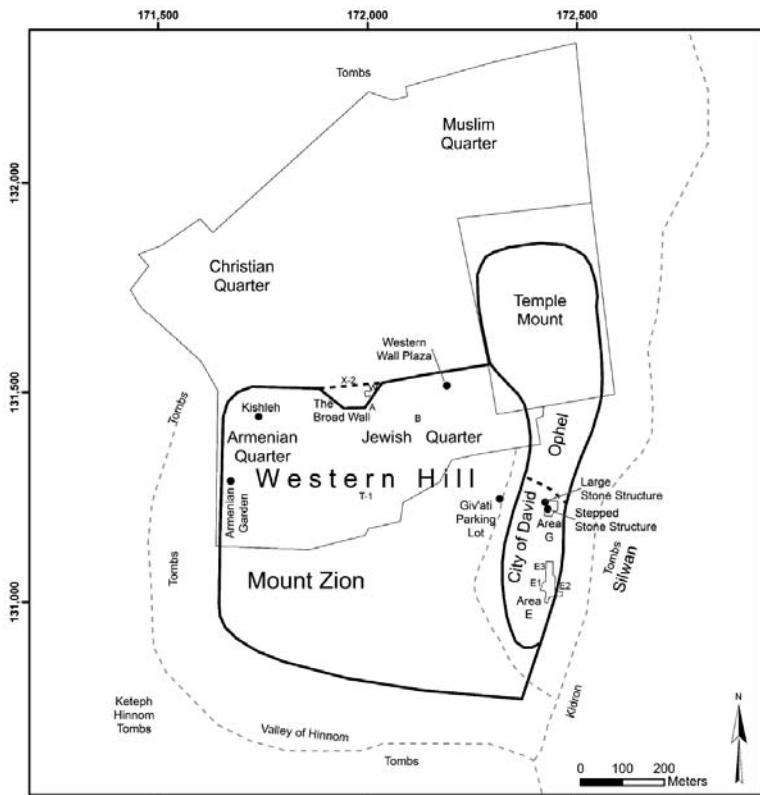
Perhaps even more dramatic are the changes in the countryside. The countryside in Judah was abandoned during the transition from the Iron I to the Iron II, and practically all the excavated Iron I rural settlements were abandoned (e.g., Kh. Za'akuka, Giloh, Kh. Umm et-Tala; Beth-Zur; Allon Shevut). The resettlement of the countryside was a long process, which took place in new sites, making it clear that there is no continuity in settlement. The available evidence suggests that significant resettlement of the countryside in Judah, that is, the establishment of villages and farmsteads, was mainly a feature of the eighth century (e.g., Kh. Jarish, Kh. er-Ras, Pisgat Ze'ev A, French Hill, and many others), even if the peak was in the seventh century BCE (for a detailed discussion of the history of the rural settlement sector, see Faust 2015a). We must admit that due to formation processes described below, it is likely that we have missed some of the activities that took place during the Iron IIA. Nevertheless, the overall data is quite striking, and it appears that the majority of the rural settlements were established in the eighth century BCE, or at least did not have a substantial Iron IIA phase.

#### URBANIZATION

The peak of the eighth century is identified not only in the number of settlements, but also in their composition. Urbanization is by no means a new feature, but it appears that, generally speaking, the urban centers of the eighth century were

denser and more developed than their predecessors. The nature of the eighth century urbanization can be examined in a number of sites, where the eighth century levels can be compared with earlier strata.

Jerusalem was no doubt exceptionally large, with a walled area of over 600 dunams. This was, in my view, a result of a lengthy process of expansion (though some believe the expansion was quick and took place in the late eighth century; for various views, see Na'aman 2014; Finkelstein 2015; Faust 2014b, and references). The number of inhabitants is debated, but it was most likely on the scale of 20,000 and more (Faust 2014b). Still, the changes in Jerusalem were dramatic, and no similar changes can be identified in other urban sites in the eighth century BCE.



**Fig. 1:** Late Iron Age Jerusalem, with major discoveries and excavation areas marked. Prepared by Yair Sapir. Courtesy of the author.

In Lachish, for example, fortifications and public structures were erected already in the Iron Age IIA. In the Iron IIB there were some changes, though not dramatic as far as the overall nature of the site is concerned (see the comparison in Ussishkin 2013, 179–80). A similar picture can be seen also in Beersheba, where the urban planning of the eighth century, as reflected in stratum II, seems to continue pretty much that of the Iron IIA, as reflected in stratum V (regardless of its exact time of erection during the Iron IIA; Lehmann 2013, 92). At Beth-Shemesh, too, although the Iron Age II witnessed developments, it is clear that there was urbanization already in the Iron Age IIA, and the Iron IIB settlement might have been even less impressive (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2011, 116, 136–37).

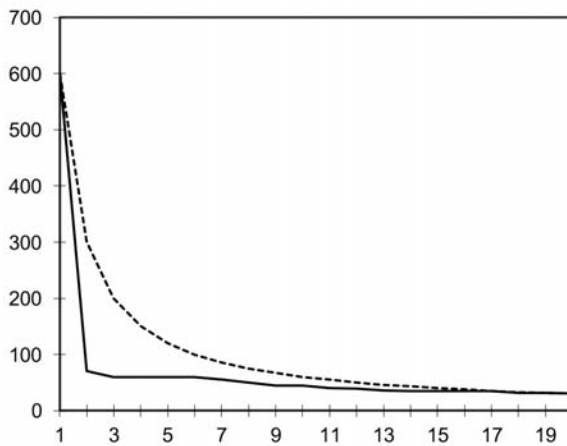
In this regard, at least, the eighth century exhibits some advance, but no revolution.

#### SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY

The continued urbanization process, and especially the resettling of the countryside, led to the emergence of a very developed settlement hierarchy. At the top of this system was Jerusalem, Judah's capital which was a mega-city of over 600 dunams, and below it were regional centers like Lachish, Tel 'Eton, and Beersheba, field towns like Tell Beit Mirsim, villages like Kh. Jarish and Kh. er-Ras, "fortress" villages like Kh. abu et Twein, and finally farmsteads like Pisgat Ze'ev A., French Hill, and Kh. el-Qatt.

This existence of the entire settlement spectrum is quite revealing. At no time before the eighth century was such a settlement continuum identified. A few features of this phenomenon, especially at both its ends, however, merit a closer attention.

The capital, Jerusalem, was an exceptionally large city (fig. 1). While an average city in Judah was some 30 dunams large (e.g., Tell Beth-Shemesh, Tell Beit Mirsim, etc.), and the second-largest city reached some 70 (Lachish) dunams, Jerusalem was over 600 dunams large. Barkay (1988) rightly used the term "primate city" (Jefferson 1939) to describe Jerusalem of this era. Indeed, the distribution of the urban settlement in terms of size and postulated demography seems to support this notion. If we take the largest 20 sites in Judah and plot them on a graph (see discussion in Faust 2012, 198–206) from the larger to the smaller, the following graph will emerge:



**Graph 1:** Settlement Hierarchy in the kingdom of Judah.

The solid line in the graph represents the situation in Judah, and this seems to reflect the primate city model, that is, a situation in which the central city is several times larger than the second largest city.<sup>2</sup> This contrasts with rank-size distribution, represented by the dotted line, according to which the second-largest city has about half the population of the largest one (Zipf 1941; and below).

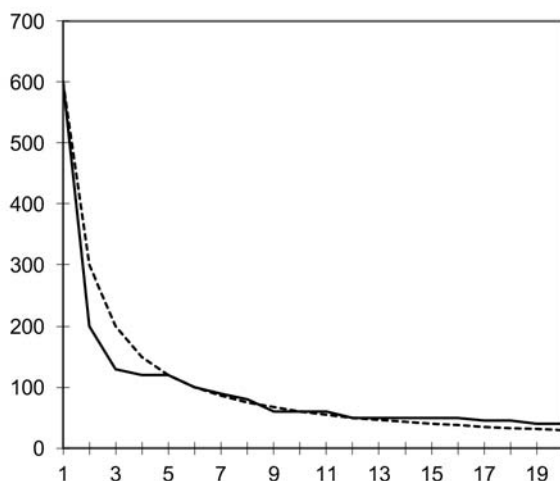
In the lower end of the spectrum, the mere existence of so many farmsteads is something new. Hardly any farmsteads are known from earlier epochs, whereas many that were dated to the eighth century were exposed in excavations (and many others were identified in surveys). This seems to imply, first of all, that settlement was indeed dense at the time and, moreover, that security was somewhat better than in earlier epochs and people could settle in isolated structures near the fields. This was likely connected to the existence of territorial kingdoms at the time, that is, with polities that governed larger areas and were responsible for security therein (more below).

**BETWEEN ISRAEL AND JUDAH:** It is interesting to compare the situation in the kingdom of Judah to that of the kingdom of Israel. The exact size of the city of Samaria is not known, but if we follow the view that it was some 600 dunams (e.g., Broshi and Finkelstein 1992, 51), the analysis of settlement hierarchy in this kingdom is quite revealing. If we plot the estimated size of the 20 largest sites in Israel on a

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2. The model refers to population, but since the data we have pertains to size, we used this information to create the graphs. It is commonly agreed that there is some correlation between size and population.

graph (Faust 2012, 200–201), the result shows that the large sites are organized approximately following the rank-size rule (and this is certainly the case should Samaria be smaller, as suggested by other scholars).



**Graph 2:** Settlement Hierarchy in the kingdom of Israel

The solid line represents the actual situation in the kingdom of Israel, whereas the dotted line represents the ideal rank size pattern. It is clear that the situation in Israel correlates quite closely with the latter model.

The differences expose a gap between Israel and Judah in the degree of urbanization between the two kingdoms. The rank-size distribution is usually typical of polities with a higher level of urbanization, whereas the primate city model is typical of states in an earlier stage of their urban development, or at least with a simpler urban system in which middle-sized cities do not exist (the difference does not have to be chronological; Faust 2012, 205–6). It appears, therefore, that Israel was more “developed” than Judah.

We should note that there are differences also in the lower part of the settlement hierarchy (which is not reflected in these graphs). Notably, when comparing the rural settlements in Israel and Judah, it appears that these in the former were usually larger (large villages and small villages) than in the latter (mainly small villages and farmsteads). This is probably a result of the fact that the Kingdom of Israel was larger, denser, and more developed than the kingdom of Judah (Faust 2012, 176, 206).

**MILITARY AND FORTS**

Excavations have unearthed quite a few large forts within the boundaries of the kingdom of Judah, for example, at 'Arad (fig. 2) and 'En Hazeva (Herzog 1998; Cohen and Yisrael 1995), and these clearly served a military function (these forts were established prior to the eighth century BCE, of course). In addition to these large towered fortresses, we know of a relatively large number of fortified structures that were unearthed in some parts of Judah, for example, Kh. abu et-Twein and Deir Baghl (Mazar 1982). It appears that these structures, which most likely served some public function (most probably as royal estates), supplied security to the countryside, which was dotted with small settlements, and mainly farmsteads (above). Interestingly, these small fortified structures are more common in Judah than in Israel, and this probably resulted from the less dense countryside, and the need for more security there. It is further possible that in some cases those structures were the center of estates that also managed production (Faust 2012, 183–89).



**Fig. 2:** The fortress at Arad. Photograph by A. Faust. Courtesy of the author.

At any event, the mere existence of the large fortresses, like Arad, is indicative of a sophisticated state apparatus at the time with at least a small core of a standing army (though this also is not a novelty of the eighth century). The widespread appearance of the smaller fortified structures is also indicative of the scale

of the kingdom and its control over the countryside, and this development is coupled with the growth of the rural settlements at this time.

#### ECONOMY AND TECHNOLOGY

As far as the technology is concerned, we witness great advances in the eighth century. This can be seen in the olive oil industry, which is easily identified archaeologically and can serve as a simple and good example (e.g., Katz 2008). While agricultural production existed throughout history, it appears that far more surpluses were produced in this period than in the preceding centuries, and toward the end of this century, relatively large centers for the production of oil surpluses were unearthed in Judahite sites like Tell Beit Mirsim and Beth-Shemesh. Bunimovitz and Lederman (2009, 136) labelled the latter an “oil-producing town” (although production was not organized, and the installations were scattered throughout town).

An even more impressive advance can be seen in pottery. Zimhoni (1997, 170) referred to “the uniformity of pottery forms in Level III” at Lachish, which was in her view “the result of mass production.” It is quite clear that production became standardized and relatively homogenous much earlier (e.g., Dever 1997, 229; Barkai 1992, 325), but the change of the Iron Age IIB marks a significant development in this regard. Notably, such changes in material culture are not only a passive reflection of societal change, but are also the agent of change, alienation in this case, that is, a process in which the familiar gradually became strange and “things” became “objects” (c.f. Gosden 2004, 36–39); we will return to this point below.

Writing is also greatly advanced in this era, beyond what was known in the past, and this is reflected in a wide array of evidence, from the increase in the number of ostraca, bullae with writing, *lmlk* impressions, and more (at least part of the increase seems to be real, and not a result of formation processes which lead to the finding of more items of all types in the destruction layers of the late eighth century BCE, see below). Such writing belongs to the technology of administration. Notably, increase in writing is part and parcel of the process of increase in standardized manufacture on the one hand, and it also leads to further alienation on the other, because it helps to “calculate, and convey worth in ways that have no direct link the actual object, but rather conceive of their values in both abstract and utilitarian ways (cf. Gosden 2004, 39).

A related advance can be seen in the development of a unified system of weights. Although mainly a feature of the seventh century, the first inscribed Judahite weights are dated to the eighth century (Kletter 1999, 32–34), and it appears that these are the forerunners of the well-developed economic and trade system that typified the seventh century (for this, see Faust and Weiss 2011).

It is quite clear, therefore, that the eighth century was quite developed technologically and that many processes that were initiated earlier matured then.



## TRADE

The large amount of agricultural surpluses inevitably led to more trade. The importation of various products—at least for the use of the monarchy and the elite (though not only by them)—is reflected by the large number of fish bones, imported from afar (e.g., Borowski 1998), as well as by the inscribed weights. Although peaking in the seventh century (Faust and Weiss 2011 and references), these processes were clearly underway at least by the late eighth century, if not earlier. While imports did not usually reach the average inhabitants of Judah (Faust 2006, 49–64; Katz 2008, 118–120), the integration of Judah into the international trade influenced the population. Above all, it had an impact on the production of surpluses, which Judah used to pay for the imports that served the royalty as well as its tribute to Assyria (in the last third of the century).

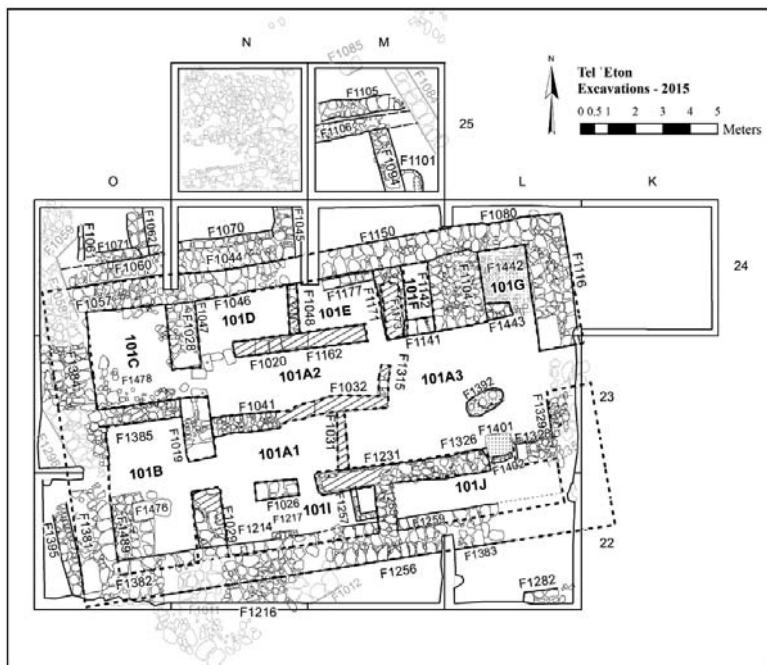
## SOCIOECONOMIC STRATIFICATION

Socioeconomic stratification was identified in every city or town in Judah for which we possess enough data, e.g., Beth-Shemesh, Tell en-Nasbeh (Mitzpah), Tell Beit Mirsim, Beersheba, and Jerusalem. While socioeconomic stratification can be studied on the basis of various lines of analysis, architecture seems to be the best vehicle for such an enterprise (e.g., Smith 2015; Blanton 1994; Faust 2012, 117–27, and references).

Houses can be differentiated according to size, quality of construction, use of common walls and location (Faust 2012, 41–42). It appears that in a typical Judahite city there was small number of very large and wealthy structures, and many smaller and flimsier abodes. Most of the structures excavated in the cities and towns of Judah were small three-room houses, in the size of 30–70 sq.m., which shared their walls with their neighbors. Their plan was created by local constraints and was influenced by them (with the exception of the adoption of the basic four-room concept which served as a common characteristic). Examples for such structures can be seen in most structures in Tell en-Nasbeh (Mizpah), Beersheba, Tel Beth-Shemesh, and Tell Beit Mirsim (Shiloh 1970; Faust 2012, 72–94, and many references). These structures most likely housed nuclear families, probably members of the lower classes which comprised the majority in the urban sector.

Still, one can identify in the cities also a small number of much larger and well-built structures. An example for an elite house is structure 101 at Tel 'Eton (fig. 3). This is a very large four-room house (some 230 sq.m. on the ground floor alone), whose plan is very symmetrical and in whose construction ashlar stones were used. The house does not share walls with other structures, and it appears that whenever it was built besides other structures double walls were constructed. The structure was built at the top of the mound, in the highest point at the site near its southern edge, overlooking some of the fields and parts of roads that were located below the mound. Additional examples can be seen in the western tower in Tell

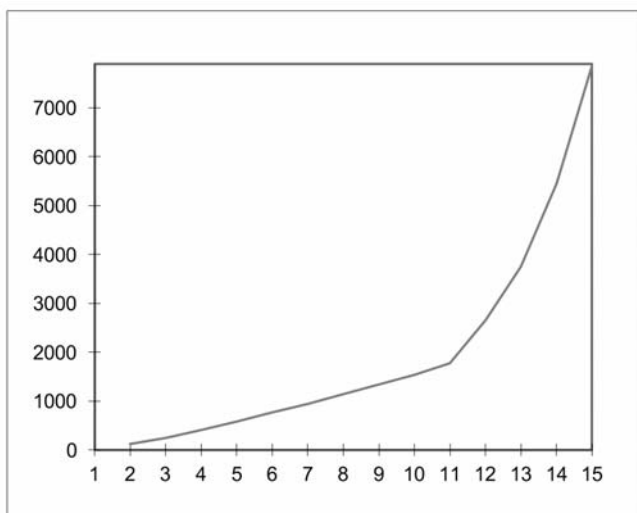
Beit Mirsim, the cellar house and the Governor's residency at Beersheba, and more. These structures housed large, extended families of the upper classes, and as we will see below most rural families that kept the traditional structure of the *bet 'av* also lived in large houses (Faust 2012, and references).



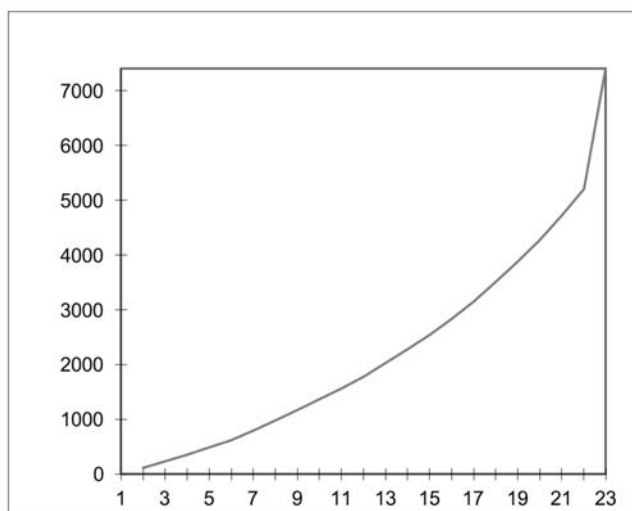
**Fig. 3:** Building 101 (“the governor’s residency) from Tel ‘Eton. Courtesy of the Tel ‘Eton archaeological expedition.

Notably, when enough data is available, differences can also be identified on the basis of a sophisticated analysis of the finds within the houses. Again, the finds in house 101 at Tel ‘Eton can serve as an example. We found dozens of storage vessels within the various rooms, indicating the storage of surpluses, along with other items showing high status or position like sealings and bullae.

This seems to indicate a high level of socioeconomic hierarchy. In order to assess the degree of socioeconomic stratification, I have plotted the houses in a graph (Lorenz curve; see Faust 2012, 42–45, and references; see also Smith et al. 2014). Simplistically put, a society with no stratification will be represented by a straight line. The more concaved the graph, the more stratified the society. The following graphs of Tell Beit Mirsim and Beth-Shemesh will serve as examples:

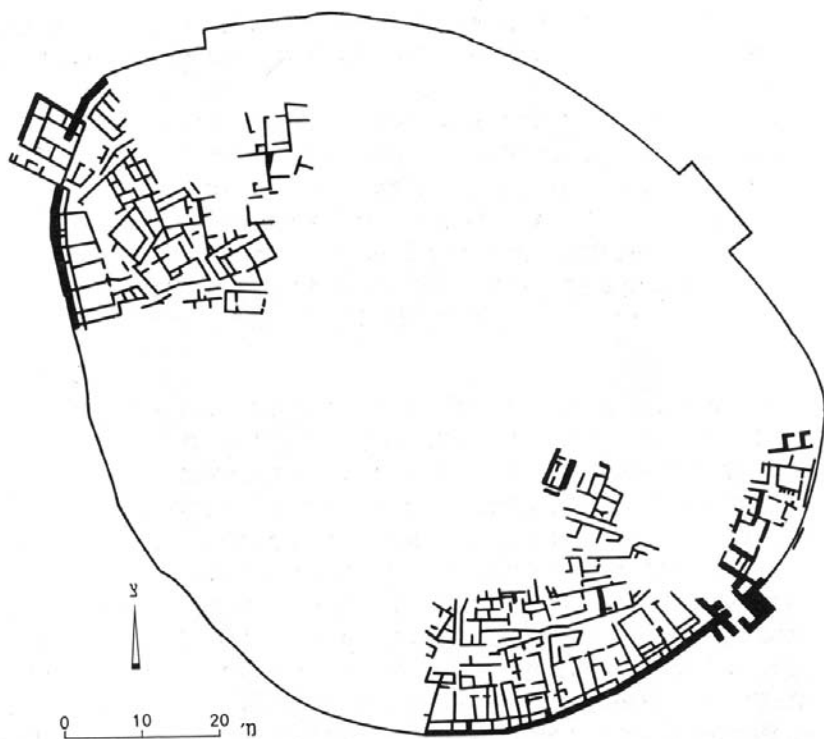


**Graph 3:** Socioeconomic stratification at Tell Beit Mirsim.



**Graph 4:** Socioeconomic Stratification in Beersheba.

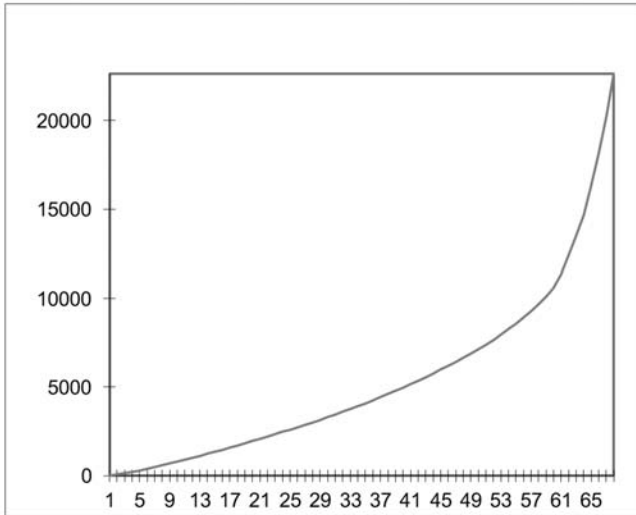
Clearly, both Beersheba and Tell Beit Mirsim (fig. 4) were stratified, and one can clearly differentiate the elite houses from the rest of the population (for the calculations, see Faust 2012).



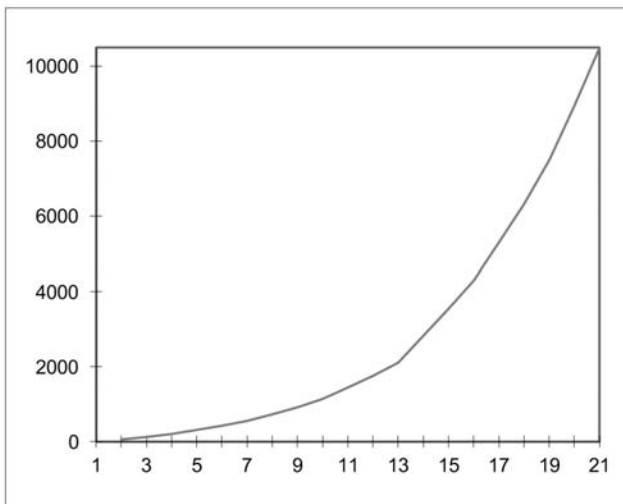
**Fig. 4:** A plan of the Iron II town of Tell Beit Mirsim (based on Albright, 1993, 179).  
Courtesy of the Israel Exploration Society.

Interestingly, the above socioeconomic stratification is typical of the urban sector, whereas the rural sector does not exhibit such differences (Faust 2012, 114–15). Furthermore, in contrast to some estimations (e.g., Lang 1985), the population in the rural sector during the eighth century BCE appears not have been poor, and the families maintained their extended family structure, lived in big houses, and seems to have kept some of their surpluses (Faust 2012, 128–77).

**BETWEEN ISRAEL AND JUDAH:** When one compares the form of socioeconomic hierarchy that is reflected in Judah at large, with that of Israel at large, an interesting difference is apparent (see graphs 5 and 6).



**Graph 5:** Socioeconomic stratification in the kingdom of Judah



**Graph 6:** Socioeconomic stratification in the kingdom of Israel

As far as Judah is concerned, the vast majority of the buildings are more or less identical, but towards the end of the graph there is a sudden jump in the quality and size of the buildings. This is clear evidence that Judahite cities were characterized by severe polarization between two classes: the small, wealthy upper class, and the poor lower class that was much larger. There was no middle class. This situation is typical of what Nolan and Lenski (2009, 145–46) called simple agrarian societies. In Israel the graph is very concave, which indicates severe stratification. However, the absence of sharp jumps along the graph shows that in the kingdom of Israel there was a fuller socio-economic continuum, and it contained a sort of middle class. This situation is typical of Nolan and Lenski (2009, 158–61, 170–71) called advanced agrarian societies. In Israel, therefore, there is a more apparent middle class than in Judah, and the graph is more complete.

This seems to be in line with the above-mentioned difference in urbanization between the two kingdoms, and both show that Israel was a more complex polity than Judah. Still, the evidence clearly shows that Judah was, anthropologically speaking, a “state” at the time.

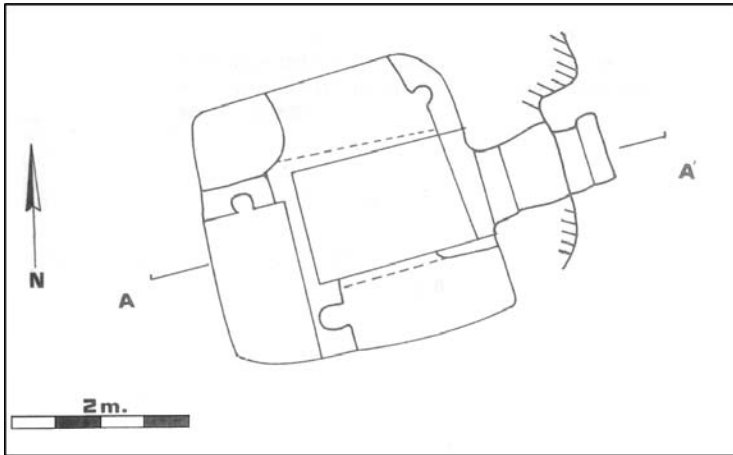
#### MATERIAL CULTURE

Many traits in the material culture of Judah show clear signs of continuity with previous phases of the Iron Age. Ceramic traditions, for instance, express continuity in a number of traits, including the extreme rarity of decoration of pottery. Another example is the extensive use of the four-room house, and more could be added to this list. Still, there are a few traits that appear, at least in substantial numbers, for the first time in this era.

**ROCK-HEWN TOMBS:** The eighth century saw the *en masse* adoption of a new burial practice. In the earlier phases of the Iron Age, the vast majority of the population was buried in simple inhumation in the fields outside the city—a form of burial that does not leave substantial remains (Kletter 2002; Faust 2004). In contrast, the eighth century experienced the adoption of rock hewn burial caves, at least by the middle segments of the society and its upper echelon (e.g., Barkay 1999; Faust 2012, 32, 71–72, 115; the urban poor and perhaps some of the rural population continued to use simple inhumation or other simple forms of burial).

The typical Judahite tomb is composed of a hewn burial cave, usually with a *dromos* (fig. 5). From the *dromos* one enters the cave by stepping down rock steps. The cave itself was usually composed of a single space of approximately 2.5 x 3 m. The chambers were usually dug in strait lines, although the quality and finish vary greatly. After entering the cave, one reaches a central passage, on three sides of which benches were left undug. The benches are organized like a  $\pi$  (the Hebrew letter *het*); one facing the doorway, and two on the right and left side of the central passageway. The deceased were laid on the benches, until the flesh was decomposed. On one of the inner corners, or below one of the benches, there is usually

a repository, into which the bones of the deceased were collected for secondary burial. The bench was thus freed to accommodate a new body. Many funerary gifts accompanied the burials, and these were also found in the repository. Evidently, this type of burial was used by extended families for a number of generations.



**Fig. 5:** A typical Judahite tomb, from Gibeon. Based on Eshel 1987, fig. 9. Courtesy of the Israel Exploration Society.

There is great variation in the size and execution of the caves, reflecting socioeconomic differences. Still, despite the differences, it is easy to identify the various caves that belong to this group (some do not; Yezerksi 2013), labeled the “Judahite tomb.”<sup>3</sup>

This new practice was probably adopted from the margins of Judah (e.g., Yezerksi 2013), where burial in caves (though somewhat different) was still practiced (even if rarely) during earlier phases of the Iron Age (e.g., Borowski 2013; Katz and Faust 2014). What is important for our purposes, however, is not the source or origin of the new practice, but the mere fact that it was adopted at this time; the issue will be elaborated below.

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3. The differences between the various tombs resemble the differences between the houses (only that the tomb, unlike the houses, does not represent the entire population, and hence is not representative of the entire socioeconomic spectrum). In both cases the differences represent socioeconomic differences, while the mere usage of a common style indicates that the population belonged to the same social group.

**FIGURINES:** Figurines, mainly of the type known as the Judean Pillared Figurines (note that there are also other types of figurines) are also adopted in the period en masse, and hundreds were discovered in the destruction layers in sites from this era. These are stereotyped female figurines, with solid, handmade bodies, “featuring a standing woman, with hands supporting the breasts (or placed a little beneath them)” (Kletter 1999, 28). It is agreed that this is mainly a feature of the eighth and seventh centuries (Kletter 1999, 29; Byrne 2004, 139; Darby 2014). Interestingly, while figurines are typical in many polities throughout the region at the time, those in Judah are stylistically different, and some scholars have even suggested that their distribution (along with these of other features like the inscribed weights) matches the boundaries of the kingdom of Judah (with few exceptions).

#### DISCLAIMER

Before moving on to assess how the eighth century stratified and complex society evolved, a few words on the limitations of our knowledge are in order.

We must stress that while the above presented picture clearly reflects the situation in the eighth century BCE, we cannot always be certain what the situation earlier in the Iron Age was, and exactly when the above-mentioned reality came into being. Sennacherib's campaign of 701 BCE brought about destruction to many sites, especially in the Shephelah, sealing the finds from this era within heavy destruction layers, and allowing archaeologists to learn about this period. It is precisely because of these destruction layers that we know a great deal about the archaeology of the late eighth century. We know a great deal less about the tenth and ninth (and even the early part of the eighth) centuries BCE. There are hardly any destruction layers from these eras, and it is almost impossible to quantify finds. Consider, for example, cooking pots. We know of hundreds of complete eighth century cooking pots, but hardly any complete cooking pots of the ninth century were discovered in Judah. Does this mean that people cooked more or ate more in the eighth century? Certainly not.

Notably, it appears that destruction events contribute much material to the archaeological record, and hence periods in which there were massive destruction, events are far more known archaeologically (e.g., Faust and Katz 2012, and references). As a consequence of destruction, all the artefacts and vessels are “left” on the site (fig. 6), and have the potential to be discovered in excavations (in the form of destruction layers) or surveys (via the various mechanisms that brings sherds to the surface). During continued occupation, in contrast, almost all the broken vessels are discarded and the sherds are thrown away (or restored/reused if possible, as is the case with metal objects for example), leaving little remains that can be identified in excavations, and almost nothing to be discovered in surveys (Faust and Sapir 2018). Hence, the late eighth century is well known archaeologically, while the previous centuries in Judah are far less known, as few sherds remained in the sites, to be discovered in excavations and surveys. The



unrelated fact that even the number of tombs known from this (earlier) period is extremely limited (in contrast to the late eighth century BCE) only exacerbates the problem, as it means that scholars are less familiar with the pottery of this era and are less likely to identify it in surveys (see extensive discussion in Faust and Katz 2012).



**Fig. 6:** An eighth century BCE destruction layer, with all the in situ remains, Area B, Tel 'Eton. Photograph by A. Faust. Courtesy of the Tel 'Eton archaeological expedition.

The problem is farther aggravated by the disproportionate research concentrating on the Shephelah. This region suffered most in Sennacherib's campaign (Faust 2008 and references), and is also the one on which (for various reasons) we know far more than any other region in Judah. This bias in scholarship compounds the knowledge gap between the eighth century and the preceding era, and must also be taken into consideration (see also Faust 2014a).

The fact that the eighth century is also far more represented in textual sources, be they biblical, archaeological, or Assyrian, increases the knowledge gap inherent in the archaeological record.

The lack of knowledge of the Iron Age IIA was not always taken into account, and this is especially acute regarding some material traits that are difficult to quantify. Still, since some of the traits that are more easily dated, for example, the tombs, are clearly dated to the eighth century, there is no denying that there *was*

a change in the eighth century. This gives more credit to the dating of the changes at large (though it clearly does not prove them). Since we cannot quantify the finds in the various subphases of the Iron Age, we cannot attempt to compensate for our relative lack of knowledge of the earlier phases. I therefore cautiously accept here the common view that many changes should indeed be attributed to the eighth century BCE. We must, however, take into account that (1) this is not always certain, and (2) that it is not always clear when within the eighth century the changes came about, and (3) it is likely that many of them were not quick, but rather gradual, covering long periods of time.

#### CHANGES IN JUDAHITE SOCIETY IN THE EIGHTH CENTURY BCE: A SYNTHESIS

Although in light of the above, we cannot be certain as to the reality in the early Iron Age IIB, let alone earlier in the Iron Age II, it is clear that at least many of the above traits and processes matured toward the end of the eighth century. Can we understand what caused the changes in the structure of the society, and how the hierarchical and stratified society described above evolved?

Some changes started long before the eighth century, and many were connected with the formation of the state in Israel and Judah; most likely it was in the tenth century BCE following the modified conventional chronology (Mazar 2011; and Garfinkel et al., 2012; Faust 2013), but the exact date and surrounding processes (e.g., Finkelstein 2010) need not concern us here. It is clear, however, that the Iron Age IIA saw the initiation of urbanization and the processes that led to the development of stratification. Clearly, the greater urbanization of the eighth century is first a result of gradual natural growth and internal processes, and the same is probably true for the repopulation of the countryside and the establishment of many villages and farmsteads. While the increase in industry might have accelerated in the eighth century, it can still be viewed, at least to some extent, in a similar light, that is, as the result of a long process of growing complexity. But it appears that there is more to it than that, and in the following section I would like to briefly address the processes that were unique to the eighth century BCE.

Some changes might be related to contacts with other regions, reflecting direct and indirect influences. Thus, the growth of the olive oil industry might result from interaction with the northern kingdom of Israel, which had a more sophisticated olive oil industry (Gal and Frankel 1993; Faust 2011). While olive-oil was produced earlier, the growth the industry in general and the increase of surpluses production in particular, might result from the incorporation of Judah within the ever-growing economic world system of the Phoenicians (Markoe 2000; Aubet 2001), probably through the mediation of the kingdom of Israel (prior to its destruction of course), and to some extent Philistia.

The growth of the international (Phoenician) trade also greatly influenced some segments of Judahite society, especially the upper classes. It probably enabled some other socioeconomic changes within the society and encouraged both

urbanization and stratification (coupled with the gradual developments described above).

Other innovations might be attributed directly, perhaps, to refugees from the kingdom of Israel. However, I think that some scholars have exaggerated the extent of these migrations. Yet even if the number might not have been very large, one can assume that qualitatively, there were influences that go beyond the actual number of refugees (e.g., Israelite influences on religion in Judah).

The economic pressure exerted by Assyria, mainly in the last third of the century, required internal changes in Judah's economy in order to collect the required tribute. The connections with Assyria gradually led also to some cultural influences, at least as far as the elite is concerned. Thus, we can see how biblical authors, for example, negotiated with Assyrian texts in direct and indirect manners (e.g., Machinist 1983; Aster 2017; most of the cultural influences are later than the eighth century BCE, and will not be discussed here).

The dark shadow cast by Assyria over the entire region in the second half of the eighth century BCE increased feelings of insecurity, contributing to the disintegration of social cohesion. Once Assyrian campaigns in western Asia began, people must have felt that things could not be taken for granted anymore (for a vivid description of the Assyrian impact, see Byrne 2004, esp. 145–48).<sup>4</sup>

**SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES:** All the above may have led, especially toward the end of the eighth century BCE, to growth of new forms of organization, partially, at least, at the expense of the traditional structures (cf., Halpern 1996). Socioeconomic differences deepened, some segments of society were more influenced by “foreign” traits, state administration increased, and production became more industrialized. Society gradually became more segmented, objects became less personal, and material culture was, to some extent, alienated (Faust and Bunimovitz 2008, 157; cf., Gosden 2004, 36–39). Urbanization and hired labor led to the disintegration of some large kinship units, especially in the cities (Faust 2012, 110–15, 264–66).

As noted, these changes led to the weakening of the traditional social frameworks, and eventually to the disintegration of some of them, especially in the larger and more central settlements. The disintegration was accompanied by the growth in importance of the nuclear family, and even the individual, at the expense of the extended family (or the *beth* ‘av); this process started no later than

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4. While different kinds of figurines are prevalent throughout the region (e.g., Darby 2014), one may wonder why were the figurines adopted en-masse in Judah in the first place. Byrne's (2004) suggestion that the wide-scale adoption of the Judean Pillared Figurines was part of a policy that attempted to encourage reproduction in the wake of the Assyrian destruction and demographic decline is therefore compelling.

the eighth century and peaked in the seventh century. In addition to the archaeological changes briefly addressed above, this can also be seen in the texts—for example, in the references to kinship units that are regarded as responsible for the action of the individual. Halpern stresses the developments in this regard in the late Iron Age (Halpern 1996). He thinks at this time we witness a transformation from a concept of collective responsibility to a concept of personal responsibility. The idea of collective responsibility (e.g., Exod 20:4; 34:7; Num 14:18; Deut 5:8)<sup>5</sup> reflected a traditional society, where three or four generations lived together or in close proximity, so that it was natural for the extended family to bear responsibility for its individual members (for example, the punishment of sons for the sins of their fathers). Other verses, however, place responsibility only upon the relevant individuals, for example, “In those days they shall say no more, ‘Parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are blunted.’ But every one shall die for his own sins: whosoever eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be blunted” (Jer 31:29–30); “What do you mean by quoting this proverb upon the soil of Israel, ‘Parents eat sour grapes and their children’s teeth are blunted’?... Consider, all lives are Mine.... The person who sins, only he shall die” (Ezek 18:2–4). Halpern anchors this development chronologically, relying on the fact that Jeremiah and Ezekiel (late seventh–early sixth centuries BCE) express the idea of personal responsibility and oppose collective responsibility in the seventh century BCE. Thus, for Halpern this transition reflects a major change in society.

Archaeologically, these changes can be seen by the fact that at this time the majority of houses are pretty small, and were inhabited by small nuclear families, rather than large extended ones (the *bet ‘av*). The transition to the nuclear family in most cities and towns is the equivalent of the above-mentioned change to personal, rather than collective, responsibility. We must remember, however, that in the rural sector, large families were still common, and it appears that the traditional kinship structure was maintained there.

In a sense, the adoption of the Judahite tomb might have been a sort of a response adopted by the extended families to social changes (Faust and Bunimovitz 2008). As the processes of population growth, urbanization, mass production, insecurity, alienation, etc., intensified, the traditional families felt threatened and needed to “protect” themselves. One of the main messages transmitted by the Judahite tomb was: “We are a big, strong and coherent family. The generations continue, and the family will persist forever.” During earlier epochs, when extended families were the norm, “exposed” transmission of such messages was not needed. However, when the status of extended families had weakened,

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5. I will not discuss the dating of these verses here, but I accept Halpern’s idea that they reflect the traditional Iron Age social structure (the dating of the sources is hotly debated, see for example Hurvitz 1974; Friedman 1987; Milgrom 1991; Schwartz 2011; but see Blenkinsopp 1996; Levine 1993).

there was an urgent need to stress the values of *continuity* and *permanency*. It was essential to tie the family together and to strengthen the individual's sense of belonging, so that the family would not disintegrate. The response to the continued crises and insecurity may, then, be viewed as an attempt to immortalize the family in stone. When families disintegrated, it was important for those that survived to stress their existence and continuity, both to themselves and to others (see extended discussion in Faust and Bunimovitz 2008).<sup>6</sup>

## SUMMARY

The eighth century was a formative period in the history of the kingdom of Judah. Diverse processes like natural demographic growth, economic development, resettlement of the countryside, urbanization, increased international connections—all beginning in the Iron IIA—had matured. Coupled with some unique features of the eighth century like the impact of Assyria, these processes led to important societal change.

The result was a complex, stratified state society, with sophisticated settlement hierarchy (with Jerusalem at the top as a “primate city”), complex administration, and mass-produced material culture. International connections in general, and the growing Assyrian threat in particular, led to further changes. This resulted with additional changes within the Judahite society, as various segments coped with these developments. All the above led to alienation, that is, a process in which “things” became “objects” (Gosden 2004, 36–39), which increased the pressure on the traditional kin-based society. This process, however, took place mainly in the urban centers, as evidence suggests that the traditional structure was better preserved in the countryside. All these processes led to significant social changes and developments, including the rise in the significance of the nuclear family and the individual in the urban sector, as well as material cultural developments, like the adoption of the Judahite tomb.

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6. This can explain why only the mid-upper classes of Judah's population adopted the rock-cut tombs as their normative way of burial. As an attempt on the behalf of the extended families to strengthen their cohesion, the tombs were relevant only for them. Thus, for the nuclear families of the urban poor, along, perhaps, some conservative rural families, such tombs did not have any symbolic meaning (and the formers could not afford it anyway).

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## The Introduction of the Open-Courtyard Building to the Jerusalem Landscape and Judean-Assyrian Interaction

*Yuval Gadot and Efrat Bocher*

### INTRODUCTION

The eighth-seventh century BCE was a period of unprecedented growth in Jerusalem. The city, founded in the Early Bronze Age near the Gihon Spring, was located for over two thousand years on the Southeastern Ridge (known also as the City of David/Silwan) (Reich 2011 and further literature therein; for an alternative view see Finkelstein, Lipschits and Koch 2011; De Groot and Geva 2015). During a long process that began close to the end of the ninth century BCE and that continued during most of the eighth century BCE, Jerusalem expanded into an area of over 600 dunams as it became not just political center (Geva 2014) but a demographic one as well.

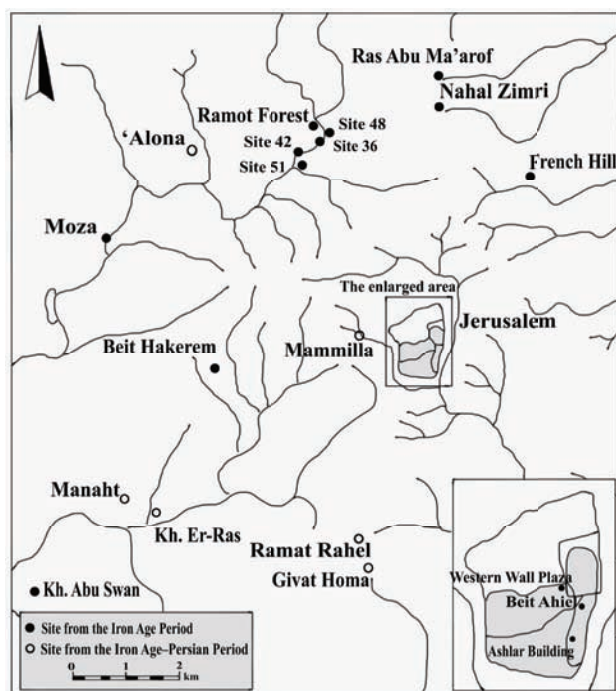
Monumental structures were built south of the Temple Mount (Ben-Ami and Tchekhanovets 2015; Mazar 2015). Further away elite domestic quarters were built (Shiloh 1984; Sapir-Hen, Gadot, and Finkelstein 2016) and a literate administrative system reached maturity.<sup>1</sup> Following Sennacherib's campaign in 701 BCE, Jerusalem established a sophisticated agricultural system to feed its population. This is evident from over 65 small sites dating to the seventh century BCE, that were found and excavated in the valleys northwest, west, and southwest of the city (Faust 2007, 166–67; Gadot 2015). These sites include a small number of villages such as Er-Ras and Kh. El-Burj (Gadot 2011; De Groot and Weinberg-Stern 2013), many farmsteads and isolated buildings, stone piles of different sizes, and rock-cut winepresses (for an updated list, see Gadot 2015, tables 1 and 2).

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1. The time of Jerusalem's growth is highly debated (Geva 2006; Finkelstein 2008; Na'aman 2007; 2009; Faust 2013). Results of recent excavations conducted at the spring tower indicate that the processes had already begun in the ninth century BCE (Uziel and Zanton 2015; Regev et al. 2016).

The flourishing of Jerusalem as an urban center must be viewed in relation to the expansion of the Assyrian empire westward and southward. Judah came into the Assyrian sphere of dominance after 720, when it became a vassal kingdom (Dalley 2004; Lipschits, Sergi and Koch 2010, 26). More direct Assyrian rule was established following the campaign of 701 BCE. While the nature of Assyrian involvement in the southern Levant is disputed, various scholars have recognized traits in the material culture that express the Judean elite's adoption of Assyrian style material culture (Ussishkin 1995; Winderbaum 2012).

In what follows we treat a previously unnoticed feature of material culture that may be Assyrian in its origin, namely, the Open-Courtyard Building. By this example we will try to demonstrate the complexity of cultural borrowing and how the interaction between two cultures is never a simplistic situation of the borrower-lender dichotomy (Bhabha 1994; Stein 2005). In fact, cultural interactions are shaped by both the giver and the receiver. The Judeans' adoption of material culture was not straightforward; it included a process of selection that promised the adaption of the borrowed trait into the local needs and way of life.



**Fig. 1:** Map of Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside during the Iron Age and the Persian period. Based on Gadot 2015. Drawing by Itamar Ben Ezra.

The Open-Courtyard Building was defined by Amiran and Dunayevsky as they were conducting a reanalysis of the architectural layout of Stratum III at Megiddo (Amiran and Dunayevsky 1958). The authors identified two groups of buildings: the first included buildings that are Assyrian in style, and the second they saw as a local adoption of the original type while adapting it into the local tradition (Amiran and Dunayevsky 1958, 31).

According to their list of criteria, the original Assyrians buildings was composed of a large inner court (no. 3 on their list, p. 29) and had an exceptionally large courtyard surrounded from all sides by wings of rooms. In the local adaption of the building, “the court is free from rooms on one of its sides, a situation which also influences the plan of the entrance” (31). The building of the locally adapted type are composed of a proportionally large courtyard that is usually accessed directly from the street. Two or three wings are built to the sides of the courtyard, but these were much smaller than the courtyard (see also Stern 2001, 468). Amiran and Dunayevsky, like most other scholars, use an essentialist approach to define the building as a unique type. In what follows we will be defining the buildings by the practice conducted within them, thus turning the attention to the courtyard: its spatial position and its relative size (see, for example, Stockhammer 2013 and see more further below).

According to the analysis presented by these two scholars, the Open-Courtyard Building was common in Assyria and appeared in the former territory of the monarchy of Israel just after the Assyrians annexed it at the end of the eighth century. Other examples presented in their article date to the Persian and Hellenistic periods (and see Stern 2001, 468; Tal 2009, 109). As will be explained below, the courtyard’s size and location is significant for differentiating this type from other known building types, such as the Four-Room House.

#### OPEN-COURTYARD BUILDINGS IN AND AROUND JERUSALEM

The best example of an Open-Courtyard Building was found in Mamilla, just west of the Old City of Jerusalem and outside the boundary of the city during the Iron II. The site was excavated by David Amit and is being prepared for publication by Sarah Hirshberg (Amit 2011; Hirshberg 2014). It includes a large, isolated building dating to the Iron Age and Persian periods and a dam for holding seasonal flood water in the wadi, which possibly dates to the Iron Age. The building is 20 × 20 m and the most dominant feature is its courtyard. It has two wings, one to the south and one west, and each is further divided into rooms (Amit 2011, 29–30; Hirshberg 2014, 17–33). No similar wings are built north or east of the courtyard, which means the courtyard was open to visitors and served as a semi-public space.

Pottery collected at the site dates its construction to the Iron IIC (the seventh–beginning of the sixth centuries BCE). Pottery dating to the Persian period was

also found (Hirshberg 2014, 17–33) indicating that the building continued to function through that time. The size and nature of the building, especially the fact that it was located near a dam and a water reservoir, led Amit to suggest that it was not just an isolated farmhouse but served an administrative function as well.

A second example of such a building was found within the built-up area of the city, on the eastern slopes of the Southeastern Ridge (City of David/Silwan). This edifice, excavated by Yigal Shiloh, is known as the “Ashlar Building” (De Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012, 23–27). According to the detailed report, it belongs to Shiloh’s Stratum X and dates to the second half of the seventh century BCE—the same time-slot as the construction and functioning of the Mamilla building. It was abandoned at the time of the Babylonian conquest of 586 BCE.

The building has two wings, south and east of a central courtyard from which only a small segment was exposed. Alon De Groot, following Shiloh, reconstructed the building as a Four-Room House (De Groot 2012, 162–66), but we believe its plan is more like the layout of an Open-Courtyard Building. It should be noted that there is no use of stone pillars for the building construction. This fact sets it apart from the classic Four-Room House where the use of pillars is common.

In his discussion of the building’s function, De Groot noted that its size and construction indicate that it had a public function and was not a simple dwelling (De Groot 2012, 166). Separating public from domestic buildings is very difficult and may be an anachronistic question (Shai et al. 2011). Admittedly, though, it should be acknowledged that the construction of the residential quarter in Shiloh’s Area G, namely the “House of Ahiel” and the structures built next to it, also demanded a considerable investment in energy and resources (Shiloh 1984, 17–18; Steiner 2001, 54–88); still, these buildings have been identified as family homes.

The size of the “House of Ahiel,” which included a second floor and adjunct building to the north, is not much different from the “Ashlar Building” (Reich 2000, 124). However, the suggestion that the “Ashlar Building” also had a public function is supported by the building’s isolation (rather than as part of a densely built neighborhood; De Groot 2012, 62–66) and, as will be shown below, by the nature of its courtyard.

#### OPEN-COURTYARD BUILDINGS AT ER-RAS

Three more examples of Open-Courtyard Buildings were found at the site of Kh. Er-Ras, excavated by a team led by one of the authors [YG] of this article. The site is located 8 km. southwest of Jerusalem, at the bottom of the northern slope of Nahal Refaim and opposite the Ein Yahel Spring. The importance of this site stems from its being one of the few examples of a village in the Jerusalem



**Fig. 2:** Plan of Kh. Er-Ras. Drawing by Shatil Emmanuilov.

environs. While most of the rural Iron Age and Persian period sites around Jerusalem are in fact just a single building or an installation (Faust 2012a), at Er-Ras, the remains of at least five buildings were unearthed and it is possible to study the plan of four of them.

The site was first identified by Shimon Gibson and Gabriel Barkay in 1977 (Gibson and Barkay 1977; Kloner 2000, Site 39). The surveyors reported finds from the Intermediate Bronze, MB II, Iron II (eighth–sixth centuries BCE), Persian, Hellenistic and Early Roman periods. They also noted that in between the surface stone piles, it is possible to identify the layout of a typical Iron Age building. Following the survey, the site was excavated three times, first by Gershon Edelstein and Yosef Gat (Edelstein 2000), next by Nurit Feig (Feig and Abd Rabu 1996; Feig 2016), and finally by Yuval Gadot (Gadot 2011; 2015, 8–11).

Edelstein and Gat cleared segments of two buildings (fig. 2, Buildings 1 and 2). The plan of Building 1 was quickly cleared, even though its southern wing was not excavated (Edelstein 2000, 44–45, plan 4). It is composed of an outer paved courtyard that leads into an inner paved central but small space. Two rows of stone pillars, meant to support an inner roof, separated the main space from two parallel spaces to the south and to the north. The northern space is further divided into smaller rooms. It is unclear whether this division was part of the original plan or was incorporated in a later stage. The space to the west was built perpendicular to the three spaces and its floor was paved. The size of the building's outer walls suggests it had a second floor. The plan of the building and the use of stone pillars turn this building into a wonderful example of a Four-Room House (Mazar 2009; Routhledge 2000, 37–70 and see further below).

Edelstein tried to clear up the plan and date of Building 2, but excavations were not completed. Based on a stone lintel still *in situ* and in comparison to Building 1, he concluded that Building 2 was also a Four-Room House and that it dates to the Iron Age (2000, 44–46). These conclusions were too simplistic and ignored activities taking place at the site in periods that followed the Iron Age. In the new excavations, the floors of the house were reached in more than one spot and *in situ* pottery was found on them. In this new work it became apparent that:

1. Rooms with Iron IIC pottery were found south and northwest of the supposed outer walls of the building. Two rooms were found to the south and two rooms were found to the northwest. Apparently during the Iron Age, the building extended over a larger area than what was previously thought and the walls documented by Edelstein date to a later period, most likely the Late Roman period.
2. The floors and walls of the two rooms located west and east of the stone lintel were deserted for the last time during the Late Roman–Early Byzantine period and the plan of this part had been altered completely.



It is impossible to determine which of the walls seen today were originally built during the Iron Age.

3. Winepress 1, located at the southwestern corner of the building, and the walls of the southern room were constructed together. This observation proves that the winepress also dates to the Iron Age.

All in all, it seems that the reconstruction of the building as a Four-Room House is unsubstantiated. There is also no evidence for the use of pillars for the building. It seems that its original plan included two chains of small rooms located to the west and to the south of a central space/court, the character of which during the Iron Age is not known.

Feig was the primary excavator of Building 3, especially its eastern edge (Feig 2016). The edifice was reconstructed as a Four-Room House, with three longitudinal spaces and a perpendicular space to the south. This reconstruction, however, seems to conflict with the finds. First a close examination casts doubts on the existence of Wall 14. It has no inner face and the outer face marked on the plan seems to be artificial. The building was re-cleaned during the new excavations and the stones that appear on the plan are actually paving stones used for leveling the rising bedrock level. According to our understanding, only Wall 9 was used to separate Hall L116 and the space to the east of it. Apparently the plan of the building included two long halls: one located to the south and one located to the west of a central space. It should also be noted that no pillars were used in Building 3, which sets it apart from the construction technique of Building 1.

According to Feig, Building 3 had two stratigraphical phases. In earlier publications she suggested both dated to the Iron Age (Feig 1996, 3; Feig and Abd Rabu 1996, 75). In the final publication she stated that the time of the late phase (Phase 4) cannot be defined although she found Iron IIC pottery sherds on one of the floors (Feig 2016). We believe that Feig, like Edelstein before her, did not pay sufficient attention to occupational levels dating to the Persian and Hellenistic periods, even though she presented pottery from these periods in her article.

During our renewed excavations of the eastern part of the building we were able to show that the outer walls of the building were in use during the Hellenistic period. Under these floors we found a constructional fill holding mixed Iron and Persian pottery. It is very difficult to define what was originally built during the Iron Age. It is clear however that there was much reuse of earlier architectural features as well as rebuilding activity. Figure 3 presents our reconstruction of Building 3 during the Iron Age and Persian periods. Apparently it has much more in common with the characteristic Open-Courtyard Building than it does with the Four-Room House.



**Fig. 3:** Buildings 1, 3 and 4 aerial photo, Khirbet Ar-Ras. Courtesy of HORNET Israeli Institute of Archaeology.



**Fig. 4:** Building 4 and the oil press. The plastered bath was added to the building in the Persian period. Courtesy of Paval Shrago.

We excavated Building 4, which is located between Buildings 1 and 3. It went through many changes during the long period it was in use and very little has survived of its original plan (fig. 3). Rock-cut lines that served as wall foundation enabled us to reconstruct a line of at least three small rooms or chambers that together formed an elongated wing built along the northern outer wall of the building.

One of the rooms included a small oil press. By the Persian period, the rooms had already been cancelled, and Wall F169, seen in the figure, was built on top of the oil press (fig. 4). Stone pillars are seen in secondary use in the wall, and it seems that it was built along a line of an earlier wall that had collapsed. A second line of rooms was built along the western side of the building as is evident by the pavement and segments of walls that were found. No architecture that can be related to this building was found to the east and to the south; so it seems that Building 4 was composed in its original phase of two wings to the west and to the north with a large open courtyard in front.

Based on Iron Age construction at Kh. Er-Ras, we are able to state that the layouts of Buildings 2, 3, and 4 are markedly different from the plan of Building 1. Building 1 is the only structure that should be classified as Four-Room House. Each of the other three buildings, with their two long wings and large open courtyard in front, should be classified as Open-Courtyard Buildings.

## DISCUSSION

### THE SOCIOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF HOUSEHOLD ARCHITECTURE

One hundred and fifty years of archaeological research in Jerusalem and its environs have progressively created a large corpus of excavated buildings that can be defined as “households.”<sup>2</sup> This large corpus offers a view into Jerusalem’s society and economy during the Iron IIB–C (eighth and seventh centuries BCE), and it has not evaded scholarly attention: Numerous articles have been written on their nature, function and the spatial division of activities performed in them (Faust 1999, 233–52; 2000, 17–39; 2006; 2012b; Faust and Bunimovitz 2003, 22–31; Steiner 2001).<sup>3</sup> In all of these publications most of the buildings have been catalogued under the broad definition of Four-Room Houses, or Pillar Buildings as others name them (Shiloh 1970, 180–90; Mazar 2009, 319–36; Routledge 2000, 37–70).

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2. We define *household* as the basic unit of economic and social cooperation (Willk and Rahje 1982, 620; Blanton 1994, 5).

3. The number of books and articles exceeds the scope of this article. For a most up to date concentration of all relevant data, see Gilboa, Sharon, and Zorn 2014, 40–43.

A closer inspection of the many buildings found in and around Jerusalem shows that under this broad umbrella of Four-Room Houses, scholars have included buildings with many different layouts. Most notable is the different relations between the main courtyard and the other spaces in some of the buildings.

The layout of a building and its ground plan are influenced by functional considerations such as available space, the specific topography and/or climate in which it is built, and symbolic considerations such as cultural preference or social values (Portogali 1999, 47–48; Gilboa, Sharon and Zorn 2014, 40–46). Clearly the arrangement of a house does not reflect just an array of personal, arbitrary, *ad hoc* decisions made by the occupants of the given building. Rather, a house is the sphere in which social and economic values are imprinted into mundane activities as they become fundamental to an entire social structure (Ur and Colantoni 2010). Therefore, house plans embody basic social structures and reflect perceptions.

In order to uncover the deepest layers guiding the design of a building, it is not sufficient to note similarities that exist in the general architectural layout (see the illustrative example given by Portogali 1999, 73–76). Alternatively, when trying to classify a building, we should place at the center of attention social and economic practice taking place within the built environment. The actions of an individual or a group are always culture-related and therefore when studied, reflect perceptions, ideology, and possibly the identity of those resident in the building (Smith 1987, 297–98).

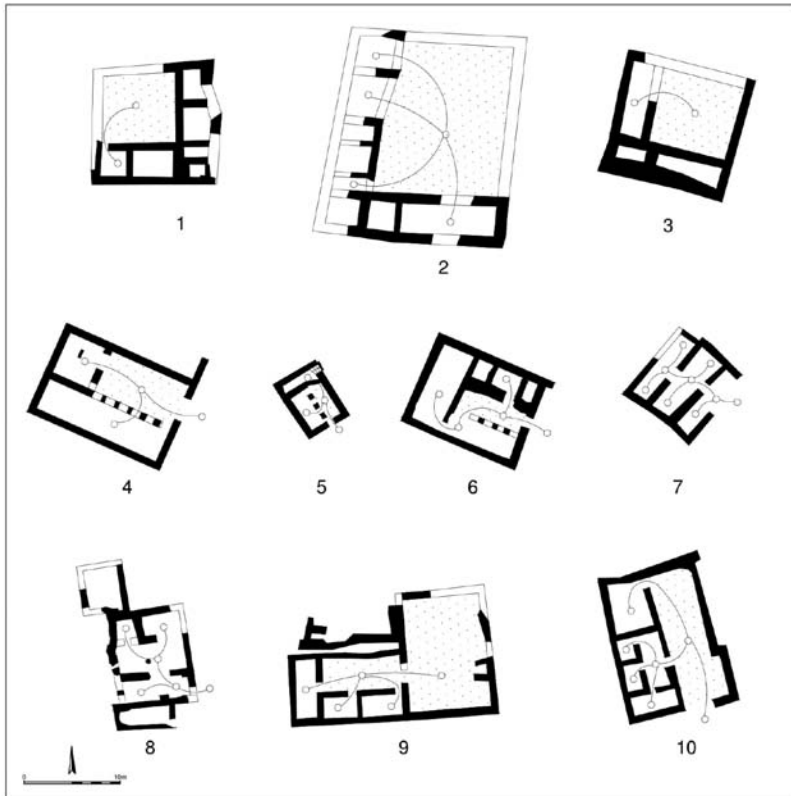
The reconstruction of behavior by archaeological means can be achieved either by analyzing the syntax of space as it is expressed through access possibilities (Hillier and Hanson 1984; Hillier 1996; 1998), or by a critical study of material culture and its distribution pattern (Schiffer 1976; 1985; 1987; Gadot and Yasur Landau 2009; Hardin 2010, 37–43; Marom and Zuckerman 2011; Gilboa, Sharon and Zorn 2014, 44–45).

When it comes to Jerusalem, and especially the Southeastern Ridge, using floor assemblages is almost impossible. The mountainous slopes brought with it the downslope wash of most buildings following their abandonment and the number of destruction assemblages is surprisingly low. Consequently, almost all of the finds derive from earth fills that were placed in order to bridge between topographical levels. This fact leaves us with the former tool: Access analysis based on the architecture.

#### ACCESS ANALYSIS OF THE BUILDINGS

We analyzed the ground plan of three buildings located inside the city and sixteen more that were found on the outskirts (table 1). Many more buildings were excavated over the years in and around Jerusalem; we excluded those whose full plan was unclear or that were built on an *ad hoc* basis. The focus of our assessment was the courtyard of the household. This space teaches most about daily conduct,

social values, and the demarcation of private versus public spaces (Byrd 1994). Four types of buildings were defined based on recurring patterns that indicate shared perceptions: Four-Room Buildings, Inner-Courtyard Buildings, Long-Axis Buildings, and the Open-Courtyard Buildings (fig. 5). Note that we use here the



**Fig. 5:** Typological plan compares the types of buildings:

Open-Courtyard Building: (1) Ashlar Building (according to: De Groot A. and Bernick-Greenberg 2012, plan 9) (2) Mammilla (according to, Amit 2011: 29) (3) Building 3, Kh Er-Ras; Pillar Building: (4) Givat Homa (according to: May 1999, fig 131) (5) Ramot Forest, Site 36 (according to: Davidovich et al 2006, fig 21) (6) Kh. Er-Ras, Building 1; Width-Axis Building: (7) Kh. Abu Shwan, Building 200 (according to: Baruch 2007, plan 1) (8) Ras Abu Ma'arof (according to: Seligman 1994, Plan 3); Inner-Courtyard Building: (9) 'Alona (according to: Weksler-Bdolah 1997, fig 136) 10. Beit Hakerem (according to: Davidovich et al 2006, fig 80). Drawings by Shatil Emmanuilov.

term buildings since we cannot be sure that all the structures listed functioned exclusively for housing.

The Long-Axis Buildings are built without a courtyard and are usually composed of three broad rooms arranged one next to the other. The courtyards of the Four-Room Buildings and Inner-Courtyard Buildings are located inside the buildings themselves and are similar in size to all surrounding spaces. The location of the courtyard turns it into a hub that allows direct access to all of the building's wings.

In the Four-Room Building, the courtyard is nested within the building and is surrounded by three wings. The size of the courtyard is similar to that of the rooms to its sides. A set of pillars serve in some cases to divide between the courtyard and the spaces at its sides. The pillars had a cardinal impact on both the physical and sensory interactions taking place within the building. Regardless of their ethnic affiliation, the buildings share a unique syntax that shaped and expressed economic and social conduct within them (Faust and Bunimovitz 2003).

In the Inner-Courtyard Building, separation between the courtyard and the surrounding spaces was achieved with fully built walls. One such example can be seen at the site of Alona (Weksler-Bdolah 1997, 96–99). Excavations at the site exposed a building in its entirety which the excavators described it as a Four-Room House. An analysis, however, shows the main courtyard is actually located outside of the building, in a space that is shared with at least another building, and thus it cannot be categorized as a Four-Room House.<sup>4</sup> A smaller courtyard is located inside the building, and it allows access to a set of rooms to its west and to its south.

Another example of such a building was exposed at Beit HaKerem (Davidovich et al. 2006, 82–86). Here the courtyard is positioned in front of the other rooms and not in direct contact with all of them. Both examples show a very different concept of space usage and access, and they should not be considered as subtypes of the Four-Room Building.

#### DISTINCTIVE QUALITIES OF THE OPEN-COURTYARD BUILDING

Unlike other types of buildings, the courtyard of the Open-Courtyard Buildings, such as the ones found at Mamilla and Kh. Er-Ras, clearly distinguish between public and private spaces. And it is the uniqueness of the courtyard and its relation to other components of the building that rightly drew Ruth Amiran and Immanuel Dunayevsky's attention when they defined these buildings as a distinct type (Amiran and Dunayevsky 1958, 31).

First, the courtyard is much larger than the inner courtyards that typifies all the other types of building, a fact which makes it probable that it was used for a

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4. We wish to thank Shlomit Weksler-Bdolah for sharing with us unpublished data from the site.

larger variety of functions. Second, the courtyard is not tucked inside the walls of the building. Instead it turns towards outwards, making it seem more public in its nature. The positioning of the courtyard in the Open-Courtyard Building in front of the two wings turns it into an area that can serve an administrative, public function. For example, a cart that is loading storage jars can enter the courtyard. Such action cannot be performed within the inner courtyard of the Four-Room Building or the Inner-Courtyard Building. To accomplish this task, the cart and the workers would have had to stay outside in the street, in the public space.

Amiran and Dunayevsky noted the fact that the building was foreign to the local landscape and essentially different from the common courtyard buildings that were customary throughout the entire second millennium BCE (Gilboa, Sharon and Zorn 2014 and earlier references therein). In contrast, Tal has claimed that Open-Courtyard Buildings continue the tradition of the typical Canaanite Central Courtyard Building (Tal 2009, 107–9) and that there is not much of difference between the two types.

In our opinion, if one evaluates the location and character of the courtyard in the two types of buildings, it becomes apparent that they are essentially different. As described above, the courtyard of the Open-Courtyard Buildings was a public arena; the courtyard of the Classic Canaanite buildings were positioned at the heart of the dwellings and were surrounded from all sides by rooms so that the courtyard was an area that was not only private but also offered an environment that was completely disconnected from any of the public spaces (Gadot and Yasar-Landau 2006, 596).

The typological division presented above, which is based on the location of courtyards within the building, allowed us to recognize a sequence in the degree of privacy the building offers its inhabitants. On one end of the continuum is the Long-Axis Buildings that have no courtyard and its rooms are built as a long chain where one room led to another and, creating spatial hierarchy in which the front room can be shared by all while the back room is relatively segregated.<sup>5</sup> The Inner-Courtyard Building and Four-Room Building are characterized by a sheltered courtyard that is accessible and visible only to the occupants of the building. While fully built walls serve to define segregated and private spaces in the Inner-Courtyard Building, the separation into spaces in the Pillar Buildings is essentially symbolic, with no real physical separation. Finally, at the other end of the continuum from the Long-Axis Building stands the Open-Courtyard Building type where the courtyard was much larger and more accessible by the public. This kind of floor fits better an administrative or civic function that De Groot and Amit have suggested for the buildings at Mamilla and Area E of the Southeastern Ridge.

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5. The size of the buildings identified with this type hints that they were not used as dwelling and they served as small warehouses positioned near the farmed lands. We wish to thank Joseph Patrich for this observation.



## OPEN-COURTYARD BUILDINGS, JERUSALEM, AND THE ASSYRIANS

According to Amiran and Dunayevsky, Open-Courtyard Buildings appeared in the southern Levant for the first time during the seventh century BCE and in places that were turned into Assyrian provinces. This was not a direct borrowing, and in the process of adoption the buildings were adapted by the local elite. Especially important is the opening of the central courtyard to the outside. Other traits, such as straight walls, carried less significance and were abandoned when the buildings were set into the local environment.

The identification of such buildings at the site of Kh. Er-Ras and other sites that date to the seventh century BCE, strengthen their observation that the building's appearance is connected to the Assyrian presence and that the buildings were also common in the Persian period. Finding such buildings at a site like Megiddo, a province capital built along Assyrian concepts (Peersman 2006, 81–86), should not be a surprise. But finding them in Jerusalem, which was not under direct Assyrian rule, is not self-evident.

The Assyrian takeover of the southern Levant, during the eighth century BCE, was achieved through a series of sweeping military campaigns that left the local kingdoms in ruins and forced a restructuring of political powers. The kingdom of Israel was depopulated and its relatively large territory was divided into three provinces. Judah, on the other hand, was turned into a vassal kingdom and its territory to the west was given to the Philistine kingdom of Ekron.

While most scholars agree on the violent nature of Assyria's military campaigns, the nature of their rule in the century that followed their takeover is disputed. Some scholars claim the Assyrian policy was exploitative and left behind a ruined country (Stager 1996; Faust and Weiss 2005; Faust 2011; 2015; Master 2014). According to this view, if there were regions that flourished during the seventh century, it was *despite* the Assyrian policy, not *because* of it. A different viewpoint, expressed by many other scholars, sees the Assyrians as developing and maintaining a web of economic cooperation that insured the flow of wealth and taxes (Na'aman 1995; Gittin 1995; Stern 2001; Finkelstein and Na'aman 2004; Thareani 2009; 2016, Lipschits Sergi and Koch 2011; Sapir-Hen, Gadot and Finkelstein 2014).

Judah became part the imperial sphere already in the days of Ahaz and possibly even before. Following Sennacherib's campaign in 701 BCE, the Assyrian's tightened their grip on the kingdom. Jerusalem—as the capital of the kingdom, the location of the main temple, and the seat of the ruling dynasty—must have been exposed to Assyrian cultural, economic, and political pressure. Assyrian influence can be identified in Judah's economic and administrative systems (Katz 2008, 179–82; Lipschits, Sergi and Koch 2011, 5–41; Sapir-Hen et al. 2014; Singer-Avitz 1999, 3–74).



The Assyrian strategies were adapted to their geopolitical needs, in kingdoms that remained independent, the Assyrians developed a client-patron relationship with local elites (Thareni 2009, 186–89). In light of this understanding, the appearance of “foreign” material culture should be seen against the background of cultural negotiation that ensured the loyalty of local leaders. In Jerusalem, the Assyrian presence is seen mostly through the elite’s selective adoption of aspects of Assyrian culture (Aharoni 1964, 32–33; Matthiae 1964, 85–94; Römer 2005, 68–106; Steymans 2013, 12; Winderbaum 2012, 98–99).

The introduction of the Open-Courtyard Buildings is an expression of this phenomenon. The building’s plan offers a distinctly different mundane pattern of activities from those that are conducted in other households in Judah’s urban and rural landscape. This can be the result of a choice by local Judahites to adopt the Assyrian lifestyle, and, in cases where the buildings served for administrative rule, to adopt the Assyrian administrative system.

Finally, the fact that the building continued to be used in the Persian period should be stressed. Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians but the rural sector surrounding the city partially recovered by the Persian period (Lipschits 2005, 372–78; 2011, 57–90; Gadot 2015). The Mamilla building was in use during the Persian period. Two Open-Courtyard Buildings were excavated recently at a site located in the Beit-Shemesh hills (Kogen-Zehavi 2014, 120–33). Hopefully, future research will be able to determine whether their inhabitants knew of the buildings’ Assyrian origins.

TABLE 1: CLASSIFIED BUILDING IN AND AROUND JERUSALEM

Building	Site	Date	Type	Description	Reference
Beit Ahiel	Southeastern Ridge, Area G	Iron II C	Pillar Building		Shiloh 1984; Steiner 2001, 62–63
Ashlar Building	South-eastern Ridge, Area E	Iron IIC	Open-courtyard building		De Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012, 23–27.
Western Wall Plaza	Western Hill	Iron IIC	Pillar Building?		Weksler-Bdolah et al 2008, 2009
Area 1	Givat Homa	Iron IIC — Persian	Pillar Building	Two length division divided into two row of pillars. See Fig 5:4.	May 1999: 65–66.

Ras Abu Ma'arof	Pisgat Ze'ev	Iron IIC	Width-Axis Building	A side entrance that leads to three spaces in length on the vertical axis. See fig 5:8.	Seligman 1994, 63–75.
Building 200	Kh. Abu Shwan	Iron IIC	WidthAxis Building	Side entrance and spaces arranged vertically. See fig 5:7.	Baruch 2007, 25–44.
Manaht		Iron IIC — Persian	Width-Axis Building	Front courtyard and two spaces in length.	Zehavi 1993, 65–66.
Mammilla		Iron IIC	Open-Courtyard Building	See fig 5:2.	Amit 2011, 29–34
French Hill		Iron IIC	Pillar Building	A building with four wings built in conjunction with agricultural facilities. One pillar row separates the two wings of the length.	Mazor 2006, 1–14.
Building 1	Kh. Er-Ras	Iron IIC	Pillar Building	Paved outdoor courtyard, three divisions, length separated by two rows of pillars. Wing width with stone paving. See fig 5:6.	See above
Building 2	Kh. Er-Ras	Iron IIC	Open-Courtyard Building		See above
Building 3	Kh. Er-Ras	Iron IIC-Persian period	Open courtyard building		See above
Building 4	Kh. Er-Ras	Iron IIC	Open-Courtyard Building		See above

Area C	‘Alona		Inner courtyard building	See Fig 5:9.	Weksler-Bdolah 1997, 68–70.
Area B	Nahal Zimri	Iron IIC	Pillar Building	Three spaces length and one width space. A row of pillars separates the central length space into the south space.	
Site 36	Ramot Forest	Iron IIC	Pillar Building	Two length wings separated by row of pillars. Wing width perpendicular. A much smaller structure from the rest of the buildings. See fig 5:5.	Davidovich et al 2006, 72–70.
Site 48	Ramot Forest	Iron IIC	Pillar Building	Structure with two length divisions, separated by a row of pillars which were blocked during the use of the building.	Davidovich et al 2006, 74–72.
Site 51	Ramot Forest			Two length divisions which are separated by a row of pillars. Another wing was built across.	Davidovich et al 2006, 79–77.
Site 32	Ramot forest		Width-Axis Building		Davidovich et al 2006, 70–68.
	Beit Hakerem			See fig 5:10.	Davidovich et al 2006, 80.

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## Coming to Recognize that Sedentary Agriculture, or Farming, Was Rarely Practiced in the Hesi Region

*Jeffrey A. Blakely and James W. Hardin*

### INTRODUCTION

One of the truly transformative books of the twentieth century was Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (1962). It was intended to describe and to interpret the growth of knowledge in the physical sciences. Yet, soon after it was published, it was being used to describe and to interpret many things never imagined by Kuhn, and its core concept, paradigm, quickly was integrated into popular thought with meanings far more varied even than the 21 meanings used by Kuhn (1962; Hoyningen-Huene 1993, 131–32; Masterman 1970, 61).

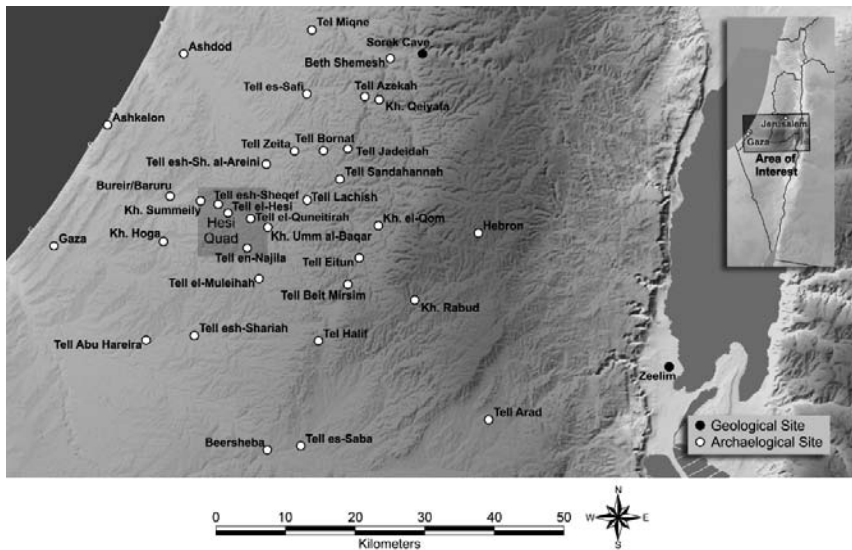
Kuhn's powerful terminology can be used in a meaningful way to describe the archaeological pursuit. While an archaeological project is being developed, it creates a research design that includes a set of assumptions, theories, methods, and goals. In Kuhn's terms this should be viewed as a paradigm for the work undertaken by that project. A very small scientific discipline has been created—the research project—that should operate in the precise manner Kuhn described for the physical sciences.

As actual research begins, the project members embark doing what Kuhn described as “normal science.” The researchers start digging, and/or surveying, and then analyzing using the planned methods to collect the expected data, and by so doing accumulate knowledge. Probably many of the results are what were expected, and these data provide the needed details and insights that can be used to explain the site or region. As this happens, however, unexpected results also appear. Kuhn called these anomalies. Usually these apparent anomalies can be understood as mistakes, you missed a pit while digging or pottery dating to different times got mixed together. Here doing more of the same types of research will usually resolve the apparent anomaly and the results will fit into the model or

paradigm. Occasionally, however, some anomalies persist and never fit the expected results of your research. They might be ignored, but they are bothersome.

However, sometimes accumulated anomalies lead to new research designs—what students of Kuhn know as scientific revolutions or paradigm shifts. Essentially, a new research design that accounts for anomalous observations has to be created that looks at the entire project from a different perspective. The new research design is not simply a modification of the previous one, but it is a new approach that accounts for and interprets all the material from a new perspective.

What follows is an example of how this process works in archaeology from our own work in the Hesi region of southwestern Israel and how research in this region over the last two centuries has slowly led to a more comprehensive understanding of the Hesi region during the ninth and eighth centuries BCE of the Iron Age II (see fig. 1). While this paper seeks to understand the ninth and eighth centuries, it takes a much broader temporal approach to place the Iron Age Hesi region into a larger historic context. When historic information from the last 2000 years, including tax records, travelers'/pilgrims' accounts, land contracts, Ottoman administrative records, early Arab historical records, foundation inscriptions,



**Fig. 1:** Map showing the general location of Tell el-Hesi among the archaeological sites of southwestern Israel. Map prepared by William Isenberger in association with the authors.

and Roman milestones are combined with geological, geographical, climatic, archaeological (excavation and survey), biblical and Neo-Assyrian historic and administrative data, what becomes apparent is that a number of anomalous observations cannot be explained by the current understandings of the Hesi region as a long-used marginal agricultural hinterland.

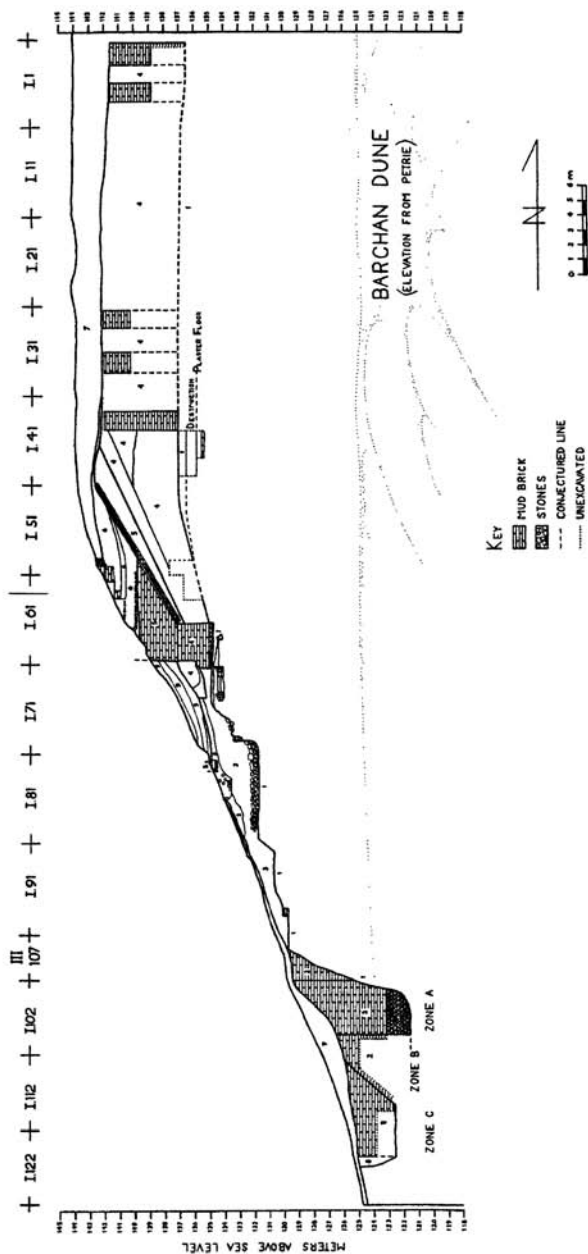
An underlying assumption in our own research, and in fact all research in the Hesi region for the last two centuries, is that typical sites in the region for most periods normally included a number of towns and villages that were surrounded by ploughed fields for wheat and barley. There would be neighboring hamlets, and there would be farmsteads. This can be seen from the records and writings of the earliest explorers to our own recent research proposals for archaeological excavation. The implicit assumption was that a site such as Tell el-Hesi, the largest archaeological site in the region, was such a village or town, and that it was, as all the towns and villages of the Shephelah and Hill Country, agrarian.

However, our archaeological data based on regional excavations and survey cannot be explained by this understanding. When approached from a different perspective, the anomalous observations vanish and a new explanation for the use and exploitation of resources in the Hesi region appears. This change in perspective is akin to a Kuhnian scientific revolution, creating a new research design or paradigm for future work.

Our work complements the important research done by Professor Oded Borowski just to Hesi's east at Iron Age II Tell Halif. When taken together, the two different Iron Age sites can be used to provide a better understanding of how various settlement types and regions were integrated into the small Iron II kingdoms of the southern Levant on the eve of the Assyrian destructions at the end of the eighth century BCE. It is with respect for Professor Borowski that we write this piece and with gratitude that we are able to include it in this work celebrating his career.

#### TELL EL-HESI AND THE HESI REGION DURING THE IRON AGE II: THE ACCEPTED VIEW

Tell el-Hesi is a mound-type site consisting of a small, conical "upper city" and a large "lower city." It occupies a marginal region where the sand dunes and loessal lowlands of the coastal plain, the rolling limestone hills of the Shephelah, and the arid environs of the Negev Desert come together. Between 1890 and 1892 Hesi became the first site in the Levant to be scientifically excavated in work led by W.M.F. Petrie (1891) and F. J. Bliss (1894). Except for excavation at the Middle Bronze Age Tel Nagila in 1962 and 1963 (Eitan 1993), the next major archaeological research project in the entire region was undertaken as the Joint Archaeological Expedition to Tell el-Hesi from 1970 to 1983. The work of the coauthors has continued this work with systematic survey seasons in 2004 and



**Fig. 2:** Section drawing of Tell el-Hesi's upper mound (acropolis) showing the various fortification elements including the double wall system protecting its small citadel in the ninth and eighth centuries BCE. Drawing by coauthor Blakely and prepared for publication by William Isenberger.

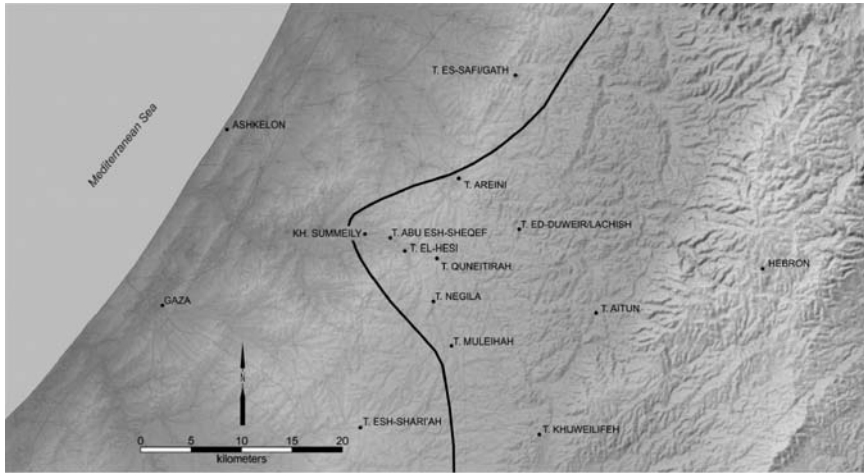
2008 and excavation at the small Iron Age II site of Khirbet Summeily beginning in 2011. Based on much of this work, we have demonstrated that during the ninth and eighth centuries BCE, the Hesi region is best understood as a border area between Judah and Philistia (Blakely and Hardin 2002; Blakely, Hardin and Master 2014), hardly a revolutionary thought.

Research in the Hesi region began in 1838 when the biblical scholar Edward Robinson visited the Holy Land. As he traveled the region he described and mapped it, thus creating the basis for identifying many biblical and non-biblical sites. His work was revolutionary. On 22 May 1838 Robinson (1841, 385–86) described the larger Hesi region, including Wadi el-Hesi and Tell el-Hesi, as the “plain of Judah” on the border of Philistia. Tell el-Hesi was soon identified as biblical Lachish, an identification seemingly supported by the excavations of Petrie and Bliss. Once it was discovered that Tell el-Hesi could not be biblical Lachish, most scholars quickly identified it as biblical Eglon, but others saw it possibly as Philistine Ziklag, Philistine Gath, El-Kosh, Yurza/Arza, or Gimzo (Blakely and Horton 2001). As long as Tell el-Hesi was identified as either biblical Lachish or Eglon, maps illustrating the Iron Age identified the Hesi region as the southwestern border region of Judah. As more archaeological work was done in the larger region, however, the significant Judahite sites came to be identified with locations in the Shephelah or Hill Country. Thus the Hesi region no longer possessed identifiable Judahite sites and most investigators began to draw the western borders of Judah along the western edge of the Shephelah where the limestone hills give way to loessal fields.<sup>1</sup> Hence, almost by default, most scholars saw the Hesi region as Philistia.

The staff of the Joint Archaeological Expedition to Tell el-Hesi, however, continued to see the region as Judah. Their renewed excavations of Tell el-Hesi between 1970 and 1983 exposed a sizable double-wall, mud-brick fortification system protecting a small citadel that was constructed in the early ninth century BCE (fig. 2). This work provided three arguments why Tell el-Hesi should be identified with Judah. The first is that basic parallels both in the fortification concepts and in construction technique tied Tell el-Hesi to Lachish (Blakely, Hardin and Master 2014). The second reason is that nearly identical ceramic remains connected these sites, including an almost total lack of Philistine, or coastal, pottery in the ninth and eighth centuries BCE (Blakely and Hardin 2002, 30–32, figs. 15, 18, and 20). Hence, since Lachish was in Judah, so was Tell el-Hesi. These first two arguments allowed G. E. Wright’s (1971) study of a series of small, seemingly fortified sites in this general region to be reevaluated and reinterpreted based on newly excavated data.

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1. For sample maps see Rainey 1980; 1983.



**Fig. 3:** Map showing the location of regional settlements sitting atop small conical mounds that we understand as parts of a defensive perimeter formed southwest of Lachish. These include notably tells Zeita/Zayit, Bornat/Burna, Areini, Abu ash-Sheqef, Hesi, Quneitirah/Qeshet, and Muleihah/Milh. Map prepared by William Isenberger in association with the authors.

Blakely and Hardin and then Blakely, Hardin, and Master concluded that in the ninth and eighth centuries BCE, until they were destroyed by the Assyrians in the late eighth century BCE, small regional settlements sitting atop small conical mounds including Tel Zayit, Tel Burna, Tel Erani, Tell el-Hesi, Tel Sheqf, Tel Qeshet, and Tel Milh formed a defensive perimeter west and southwest of Lachish (fig. 3; Blakely and Hardin 2002; Blakely, Hardin, and Master 2014). Therefore, yet again, there are archaeological pegs tying the Hesi region to Judah even though the biblical site names are unknown. Implicitly, we understood the small regional settlements atop small, conical mounds to be forts protecting area towns, villages, hamlets and farmsteads. The forts had been placed next to the best water and along roads to control access to Judah's agricultural hinterland.

### FAILED EXPECTATIONS

That other researchers understood the region as an agricultural hinterland can be seen by a brief review of literature intended to identify site types and settlement patterns typical of the larger region and to explain how their ancient settlements



were integrated across the landscape in various ways. In 1996 William G. Dever published a working typology of Palestinian tells and settlement types and identified Tell el-Hesi as an example of his second type tell labeled “Middle Tier” or “Node” settlement. These he characterized as “Good-prime agricultural area, good communication, mainly agricultural economy, small city, town” (Dever 1996). This identification shares our assumptions regarding the nature of Tell el-Hesi and other nearby sites. However, Iron Age Tell el-Hesi as revealed through excavation actually fits this category quite poorly, only exhibiting Dever’s characteristic of good communication. From our perspective Hesi better fits one of Dever’s types 6 (Buffer zone, natural border), 7 (International border controlling trade, possibly politically subsidized), or 11 (fort) during the Iron Age II. Even if one chooses one of Dever’s other types, however, a name is provided but not an explanation (Dever 1996).

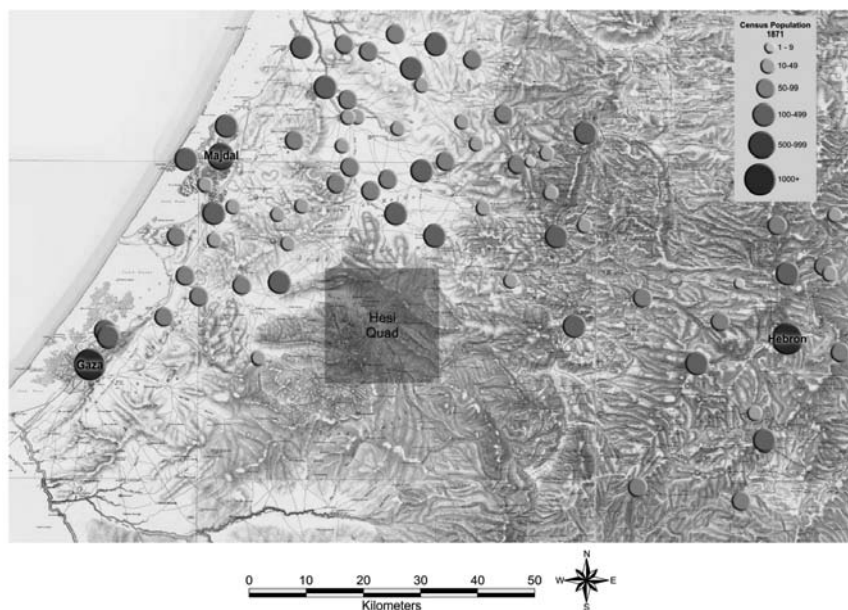
In the same year, Israel Finkelstein (1996) investigated the southern coastal plain and Shephelah to shed light on demographic, socio-economic, and political processes during the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age I. For the Late Bronze Age, Finkelstein sees this area as one of the most developed and densely populated in the entire southern Levant. Sites spread into every niche of the region with a fully developed settlement system exhibiting several large sites, a significant number of medium-sized sites and many small sites. For Finkelstein these sites are integrated into a cogent land use system of city states where smaller settlements are dominated by political capitals (LBA city states and Iron Age I Philistine pentapolis cities). To determine the territorial boundaries between each polity, Finkelstein used historical data (primarily Egyptian and biblical texts), settlement patterns, geographical features, and a Thiessen Polygon system. He thus sees a “fully developed settlement system of the Philistine countryside” (Finkelstein 1996). While Finkelstein’s analysis is useful for understanding site/settlement integration generally, especially the relationship of capitals or regional centers to small sites across the geopolitical landscape, it does not match the types of sites and settlement patterns observed in the Hesi region during the Iron Age.

Understanding the settlement patterns of Iron Age II Judah was a goal of Ryan Defonzo (2005) in his unpublished PhD dissertation that centered on Khirbet el-Qom, an Iron Age village located in the Hill Country about ten miles to the east of Tell el-Hesi. Defonzo incorporated the research techniques of John Brush and Howard Bracey to address patterns of various settlement types in a premodern agrarian world. Brush (1953) examined the hierarchy of hamlets, villages, and towns in mid-nineteenth century southwestern Wisconsin and concluded that Christaller’s original central place theory (a theory to explain the size and number of cities and their spacing in a territory) was too rigid and unable to account for the topographic realities or changing modes of transportation he encountered in

the Wisconsin landscape. Bracey saw these conclusions to be applicable to southern England as well and their collaboration began (Brush and Bracey 1955).

Like Wisconsin and southern England, Judah was agrarian, although cattle were raised in England and Wisconsin while sheep and goats were raised in Judah. Brush and Bracey had worked in regions of far lower relief than the hill country around el-Qom where the centers were found to be a bit closer together. Defonzo (2005, 82) highlighted Brush's and Bracey's observation that when using primitive transportation means, "the basic distance factor was the time and effort required to get to any trade center by cart or on foot (1955: 568)." Defonzo (2005, 81–83) found the methods useful for his analysis of the el-Qom region, seeing a pattern of hamlets, villages, and towns integrated into a network of regional service centers. Additionally, he included sites like Lachish and Tel Halif in his analysis so it seems applicable as far as the edge of the Shephelah. For the greater Hesi region near the western edge of the Shephelah, however, this pattern of a network of regional service centers serving small towns, villages, and hamlets fails. In theory, the model should have worked better in this region than around el-Qom because the basic topography is more akin to southwestern Wisconsin and southern England. Around Hesi, towns, villages, and hamlets appear to be missing, a fact largely unrecognized in the scholarship addressing the region.

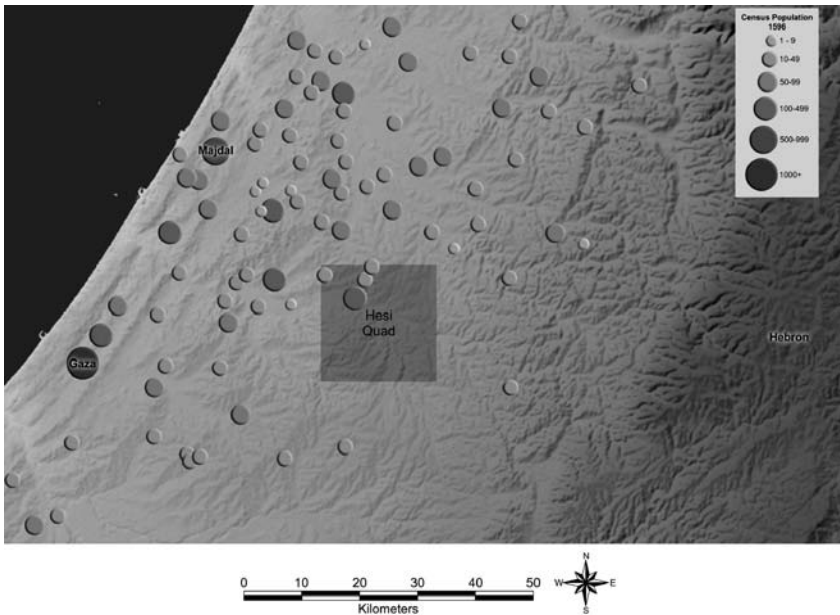
While these scholars attempted to categorize and interpret various types of sites in Judah and throughout the southern Levant, and to integrate them into larger meaningful patterns of understanding, these attempts typically work much better for explaining regional settlement patterns and land use outside of the Hesi region than in the Hesi region itself. The past forty years of research inside of the Hesi region, however, also have provided several anomalous observations that also need to be dealt with since they cannot be explained by any existing paradigm. The first was Tell el-Hesi itself. Archaeology proved that it was a fort in the ninth and eighth centuries BCE, not a village (Blakely and Horton 2001, 24–36; Blakely, Hardin, and Master 2014, 33–52). Thus one could conclude that Hesi was the fort protecting the hamlets and farmsteads of the region. Second, archaeological survey of the entire region in the 1970s, early 1980s, 2004, and 2008 found hundreds of sites from many periods, but very few of them could be identified as hamlets, villages, or farmsteads of the ninth or eighth centuries BCE. Geomorphological processes could have buried most of these sites, but we did find one wonderful example, Khirbet Summeily. Third, starting in 2011 we began excavation of Khirbet Summeily expecting to find an agricultural hamlet or village. We found an administrative site of the tenth century BCE that was abandoned in the ninth century BCE. In the eighth century BCE some isolated structure appears to have functioned for some short period of time. None of this was expected. Our agrarian countryside seems almost devoid of farmsteads, hamlets, and villages. This is the problem, or anomaly, studied here.



**Fig. 4:** Map showing the locations of the towns, villages, and hamlets in the region of Gaza that were enumerated in the tax census of about 1871. Data from Grossman and plotted on the *Map of Western Palestine*; our map prepared by William Isenberger in association with the authors.

## A REEXAMINATION

To address this problem, we first re-examine what we think we know about the area. One axiom of Lawrence E. Toombs, the sage of the Tell el-Hesi project from 1970 to the 1990s, was always to question what you think you know. Beyond the archaeological synopsis presented above, thirty years ago Hesi geologist, Frank L. Koucky (1989), assembled the known climatic, geological, geographical, and historical data to accompany his original geomorphological survey of the Hesi region. These data had to be updated, reevaluated, and then integrated with other data sources that had not previously been tapped. The sections and paragraphs that follow forge a path towards a new understanding of the archaeological record of the Hesi region that allows it to be understood without the anomalies, or problems, now recognized.

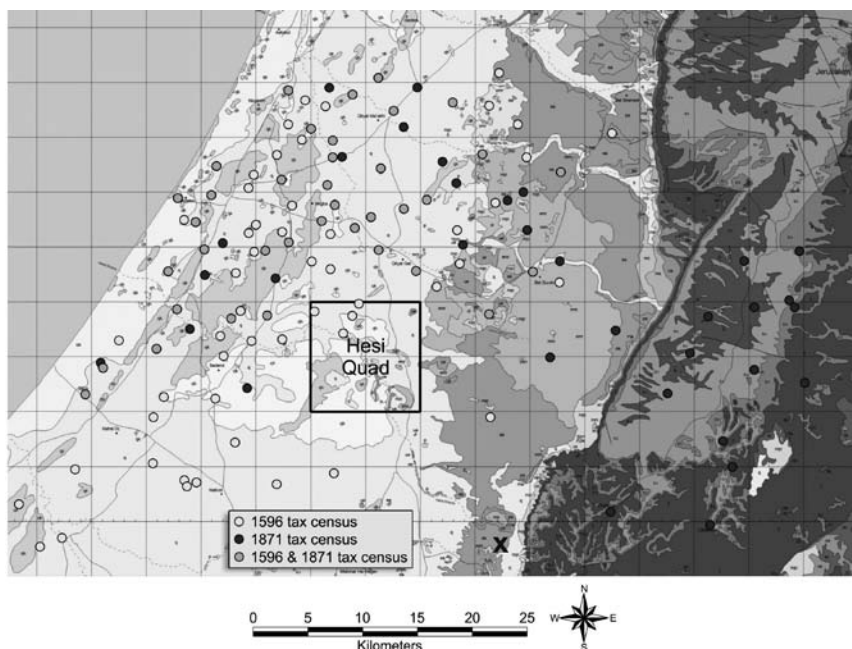


**Fig. 5:** Map showing the locations of the towns, villages, and hamlets in the region of Gaza that were enumerated in the tax census of 1596/7. Data from Hütteroth and Abdulfattah; our map prepared by William Isenberger in association with the authors.

#### THE GAZA TO HEBRON ROAD

Gaza and Hebron became significant cities by the Middle Bronze Age. It was only in 1948 that a border terminated frequent interaction between them. We have to imagine a significant road connecting the two cities throughout much of the intervening time, a road passing through the center of the Hesi region. Such a road was noted by nineteenth century explorers and was used by medieval pilgrims. It was part of the Imperial Postal Service during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and it was described by the Crusaders in the thirteenth century. The road was mentioned in Early Islamic times and is well known in Roman times, in part because of the description of Eusebius and intact Roman milestones.<sup>2</sup>

2. Freeman-Grenville, Chapman, and Taylor 2003, esp. map 6; Tsafirir, Di Segni, and Green 1994, Map 1:250,000 (North); Cytryn-Silverman and Blakely 2013; Blakely and Huster 2016.

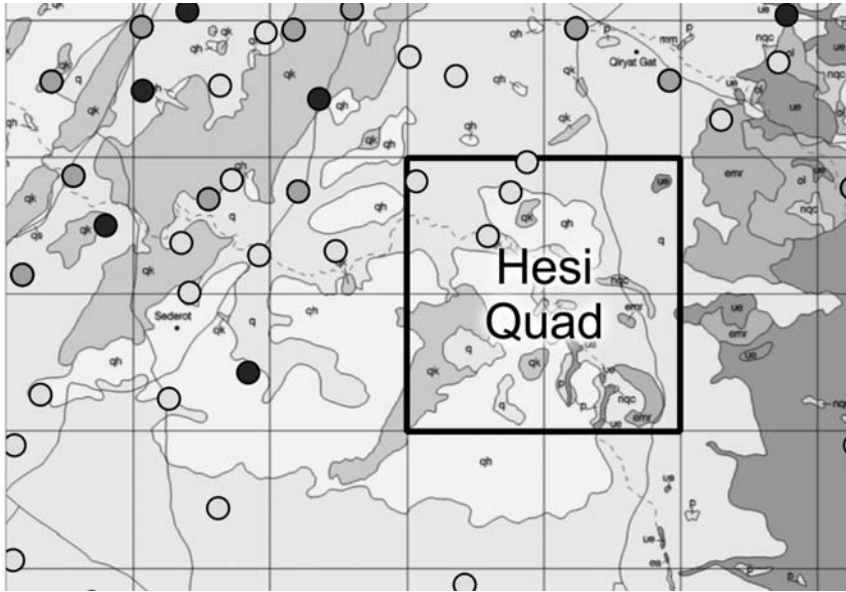


**Fig. 6:** Map showing the locations of the towns, villages, and hamlets in the region of Gaza that were enumerated in the tax censuses of about 1871 and 1596/7. Data from Grossman and Hütteroth and Abdulfattah plotted on the Geological Map of Israel; our map prepared by William Isenberger in association with the authors.

## TAX RECORDS

In 1871 the Ottoman Turks prepared a tax census of Palestine (Grossman 2004, esp. 234–57). Figure 4 locates all sites taxed in the Gaza region. The sites are plotted on the contemporary *Map of Western Palestine* (Conder and Kitchener 1880, Sheets 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, and 25). The data mesh. The dots identify ranges for the number of taxable heads of household in each village. Note the total absence of villages in the Hesi region.

Below, we will identify a prolonged period of good weather that promoted economic and population growth in the mid-1500s. In 1596, at the end of this period of good weather, the Ottoman Turks compiled a tax census that accounted for the growth (fig. 5; Hütteroth and Abdulfattah 1977). The dots again identify ranges for the number of taxable heads of household in each village in the Gaza region. Note the paucity of villages in the Hesi region.



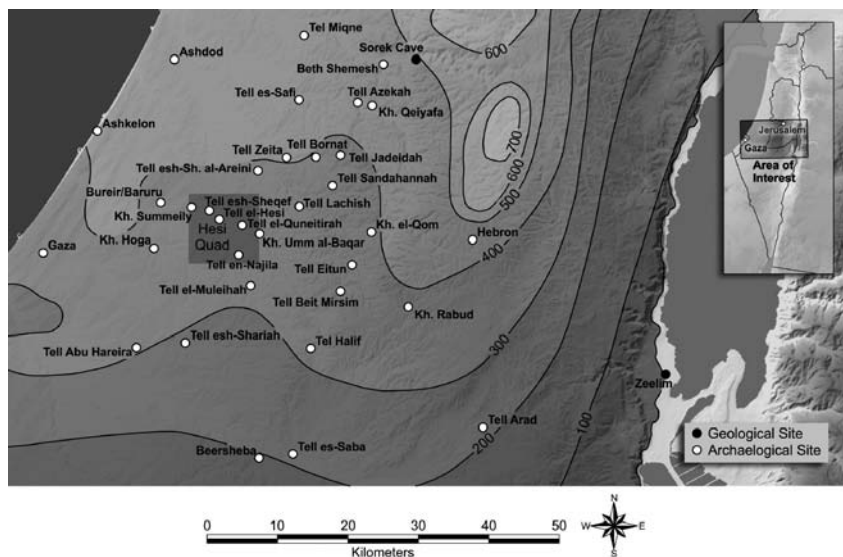
**Fig. 7:** Close-up image showing the locations of the towns, villages, and hamlets in the region of Gaza that were enumerated in the tax censuses of about 1871 and 1596/7. Data from Grossman and Hütteroth and Abdulfattah plotted on the *Geological Map of Israel*; our map prepared by William Isenberger in association with the authors.

Figure 6 superimposes both data sets, but now with the *geological map of Israel* as its base (Geological Survey of Israel 2001). Note, most of the Hesi region falls in three geological units: the Qk is *kurkar* (calcareous sandstone), the Qh is “red sand and loam, *hamra*,” and the surrounding Q is mixed, or undifferentiated. Figure 7 is a close-up of the previous figure. Virtually all of the villages surround the *humra* and the *kurkar*, or are located in floodplains where Wadi el-Hesi cut through the *hamra*. The exception, Huj, the dot southwest of Hesi, was established about 1820 by the governor of Gaza, who dug a 200-foot deep well for its use (Robinson 1841, 385–86; Walid Khalidi 1992, 103).

Thus we have identified a geological unit, the Hesi region, where sedentary occupation is rare, at least in the Ottoman Period.<sup>3</sup> Why? And is this true for other periods as well?

3. If one compares the current map from *Geology of Israel* with a previous effort (Picard and Salomonica 1936) you see that the units under discussion were not identified





**Fig. 8:** Map showing average rainfall in the Hesi region during the period 1930 to 1960, based on Map IV/2A in *Atlas of Israel: Cartography, Physical Geography, Human and Economic Geography and History* (2nd ed., Jerusalem: Survey of Israel, 1970); our map prepared by William Isenberger in association with the authors.

#### CURRENT EFFECTIVE PRECIPITATION

Between 1930 and 1960 Tell el-Hesi averaged about 350 mm of rainfall per year, a number that should have been sufficient for farming and sedentary occupation most years (fig. 8).<sup>4</sup> During wet years this can reach about 550 mm, and there was adequate water for crops unless they got washed out or flooded. During dry years, precipitation at Tell el-Hesi was probably just above 200 mm, not adequate for farm crops without irrigation (Atlas of Israel 1970, 4.2C and 4.2D). Today at Kibbutz Ruhama, even with far hardier cultivars, there is still the expectation that crops will totally fail some years.

in a manner similar to today. Koucky and others who have studied the archaeology of the Hesi region did not miss an important piece of the scholarly literature, at the time of Koucky's work the observations did not exist.

4. We use the 1930 to 1960 standards even when far more thorough and complete data are available that extend to the current day (e.g., Baruch Ziv et al 2013, 13) because Yair Goldreich (1981) has shown that large modern cities have impacted the natural regime. Since the Hesi region is near the huge cities of modern Gaza and Tel Aviv/Jaffa, we prefer to use the earlier data.

Why, then, since the Hesi region should have sufficient rain to support marginal sedentary agriculture are villages absent while successful villages in neighboring regions are on the same isohyet? We believe the answer is the soil, specifically the *hamra* soil,

a mixture of loess and windblown sand. The character of this soil is to absorb precipitation immediately, but the soil rapidly becomes saturated and impervious to further absorption. In typical heavy winter rainstorms, much of the rain simply runs off creating floods. Water then descends into Wadi el-Hesi where some of it is absorbed into the more porous sands and conglomerates of the wadi floor, while the remainder roars off toward the sea as flash floods.

We believe, therefore, that except for the rare wet years with light rain of long duration, much of the rain simply runs off this *hamra* region and that the effective precipitation absorbed into the fields is far below what is needed for sedentary agriculture. Hence a typical village in the *hamra* could never succeed, thus explaining the villageless Hesi region, at least in the current climatic regime. The major exceptions seen in figure 5 are Malaques and Ajlan, sites located in the broad Hesi floodplain where the



**Fig. 9:** Map showing the distribution of snails of both Mediterranean and desert environments that were excavated at Tell el-Hesi between 1977 and 1983; our map prepared by William Isenberger in association with Inbar Ktalav and Blakely.



*hamra* has eroded and been replaced with reworked soils that are far more receptive to rain.

#### CHANGING CLIMATE OVER TIME

Inbar Ktalav and Jeffrey Blakely recently prepared for publication the land snails excavated at Tell el-Hesi between 1977 and 1983. They found five major species in the EBIII, the same species found in all subsequent strata, albeit in slightly different proportions. Virtually every locus included snails native to a Mediterranean climate (*Helix engaddensis*, *Xeropicta vestalis*, and *Monacha obstructa*), shown in figure 9 in dark gray, and snails native to a desert environment (*Sphincterochila fimbriata* and *Xerocrassa simulata*), shown in figure 9 in light gray. Intermediate gray dots indicate where both species are present. Tell el-Hesi, the bull's eye dot, is located at the interface of the Mediterranean and desert zones. They concluded, therefore, that Hesi's climate has remained more-or less-the same over the past 5000 years.

Paleo-climatological studies have developed much since Koucky's original work; hundreds of relevant articles have been published since 1990. It is now clear that the climate of the eastern Mediterranean generally has fluctuated in a fairly narrow range since the latter half of the EB IV. For sure, climatic anomalies occurred and lasted up to one and two centuries. We note the long-term aridity at the end of EB III and the start of the EB IV or the aridity at the end of LB II and the beginning of Iron I. The later fourth through early sixth centuries CE were exceedingly moist, but the seventh through ninth centuries were exceedingly dry. The Little Ice Age, from the end of the sixteenth century to the beginning of the eighteenth century, was exceedingly cool, but that manifested itself in both drought and flooding (Issar 2007; Piero Lionello 2012, 87–185; Rambeau and Black 2011).

Two good long-term climate proxies are located relatively close to the Hesi region (fig. 1). The study of shorelines and the associated palynological record at Nahal Ze'elim, on the western shore of the Dead Sea near Masada, supports the overview, but adds subtlety (Migowski et al 2006). Since the discovery of Sorek Cave, near Beth Shemesh, climatologists have been analyzing its stalactites and stalagmites in an attempt to understand the changing quantities and seasonality of rainfall (Bar-Matthews, Ayalon, and Kaufman 1998; Orland et al 2009.). With these proxies and with pluses and minuses attached (fig. 10), we see the late thirteenth and into the twelfth centuries BCE as very dry, but improving to above average moisture in the tenth century BCE. Then it became slightly warm and slightly dry for the rest of the Iron Age, but declining, reaching a nadir during the Persian Period. The Hellenistic and Early Roman was a bit cooler and more moist, but about 100 CE the climate warmed and started to dry out, reaching a period of numerous droughts between 250 and about 370. From about 370 to 525 the climate was far more humid,

Approximate Date	Description	Period
1725-2000 CE	Warm and slightly dry	Late Ottoman to Mandate to Modern
1575-1725 CE	Little Ice Age, unsettled climate	Mid-Ottoman Period
1500-1575 CE	Consistent cool and moist	Early Ottoman Period
1250-1500 CE	Drying out and warming up	Mamluk Period
1000-1250 CE	Cool with increasing moisture	Fatimid to Ayyubid and Crusaders Periods
925-1000 CE	Unstable	Abbasid/Fatimid transition
535-925 CE	Drying out to dry	Late Byzantine to Abbasid Periods
370-525 CE	Very moist optimum	Early Byzantine Period
100-370 CE	Moist to dry with periodic droughts	Late Roman Period
350 BCE-100 CE	Improving from dry to moist	Hellenistic to Early Roman Periods
600-350 BCE	Going from dry to very dry	Persian Period
900-600 BCE	Drying throughout but generally similar to today	Iron II
1000-900 BCE	Relatively moist	Iron I/II transition
1100-1000 BCE	Improving from dry to moist	Iron I
1250-1100 BCE	Going from dry to exceedingly dry	LBII/Iron I

**Fig. 10:** Chart showing the suggested climatic conditions in the Hesi region over the past 3300 years based on modern climatic research.

roughly 150 years of continuous, better than average rainfall. Cities, towns, and villages of this period dot the landscape in regions barren today.<sup>5</sup>

A decline in rainfall and increased temperature accelerated into the early tenth century, becoming quite dry. After seventy-five years of climatic instability, the region again became more humid and cooler, peaking during the Crusader Period. A cooler and drier phase seems to have then lasted until soon after 1500. At that point a remarkable, consistent cool moist period began, lasting until about 1575. The climate quickly became unsettled as the Little Ice Age began, extending until the early eighteenth century with devastating results. The period was cool, but sometimes very dry and at others very wet. Soon after 1700 the current trend of warm and slightly dry weather began.<sup>6</sup>

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5. See, e.g., Bookman et al 2004; Quintana Krupinski et al 2014; Neumann et al 2007; Sperber 1974; Bakker et al 2013; Orland et al 2009.

6. See, e.g., White 2011; Neumann 2007; Bookman et al 2004; Ellenblum 2012, 12-57; Kaniewski, Van Campo, and Weiss 2012.

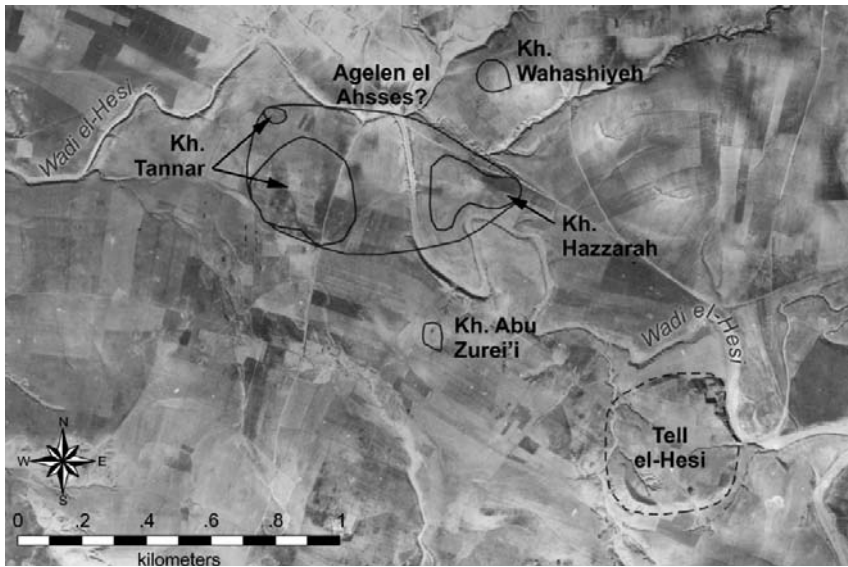
#### FIRST-HAND ACCOUNTS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF THE HESI REGION

With climate in mind, let us examine first-hand historical evidence for the region and see how it meshes with the reconstructed climatic evidence. Other than cursory statements in the *Onomasticon* (Freeman-Grenville, Chapman, and Taylor 2003), the earliest documentary evidence for occupation in the greater Gaza region the Anti-Chalcedonian movement. We have John Rufus's *Life of Peter the Iberian* and the writings of Abba Isaiah describing life in this region in the late fifth and sixth centuries (Horn and Phenix 2008; Isaiah, Chrysavgis and Penkett 2002). The entire Gaza region is described as a rich agricultural region with viticulture. Philip Mayerson discussed the fame of the region's grapes and wine throughout the Mediterranean (Mayerson 1992; Mayerson 1993; Mayerson 1995). The trade amphoras containing these wines are distinctive. This meshes well with a cooler, moist climate, almost lush when compared with today. By 640 the climate was dry and warm. Soon thereafter either Umar or Uthman granted Amr bin al-As an estate in Palestine, in recognition of his leadership in the conquest of Palestine. Michael Lecker studied the history of the estate, Ajlan, and located it astride the Gaza to Hebron road in the northern part of the Hesi region (Lecker 1989). Subsequently Blakely suggested its center was the combined sites of Kh. Tannar and Kh. Hazzarah (fig. 11). Subsidiary sites of the estate are known to include villages at Kh. Ajlan, Malaques, and Sukkariyyeh. Ajlan was a large manor estate set onto the landscape by Amr bin al-As, a stupendously wealthy member of the elite who could tap the resources of the entire region to build his vision. The estate was to function for generations, although in decline (Blakely 2010).

We should note that Ajlan and Malaques are located in the broad Wadi el-Hesi floodplain which cut through the *hamra* allowing far better water management. Al-As probably utilized a barrage-style irrigation system to water the fields, similar to systems used at his highly valuable estate near Ta'if in Arabia. The unique character of Ajlan is highlighted by the fact that no similar sites are located in the Hesi region. We argue this estate was only feasible in this otherwise inhospitable region because al-As expended the necessary capital. As the infrastructure declined, probably so did the manor estate.

Although terse, the late tenth century geographer al-Muqaddasī (1994, 225) described the region along the road south from as-Sukkariyya as "a desolate semi-desert."

A much-discussed transfer between John of Ibelin and the Hospital of Saint John was finalized in 1256. In this transaction, Ibelin yielded rights to 14 villages in the County of Ascalon to the Knights if they joined him to defeat the Moslems thus reclaiming lost lands. Ultimately, they failed. Scant attention has been given to the villages listed on the contract (fig. 12). Ya'akov Huster and Blakely have shown that thirteen of the fourteen villages form a single tract of land running along the north bank of Wadi el-Hesi, from Phetora to Herbiyya on the sea. Wadi

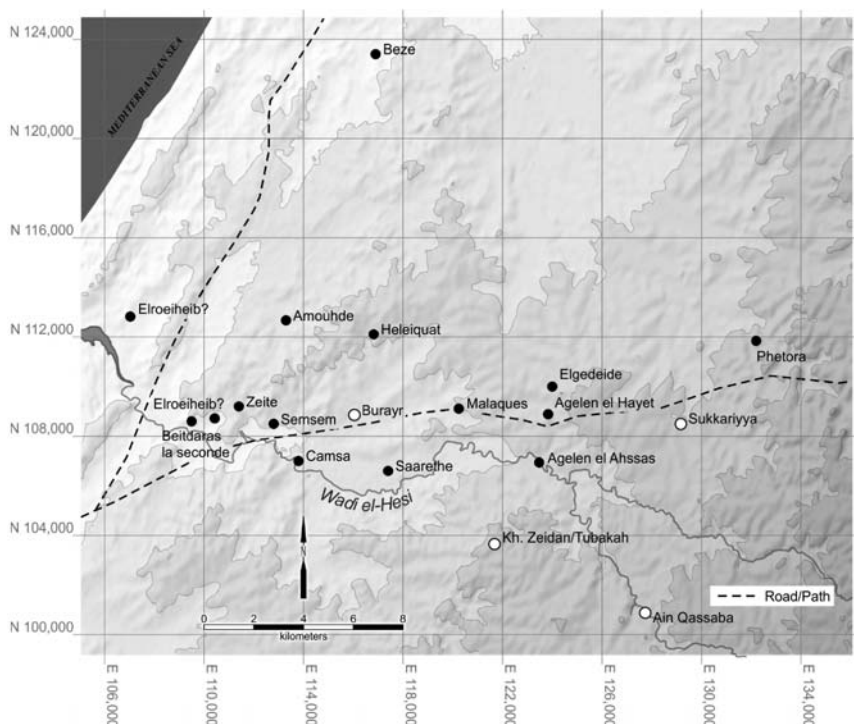


**Fig. 11:** Plan of the likely location of Amr bin al-As's estate Ajlan showing Khirbet Tannar and Khirbet Hazzarah and the estimated size of the original site. Plotted on a 1945 air photograph of the Hesi region; our map prepared by William Isenberger in association Blakely, and previously published by Blakely.

el-Hesi was probably the border between Moslem Gaza and Crusader Ascalon. Thus, Ibelin was transferring the border villages to the Knights. These villages must have been functioning in 1256 to be mentioned (Blakely and Huster 2016). Most of these villages are beyond the *hamra*, and those within the *hamra* zone are in the floodplain.

In the drier fourteenth through sixteenth centuries, Christian pilgrims traveled the Gaza to Hebron road and a few recorded descriptions of the Hesi region. In November 1384, Leonardo Frescobaldi and Giorgio di Guccio spent a night at the *khān* at Sukkariyya. Frescobaldi tersely stated, "The first day [ed., leaving Gaza] we traveled through desert country, and in the evening we reached a khan" (Bellorini and Hoade 1948, 67). Guccio wrote, "Almost all this day up to near the said place is as the desert, that is, sterile country" (Bellorini and Hoade 1948, 123). In 1432 Bertrandon de la Brocquière traveled the same route from Hebron and wrote, "Thence we crossed a desert country, and lodged in one of those houses built through charity, and called khan, from this khan we came to Gaza" (Brocquière 1988, 12).

The traveling party of Felix Fabri, Bernhard von Breidenbach, Joos van Ghistele, and Pauli Waltheri Guglingensis crossed the region in August 1483.



**Fig. 12:** Map of the Hesi region, showing sites listed in the contract of John of Ibelin with the Knights of St. John in 1256/57. Map prepared by William Isenberger in association with Ya'akov Huster and Blakely.

Fabri's is the most famous travelogue for the entire period. He described setting out from Sukkariyya for Gaza, "On the twenty-ninth [of August] we rose with the dawn, loaded our camels, saddled our asses, and set out over a flat, barren country, where we saw many ruined villages and the ruins of ancient cities..." (Fabri 1843, 352–63). Guglingensis, on the other hand, described coming to Sukkariyya from Hebron, "Toward night we climbed down toward one desolated inn that was located next to the village Zuchara [ed., Sukkariyya]. The land of the Philistines is flat and most fertile, but in 4 miles scarcely three trees were to be found" (Guglingensis 1892, 188–93). In summary, these and other travelers of this period universally described the region as a desert or barren.

The 1596 tax census is an important historical document (fig. 5; Hütteroth and Abdulfattah 1977). It describes the Palestine region after 60 years of unparalleled growth at a population peak unmatched for about 250 years. Again we

should note that the Hesi region with its *hamra* soil was devoid of villages, except for Ajlan and Malaques, villages in the flood-plain. Ajlan, in particular, seems to have remained occupied at least until 1785 when it was called “another village of the Bedouins” (Volney 1787, 335–36).

By the nineteenth century, travel accounts and historical documents become more plentiful. Robinson described the region along with van de Velde, Guérin, Warren, and many others (Robinson 1841; Van de Velde 1854; Van de Velde 1858; Guérin 1869; Warren 1871). Figure 13 was prepared for an article by Huster, Felicity Cobbing, and Blakely, portraying the Hesi region of that time (Blakely, Huster, and Cobbing 2014). Note, not a single site was occupied south of Bureir and east of Huj in the region of *hamra* soils.

Josias L. Porter visited the region in the 1850s and provided this stark account of the utter bareness of the region:

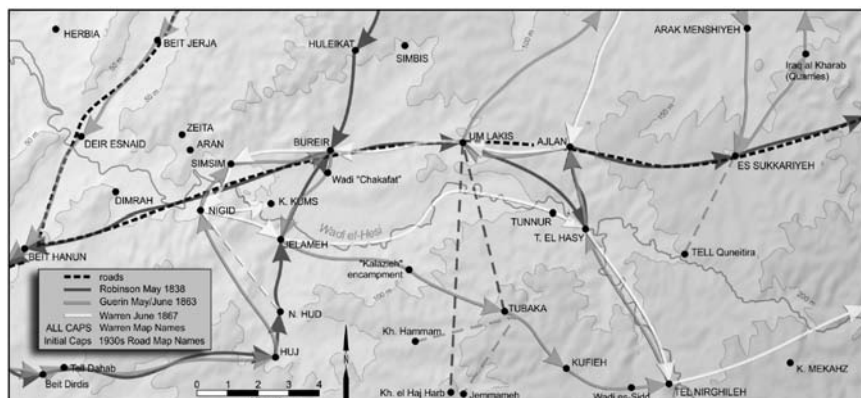
We looked and longed for shelter from that pitiless storm, and for water to slake our burning thirst; but there was none. The plain extended on every side, as smooth as a lake, to the circle of yellow haze that bounded it. No friendly house was there; no rock or bank; no murmuring stream or solitary well.... As we approached [ed., Umm Lakis/Malagues] we could distinguish heaps of ruins and rubbish; and on reaching it, and pressing our panting steeds up its shelving sides in search of some rude shelter, we scrambled over large hewn stones, and fragments of marble columns, with here and there a piece of carved cornice or sculptured pediment protruding from the dust. (1865, 207–8)

In our ride of more than thirty miles that day we did not meet a human being; and from the moment we left the fields of Gaza till we passed in among the rocky spurs of the hills of Judah [ed., near el-Kubeibeh], we did not see a single sign of human life. We saw many towns and villages in ruins—white mounds of rubbish—on the grey plain (1885, 209–10).

Again, the 1871 tax list and *Map of Western Palestine* highlight the region (fig. 4; Conder and Kitchener 1880, Sheets 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, and 25). Conder and Kitchener wrote, “North of this boundary valley [ed., Wadi el-Hesi], the plain is tilled by the inhabitants of the villages; south of it the country is uncultivated and affords pasture to the Arabs. The hills are cultivated to about the same latitude” (1883, 256).

The final visitor we mention is George A. Barton, who visited the Hesi region in 1903 just before modern technology altered the region through the excavation of deep wells. Barton left Beersheba and headed directly to Tell el-Hesi to inspect the former excavations of Petrie and Bliss. He noted, “Since leaving Beersheba we have seen no houses, except three storehouses, built by the government for the storage of grain taken in payment for taxes. All the population live in black Arabian tents” (1904, 215).





**Fig. 13:** Warren's site locations for the Greater Hesi Region are shown using modern cartographic methods. Warren's sites are identified in capital letters, while other sites and locations are shown in lower case letters. The paths through the Hesi region followed by Edward Robinson, Victor Guérin, and Charles Warren are shown in different shades. Dotted lines show sites identified by an explorer but not visited by that explorer. Image created by William Isenberger in association with Ya'akov Huster, Felicity Cobbing and Blakely.

The point of these accounts is that we have no documentary evidence for sedentary occupation in the Hesi region's *hamra* soils, except during the Byzantine period when the climate was far moister. At all other times for which we have historical records, the region is largely devoid of sedentary occupation. We also have records that, at least at times, suggest it was used for sheep and goat herding. Given a similar climate, this suggests that for the ninth and eighth centuries BCE, too, that we should consider sedentary occupation of the Hesi region to be highly unlikely. So the question for us becomes: Does the archaeological record (both survey and excavation), as well as archaeologically derived historical and biblical texts provide further support for a different use of the Hesi Region during earlier periods, including the Iron Age?

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA

If we begin with the most recent archaeological work in the Hesi Region, then our current excavation at Khirbet Summeily, approximately 1.5 km northwest of Hesi, exhibits an almost total absence of charred seeds in its archaeological record, despite 100 percent sifting of all soils and flotation samples of all loci. For the currently identified Phase 2, which we date to the early eighth century BCE, this is particularly surprising since the phase is represented by one structure, replete

with several *tabuns* /*tannurs* and a large fire pit. While plenty of ash is found in these installations, the absence of seeds is striking and it is unclear to us what is being burned since one would expect some seeds to survive the threshing process along with the chaff and straw. This begs the question of whether grains were raised anywhere in the vicinity of Summeily and whether they were processed at the site. We lack any evidence to suggest that they were. To support further this observation, we also note that in three field seasons no sickle blades have been found, again noting the 100 percent sifting of all excavated soils.

At Tell el-Hesi, W. J. Bennett, J. B. Sollberger, and A. F. Gettys (1989, 231–56) carefully analyzed the vast quantities of lithics recovered in the Persian-Period strata and concluded that none of them need post-date the EB III, although they thought a few might. In other words, in a huge corpus of material, they found no clear examples of Iron Age sickles. Even though great quantities of charred seeds were also recovered in Iron Age contexts at Hesi, given the lack of sickles we can also suggest that either these seeds were residual or had to be imported from elsewhere for consumption on the site. If there is little to no evidence of Iron Age farming in the excavated Iron Age sites of the Hesi region, can other sources strengthen the argument that the surrounding region was probably a pasturage as well?

In the excavation of tenth century Atar Haroa in the Negev Highlands, Ruth Shahack-Gross and Israel Finkelstein (2008) examined phytoliths (fossilized plant tissue) in the archaeological record and concluded that the inhabitants of this site were sedentary “desert-adapted pastoralists” who did not raise grains. One point in their argument was the lack of sickle blades at the site, while another was the lack of grain phytoliths at the site.<sup>7</sup> This matches the situations at both Summeily and Hesi. Thus excavated material remains support the same interpretation, that this is not farmland, it is instead a grassland or pasture.

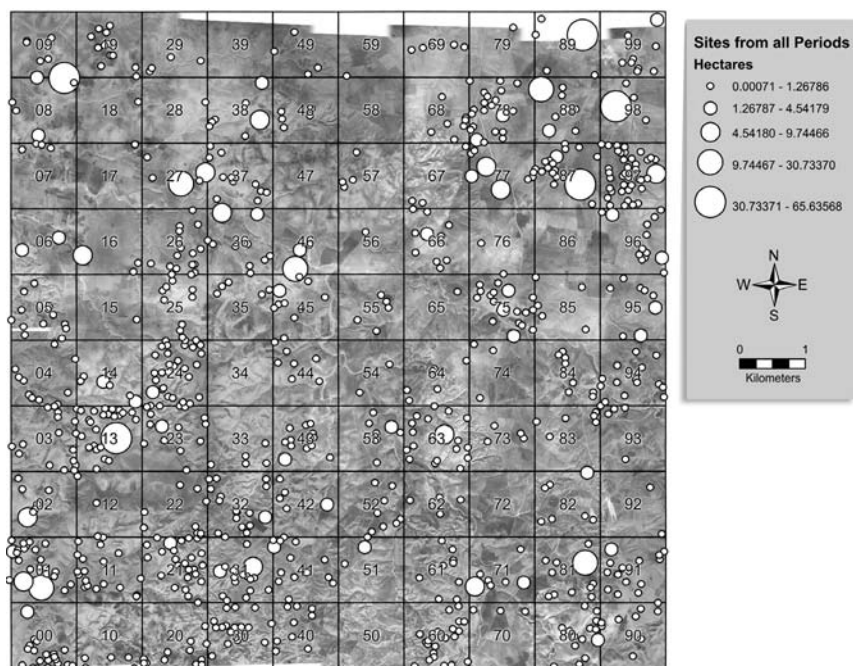
## REGIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

In 2004 and 2008, the Hesi Regional Project conducted a pedestrian survey over the 100 km<sup>2</sup> that surround Tell el-Hesi. The survey limits match the boundaries of the *Ruhama Map of the Archaeological Survey of Israel*, where our survey results will be published. A photo-mosaic of the 1945 air photographs serves as the background for our maps. In figure 14 we have plotted the location of every identified archaeological site from all periods. Note, there is total coverage. In some areas, especially the north-north central region, bulldozing in preparation for planting

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7. Bruins 2012, however, summarily dismisses the conclusions of Shahack-Gross and Finkelstein by noting that the regional survey of Moti Haiman (1994, 51) found an abundance of Iron Age sickles as well as silos and threshing floors in the same region. We wonder if the conclusions are mutually exclusive.

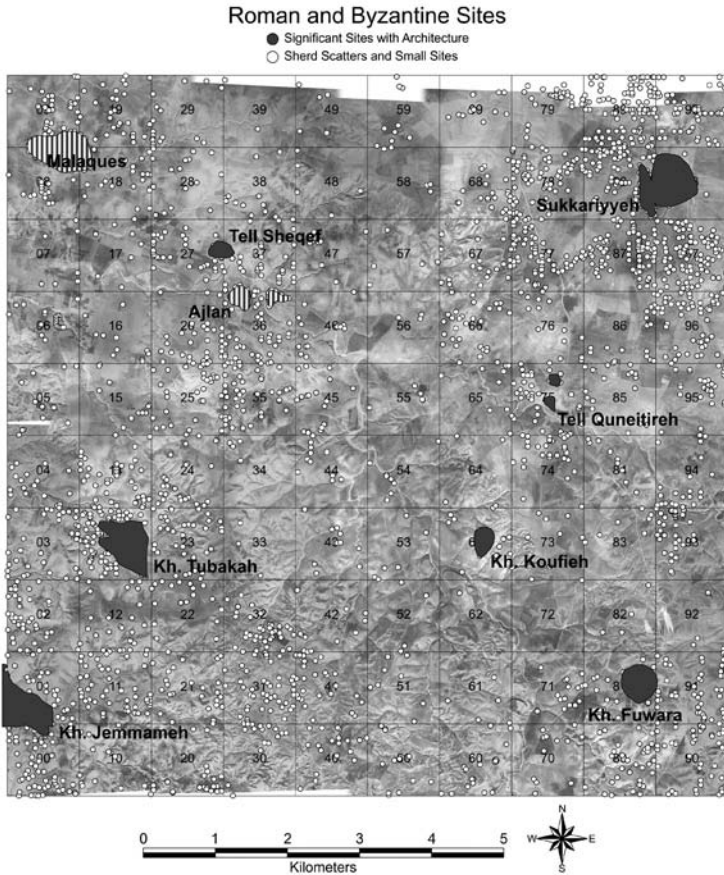




**Fig. 14:** Map showing the location and size of all sites found during archaeological survey of the Hesi region. Plotted on a 1945 air photographs of the Hesi region; map prepared by William Isenberger in association with the authors.

extensive orchards removed parts of the archaeological record. In other places, such as just southeast of the center of the map, the lack of surface manifestations of any archaeological sites is real.

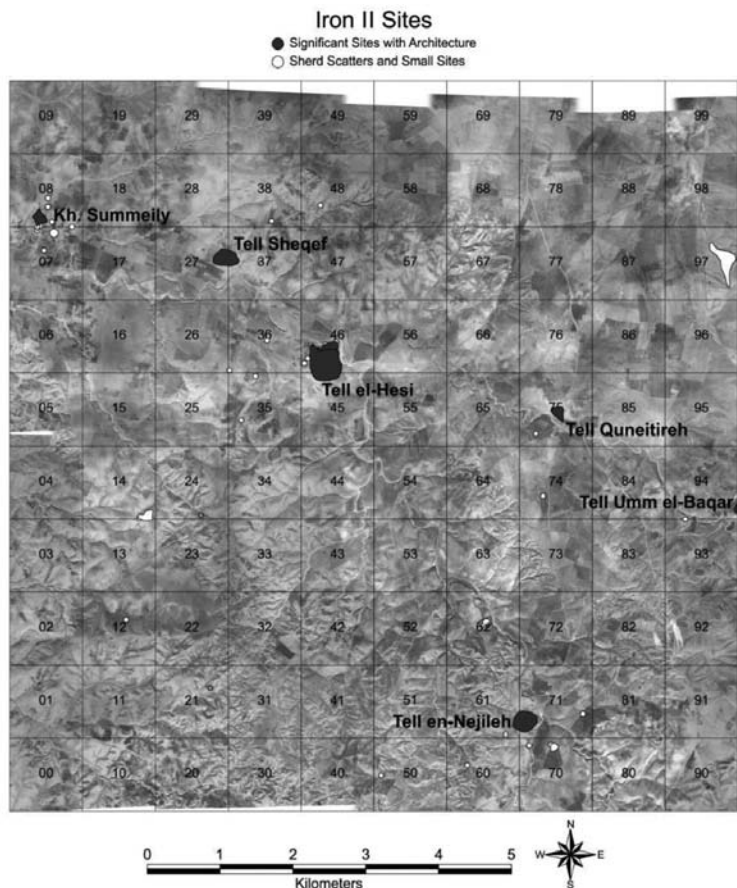
The Roman and Byzantine period was a rare cool and damp period whose site distribution is seen in figure 15. Their large number is obvious, but we also note the size of what must have been villages or towns in locations otherwise never occupied. The wet climate of about 150 years allowed these sites to develop further south and in the *hamra* zone. Khirbet Jemmameh, Khirbet Tubakah, Khirbet Koufir, Khirbet Fuwara, and Sukkariyya were substantive sites. Two sites that



**Fig. 15:** Map showing the location all Roman and Byzantine sites. Black polygons are larger sites with structure and artifacts. White dots are the location of sherd scatters and small sites with limited remains. Plotted on a 1945 air photographs of the Hesi region; map prepared by William Isenberger in association with the authors.

appear significant, Ajlan and Malaques, probably are not. Their apparent large size is the result of our inability to distinguish amphorae and jar fragments of the mid-sixth century from the mid-seventh century on al-As's manor estate.

During the more typical warm dry climate of the Iron Age far fewer sites are found (fig. 16). Not a single village is known. Tell el-Hesi seems to be a military site and Khirbet Summeily seems to be a governmental site. The small, tall, mound sites of Tell Abu esh-Sheqef, Tell Quneitirah, and Tell Umm al-Baqar dot



**Fig. 16:** Map showing the location all Iron II sites. Black polygons are larger sites with structure and artifacts. White dots are the location of sherd scatters and small sites with limited remains. Plotted on a 1945 air photographs of the Hesi region; map prepared by William Isenberger in association with the authors.

the landscape, apparently near available water found in floodplains. Although a mound site above a floodplain, Tell en-Nejileh is a thin occupation partly atop an older mound. Its identification as a village is questionable and briefly addressed below. With that possible exception, no villages or farmsteads are known across the landscape.

In summary, occupation in the cooler, moister Roman/Byzantine Period is representative of village life and is an anomaly we will not discuss in this venue.

The site distribution maps for all other periods from Iron Age to about 1900 are without village or farmstead sites. Sites of size appear to serve other purposes. This suggests that at best there was a limited sedentary agrarian population in the region during most periods. True occupation sites only appear where the Wadi el-Hesi system cut through the *hamra* soil and formed a floodplain. Even the unique manor estate of Amr bin al-As was located in the Hesi floodplain. Thus, virtually all other occupation of the region must have been transitory, non-sedentary, or seasonal endeavors that left only limited remains scattered across the archaeological record.

### THE NEW PARADIGM

Almost forty-five years of archaeological research at Tell el-Hesi and in its environs were predicated on the implicit assumption that Iron Age Tell el-Hesi, particularly in the ninth and eighth century BCE, was a biblical town or village. This “identification” implied that the region was a settled, agrarian landscape replete with planted fields, farmsteads, and hamlets. As research progressed, various discoveries and observations came to light that did not fit comfortably with this interpretation. Anomalies developed. On the previous pages, we have presented a variety of geological, geographical, climatic, malacological, historical, and archaeological data that, when taken together, suggest that for most periods over the past 3000 years, and for the ninth and eighth centuries BCE, in particular, the Hesi region had not developed into a sedentary environment with agrarian activities. Rather it was not cultivated and the sites on the landscape seemingly were military or governmental. This understanding is sufficiently at odds with the project’s research design as to render it useless as a paradigm in the research program.

Over the past 3000 years, excepting the late Roman/Early Byzantine period, the greater Hesi region functioned as a pasture or grassland populated by nomadic or semi-nomadic shepherds and their flocks or herds. Over these 3000 years the central governments would have changed many times. In the ninth and eighth centuries BCE, Judah controlled this region, possibly to multiple ends. Undoubtedly they controlled the road, benefitting through the receipt of taxes and tolls. The small fort at Tell el-Hesi was an early warning point on the border protecting Lachish as well as the neighboring grasslands from unwanted grazing or raiding. The unique aspect of this region is the grassland. For the remainder of this study we will examine its use.

### MOVING FORWARD WITH A NEW PARADIGM: GRASSLANDS AND PASTURES

In light of this discussion, we believe the mounded fortresses in the Hesi region (Tell el-Hesi, Tell Sheqef, and Tell Kuneitrah) were maintained by a regional

polity (Judah) and served to control the border region between Judah and Philistia (Blakely, Hardin, and Master 2014). In particular they were further placed to control both the road and the best water in the greater region.<sup>8</sup> Beyond protecting Judah's southwest border, we suggest the forts protected a pasturage around Hesi that was exploited by Judah primarily for sheep and goats, rather than as an agricultural hinterland during the ninth and eighth centuries BCE. Over 20,000 acres of land providing feed on the stalk would have been a valuable commodity to control and it would have required protection.

Support for this idea can be found in the towns and villages mentioned in the Lachish district that are preserved in Josh 15:37–41. Hardin, Rollston, and Blakely argued that the first names in this list are those of the Hesi region, ordered from west to east along the road. The first location mentioned is *tsana'an* (*zenan*), a noun probably meaning "pasturage." Whether this name relates to the site of Khirbet Summeily, or to the site Tell el-Hesi, or is simply the name of the region, is unimportant. What it shows is that Judah viewed this pasture region as an integrated part of the kingdom. The name describes its use, not its larger function.

#### NEO-ASSYRIAN ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS

First Samuel describes Doeg the Edomite as King Saul's "Chief Shepherd" (1 Sam 21:7–8). Since the Bible is rarely interested in issues of economics or animal husbandry, it never mentions the role or duties of the Chief Shepherd or his underlings. Fortunately, various Neo-Assyrian letters exist from the latter third of the eighth century BCE, the time of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II.<sup>9</sup> These letters show direct imperial control of pasture, sheep, and other grazing animals in a system covering the empire that extends down from the king, to governors, to commanders of cohorts, to members of cohorts, and finally the individual shepherds. Grazing locations, permission to travel, and even routes taken to the capital were directed from the King's Court, which probably included a Chief Shepherd. While there is a difference in scale between Judah and Neo-Assyria, it is easy to imagine that Judah's king exercised similar control of pasturages, especially if the pasture was protected by a series of forts, as is the case in the Hesi example during the ninth–eighth century.

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8. Bedouin all the way into the mid-twentieth century identified the Wadi Hesi and as one of only two good sources for sweet water in the southern areas of Palestine (the other was the Wadi Beer Sheva), see e.g., al-Aref 1944, 185.

9. We thank Lawson Younger for pointing to such examples in the State Archives of Assyria. For example, Mikko Luukkoo (2012, 5–6) notes that at one point Tiglath-pileser III ordered camels to be grazed in the midst of the land and also ordered that the rams need to be shepherded.

With this in mind, the land surrounding the Hesi region probably served as a pasturage for sheep and goats. Finkelstein cautiously estimated the water needs of goats as about six liters per day during the dry season, and less during the rainy season when green vegetation is available.<sup>10</sup> The ability of goats to eat anything from grasses to thistle would have provided rich and ample feed throughout the Hesi region except for the late summer and early fall. Only one person would be needed to handle between 150–200 sheep, as Watson (1979, 93) has noted.

### THE OTTOMAN PROVISIONING ECONOMY

Other successful, aggressive, expansionistic, pre-modern empires probably faced many of the same governing issues encountered by the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Undoubtedly the best documented was the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century CE. Recent work by Sam White and other Ottomanists has revolutionized the modern understanding of the Ottoman Empire's economy because of the preservation of, and access to, a huge quantity of seemingly mundane written records. White's 2011 study of the Ottoman economy of the latter three quarters of the sixteenth century provides an interesting example of an imperial sheep economy being one basis for provisioning a successful, aggressive, and expanding empire. Provisioning such an empire required numerous and varied resources pouring in from the periphery to the imperial center. White called it "an imperial ecology" (2011, 17). In this case sheep were a key commodity.

Sheep were raised throughout much of the Ottoman Empire. In the late sixteenth century, about 1.5 million sheep were brought to Istanbul annually for slaughter as part of this system. The Balkan region, for example, sent herds of about 440,000 sheep per year. The Porte empowered contractors from each part of the empire to provide specified numbers of live sheep to Istanbul on a set schedule to ensure a continuous supply of live animals to the imperial slaughter houses that were located near the city's gates (White 2011, 18–20).

Sheep were just one part of the system; records of timber supply and usage are another example. Timber was essential for building of many things, but especially ships. White shows how timber lands were estates totally regulated by the Porte. Every activity (from the species to be utilized, the season of harvest, and function to be served from staves, to oars, to beams, to masts, to gunstocks, to wheel felloes) was controlled to meet the needs, yet maintain the forests for future generations (White 2011, 27–31). Just as the forests could be managed from a thousand miles away by the Porte, the routes and seasons of sheep herding to Istanbul were regulated. It is only in these relatively modern records that we can see the detail in control of fields, routes, and produce that might be regulated by

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10. Israel Finkelstein (1995, 56), based on figures for local sheep and larger mountain and European goats.



the sultan or king even though the extent has been missed by modern scholars until recently.

The system collapsed, however, with the advent of the Little Ice Age when climate change caused many sheep to freeze to death or die of starvation at a time when greater military activity increasingly stressed the system. Eventually ewes were sent to meet the quota destroying the breeding stock and depleting the herds. However, while the system worked during the stable climate of much of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman army was virtually invincible (White 2011, 20–51, 97–98, 148–49). Once the provisioning system broke down, the war machine of the Ottoman Turks failed and never again was as formidable. The Ottoman example demonstrates well the integration and control maintained by the state.

## HORSES

If we turn back to Judah in the eighth–ninth centuries, and, given the potential integration of the small, state system, we also need to consider horses being raised and trained in the pasture. Many believe that rearing of horses in significant numbers was prohibitively expensive for a small polity like Judah. However, as Deborah Cantrell demonstrated in her study of horse rearing and chariotry in Iron II Israel, this is not the case, especially at a site like Megiddo and its military architecture. She showed the number of horses in Israel and Judah likely varied through time depending on economic, agricultural, and military realities.

The greatest expenses depended on the availability of rich pasture land, grain, and water, with some of the most significant cost directly related to grain harvest. However, in years of surplus, the cost of feeding horses can be diminished to the point of negligibility in a state with an effective distribution system (Cantrell 2011, 53–54, 57), such as an imperial provisioning system. In the Hesi region, the thousands of acres of grazing land would have provided the requisite pasturage lands and proximity to the better watered lands of the Shephelah. However, according to Cantrell, the best locales for raising horses are rich in both grass and water. Indeed “water availability ... is essential to raising horses” since 8 to 10 gallons are needed daily, and perhaps double that in hot climates, or roughly 10–20 times more than needed by people (Cantrell 2011, 55).

Originally, we discounted this possibility since the Hesi region lacks water all year long, but upon reflection we see no reason the Hesi region would not have been optimal in the winter. In fact, one might argue that the enigmatic remains of Strata IV and III at Tell Nagila could well have served as a base for war horse rearing and training (Shai and others, 2011; Hardin and Blakely, forthcoming).

## CONCLUSIONS

Ultimately, we see the Hesi region of the ninth and eighth centuries BCE being an important and integrated part of Judah. It was probably Judah's largest single pasture because of its unique geomorphologic and environmental characteristics. As it was located near the border with Philistia, it had to be protected by the same forts that protected the important trade roads in addition to serving as the early warning line in defense of Lachish. Sheep, goats, and probably horses were the valuable commodities being raised and nurtured for the crown, who probably directly controlled every aspect of their care and movement. Thus, when combined with more recent historical data describing provisioning economies and more contemporary archaeological data from sites such as Tell Halif and its environs, we start to understand how completely and complexly many different types of settlements were integrated across the larger geopolitical landscape of Judah during Iron Age II.

In the end, therefore, we have discarded the former agrarian model with which we had multiple problems and replaced it with a model based on grasslands and pastoralism. Given the issues of which we are aware, this new model explains better the landscape, its use in the ninth and eighth centuries BCE, the observed data from archaeological surveys and excavations, and historical and biblical texts. Now with this new perspective, or paradigm, we can launch new research initiative seeking to improve and clarify this understanding of the region until it, too, as Kuhn would acknowledge, comes up wanting.

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Part 3  
ANCIENT TECHNOLOGY





# 11

## Daily Life

*Jennie Ebeling*

What can we say about the rhythms of everyday life and the activities that were of daily concern to the population of the southern Levant during the late eighth century BCE? More than any other archaeologist working in the southern Levant, Oded Borowski has dedicated his career to advancing our understanding of ancient Israelite agricultural practices (Borowski 2002) and animal husbandry (Borowski 1998); in particular, his *Daily Life in Biblical Times* (2003) is an important resource for students and specialists looking for an accessible introduction to a wide variety of topics, from ways of life in rural and urban settings to lifecycle events, the arts, and more.<sup>1</sup>

In this essay, I discuss the history of research into daily life in ancient Israel and Judah, describe the installations and artifacts that represent daily life activities, and use a case study from eighth century BCE Tel Halif—the site to which Oded has dedicated most of his archaeological attention—to illustrate how archaeology can inform on everyday life during the period of the Hebrew Bible.

### HISTORY OF RESEARCH

Researchers have been shedding light on aspects of daily life in biblical times since the early days of Palestinian and Biblical Archaeology. The logistical realities of excavating in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Palestine and Transjordan placed many early archaeologists in village communities in close contact with local people and their customs. Exposure to traditional lifeways clearly influenced how archaeological remains were interpreted by foreign archaeologists working in the region, and archaeologists sometimes explained what

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1. It is a privilege to honor my colleague and friend Oded Borowski with this essay. Oded's work provided the inspiration and background for much of my own research into issues of ancient daily life and I have benefitted from his support and generosity for nearly two decades. Mazal tov!

they excavated in reference to what they observed around them in early excavation reports. This can be seen, for example, in R.A.S. Macalister's presentation of the finds at Gezer, a site he excavated 1902–1908. Macalister observed the customs of Palestinian villagers and thought they offered a window to ancient behavior. In doing so, he made a “uniformitarian assumption,” namely that “in the ‘unchanging East’ the ways of the modern villagers were identical to those of their remote ancestors” (Chapman 1991, 220). Conflating the past and present is problematic because it implies that ancient technologies continued to be used by twentieth century Palestinians. In the early days of Palestinian archaeology, it bolstered the myth of the timeless, unchanging Arab that was popular at the time.

Outside of archaeology, descriptions in contemporary travel journals and staged photographs of Palestinian women performing activities of daily life like fetching water at the well and grinding grain were linked explicitly to the biblical past. For example, photographs in the G. Eric and Edith Matson collection sometimes have scriptural references associated with them, like a staged photo of two women using a rotary millstone to grind grain that reads “Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left (Matt 24:41)” (fig. 1). Other photographs in the collection illustrate biblical stories, like scenes from the Book of Ruth that were staged using Palestinian models (fig. 2). Photographs like these were used as illustrations in Bibles published at the time and such scenes probably entered readers' subconscious as representations of how ancient life really was. Apparently influenced by this trend, a few foreign and local archaeologists included their own staged photographs of Palestinian and North African women “using” ancient artifacts in excavation reports, even when the technology had been obsolete for millennia (Ebeling and Rogel 2015, 346).

A number of early foreign archaeologists, including but not limited to the Protestant clergymen who directed and participated in American excavations in Palestine in the first half of the twentieth century, saw archaeology's potential for illustrating biblical passages, and their research aims included searching for archaeological evidence of specific biblical people and events. This began to change in the mid-twentieth century as more broadly-trained scholars began directing digs, and methodologies developed elsewhere were adopted in Israel and Jordan. As the field continued to expand and diversify in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, and changing geo-political realities and widespread modernization presented fewer opportunities to observe pre-modern lifestyles in the region, some archaeologists began to employ ethnoarchaeological approaches. Although contemporary practices cannot be equated to ancient ones, observing traditional pottery making techniques with specific archaeological questions in mind, for example, provides useful analogies for interpreting ancient remains.



**Fig. 1:** Staged photo of women grinding grain using a rotary hand mill. Detail from “Arab women working primitive grain mill.” Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. LC-DIG-mattpc-06017.



**Fig. 2:** Women and men gleaning. Detail from “Ruth series, Ruth the Moabitess.” Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. LC-DIG-mattpc-10155.

For the past two decades, a number of studies on daily life in ancient Israel have been published that are primarily geared to audiences interested in the context of the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Borowski 2003; Dever 2012; Ebeling 2010; King and Stager 2001). Despite the use of archaeological and other non-biblical sources in their reconstructions of ancient daily life, most—but not all—of the authors continued to rely on biblical passages as a primary source of information. In doing so, they perpetuated the androcentric and urban biases of the biblical writers. At the same time, recent household archaeology studies have narrowed the focus of archaeological investigation from monumental architecture and fortification systems to domestic buildings and associated outdoor spaces (e.g., papers in Yasur-Landau, Ebeling, and Mazow, 2011). This approach has led archaeologists to ask different questions of the data, take advantage of new analytical techniques, and offer insights into the minutiae of daily life and the gendered associations of everyday activities represented in domestic settings like grinding grain, baking bread, and producing textiles.

It is now possible to know a great deal about the daily lives of those who lived in ancient Israel and Judah—how they built their houses and used domestic space, prepared food and drink, made and used the tools required in daily life activities, etc. Those interested in the topic have many sources at their disposal, including archaeological remains from Iron Age sites, the biblical text and contemporary written sources, iconographic material, ethnographic and ethnoarchaeological data, and experimental studies. Archaeologists and text scholars have even used fictional narratives to bring the past to life for the reader (Borowski 2003; Ebeling 2010; Frank 2011; King and Stager 2001; van der Toorn 2003).

## THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS OF DAILY LIFE ACTIVITIES

Agro-pastoralism—cereal agriculture along with sheep and goat herding—was the basis of the ancient Israelite economy. Most of the Iron Age population engaged in agricultural and horticultural activities and/or sheep and goat herding on a daily basis. Unfortunately, however, these activities are difficult to study archaeologically. The rich agricultural farmland found in parts of modern Israel has been used as such for millennia and it is difficult to recover evidence of Iron Age farming activities. Artificial terraces built around or near some Iron Age sites for planting fruit trees and other crops have been investigated and, in some cases, even dated, but their study presents many of the same problems inherent in studying other land used for farming in antiquity. Likewise, evidence for herding is scant other than the presence of animal bones in Iron Age settlements. The stabling of animals in the Four-Room Houses typical of the period (see A. Avraham in this volume) and other spaces can sometimes be recognized, but it is not always

certain (see further below). Since field agriculture and herding leave few identifiable archaeological traces, we must look to evidence from domestic contexts to study daily life activities.<sup>2</sup>

Many household archaeology studies have focused attention on various classes of installations and material culture that are found—sometimes *in situ* as the result of abandonment or destruction—in domestic structures like the Four-Room House. Fortunately, many installations and artifacts were made of durable materials (clay and stone) and are thus well-preserved in archaeological contexts. Most bear witness to activities like food storage, preparation, and consumption or textile production. Most of these activities represent women's contributions to the domestic economy (Meyers 2013, 128–33).

Pits dug into the ground and lined with stones or plaster and large clay storage jars are among the installations and artifacts used for food storage in household contexts. One of the chief concerns of ancient Israelite farmers was storing grain and other foodstuffs for year-round consumption. After the staple crops (barley and wheat) were harvested each spring, the grains were removed from the stalks on a threshing floor located outside of the settlement and carried to these fixed and portable containers in the house for storage. Although the Israelites grew other foods that were stored and processed in various ways (see Shafer-Elliott in this volume), cereals were central in the Israelite diet and used to make bread, beer, and more. Therefore, it would have been critical to preserve these cereal grains between harvest seasons by ensuring that they were protected in waterproof and insect- and animal-resistant containers. Still, it is likely that a certain amount of loss was expected and that contaminated grain was consumed when necessary.

Other durable installations and artifacts that bear witness to food processing activities are clay ovens, hearths, and ground stone tools. Unfortunately, they have been the focus of fewer studies than ceramic vessels—the most-studied artifact class in Palestinian archaeology (see Katz in this volume)—and have only become a focus of attention relatively recently. Clay ovens that vary in size and form are well-known within houses and associated outdoor spaces; they were used to bake bread and cook other foods (see fig. 1 in Shafer-Elliott in this volume for a reconstruction of an ancient oven baking bread). Ground stone tools like grinding slabs, handstones, mortars, and pestles are ubiquitous in household contexts and were used in a variety of food processing and other activities. Grinding slabs or querns usually made of vesicular basalt (a volcanic material highly prized for its rough

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2. This discussion is meant to be a very general overview. For more detailed information, see recent publications on daily life in ancient Israel and Judah (e.g., Borowski 2003; Dever 2012; Ebeling 2010; King and Stager 2001; Shafer-Elliott 2013) and recent household archaeology studies in the southern Levant (the papers in Yasur-Landau, Ebeling, and Mazow, 2011).

cutting surface) were used along with smaller handstones to grind grain for consumption. Grain might be roughly ground for cooking in stews and porridge or ground several times to produce fine flour for making bread. Mortars and pestles were used to dehusk cereals, process meat and vegetal foods, grind spices, and more. Many sources confirm that baking bread and grinding grain are among the activities most strongly associated with women's work in the ancient world and the recent ethnographic past.

The archaeological correlates of household food consumption include open ceramic containers like kraters and bowls and the actual remains of foods consumed. Until recently, food remains available for study consisted primarily of animal bones, which are easy to recognize in the archaeological record and associated with the consumption of high-status food (that is, meat) that is generally not believed to have been a daily staple in the ancient Israelite diet. Archaeologists are now focusing on what can be learned from collecting other food remains, including those that can only be studied under the microscope. As a result, we are gaining a much clearer picture of patterns of household food consumption in Iron Age Israel and Judah (see further below).

Other durable items found in domestic contexts are associated with textile production. Small perforated discs of clay and stone are often identified as spindle whorls that were attached to the end of a spindle—usually a stick—to produce thread from wool and other animal and plant fibers. When found in clusters, larger perforated balls of unbaked clay bear witness to weaving on upright warp-weighted looms made of wood. Although cloth and other textiles are rarely found in Iron Age contexts, the few known examples attest to sophisticated weaving techniques. We have very little direct evidence for their use in ancient Israel, however.

We are fortunate that so many activities of daily life involved the use of containers, tools, and equipment made of clay and stone, yet many other domestic activities left few traces. Metal fragments and slag (the waste product of metalworking) suggest metalworking activities in some Iron Age houses. Perhaps this attests to the repair of agricultural tools like ploughshares that were stored in houses when not in use. Other household industries that are underrepresented in the archaeological record are woodworking, hideworking, and basketry. We know a great deal about these technologies from neighboring Egypt due to the arid climate that favors the preservation of organic material, and we can safely assume that the ancient Israelites relied on various tools, pieces of furniture, and other items made of wood as well as leather and woven items made of perishable materials. Yet we have very little *direct* evidence for their use in ancient Israel.

A different set of installations and artifacts associated with daily life activities are cultic or religious items that had no other "practical" function. The household cult involved the use of many specialized items like miniature shrines, altars, stands, certain ceramic vessels, amulets, and figurines of various types (see Darby



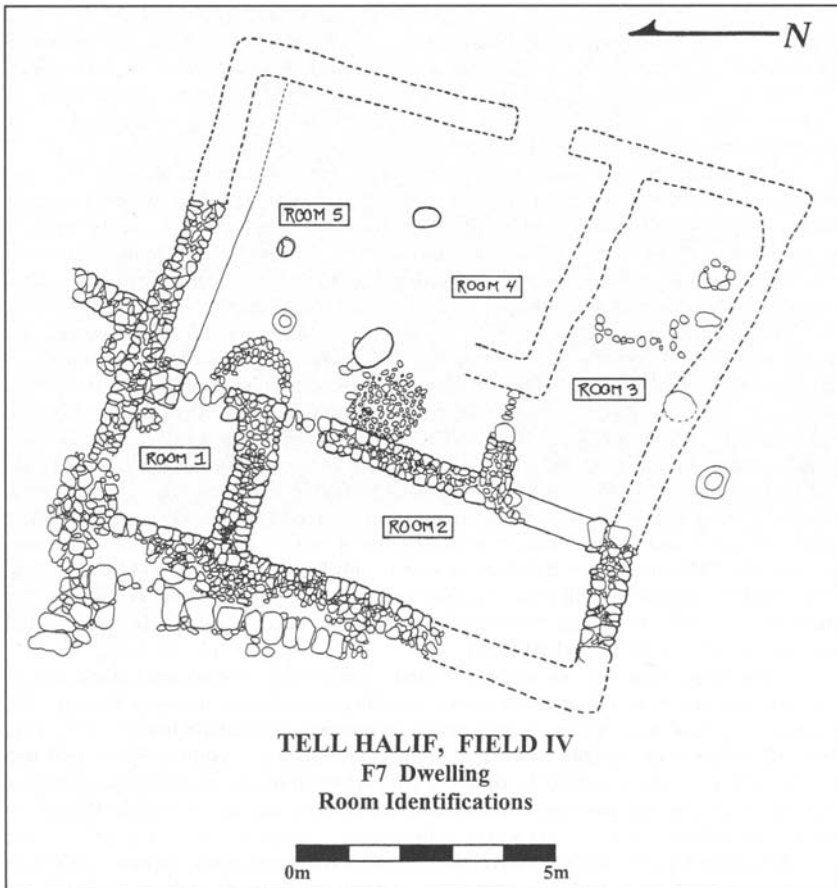
[JPFs] and Farber [religion] in this volume) that are usually found in close association with the kinds of installations and artifacts related to food preparation and consumption described above. According to a recent study, the vast majority of Iron Age cult spaces (78 out of 110) were found in houses in close proximity to food preparation areas and other daily life activities. The authors of the study concluded that the domestic cult was “the primary center of the fundamental religious activity and needs of the family” (Albertz and Schmitt 2012, 227) and “women played an important role in the ritual activities of everyday life” (479). Household religious activities often included the presentation and offering of food and drink to household deities, and these activities might not be easily distinguishable from “typical” food consumption activities. This underscores the pervasiveness of cultic activities in the everyday life of these households and communities.

### CASE STUDY: TEL HALIF

A number of recent studies have analyzed one or more domestic structures and their contents from a specific Iron Age site with the aim of reconstructing activity areas, the ancient behaviors they represent, and the social organization of the household/s represented. Among the best of these are studies that have focused on two eighth-century BCE houses at Tel Halif in Judah (Hardin 2004, 2010; Shafer-Elliott 2013). The following discussion of one of these houses illustrates the variety of daily life activities that can be reconstructed through careful excavation and analysis as well as the potential such studies have for understanding other aspects of Israelite society.

Located ten miles north of Beersheba, Tel Halif is a 7.5-acre mound that was a fortified town during the eighth-seventh centuries and abandoned before its destruction *ca.* 701 BCE by the Neo-Assyrians. This destruction layer, along with later building activity, effectively sealed the remains of a domestic area consisting of several houses in Field IV, located on the western part of the tel. The meticulous excavation and collection methods employed by the Lahav Research Project’s excavation team provided an excellent opportunity to study the nature of the Iron Age II settlement at the site and the organization of domestic space (Hardin 2010, 96). This summary of finds from House F7 (the Northern Building) (fig. 3) demonstrates the abundance of material that is available for reconstructing daily life activities in Iron Age sites.

House F7 has been the focus of an intensive study by J. W. Hardin (2010). Although parts of the house were damaged by later activity, it is believed to have measured 11–12 x 9.5 meters with 79 square meters (about 850 square feet) of ground floor living space. The walls are made of mudbrick on stone foundations. The internal space is divided into three long rooms at the front of the house (Rooms 3, 4, and 5) and two broad rooms in the rear (Rooms 1 and 2) and various reconstructions have been proposed for roofed and second-story spaces. Badly



**Fig. 3:** “The F7 Dwelling identified by Rooms (1–5).” Reprinted from Hardin 2010 (fig. 5.3) with permission.

damaged, Room 3 contained evidence of seven clay loom weights, a spindle whorl, and a bone weaving shuttle. Fragments of metal slag were also recovered in this room, along with a variety of ceramic vessels, ground stone tools, a figurine fragment, and more. Part of adjacent Room 4, the central space, was paved with stones and interpreted as an animal stable based on ethnographic analogy, while other parts of this space contained ceramic vessels, food remains, and several installations built of stones. It is separated from the third long room, Room 5, by a row of pillars. Room 5 contained an oven, a hearth, a limestone mortar embedded



in the floor, and cooking pots and other vessels, as well as sheep, goat, cattle, and fish bones, egg shells, and the remains of cereals and legumes. Located close to these remains is an area that contained twelve large storage jars, including three that tested positive for wine, along with fermentation stoppers, a funnel, and a strainer. Two *bullae* (clay seal impressions) were found in this space along with other small items made of stone, clay, bone, and metal.

Adjacent to Room 5 is rear Room 1, which is a small square room with the remains of an oven, storage jars and other ceramic vessels, animal bones, cereal remains, flint chips, and more. Artifacts found in the material above the floor included a figurine fragment and ground stone tools. Room 2, which is a larger, rectangular broad room at the back of the house, contained no installations, although numerous ceramic vessels, ground stone tools, food remains, and other items were found within it, including two finely-dressed stone “altars,” a ceramic fenestrated (windowed) stand, and the head of a Judean Pillar Figurine (JPF).

What can be learned about daily life activities from a study of the installations, artifacts, and organization of space in the Tel Halif house? Much of the evidence suggests the activities I described earlier: food storage, preparation, and consumption along with textile production and cultic activities. Food storage is evident especially in Room 1, a small space that contained numerous ceramic vessels, including six storage jars. Jars used for making and storing wine were found in adjacent Room 5, and Room 4 contained several storage jars as well. Evidence for food preparation is seen in the many ground stone tools and cooking pots found throughout the house, the ovens and hearths found in Rooms 1 and 5, and the stone installation/s in Room 4. Food consumption is evidenced by the kraters found in Room 2. Food remains identified throughout the house include cereals, eggs, grapes, and legumes, and the bones of sheep, goat, cattle, and fish. These food remains could have entered the archaeological record through storage, preparation, and/or consumption activities, although charred remains found in and around hearths suggest that some food was being prepared when it entered the archaeological record.

Evidence for both spinning and weaving was found in Room 3 in the form of one spindle whorl, seven clay loom weights, and a bone weaving shuttle. Another loom weight was found in Room 5. Household cultic activities were apparently carried out in Room 2 as witnessed by a fenestrated stand, two stone stands or altars, and the head of a JPF. Since the other remains found in Room 2 suggest food consumption activities, it seems that food and drink offerings were part of the cult practiced in this house. Other activities that can be inferred from remains uncovered throughout the house include metalworking and the reduction of lithic artifacts. The household's participation in larger economic activities is suggested by evidence for wine production (if not all of it was intended for household consumption) and the two *bullae* found nearby.

Using data from ethnographic and ethnoarchaeological studies in the Middle East, Hardin (2004, 2010) reconstructed Room 1 as a storage and food preparation area, Room 2 as a living room used for food consumption and cultic activities, Room 3 as a living room and textile production area, Room 4 as a stable and food storage and preparation area, and Room 5 as the main kitchen area in the house. It is worth noting that multiple activities were carried out in the same spaces and modifications were made to various parts of the house as its residents adapted to life during the siege of the town at the end of the eighth century BCE.

## CONCLUSION

The case study from Tel Halif shows that archaeology can provide virtually limitless data for reconstructing daily life activities in ancient Israel and Judah. The meticulous recording and collection methods employed during excavation provide a rare opportunity to reconstruct a number of daily life activities in a house inhabited by an extended family living in eighth century BCE Judah. Using analogies from ethnography, ethnoarchaeology, and other sources, the “mute” archaeological remains found in the debris of this abandoned house have been brought back to life by the archaeologists who meticulously analyzed them. Everyday activities like cooking, weaving, and making offerings to household gods are made “real,” as are the unnamed people who left their possessions behind when they were forced to abandon their home prior to its destruction. This intimate account of ancient daily life invites us to think about the realities of the lives of the men, women, and children who lived in settlements like Tel Halif, everyday people about whom the biblical authors wrote little.

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## “He Shall Eat Curds and Honey” (Isa 7:15): Food and Feasting in Late Eighth-Century Judah

*Cynthia Shafer-Elliott*

### DEDICATION

Within a graduate student’s career there are always a handful of scholars whose work was important, if not essential, to their own. Professor Oded Borowski was one of those scholars for my research into the daily life of Iron Age Israel and Judah. Imagine my surprise when he invited me to participate in the renewed archaeological excavations at Tel Halif, Israel. Our mutual interests in the daily activities of the average ancient Judahite would be our focus at Tel Halif, utilizing the methodology of household archaeology. As a result of the Halif excavations, Oded has become a mentor and a friend, and it is my privilege to contribute to this volume in his honor. Oded’s expertise in the daily life of ancient Judah during the eighth century BCE (that is, Iron IIB ca. 840–700 BCE) (Master 2013, 458) is foremost in our field, and, in this piece, I will explore one important aspect of daily life in Iron IIB Judah: the preparation of food.

### INTRODUCTION

Food, prepared for the eating of both every day and special occasion meals, is one of the primary aspects of daily life in all societies—both present and past. The study of diet, cooking, and eating practices is an effective way to understand daily life of ancient societies not only because food was essential to their physical survival, but also because meals are much more than just food. Meals contain a diverse collection of cultural practices embedded within them, such as dietary preferences and taboos, culinary practices, household economics, religious ritual, gender roles, power relations, and accepted social norms, just to name a few.

This chapter begins with a brief survey of past and present scholarship on food studies within the research of ancient/biblical Israel and Judah, followed by

a description of the interdisciplinary methodology used for this present study. The *meat* of the chapter (pun intended) will include an analysis of eighth-century Judah's daily food preparation utilizing artifactual and textual resources. Focusing on one aspect of daily life, namely daily food preparation (and its assumed consumption), will allow us to learn more about the cultural context of eighth-century Judah.

## SCHOLARSHIP

The study of food and the study of ancient Israel and Judah both have no shortage of analysis; however, combining these two ingredients is a relatively new phenomenon. Within biblical scholarship the topic of food was a concern mostly in the form of dietary laws and the sacrificial system. Within archaeology of the southern Levant and the Mediterranean world, food in the form of elite feasting and drinking was the popular topic. Neither of these historical foci illuminates the daily food preparation and consumption for the average ancient Israelite and Judahite very well, but there are some that paved the way for the present interest in cultural context.

One of the most influential contributors into the daily life of ancient Israel is Oded Borowski. Borowski's dissertation was published as the monograph *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel* in 1987, followed by his book on animal husbandry *Every Living Thing: The Daily Use of Animals in Ancient Israel* in 1998.<sup>1</sup> Even though there is a significant present interest in food production and preparation, Oded's research on agriculture and animal husbandry is still considered the principal work on these subjects. A second forerunner of food studies in ancient Israel is Carol Meyers, whose research on food preparation stems from her interest in the roles of women in the biblical world. Her numerous articles on the subject of Israelite women as preparers of food and their subsequent power and authority within the household are important contributions to both feminist and food studies.<sup>2</sup> The third publication worth noting here is the 1999 volume of *Semeia Studies* edited by Athalya Brenner and J. W. van Henten. Brenner and van Henten acknowledge the lack of scholarship on food and drink within biblical studies and hoped their volume would provide the motivation for scholars to look more deeply into the subject; however, excluding further work by Borowski and Meyers, the interest into food preparation and consumption was somewhat long in coming (Brenner and van Henten 1999).

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1. See also Borowski 2004.

2. For a detailed list of Carol Meyers's publications see: Ackerman, Carter, and Alpert-Nakhai 2015.

The current interest in daily life of ancient Israel/Judah and in food studies has brought forward many new and engaging investigations within the fields of both biblical studies and archaeology of the southern Levant.<sup>3</sup> Present scholarship includes broad encyclopedias to various areas of detailed specialization ranging from the study of diet, plant and animal remains, baking, and feasts.<sup>4</sup> Nathan MacDonald’s work on the ancient Israelite diet and his subsequent volume on the symbolism of food and meals within the Hebrew Bible are considered by many to be the impetus for the current increase in food-related research within ancient and biblical Israel (MacDonald, 2008a, 2008b). The incorporation of studying plant and animal remains allows archaeologists an opportunity to investigate the actual physical remains of meals. Other investigations into food in ancient Israel/Judah make use of ethnographic studies, which is the study of contemporary cultures through direct observation, and ethnoarchaeology, which is “the study of contemporary cultures in order to understand the behaviors and relationships that underlie the production and use of the material culture of a past society” (Meyers 2003, 185–97). Observing and studying a modern culture’s remains, activities, and behaviors in various areas of daily life provides insight into, and possible reconstruction of, the daily life of their ancient counterparts (Wright 2010a, 212–33; Wright 2010b, 333–52).

A natural result of the interest in food in ancient Israel is the organization of groups dedicated to its study in various scholarly institutions, such as the American Schools of Oriental Research and the Society of Biblical Literature. Both currently have a session dedicated to the research of various aspects of food including production, preparation, and consumption through archaeological, textual, and iconographic materials. Accordingly, a volume concentrating on feasts in ancient Israel and the ancient Near East was recently published and is one of the few volumes that are specifically on an aspect of food studies, namely feasting (Altmann and Fu, 2014). The current interest in researching food in ancient and biblical Israel/Judah will surely provide us with more publications on the subject.

## METHODOLOGY

This paper will concentrate on the preparation of everyday meals and special occasion meals (that is, feasts) of the average ancient Judahite in the eighth century BCE. The emphasis on food is a broad one, for there are many aspects within food

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3. Fuller summaries of scholarship can be found in Nathan MacDonald 2008; Altmann and Fu 2014.

4. For a current encyclopedia on food studies within in archaeology, see Bescherer Metheny and Beaudry 2015.

studies to consider; however, my focus will be on one element of the food paradigm: food preparation (Goody 1982). The methodology used in this study is interdisciplinary in nature. Primary resources include archaeological material culture and textual sources.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the present study must be interdisciplinary in nature simply because the primary textual resource for ancient Israel and Judah, the Hebrew Bible, does not provide a detailed record of food preparation, daily or otherwise. What textual resources can't do, archaeological evidence can. Archaeological evidence provides us with the physical reality of ancient cultures, including food and feasting in ancient Judah. Each of these disciplines is further defined below.

### TEXTUAL RESOURCES

Textual resources are an important source of information on any ancient society. With that said, there are a few things that must be kept in mind when utilizing ancient texts. The majority of the average population in ancient Judah would have been mostly illiterate (Mandell 2013, 81). The literate were a minority that likely consisted of elite, urban males. The Hebrew Bible, along with other ancient literature of the ancient Near East, were written and edited by the literate elite and not the average man or woman; consequently, the Hebrew Bible rarely reflects the daily lives of the average person.

The purpose of most ancient texts, as well as the Hebrew Bible, is to provide accounts of *monumental events* such as military conquests, the anointing of a new king, the development of law codes, cultic events—usually through the lens of that society's relationship with their deity/deities. When an ancient text does make reference to aspects of daily life, it must be discerned if they reflect actual or idealized practices of daily life. For example, few scholars believe that ancient Israel and Judah actually instituted the law of Jubilee (Lev 25), understanding it as “utopian and idealistic in character” (Nam 2013, 1:259–67). This does not mean we discard this biblical text altogether; rather, the inclusion of the law of Jubilee into biblical law reveals specific aspects of the economy of ancient Israel and Judah. For instance, that while the land itself was considered sacred and inalienable, there were various economic circumstances that led to the loss of household land. The intention of the law of Jubilee is to neutralize this economic threat by maintaining the integrity and sacredness of the land (Nam 2013, 1:259–67). All applicable written sources should be included with these caveats in mind.

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5. Unless stated otherwise, all passages from the Hebrew Bible are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).



## MATERIAL CULTURE AND HOUSEHOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

As was stated earlier, archaeological evidence provides the physical reality of ancient cultures. The term used for this physical evidence is “material culture,” which can be loosely defined as the physical evidence of a culture in the objects and architecture they make.<sup>6</sup> Archaeological excavations uncover the material culture of ancient societies; archaeologists base their interpretations on the material culture of their site and other sites that are parallel to it in time and space.

There are many types of archaeologies, but the type that best suits our purposes here is household archaeology. The discipline of household archaeology concentrates on the lived environment and daily activities of the home and its members. In their landmark introduction to household archaeology, R. Wilk and W. Rathje note that there are three aspects to consider: the material aspect, the social aspect, and the behavioral aspect (Wilk and Rathje 1982, 617–39).

The material aspect consists of the house, secondary buildings (and features), areas where household activities took place, and the house’s possessions. Houses in Iron Age Israel and Judah (ca. 1200–586 BCE) had a similar plan and common features.<sup>7</sup> The typical house had two floors and a flat roof. The first floor consisted of a back-broad room with one to three (most often three) rooms running perpendicular to it. The first floor had wood or stone pillars supporting the second floor; these pillars often had short boundary walls between them to help segregate space. Houses were small but still ranged in size depending if the house was in an urban or rural environment (Shafer-Elliott 2013, 109). For this reason, it is best to think of the houses in Iron Age Israel and Judah as being multi-functional with several household activities taking place in the limited space available. The first floor was used for a variety of domestic activities including storage, production (such as pottery making), food preparation and consumption, and religious ritual. The second floor was the household’s sleeping quarters and could also have been used for some light domestic activities, like weaving. The flat roof of the house also served as a space in which to conduct chores, like drying flax (Josh 2:6) or for sleeping in the hot summer months (Shafer-Elliott 2016, 35–37).

The social aspect includes the members of the household and their relationship to each other. A common misconception is that “household” is synonymous with “family.” The terms are related but do contain important distinctions. A *household* is defined by coresidence and/or the sharing of domestic activities. In other words, a household is a group of people who typically live and/or work together but may or may not be related. A *family* is a group of people who are related to each other either biologically or through marriage, but they may or may

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6. Dictionary.com, s.v. “Material Culture.”

7. For more on the Iron Age house see Faust 2012. See also Assaf Avraham in this volume.

not live or work together (Goody 1958, 53–91). For instance, an ancient Judahite household could include immediate and extended family members, such as parents, unmarried daughters and sons, married sons and their families, and any unmarried or widowed women, but also non-related members such as slaves, guests, concubines, or hired workers. These same members of the household could live together in the same house or compound, while others (like a hired worker) could live elsewhere but come to the household land to work (Wilk and Rathje 1982, 620; Shafer-Elliott 2013, 12–14; 2016, 34).

The behavioral aspect suggests what activities the household members performed. The evidence from the material aspect of the household is applied to determine what activities or functions the artifact was used for. Wilk and Rathje note that there are four basic social and economic functions that every household performs: (1) *production* refers to activities that secure resources or increase their value; (2) *distribution* refers to the process of moving resources from the producers to the consumers and can include the consumption of said resources; (3) *transmission* refers to a specific form of distribution that involves the transferring of rights, roles, land, and property between generations; and (4) *reproduction* refers to “the rearing and socializing of children.” (Wilk and Rathje 1982, 617–39). The behavioral aspect of eighth-century Judah is, in essence, the daily life of its households.

Taking these aspects into consideration, household archaeology can be characterized as the archaeological study of a household’s buildings, its possessions, members, and the activities in which they engaged. To better understand the daily lives of ancient Judahites, we must turn our attention to where they spent all their time—the home. We will use household archaeology to highlight food preparation practices of eighth-century Judah.

## ANALYSIS

Within food studies, the paradigm put forward by sociologist J. Goody is a good starting point. He identifies four central components: production, distribution, preparation, and consumption. Production involves how food is produced, such as the various phases and aspects of agriculture and animal husbandry (e.g., planting, cultivating, breeding, slaughtering, labor, resources, and technology). Distribution includes how food is distributed (e.g., storage and transport) and types of food-related transactions (e.g., gifts and reciprocal exchange). The preparation of food involves preliminary work (e.g., the butchering of meat, and the husking, winnowing, and grinding of cereals), cooking (e.g., the application of heat or other transforming agents like cold, vinegar, salt, etc.). Finally, consumption includes the serving, eating, and cleaning away of cooked food (Goody 1982, 44–49).

Most pertinent to our interests here is food preparation, which can be subdivided into the cooking group and the technology of cooking. The cooking group consists of who cooks and with whom, and it is not necessarily made up of the same people as the consumption group (the group that does that actual eating). Meals are often prepared for guests in which the cooking group does not participate in the meal (Gen 18:1–8; Judg 6:19). Our study here will focus on the technology of cooking, that is, what is used to prepare the meals, such as ovens, hearths, pots, instruments, spits and fuels (Goody 1982, 44–49).

## DIET

Ancient Judah, like ancient Israel, was an agrarian and pastoral society often functioning at a subsistence level. The fertility of the land, animals, and household members were essential to their survival. Drought, famine, or war could devastate a household. Add to the mix the dominating foreign power of the eighth century, the Neo-Assyrian Empire, that forced Judah and its households to offer tribute and taxes—all of these extenuating factors increased the difficulty of the daily survival of the ancient Judahites.

The diet of ancient Judah and Israel was supported by the so-called “Mediterranean Triad” of olives, grapes, and cereals, and the primary products made from them: olive oil, wine, and bread. Seasonal fruits and vegetables such as figs, pomegranates, dates, onions, garlic, lentils, vetch, pistachios, and pine nuts enhanced the diet, but the daily fare was dependent upon cereals and the bread made from them (Borowski 2002, 95–96; Borowski 2004, 96–107).<sup>8</sup> The Judahite diet relied so heavily on bread that the Hebrew word for it, *lechem*, is metonymous with food. Dairy products from animals were also a staple in the Judahite diet. Common herd animals, such as sheep and goats, were a major part of the household’s economy.<sup>9</sup> The secondary products from the household herds were used in many ways: their fleece was used to weave into clothes, their dung was used for fuel, and their milk was used to make a variety of dairy products such as yogurt, cheese, and curds. The Judahite household rarely ate meat unless it was procured through the hunting of wild game, the household herd needed to be culled, the household needed ready cash, or there was a special occasion such as a wedding, agricultural/religious festival, or as a gesture of hospitality.

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8. For a complete study on the agriculture of ancient Israel see Borowski 2009.

9. For a detailed study on animal husbandry in ancient Israel see Borowski 1998.

## FOOD PREPARATION TECHNOLOGY

The average Judahite household prepared their food using a variety of technologies, the primary of which was a thermal feature, i.e., an oven.<sup>10</sup> Ovens found in the archaeological record are usually incomplete so it is difficult to say precisely what they looked like. However, ethnographic studies in the Middle East provide several oven types, some of which may be the modern descendants of ancient ovens. The simplest type of oven wouldn't be classified as an oven at all; food could be prepared on the embers of a fire or over hot rocks (Isa 44:19). A step beyond the hot rocks would be a *saj*, which is a rounded metal disk that is placed over the fire or resting on the rocks. Once the dough is made, it is thrown back and forth between the palms of the baker until it is a thin flap of dough and then placed on the *saj* to quickly bake on either side. While the ancient Judahites would not have baked on a rounded metal disk, the method of baking could indicate how bread was baked on hot rocks (1 Kgs 19:6) or the coals of a fire (Isa 44:19) (Shafer-Elliott 2013, 119).

A third type of oven ethnographers observed in the Middle East is a *tabun* (Arabic plural: *tawabin*). A *tabun* is a low truncated, dome-shaped oven made of clay between .25–.50 cm tall, has a large opening at its top, and some also had side openings. The *tabun* is fired from the outside and dough placed on the floor to bake. The term *tabun* is used anachronistically to describe ovens found in archaeological excavations in Israel (Ebeling and Rogel 2015, 328). Although usually incomplete, the ovens we have found resemble more of the *tannur* type of oven (Arabic plural: *tannaneer*) used in the Middle East. A modern *tannur* is a “cylindrical clay oven in which fuel is lit at the bottom and dough is baked on the upper inner walls” (Ebeling and Rogel 2015, 329). The term *tannur* is found in the Hebrew Bible fifteen times, seven of which refer to an oven used to bake bread (Exod 7:28; Lev 2:4, 7:9; 11:35, 26:26; Hos 7:4, 6–7). A lid is often placed over the top opening of both *tawabin* and *tannaneer* to retain heat or allow other items to be placed on top or even inside to cook (Shafer-Elliott 2013, 120–21; Ebeling and Rogel 2015, 330).

Excavations of Iron Age houses in Judah and Israel typically find the remains of ovens in two locations. One oven is found inside the house, often in the central long room that was presumably the main living area where multiple household chores were conducted. Ovens in Iron Age houses in the southern Levant were usually located near entryways, which would be consistent with the lack of ventilation in ancient houses (Baadsgaard 2008, 21–22). A second oven is often found in the courtyard space of the house. Ethnographic studies document that outside

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10. The form, function, and name of these thermal features have been a matter of much confusion. For a recent and well-informed discussion on ancient thermal features in the archaeology of the southern Levant see Ebeling and Rogel 2015.

ovens are shared among the village, which helps reduce the use and cost of fuel but also encourages cohesion within the group (Lev 26:26) (Parker 2011, 603–27).

Meals were prepared in cooking vessels that evolved throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages and were heavily influenced by the arrival of the Philistines. In the Hebrew Bible, words for cooking pots include *parur* (Num 11:8, Judg 6:19, 1 Sam 2:14), *siyr* (Exod 16:3; 2 Kgs 4:38–41; Jer 1:13; Ezek 11:3, 7, 11; Mic 3:3; Zech 14:20–21), *qallachat* (1 Sam 2:14; Mic 3:3), and *dud* (1 Sam 2:14) (Shafer-Elliott 2013, 220). Generally speaking, cooking vessels can be categorized into three basic forms: the Bronze Age pot or bowl, the Philistine jug, and the hybrid pot.

The cooking pots found within Bronze-Age Canaan and later in Israel evolved from a simple and common bowl-shaped vessel. The typical pot of the Bronze Age was a large, handleless, open-mouthed pot with an everted rim, round base, and carinated body, which makes it look like a large bowl. The Late Bronze Age pots kept the traditional shape of their Middle Bronze Age predecessors, but with some variations in size and an increasingly carinated shape. During the Late Bronze Age II, cooking pots added a folded-over, everted rim with a triangular flange. The diameter of the mouth averaged 9.8 to 15.7 in (25–40 cm) and the height 5.9 to 7.8 in (15–20 cm). Its open mouth, wide shape, and special cooking were allowed the pot to be used for several types of cooking, including steaming, frying, simmering, and boiling. It served also for cooking larger food items like meat and for serving larger groups of people. Bronze Age pots were placed inside the oven, over its upper opening, or against the stones of the hearth, while those with handles could be suspended over an open fire. This type of pot is familiar in Late Bronze Age Canaan and in Israel, with variations continuing to the end of the Iron Age (Killebrew 1999, 84, 92–95, 106–9).

In the Late Bronze and Early Iron I Ages, the Philistines appeared and brought a new type of cooking vessel with them. It resembled Cypriot and Aegean cooking jugs of the Late Cypriot IIC and IIIA and Late Helladic IIIC periods. Generally speaking, the shape of the new vessel was less like a bowl and more like a jug, with a closed mouth, a globular to ovoid shape, and one or two loop handles from the rim to its shoulder. Its rim, either simple or slightly thickened, was everted. Philistine jugs were typically uniform in size, with a volume of about one-half to three-fourths of a gallon (2–3 liters), a maximum height of ca. 7.8 in (20 cm), a maximum body diameter of ca. 7 in (18 cm), and a diameter at the mouth of 3.5 to 4.7 in (9–12 cm). Modifications of this cooking jug evolved throughout the Iron Age.

The cooking jug nearly replaced the traditional cooking pot at sites designated as Philistine on the southern coastal plain and is less commonly found in sites outside of Philistia, hence its designation “Philistine jug.” Unlike the traditional Bronze Age cooking pot, the size and shape of the cooking jug does not allow for multiple types of cooking. The cooking jug’s primary mode of cooking

was probably simmering: its thin walls were useful for slow, low-heat cooking of liquid dishes; its flat base allowed it to rest directly on or near the heat source; and its handle allows for easy removal. Soot marks on the sides of the jugs indicate that they were placed directly over an open fire or leaned on a hearth. Its small size also dictated the amount of cereals or vegetables cooked within it, indicating smaller portions and consumption by fewer people (Ben Shlomo et al 2008, 225–46; Gur-Arieh et al 2011, 349–55; Killebrew 1999, 93–95, 107).

A different type of cooking pot came to be widely used during the end of the Iron Age I and into Iron Age II. The Bronze-Age bowl and Philistine jug blended to create the so-called “hybrid cooking pot,” with slightly varying forms. The most functional features of the pot and jug were combined: the rounded body and open mouth of the Bronze-Age pot and the handles and shape of the Philistine jug. The hybrid pot, depending on the type of cooking ware used, could be used for slow, low-heat cooking as well as for rapid, high-temperature cooking. The size of the pot determined whether it was used for small or large items or quantities of food.

Hybrid pots were used alongside the more traditional Bronze-Age pot, indicating that a variety of cooking methods were used. The hybrid pot was more user-friendly than the jug, but was not as useful for cooking large types or amounts of food as the Bronze-Age pot. Consequently, the hybrid pot might have been used to cook liquid dishes, like soups, as well as heartier dishes, like stews and porridges. If meat was prepared in a stew, a traditional Bronze-Age pot or larger hybrid pot would have been ideal, depending on the size of the pieces of meat and the number of people to be fed. A hybrid pot could be suspended over a fire if it had handles or placed in a fire pit, next to or on top of a hearth, inside a *tannur*, and, according to some reconstructions, covering its upper opening (Ben Shlomo et al. 2008, 225–46; Killebrew 1999, 93–95, 107).

## MEALS: BAKING

Ovens (likely, of the *tannur* type) were used to bake bread daily in ancient Judah. There were two types of bread dough: unleavened (or without yeast; *matsah*) and leavened (or with yeast; *khamets*). Grain was ground daily into flour using grinding stones or a pestle and mortar. A mortar is a stone bowl that could hold small amounts of grain. A pestle is a blunt stone the shape of a club and would be used to crush and grind the grain in the mortar into flour. Grinding stones consisted of one large, often immobile, stone or slab and a smaller stone. The grain was placed between the two stones and the smaller stone was rubbed back and forth against the grain (Ebeling and Rowan 2004, 108–17).

Unleavened bread is a mixture of flour and water, plus a pinch of salt. The dough is quickly mixed, kneaded, and baked, with no time allowed for yeast to

develop. This also means that unleavened bread could not be stored for long. Unleavened bread could be prepared quickly since it did not need time to rise and was often made when guests suddenly arrived (Gen 18:6, Judg 6:19, 1 Sam 28:24). Similarly, leavened dough uses the same basic recipe, but a yeast product such as brewer’s yeast (derived from brewing beer) or sourdough (derived from dough left out to ferment) is added to the dough. The addition of yeast allows for leavened dough to stay fresh longer and it was more filling, which is one reason why ancient Israel and Judah were so dependent upon leavened bread as a major part of their diet. Dough was kneaded on a wooden board or trough placed on a bench or on the floor near the oven. Both types of bread were baked on hot stones or griddles over an open fire, like a *saj* (Lev 7:9, Isa 44:19) or in an oven, like a *tannur* (Lev 26:26) (Shafer-Elliott 2013a, 220).

Mesopotamian recipes and encyclopedias show that baking bread was more complex in antiquity than one might imagine. There were some 200 to 300 varieties of bread, depending upon the type, quality, and color of flour used; the type and amount of kneading; the additives and flavors; and the baking methods, presentation, geographic origin, and use. Some of the ingredients added to dough include ghee, dates, milk, cheese, fruits, and sesame oil. Loaves of bread might accompany the meal or be served as part of the main dish. Dough was divided and arranged on platters to retain its shape, served with meat or stew or in the form of dumplings (2 Sam 13:8) (Bottero 2001, 47; Bottero 1995, 3). Even though these recipes come from the elite contexts, they can still provide a glimpse into variety of baking in the ancient Near Eastern world, which would include ancient Judah.

## MEALS: COOKING

Average households in ancient Judah spent their days tending to chores, most of which could be classified as production or food preparation activities (the behavioral aspect), such as agriculture, animal husbandry, grinding grain, and weaving. Certain times of year, like planting and harvest, demanded that all physically-able members of the household participate. Daily chores would start early, so a quick, easy meal of porridge or gruel would be prepared for breakfast. People who tended their herds had long distances to travel and were unlikely to return home for a midday meal. Likewise, those in the fields may not have been able to return home. Instead, a “picnic” lunch was most efficient and would include bread, cheese, yogurt, dried fruit, parched grain, water, and seasonal vegetables and fruit (Ruth 2:14). Regardless of the daily activities, midday meals were raw and light. The main hot meal was prepared at the end of the workday by those whose activities were centered at home (Borowski 2003, 74).

The ancient Israelite/Judahite diet was dependent upon cereals, not just to make bread but porridges and gruel as well. To the average Judahite, porridge or gruel was a mainstay, a meal in itself. Gruel was an ideal morning meal since it

was relatively fast and easy to make (Prov 31:15). Gruel and porridge required small amounts of raw ingredients that stretched a long way making them highly economical. In ancient Israel and Judah, porridge or gruel was made from spelt or emmer, barley, lentils, and chickpeas (Borowski, 2003, 91–92, 95–96; 2004). The grains were ground using a pestle and mortar, then boiled in any of the three types of cooking pots; but since the cereals were small, they were more likely prepared in one of the smaller pots such as the Philistine jug or a small hybrid pot. In one Mesopotamian recipe, the cook is directed to take cooked birds out of the cauldron, to put them on top of the porridge that is in a platter, and to then put it back over the oven's upper opening (Bottero, Textes, 14, 2001; Shafer-Elliott, 2013, 134).

The main hot meal, eaten in the evening, was a soup or stew. The preference for stews in the ancient Near East is evident in Mesopotamian sources. One Assyrian "encyclopedia" mentions not only 20 varieties of cheese, but at least 100 different soups or stews. Babylonian recipes for stews are made from ingredients such as vegetables, lentils, and meats (Bottero 1995, 48; Shafer-Elliott 2013, 132). However, meat was not consumed on a regular basis by the average Judahite; thus most stews were made from lentils, legumes, and vegetables. The Hebrew word for stew, *nazid*, is used to describe stews of vegetables or legumes (Gen 25:29, 34; 2 Kgs 4:38–40; Hag 2:12). If these food items were scarce due to famine, war, drought, or economic difficulties, then porridge was served again, as the main meal.

Stews were also made for non-special occasion meals when meat or other animal parts, fresh or otherwise, were available. Meat was acquired by hunting wild game or when an animal from the herd was slaughtered (Gen 18:7, 27:3–4; Judg 6:19; 1 Sam 28:24). The entire animal was utilized and nothing went to waste when an animal was butchered. Ancient Judah was reliant upon its herds for their secondary products (including wool, milk, and dung for fuel), and they were unlikely to butcher animals (most likely goat or sheep) for meat, unless it was for a special occasion like a wedding or religious/agricultural feast. In ancient societies like Judah, economy was an important part of daily life and is reflected in the use of the entire animal. Most households would be unable to consume an entire animal before it spoiled; therefore, reciprocal exchanges occurred within households, clans, or entire settlements (Watson 1979, 108–9).

When an animal was killed, the entire animal was butchered, skinned, and chopped; bones, cartilage, and meat were turned into stews, the most economical of meat dishes (Watson 1979, 108–9). Meat prepared for stews could be roasted or braised and rinsed before added to the cooking pot. "Rinsing" meat could be done for several reasons: one, warm water was used to help pluck fowl; two, rinsing or soaking raw meat in cold water increased the firmness of the meat, which enhanced its texture; three, there may have been a concern with cleanliness; and four, it may be related to the method of cooking. When meat was browned, juices



from it were drawn out of the meat and into the vessel, leaving both with an undesirable residue or film that needed to be washed off. Once the meat was rinsed, it would be added to the rest of the stew and, more often than not, served with bread. Bread was served either alone or as bread cakes (*‘ugeot* in Gen 18:6) or dumplings within the stew (*lebibot* in 2 Sam 13:6, 8, 10). To thicken the stew or provide it with a “burned” flavor, roasted grain seeds were soaked and preserved in bread that was crumbled on top of the stew (Bottero 2004, 66–67).

If the household needed to prepare a large quantity of meat or even an entire animal, it was for a special occasion such as hospitality, weddings, or festivals. The animal, or large pieces of it, was likely roasted over an open fire or in a pit (Isa 44:16, 19), perhaps similar to the methods used by modern-day Samaritans at Passover. Unfortunately, roasting pits are generally not identified in archaeological reports. If the animal was butchered, small pieces of meat could be roasted on a plate, rack, or screen made of metal or clay that was placed on top of the upper opening of the oven (*tannur*). Meat could also be placed on skewers that rested on top of the oven or inside it (Bottero 2004, 45).

It is important to note that during the eighth-century Judah was under the domination of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. As such, the Assyrians imposed heavy tribute on the kingdom of Judah, which was then imposed onto the local towns and villages. For example, the local economy at the site Tel Halif changed during the eighth century. In the early Iron II period, the wealth of the economy at Halif can be seen in several ways: first, the animals butchered seem to have been brought in from the outside; in other words, they were not born and raised at Halif. Secondly, the dominance of meat-rich parts of the faunal remains as well as the young culling age of the animals. These factors indicate that the economy of early Iron II Halif was one of security. Juxtapose this with the faunal remains from Halif’s eighth century stratum, which indicate that animals were from Halif and were exploited for their secondary products for much longer than before. The faunal remains indicate that at the time of its destruction (ca. 701 BCE), the inhabitants of Halif did not eat well. The economy changed from a so-called “consumer” economy back to a more subsistence “crisis” economy (Sapir-Hen 2015, 175; Boer 2015). In other words, survival was the name of the game.<sup>11</sup>

To expand on this point, during the late eighth century, the kingdom of Judah was dominated by the Neo-Assyrian Empire, who demanded heavy tribute from the kingdom, which was then passed on to the average Judahite household. The heavy tribute extracted from the local Judahite household reverted their economy back to a more subsistence level “crisis” economy (Boer 2015). Understandably, this affected everything within the Judahite household economy, including food preparation. Moreover, Judah was besieged by Sennacherib, king of Assyria in 701 BCE, with city after city eventually succumbing to destruction and Jerusalem

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11. For an in-depth discussion on the economy of ancient Israel see Boer 2015.

surrendering after a long siege. To what degree what food was prepared, how it was prepared, and how much of it was prepared during this time, especially on the eve of destruction or during a siege, is itself a question.

## FEASTS

It is important to distinguish between meals for everyday occasions and meals for special occasions when discussing ancient Judah. Extraordinary meals or feasts are a principal feature of a household and occupy an important place in behavioral aspect of the household. J. Greer defines feasts as “the specialized consumption of food, often meat, and drink, in a communal setting set apart precisely because of the ‘highly condensed’ symbolic importance of the event” (Greer 2013, 3). Several features typify a feast: (1) the amount and quality of food and drink is superior to an average meal; (2) there is a special purpose for the meal; (3) it is typically longer than an average meal and may consist of several meals over many days; and (4) it often has more participants, including neighbors and other kinship-related households (Meyers 2013, 157).

Feasts in ancient Israel and Judah can be categorized as two types of events: regular or occasional. Within the household, regular feasts were connected to events that occurred annually, monthly, and weekly, while occasional feasts were often related to lifecycle events and hospitality (Meyers 2013, 157). Regular yearly activities included the annual agricultural festivals. These yearly agricultural festivals adopted further significance for religious and group identity; thus, they were viewed as sacred festivals just as much as agricultural festivals. The primary agricultural/religious festivals included: Passover/Unleavened Bread, Weeks, and Booths (Deut 16:1–17; Exod 23:14–17; and Lev 23:4–25). Other regular yearly feasts that occurred in the home or with household members include: the monthly new moon celebration (Num 10:10; Ps 81:3; 2 Chr 8:12–13; Hos 2:11; Amos 8:5, and 1 Sam 20: 5–6) (King and Stager 2001, 353); and the weekly Sabbath observation, which included a cessation from household work (Exod 20:8–11; 23:12; Lev 23:2–3; Deut 5:12–15) and the giving of drink and burnt offerings (Num 28:9–10) (Meyers 2011, 124–26; Myers 2013, 157–62).<sup>12</sup>

Significant events related to the life cycle were also a religious concern. Life-cycle events were dominated by reproductive concerns including birth, circumcision, puberty, marriage, and death. Other life-cycle events included the name-giving ceremony, which may have included a circumcision ceremony for males, and possibly weaning (Gen 17:12, 21:4). These ceremonies would have included offerings of food and drink to the household deity/deities and a feast for the household. For instance, the sacrifices a mother was to make after the birth of a child

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12. Other passages in the Hebrew Bible clearly indicate that the Sabbath rules were not always strictly observed: Lev 26:34–35; Num 15:32–36; Jer 17:21–23; Ezek 20:24.

included purification offerings, after which the consecrated food became a festive meal (Lev 7; 12:6). The little that can be gleaned from marriage stories also suggests that marriage celebrations included festive meals (Gen 29:22; Judg 14:10; and see Tob 7:13–14) (Meyers 2013, 157–60).

Other significant events outside of life-cycle events that would call for a feast would be hospitality. Hospitality norms dictate that strangers were invited in, provided with food, protection, and washing of their feet. Within the narratives of the Hebrew Bible, the food that the host offers is basic food for sustenance, like bread and water; however, when the host returns with the food, he presents the guest with much more than basic food, he returns with a feast (Gen 18: 1–8; 19:3; Exod 18:12; Judg 19). The household would make every effort to make the guest comfortable, which would then help neutralize the threat of a stranger within the home (Matthews and Benjamin 1993, 82–85).

These major festivals included animal sacrifices to the deity/deities that, according to the Hebrew Bible, were conducted at the local shrine or, eventually, the temple in Jerusalem. However, C. Meyers argues that feasts and sacrifices, including Passover, Weeks, and Booths, held at local sanctuaries and the temple were imitations of the religious feasts held within the household (Meyers 2013, 165). The Hebrew Bible supports the notion that religious feasts occurred within the home (Job 1:4; Deut 14:26; Exod 12:3–4a, 7–9). Archaeological evidence of religious domestic feasting can be found in numerous dwellings from Israel and Judah's Iron Ages (1200–586 BCE). As part of their study of family and household religion, R. Albertz and R. Schmitt analyzed 20 Iron IIB dwellings that contained artifacts used for religious rituals. Approximately 80 percent of these religious ritual clusters were found in conjunction with artifacts for the preparation and consumption of food, with some appearing to be connected to kitchen installations (Albertz and Schmitt 2012, 173–75). More specifically, archaeological evidence of religious domestic feasting was found at Tel Halif, the site that has been a focus of Oded Borowski's field excavations. Artifacts of feasting and religious ritual were found in the back broad room of one particular house (the F7 house) at Tel Halif: 8–10 of the 15 ceramic vessels found can be connected to the serving and consumption of meals, such as cooking pots, a krater, and bowls; while religious rituals are suggested by the remains of a polished triangular-shaped stone, 2 standing stones squared with beveled edges, the broken pillar figurine, and the fenestrated stand (Hardin 2010, 133–43; Shafer-Elliott 2014a, 205). Artifacts relating to religious ritual and the serving and consumption of food are regularly found in Iron IIB houses and plausibly indicate that religious domestic feasting was a primary household activity.

The same foodstuffs and ingredients that were part of an everyday meal were generally used for feasts but were more lavish. Bread, cereals, seasonal vegetables and fruits, olives, wine, and beer were served at both ordinary and extraordinary meals. The most notable difference between the everyday meal and the festive

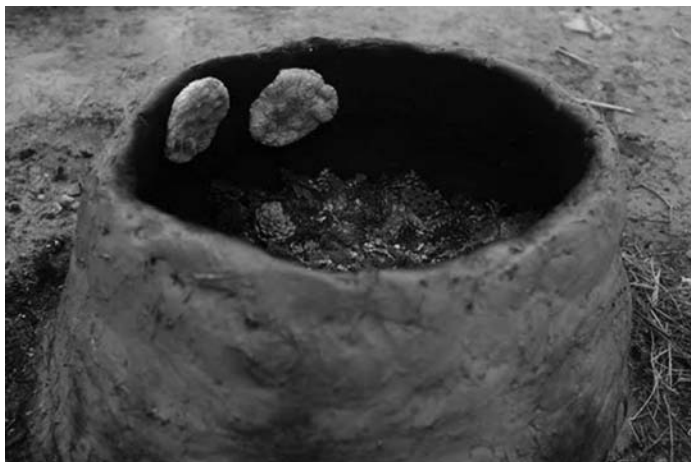
meal was the inclusion of meat followed by an abundance of food and fermented beverages (Altmann 2012). Once the sacrifice was offered and the superior portion of meat burned, depending on the type of sacrifice, what remained became part of the household feast (Lev 7:15).

The domestic sacrifice encompasses a great deal of symbolism in that they could be seen as the household sharing a meal with the household deities. This connection was noted long ago by the anthropologist M. Douglas: the altar on which the sacrifice to the deity was made is symbolic of the “table,” and the sacrifice itself represented the meal (Douglas 1972, 71). Thus, the festive meal was not just about the household members, but it also included the household ancestors and deities playing their perceived role within the household.

### CONCLUSION

This study utilized textual sources and archaeological material culture to focus on the preparation of everyday meals and feasts in eighth-century Judah. More specifically, texts from the Hebrew Bible and the methodology of household archaeology were employed to highlight the everyday activity of food preparation including diet, cooking ovens, cooking pots, and cooking techniques. The same ingredients, cooking techniques, and technology were also used for special occasion meals, or feasts, but the added element of occasion was also discussed. Focusing our attention on food preparation has allowed us to learn more about the daily life of ancient Israel and Judah in general, and eighth-century Judah in particular.

FIGURES



**Fig. 1:** Experimental archaeology at Tel Halif, Israel: making a tannur and cooking leavened bread in it. Photo courtesy of Seung Ho-Bang.



**Fig. 2:** Ninth century traditional style cooking pots. Photo courtesy of Prof. Aren Maeir, Director, the Tell es-Safi/Gath Archaeological Project

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## 13

### Ancient Building Techniques: A Brief Overview

*Assaf Avraham*

A house is built by wisdom, and is established by understanding  
—Prov 24:3 (NJPS)

#### BUILDINGS IN EIGHTH-CENTURY JUDAH

Building practices in the kingdom of Judah draw from the building practices in the Levant. The latter developed over thousands of years from the time the first permanent dwellings were constructed from stone and brick, namely, the Neolithic period (8300–4500 BCE). From an engineering perspective, the building techniques in Judah during the eighth century are essentially the same as those used in among other polities in the area such as the Philistines on their west, Moab on their east, or Edom to their south. Nevertheless, with respect to the design component, Judah's practices do differ from their neighbors, specifically in the way they divide up space in the house. This particular aspect of planning goes back to the very beginning of the Iron Age, and Judah shares it with its neighbor to the north, the kingdom of Israel.

Before discussing the engineering methods utilized in house building, let's first look at how houses were planned in eighth-century Judah. The vast majority of houses excavated in multiple sites in Iron Age Israel and Judah reveal a clear division of space: three long rooms and one wide room that spans the width of the three long ones, creating a rectangle. This building practice has been discussed at length in the literature describing Iron Age Israel and Judah, and is generally referred to as the Four-Room House (Shilo 1970). This house style is a widespread phenomenon in Israel and Judah, and it underlines the connection between these two polities, which shared similar worldviews, language, material culture, and building practices.

Scholars have suggested various explanations for this division of space based on sociological, social, and religious considerations. For example, access analysis

suggests that the design of the inside of the house, such that any room is accessible from the courtyard without having to walk through a different room, is optimal for a society concerned about ritual impurity. If even menstruation and coitus can cause ritual impurity, as the case seems to have been in ancient Israel and Judah, space division would be a constant concern (Bunimovitz and Faust 2003). It is generally assumed that in most cases the middle room was open to the sky and functioned as an open courtyard. In contrast, the wide space sometimes had a second floor built upon its roof.

#### TOPOGRAPHY AND CHOICE OF MATERIAL

The kingdom of Judah was spread over a wide area with varied topography. The difference in the plots of land, their geological make-up, and their topography greatly influenced the types of buildings that would be built upon them, especially, the types of materials used for construction. The clearest difference is between the two standard construction materials used for building: mudbricks and stone. In the hilly areas of central Judah, the most readily available material was stone, whereas in the plains and valleys, earth was the most readily available material.

In addition to the question of topography was the question of cost or investment. In this regard, it is important to distinguish between the construction of private homes and the construction of public buildings. In Iron Age Judah, the latter received much greater investment, both in choice of materials and quality of construction, such as the thickness of the walls, the quality of the floors, and the use of massive hewn stones, often well-carved ashlar stones.

#### FOUNDATIONS AND WALLS

... those who dwell in houses of clay, whose  
origin is dirt

—Job 4:19 (NJPS)

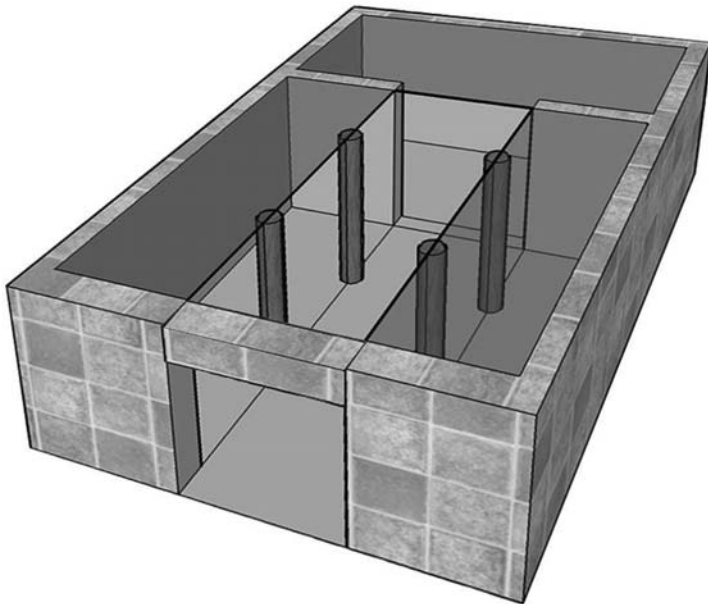
The method of laying foundations and building walls is more or less standard in this period, and is reflected in most buildings. The foundations under the floors are laid in parallel lines, with small stones used as filler to a depth of around half a meter. The purpose of the stone foundations was to transfer some of the load from the walls to the ground, thereby making the building sturdier.

## STONE AND MUDBRICK WALLS

With respect to walls, there appears to have been two main styles of building in the Bronze and Iron Ages. One method was to build primarily out of mudbrick while using stones for the first few courses. The other was to build walls entirely out of stone, from floor to roof.

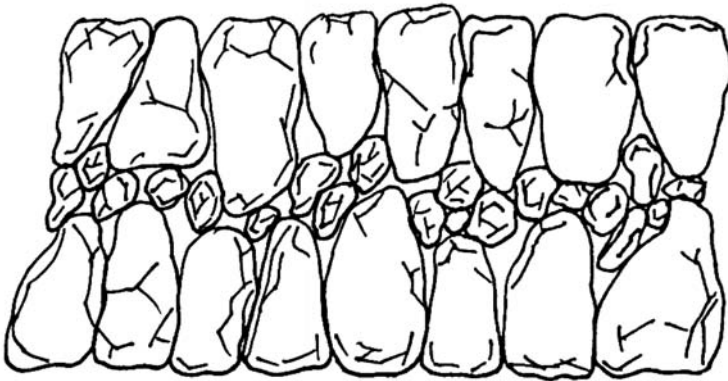
### STONE WALLS

Most walls were built with uncut field stones. The stones were generally oblong and laid in (generally) two rows, in a formation known as “headers.” In this method, the stones would be laid “pointing” into the building, with the visible part of the stone inside and the wider (smaller) part being outside; see diagram below. The benefit of this method is that the load then sits in the center of the thick wall and not at the edges (as would be the case if the stones were laid pointing side to side, instead of in and out, as became common in later building).



**Fig. 1:** The general plan of a standard Four-Room House. The three long rooms can be seen coming off one of the long sides of the wide room forming a rectangle. The wide room and the two outside rooms are roofed, the middle long room is unroofed and open to the sky. Image from Wikipedia.

**Fig. 2:** A model of a Four-Room House with a second story above the wide room in the back. Note the open-court-yard space in the middle. Image from Wikipedia.



**Fig. 3:** View from above: A wall building in the “headers” manner (illustration by Assaf Avraham). The front (wide) part of the stone is that which forms the inside and outside surfaces of the wall, and the longer part of the stones extends into the wall. The average length of the stones is about 50 cm and the average width about 25 cm. The space that is left between the two rows of stone is filled with small stones. This method allows the walls to bear a greater burden of weight over time without becoming unstable. Illustration by Assaf Avraham.

As noted above, the most common stones used for building were uncut field stones. However, in the Iron Age, starting from the tenth century BCE, we begin to see wider use of hewn stone and finely made ashlar stone. While particularly

characteristic of public and government buildings, hewn stone (including ashlar) can sometimes be found in private homes, especially in entranceways and corner-stones.

Hewn stones (including ashlar) have a serious advantage over field stones since their flatness and evenness makes them more stable as walls. Moreover, ashlar stone makes a powerful impression on onlookers. As a sign of power and wealth, it was extensively used for public and governmental buildings.

#### MUDBRICK WALLS

Bricks were also used frequently in building, and a large number of mudbrick walls have survived, at least partially. Generally, bricks were laid upon stones that made up the lower part of a wall, generally two or three courses above the stone foundations. The bricks were used to complete the walls and hold up the roof. Bricks, like hewn stone, have a distinct advantage over field stones as a building material: Since they are flat and regular in shape, they both easy to use and stable.

Bricks were formed, using a mixture of earth, water, and straw. The process was relatively quick and easy to perform, thus making this building material cheap and available. The mudbrick wall forms a compact mass that has many benefits, including stability, resistance to earth tremors, and improved insulation. Moreover, mudbrick walls form an excellent surface upon which to lay a stable roof. A few courses of stone were lain at the foundation to protect the walls from crumbling as a result of surface runoff and dampness coming up from the ground. Brick walls were generally plastered with mud to shield them from harsh weather, especially rain.

Although the mudbrick atop stone courses was the more commons style of building in eighth-century Judah, the choice of material was largely determined by what was available in a given site. Thus, for example, in Judean plains, where dirt is plentiful and stones less so, mudbrick walls are ubiquitous. In contrast, in the hill country, we see many examples of walls built entirely of stone.

#### ROOFS

David rose from his couch and strolled on the  
roof of the royal palace  
—2 Sam 11:2 (NJPS)

The roofs of Iron Age Judean buildings are largely unpreserved in the archaeological record, as they were made from loose materials that crumble over time. Therefore, any description must rely on induction, analogy, and other indirect sources of knowledge. When looking at structures in the Near East more broadly, we see that their roofs are often made from mud plaster of local origin, although



**Fig. 4:** Mudbrick walls with fieldstone foundations and lower wall. Photo by Ian Scott, creative commons.

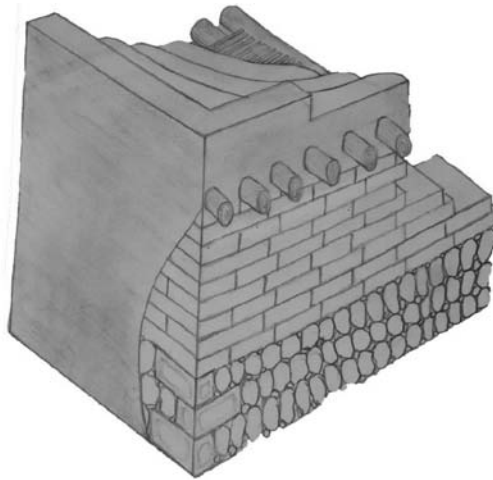


**Fig. 5:** Imposing ashlar stone construction; façade of a gatehouse on Tel Gezer. Photo by Assaf Avraham.

sometimes they are made of chalk plaster. Chunks of chalk plaster, likely the remains of roofs, have been uncovered in archaeological sites in Judah, some of which had impressions of reeds on them. This fits with what we know to have been the standard practice in building roofs, which began with the placing of wooden beams on the tops of the walls, upon which it seems reeds and twigs were laid, which allowed for easier spreading of the plaster upon them. The roof was completed after the application of a number of layers of plaster in a slight slope.

From various biblical passages, we learn that rooftops were social and work spaces. A number of different activities would take place there, such as washing (2 Sam 11:2), private conversation (1 Sam 9:25), viewing (2 Sam 18:24), and even cultic activities (2 Kgs 23:12; Jer 32:29). Thus, according to Deut 22:8, these roofs are supposed to have a parapet around them to prevent people from falling:

When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, so that you do not bring bloodguilt on your house if anyone should fall from it. (Deut 22:8 [NJPS])



**Fig. 6:** A reproduction of the corner of a typical eighth-century Judean house. You can see the ashlar corner stones and the field-stone courses. (Admittedly, ashlar was expensive and rarely used; most corners used regular hewn stone.) Above the stone courses were laid the brick courses. On top of the bricks can be seen the roof of the house. The wooden beams protrude right above the final brick wall course. On top of those beams was laid the reeds and twigs (this cannot be seen in the drawing), upon which a number of layers of plaster were applied. On the roof we can see the parapet, built to prevent people from accidentally tumbling off the roof. Drawing by Assaf Avraham.

## CONCLUSION

The building practices in Iron Age Judah embodies methods and technologies developed over thousands of years. This type of construction made use of the raw materials available in the area. Some of these building techniques continued to be used in later periods, including some that were still in use in this region up to the early twentieth century (Canaan 1933).

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## The Pottery Assemblage of the Eighth Century: A Concluding Observation

*Hayah Katz*

Sennacherib's campaign, in 701 BCE, was a turning point in the history of the kingdom of Judah (Tadmor 1985; Grabbe 2003; Na'aman 2007). Yet, beyond its historic significance, it also had weighty implications from a ceramic point of view, since the destruction layers dated to 701 BCE are used as a chronological anchor for dating the Judahite pottery assemblages of the eighth century. Nevertheless, while the time span in which this pottery was in use can be dated absolutely, its earliest appearances are disputed. Were vessels typical to the eighth century in use as early as the final third of the ninth century or should they be dated to middle of the eighth century? The study which follows will examine this chronological issue as well as review the main types of vessels, characteristic of the eighth century BCE ceramic assemblage.<sup>1</sup>

### BACKGROUND

Over the years, the Judahite pottery assemblage dated to the eighth century BCE has been thoroughly discussed in numerous studies. Albright's excavations in Tell Beit Mirsim, during the 1920s, yielded a rich assemblage, including more than five hundred complete vessels dated to the eighth century BCE. The two excavation reports Albright published following the excavation provided the first detailed discussion of the subject (Albright 1932, 76–89; 1943, 69–154). A decade later, Olga Tufnell published the excavation report that presented the results of

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1. This article will focus the local assemblage characteristic to the Judah region. Imported vessels as well as local imitations such as Cypriot Pottery (Schreiber 2003; Gilboa 2015), vessels with coastal characteristics (Singer-Avitz 1999) and Phoenician storage jars (Singer-Avitz 2010; Stern 2015) will not be discussed.

Starkey's excavations at Lachish (Tufnell 1953). From then on and until the present date, the ability to connect the destruction layer discovered in Level III at Lachish to a dated historical event (Sennacherib's campaign in Judah in 701 BCE) has made the pottery assemblage from that site (both in the mound and in the surrounding cemeteries) a comparative basis for dating the eighth century pottery in Judah.

The next stage of studying this subject came in Ruth Amiran's book, *Ancient Pottery of the Holy Land*, published in Hebrew in 1963 and in an English translation in 1969 (Amiran 1969). The book, an overview of the development of pottery from its earliest beginnings in the Land of Israel in the Neolithic period up to the end of the Iron Age, included a comprehensive typology relating to the entire range of vessel types found in Judah during the eighth century BCE (Amiran 1969, 191–293). During almost thirty years, Amiran's book was one of the foundational textbooks of the archaeology of the Holy Land, however, in the following years dozens of new excavations carried out in Israel have yielded rich ceramic assemblages.

The reports (both preliminary and final) of those excavations which have been published especially during the last two decades, have expanded our knowledge about the assemblages of this period. The most important among them include the excavations at Timnah (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001), Arad (Singer-Avitz 2002), Lachish (Zimhoni 2004b), City of David (De Groot and Ariel 2000; De Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012) and Beer-Sheba (Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2016). A noteworthy new summary has been published recently by Herzog and Singer-Avitz (2015) that deals with the pottery assemblage dated to the Iron Age IIA–B in Judah and the Negev. The publications mentioned above, old and new, will be the framework of the discussion in the present article.<sup>2</sup>

#### DATING THE EARLIEST APPEARANCES OF THE EIGHTH-CENTURY BCE ASSEMBLAGES

Hazael's ascent to the throne of Aram-Damascus in 842 BCE was accompanied by campaigns against the kingdom of Israel and the cities of Philistia. This reality is described in biblical sources: "In those days the Lord began to trim off parts of Israel. Hazael defeated them throughout the territory of Israel" (2 Kgs 10:32), and later on, "At that time King Hazael of Aram went up, fought against Gath, and

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2. Over the years, strata dated to the eighth century BCE have been exposed in dozens of excavations held in Judah. These excavations revealed major cities alongside towns, villages, farms and cemeteries. As it is beyond the scope of this article to provide parallels to all sites where a pottery assemblage dated to the eighth century has been found, the parallels included in this article are taken solely from published major sites (see references below).

took it" (2 Kgs 12:17). In the archaeological record, the Aramaic activity is manifest in the destruction layers discovered in sites such as Rehob stratum IV (Mazar 2013, 228), as well as the destruction layer exposed in phase A3 in Tell es-Safi, identified as Gath of the Philistines (Maeir 2004; 2012).

Within the kingdom of Judah, however, no destruction layers attributed to this period have been identified, and the settlement is continuous from the end of the tenth century BCE (the destruction layers attributed to the 926 BCE Shishak [Sheshonq I] campaign) until the last quarter of the eighth century BCE, when some of the sites were destroyed in the Assyrian campaigns. Due to the existence of this continuity throughout the Iron Age IIA–B, it is difficult to determine a chronological anchor for the emergence of the strata containing typical eighth century assemblages.

In order to deal with this difficulty, some scholars point to Amos 1:1, which describes the "earthquake" that occurred in the reign of Uzziah king of Judah (apparently between 760 and 750 BCE), for determining absolute dating to the emergence of the ceramic assemblage of the eighth century BCE.<sup>3</sup> According to this interpretation, the settlement strata where the eighth-century BCE assemblages first appear (such as Level III at Lachish, stratum X at Arad, and stratum III at Beer Sheba) were established as a result of a rebuilding following the earthquake. Therefore, the beginnings of these strata (as well as their ceramic assemblage) must be dated to the time of the earthquake in middle of the eighth century BCE, rather than earlier (Herzog 2002, 98; Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2004, 230; Ussishkin 2004, 83).

Fantalkin and Finkelstein (2006, 2) rightly argued that no city in Judah can be clearly shown to have been destroyed by an earthquake, and there's no reason to assume so many sites were destroyed by it. Finkelstein rejects the link between the earthquake and the rebuilding of the strata where the ceramic horizon of the eighth century appears. Nevertheless, he adopts a Low Chronology, which advances the assemblages attributed to the Iron Age I and the Iron Age IIA forward approximately fifty years later. Accordingly, he dates the beginnings of these strata to 777–744 BCE (Finkelstein and Piasetzky 2015).

An examination of the data makes it hard to accept this late dating for the beginnings of the strata containing eighth century assemblages, and suggests their dating should be pushed back earlier, to the last thirds of the ninth century BCE, probably 840–830 BCE. Unlike the inability to form a direct link between the rebuilding of the strata to the earthquake event, an analysis of the pottery finds enables us to propose that the earliest appearances of the eighth century BCE assemblages should be dated earlier, to the final part of the ninth century BCE.

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3. For dating the earthquake to the middle of the eighth century BCE see Andersen and Freedman 1989, 183; Dever 1992; Austin, Franz and Frost 2000.

The destruction layer discovered at Tell es-Safi/Gath stratum A3 and attributed to Hazael of Aram-Damascus is dated, based on numerous radiocarbon results, to approximately 830 BCE (Sharon et al. 2007, Report 44, table 8). The ceramic assemblage discovered in this stratum mostly belongs to the Iron Age IIA and consists of pottery types characteristic of the ninth century BCE (Shai and Maeir 2012, pls. 14.1:1, 14.2:9–14). Alongside these vessels, however, this stratum already contains types which are seen in Iron Age IIB and eighth century BCE assemblages, typical of the latter part of the period (Shai and Maeir 2012, 328, pls. 14.3:8, 14.5:4–5, 14.19:6).<sup>4</sup>

It should be noted that dating the emergence of eighth century assemblages to the end of the ninth century BCE was first proposed by Aharoni and Amiran (1958), following the results of the Hazor excavations. A half century later, Mazar (2005; 2011) went back to Aharoni and Amiran's original dating and suggested the date of 830 BCE as the transitional phase between Iron Age IIA and Iron Age IIB, as part of the "modified conventional chronology"—a transition that indicates the appearance of the assemblage of the eighth century BCE.

#### THE CERAMIC ASSEMBLAGE<sup>5</sup>

One of the most prominent characteristics of the Iron Age II pottery assemblage is the treatment of the surface of vessels, consisting mainly of a red slip and burnish. Red-slipped vessels appear as early as the Iron Age I period in northern Philistia sites (Mazar 1998) and become a central component in the coastal assemblage of the Iron Age II (Ben-Shlomo, Shai, and Maier 2004). Much like the coastal assemblage, in Judahite sites in the Shephelah, too, the red slip is characteristic of dated Iron Age IIA assemblages. In the latter, the percentages of the slipped ware steadily decrease as we progress chronologically.

Thus, for example, in Timnah Stratum IV (dated to the Iron Age IIA), 58 percent of the vessels were red-slipped, compared to only 23 percent of the vessels in Stratum III, dated to the eighth century BCE (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001, 146). The Lachish finds paint a similar picture: 66 percent of all bowls in Level V and 62 percent of the bowls discovered in Level IV (dated to the tenth–ninth centuries, respectively) were red-slipped, whereas in Level III, dated to the eighth century BCE, the number of the slipped bowls decreases to merely 25 to 30 percent (Zimhoni 1997, 117). Conversely, in assemblages discovered in the hill region and dated to periods earlier than the eighth century (e.g., assemblages found in the Ophel and City of David excavations in Jerusalem), the red slip is far less frequent. In the hill region, the incidence of slipped ware increases as we

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4. For details see: Katz and Faust 2014.

5. I would like to thank Avraham Faust and the Tel 'Eton expedition for allowing me to publish pottery figures which have not been published yet.

progress along the timeline, and it is only in the eighth century BCE that the red slip becomes a principal indicator (De Groot and Ariel 2000, 94).

Burnishing (that is, polishing the ceramics before firing) is also typical of Judahite Iron Age II assemblages, although in this case the differences are only chronological, and no regional ones are detectible. The tenth–ninth centuries BCE pottery assemblage is characterized by irregular horizontal hand burnish, which from the ninth century BCE onwards is replaced by a wheel burnish. Thus, for instance, 58 percent of the vessels found in Timnah Stratum IV were hand-burnished (irregular, horizontal, or both irregular and horizontal), compared to merely 2 percent that were wheel-burnished. In Stratum III, on the other hand, the percentage of the hand-burnished ware decreased to only 30 percent while that of the wheel-burnished ones increased from 2 to 32 percent (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001, 149).

Another significant change characteristic of the assemblages from the eighth century is the transition to industrial production. An examination of the production methods of the ceramic assemblages originating in Judahite sites suggests that the eighth century assemblages reflect an “industrial revolution,” entailing a veritable change in the pottery manufacture process. The typical pottery assemblage in the Judahite kingdom in the tenth–ninth centuries BCE consists of multiple forms of vessels, mostly red-slipped and hand-burnished, manufactured on a small scale. In the eighth century, these are replaced by pottery of a lighter shade, typified by standardized forms and a relatively meagre variety. The change reflects the transition from manufacture in individual workshops, where each vessel was individually produced, to a wide-scale industrial production that required standardization (Zimhoni 1997, 171–72). This standardization is manifest in the assemblage described below.

## BOWLS

The majority of bowl types typical of the eighth century BCE first appear during the Iron Age IIA (980–840/830 BCE).<sup>6</sup> This is evinced, first and foremost, by the assemblage of Lachish Level IV (Zimhoni 2004a), Arad stratum XI (Singer-Avitz 2002, 112) as well as Timnah stratum IV (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001, table 7). Although compared to the Iron Age IIA, during the eighth century BCE the incidence of some of the bowl types decreases from that of the Iron Age IIA. In other cases, bowls that make their first appearance during the Iron Age IIA remain common in the eighth century BCE.

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6. It seems that unlike the variety of bowls produced during the Iron Age IIA (Zimhoni 1997), eighth-century BCE potters selected only a few of the earlier types which they kept on manufacturing. Production at this period, however, was industrial.

**BOWL WITH ROUNDED-CARINATED WALLS** (fig. 1:1–2). Medium and small bowls with rounded-carinated walls, whose plain rim is of the same thickness as the wall: The walls are rounded at the lower part of the vessel and carinated in its middle or upper third. The shallow base is disc or ring shaped. This type of bowl is typical of the Iron Age IIA assemblages and common mainly during the ninth century BCE (Katz and Faust 2014, 120). The type prevails into the eighth century BCE, although less frequently. Some of the bowls are red-slipped on both their inner surface and the top upper third of their exterior.

Parallels: Lachish: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b, fig. 26.18:3–4). Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1943, pl. 24:1–5). Beer-Sheba: Stratum II (Singer-Avitz 2016, figs. 12.43:1, 12.47:17–18).

**BOWL WITH STRAIGHT WALLS** (fig. 1:3–4). A small bowl with straight walls, pronounced carination on the lower part and a disc base: The rim has the same thickness as the walls. Some vessels have a low disc base, others a flat base. These bowls are prevalent in Lachish locus 4421, dated to the transitional phase from the Iron Age IIA to IIB (Zimhoni 2004a, figs. 25.50, 25.51:1–4) and continue to exist during the eighth century BCE.

Parallels: Lachish: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b, figs. 26.3:2–5, 26.20:4). Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1932, pl. 67:1–15). Jerusalem, City of David: Stratum 12 (De Groot and Ariel 2000, fig. 20:3; De Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012, fig. 4.39:11). Arad: Strata X–VIII (Singer-Avitz 2002, figs. 32:4, 37:4–5). Beer-Sheba: Stratum II (Singer-Avitz 2016, figs. 12.44:4–7, 12.90:12).

**OPEN BOWL** (fig. 1:5). Small and medium bowls nearly flat, whose walls are straight from rim to base: Its rim has multiple variants, some rounded and others cut and straightened. The base is a low disc one. This type appears as early as the ninth century BCE (Zimhoni 2004a, Group B-1, 1657–1678) but is seen more frequently through the eighth century BCE.

Parallels: Timnah: Stratum III (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001, pl. 14:2). Lachish: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b, figs. 26.3:12, 26.35:5). Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1932, pl. 65:30). Jerusalem, City of David: Stratum 12 (De Groot and Ariel 2000, fig. 17:1; De Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012, fig. 4.48:6–8). Arad: Strata X–VIII (Singer-Avitz 2002, figs. 33:10, 37:1).

**BOWL WITH THICKENED RIM** (fig. 1:6–9). A medium to large sized bowl, with a rim that is either thickened or folded outwards: Although this type first appears in ninth-century BCE assemblages, it is during the eighth century that its frequency increases until it becomes the most characteristic of the eighth century bowl assemblages. Moreover, while most ninth century bowls have a thickened rim,

eighth century bowls are characterized by an outward folded rim, alongside a thickened one (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001, 39). The walls are sometimes rounded and in other cases carinated at the top third of the vessel, and the base is a low ring one. This bowl endures into the Iron Age III, too.

Parallels: Timnah: Stratum III (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001, pl. 13:17, 24–27). Lachish: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b, figs. 26.3:17–19, 26.14:4, 26.20:7). Tel ‘Eton: Temporary Strata A4 and B3 (Katz and Faust 2012, fig. 7:8–11). Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1932, pls. 61–62; 1943: pl. 22). Jerusalem, City of David: Stratum 12 (De Groot and Ariel 2000, figs. 17:17, 22:13–15; De Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012, fig. 4.31:12–13). Arad: Strata X–VIII (Singer-Avitz 2002, figs. 24:12, 31:2, 32:8–9, 35:2). Beer-Sheba: Stratum II (Singer-Avitz 2016, fig. 12.54:3–5).

## KRATERS

KRATER WITH THICKENED RIM (fig. 1:10–11). An open krater with two or four handles and a ring-base: The upper part of the wall has a pronounced, inward carination. Much like the bowls, some of the kraters are red-slipped and burnished.

Parallels: Lachish: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b, figs. 26.3:25, 26.32:10–11). Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1943, pl. 20:10–11). Jerusalem, City of David: Stratum 12 (De Groot and Ariel 2000, fig. 17:8–9). Arad: Strata X–VIII (Singer-Avitz 2002, figs. 24:5, 31:3, 32:11). Beer-Sheba: Stratum II (Singer-Avitz 2016, fig. 12.58:11–13).

## COOKING POTS

CLOSED COOKING POT (fig. 2:1–4). A closed cooking pot with a straight, grooved neck, a globular, usually thin-walled body and a pair of handles extending from the rim to its shoulder, sometimes red-slipped: This type is among those characteristic only of eighth century assemblages. Although the closed-mouth cooking pot continues into the seventh century, unlike the grooved neck of the eighth-century type, by the seventh century BCE, the neck has a single ridge (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2011, pl. 34:1–5).

Parallels: Timnah: Stratum III (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001, pl. 25:15). Lachish: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b, figs. 26.1:2, 26.4:1–6). Tel ‘Eton: Temporary Stratum A4 (Katz and Faust 2012, fig. 8:1–2). Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1932, pl. 55:10–12; 1943, pl. 19:5–11). Jerusalem, City of David: Stratum 12 (De Groot and Ariel 2000, figs. 17:13, 21:17; De Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012, fig. 4.57:18–19). Arad: Strata X–VIII (Singer-Avitz 2002, figs. 25:8, 31:4–6, 37:11–13). Beer-Sheba: Stratum II (Singer-Avitz 2016, fig. 12.60:1–6).

OPEN COOKING POT (fig. 2:5–7). Open cooking pot with shallow body. The rim is almost flat on top and has a groove in the middle of the flat top or just below it on the exterior. A rounded carination at its middle and a pair of handles extending from the neck to the wall, above the carination.

Parallels: Lachish: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b, fig. 26.4:8–9). Tel ‘Eton: Temporary Stratum A4 (Katz and Faust 2012, fig. 8:3). Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1932, pl. 56:1–3). Jerusalem, City of David: Stratum 12 (De Groot and Ariel 2000, fig. 16:19–20; De Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012, fig. 4.30:5–6). Arad: Strata X–VIII (Singer-Avitz 2002, fig. 24:6). Beer-Sheba: Stratum II (Singer-Avitz 2016, fig. 12.41:2).

### STORAGE JARS

The storage vessels typical of the eighth century are of four main types: storage jars, hole-mouth jars, hole-mouth storage jars, and pithoi.

*LMLK* STORAGE JAR (fig. 3:1–3). The *LMLK* storage jars are among the most characteristic of the eighth century BCE pottery assemblage.<sup>7</sup> Their significance stems from the seal impressions stamped on the handles of some of the jars, which include the word *LMLK* (“for the king”), and attest to their forming a part of the administrative system of the eighth-century Judahite kingdom (see below). Seal impressions of this type were first discovered in Charles Warren’s excavations in Jerusalem in 1867. Over a thousand handles bearing such seal impressions have since been found in various sites throughout Judah.

The storage jar itself has a conical neck and an ovoid body tapering toward its rounded base. Four handles extend from its broad shoulder. This type has several variants, differing from each other mainly in their upper part (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001, 94; Gitin 2006). In view of the Lachish Level III finds, Zimhoni distinguished between two types: *LMLK* and *LMLK*-like storage jars (Zimhoni 2004b, 1794–1795).<sup>8</sup> However, an examination of the jars discovered in other Judahite sites apparently precludes their classification by the criteria set by Zimhoni, as some display characteristics of both groups (Gitin 2006, 508). *LMLK* type storage jars first appear towards the end of the tenth century (Shai and

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7. *LMLK* jars and the stamp impressions on their handles have been widely studied and discussed. For major works see: Vaughn 1999; Fox 2000; Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001, 93–97. See also the articles of Vaughn and Lipschits in this volume.

8. According to Zimhoni’s classification, one should distinguish between *LMLK* jars, characterized by a thickened rim, rounded shoulder and reddish-brown clay, and *LMLK*-like types, which differ by a few details: the clay’s color tends to be buff, the rim is rounded and the handles are extended from the shoulder, which is ridged (Zimhoni 2004b, 1794–1795).



Maeir 2003; Gitin 2006), and like other storage jar types of the period, have initially been used in the private household economy (Shai and Maeir 2003, 120).

During the eighth century, the manner of their use altered, and some were stamped with a *LMLK* impression (meaning “[belonging] to the king”). The seal impression indicates they were now used as part of the royal economy. *LMLK* seal impressions are divided into two main types, determined by the symbol at their center. The first group has a four-winged scarab, the other a two-winged sun disk. In both types, above appears the inscription *LMLK*, while below it the name of one of four cities is written: *HBRN* (Hebron), *SWKH* (Socoh), *ZP* (Zif) and *MMST*.

The results of a chemical analysis of a group of this type of storage jars indicated they had all been manufactured in a single potters’ workshop in the Shephelah (Mommson, Perlman and Yellin 1984; Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001, 94). This evidence enables us to assume all *LMLK* jars were produced in royal pottery workshops established in the western Shephelah.<sup>9</sup>

Over the years there have been different suggestions as to the role of these jars (see above, n. 5). Rainey (1982) linked them to the works of Uzziah, described in 2 Chr 26:10–11. In Rainey’s opinion, the origins of the *LMLK* jars was in the royal vineyards located in the Judah hills. The four places mentioned in the *LMLK* stamp impressions were located in the Judah hills, in the vicinity of the royal vineyards, and served as centers for the collection of the wine produced there.<sup>10</sup> Fox offered a similar suggestion, assuming the jars to have been manufactured in a royal pottery workshop, where they were stamped and whence they were sent empty to the royal estates, located in the vicinity of the towns named in the stamps. The finished product stored in the jars was mainly consumed by the royal household (Fox 2000, 230).<sup>11</sup>

Following Rainey and Fox’s suggestion, the answer to the question of the jars’ role may be sought in developments in the Judahite royal estate system during the eighth century BCE. The archaeological record indicates that in the second half of the eighth century BCE, a system of royal estates, where extensive agricultural activities were conducted, was established for the first time in Judah (Feig 1995;

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9. Possibly the ones referred to in 1 Chr 4:23 (Demskey 1966, 214–15).

10. One should note that unlike the accepted view, which identifies Socoh with Tell Shuwayka in the Shephelah (see for instance Aharoni 1979, 398–99), Rainey places Socoh in the hills region, like the three other place-names.

11. In contrast, Na’aman (1986) argued that the *LMLK* storage jars were part of the military preparations for the impending Assyrian threat. According to this model, the *LMLK* jars were part of the defense system put in place in regions exposed to the Assyrian threat, and managed from four administrative centers: *HBRN*, *SWKH*, *ZF*, and *MMST*. This reconstruction, however, only refers to the distribution of the produce in the various sites, and leaves unanswered the question of the origins of the product stored in the jars.

Greenhut and De Groot 2009, 225; Lipschits, Serrgei and Koch 2010; Katz 2011, 244–49). The establishment of this system, devoted mainly to agricultural production, may have been the *raison d'être* for the manufacture of the *LMLK* jars. Only after the foundation of state centers where agricultural produce was processed on a large scale did the need arise for jars to store the products of the crown's estates (Katz 2011, 251). In view of the significant presence of such jars in the Assyrian destruction layer exposed in the various sites in Judah, it is likely that it was the yield of the state economy that was distributed at the various sites, as part of the military and civil preparations for Sennacherib's campaign (251).

According to Lipschits, Sergei and Koch (2010, 2011), the *LMLK* seal impressions were part of a royal system starting in 730 BCE and ending with the destruction of the kingdom of Judah in 586 BCE (See also Lipschits in this volume.) According to this view, *LMLK* jars represent the earlier stages of the royal administration, while in its later stages, jars bearing concentric circle incisions and rosette stamps came into use. Yet, even if we accept that the *LMLK* jars were still in use in the first half of the seventh century BCE (see chronological discussion below), their proposal that the various impressions of the *LMLK* seal have chronological significance is highly problematic: In the Assyrian destruction layer in Lachish, dated to 701 BCE, various types appear side by side (Ussishkin 2011). (For another critique of this model, see Vaughn in this volume.)

Parallels: Timnah: Stratum III (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001, pls. 16:1–9, 18:1–3). Lachish: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b, figs. 26.6, 26.7, 26.9). Tel 'Eton: Temporary Stratum A4 (Katz and Faust 2012, fig. 9:1–3). Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1932, pl. 52:10). Arad: Strata X–VIII (Singer-Avitz 2002, figs. 13:2, 19:1). Beer-Sheba: Stratum II (Singer-Avitz 2016, fig. 12.38:11–12).

**STORAGE JAR WITH TWO HANDLES** (fig. 3:4–6). A jar with an ovoid body tapering toward the base. The rim is rounded, the neck conical, sometimes with a groove in its middle, and the base rounded. The two handles are extended from the carinated shoulder. This type is prevalent in Judah in the eighth century BCE and is found concurrently with *LMLK* storage jars.

Parallels: Lachish: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b, fig. 26.10:4–10). Tel 'Eton: Temporary Stratum A4 (Katz and Faust 2012, fig. 9:4–5). Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1943, pl. 13:5–6). Arad: Strata X–VIII (Singer-Avitz 2002, fig. 40:4). Beer-Sheba: Stratum II (Singer-Avitz 2016, fig. 12.89:12).

**HOLEMOUTH STORAGE JAR** (fig. 4:1–2). Holemouth storage jars are already present in assemblages dated to the Iron Age IIA, such as Lachish IV (Zimhoni 2004a, fig. 25.21:910) and Beer Sheba stratum IV (Aharoni 1973, pl. 55:20). The eighth century version, however, has different characteristics, including a folded rim, a bulbous body and a low ring-base, four handles and three ridges in the shoulder

area. This type is mainly characteristic of the eighth century assemblages, a period in which it becomes one of the most common storage vessels.

Parallels: Lachish: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b, fig. 26.5:9–12, 26.28:5). Tel ‘Eton: Temporary Stratum A4 (Katz and Faust 2012, fig. 10:1–2). Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1943, pl. 13:1–2, 4). Arad: Strata X–VIII (Singer-Avitz 2002, figs. 30:4, 36:5). Beer-Sheba: Stratum II (Singer-Avitz 2016, fig. 12.39:1–5).

**HOLEMOUTH JARS** (fig. 4:3–4). The holemouth jar is a small, handle-less storage vessel, cylindrical in form, with a rounded base. The holemouth rim is often inverted and in many cases grooved. These vessels’ small capacity makes them unique compared with other storage jars typical of the Iron IIB period. Their height is approximately 30 cm. and their capacity is 5 to 9 liters. (Common storage jars were on average 50 cm. tall with a capacity 25 to 50 liters; Katz and Faust 2011b, 175–76.)

An analysis of the holemouth jars found in Judah suggests a common denominator uniting assemblages wherein many holemouth jars are found together: All are associated with the production and processing of agricultural products. Presumably, while large-volume vessels are cumbersome to transport, vessels with a smaller capacity were preferable for the transport of the agricultural produce. Consequently, agricultural products intended for immediate transportation were stored in holemouth jars while long-term storage was made by using large vessels (Katz and Faust 2011b, 182).

Parallels: Timnah: Stratum III (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001, pl. 21:1–2). Lachish: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b, figs. 26.5:13, 26.19:4). Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1932, pl. 52:1–8). Jerusalem, City of David: Stratum 12 (De Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012, figs. 4.30:14, 4.41:26, 4.42:20–21). Arad: Strata X–VIII (Singer-Avitz 2002, figs. 29:3, 31:11, 33:8). Beer-Sheba: Stratum II (Singer-Avitz 2016, fig. 12.39:8–9).

**SPOUTED JAR** (fig. 4:5–6). The spouted jar has three loop handles and a spout where the juglet used to draw the liquid from the jar was placed. In many cases the base of the spout was pierced to enable the surplus liquid to trickle back into the jar, maximizing the use of the contents. This type of jar is characteristic of the ceramic assemblage that appears in the kingdoms of Judah and Israel from the ninth century BCE onwards, and remained in existence through the eighth century.

Parallels: Lachish: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b, figs. 26.19:1, 26.22:1, 26.34:9). Tel ‘Eton: Temporary Stratum A4 (Katz and Faust 2012, fig. 10:4–5). Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1932, pls. 53:1, 54:1). Jerusalem, City of David:

Stratum 12 (De Groot and Ariel 2000, fig. 17:25; De Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012, fig. 4.28:21). Arad: Strata X–VIII (Singer-Avitz 2002, figs. 28:3, 31:12, 40:1). Beer-Sheba: Stratum II (Singer-Avitz 2016, fig. 12.39:7).

**PITHOI** (fig. 4:8). The pithos is a large, thick walled storage vessel, with an elongated body ending in a rounded bottom, and a thickened, inverted rim. It is 1.20 meters or more in height, with a capacity of 150 to 250 liters (Katz and Faust 2011b, 176).

Parallels: Lachish: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b, figs. 26.1:8). Tel 'Eton: Temporary Stratum A4 (Katz and Faust 2012, fig. 10:7). Beer-Sheba: Stratum II (Singer-Avitz 2016, figs. 12.39:6, 12:71:1–4). Tel 'Ira: Stratum VII (Freud 1999, fig. 6.76–77).<sup>12</sup>

**AMPHORISKOSI** (fig. 4:7). Amphoriskos with an elongated body, carinated shoulder, pointed base and handles extending from the shoulder to the body.

Parallels: Tel 'Eton: Temporary Stratum B3 (Katz and Faust 2012, fig. 10:6). Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1932, pl. 54:7). Jerusalem, City of David: Stratum 12 (De Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012, fig. 4.59:1).

## JUGS

As stated above, one of the main characteristics of the ceramic assemblage of the eighth century BCE is the transition to industrial production, which is manifest in the standardized forms of the vessels produced and in the relatively meagre variety. Yet while these features are characteristic of most types of vessels, the jug assemblage includes a narrow range of types manufactured in industrial lines as well as a wide range of unique jugs, each singular, made in different workshops. In what follows, I will only introduce the typical jug types discovered in eighth century strata, although most sites also yielded additional, unparalleled jugs.

**JUG WITH BROAD, ELONGATED NECK** (fig. 5:1–2). A jug with a broad, elongated neck and an everted rim. The body is globular and it has a rounded base and one handle extending from rim to shoulder. Some of these jugs are red-slipped. This type of jug is typical mainly of eighth century BCE assemblages.

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12. In the excavation report, stratum VII at Tell 'Ira was dated to the end of the eighth century–first half of the seventh century BCE (Beit-Arieh 1999, 176; Freud 1999, 226–27). Today, however, the stratum's dating is set earlier, in the second half of the eighth century BCE, contemporary with Lachish Level III and Beer Sheba stratum II (Thareani-Sussley 2007, 72; Freud, personal communication).

Parallels: Lachish: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b, figs. 26.1:7, 26.18:13, 26.23:4–5). Tel ‘Eton: Temporary Stratum A4 (Katz and Faust 2012, fig. 11:1). Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1932, pl. 57:4–5). Jerusalem, City of David: Stratum 12 (De Groot and Ariel 2000, fig. 27:4–5; De Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012, figs. 4.28:12, 4.40:14). Beer-Sheba: Stratum II (Singer-Avitz 2016, fig. 12.91:8).

**JUG WITH A BROAD, SHORT NECK** (fig. 5:3–4). This type of jug is similar to the previous type, but instead of an elongated neck it has a short one. These jugs already appear in Iron Age IIA assemblages (Katz and Faust 2014, fig. 8:1) and continue throughout the eighth century BCE.

Parallels: Tel ‘Eton: Temporary Stratum A4 (Katz and Faust 2012, fig. 11:2). Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1943, pl. 17:9, 11, 13). Jerusalem, City of David: Stratum 12 (De Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012, fig. 4.58:22). Beer-Sheba: Stratum II (Singer-Avitz 2016, fig. 12.50:7).

**COOKING JUG** (fig. 5:5). A jug with an everted neck ending in an inverted rim, a bulbous body, a rounded base and a handle extending from rim to body: Some of these jugs were manufactured of the same clay used for cooking pots and it seems that this type was also used for cooking (e.g., Singer-Avitz 2002, type CP 13).

Parallels: Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1932, pl. 57:14; 1943, pl. 17:10). Arad: Strata X–VIII (Singer-Avitz 2002, figs. 3:11, 35:8). Beer-Sheba: Stratum II (Singer-Avitz 2016, figs. 12.35:11, 12.49:12).

**JUG WITH A NARROW NECK** (fig. 5:6). A jug with a narrow neck: The middle of the neck bears a ridge from which a handle extends to the body. The body is globular, with a ring-base.

Parallels: Beth Shemesh: Strata IIA–b (Grant and Wright 1938, pl. LXV:40, 42). Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1943, pl. 16:7).

**DECANTER** (fig. 5:7–8). The decanter is typical of the eighth century BCE assemblages, but continues to exist, in equal prevalence, throughout the seventh century as well. It has a square body, a ring-base, and a sloping shoulder that widens at a sharp angle towards the body. The narrow neck ends in a splayed rim.

Parallels: Lachish: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b, figs. 26.13:2, 26.18:19). Tel ‘Eton, Temporary Stratum A4 (Katz and Faust 2012, fig. 11:7). Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1932, pl. 59:1). Jerusalem, City of David: Stratum 12 (De Groot and Ariel 2000, fig. 10:4–5; De Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012, fig. 4.20:20). Arad: Strata X–VIII (Singer-Avitz 2002, figs. 26:3–11, 33:2, 38:4). Beer-Sheba: Stratum II (Singer-Avitz 2016, fig. 12.50:11).

## JUGLETS

**BLACK JUGLET** (fig. 5:9–10). This type is characterized by a black slip, a narrow neck and a single handle. Some of the juglets have a rounded body, while others have a bulbous body with rounded base, slightly pointed at its center. In some juglets, the handle extends from rim to shoulder, while in others it is extended from the neck. The black juglet already appears in assemblages dated to the tenth century BCE (E. Mazar 2011, 109; Cohen-Weinberger and Panitz-Cohen 2014) and continues to exist throughout the Iron Age IIA–B, including the eighth century BCE.

Parallels, Timnah, Stratum III (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001, pl. 29,18). Lachish, Level III (Zimhoni 2004b, figs. 26.24,4, 26.39,10). Jerusalem, City of David, Stratum 12 (De Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012, fig. 4.44:20). Arad: Strata X–VIII (Singer-Avitz 2002, figs. 27:5–6, 31:8–9, 35:16–18). Beer-Sheba: Stratum II (Singer-Avitz 2016, fig. 12.51:1–2).

**JUGLET WITH AN ELONGATED BODY** (fig. 5:11–12). This juglet has a wide neck, an elongated cylindrical body, and a rounded base. Its handle is extended from the rim to its shoulder. Much like the black juglet, this type makes its first appearance during the Iron Age IIA (Katz and Faust 2014, fig. 8:7; Zimhoni 2004a, fig. 25.36:9) and continues throughout the eighth century and even later, until the end of the Iron Age (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001, pl. 38:1).

Parallels: Lachish: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b, figs. 26.4:14–15, 26.36:5). Tel 'Eton: Temporary Stratum A4 (Katz and Faust 2012, fig. 12:5–6). Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1932, pl. 68:42–47; 1943, pl. 17:1–5). Arad: Strata X–VIII (Singer-Avitz 2002, figs. 29:2, 33:15, 35:12–13).

## LAMPS

**LAMP WITH A ROUNDED BASE** (fig. 5:13). A lamp with a pinched spout and a rounded base; some have a ledge rim: This type appears during Iron Age IIA (Katz and Faust 2014, fig. 8:12–14; Singer-Avitz 2002, fig. 9:3) and continues with a lower incidence in the Iron Age IIB.

Parallels: Timnah: Stratum III (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001, pl. 92:14). Lachish Level III (Zimhoni 2004b, figs. 26.21:12–13, 26.36:8, 26.39:4–5). Tel 'Eton Temporary Stratum B3 (Katz and Faust 2012, fig. 12:9). Tell Beit Mirsim Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1932, pl. 70:10). Jerusalem, City of David: Stratum 12 (De Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012, fig. 4.40:19).

**LAMP WITH A LOW DISC BASE** (fig. 5:14). A lamp with a low disc-base and a pronounced rim: This type is one of the outstanding characteristics of the ceramic assemblage of the eighth century BCE.

Parallels: Lachish: Leve III (Zimhoni 2004b, figs. 26.5:7, 26.13:3). Tel 'Eton: Temporary Stratum A4 (Katz and Faust 2012, fig. 12:7–8). Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1932, pl. 70:6–7; 1943, pl. 15:6–9). Jerusalem, City of David: Stratum 12 (De Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012, figs. 4.28:20, 4.38:16). Arad: Strata X–VIII (Singer-Avitz 2002, figs. 27:9–10, 34:11, 39:3–4). Beer-Sheba: Stratum II (Singer-Avitz 2016, fig. 12.38:9).

**LAMP WITH A THICK, HIGH DISC-BASE** (fig. 5:15). A lamp with a thick, high disc-base and a pronounced rim: Although this type is common in the seventh century BCE assemblages, like Lachish Level II (Zimhoni 2004b, fig. 26.42:7), Timnah Stratum II (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001, pl. 50:13–15) as well as Arad Strata VII–VI (Singer-Avitz 2002, figs. 45:11, 46:6), it seems to have been only sporadically unearthed in eighth century strata.

Parallels: Lachish: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b, pls. 26.5:8, 26.37:6, 26.37:6, 26.42:7). Jerusalem, City of David (De Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012, figs. 4.32:9, 4.57:29–30). Beer-Sheba: Stratum II (Singer-Avitz 2016, fig. 12.38:8). Tel ,Ira: Stratum VII (Freud 1999, fig. 6.59:17).

#### STANDS (FIG. 5:16–17)

Stands appear in nearly every site containing an eighth century assemblage. Of an “hourglass” shape, each is slightly different than the other.

Parallels: Lachish: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b, figs. 26.14:7, 26.21:11). Tel 'Eton: Temporary Stratum B3 (Katz and Faust 2012, fig. 12:10–11). Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A<sub>2</sub> (Albright 1932, pl. 71:7–13). Arad: Strata X–VIII (Singer-Avitz 2002, figs. 33:6–7).

#### FUNNELS (FIG. 5:18)

Funnel with rounded walls ending with narrow neck: Funnels are not common in the ceramic assemblage of the eighth century BCE. Nevertheless, they mainly appear alongside storerooms since their use was for transferring agricultural products between different vessels.

Parallels: Tel 'Eton: Temporary Stratum A4 (Katz and Faust 2012, fig. 8:6). Jerusalem, City of David: Stratum 12 (De Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012, fig. 4.10:6). Beer-Sheba: Stratum II (Singer-Avitz 2016, fig. 12.61:5).

# DATING THE END OF THE EIGHTH CENTURY BCE ASSEMBLAGES

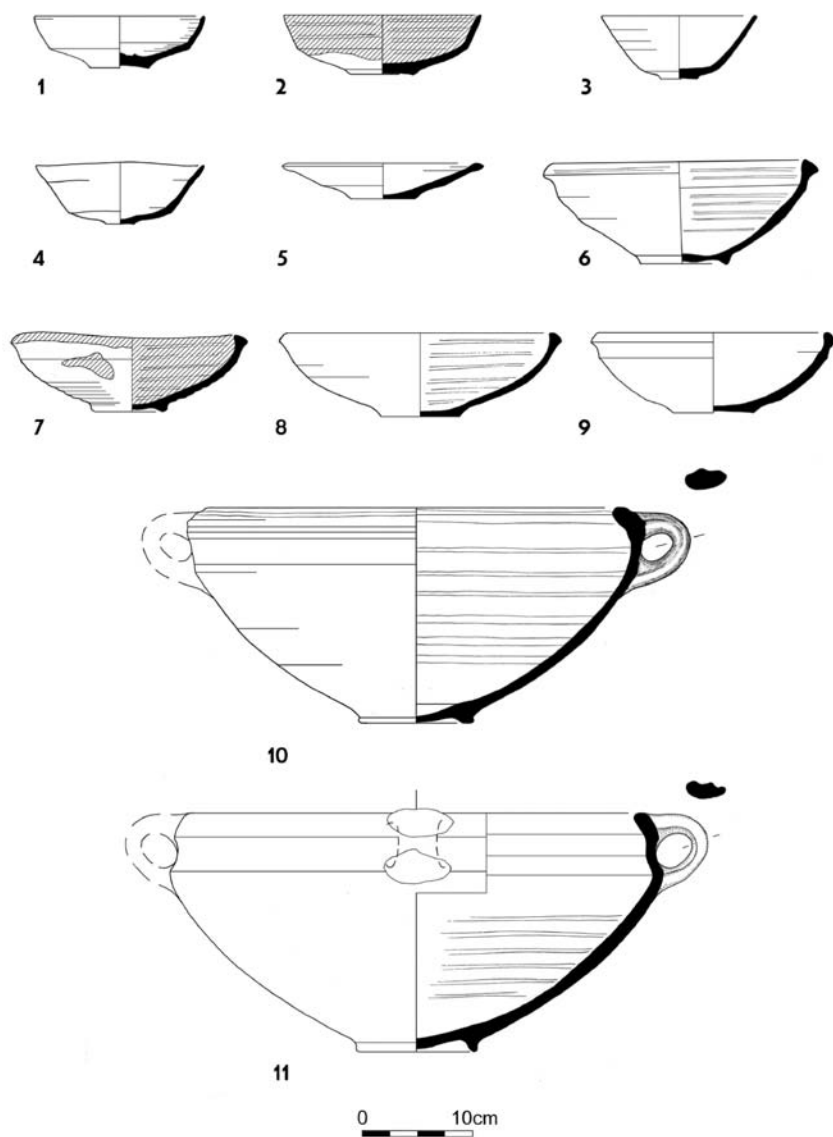
The end of the eighth century pottery assemblages is associated with the Assyrian campaigns, and mainly Sennacherib's 701 BCE campaign that wrought destruction throughout Judah. Presumably, the pottery typical to the period was not immediately replaced when the sites were destroyed, and was still in use during the first half of the seventh century. We cannot, however, determine exactly how long into the seventh century these types endured, as there are very few substantial assemblages dating to this period. The next significant destruction layer is the one left by the Babylonians in the early sixth century. Thus, the seventh century assemblages known to us date from the latter half of the seventh century until the early sixth century BCE. These assemblages contain different types of vessels (such as cooking pots and storage jars) and mark the end of the Iron Age.

## TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLE 1: BOWLS AND KRATERS (SEE FIG. 1 BELOW)

No.	Vessel	Reg. no.	Locus	Description
1	Bowl	10315-13	1089	
2	Bowl	20373-1	2114	Red slip and wheel burnish on both sides
3	Bowl	10147-8	1042	
4	Bowl	10972	1262	
5	Bowl	10329-3	1086	
6	Bowl	10961-4	1258	Horizontal hand burnish inside
7	Bowl	10469-1	1115	Red slip inside and on rim, horizontal hand burnish inside and on rim
8	Bowl	10461-28	1115	Horizontal hand burnish
9	Bowl	20331	2114	
10	Krater	10929-2	1229	Wheel burnish inside
11	Krater	10331-7	1088	Horizontal hand burnish inside

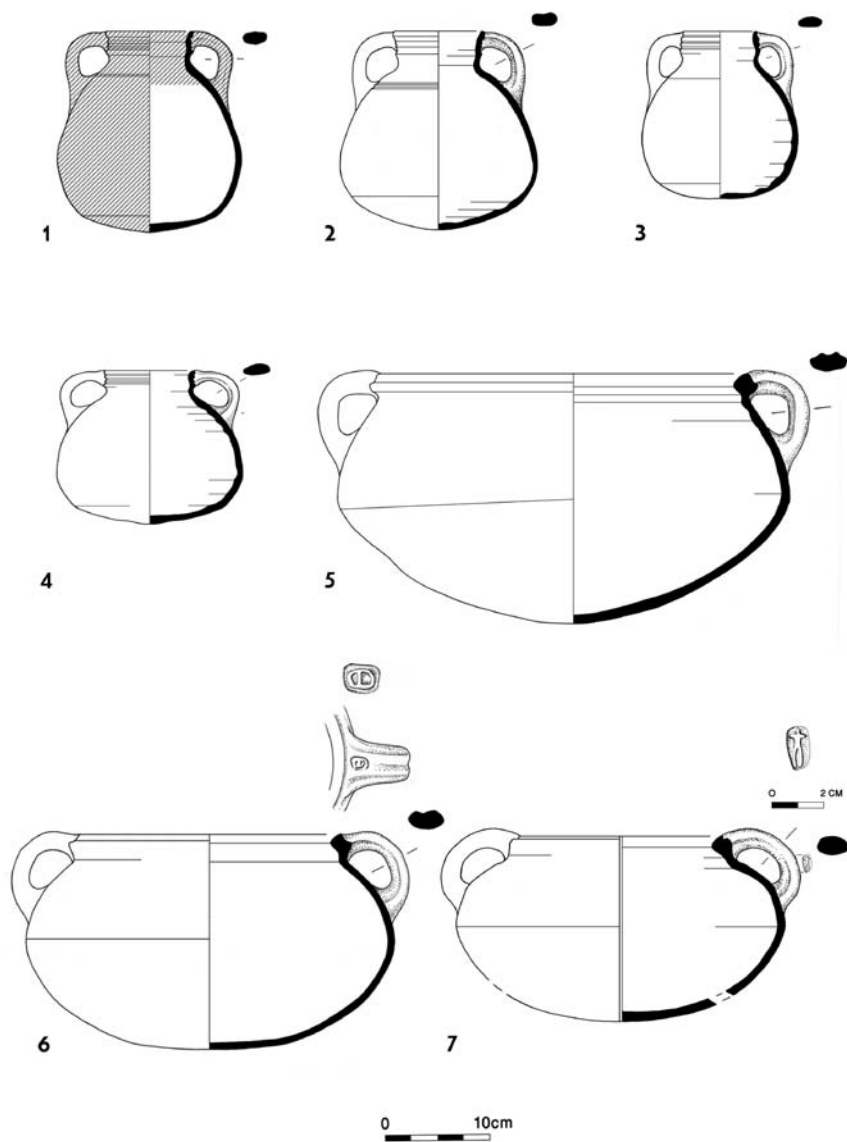




**Fig. 1:** Bowls and Kraters. Courtesy of Avraham Faust and the Tel 'Eton Expedition.

TABLE 2: COOKING POTS (SEE FIG. 2 BELOW)

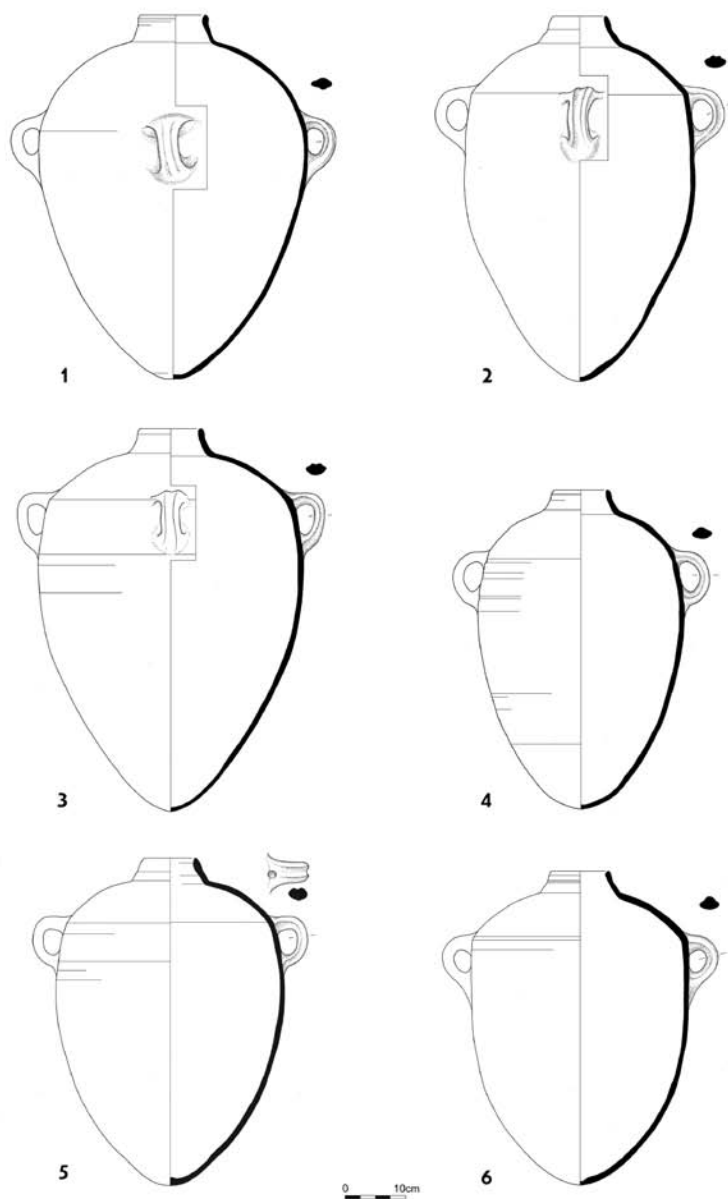
No.	Vessel	Reg. no.	Locus	Description
1	Cooking pot	10021	1006	Red slip outside
2	Cooking pot	10206	1053	
3	Cooking pot	10179	1042	
4	Cooking pot	10126-25	1036	
5	Cooking pot	10821-10	1202	
6	Cooking pot	10829-3	1202	



**Fig. 2:** Cooking Pots. Courtesy of Avraham Faust and the Tel 'Eton Expedition.

TABLE 3: STORAGE JARS (SEE FIG. 3 BELOW)

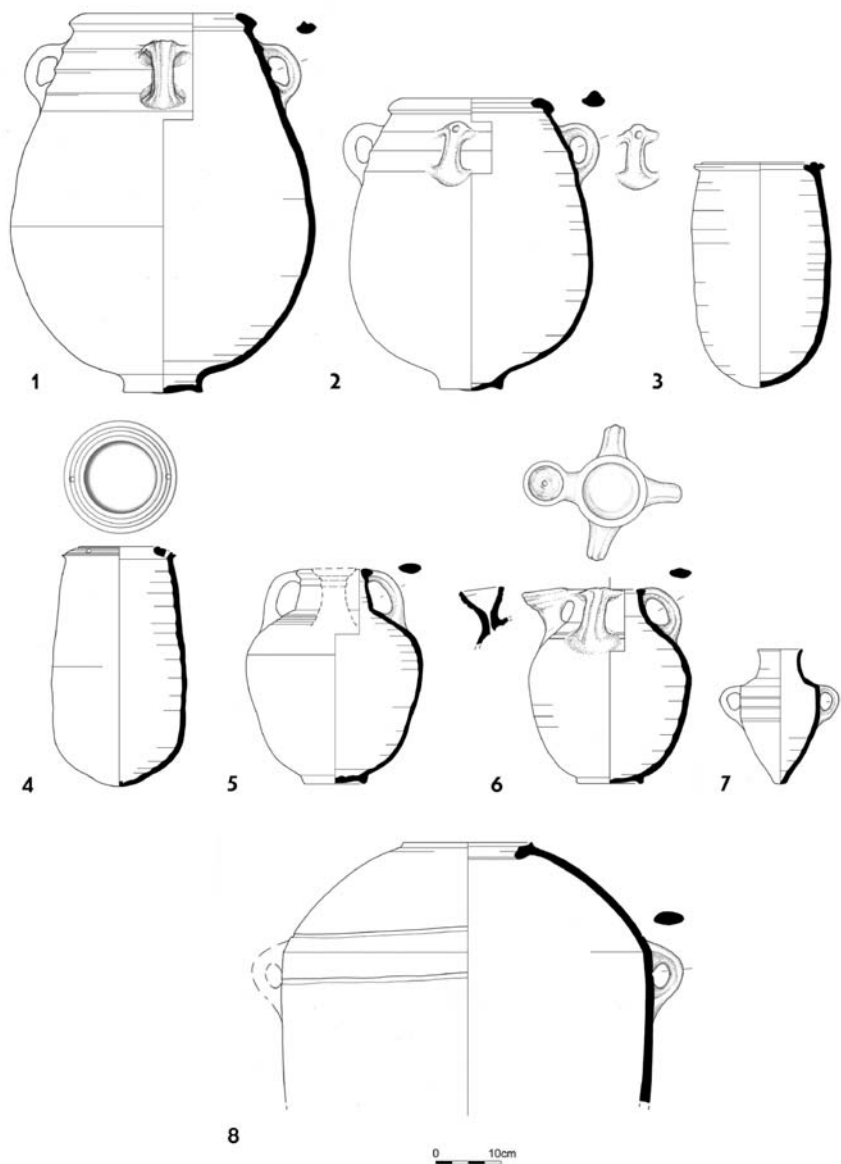
<b>No.</b>	<b>Vessel</b>	<b>Reg. no.</b>	<b>Locus</b>
1	Storage jar	10264.01	1056
2	Storage jar	10335-7	1093
3	Storage jar	10336	1093
4	Storage jar	10147-4	1042
5	Storage jar	10462	1110
6	Storage jar	10564	1137



**Fig. 3:** Storage Jars. Courtesy of Avraham Faust and the Tel 'Eton Expedition.

TABLE 4: HOLEMOUTH STORAGE JARS, HOLEMOUTH JARS, SPOUTED JARS, AMPHORISKOSI AND PITHOI (SEE FIG. 4 BELOW)

No.	Vessel	Reg. no.	Locus
1	Holemouth storage jar	10167-1	1042
2	Holemouth storage jar	20352-8	2114
3	Holemouth jar	10147-5	1042
4	Holemouth jar	10646-9	1168
5	Spouted jar	10159-3	1042
6	Spouted jar	10912-9	1247
7	Amphoriskos	20062.02	2019
8	Pithos	10606-4	1156

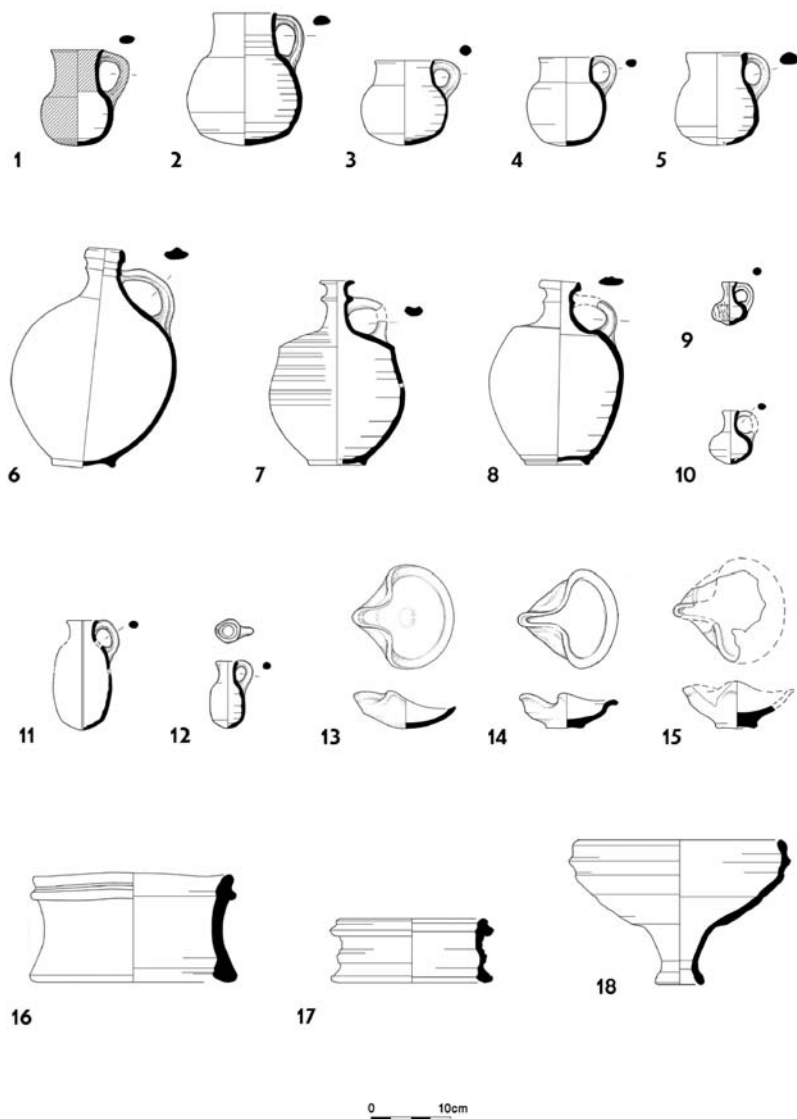


**Fig. 4:** Holemouth Storage Jars, Holemouth Jars, Spouted Jars, Amphoriskosi, and Pithoi. Courtesy of Avraham Faust and the Tel 'Eton Expedition.

TABLE 5: JUGS, DECANTERS, JUGLETS, LAMPS, STANDS, AND FUNNELS  
(SEE FIG. 5 BELOW)

No.	Vessel	Reg. no.	Locus	Description
1	Jug	10135-3	1036	Red slip outside, upper body inside and on handle
2	Jug	20659-1	2208	
3	Jug	10376-11	1102	
4	Jug	10329-1	1086	
5	Jug	10615-9	1156	
6	Jug	10453-4	1115	
7	Decanter	20392	2114	Horizontal hand burnish outside
8	Decanter	10199	1053	
9	Juglet	32/1 1969-1692	Tomb CIII	Black slip outside, vertical hand burnish
10	Juglet	10642	1156	Black slip outside
11	Juglet	10439-4	1091	
12	Juglet	10233.01	1063	
13	Lamp	148/1 1969-1766	Tomb CIII	
14	Lamp	10329.04	1036	
15	Lamp	10347	1089	
17	Stand	10363-3	1091	
18	Stand	10326-5	1089	
19	Funnel	10446	1096	





**Fig. 5:** Jugs, Decanters, Juglets, Lamps, Stands, and Funnels. Courtesy of Avraham Faust and the Tel 'Eton Expedition.

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## Judah under Assyrian Rule and the Early Phase of Stamping Jar Handles

*Oded Lipschits*

Oval storage jars with *mlk* impressions stamped on their handles are among the most important and well-known finds of late Iron Age Judah. These jars were already common in the Shephelah in the ninth century BCE, but stamp impressions appear on some handles as early as the late eighth century BCE. They all have the word *mlk* (meaning “belongs to the King”) stamped in paleo-Hebrew script on their handles.

The word *mlk* usually appears in the upper section of the stamp impression, while two additional features appear beneath it: (1) a royal symbol that sits in the center and that comes in two forms: either a four-winged scarab, probably reflecting Egyptian influence, or a winged sun-disk, similar to the sun-disk that appears in ancient Near Eastern cultures in general, and in the Assyrian culture in particular;<sup>1</sup> (2) a place name, which usually appears at the bottom of the stamp impression, under the royal symbol, and is one of the following four sites: Hebron, Ziph, Socoh and mmšt. Socoh is identified at the Ellah Valley in the Judean Shephelah; Hebron and Ziph are located in the southern Judean Hills; and mmšt (apparently Mamshit), the identity of which is unknown, and could have been located anywhere in the kingdom.<sup>2</sup> Scholars have suggested various explanations for the appearance of these four particular sites,<sup>3</sup> but the main reason seems that

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1. It seems that these late First Temple period symbols represented the local god or the local king, and were influenced by similar symbols in neighboring cultures. On these symbols, see Ward 1968; Tushingham 1970; 1971; Keel and Uehlinger 1998, 256–59, 272–77; Fox 2000, 220–23; Avigad and Barkay 2000, 243a; Ornan 2005, 231–34; Hudon 2010, 31–32; Na’aman 2016, 114–16.

2. On the location of these sites in general and of that of mmšt in particular, see Ginsberg 1948, 20–22 (and cf. to Barkay 2006, 43); Na’aman 1986, 170–71; Fox 2000, 224–25; Kletter 2002, 137–38; Lipschits, Sergi and Koch 2010, 21; Lipschits forthcoming.

3. See Fox 2000, 224–25, with further literature.



**Fig. 1:** (above) *lmlk*-type storage jar from Lachish. Photograph: Pavel Shrago, Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University.

they were royal estates in which agricultural products, mainly grapes and olives, were grown and wine and oil produced.

These royal estates were the points of origin of the agricultural products with which the jars were filled and whence they were shipped to a central collection center.<sup>4</sup> About 1,400 *lmlk* handles have been found in provenanced archaeological excavations and surveys. Currently we know of more than 2,000 handles, most of which were found within the borders of the kingdom of Judah.<sup>5</sup>

**Fig. 2:** (below) Four-winged *lmlk* stamp impression.



4. On the interpretation of the place names and their function in the jar administration, see Na'aman 2016, 114–16; Lipschits forthcoming.

5. For a list of the provenanced *lmlk* stamped handles, see: Lipschits, Sergi and Koch 2010. Vaughn (1999, 185–97) mentioned 1716 stamped handles, but the origin of 355 of them is unknown. Over the years, many more stamped handles have been discovered and published, mainly from Ramat Rahel. Grena published 2251 stamped handles on his website (<http://www.lmlk.com/research/index.html>), but 725 of them are from private collections or of unknown origin.





**Fig. 3:** Two-winged *lmlk* stamp impression

Photograph: Pavel Shrago, Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University.

## TYPOLOGY OF THE LMLK STAMP IMPRESSIONS

Most scholars founded their basic typology of the *lmlk* stamp impressions on two main groups, based on the royal symbol located at the center of each seal: the four-winged scarab or the winged sun-disk. The sub-division of these two main groups follows the inscribed words above and below the symbol.<sup>6</sup> The acknowledged typology of the *lmlk* stamp impressions was suggested in 1981 by the French scholar André Lemaire. According to Lemaire, there are five main types of *lmlk* stamp impressions. Two types are of the four-winged icon: Ia contains cursory writing, with *lmlk* in the upper register and place name in the lower register; Ib is the same but contains lapidary writing. Three types are of the winged sun-disk icon: IIa contains *lmlk* in the upper register and place name in the lower register; IIb is similar, but the place name in the lower register is divided (usually two letters on each side); IIc has the place name in the upper register, without the word *lmlk*.

Lemaire defined four variants in each of the five main types, according to the first letter of each place name that appears on them (H—for ḥbrn = Hebron; S—for

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6. Scholars have offered a variety of suggestions for the typology, and see, e.g., Diringer 1941, 91–101; Lapp 1960, 15 and fig. 1; Welten 1969, 36–44; Grena 2004, 59–72.

šwkh = Socoh; Z—for zyp = Ziph; M—for mmšt = ?), and classified one additional type, with no place name, which he designated XII.<sup>7</sup>

Altogether, there are 19 subtypes of the *lmlk* stamp impressions, which means that 19 seals were in use. Seven of the subtypes (=seals) used the four-winged scarab at the center: H1a and H1b are four-winged scarab types where the name *hbrn* (=Hebron) appears under the royal symbol and the word *lmlk* appears above it, one in cursory and the other in lapidary writing; Z1a and Z1b are four-winged scarab types where the name *zyp* (=Ziph) appears under the royal symbol and the word *lmlk* above it, one in cursory and the other in lapidary writing; M1a and M1b are four-winged scarab types where the name *mmšt* (= ?) appears under the royal symbol and the word *lmlk* above it, one in cursory and the other in lapidary writing; S1b is the only four-winged scarab type where the name *šwkh* (=Socoh) appears under the royal symbol and the word *lmlk* above it, all in lapidary writing. There is no similar subtype (=no such seal) with cursory writing, so type S1a does not exist.

The meaning of the above typology is that there are two sets of four-winged scarab type seals. One set (Ib) includes four seals with the four-winged scarabs in the center of all of them, with lapidary script. The size of the seal is exceptional: while its width is similar to all the other *lmlk* seals (about 22 mm), it is 35–36 mm long (ca. 20 percent longer than the other *lmlk* seals). The similarities and unity of the Ib type indicate that it was produced as a series, probably by the same artisan, and at the same time.

Only three seals have been found for the other set of four-winged scarab types (Ia), which contained the four-winged scarab at the center, cursory script, and the place names—*hbrn* (=Hebron); *zyp* (=Ziph) and *mmšt* (= ?); the seal with the place name *šwkh* (=Socoh) is missing (not even one handle with this stamp impression has as yet been discovered). The size of the Ia set of stamp impressions is smaller than the Ib set, and closer to all the other sets of *lmlk* stamp impressions. This is one of the reasons for the claim that the Ib set is earlier than the Ia, and see further below.

In addition to the seven subtypes of the four-winged scarabs (=7 seals that were used in this system), there were 12 subtypes (=12 seals) of the winged sun-disk icon. One set (IIa) included four seals. At the center of every seal was the winged sun-disk, the word *lmlk* in the upper register above the symbol, split in

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7. Lemaire (1981) identified another type of *lmlk* stamped handle, which he termed, Type OII, and which bears only the winged sun-disk with no inscription. He based this typology on one example from Ramat Raḥel (Aharoni 1962, pl. 29: 9). However, a careful study of this handle demonstrated that it actually bears a stamp impression of Type XII. The same is true regarding another handle from the Jewish Quarter Excavations in Jerusalem (Avigad and Barkay 2000, 261: 27) which also had been classified as Type OII but is undoubtedly another exemplar of Type XII.

two at the two sides, and the place name in the lower register, written in one complete word below the lower part of the icon: HIIa for the seal with the place name *ḥbrn* (=Hebron); SIIa for the seal with the place name *śwkh* (=Socoh); ZIIa for the seal with the place name *zyp* (=Ziph); MIIa for the seal with the place name *mmšt* (= ?).

Another set (IIb) also includes four seals in a similar size and quality, but just as the word *lmlk* was split above at two sides of the winged sun-disk, here the place name in the lower register is divided into two on the sides of the lower part of the icon: HIIb for the seal with the place name *ḥbrn* (=Hebron); SIIb for the seal with the place name *śwkh* (=Socoh); ZIIb for the seal with the place name *zp* (=Ziph) with only two letters; MIIb for the seal with the place name *mmšt* (= ?).

A third set of winged sun-disks includes only three seals; in all of them the place name rather than the word *lmlk* is written above the icon: HIIc for the seal with the place name *ḥbrn* (=Hebron) with two letters above the right wing and two letters above the upper part of the icon; MIIc for the seal with the place name *mmšt* (= ?) above the icon in one word, with two letters above the right wing of the symbol, one letter above the upper part of it and one letter above its left wing; ZIIc for the seal with the place name *zp* (=Ziph) with only two letters above the right wing of the winged sun-disk. Also in the case of the IIC set of seals there is no seal with the place name *śwkh* (=Socoh), just as in the case of the Ib set of seals.

The fourth and last set of winged sun-disks includes only one seal, on which only the word *lmlk* was written above the symbol; below it there is no place name. According to Lemaire's typology this is Type XII.

#### TYPOLOGY, STRATIGRAPHY AND CHRONOLOGY OF THE LMLK STAMPED HANDLES: DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN "EARLY" AND "LATE" TYPES

More than 400 *lmlk* stamped handles were discovered in the excavations conducted at Lachish, many of which were clearly assigned to Level III. During the 1940s and 1950s several British and American scholars accepted John Starkey's opinion (1936) to associate the destruction of Level III at Lachish with the 597 Babylonian campaign and the destruction of Level II with the 587/6 campaign. Consequently they continued to support Diringer's classification (1941; 1949) of the *lmlk* stamp impressions and Albright's chronology (1943), and dated all of the four-winged types to the time of Hezekiah and Manasseh, while assigning the two-winged types to the time of Josiah. However, after Olga Tufnell's (1953) suggestion that the destruction of Level III at Lachish be associated with the Sen-nacherib campaign of 701 BCE, most scholars in Israel accepted the new idea that the *lmlk* jars be linked to the period of Hezekiah's rule in Judah. David Ussishkin's

excavations at Lachish (1973–1994) established the date of the destruction of Lachish Level III to the Sennacherib campaign in 701 BCE.

From the methodological point of view, the date of the destruction of Level III was a key point in the dating of the *lmlk* stamp impressions, especially when Lemaire's detailed typology was published in 1981. Surprisingly, nearly 30 years passed before a careful and precise study of the exact location of each type, its stratigraphy and distribution was published (Lipschits, Sergi, and Koch 2010). Even if scholars in the early phase of research, were careful not to fix a rigid *terminus post quem* and *terminus ad quem* for the production and use of the *lmlk* stamped jar handles (Ussishkin 1977, 56–57), after an attractive historical suggestion by Nadav Na'aman (1979) to connect the system of the *lmlk* stamp impressions to Hezekiah's revolt and to the preparations in Judah before the Assyrian attack of 701 BCE, many researchers accepted the idea that the entire system of jars and stamp impressions should be limited to a very short three-year period—between 704 and 701 BCE (Ussishkin 2004c, 2141–42, and see further literature in Vaughn 1999, 88–89, 136–37).

From the methodological point of view, it should be stressed that while the interpretation of the many *lmlk* stamped handles sealed under destruction Level III at Lachish as the *terminus ad quem* of the system is an archaeological fact, it is historical conjecture that the *production* of the jars and the system of stamping jar handles had begun only three years previously, as part of Hezekiah's revolt. Moreover, concluding that 701 BCE is the *terminus ad quem* of the entire *lmlk* system (Ussishkin 1977, 56–57), without carefully examining the typology of the actual finds, can only be considered a general, untidy and poorly based assumption.

A careful and precise study of the exact location, stratigraphy, and distribution of each type shows that some types of the winged sun-disk stamp impressions (Types IIb, IIc, XII) were found unsealed by the 701 BCE destruction debris at Lachish or by any destruction layer assigned to the 701 BCE Assyrian campaign in all the many sites excavated in Judah (Lipschits, Sergi, and Koch 2010).<sup>8</sup> This study isolated the four-winged scarab Type Ia and Ib and the winged sun-disk Type IIa as those found sealed under the destruction level of Lachish III and contemporaneous strata. Accordingly, these types were defined as the “early types,” used before the 701 Assyrian attack on Judah (Lipschits, Sergi, and Koch 2010, 11 and fig. 1).

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8. In a later paper, Ussishkin (2011, 237) acknowledged for the first time that, indeed, this is the archaeological situation in Lachish Level III and in all other contemporary destruction layers in Judah. For a critique on Ussishkin's methodological and archaeological conclusions, see: Finkelstein 2012, 203–6; Lipschits 2012; Na'aman 2016, 112–13.

By contrast, the three types of winged sun-disk *lmlk* stamp impressions (Le-maire's I Ib, I Ic, and XII) appear only in hill-country sites not destroyed in 701 BCE, or in strata attributed to the seventh century BCE with not even one stamped handle of these types found in a clear 701 BCE destruction level. Therefore, these types were produced after the 701 campaign, and should be defined as "late types," dated to the beginning of the seventh century BCE (Lipschits, Sergi and Koch 2010, 11, 13–17).<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, when it became evident that the *lmlk* stamped jars were not part of a short term system of preparation for the Assyrian attack, it also became obvious that (1) they were part of an administrative system that began before Hezekiah's revolt against the Assyrian empire, and (2) they were followed by many other systems of stamping and incising jar handles, mainly the incised concentric circles and the rosette stamp impressions (Lipschits, Sergi, and Koch 2010, 8–9; Koch and Lipschits 2010, and cf. Lipschits and Vanderhooft 2007; 2011; Bocher and Lipschits 2013). The continuity in the manufacturing of royal storage jars (Vaughn 1999, 148–50; Shai and Maeir 2003; Gitin 2006) and the use of royal emblems stamped on their handles (Lipschits, Sergi, and Koch 2010, 7–10) indicate that the different stamp impressions are all part of the same administrative system that probably had a constant function for about 140 years.

Moreover, the same administrative system continued after the 586 BCE destruction of the kingdom of Judah for an additional 450 years—during the Babylonian period (the *mwsh* and lion stamped handles; see Lipschits 2010), during the Persian and the Early Hellenistic periods (the *yhw*d stamped handles; see Lipschits and Vanderhooft 2011), and until the Late Hellenistic period (the late *yhw*d and the *yršlm* stamped handles; see Ariel and Shoham 2000, 159–63; Vanderhooft and Lipschits 2007; Bocher and Lipschits 2011). Throughout this long period, Judah (and then Yehud and Judea) was under the hegemony of great empires, and the stamped jars were part of the Judahite administrative system that had already been established when Judah became an Assyrian vassal kingdom. They continued to be in use as long as Judah was a vassal kingdom and later,

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9. The first scholar who wrote about this chronological separation between the different *lmlk* types is Chang-Ho Ji (2001), who reconstructed four stages in the evolution of the Judahite royal stamp impressions. According to Ji, the four-winged scarab and the two-winged disc were used concurrently before Sennacherib's 701 BCE campaign, and only the two-winged emblem was used during the seventh century BCE. Prior to the early or mid-seventh century BCE, King Manasseh introduced the concentric incision, which was employed alongside the two-winged disc. It is not clear on what ground Ji suggests that the two-winged symbol alone continued to be used until the last third of the seventh century BCE, when the rosette symbol replaced it. On the separation between "pre-Sennacherib" and "post-Sennacherib" *lmlk* stamp impressions, see also Grena (2004).

when it became a province under the rule of the Babylonian, Persian, and Ptolemaic empires.

### WHEN WAS THE *LMLK* SYSTEM INITIATED?

#### THE EARLY PHASE OF STAMPING JAR HANDLES IN THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH

It is obvious that all jars stamped by early *lmlk* seals and discovered beneath the destruction debris of Level III at Lachish and other destruction levels from the same 701 BCE event, should be dated to the period before this event. But archaeology cannot tell us how much earlier and exactly when this system was initiated. Just how long before 701 BCE these jars were in use and when their production began must remain in the realm of historical assumption with no clear-cut archaeological evidence to back it up.

Level III at Lachish was probably founded in the mid-eighth century BCE (Ussishkin 2004a, 82–83) and unstamped jars of the type bearing the *lmlk* stamp impressions had already appeared in the late ninth–early eighth centuries BCE (Shai and Maeir 2003; Gitin 2006; Sergi, Karasik, Gadot, and Lipschits 2012). There is no archaeological answer to the question of precisely when and why stamping of some of the handles of these jars began. However, the fact that the same type of jars with different kinds of stamp impressions on their handles continued to be in use during the seventh century BCE and later, when the Babylonian, Persian, Ptolemaic, and Seleucid empires ruled in Judah, does not support the idea that the *lmlk* administrative system was an *ad hoc* operation. Furthermore, if the production of all the *lmlk* jars had been limited to a short three-year period, it is difficult to understand how, during a revolt against the Assyrian empire, such a sophisticated system could have been developed—one with such an abundance of seals and such a profusion of symbols; with so many stamped handles, and such a wide distribution of jars, many at sites that were not part of Judah's preparations for the Assyrian attack, most of which would not be destroyed in 701 BCE and which would continue to develop in the seventh century BCE (Lipschits, Sergi, and Koch 2010, 6–7; see already Vaughn 1999, 136–52).

A much more tenable historical reconstruction of the *lmlk* system is that it represents the first stage in a long-enduring administrative and economic system that was established when Judah became an Assyrian vassal kingdom (Lipschits, Sergi and Koch 2010, 7, with further details and literature; Lipschits forthcoming). From the historical perspective, it is more reasonable to reconstruct the idea, hypothetical though it may be, that the system of stamped jars was initiated in the early stages of Judah's subjugation to the Assyrian empire, and continued for about 600 years, disappearing only after the Hasmonean Revolt. This system functioned as part of the Judahite administration under imperial rule, probably for collecting agricultural products at one main collection center. It seems that the first collection center was Lachish, and this role can explain the fate of this site

and the fate of the Shephelah during the Assyrian 701 BCE campaign. It can be assumed that Ramat Rahel was initially founded as a Judahite administrative center under the supervision and guidance of imperial forces, probably after the destruction of Lachish in 701 BCE (Na'aman 2001, 270–74; Lipschits and Gadot 2008; Lipschits, Gadot, Arubas, and Oeming 2009; 2011; 2016; Lipschits forthcoming).

As a historical assumption, we may then date the beginning of the *lmlk* stamp impression system to the beginning of the last third of the eighth century BCE, the period when Judah became a vassal kingdom, probably in the final years of King Ahaz' rule in Judah (Lipschits, Sergi, and Koch 2010, 17; 26–28; 2011, 6–7; Lipschits 2012, 8–9). During this period many other changes occurred in Judah's economy and administration, such as the technological changes in the agricultural production installations (Faust and Weiss 2005; Katz 2008, 55–59), the change in Judahite pottery from non-standardized, small-scale production in local workshops to a standardized mass-production industry with a limited variety of shapes, and a broad distribution network (Mazar 1990, 509; Zimhoni 1997, 171–72; 2004, 1705–7; Katz 2008, 52–53), and the appearance of the new system of marked weights (Kletter 1998, 145–47; Katz 2008, 77–79, with further literature).

#### WAS THERE A GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE EARLY LMLK STAMP IMPRESSIONS?

As stated above, the archaeological fact is that jar handles bearing all the different Ia and Ib four-winged scarab types and IIa winged sun-disk types, were all discovered sealed under the destruction debris of Level III at Lachish and other parallel destruction levels at other sites in the Shephelah. The question is whether one can find any indication of different stages in the development of these pre-701 BCE *lmlk* types.

Lipschits, Sergi, and Koch (2010, 17–18) suggested that the different four-winged scarab types preceded the winged sun-disk types, since the two-winged symbol continued to exist after 701, while production of the four-winged scarab ceased after this date. Furthermore, the number of stamped handles with the four-winged scarab symbols from the different types discovered in the 701 BCE destruction levels is much larger than the number of stamped handles bearing the winged sun-disk types.<sup>10</sup> Based on this data, it can be reconstructed that the use of the four-winged scarab symbol preceded the use of the winged sun-disk symbol, that it went out of use before the 701 Assyrian campaign, and that it was

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10. For example, 348 handles stamped with the four-winged scarab types were discovered in the Lachish III destruction level, as against 30 handles stamped with the different types of the winged sun-disk symbol. For a detailed summary see Lipschits, Sergi and Koch 2010, 17; Lipschits 2012, 9.

replaced by the winged sun-disk symbol sometime before this date. At the different sites that were destroyed by the Assyrian army there were still many stamped jars bearing the four-winged scarab stamp impressions, but together with them there were already some jars that were stamped with the winged sun-disk seals. These early winged sun-disk types came into use a short time before the Assyrian campaign, which explains the small number of stamped jars. However, after 701 BCE, the use of this symbol on the late types continued, and all the late types bear the winged sun-disk symbol.

Only now, after “early” and “late” types of the *lmlk* stamp impressions have been separated, (Lipschits, Sergi, and Koch 2010; 2011; Finkelstein 2012; Na’aman 2016), is it possible to measure this assumption against the old concept that all the different types were in use together, in the short three-year period before the Sennacherib Campaign (Ussishkin 1976; 1977; 2004c; Na’aman 1979; 1986) and show its advantages.

Scholars previously had suggested the similar assumption, dominant in the research of the mid- twentieth century, when many dated the entire *lmlk* system to the seventh century BCE and assumed that the four-winged symbol, Egyptian in origin, was replaced by the “flying scroll” as part of the new religious reform in Judah. Already Diringer (1949, 75–76; 85–86), followed by Lapp (1960, 21) and Cross (1969, 20–22), connected this change to the Josianic reform, and also claimed that from the paleographic perspective the script in the four-winged scarab seals preceded the script in the winged sun-disk seals. This observation was abandoned in the 1970s with the idea that all the different types of *lmlk* stamp impressions were discovered sealed under the destruction of Lachish level III, and the hypothesis that this entire system was created and was in use for a very short period of only three years, as part of Hezekiah’s preparations for the Assyrian 701 campaign (and see above).

Now, in light of the renewed typological and chronological discussion, and the separation between the “early” and the “late” types, this idea has been resurrected by new research and has returned to the agenda of modern research. The circumstantial evidence for the early date of the four-winged scarab symbol which can be supported by glyptic research, demonstrated that this symbol was already known and common in the ninth and eighth centuries BCE, that its origin can be detected in Egypt, that its culture and influence over the Levant in general, and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah in particular, were well established before the Assyrian conquest of the Levant in the second half of the eighth century BCE<sup>11</sup>

Another indication for the early date of the four-winged symbol can be found in the connection between the two-winged *lmlk* and the so called “private” stamp

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11. See, e.g., Sass (1993, 214); Keel and Uhlinger (1998, 276); Ornan (2005, 231–34).



impressions on jar handles (Lipschits, Sergi, and Koch 2010, 22–27; Lipschits 2012, 8–9).<sup>12</sup> It is clear that all the “private” stamp impressions *pre-date* Sennacherib’s campaign of 701 BCE,<sup>13</sup> and the geographical distribution of the “private” stamped handles is smaller than that of the *lmlk* stamped handles, found mainly in the Judean Shephelah, and usually at sites that were destroyed in that campaign.<sup>14</sup> It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that this small scale and limited time-use system represents an adaptation of the royal administration system of the *lmlk* stamp impressions in preparation for Judah’s revolt against Assyria (Lipschits, Sergi, and Koch 2010, 26).

A logical historical explanation for the “private” system of stamp impressions can be that for a short while it replaced the *lmlk* system. The people whose personal names appear in the seals were probably either responsible for the collection, or for receiving and distributing supplies, in conjunction with the war effort. Following the Assyrian campaign, the “private” stamp impression system disappeared, while the *lmlk* system continued to develop, with the necessary

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12. More than 250 “private” stamp impressions are known today, of which 185 were found in provenanced archaeological excavations. The “private” stamp impression usually includes two written rows with two private names. Often the Hebrew letter *lamed* (ל), a sign of belonging, appears before the first name; and sometimes it is absent. Occasionally the word “son” (בן) appears in between the two names, but generally not. This term generally means that the second name is the father of the first person. Thus, in most cases, the impression should be interpreted as follows: “(Belongs to) <personal name>, (the son of) <personal name>.” Occasionally a title is added. It should be noticed that one handle with “private” stamp impression placed next to *lmlk* stamp impression was found in Aharoni’s excavations in Ramat Raḥel (Aharoni 1962, 16), while in the Lachish excavations some jars had both the *lmlk* and the “private” stamp impressions, impressed on different handles (Ussishkin 2004c, 2143). It is also clear that the jars stamped by *lmlk* and “private” seals came from the same workshop (Mommsen, Perlman and Yellin 1984).

13. Of the 43 “private” impression types, it is certain that 40 are dated to the late eighth century BCE: 35 types were found in the Assyrian campaign destruction layers of 701 BCE, and five others were discovered in the undestroyed sites, with personal names that also appear on the 35 found at the sites destroyed by the Assyrians. Only three names—Hosh’am (son of) Hagay, Hashi (son of) Elshema, and Zemach (son of) Elshema—were found only in Jerusalem and in Ramat Raḥel, without any equivalent in Lachish Stratum III or at any other Judahite site. As they are only three out of 43 known types, it seems that they are an exception which does not prove the general rule. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that unlike the *lmlk* stamp impressions, not one handle with a “private” impression was found in an archaeological context securely dated to the seventh century BCE.

14. Of the 185 “private” stamped handles found in archaeological excavations, only 51 were found in the Hill region, out of which 19 came from Ramat Raḥel. All the personal names on the Hill area handles are identical to those found in the Shephelah and in the settlement layers destroyed in Sennacherib’s Campaign.

changes caused by the massive Assyrian destruction, especially in the Lowland agricultural region, now destroyed.



**Fig. 4:** “Private” stamp impression together with *lmlk* stamp impression on the same jar handle. Photo: Aharoni’s Expedition to Ramat Rahel

Based on this chronological “key,” Lipschits, Sergi, and Koch (2010, 17) suggested seeing the connection between the “private” and the winged sun-disk *lmlk* stamp impressions as the main clue for the earlier date of the four-winged scarab stamp impressions of Types Ia and Ib, and for the later change to the winged sun-disk stamp impressions of Type IIa, which continued after 701 BCE and developed into the late *lmlk* winged sun-disk

types (IIb and XII). Ussishkin (1976, 12; 2004c, 2142–43) noted that in all the cases known to him where “private” stamp impressions were stamped on the same handle or the same jar as *lmlk* impressions, the *lmlk* type was always the winged sun-disk. This observation can now be updated, since all the cases mentioned by Ussishkin are indeed of the winged sun-disk types, and furthermore they are all “early types” (IIa), except for one case of a “private” stamp impression stamped on the same handle of a four-winged scarab impression (Lipschits, Sergi and Koch 201, 26; and n. 45; and cf. Avigad and Barkai 2000, 248–49, no. 54).

The conclusion is that there is a chronological overlapping between the last phase of the four-winged scarab types and the “early” winged sun-disk types, probably in the final years before the Sennacherib campaign. In light of this data, it can be assumed that when the “private” impressions were stamped, probably as part of the adaptation of the *lmlk* system to the preparations in Judah for the Assyrian attack, four-winged scarab *lmlk* stamp impressions were no longer stamped on new jars, and only old jars stamped by seals of these types were recycled in large numbers. The main archaeological argument in support of this suggested dating is that within all the early types discovered at Lachish, many more four-winged scarab handles of Types Ia and Ib were found than the winged sun-disk handles of Type IIa. This may also indicate that storage jars bearing a four-winged scarab emblem were in use for a longer period of time than those bearing a winged sun-disk emblem.

New data, based on paleomagnetic research, indicate an inner chronology of the four-winged scarab types and on the processes of development of Types Ia and Ib.<sup>15</sup> The paleomagnetic graph shows no overlapping between the four-winged Ia and Ib types, and it seems that Type Ib is earlier than Type Ia. The meaning of this observation is that the system of stamp impressions with the lapidary writing is the first ever system of stamp impressions on jar handles. This system was produced by a skilled artisan in a unified way, and was replaced by the Ia system with cursory writing. Only three seals were produced; the place name *śwkh* = Socoh is absent. The size of the new set of seals is similar to the other types that were in use after the 701 Assyrian campaign. The change probably took place after many years of use of the old Ib system, and the new Ia system was also replaced by a similar system of seals, with a similar size and script, but with a new symbol of winged sun-disk, which replaced the symbol of the four-winged scarab.

#### SYNTHESIS AND RECONSTRUCTION

Beginning with the rule of King Ahaz, no later than 732 BCE, until the sudden death of Sargon II in 705 BCE, Judah was a loyal vassal kingdom of the Assyrian empire (Lipschits, Sergi and Koch 2010, 6–7; 2011, 6; Lipschits forthcoming). As part of its obligations, Judah paid an annual tribute to the empire. The *lmlk* jar system would have been one of the main means by which the kingdom accomplished this. It collected agricultural products such as olive oil and wine, exchanged it for silver and gold, and with this paid its annual taxes (Lipschits, Sergi and Koch 2010, 17; 26–28; 2011, 6–7; Lipschits 2012, 8–9; forthcoming). The development of the *lmlk* system of estates and transportation of agricultural products was an administrative scheme initiated by King Ahaz a few years after 732 BCE, and which continued until his death in 715 BCE.<sup>16</sup>

In this case it can be suggested that 715 BCE is the transition point between Types Ib and Ia, and if so, Type Ib was in use between approximately 730 and 715 BCE. It may be that the changeover from the four-winged scarab to the

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15. The Paleomagnetic research is conducted by Erez Ben-Yosef of the Department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Cultures and the Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University, Ron Shaar of the Institute of Earth Sciences, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Lisa Tauxe of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California San Diego. As part of this research, Michael Millman wrote an MA thesis, under the supervision of Lipschits and Ben-Yosef, on paleomagnetic research of a series of stamped handles of all the different types. The conclusions cited here are based on the results of this study (Millman 2014), as well as on a paper published by all the above scholars (Ben-Yosef, Millman, Shaar, Tauxe, and Lipschits 2017).

16. On the chronology of King Hezekiah see Na'aman 1994, 236–39; 2016, 118, with further literature.

winged sun-disk occurred following the unexpected death of Sargon II in 705 BCE, and if so, Type Ia was in use between approximately 715 and 705 BCE, and the winged sun-disk Type IIa was in use, together with the “private” stamp impressions, between 705 and 701 BCE.<sup>17</sup>

After Judah’s recovery from the harsh blows levelled on the kingdom during the Assyrian military campaign, and still under Hezekiah’s rule, the system continued to function. The winged sun-disk Types IIb, IIc and XII were in use probably until the end of the first quarter of the seventh century BCE, and since the Shephelah was lost to the kingdom, as part of the punishment and the new order of the Assyrian empire in the region, new agricultural areas were developed in the Judean Hills, and a new central collection center for the agricultural products was built close to Jerusalem—at Ramat Raḥel (biblical Beit Hakkerem) (Lipschits, Gadot, Arubas, and Oeming 2016; Lipschits forthcoming).

### POSTSCRIPT

A recent critique of my earlier work (Lipschits, Sergi and Koch 2010), which was updated in my 2018 book and in this current article, was presented by Andy Vaughn at a symposium for Oded Borowski at Emory University in 2014 and published as an addendum to his article in the Beth Shemesh report (and again, in the same words, in this volume). As a full response to this critique will be published shortly (Lipschits forthcoming), I will not respond in detail here, but I would like to call the readers’ attention to some key points:

(1) The new research on stamp impressions was not connected in any way to the renewed excavations at Ramat Raḥel which I co-directed. Rather, it was based on a careful study of the distribution of the *lmlk* stamped handles, according to the detailed typology set out by Andre Lemaire in 1981, something that was not done in the many years that passed until our 2010 study. The basic comparison between the *lmlk* types and the archaeological data indicates that the different four-winged

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17. One must remember that the relative chronology between the “early types” is well based but the exact chronology is based only on historical assumptions. In this case, the fact that no *lmlk* jar handles have thus far been found at Tel ‘Eton late eighth century destruction layer (Katz and Faust 2012, 44–48) should come as no surprise, and should not be regarded as an indication either of a destruction prior to Sennacherib’s 701 BCE Campaign (Katz and Faust 2012; and cf. Finkelstein 2012, 204) or of the date of the *lmlk* system of stamp impressions (Na’aman 2016, 118–19). As against general conclusions, like “Tel ‘Eton is located 11 km southeast of Lachish, in a region where all the large late eighth century sites excavated so far produced *lmlk* stamped handles” (Na’aman 2016, 118), it should be remembered that in all the area south of Lachish, the finds of *lmlk* stamped handles is very rare, and includes four handles in Tel Beit Mirsim, two in Khirbet Qeilah and one in Tel Halif. It should come as no surprise that no *lmlk* handles were discovered at Tel ‘Eton and no chronological or other conclusions can be deduced based on it.

Types Ia and Ib, together with the two-winged Type IIa, were found sealed under the destruction level of Lachish III and contemporaneous strata, and accordingly, we defined them as “early types,” meaning that they were used before the 701 BCE Assyrian attack on Judah. The three other types of two-winged *lmlk* stamp impressions (Lemaire’s IIb, IIc, and XII) appear either in hill-country sites not destroyed in 701 BCE or in strata attributed to the seventh century BCE. Not even one stamped handle of these types has been found in a clear 701 BCE destruction level, and accordingly, we defined them as “late types,” dated to the beginning of the seventh century BCE.

(2) Even in his critique of our conclusion, Vaughn fails to differentiate between the different two-winged types—defined as “early” and “late.” The understanding of this basic conclusion could add a new dimension to the stamped jar handles published by Vaughn himself in the Beth Shemesh report, and shed new light on the history of this site during the late eighth and early seventh century BCE.

(3) Vaughn claims that many of the so-called later types of *lmlk* stamp impressions are found together with earlier types in the same archaeological context. Nevertheless, the few examples he deals with are problematic, since none of them were found in a clear 701 BCE destruction level. In contrast, insofar as their pottery type, all of them would be best dated to the seventh century BCE, after the Assyrian attack on Judah. In short, none of these examples contradict our dating; if anything, they support it.

(4) Vaughn does not deal with the supporting paleomagnetic evidence, which indicates that the jars stamped with *lmlk* stamp impressions went through a long process of development, including within the early types—the four-winged Type Ia and Ib and the two-winged Type IIa, and continues to develop after 701 BCE with the late types (Ben-Yosef, Millman, Shaar, Tauxe, and Lipschits 2017).

(5) Vaughn disregards the many types of stamp impressions dated from the seventh to the second centuries BCE, and instead, limits his research and his critique to the *lmlk* types and the “private” stamp impressions. But the new approach I have suggested focuses on the big picture—not one specific type of stamp impressions—but on this unique Judahite phenomenon of stamping jar handles. This system endured in one form or another for no less than 600 years. In former publications as well as in the new book (Lipschits 2018), I argue that the practice began in the final third of the eighth century BCE, with the early *lmlk* types, and continued during the first quarter of the seventh century BCE with the late *lmlk* types, during the middle of the seventh century BCE with the incised concentric circles on jar handles, and during the last quarter of the seventh and early sixth century BCE with the rosette stamp impressions. This same administrative system of stamping jar handles that began during the height of the kingdom of Judah, continued even after 586 BCE for an additional 450 years, when Judah was a Babylonian province (the *mwšh* and lion stamped handles), as well as a Persian,

Ptolemaic, and Seleucid province (the *yhwd* and the *yršlm* stamped handles). This, I have argued, is the big picture.

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## Should All of the *LMLK* Jars Still Be Attributed to Hezekiah? Yes!

*Andrew G. Vaughn*

Back in 1976, David Ussishkin argued that all the jars stamped with *lmlk* (“for the king” or “of the king”) seals should be dated to the late eighth century.<sup>1</sup> (For a physical description of these seals, see Lipschits in this volume.) As the title of this paper indicates, I still follow this argument and believe that there is no need to change the scholarly consensus. It is possible that a handful of isolated jars remained in use into the seventh century, but the manufacture of jars ceased shortly after Sennacherib’s campaign in 701 BCE. Although it may seem odd to rehearse arguments that I made almost 20 years ago, given the recent flurry of proposals to see the *lmlk* phenomenon as extending beyond the reign of Hezekiah and into the early sixth century, I feel the need to respond and show why the new proposals are unconvincing.

### SO-CALLED NEW EVIDENCE PRESENTED AFTER THE RAMAT RAHEL EXCAVATIONS

Following the renewed excavations at Ramat Rahel, several senior members (Lipschits, Sergi, and Koch) of that excavation team proposed a new chronological scheme for the *lmlk* jars based in part on the evidence that they uncovered at Ramat Rahel. In their view, the *lmlk* impressions from Ramat Rahel dated *both* from the late eighth century BCE (the horizon of Sennacherib’s campaign) *and* from periods throughout the seventh century BCE. They gathered evidence from other sites in order to support their hypothesis. They outlined their new dating in

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1. This paper, minus the new introduction, appears as an addendum (titled “Seal Impressions in Light of Current Debate,” 498–501) to my chapter in Bunimovitz and Lederman 2016 and is reproduced here with their kind permission.

a 2010 article; the argument is presented in a somewhat different form in Lipschits' article for this volume (to which I did not have access), but I will focus on their original article upon which this later work is based.

Lipschits et al. (2010) begin their article by rehearsing the current scholarly consensus that has led to the view that all *lmlk* stamped jars were manufactured during the reign of Hezekiah sometime in the years preceding Sennacherib's campaign in 701 BCE. They list a number of *lmlk* impressions that come from seventh century layers, and they observe that most scholars consider the jars associated with these impressions to originate from limited secondary use. Lipschits *et al.* maintain that while such a conclusion is reasonable, it seems worthwhile to consider "the possibility that some *lmlk* jars were manufactured and stamped *after* Sennacherib's campaign to Judah" (Lipschits et al. 2010, 9).

On the face of it, such a statement seems prudent—it is almost always worthwhile to consider another hypothesis as a possibility. However, as will be seen in the discussion below, the problem with their argument is that they begin with an assumption (the character of Judah being an Assyrian vassal during Ahaz's reign), suggest a possibility (that some *lmlk* jars were manufactured after 701 BCE), present some evidence that *might* support that possibility (of some *lmlk* jars dating to the seventh century), and then use both the assumption and the possibility as proven building blocks to support a new chronology for the *lmlk* jars. The entire hypothesis or theory is based on arguments from silences, assumptions, and possibilities that are not proven. After examining the hypotheses and theories presented by Lipschits et al., I will then turn to some broader proposals presented by Israel Finkelstein and show why these broader proposals are also not convincing. But first, let's continue with the examinations of Lipschits, Sergi, and Koch.

Even though their hypotheses are not proven, the argument is crafted in such a way as to give the impression that the large amounts of data support the re-dating of the entire *lmlk* phenomenon. Lipschits et al. postulate that there are four periods of royal jars production:

1. Jars with four-winged impressions (ca. 730 BCE)
2. Jars with two-winged impressions of Type IIa and official seal impressions (ca. 701 BCE)
3. Jars with two-wing impressions of Type IIb, IIc, X II, and O II (first half of seventh century BCE)
4. Jars with concentric circles (late seventh century BCE)

To examine this new chronology, it is helpful to briefly look at their argumentation. (See Lipschits in this volume for a more detailed presentation.) As a means of considering the *possibility* that some *lmlk* jars were manufactured after 701 BCE, they state: "We hypothesized that if not even one exemplar of a given type [of a *lmlk* impression] was found in a clear 701 BCE destruction level, we

could assume that this type was produced after the 701 campaign” (Lipschits et al. 2010, 10). They go on to list twelve sites that fit this criterion: Jerusalem, Ramat Rahel, Gibeon, Tell en-Nasbeh, Tell el-Fûl, Nebi Samwil, Hebron, Beth Zur, Jericho, Khirbet es-Samrah, En-Gedi, and Hurvat Shilhah. Lipschits et al. then argue that these sites all contain impressions of Type IIb, IIc, X II, and O II, and that these impression types are not found at sites destroyed by Sennacherib or at sites that do not have seventh century occupation. Therefore, they postulate that all of these impression types post-date the campaign of Sennacherib.

At this point in our discussion, it is instructive to look closely at the argumentation. Lipschits et al. have taken a rhetorical leap of stating that there is a possibility of seventh century manufacture to arguing that if a certain *lmlk* type is only found at a site that was not destroyed by Sennacherib and this type was absent at sites with only eighth century occupation, then such a type was definitely manufactured in the seventh century. Such a conclusion is far from proven and only a possibility until some positive evidence is presented. Indeed, David Ussishkin made the same observation in his rejoinder to Lipschits et al.: “A cardinal suggestion like the change in chronology made by Lipschits et al. needs some positive archaeological data in order to substantiate it” (Ussishkin 2011, 230).

Yet, Lipschits et al. only present evidence that can be classified as an argument from silence. For example, they marshal evidence to suggest that *lmlk* impressions of Type IIb are absent in layers with late eighth century occupation, and then conclude that because these impressions are absent in clear eighth century layers that they must be later in date. Language like “if not even one exemplar” (Lipschits et al. 2010, 10) might cause a reader who is not familiar with the topic to think that they are correct in their hypothesis.

Such arguments from silence are most tenuous, and it is instructive to reflect on a similar (but different) distribution theory about the *lmlk* jars that was advanced by Yosef Garfinkel in the 1980s based on evidence that known at the time (see Garfinkel 1984 and Garfinkel 1985). Building on a distribution study of all of the official seal impressions known at the time of his articles, Garfinkel proposed a system of local, regional, and kingdom-wide officials for Hezekiah’s kingdom. The problem with the argumentation was that if even one new impression was located in a different region belonging to a particular official, that person would move from a “local” official to a “kingdom-wide” official.

As it turns out, the identification of dozens of new impressions in the 1990’s resulted in almost all of the officials in Garfinkel’s study being identified as kingdom-wide officials rather than local or regional officials (see Vaughn 1999, 158–61). Even though Garfinkel’s distribution study was a possibility given the data known in the 1980’s, it was based on what had *not* been found. The discovery of just a few new impressions dramatically altered his conclusions. Likewise, the hypotheses of Lipschits et al. will be dramatically altered or disproven if even a

couple impressions of Type IIb are found in eighth century contexts or at sites that were not occupied in the seventh century.

Even though Lipschits et al. use language to suggest that not even one counter-example has been found, the opposite is actually the case. In a thorough examination of the evidence from the twelve sites cited by Lipschits et al., Ussishkin (2011, 224–31) demonstrates that only one site out of the twelve (Hurvāt Shilḥah) does not have occupation during the eighth century that might account for the presence of what Lipschits *et al.* call the later type of impressions. Ussishkin rightly shows that the handles and jars need to be found in a stratified context to point to usage in the seventh century. Just because a non-stratified find might date to a later period, does not mean that the non-stratified finds *should* be used to re-date the phenomenon. Again, they focus on a possibility that is not probable and later use it as a proven building block.

Moreover, many of these so-called later types of *lmlk* impressions are found in the same archaeological context with what Lipschits *et al.* identify as earlier types or in the same archaeological context with official seal impressions (which they also date the eighth century). In conclusion, one sees that in spite of language such as “even one exemplar,” there are many possible exceptions. Only one site (Hurvāt Shilḥah) has what Lipschits et al. call a late impression type without the possibility of eighth century occupation.

At this point in our review of the hypotheses of Lipschits et al., we can conclude that they have only presented possibilities that have not been proven. Yet, one should ask if there is positive evidence to suggest the opposite theory—that all (or almost all) of the *lmlk* impressions and related jars date to the late eighth century. In addition to the persuasive arguments of Ussishkin presented as early as 1970’s (see Ussishkin 1997), there are several counter-examples that necessitate that the hypotheses of Lipschits et al. be reconsidered just as new evidence necessitated the re-examination of the Garfinkel’s theories as described above.

First, *lmlk* impressions of Type ZIIb, HIIb, and MIIb have been found at Lachish and should be dated to the late eighth century. Lipschits *et al.* attempt to explain away these examples by stating the Lachish has seventh century occupation as well eighth century occupation. However, Ussishkin (1977; and see recently 2011, 231) has shown that only Level III at Lachish has clear evidence of *lmlk* jars, and such evidence is absent in Level II (where a slightly different jar type and handle type is found).

Second, one site listed by Lipschits et al. is actually an example of a Type IIb impression found in a clear eighth-century context. Even though Frank Moore Cross (Cross and Milik 1956, 9–11) identified a Type HIIb and possibly a Type MIIb from Khirbet es-Samrah as coming from a seventh century context, they should be dated from the eighth century. I have already pointed out in my book on the topic (Vaughn 1999, 75–78), Cross (and later Lawrence Stager in his 1975 dissertation) dated all of the phases from Khirbet es-Samrah to the late seventh

century because he followed the theory prevalent at the time that pottery from the horizon of Lachish Level II and Level III both dated to the late seventh century. Stager (1976) later refers to Khirbet es-Samrah and some pottery plates from the site in an article published in BASOR, but his dissertation was never published.

It has been common for scholars to site these earlier studies without re-examining the pottery plates from Stager's dissertation, but the pottery plates show clear examples of pottery from the Lachish Level III horizon. The IIIb impressed handle was found on a handle with concentric circles in the occupation debris of Phase 2 in a storage magazine of Area 8-9. This same phase contains three rilled rim pot sherds that have parallels to Lachish Level III (Stager 1975, 147, 149 and plates 3:33–35; 4:21–25; and 4:27–28). Stager's dissertation specifies that the handle came from the occupational debris (not a fill), so it should be dated conclusively to the late eighth century. Ussishkin (2011, 227) also cites the evidence from Khirbet es-Samrah and references personal communication from Lawrence Stager and a study of Daniel Master (2009), who recently reexamined the pottery and drew similar conclusions.

Third, handles with Type IIIb impressions were found at Tel `Erani, Tel Jezreel, and Khirbet Shartu. These sites are mentioned by Lipschits et al. but explained away as falling outside the boundaries of Judah (Lipschits et al. 2010, 15). However, the presence of these impressions at sites that are outliers from the kingdom of Judah does not make sense in the seventh century when the kingdom of Judah was restricted in size. The presence of jars impressed with these impressions makes the most sense during the reign of Hezekiah when the boundaries of Judah were expanded and when Judah likely had a wider sphere of trade with the surrounding regions.

Finally, Ron Tappy (oral communication) has discovered two, two-winged *lmlk* impressions at Tel Zayit that have not been published. One of the impressions is clearly of Type ZIIb, and the other impression could be of the Type IIb variety. The impressions do not come from stratified contexts, but to date Tappy has not found evidence of (any?) significant occupation at Tel Zayit during the seventh century. These impressions (especially the Type ZIIb impression) provide further evidence against the hypothesis of Lipschits *et al.* that Type IIb impressions were not used in the late eighth century. This jar handle is the clear, single exemplar that they claim has not been found.

In summary, one sees that the hypotheses presented by Lipschits et al. are not compelling. The most likely explanation is still that all of the *lmlk* impressions date from the reign of Hezekiah and from the late eighth century. Thus, the conclusions presented by Ussishkin in 1977 and reaffirmed by many scholars since (including the present author in 1999) still hold true today. We can still safely and confidently conclude that *lmlk* jar phenomenon is limited to Hezekiah's reign, with the possible exception of a few jars that remained in use in the seventh century.

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Part 4  
RELIGION AND RITUAL



## Death and Burial in Eighth-Century Judah

*Elizabeth Bloch-Smith*

This paper honors Oded Borowski, who, among his many accomplishments, promoted discussion of death and burial through his excavation and publication of the Tel Halif tombs. In the spirit of his work, eighth century burial remains from Judah are considered from the perspectives of biblical texts and anthropological research to conjure up the life of the dead.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

For eighth-century Judah, the predominant, archaeologically-attested, type of burial is the bench tomb, followed by the chamber tomb.<sup>1</sup> However, the number of excavated interments falls far short of the population, estimated at 130,000-150,000 for eighth century Israel and Judah so the recovered remains may not represent the range of Israelite burial practices (Dever 2012, 105). Mention of a commoners' interment in the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem (2 Kgs 23:6) suggests that massive, communal burial grounds may yet be located. Other attested eighth century burial types—jar burials (Beth Shemesh) and pit graves (Jerusalem, Lachish)—found in miniscule numbers at a limited number of settlements also do not account for the missing population.<sup>2</sup> An unanswerable question remains whether the missing or “invisible burials” were due to financial or

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1. All dates in this paper are BCE; Khirbet/Horvat and Tell/Tel have been omitted from place names—all names refer to the ancient site by that name; and cited examples of burials and biblical texts are representative, not exhaustive.

2. For the purposes of this study, all burials within the territorial kingdom of Judah are considered Israelite with the possible exception of some Lachish interments. Lachish royal fort burials displayed various non-normative, Judahite practices such as burial in pit graves—not attested elsewhere (100 and 200 Cemetery, 519, 4027); skulls separated from

ideological considerations. Was the bench tomb preferred but prohibitively expensive for some, or did Judahite burial take other culturally-mandated forms not yet attested?

Eighth-century Judahite cave tombs, chamber tombs, and bench tombs continue a local Bronze Age practice of housing multiple individuals in a naturally formed or hewn room(s) in the rock.<sup>3</sup> A cave tomb utilized natural fissures within the rock that might be enlarged as needed. To create a chamber tomb, the fissure or cave was shaped into a quadrilateral room. Adding benches around the periphery of the chamber produced a bench tomb. Stone carved or constructed, waist-high benches along the sides and back of the chamber first appeared in earlier fourteenth to twelfth century coastal and Shephelah tombs. Use of benches persisted in those areas (such as at 'Eton/Aitun) from the Late Bronze Age into Iron II, so highland Judahites likely adopted or conveyed this practice from the Shephelah or the coast. In the eighth century, these three types of burial—cave, chamber, and bench tombs—occur either alone or together; they commonly cluster in a rock outcrop proximate to a settlement.

The basic bench tomb plan consists of a small, square-rectangular entrance closed by a large stone opening into a single chamber measuring from 5-3 x 3.5-2.5 meters. Steps descend to the floor of the chamber with one to three waist-high benches lining side and/or back walls, often with a repository or pit for bones and goods carved into the floor, or in or under a bench. Additional chambers may be positioned to the side or back of the initial room. A small niche occasionally carved into a wall of the tomb held a lamp. In a southern and Shephelah regional variant, recessed niches, with a slightly arched ceiling, carved along the length of side and/or back walls form the “benches” (Yezereski 2013). This arrangement creates more floor space in the center of the tomb. The most elaborate tombs feature a dromos or an elaborately carved façade opening into a vestibule affording access to multiple burial chambers.

The bench tomb plan with regularly-shaped chambers resembles highland and Shephelah rectangular pillared houses with their rectilinear divisions of internal space. Benches arrayed along the walls correspond to the rectilinear rooms opening off the house's courtyard. Elements such as entry stairs, doorways, benches for reposing, and paneled walls likely replicate domestic architectural features. Extraordinary, finely carved examples, found primarily in Jerusalem, but also in Gibeon to the north and Judeidah to the south, replicate residences; they

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bodies (Tb. 120); and charred animal bones, primarily pig, covering layers of human bone (Tbs. 107, 120).

3. For Late Bronze Age burials see Gonen 1992. Summary treatments of Iron Age burials include Bloch-Smith 1992; Faust and Bunimovitz 2008; Fantalkin 2008; Osborne 2011; Yezereski 2013.

feature antechambers, supplemental rooms, and decorative features, such as faux cornices, paneling, and door frames, all carved into the rock. Such tombs create a stone skeuomorph of an elite residence. As is evident through comparison with other tombs, these more elaborate tombs mirror the growing economic and status disparities evident in Judahite society.<sup>4</sup> Analogous to the houses in settlements, tombs in cemeteries constitute parallel, neighboring communities.

The recently deceased lay supine either on the floor near the middle of the cave/chamber or on a bench. Finely carved tombs added parapets along bench edges to prevent rolling off and a stone pillow or headrest to cradle the head. In an undisturbed Jerusalem-Mount Zion tomb, five individuals lay on two benches in the first chamber: two individuals lying head to foot on one bench and three people on the second bench (Davis and Loner 1978, 16–19). Carved headrests suggest that a bench was intended for a single individual or, rarely, for two persons at a time (el-Qôm, Zuba, Silwan). Crowding bodies may reflect socio-economic realities or the need to accommodate multiple contemporary interments. Both sexes and all ages were interred together, including, in 'Ira Tb. 15, an adult cradling a child (Beir-Arieh and Baron 1999). This distribution argues for interment by family or coresidential unit rather than by a different category such as sex, age, or social status. Scientific testing has yet to establish kinship among Judahite, Iron Age tomb occupants.<sup>5</sup>

In cave and chamber tombs, an earlier occupant's remains could be relocated to the periphery in order to free space for new interments. With more limited space in bench tombs, bones with goods of previous tomb occupants and perhaps also others introduced from elsewhere were re-deposited in a repository or pit or on the tomb floor. In some cemeteries, more than one repository/pit was hewn in a tomb (St. Étienne, Halif, Za'aq), while others generally contained none ('Ira). No publications of undisturbed repositories or pits estimate the minimum number of individuals by sex and age with their associated finds. This lacuna complicates hypothesizing about the secondarily buried dead. The description of a repository from an undisturbed, Halif bench tomb dated to the tenth to ninth century mentions no osteological remains but lists bowls and a goblet, jugs, more than 60

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4. Mike Parker Pearson (1993) cautions against correlating burial and societal features without considering the broader burial and lived contexts. See also Bloch-Smith 2002, 128–29.

5. According to DNA analysis, 22 individuals buried in the Middle Bronze Ashkelon Tomb 5 represent not a single extended family but three different patrilineages and 5 matrilineages (Stager, "Tel Ashkelon" in *NEAEHL* 5, 1580). Archaeological evidence is also lacking. William Dever's (1970) contested reading of the el-Qôm tomb I inscription names the siblings "Ophai and 'Uza," son and daughter of Netanyahu but epigraphers reconstruct, "(Belonging?) to Ephai son of Nethania" (Dobbs-Allsopp et al. 2005, 405–7).

juglets, 34 bronze anklets, five scarabs or scaraboid seals, a cat amulet, and a bronze lamp in a niche carved within the pit (Biran and Gophna, 1970). This selection may demonstrate concern for pleasing fragrance (juglets), sustenance (bowls, jugs, goblet), illumination (lamp), personal identification (seals), and adornment possibly affording protection (amulet, anklets). In nearly every tomb, secondary burials with select goods were kept in proximity to primary inhumations.

Most tombs were disturbed; as a result, generalizations regarding length of use and numbers of interred are tentative. Of the 15 undisturbed, tenth to sixth century, cave, chamber, bench, and *arcosolia*<sup>6</sup> tombs in Israelite territory that detail interments, six housed 23–100 individuals (100, 54, 45, 37, 25, 23). Nine of the fifteen held only two to ten persons including children. If these tombs housed kin, then these low numbers may represent one to three or possibly four generations of a nuclear family, perhaps augmented by a surviving grandparent or unmarried sibling. Fifteen tombs over four centuries should not be considered representative, merely suggestive. The most-prevalent tomb plan with one to three benches in a single chamber, visually evokes a residence for a nuclear family rather than an agnatic or extended family.

Mortuary provisions in both the tomb and the repository/pit typically included locally-made ceramic lamps for illumination; bowls, jars, and jugs indicative of the consumption of food and drink; and juglets for precious liquids such as scented oils. Conceivably these vessels were provided for the living to dine in the tomb, though the malodorous and gruesome setting might have discouraged lingering. However, many vessels' meticulous placement at a corpse's head and feet and transference to a repository/pit with the secondary burial of bones indicate the deceased as the recipient.

Pottery assemblages deviated from their household counterparts in a lack of large storejars and fewer cooking pots but with a larger percentage of lamps, bowls, small jars, and juglets—vessels for serving and consumption of food and drink but not preparation or storage (Yezereski and Lender 2002, \*66). A lack of grinding stones and the small number of other tools also differs from a household assemblage. The tools, which were rarely provided in tombs (needle, spindle whorl, flint, metal blade), perhaps served the deceased in a next or continuing life or indicated an occupational identity, such as a weaver, butcher, or warrior. Clothing and objects of personal identification and adornment, also present in

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6. *Arcosolia* are often difficult to distinguish from benches. By definition, benches could accommodate multiple individuals either at a time or sequentially, whereas *arcosolia* housed only a single individual. *Arcosolia*'s roughly coffin-shaped space could radiate out from the center of the chamber (Tuba?) or was cut into a wall along the side of the chamber comparable to a bench (Aitun). Given the difficulty in distinguishing between the two, no distinction is made in this paper.

repositories, may have served to maintain the deceased's distinctive identity from life into a post-mortem existence. Some assemblages included additional, distinctive items such as figurines, models, rattles, and imported pottery, but the majority was equipped with a standardized repertoire of common household items, with no exclusively mortuary items. The standardized provisions suggest a societal conviction in the individual deceased's diminished but ongoing needs in a post-mortem existence.

Several tombs bear one or more inscriptions on the façade or interior wall; some readings and datings are disputed (el-Qôm Tombs I and II; Silwan Tombs 3, 34, 35). Inscriptions name the deceased and add a warning or proclaim divine favor. The Silwan Tomb 35 inscription dated to around 700 BCE reads, "This is [the tomb of ...]yahu who is over the house. There is no silver or gold here [on]ly [his bones] and the bones of his female slave with him. Cursed be the person who opens this (tomb)" (Dobbs-Allsopp et al. 2005, 507–10). Uriah, buried in el-Qôm Tomb 3, acknowledges his divine patron: "Uriah the rich commissioned it. Blessed was Uriah by YHWH, and from his enemies by his (YHWH's) a/Asherah he has delivered him. (Written) by 'Oniyahu.... by his a/Asherah."<sup>7</sup> These inscriptions appear purposefully inscribed on the tomb walls to protect the resident deceased individual.

An elaborate, variant tomb type accommodated a single individual, often with a companion. Silwan tombs, carved into a rock face visible from royal and cultic Jerusalem buildings, housed one or two individuals in a stone sarcophagus or resting places equipped with headrests. The absence of repositories appears intended to preclude subsequent occupants. The Tomb 35 façade inscription identifies the occupants as a "royal steward" with his female companion (see Isa 22:15). This titled occupant suggests royal and perhaps cultic personnel chose individualized burial in the capital city rather than with family.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

Just as eighth-century Judahite family members resided and slept in their home, so the dead gathered and slept on the one to three sleeping berths in a bench tomb, seemingly intended for an augmented nuclear family (kinship undetermined). The larger tombs may have accommodated extended families. Secondary burials, whether of previous primary interments or newly introduced individuals, kept the recently and more distantly deceased together in the tomb. Lamps and serving vessels for foods and liquids provided for both the primary and secondary burials suggest continued needs or wants attributed to the deceased in their post-mortem existence. In general, feasting functions as an important mode of social integration

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7. Dobbs-Allsopp et al. (2005, 409) translate with the name of the goddess Asherah rather than her symbol (asherah).

and exclusion. Was the meal consumed by the living or, more likely, the recent and distant dead? In general, objects tended to be pedestrian and functional, not a valuable gift, or a distinctive mortuary item indicative of a changed status for the individual, or of a gift intended to placate the deceased or gain future favors.

Without more undisturbed burials, it is not possible to identify rituals enacted by the living in the tomb. The middle to late eighth century Katamuwa inscription from Zincirli, admittedly distant from Judah, testifies to mortuary rituals conducted elsewhere, not at the burial site. A stele depicts the feasting Katamuwa with an injunction to survivors to supply annual offerings so that he may dine with the gods. This stele stood not in proximity to or inside a tomb but in a small room, perhaps a mortuary chapel (*bsyr/d. 'lmy*, see Eccl 12:5), within a building in a residential section of town (Struble and Rimmer Herrmann 2009; Pardee 2009).

For the vast majority of attested burials, the standardized practice manifest in bench and chamber tombs persists through the eighth to the sixth century with no significant changes. Minor developments include a greater frequency of repositories and the inclusion of more specialized vessels such as cooking pots, wine decanters, and storage jars. The standardization in tomb plan and location, multiple burial, primary and secondary treatment of the corpse, and grave goods points to a broad cultural practice and not individualized preference. Variation within the norm allows for displays of wealth and claimed status as demonstrated by the range in quality of tomb carving and embellishment even within a single cemetery (Halif, Za'aq; Borowski 2013). Individualized burial of officials in Silwan constitutes the greatest divergence from the norm, excluding the aforementioned Lachish graves.

### SELECT BIBLICAL EVIDENCE<sup>8</sup>

Biblical texts express a range of attitudes regarding the dead and burial, including desirable and deprecatory forms of interment, appreciative and disdainful attitudes towards the dead, and vague notions regarding post-mortem existence. This diversity of value-laden views, idiomatic phrases, idealized practices, and disparagement of divergence from the ideal expresses a range of ideological attitudes regarding the dead among biblical writers. Accordingly, the texts are regarded as ideological formulations rather than objective descriptions of reality. Nevertheless, they testify to a diversity of practices that are approved, disparaged, or forbidden by different authors through time. This textual complexity complicates reconstructing eighth century practices and beliefs. Biblical passages refer to a

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8. Textual references are not limited to conclusively eighth-century sources, but an effort is made to focus on texts that likely originated in the ninth to sixth centuries and were representative of eighth-century thinking.



variety of premonarchic interment practices. Patrilineal burial in a tomb located on family-owned land in Israelite territory constitutes the ideal as modeled by the patriarchs in the Cave of Machpelah (Gen 49:29–32).<sup>9</sup> From the conquest and settlement generations, Gideon, Samson, and Asahel were interred “in their father’s tomb” (Judg 8:32; 16:31; 2 Sam 2:32), but minor judges and Jephthah plus Samuel were buried where they lived without reference to family (Judg 2:9; 10:2; 1 Sam 25:1; 28:3). The book of Joshua concludes with the burials of Joshua on ancestral land, Joseph at Shechem on the plot purchased by Jacob, and Eleazar son of Aaron on land assigned to his son in Ephraim (Josh 24:29–33), all located in territory purchased by the patriarchs and allotted by Yahweh but not specifically conquered by Joshua. In general, these burial notices affirm the importance of physical burial, family connections, and attachment to claimed, allotted, or purchased land.

According to biblical texts, through the monarchic period family burial in a tomb signified a good death, while exhumation and individualized or non-familial interment without a tomb or in a foreign country was disparaged or considered a form of punishment (Josh 7:25–6; 1 Kgs 13:21–2; 14:13; Jer 8:1–2; Olyan 2015). New burial practices were also introduced. Northern and southern kings who died of natural causes were buried in their capital city, whether Tirzah, Samaria, or the city of David/Jerusalem (1 Kgs 16:6, 28; 2 Kgs 9:27–8). For Judahite kings, interment with previous kings or in proximity to the temple likely conferred the legitimacy of dynastic succession on the new ruling descendant and perhaps fostered a cult of divinized, deceased kings in the capital city. Select prophets and kings were interred near holy sites: prophets of Judah and Israel proximate to the Bethel altar (2 Kgs 23:17–18) and later Judahite kings near the Jerusalem temple (Ezek 43:7–8). Some political functionaries, such as the royal steward mentioned in Isa 22:15–16, chose individualized burial in an elaborate tomb carved in the Silwan cliff facing the City of David. The commoners’ interment, likely in a simple or a mass grave, in the Kidron Valley bordering Jerusalem (2 Kgs 23:6), and cremation (and burial) in a tophet (Jer 7:31–2), dramatically diverged from the ideal.

Biblical literature incorporates opposing views regarding the dead.<sup>10</sup> Some deceased are presented positively as beneficent, cultic figures, or as sympathetic, divinized progenitors or ancestors. Post-mortem divine status is evident in the appellations *‘ēlōhîm* (“divinities”) (1 Sam 28:13; Isa 8:19) and *qēdōšîm* (“holy ones”) (Ps 16:3) as well as the receipt of offerings and tithes (Deut 26:14; Ps 16:3–

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9. Other customs include burial under a tree for Rebecca’s nurse Deborah and for Saul and his sons (Gen 35:8; 1 Sam 31:12–13), and interment at the location of death as for Rachel and Aaron (Gen 48:7; Deut 10:6).

10. For representative treatments of biblical evidence pertaining to the dead see Tromp 1969; Spronk 1986; Schmidt 1994; Suriano 2010; Hays 2015.

4). *Zebaḥ hayyâmîm* and *zebaḥ mišpāḥâ* likely also entailed ancestral sacrifices (1 Sam 1:21; 20:6, 29). Texts unreservedly describe Samuel and Elisha as deceased cultic personnel who retained their prophetic powers and the ability to revive the dead, respectively (Deut 18:11; 1 Sam 28; 2 Kgs 13:20–21). Belief in the dead's prophetic powers is evident from the various specialists who accessed their knowledge: *dōrēš 'el-hammētîm* (necromancers) and those who consulted the *'ôb* (from *'b* meaning “father/progenitor”?) and *yiddē'ônî* (“ghosts” and “familiar spirits”) (Lev 19:31; Deut 18:10–11; 1 Sam 28:8; 2 Kgs 21:6). *Tērāpîm*, familial anthropomorphic statues, also referred to as *ēlōhîm*, arguably depicted divinized ancestors with intercessory or divinatory powers (Gen 31:30, 34; Zech 10:2). Cultic service, beyond mere veneration, seems indicated by legislation forbidding offering tithed food to the dead (Deut 26:14; Nihan 2012). Required disavowal signifies the persistence of a practice that was likely formerly acceptable.

Negative portrayals disparage the dead as an illegitimate, non-Yahwistic source of information. References to veneration of the dead and a cult of the dead, largely but not exclusively condemning the practice, are sparse but incontrovertible.<sup>11</sup> Prescient dead are portrayed negatively by their detractors. Isaiah's late eighth century sarcastic dismissal of the deceased's powers of prophecy mocks the dead as conveying “instruction and message” through a form of vocalization deprecatingly described as “chirp and moan” (Isa 8:19–20). Efforts to silence the dead include bans against necromancy in the Holiness and Deuteronomic Law Codes, Deuteronomistic condemnation, and Isaiah's admonitions, while Samuel and Josiah are presented as rejecting *tērāpîm* (Lev 20:6, 27; Deut 18:11; 2 Kgs 23:24; Isa 28; 1 Sam 15:23; 2 Kgs 23:24). Priestly legislation mandating lengthy purification rituals for impurity transferred from a corpse may have functioned, in part, to distance the living from the dead (Num 19:11–13). Such widespread affirmations and admonitions demonstrate the pervasive reach of the dead in Israelite society and a perceived threat to priestly and prophetic prerogatives.

Social and ideological purposes inform the idiomatic phrases for death. For Abraham and Aaron, the Priestly Source employs the idiom “to be gathered to one's people” (*ne'esap/yē'āsēp 'el 'ammāyw*, Gen 25:8; Num 20:24), which is attested extra-biblically only in the Ugaritic Kirta myth (KTU 1.14 18 n 20). Jacob Milgrom suggests this idiom metaphorically designate a stage between death and burial (Milgrom 1991, 459–60). Deuteronomistic writers adopted the expression “to lie with his fathers/ancestors,” (*wayyiškab ... 'im 'ābôtayw*) for those who died peacefully, even of Manasseh who initiated his own tomb, likely signaling legitimate succession (2 Kgs 21:18; Suriano 2010). The root \*škb in idioms for

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11. Brian Schmidt (1994, 241) argues against the general consensus claiming necromancy was not an indigenous or Iron IIB practice but first adopted by Manasseh from the Assyrians in the end-seventh/early sixth century.

death frequently appears in the “Deuteronomistic History” books and Chronicles and is attested also in mid-ninth century and later Aramaic inscriptions from Dan and Deir Alla, a late eighth-century Hebrew inscription probably from el-Qom, and sixth to fourth century Phoenician inscriptions (Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995, 1132). Both idioms promote an idealized patrilineal burial thereby reinforcing the organizing principal of Israelite society that legitimates patriarchy, “the house of the father.” *’Ābôt* means both “fathers/progenitors” and “ancestors,” raising the possibility that only adult men (old enough to sire children) became Israelite ancestors. These two idioms form the sole biblical evidence for an ancestral collective; nowhere are the conditions of this unnamed “life” described in contrast to the numerous references to Sheol.

Consistent with the biblical variety of attitudes towards the dead, texts express a range of views regarding postmortem existence but fail to provide specifics. For example, what becomes of the *rûaḥ* (life-giving breath), *nepeš* (soul), and the physical body after death (Gen 35:18; Num 19:11; 1 Kgs 17:22; Isa 26:9; Steiner 2015, 82–92) who becomes a divinized ancestor; and who descends to dark, dry, dismal Sheol (Isa 14:11). Why, for instance, among the legitimate prophets does Samuel reside below such that he ascends to speak with the Woman of En-Dor (1 Sam 28: 8, 13) while Elijah is “taken up” (2 Kgs 2:1)? What distinguishes Sheol from *’rṣ* as used for the “netherworld” (1 Sam 28:13; Isa 26:19; Jer 17:13; Tromp 1969)? Sheol is presented as the destination of all (Ps 89:49) yet only sinful Korach, an evil Babylonian king, and Pharaoh are described as residing there (Num 16:33; Isa 14:9). The vast majority of the over 60 references to Sheol conjure up a metaphorical state, a bad death, an unknown yet imagined miserable condition experienced during death-like experiences such as acute illness or inconsolable grief (Gen 37:35; 1 Kgs 2:6, 9). Biblical passages do not combine the idioms for being “gathered” or “lying” with one’s ancestors with Sheol or with the terms *rûaḥ* or *nepeš*, suggesting that they are independent notions not to be harmonized.

### BIBLICAL REFLECTIONS

Legal injunctions and prophetic admonitions signal practices and beliefs that were contested among contemporaries or formerly acceptable but subsequently outlawed or discouraged. Accordingly, some eighth-century Judahites likely considered the dead to be sympathetic divinities. Ties to these ancestral kin were maintained through sacrifices and patrilineal burial in a family tomb tied to the patrimony. *’Ābôt* for both “fathers” and “ancestors,” the architectural terms *bêt* and *heder* (“house,” “room”) for both homes and tombs (1 Sam 25:1; Prov 7:27), and perhaps also the patriarchal mandate, “house of the father (*bêt ’b*),” underscore the physical and symbolic mirroring of the worlds of the living and the dead. As felicitously stated by Pierre Bourdieu, religion and ritual “achieve their most

successful ideological effects by exploiting the possibilities contained in the polysemy inherent in the social ubiquity of the legitimate language” (Bourdieu 1991, 39). While not explicitly stated, patrilineal burial validated the lineage and conferred upon descendants the prerogatives of patriarchy and patrimony (Stavrakopoulou 2010).

Israelite notions regarding death and post-mortem existence encompass physical death, departure of the *rûah* and *nepeš*, divinization (for adult males and females?), consignment to Sheol, and possibly joining an ancestral collective. Only the idioms “to be gathered” and “to lie” with one’s progenitors intimate that the deceased left the society of the living for a community of dead ancestors. It remains unclear which if any of these post-mortem beliefs were jointly held as divinization and admission to an ancestral collective should be a positive outcome whereas consignment to Sheol was viewed negatively as an existence without Yahweh. Postulating successive stages in a transition from life to a possible ancestral collective, such as transitory residence in Sheol, lacks any textual support.

## SYNTHESIS AND ANALYSIS

What is the relationship between eighth century burials and biblical portrayals? The Cave of Machpelah modeled the (possibly later) biblical ideal of patrilineal generations buried together on family-owned land. Most documented bench tombs housed primary and secondary burials of two to ten individuals including children, representing one to three or four generations (if kin), comparable to the three generational, patriarchs’ tomb. Diverging from the ideal, a very small number of high-status persons including Shebna the Royal Steward chose individualized entombment in Silwan over family burial (cf. Isa 22:15). Other forms of interment mentioned in biblical texts have yet to be unearthed.

In general, biblical texts display no interest in the physical tomb plan as a domicile for the dead, in mortuary provisions, or in consumption in the tomb by the dead and/or perhaps the living (except the much later Isa 65:4). For those burying in cave or bench tombs, standardization of the tomb plan, body treatment, and mortuary provisions reflects a widely-adopted cultural convention that views death as at least a temporary postmortem existence. Recumbent bodies mirror the sleeping but with the removal of bones to a repository or pit the individual loses his or her connection with the actions of the living. Surprisingly given the archaeological evidence, not until the book of Job does terminology reflect a notion of slumbering dead: *\*yšn* (“sleep”) and *\*lyn/lwn* (“spend the night”) (Job 3:13; 17:2).

Tomb evidence for ritualized ancestor worship and a cult of the dead is ambiguous. Vessels and items of personal identification accompanying primary as well as secondary interments suggest even the long dead were thought to continue a form of postmortem existence such that they were provisioned with common household items. No mortuary items reflect an elevation in status of the deceased

from mortal to divinity. Based on biblical idioms for death, secondary remains within the tomb are presumed to represent the ancestral collective. If so, this would include women, adolescents, and infants, even though the term for “ancestors” (*’ābôt*) literally means “fathers.”

Biblical scholars contextualize increasingly hostile attitudes towards the dead in the Neo-Assyrian period. Theodore Lewis cites Josianic, Deuteronomistic writings (Dtr<sup>1</sup>) that express “a well-developed theology against necromancy” (Lewis 1989, 126–27). For Christopher Hays (2015, 351–55), Isaianic prophecies foretell Yahweh’s ultimate triumph in the time of Josiah over both death inflicted by the Assyrians and the dead sought by necromancers. With less specificity, Christophe Nihan (2012, 171–72) attributes opposition to death cults to the elite Judeans composing the biblical documents at the end of the Neo-Assyrian and Persian periods. Their idealized system broached no competition to the central authority and its patron deity from the dead. The proposed increasing hostility towards the dead left no identifiable mark on eighth through sixth century physical remains. Through this period, significant changes evident in the physical remains appear to counter rather than confirm a diminishing status of the dead. Burials now display a greater frequency of repositories and increasingly greater resources invested in entombment.

Contemporary anthropological theory characterizes stages in the living’s perception of death and the dead.<sup>12</sup> Arnold Van Gennep (1960), as elaborated by Victor Turner (1969), identified three stages in the trajectory of the dead. The initial, preliminal stage of separation entails departing from the living. The second and most significant, liminal stage represents the transformation from the separation to the third, postliminal stage of aggregation with reintegration into a community of the dead. For eighth-century Judahites, these stages have been correlated with pre-liminal death and placement in the tomb, liminal repose in the tomb as the flesh decomposes, and postliminal acceptance into the ancestral collective represented by comingled bones. However, the biblical “ancestral collective” is a relatively new scholarly *topos* perhaps motivated by Van Gennep’s work. To join the ancestors may be a euphemism for an acceptable death; no Israelite ancestral collective is either described or named in the Bible.

Anthropological theory posits that the greater the disparity between the social world and burials, the more burials present a construct divorced from reality.<sup>13</sup>

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12. Theories of personhood explore relational identities and raise questions such as what aspect of the deceased was presented at burial (e.g., familial, professional, or an idealized identity not necessarily achieved in life). Our data are insufficient to answer this question (Fowler 2004).

13. Adam Smith (2007, 164–65) references a conference paper delivered by Michael Dietler that does not appear in the volume.

Interestingly, eighth-century Judahite burials largely conform to the contemporary material world. Cemeteries proximate to towns consist of side-by-side tombs with slight variations in layout, size, and relative wealth comparable to their residential counterparts. In the tombs, the deceased repose on benches, as in sleep, provisioned with common household items. The standardized assemblage, with no distinctive mortuary items, few tools, and no large storage vessels, provisions the recent and long-ago dead for temporary occupation but without the tedious subsistence chores. Secondary burial distinguishes the tomb from the social world. Continued life for the deceased, as indicated by material provisions, does not presuppose but permits ancestor veneration or worship and a cult of the dead.

Tombs function as perpetual monuments, *loci memoriae* (“places of memory”) to family history, lineage, identity, and inheritance claims (Laneri 2007, 4; Chesson 2007, 115). They foster “singular/autobiographical memory” by kin, and simultaneously preserve and create “historical memory” of the past as curated by societal institutions (Halbwachs 1992, 24, 54–83; Laneri 2007, 8). For example, Judah’s dynastic history and territorial claims both foster and are fostered by royal tombs in the capital City of David/Jerusalem and by the association of familial tombs with specific territory as at the end of the book of Joshua.

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## Religion in Eighth-Century Judah: The Case of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (and Beyond)

*Brent A. Strawn and Joel M. LeMon*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Ḥorvat Teman) provides a fascinating—and, at times, confounding—glimpse into the religion of eighth-century Judah. The at times widely divergent interpretations of the remains from this famous site have significant implications for the study of ancient Israelite religion and the Hebrew Bible writ large.

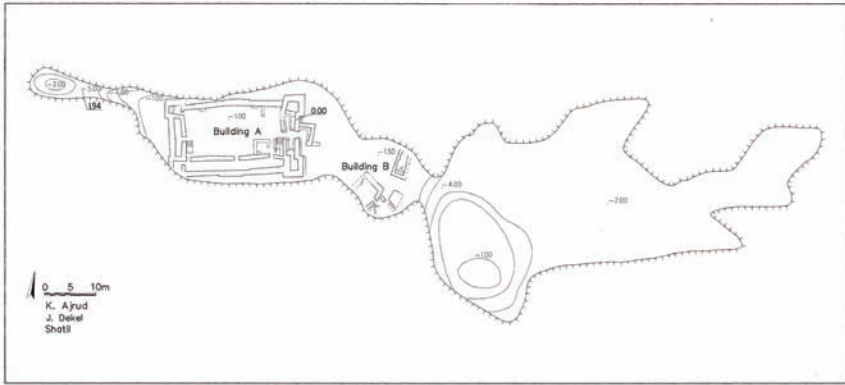
Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Arabic: “the solitary hill of the water source”; Meshel 2012, ix) is a self-contained, one-period site dating to the eighth century BCE, located in the south.<sup>1</sup> The extensive scholarly literature on the site is now enriched immeasurably by the recent publication of the long-awaited final excavation report (Meshel 2012), along with recent studies that have engaged directly with the final publication (e.g., Na’aman 2011; 2013; Blum 2013; Lemaire 2013; Schmidt 2013; LeMon and Strawn 2013; Aḥituv 2014; Puech 2014). In what follows, we provide

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\*It is a pleasure to dedicate this short study to Oded Borowski, a gifted scholar, teacher, and field archaeologist. We have been lucky to count Oded as both our colleague and our friend. The brevity of the present essay is, therefore, in directly inverse proportion to the respect we have for him. An early form of many of the arguments presented here were first delivered at a symposium at Emory University held in his honor: “Eighth Century Judah and Its Cultural Context” (February 2014). That presentation was subsequently published in more developed form in LeMon and Strawn 2013. Insofar as the present essay draws on that publication, interested readers are also referred to that article for additional discussion. We also express our deep gratitude to Professor Ze’ev Meshel for his kind permission to use images from the final excavation report.

1. It is a matter of debate, however, if southerners, i.e., Judeans, were the primary inhabitants of (or visitors to) the site.

a very brief primer on Kuntillet 'Ajrud (§2), before commenting on the most famous of its remains: the images and the inscriptions found there, along with the question of their interrelation (§3). Next, we consider a few ways the finds from Kuntillet 'Ajrud may relate to other data germane to the study of Israelite religion in eighth-century Judah and beyond (§4) before concluding the study (§5).



**Fig. 1:** Plan of the summit of Kuntillet 'Ajrud. Source: Meshel 2012, 5, fig. 1.3. Used with permission.

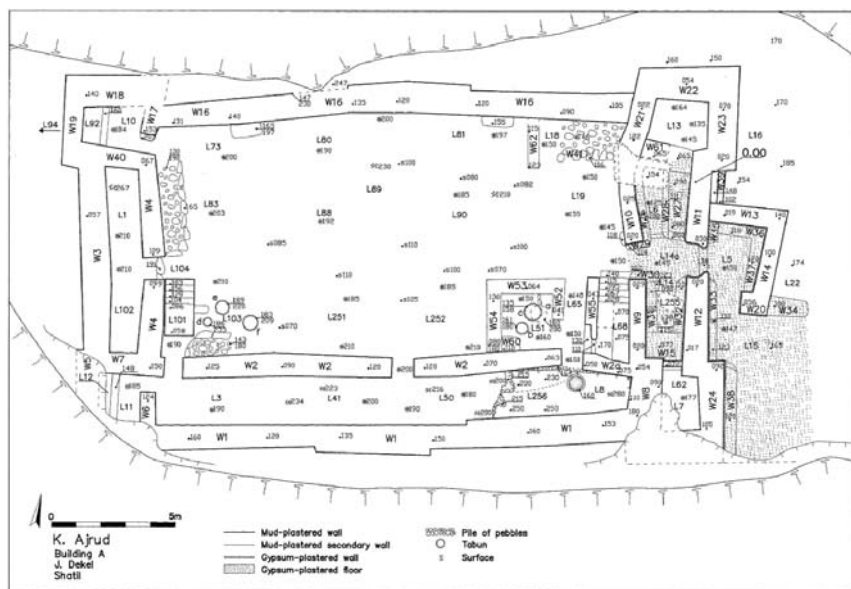
## 2. KUNTILLET 'AJRUD: A VERY BRIEF PRIMER

Scholars of ancient Israelite religion have discussed the importance of Kuntillet 'Ajrud since the 1970s, when three seasons of excavations conducted by Ze'ev Meshel and his team (1975–1976) yielded a series of remarkable images and inscriptions. If these discoveries are to be properly grasped, they must, of course, be understood within the context of the site itself: its location, dating, and architecture—something that can be done to a greater degree now than ever before thanks to the fine publication of the excavation report by Meshel and his colleagues (Meshel 2012).

Kuntillet 'Ajrud sits atop a hill that lies at a small crossroads about 15 kilometers from the much larger road connecting Gaza to Eilat. On this hill, two eighth-century buildings were discovered (fig. 1). The surrounding area is extremely arid and otherwise flat, with little capacity to support permanent settlements (see Meshel 2012a). The inhospitable terrain not only explains the site's *location* on the raised hill, it also explains its *limited* occupation history: it is “a short-lived, single-stratum, one-period site” dating to the first half of the eighth century (Meshel 2012, xxi). Within that general time frame, it is clear that the site was occupied only briefly, perhaps just twenty-five years (so Keel and

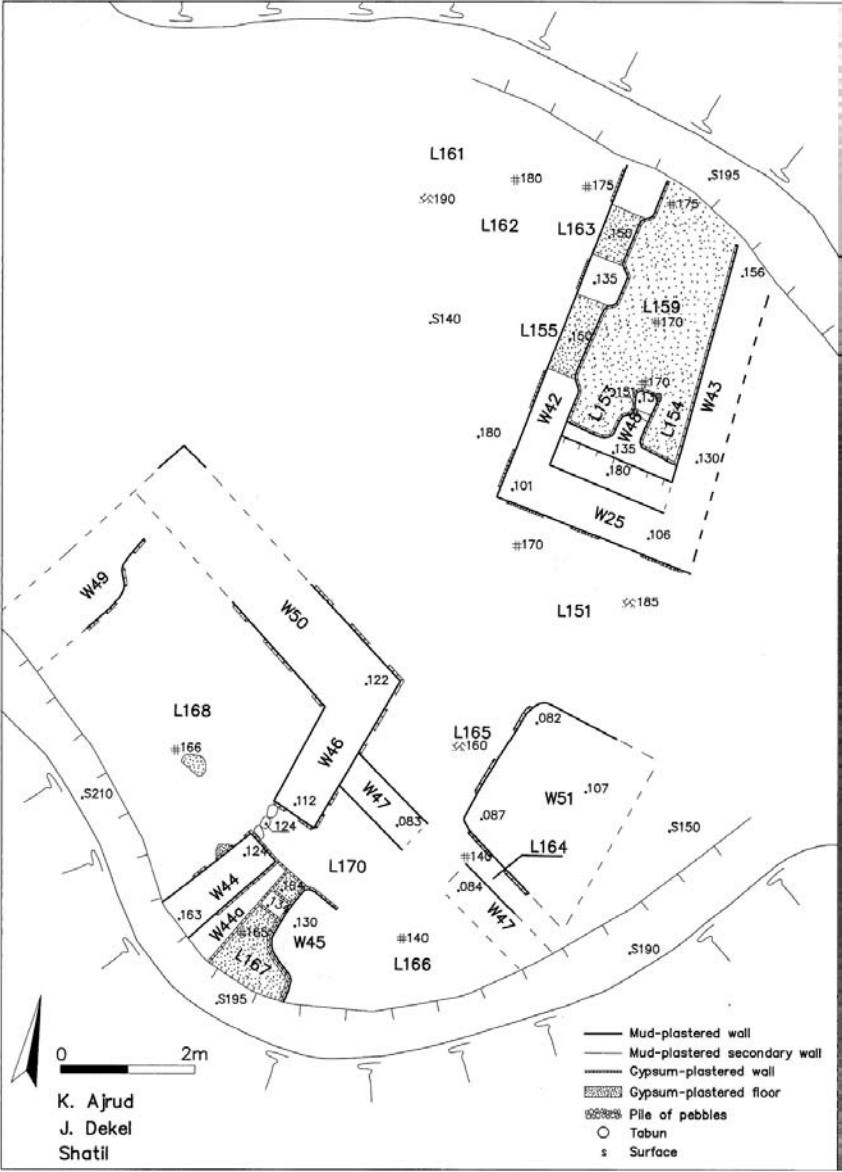
Uehlinger 1998, 248 who give the range as ca. 800–775 BCE). Since its discovery, Kuntillet 'Ajrud has remained a compelling locus for historians, generally, and for historians of religion, particularly, since the factors regarding its establishment, use, and abandonment make it something of a time-capsule from a specific and important period in ancient Israelite religion.

The two buildings on the site were positioned on the top of the hill, on the narrow western point of the summit. Both buildings have unique features that make it difficult to establish clear architectural parallels (see Meshel and Goren 2012). The larger of the two, Building A (see fig. 2), is reminiscent of a fortress, with four towers, but without the casemate walls that were common at this time. This building contained a large interior courtyard framed by storage rooms on the western and southern sides and is particularly notable for its complex of bench-rooms at the eastern entrance of the structure.



**Fig. 2:** Plan of Building A from Kuntillet 'Ajrud. Source: Meshel 2012, 16, fig. 2.12. Used with permission.

Entrance into Building A from the crossroads at the base of the hill involved going through Building B (see fig. 3). This smaller building had two wings that created a corridor providing passage to the rest of the site and to Building A.



**Fig. 3:** Plan of Building B from Kuntillet 'Arjud. Source: Meshel 2012, 54, fig. 2.77. Used with permission.

Building B, notably, had fully plastered white walls. The remnants of this plaster suggest it was decorated with murals and some inscriptions (see Ahituv, Eshel, and Meshel 2012; Beck 2012). Similar plastered walls were found in the bench-rooms of Building A. An enigmatic platform (W51) was also discovered on the eastern side of Building B (Meshel and Goren 2012, 57–59).

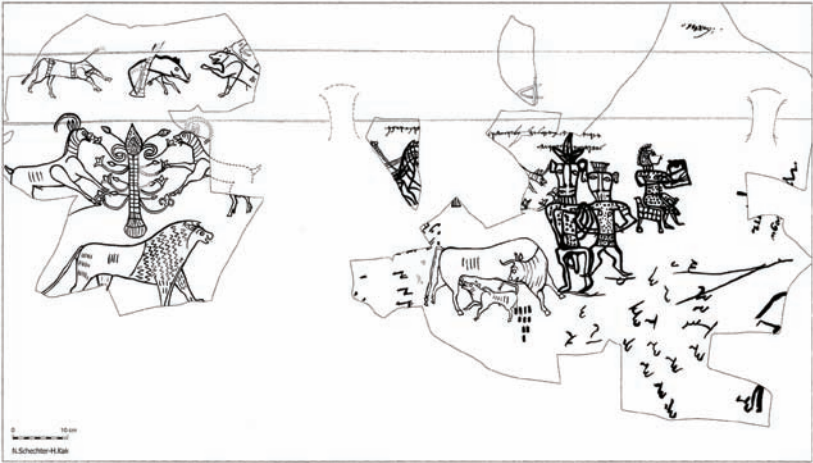
In his own assessment of the religious nature of the site, Meshel (2012b, 66) highlights four features that may be “associated with cultic activities” though he admits that “such an interpretation is quite speculative”: (1) the enigmatic platform, which he says “may perhaps be interpreted as a *bamah*, or high place”; (2) four hewn stones “somewhat reminiscent of cultic stelae” in the northwestern corner room of Building A (L10); (3) a mural of “a seated woman” painted on the plaster at the eastern entrance of Building A (= wall painting no. 9; see fig. 4);<sup>2</sup> and (4) the inscriptions and drawings on Pithos A (fig. 5), which was found in one of the bench-rooms in Building A.

Each of these finds is significant—though perhaps not equally so in terms of religious significance, if only because we do not know the meaning or function of some of them (particularly the first two). It is further likely that other finds not yet on this list may also be as significant, if not more so, for understanding the religion(s) practiced at Kuntillet 'Ajrud. Such data would include, especially, Pithos B (fig. 6), which was found in the northeast corner of the courtyard of Building A, and the numerous inscriptions found at the site inscribed on stone or pottery or written in ink on pottery or wall plaster. These inscriptions contain references to at least one deity, maybe more, and these divine references include, but are not limited to, theophoric elements in proper names found at the site (see LeMon and Strawn 2013).



**Fig. 4:** Reconstruction of wall painting no. 9 (L15). After Meshel 2012, 191, fig. 6.39. Used with permission.

2. Others take this figure to be male (cf. Ziffer 2013). Beck seems to go out of her way to avoid identifying the gender of the figure (2012, 189–92).



**Fig. 5:** Projection drawing of Pithos A (L6). Source: Meshel 2012, 147, fig. 6.5. Used with permission.



**Fig. 6.** Projection drawing of Pithos B (L19). Source: Meshel 2012, 148, fig. 6.6. Used with permission.

The most famous inscriptions and images are discussed in the next section (§3), and while these remain the most obvious or immediate witnesses to the religion(s) practiced at the site, still other factors might be noted, even if there is not space to treat them fully here. So, for example, the entrance court to Building A (L15 on fig. 2) had a white plaster floor ca. 5.5m x 3.5m. There were also white plaster-coated benches connected to this entrance (W33-W38), and wall painting no. 9 (fig. 4) was evidently placed in this same location (W20; see Meshel and Goren 2012, 19). Whatever else it may signify, the use of plaster suggests an attempt to keep the area clean, perhaps even aesthetically pleasing.

Another intriguing detail is that two kitchens were found on the site—one on the east (L51) and one on the west (L103). Meshel and Goren posit that “the Eastern Kitchen was built in a second phase to replace or augment the Western Kitchen” (2012, 37). If it is a case of *augmentation*, one wonders why two kitchens were needed: does it reflect a high number of people living at or visiting the site, or might it signal that some specialized (ritual?) activity was associated with one kitchen, but not the other?<sup>3</sup> Finally, there is a distinct *lack* of cultic paraphernalia at the site. Meshel argues that this lack may have been due to an “orderly” abandonment so that “all the cultic equipment which may have been used at the site...was removed by the inhabitants when they left.” And so, he continues, “[t]his possibility must be taken into consideration in any discussion concerning the existence of an active cult at the site” (Meshel 2012b, 66). This seems to us a reasonable explanation of the situation, though it must admittedly remain an argument *ex silentio*.

Whatever the case, the precise religious significance of these additional finds is not entirely clear; they are, that is, even less transparent than the images and inscriptions that have garnered so much attention and about which interpretation is also deeply vexed. So, once again, we simply do not know and cannot say if the existence of two kitchens constitutes proof that one was used for cultic purposes. Given such uncertainty, it is not surprising that the interpretation of the site and its various finds has been and remains controverted and debated—even within the pages of the final excavation report where one sometimes finds different understandings among the contributors (see LeMon and Strawn 2012, 84 and nn. 4–5).

Such debate is likely to continue for years to come. One hopes that such debate will be generative, yielding productive results that will bear on the interpretation of religious matters (as well as others) at Kuntillet 'Ajrud. And again, while numerous non-textual and non-iconographic aspects of the site no doubt bear on the religion(s) practiced there, the epigraphic and iconographic discoveries have remained sensational and so deserve further (re)consideration in light of the final report.

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3. If the Eastern kitchen simply *replaced* the Western one, very little significance—at least in a religious sense—may obtain.

## 3. THE TEXTS AND IMAGES AT KUNTILLET 'AJRUD

The most famous inscriptions found at Kuntillet 'Ajrud remain those that were announced already forty years ago and studied repeatedly ever since<sup>4</sup>—namely, the blessings that are uttered in the name of Yhwh and that are accompanied by the word: *l'šrth*. In the final report, which must be the starting point for all subsequent discussions, these read as follows:<sup>5</sup>

- (1) Inscription 3.1 (L6) (Ahituv, Eshel, and Meshel 2012, 87):

1 'mr. '[-]°°[-]m°[-]k. 'mr.lyhlȳ.wlyw 'šh.wl[-----] brkt. 'tkm.  
2 lyhwh.šmrn.wl'šrth.

<sup>1</sup>Message of '[-]°°[-]M[-]K: "Speak to Yāhēlî, and to Yô'āsāh, and to [...] I have [b]lessed you <sup>2</sup>to YHWH of Shōmrōn (Samaria) and to His *asherah*."

- (2) Inscription 3.6 (L19) (Ahituv, Eshel, and Meshel 2012, 95):

1 'mr  
2 'mryw '  
3 mr l. 'dny  
4 hšlm. 't.  
5 brktk.ly  
6 hwh.tmn  
7 wl'šrth.yb  
8 rk wyšmrk  
9 wyhw 'm. 'dn  
10 y [

<sup>1</sup>Message of <sup>2</sup>Amaryāw: "S<sup>3</sup>ay to my lord, <sup>4</sup>are you well? <sup>5</sup>I have blessed you by Y<sup>6</sup>HWH of Tēmān <sup>7</sup>and His *asherah*. Ma<sup>8</sup>y He bless

4. See, e.g., Lemaire 1981, 25–33; Renz and Röllig 1995, 1:47–66; Keel and Uehlinger 1998, 225–48; Zevit 2001, 379–400; Dobbs-Allsopp et al. 2005, 277–98; Ahituv 2008, 313–29.

5. We have used transliteration for the Hebrew square script used in Ahituv, Eshel, and Meshel 2012. We have also occasionally made very slight alterations to the translation (e.g., adding line numbers); we have not altered the most important and controversial parts of the inscription in any way, however (e.g., the translation/transliteration *asherah*, etc.). Finally, it should be noted that the readings of some of the letters in some of the inscriptions are not entirely certain and such uncertainty is not always indicated in the final report. The state of preservation means that scholars will continue to discuss the readings and translations of the inscriptions for years to come.



you and may He keep you,<sup>9</sup> and may He be with <sup>10</sup>my <sup>9</sup>lord <sup>10</sup>[for-ever (?)”

- (3) Inscription 3.9 (L19) (Ahituv, Eshel, and Meshel 2012, 98):

1 -----] *lyhwh.htmn wl'šrth.*  
2 ---] *kl 'šr yš'l m'š tnn h' w'm pth wntn lh yhw*  
3 *klbbh.*

<sup>1</sup>] to YHWH of the Tēmān and His *asherah* <sup>2</sup>[...] Whatever he asks from a man, that man will give him generously. And if he would urge—YHW will give him <sup>3</sup>according to his wishes.

- (4) Inscription 4.1.1 (L6) (Ahituv, Eshel, and Meshel 2012, 105):

1 y] *'rk.ymm.wyšbw [...]* *ytnw.l[ ]hwh[.]tymn.wl'šrth [...]*  
2 *].hytb yhwh.hty[...]* *y.hytb.ym[...]{h}h[ ]yhm/n[...]*

<sup>1</sup> ... May] He lengthen their days and may they be sated [...] recount to [Y]HWH of Tēmān and His *asherah* [...] <sup>2</sup>...because (?)] YHWH of the Tē[mān], has shown [them (?)] favour, has bettered their da[ys...

To these four should be added a fifth that mentions 'l and b 'l:

- (5) Inscription 4.2 (L14a) (Ahituv, Eshel, and Meshel 2012, 110):

1           ] *šnt [*  
2 ] *br 'š.wbžrh. 'l.br[m.y]hw[*  
3 *]r.wymnsn.hrm.wydkn.[g]bnm [*  
4 ] *řš.q{š}dš. 'ly. 'lm [*  
5 ]° *hkn [l]brk.b 'l.bym.mlhmh*  
6           ] *lšm 'l.bym.mlh[mh*

<sup>1</sup> [...] second time/years [...] <sup>2</sup>] in earthquake. And when God shines forth in the [heights. Y]HW[H... <sup>3</sup>]r The mountains will melt, the hills will crush [...] <sup>4</sup>] earth. The Holy One over the gods [...] <sup>5</sup>] prepare (yourself) [to] bless Ba'al on a day of war [...] <sup>6</sup>] to the name of El on a day of wa[r...]

The most famous images are those on Pithos A (fig. 5), which have also been frequently reproduced and discussed since their initial discovery. The images from Pithos B are also significant (fig. 6), however, and wall painting no. 9 (fig. 4) has, of late, often been discussed with reference to the religion and provenance of the site.

Unfortunately, the most difficult questions facing the interpreters of both the inscriptions and the images have not yet been resolved definitively simply because they resist definitive answers. Indeed, in our judgment, they will continue to do

so, barring new evidence that might somehow prove determinative—though it is hard to know what that evidence would be or how it could prove conclusive. The interpretive questions, regardless, can be largely reduced to two:

(1) First, beyond general questions about the readings of the inscriptions (many of which are uncertain and/or extremely broken) and their proper analysis and interpretation, what is the specific meaning of the word *l'šrth*? The problems begin with the prefixed preposition *l-*,<sup>6</sup> and become worse when discerning the meaning of the noun itself. Is it a divine name (DN) that refers to a goddess? Further, is the final *-h* on the word a pronominal suffix referring back to Yhwh (that is, “*his A/asherah*”)?<sup>7</sup> If so, does the suffix actually disqualify the noun—whether *šrt* or *šrh*<sup>8</sup>—from being a DN after all, since, as many scholars assert, Hebrew does not tolerate suffixes on proper nouns?<sup>9</sup> If this latter judgment is generally true, and also obtains in this specific case,<sup>10</sup> does that mean that *l'šrth* must refer to an inanimate object of some sort, and is thus *not* a divine companion or consort of Yhwh?<sup>11</sup>

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6. The translation of which is not agreed upon, even within Meshel 2012. See, e.g., Aḥituv, Eshel, and Meshel 2012, 87 (“to YHWH ... and to His *asherah*”), 95 (“by YHWH ... and His *asherah*”), and 98 (“to YHWH ... and His *asherah*”). Note also the discussion in Meshel 2012, 127.

7. Even if *-h* is understood as a pronominal suffix, it need not be analyzed as 3ms in every instance (i.e., with reference to *Yhwh's A/asherah*). It could be understood as 3fs in certain contexts instances: “her [i.e., its] *A/asherah*,” with the reference perhaps being the GN referenced in context, whether Samaria or Teman. We use upper- and lower-case “*A/a*” with “*A/asherah*” to indicate our unwillingness to make a final decision on the referent—a proper/divine name or an inanimate object—of this term and not on the basis of the epigraphic data alone. Possible referents for *šrth* as an inanimate object are largely two: a pole of some sort or a shrine/cult-place. See LeMon and Strawn 2013, 96 n. 59.

8. If *-h* is a pronominal suffix the un-augmented absolute form should presumably end with *-h* (as opposed to a construct form with *-t*). The grammatical conundrum is rendered moot by those scholars who read “*Asherata(h)*” (e.g., Hess 1996; 2007, 288; Na’aman 2013, 46–48), which understands the word as doubly marked for gender or as written with a plene final vowel—either way, this latter approach does not consider *-h* to be a pronominal suffix. Cf. Schmidt 2002, 104–7 for further discussion.

9. But see Xella 1995 and Xella 2001 for the strongest argument that suffixation is permissible on DNs in Semitic.

10. Some scholars might posit a difference between literary Hebrew and inscriptional Hebrew on this point. See, e.g., Schmidt 2002, 105–6, and Gogel 1998, 156. For more on the general phenomenon, see, e.g., Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensverd 2008.

11. For a much later example of a similar conundrum, see the Kamkam tomb-inscription from Ḥegra (1 BCE/CE) (Healey 2009, 68–72) which mentions the goddess Manōtu and “her Qaysha” (*wqyṣh*), which “might be a symbol or piece of equipment belonging to Manōtu” (70). Note that the word *qyṣ*’ is apparently a DN in another tomb-inscription from Ḥegra dated to 31/2 CE (72–77).

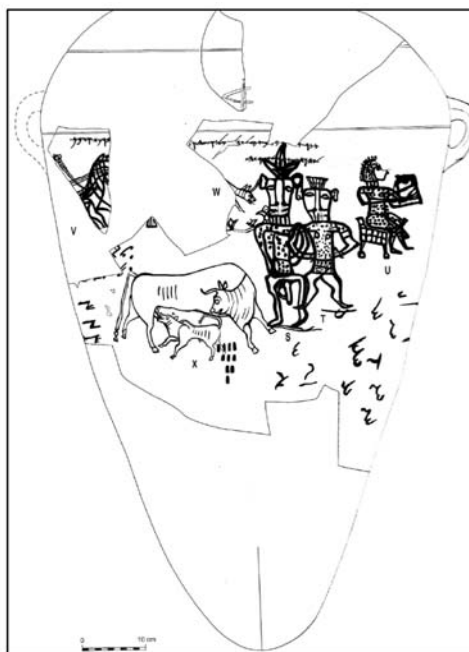
(2) Second, what, exactly, is depicted in the famous scene on Pithos A (fig. 7): Yhwh and his A/asherah? Other deities—for example, Bes and/or Beset? A scene of worship with object(s) of worship and worshippers? Further, is there any coherence to the images on this pithos or are these images unrelated and best interpreted in isolation from each other?

To these two fundamental questions, a third should be added which is no less difficult:

(3) What is the relationship, *if any*, between the inscriptions and the images?

The scholarly literature on these questions is now far too vast and diverse to summarize; it suffices to note that the three questions (along with their putative answers) have typically been closely interrelated by scholars. Moreover, in many ways, the third question about the relationship between the texts and the images has—until relatively recently—proven to be a primary driver in arguments about the interpretation of the iconographic depictions and, even more importantly, for the understanding and translation of *l'šrth*. A cursory overview of the vast sea of secondary literature amply demonstrates the last-mentioned point. This literature, while variegated, nevertheless evidences a movement that can be traced on how the third question has impinged on the first two.

At first, scholars tended to treat the inscriptions on Pithos A as if they were equivalent to captions for the images, such that they could be used to identify the figures depicted (e.g., Gilula 1978–1979). In this perspective, what many now believe to be two Bes figures (or a Bes figure and Beset figure) were identified instead as Yhwh (figure S in fig. 7) and “his Asherah” (figure T), with the image somehow representing a divine couple, which was often thought to prove a “goddess interpretation” for the term *l'šrth*. Such a



**Fig. 7:** Pithos A (L6), drawing of the right side. After Meshel ed. 2012, 147, fig. 6.4a. Used with permission.

correlation proved problematic for a number of reasons, however, two of which were (1) the appearance of what were (perhaps) phallic representations on both Bes figures,<sup>12</sup> and (2) the fact that most ancient observers would have been unable to read the inscriptions. Revision of this first interpretive perspective was in order, therefore, and so some scholars posited that it was the seated lyre player (U in fig. 7)—not the smaller Bes figure (T)—that was the “Asherah” in question (see, e.g., Dever 1982; 1984; 2005, 164–67),<sup>13</sup> with one of the standing Bes figures (but which?) turning out to be Yhwh, who, for some unknown reason, was apparently portrayed with a *Doppelgänger* or divine “friend” of some sort.<sup>14</sup>

It is clear that this revised interpretation, no less than the initial one, is heavily dependent on a close—even *causal*—relationship between the images and the inscriptions. Either way, such a close association received a sobering blow in the next major development, which came in Pirhiya Beck’s work, first published in 1982 and reprinted with a few, mostly unmarked changes in the final excavation report (Beck 2012 in Meshel 2012).<sup>15</sup> Beck offered the most extensive and carefully executed analysis of the artistic remains from Kuntilet ‘Ajrud. By her own account, the method Beck employs may be called “stratigraphic” (Beck 2012, 184).

In brief, Beck carefully delineated several different artistic hands on the pithoi found at the site and demonstrated that Inscription 3.1 on Pithos A was drawn

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12. Two points are important: (1) the object between the legs of the Bes figures may not be a phallus at all but a lion tail loop; and (2) though fig. T was thought to have originally been drawn with a tail loop (or phallus), Meshel has argued that this was not, in fact, the case, but was instead the result of soot that faded over the years. He now believes that fig. T originally had nothing between its legs. See Meshel’s “editor’s note” in Beck 2012, 165, and compare figs. 6.20, 6.20a, 6.21, and 6.21a in Meshel 2012, 166–67. For more on this important matter, see LeMon and Strawn 2013, 108–9 n. 94 and the literature cited there.

13. Beck is uncertain as to the gender of the lyre player and refers to the figure with the pronouns “her” and “him” (2012, 172 and 173, respectively). Keel and Uehlinger 1998, 223–24, 240–41, are confident that the lyre player is *not* a goddess.

14. For the language of divine “friends,” see Snyder 2010. Zevit 2001, 389 thinks the double Bes presentation is “a pictorial plural of majesty or ... two divinities.” He goes on to state that the little Bes is “either ... a second icon for YHWH or some other aspect” (392). See LeMon and Strawn 2013, 101, 106–10 for discussion of Beck’s stratigraphic analysis which deems the larger Bes figure (S) to be later than the smaller Bes figure (T) and lyre player (U) such that “it is doubtful whether the two Bes figures...were meant to represent a god-and-goddess couple, nor even whether they were drawn by the same painter” (Beck 2012, 169).

15. See LeMon and Strawn 2013, 85 n. 7 for a listing of some of the differences between Beck 1982 and Beck 2012.

on top of, and therefore *subsequent to*, the Bes images. Beck's work is the most impressive yet offered and was followed, notably, by the famed iconographers Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger (1992, 210–48; cf. similarly Dijkstra 2001, 30). What is most important, however, is to note how this second development—in polar opposition to the first—*disassociates* the inscriptions and the images (at least on Pithos A). They simply don't have anything to do with one another and so should not be used to interpret each other.

In recent years, two further developments may be observed. In the first, the pithoi drawings (Ornan 2016) or the drawings-plus-inscriptions (Schmidt 2013b) are understood as draft or practice pieces for the wall art and plaster epigraphs.<sup>16</sup> Scholars who hold such an opinion disagree, however, about how the drafts bear on the interpretation of the “final” products.<sup>17</sup>

The second recent trend (re)considers the visual-*cum*-epigraphic data through the lens of visual culture studies, which places as much emphasis on *viewer reception* as it does on *artistic production* (see LeMon and Strawn 2013; cf. Bonfiglio 2014, 394–404). That is to say that studies of visual culture attend to the various ways the meaning(s) of an image can vary, especially among image-receivers, even within the same cultural and historical context. Seen in this light, even if Beck is right in her compositional analysis of the pithoi images and inscriptions, the artifacts can nevertheless be “read” or better yet “seen” together, as wholes.

This is not to say that the Bes and Bes(et) figures (assuming they are that) *actually are* Yhwh, let alone Yhwh and “his Asherah,” if only because the current configuration on Pithos A seems to be the result of different hands working at different times (so Beck). At the same time, such a compositional/stratigraphic and art-historical analysis does not mean that someone—especially someone *literate*—could not have “seen” Yhwh (at least) in one (or more?) of the images on Pithos A. Perhaps such a person was in fact the scribe responsible for adding Inscription 3.1 over the top of the large Bes figure (S) and who intended, by the textual addition, to offer some definitive interpretation of the scene. But it could also hold true for a person who viewed the juxtaposition of text-and-image after the last hand(s) had done its artistic or epigraphic work (and regardless of that hand's intention). Still further, said viewer need not have been literate—need not

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16. This possibility was entertained but not developed by Beck 2012. See also Dijkstra 2001, 26.

17. For Schmidt (2013b), the drafts *do* have direct bearing on the final versions, and so, in some ways, his position revisits the first interpretive perspective discussed above. For Ornan (2016), the drafts and final versions *do not* relate to each other directly and in this way her work supports aspects of Beck's dissociative analysis.

have been able to actually *read* the inscription—to perhaps have “seen” (the trace of) Yhwh in the images-and-text.<sup>18</sup>

The final publication report does not definitively answer these three questions of epigraphy, iconography, and their interrelation simply because they are, in many ways, simply unanswerable. Even so, the final report does adopt certain positions with regard to at least some of the questions. So, for example, Aḥituv, Eshel, and Meshel are certain that the site’s religious system was thoroughly Yahwistic: the words “Baal” or “El” that are found there function as epithets referring to Yhwh (2012, 133). Similarly, with reference to *l’šrth*, Aḥituv, Eshel, and Meshel argue that it refers to a cult object, not a goddess figure or divine consort (2012, 131–32, 138 n. 36).

Still, as noted earlier, there are some differences of opinion within the final report concerning iconographic matters (tail loop/phallus for Bes T or not)<sup>19</sup> and the overall interpretation of the site (a kind of roadside inn [caravanaserai] or not).<sup>20</sup> Such disagreement is to be expected and can be fruitful for future work. Whatever the case, the final report does not contain much in the way of *new* data—whether artistic or epigraphic—that would bear in any major way on the religion of the site. That is to say that what we’ve known for some time now (thanks to earlier publications by Meshel and others), especially about the main inscriptions and iconographical depictions, remains fairly securely in place.

There is one new mention of “Baal,” but it occurs in a highly broken context and so its precise interpretation is unclear.<sup>21</sup> There is also mention of “Cain” in a context that appears superhuman.<sup>22</sup> But the latter, too, occurs in a broken context and so almost nothing more can be said about it. We are left, then, with the main inscriptions and the iconography—both with deep interpretive problems—that we’ve known for some forty years, along with the question of their interrelation

18. See further LeMon and Strawn 2013, esp. 102–14. It is possible that such religious viewing, what Morgan (2005) calls “the sacred gaze,” was facilitated by the writing, *even if it was unreadable* to most viewers. Cf. Schmidt (2013b and 2016) who depends heavily on the “numinosity” of writing. (On the performative aspects of writing, see also Mandell 2012.) Even if the writing was not deemed “numinous,” however (and we have doubts about that), the inscriptions are obviously now part of what is visible and, together with the images, comprise what Mitchell 1994 would call an “imagetext.” Cf. Bonfiglio 2014, 143–45.

19. See n. 12 above.

20. Cf. Beck 2012, 198 with Meshel 2012b, 66–69, respectively.

21. Inscription 4.4.1 (L102 [87], L104) line 2: *jb l.bql*], translated by Aḥituv, Eshel, and Meshel 2012, 117 as “[Ba’al in voice].” See LeMon and Strawn 2013, 91–95 for discussion.

22. Inscription 4.3 (L14a), line 7: *šht | qyn šdh wmm h[rm*, “[...] Cain destroyed a field and lofty mo[untains]” (Aḥituv, Eshel, and Meshel 2012, 115).

(or total lack thereof), which is equally and no less a matter of profound hermeneutical difficulty.

Things seem to be at something of an impasse. The data from Kuntillet 'Ajrud are vexed and nothing from the site proper seems capable of completely solving the riddles. It is exactly at such a point that we can and must look *beyond* Kuntillet 'Ajrud to see what else might be seen.

#### 4. RELATING THE RELIGION(S) OF KUNTILLET 'AJRUD TO OTHER DATA SETS

Recently, Schmidt has written that “forty years ago the Kuntillet 'Ajrud finds turned the sub-discipline of ancient Israelite religions on its head, and it is still being shaken” (Schmidt 2013a, 8). The shaking in question has largely to do with how the data from Kuntillet 'Ajrud relate—or do not relate, as the case may be—to what is known about ancient Israelite religions from the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament. In both formulations, Schmidt’s and our own, the plural “religions” is important. It is rather common, even popular nowadays, to speak of the religion (!) of ancient Israel in the plural (Hess 2007, Zevit 2001, Stavrakopoulou and Barton 2010). And, of course, this plurality has been revealed, in no small way, by archaeological and epigraphic finds like those of Kuntillet 'Ajrud and perhaps above all by the finds from Kuntillet 'Ajrud itself.

Kuntillet 'Ajrud was so sensational because what was recovered there seemed to immediately contradict a great deal of what had seemed (until then) rather straightforward in the Hebrew Bible. Nowhere was that clearer than in the question of whether Yhwh had a divine consort. Such a consort was to be expected within the ancient Near Eastern context, where pantheons were typically construed on analogy with human (extended) families and so had a high god (father) and high goddess (mother), replete with numerous children (see Schloen 2001; Smith 2001; Dever 2005, 166; cf. Handy 1994, Mullen 1980).

That is not, however, the general impression given by the texts of the Hebrew Bible, which—or so it seemed to many people for many centuries—portray a Yhwh-alone religion at odds with so many polytheistic constructions of the divine world. Where something akin to the latter was admitted in the Old Testament, it was, notably, attributed to foreign and sinful practice (e.g., Jezebel, Jeroboam, Manasseh) or presented as a divine concession of some sort (see Deut 4:19; 29:26; cf. Chapman 2015), if it was not, in fact, simply an instance of poetic metaphor (Ps 82; cf. Strawn 2014) or prophetic hyperbole (Tigay 1986).

But now, in light of excavated, “hard” data, all of these latter options needed to be rethought, and, lest one think that Kuntillet 'Ajrud was somehow simply aberrant, far off the beaten path in some strange corner of the Negev (the latter of which is at least partially true), there were other finds, like an inscription from

Khirbet el-Qom, within Judah itself, less than 40km from Jerusalem, that substantiated some of the main issues—preeminently, of course, the blessing formula *lyhwh...l'šrth* (see Dobbs-Allsopp et al. 2005, 408–14).<sup>23</sup>

Incorporating finds like those from Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qom into the picture of Israelite religion provided by the Hebrew Bible inspired new models, like Mark Smith's notion of convergence and differentiation (Smith 2002, 7–14; cf. Miller 2000b, 23–29) or Othmar Keel's idea of cumulative or integrative monotheism (2011; cf. Miller 2000a, 197–207; Miller 2000b, 29–40). Such conceptions were (and are) helpful but depend upon an obvious fact: that some of what was recovered from the “soil archive” (cf. Dijkstra 2001) was indeed already known from the biblical texts.<sup>24</sup>

It turned out, that is, that Israelite religion(s) was diverse and differentiated, but careful readers of the Bible already knew that—at least to some degree and to a certain extent—long before the excavations at Kuntillet 'Ajrud. On one hand, then, there was nothing new from Kuntillet 'Ajrud on this general front. On the other hand, since the new data that revealed—or, better, confirmed—this fact were *extra*-biblical and *non*-canonical, the impression was sometimes given that the biblical texts were more uniform than is in fact actually the case (cf. Dever 2005). Of course, the extra-biblical, noncanonical data also suggested—or, better, confirmed—that not every presentation found in the canonical, biblical texts was exactly as it was “on the ground.” How could they be, when the presentations of Israelite religion(s) are as variegated as they are already within the pages of the Hebrew Bible itself?

Perhaps worship of “the” goddess (but which one?) or a goddess or several goddesses (cf. Cornelius 2008; Merlo online; Moorey 2004) was widely accepted by many people at various times in Israelite religion(s). Yet it should be again reiterated that such a conclusion was not entirely unimaginable from what was apparent from the Bible, whether that was assessed as textually-stratified “evidence” (foreign or intra-Israelite), theological *apologia*, or poetic-rhetorical device. What the archaeological and epigraphic data provide, therefore, is further confirmation of the biblical text's own description of pluriformity within Israelite religious belief(s) and practice(s).

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23. Although the Khirbet el-Qom inscription is not geographically peripheral, some have understood it as having been written or commissioned by one Uriah (“Yhwh is my light/fire”) who is described as “rich” or “wealthy” (*h'šr*). Although the reading and interpretation is in some doubt, if it is correct, it raises the issue of religious locus (see Strawn 2016, 94–98): is Uriah a representative of the upper crust of society, with his religion elite in some way? If so, is his elite religion “official” and possibly religiously peripheral? Or is it widely representative of the religion of many, regardless of their social status? Cf. *inter alia* Mastin 2004; Dijkstra 2001, 34.

24. For what follows, see also Strawn 2016.



With this point granted, it is also the case that finds like those recovered from Kuntillet 'Ajrud not only confirm the variegated nature of Israelite religions already evident in the biblical text (so also Dijkstra 2001, 39), they also cast the various nuances and niceties of the same into still further and finer relief. Even so, as the various adventures and misadventures in the interpretation of the finds of Kuntillet 'Ajrud amply demonstrate, the precise nature of this nuance and nicety is not without a good bit of uncertainty—no less than the hermeneutical problems besetting the literary texts of the Hebrew Bible!

## 5. CONCLUSION

The present essay has barely scratched the surface of the massive subject of religion in eighth-century Judah. Indeed, insofar as some scholars (e.g., Na'aman 2013; Niehr 2013) think Kuntillet 'Ajrud is a site that was entirely established, maintained, and populated by patrons and inhabitants from the northern kingdom of Israel, it is possible that it tells us nothing whatsoever of religion in eighth-century *Judah* but only of religion in eighth-century *Israel* (as practiced on southern soil). We are not yet fully convinced of this position, however, finding at least some of the historical arguments on this point speculative and not yet conclusive (see, e.g., Na'aman 2013, 47–51; Schmidt 2002; 2013b; 2016).

In any event, Kuntillet 'Ajrud is definitely located in the south, and several of the inscriptions—whatever the origin of their authors/scribes—seem particularly concerned with Yhwh in southern climes: *yhwh (h)tmn* (Inscriptions 3.6; 3.9; and 4.1.1). We say “particularly” because there is also clear reference to Samaria at the site: *yhwh šmrn* (Inscription 3.1).<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, in our judgment, this predominantly “southern preoccupation” with Yhwh’s location may argue against an *exclusively* northern provenience for the population of and religion(s) practiced at Kuntillet 'Ajrud.<sup>26</sup>

While Na'aman, among others, has raised important challenges to the interpretation of the site as a caravanserai (2011; 2013, 43–45), other scholars continue

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25. For more on Yhwh of Teman and Yhwh of Samaria, see Hutton 2010.

26. We thus differ from Na'aman 2013, 49, who would argue that references to “Yhwh of Teman” are due to northerners seeking blessings from “YHWH-of-the-south, rather than from the more remote god of Samaria,” since “the eighth century inhabitants of Israel considered ‘YHWH of Teman’ to be the god of the Negev and Arabah regions.” While Na'aman’s argument here is not impossible, there remain connections between the site and Judah (e.g., some of the pottery; see Ayalon 2012; Goren 2012; Gunneweg, Perlman and Meshel 2012). Yhwh’s southern origins have been frequently rehearsed in the literature (see Keel 2011, 51–53; Leuenberger 2010) and the somewhat circuitous reasoning Na'aman employs to eliminate any southern influence or reflection seems somewhat strained. Cf. further Hutton 2010.

to hold to such an interpretation (e.g., Beck 2012, 198; Lemaire 1984; 2013; Hadley 1993; Hadley 2000; Ji 1995; Keel and Uehlinger 1998, 247; Dijkstra 2001; Singer-Avitz 2009; Hutton 2010). Our own assessment of the inscriptions-*cum*-iconography on the pithoi is that the composition of at least these objects was far from systematic or ordered but rather quite haphazard, even random. Such a judgment does not on its own prove that the final products stem from different “visitors” to the site (let alone indicate who these visitors were or where they were from), but it is also certainly amenable to such an interpretation, even if is the case that these persons were visiting a religious site, not just a way station.

The precise provenience of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud is just one of the questions that will continue to endure for the site and, correlatively, for its contributions to an understanding of religion in the eighth century—whether Israelite or Judean. To be sure, definitive interpretations are not hard to come by in the secondary literature,<sup>27</sup> but insofar as these often differ amongst themselves, they prove that the category of “definitive interpretation” is elusive if not, finally, oxymoronic when dealing with data sets such as these.

The most difficult thing about the finds from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, then, may not reside in the hard interpretive questions raised by them but, rather, be the challenging task of holding these questions open, insofar as they must be, and resisting dogmatism about any one of them. A review of the secondary literature reveals that many “historical” studies appear to move too quickly and easily to speculation. In many cases, especially when the talk is of “religion,” and the religion of an entire century, from so long ago, with such a spotty and incomplete record, we must admit—more frequently than we care to do<sup>28</sup>—the limits of what we know and the limits of what can be known. A “fuzzy portrait” (cf. Zevit 2001, 80) may be the best we can hope for.

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27. See, e.g., Na‘aman 2013, 50–51: “*all* the discovered inscriptions, paintings and artefacts reflect its function as a *royal Israelite center*.... The site was possibly selected due to a *magnificent sacred tree* that grew in a nearby location.... The figure of a ruler [= our fig. 4] is “*probably* the King of Israel.... The cumulative textual and artistic evidence points to a *site of religious nature*, established by the King of Israel and *maintained* by his administration.... The inscriptions indicate the devotion of their authors to YHWH and their belief in his *omnipotence*” (emphases added). Beyond any uncertainties that remain despite these strong assertions, Na‘aman leaves unanswered the critical question of why the King of Israel would want or need to establish and maintain a religious site so far from the center of his power and relatively “off the beaten track.” In this light, Na‘aman’s recommendation that “every discussion of the early history of Israel” must take “into account” the fact that “only a few, sporadic inscriptions survived from the rich corpus that was available in the past,” should—it seems to us—be applied to Kuntillet ‘Ajrud itself, no less than others.

28. For a refreshingly candid acknowledgment along this line, see Na‘aman 2011, 319.

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## Judean Pillar Figurines (JPFs)

*Erin Darby*

### INTRODUCTION

In 2005, an attractive book cover adorned with a female figurine head asked a seemingly simple question: “Did God Have a Wife?” (Dever 2005). This question has been repeated countless times and is one of the most common ways nonspecialists are introduced to female figurines in the Levant. But the cover of William Dever’s book really brings up two separate questions: “Did God have a wife,” and “is this her?” The answer to the first question may very well be affirmative, but the second remains unclear.

Among the many major changes in the material culture of eighth-century Judah is the introduction of Judean Pillar Figurines (JPFs). These miniature terracotta females are found in every population center throughout the country beginning in earnest during the eighth century and continuing until the Babylonian destruction. While much has been made of the figurines, a century of scholarship has yet to reach any true consensus about their function or the figure that they represent.

### JPFs: WHAT ARE THEY?

There are two main types of JPFs. The first has a molded head attached to a hand-made solid pillar by a clay tab. The pillars usually include attached arms situated on or below breasts. The molded faces contain staring almond-shaped eyes, eyebrows, noses, and smiling mouths with closed lips. The headdress may vary but usually features anywhere from one to six rows of horizontally arranged curls, forming a short wig that covers the ears. There is some variation in molded styling, with examples that have more pointed eyes or thinner faces than others.



**Fig. 1:** Judean Pillar Figurines from the Israel Museum Jerusalem.

Source: Wikimedia Commons.

The second style of figurine has a handmade head attached to a solid pillar. Most frequently these are formed by pinching the clay with the thumb and forefinger, creating shallow eye impressions. These figurines are sometimes referred to as “bird faced” figurines owing to the “beak-like” nose generated by this production style. Variations on the hand-pinched heads include those with applied turbans, side-locks, or caps.

These two styles constitute the vast majority of the JPF corpus. There are other important variations in body style, with some hollow and wheel-formed pillars, especially in earlier specimens. Some figurines with these JPF-style heads hold a circular object, often interpreted as a hand drum or cake, and some figurines hold what appears to be a baby. While these variations exist, they constitute only a small part of the corpus.

In most cases, JPFs, as with other types of Judean figurines, appear to have been covered with white-wash and were painted. Unfortunately, the white-wash and paint are poorly preserved on excavated fragments. White-wash would have covered the entire figurine, but paint is only present in some features. Where preserved, the most common color of paint is red, followed by black and yellow. Some examples were painted with more than one color, though poor-preservation makes it difficult to decide whether this was a regular practice. In a few instances, paint was used to trace facial features, like the hair or the eyes, but in most cases this is not apparent. Occasionally paint may also have been used to create a pectoral or aegis above the breasts. There is relatively little indication that paint was used to create a garment on the pillar bases, which may indicate that the figurines were naked rather than clothed; however, this question must remain unresolved due to the problems with preservation.



Judean Pillar Figurines are most frequently found broken, especially with breaks at the weakest points, like the head, at the arms, and on the torso under the breasts. Although some scholars take this as evidence that the figurines were broken intentionally, this is very difficult to prove archaeologically (McCowan 1947, 245; Nadelman 1989, 123. Franken and Steiner 1990, 128; Holland 1975, 48; Zevit 2001, 272).<sup>1</sup> The vast majority of fragments lack any evidence for intentional defacement (e.g., scratching or marring facial features) or destruction. In fact, experiments with reconstructed figurines have shown that they break in exactly their weakest points (Kletter 1996, 54–56). Thus, no data rule out the possibility that JPFs merely broke through the course of regular use.

When JPFs are excavated (rather than acquired on the antiquities market), they are most often found in domestic compounds, which might include fills, cess-pits, cisterns, alleys, tabuns, or floors. Fragments have also been found in construction fills, sub-floor filling, and walls. Because figurine fragments could easily be moved through reuse for other purposes, discard, abandonment, and natural processes, most fragments may not be located in the exact locations of the domestic structure where they were used. Thus, when interpreting the archaeological deposition of figurine fragments, particularly in houses, it is very important to weigh the strength of the data—that is, whether the fragment was found on a floor or in a fill and whether the remains were affected by post-occupational processes, like trash accumulation, flooding, and reconstruction after abandonment. Fragments uncovered in the earlier eras of excavation in the Levant cannot be relied upon to provide accurate information about the function of figurines in their archaeological contexts because these excavations rarely match modern standards in excavation, recording, and publishing.

Fragments are also found outside of domestic space, such as extra-mural streets, public water systems, storage rooms, and graves. In the case of Arad, they may also have been used in or around the sacred precinct.<sup>2</sup> At Gibeon all the figurines were uncovered in the site's water system rather than in the domestic units, whether owing to domestic trash discarded in the water system or ritual function (Darby 2014, 243–44).

Somewhat surprisingly, they rarely occur with items that would be identified with cultic activity, like chalices, offering stands, or incense alters. They are also very rare in “shrine” contexts, though this could be a side-effect of the small number of shrines excavated in Judah. They frequently appear in the same loci as zoomorphic figurines and occasionally occur in the same contexts as rattles or horse and rider figurines, though far less frequently.

Although scholars often correlate JPFs with women's practices, deposition in Jerusalem at the City of David produced little correlation between JPF fragments

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1. For more see, Kletter 1996, 54.

2. See Uehlinger 2006, 102–3 n. 53, n. 54; also a response in 2014, 257 n. 220.

and objects associated with women's work, like loom weights and grinding stones (Darby 2014, 180–82). Again, it should be emphasized that household debris is often relocated after discard, which may suggest the final deposition of objects, even on floors, may not reflect actual use patterns. In other words, the data cannot rule out the possibility that, prior to disposal, JPFs were used alongside loom weights or grinding stones. Nevertheless, Jerusalem lacks any evidence proving a close association between female work implements and JPFs in domestic units.

While this style group is the most dominant type of female figurine in southern Israel, other types of female pillar-based figurines are known as well, particularly versions with variations in the headdress. Nor is Judah alone in creating female pillar figurines. Other female styles are known from Philistia, northern Israel, Phoenicia, Cyprus, Syria, and the Transjordanian kingdoms, particularly Moab and Ammon (Press 2012; Ben-Shlomo 2010; Karageorghis 1991; Pruß 2010; 'Amr 1980; Daviau 2001; Kletter 1996, 54–56). Female pillar-based figurines from these other territories often use different production techniques for the body, such as wheel-formed bell-shaped bases or hollow hand-formed cylindrical bases, include different headdresses and hairstyles, and frequently feature other hand gestures, such as holding drums, offerings, or with the hands out to the sides.

#### WHO MADE JPFs?

Some of the most significant work on figurines involves not their identity, but the identification of a Judean style group. Most older figurine studies combine all types of figurines together, whether from Judah, Philistia, Phoenicia, Israel, Transjordan (e.g., Holland 1975; Pritchard 1943), etc. However, Raz Kletter's 1996 work and following articles demonstrated that one particular style group was predominant in the eighth through sixth centuries BCE of Judah and that this style group roughly corresponded to the known political borders of Judah during that period (Kletter 1999, 19–54; 2001, 179–216).

The causes for this stylistic coherence remain largely unexplained. Some might account for the phenomenon by assuming that the stylistic unity reflects the worship of one female deity, who, in Judean manufacture, apparently looked a particular way (Darby 2014, 38–39 and literature cited). Others have argued that the state was in control of production, forcing a kind of homogeneity on JPF design. The state involvement was perhaps as a resistance measure to fortify Judeans against encroaching Assyrian threats to Judean identity (Byrne 2004, 37–51; Wilson 2012, 259–78; cf. Darby 2014, 367–97). At the end of the day, many of these explanations are interesting, yet they lack any current archaeological proof that might confirm their likelihood.

Scholars have often speculated that the crude appearance of some JPFs indicates that were made on an *ad hoc* basis in people's homes or by women. Yet such does not appear to be the case (McCowan 1947, 248; Keel and Uehlinger 1998,

325; Bloch-Smith 1992, 78; Hadley 2000, 197; Schmitt 2012, 93). The figurines are kiln-fired and their stylistic coherence seems to suggest the work, not of disparate individuals, but of a production industry. So, too, does the large number of JPF fragments recovered from most population centers, especially Jerusalem where the vast majority of figurine fragments have been found.

Thus, the ceramics industry must also be considered when thinking about the production, distribution, and standardization of JPF iconography. Petrographic testing has demonstrated that figurines are usually made from local clays and that they are rarely transported from one population center to another (Kletter 1999, 384; Peterson-Solimany and Kletter 2009, 116; Ben-Shlomo and Darby 2014, 180–204). This rules out the possibility that JPFs were manufactured in one central location and exported to other locations throughout Judah.

Is there evidence that JPFs in each individual settlement, like Jerusalem, were made by a single production line in that location? While the appearance of JPFs is fairly standard, there is some diversity in the types of clays used at a given site. Tested corpora have produced evidence of at least 2, if not 4, different clay varieties at a site, perhaps with even more sub-varieties present. This does not entirely rule out the possibility that JPFs from a given site were all made by the same specialized production line that chose to use different clays as occasion warranted, but it certainly does not support that supposition either (Ben-Shlomo and Darby 2014, 180–204; Darby 2014, 183–212).

When compared with petrography from shrine assemblages at sites in the Levant, in which most objects are made from the same clay recipe, it is at least possible, if not likely, that the production industry for JPFs remained diversified within each site (Darby 2014, 361–62 with sources). At a minimum, whichever production lines were making JPFs, they were certainly doing so with more than one clay type. Many of these clay types were the same clays used for regular pottery vessels, perhaps suggesting that the same manufacturers made different types of clay objects, like pottery and figurines. This hypothesis is further supported by ethnographic and archaeological comparanda, as well ancient Near Eastern texts (Darby 2014, 190–95 with sources).

### JPFs: WHO ARE THEY?

#### WHAT HAS SCHOLARSHIP SAID?

Although the figurines have been discussed for over a century, scholarship is still divided about their identity and function. Most scholarly opinions can be boiled down to three main positions. The vast majority of scholars have identified the JPFs as goddesses. This school focuses on trying to identify which goddess the figurines might represent, and Asherah is by far the most frequent suggestion (Darby 2014, 34–46; Kletter 1996, 10–26). It should be noted, however, that there

are no clear attributes of any known goddess depicted on the figurines, and none are inscribed with any identifying text.

A second dominant approach relegates JPFs to “popular religion.” At the outset it should be understood that the “popular religion” paradigm has many weaknesses. Figurines are identified under this rubric for three main reasons. First, scholars assume the figurines represent a main deity, other than Yahweh. Second, because scholars often assume that the locations where figurines are found were used for cultic activity, it would stand to reason that these activities were occurring outside the confines of orthodox religious space and personnel in the temple. Third, because most scholars have connected the figurines with fertility, these same interpreters have sometimes argued that a fertility religion would have been abhorrent to Yahwism (Darby 2014, 46–54).

Finally, most interpreters have associated JPFs with females and fertility. In some cases, this is considered a corollary to the goddess interpretation under the assumption that goddesses might be disproportionately attractive to female worshippers. In the main, interpreters appear to connect the figurines with females because they first assume the breasts of the figurines must connect them in some way with fertility, lactation, or infant health and then assume these concerns would fall under the realm of female rather than male ritual intervention. These scholars often describe the breasts as “large” or “prominent” and interpret the hands of the figurine as cupping the breasts. It should, however, be noted that both of these interpretations of figurine iconography have been contested. Other scholars have drawn this connection because JPFs are associated with houses, which are interpreted as the primary realm of women (Darby 2014, 55–59; Kletter 1996, 10–12, 14–15, 18–20, 22–24, 74–75).

#### WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE SUGGEST?

**GODDESSES.** In actuality, the identification of the figure depicted by JPFs must remain a mystery, largely because the figurines lack identifiable attributes or inscriptions. What the archaeology suggests is that JPFs were not disposed of in any special way that would demarcate them from regular household trash. This might be contrasted with cultic objects in shrine contexts, which are often found in specialized pits, having undergone ritual deactivation. Nor are the figurines made from an elite status material, like stone, metal, or wood, which are more commonly associated with the images of major deities in Near Eastern texts, including the Hebrew Bible.

In fact, the “female-holding-breasts” and “naked female” images are known across the Near East, beginning in the Old Babylonian period. They resurface in different times and places but almost never are they clearly associated with a named goddess of any pantheon (Darby 2014, 321–28, 363–66). The one exception might be Qudshu (Holy One) from Late Bronze Egypt, but the manner of her depiction and her name indicate that she was probably adopted from Levantine

ritual and that a name and cosmology were created only secondarily for her (Cornelius 2004, 87, 94–98; Gubel 2005, 130–32).

So why have scholars assumed that JPFs represent high deities? This seems to rest on the premise that during figurine rituals the practitioners would have prayed to whatever entity was represented by the figurine. Of course, there is nothing in the archaeological record and little in the iconography that tells us what a figurine ritual might have looked like. Were other materials included that are no longer preserved? Were prayers uttered? What about physical movements involving the statuettes?

In fact, JPFs would only have been the most durable part of the larger ritual in which they played some role. Although we do not have any ritual texts describing figurines in Judah, they are known from other areas of the ancient Near East, including the Neo-Assyrian Empire. What these texts suggest is that Iron II figurine rituals in Mesopotamia, at least those preserved in ritual tablets, were fairly complex and may have included a number of other ritual steps that simply do not show up in the archaeological record, like the use of organic materials. They also suggest that the prayers invoked in figurine rituals normally target high gods of the pantheon rather than the entity represented by the figurine (Darby 2014, 61–97). In these texts, figurines of varying shapes and sizes may represent witches or warlocks, humans, ghosts, lower-level divine entities, or protective creatures, but the prayers for intervention are addressed, not to the figurines, but to main Mesopotamian deities, like Shamash, Ea, and Asaluhi (e.g., Biggs 1967; Læssøe 1955; Caplice 1974; Maul 1994; Abusch 2002; Wiggermann 1992; Scurlock 2006).

These texts require us to ask whether JPFs represent a lower-level divine entity rather than a high goddess. In fact, there is at least one other textual example of a divine intermediary being created to heal sickness, this time much closer to Israel. In the Late Bronze Keret Epic from ancient Ugarit (the northern coast of modern Syria), El creates a female deity from clay called “Shatiquatu” to heal King Keret on his death bed. The goddess appears to be a lower-level divine entity that is created/summoned to do El’s bidding (more on this point below; Darby 2014, 337–38; Lewis 2013, 86–112; 2014, 1–28).

**POPULAR RELIGION.** Judean Pillar Figurines are found in every site in Judah and seem to reflect population density. In that sense it is fair to say they are a “popular” religious phenomenon. But archaeology provides no evidence that JPFs were considered popular in a negative sense—in other words, that they were frowned upon by bureaucratic or temple elites. To take the example of Jerusalem: There the vast majority of JPFs have been excavated, and they are found in high numbers in neighborhoods of varying socioeconomic status. In Area G of the City of David, which has been connected with temple personnel, JPF fragments were found throughout the House of Ahiel and the destruction levels of the city, and the pattern of their deposition is very similar to JPFs in less elite neighborhoods, like

Area E. They do not cease during the periods associated with religious reform movements mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, such as those attributed to King Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:1-6; 2 Chr 29-31 or King Josiah (2 Kgs 22-23; 2 Chr 34-35), even in Jerusalem, where we might expect to see some prohibition of figurines if they were considered illicit by priests or the royal house. As suggested above, there is no clear proof that the broken state of JPFs was due to intentional destruction (Darby 2014, 151-59).

This leaves us with little choice but to acknowledge that people from varying backgrounds throughout Judah used JPFs from the eighth through sixth centuries BCE until the destruction of the kingdom by the Babylonians. The data may even suggest that elites engaged in figurine rituals and, at least in Area G, these elites may include temple and royal personnel. What remains less clear is who officiated at figurine rituals. As noted above, because of the physical characteristics of JPFs, scholars have often concluded that they were used on an *ad hoc* basis by women or families in their own homes. Yet the known figurine rituals in Mesopotamia, and even in Egypt, indicate that the figurine rituals in those locations were overseen by trained ritual experts, even when the ritual took place outside of a temple (Darby 2014, 68-69; 70-75).

This does not necessarily mean that the same held true in Judah, but it does raise the question of how much we know about the rituals that accompanied figurines. Does the fact that figurines were dominant in Area G, where an archive of bullae attest to the possible presence of temple officials and even a “healer,” provide circumstantial evidence that JPF ritual could have been presided over by religious officials in Judah as well (Shoham 1994, 58)? At the very least, this possibility cannot be ruled out since JPFs were “popular” across various segments of society throughout Judah, and we lack any evidence they were suppressed or shunned by cultic officials.

**FEMALE RELIGION.** We have already noted that archaeology provides little evidence that JPFs were used primarily by females. Likewise, because JPFs seem to be created as part of the ceramic production industry, we lack any confirmation that they were made by women on an *ad hoc* basis in their homes. What, then, is the purpose for the female iconography of the image? Moving back to the history of the “hands-on-breast” iconographic tradition, this image also appears across the Iron II Near East on equestrian frontlets and blinkers as well as seals owned by males, indicating that this “female” image was used by males as well (Darby 2014, 325-27). Thus, the iconography, in and of itself, does not serve as conclusive proof for the association between JPFs and females. Archaeological deposition of JPF fragments can only serve as evidence for a unique connection between JPFs and females if we assume that men did not live in Judean houses.

This leaves us with the hands and breasts of the figurines and how to interpret them. While it might be assumed that the breasts on the figurines depict physical

features that are shared by the primary users, this remains a supposition. To make a comparison to another figurine corpus, should we assume that fish apkallu figurines from the Neo-Assyrian Empire (male priests wearing a large fish costume) were meant to depict some actual physical attribute of the male Assyrian priests or that they must be used for concerns related to fish or men wearing fish costumes? It is almost impossible to hypothesize about the people using a figurine or the concerns that necessitated the figurine based on iconography alone.

Do we possess any data that corroborate a connection between figurines and concerns assumed to be central to females, like conception, gestation, birth, or lactation? In actuality, we have many ritual texts from both Mesopotamia and Egypt that address these concerns, and figurines rarely appear in those rituals. They favor other remedies like amulets and herbs. In Egypt, the only figurines that appear in these rituals are male Bes figurines. Furthermore, the Neo-Assyrian corpus suggests that males would have been involved in rituals rectifying these issues, problematizing why childbirth and rearing are being labeled as uniquely “female” concerns in modern scholarship (Darby 2014, 336; Allen 2005, 34; Robins 1993, 9).

So, what is the purpose of the breast iconography on JPFs? One answer might be the connection with healing and protection. Textual evidence from the Keret Epic at Ugarit (above) and breastmilk in Egyptian spell literature suggest that breasts and breastmilk may have had an association with healing rituals already in the Late Bronze Levant (Darby 2014, 336; Allen 2005, 34; Robins 1993, 9). Predating JPFs, females holding their breasts (along with a host of other gestures) were appended to cult stands, shrines, and boxes across the Levant, sometimes alongside other protective images. Naked females occasionally appear on seals in the Bronze and Iron Ages, perhaps serving a protective role, as seems to be the case with the equestrian objects mentioned above (Darby 2014, 319–21, 326–27, 330–33). The same case could be made for JPFs.

**JPF’S RITUAL FUNCTION.** Because JPFs are concentrated in domestic contexts, it is reasonable to conclude that they must have been valuable in addressing ritual needs that might characterize domestic life. But what might those include? Sympathetic magical rituals are unlikely because figurines in these rituals are normally used to transfer evil onto the figurine and then rid the family of the evil by banishing the figurine and the evil together. We might conclude, then, that most figurine types found in population centers, like cities or villages, are probably not the remains of sympathetic ritual. While figurines do appear in some witchcraft rituals, this is unlikely as well, since the figurines usually represent the witch or warlock and are then ritually destroyed. However, exorcistic and apotropaic rituals would fall within the realm of plausibility for JPFs, particularly those in domestic contexts (Darby 2014, 80–81, 83–84, 86–87, 91).

That being the case, a fairly wide-range of problems might require these types of services. Within the known corpus of figurine rituals, illness, both mental and physical, often stands as the reason for ritual intervention, and it may be that JPFs functioned in this way as well. Adding to the likelihood of this interpretation, the home was known as the locus for illness and related rituals. Illness was often considered the fault of malevolent spirits, ghosts, or the dead who then needed to be exorcised for healing to be effective (Darby 2014, 73–74, 369–71, 388–93; Avalos 1995, 173–82, 249, 251–54, 338–49, 357, 355, 327–31). In fact, the eighth century saw the rise of an increasingly interconnected world that might be responsible for the spread of illness and a change in the public health landscape (Gallagher 1999, 247).<sup>3</sup>

As to the question of who the figurines represent, one possibility is that the figurines represent a mid-range deity. Despite biblical depictions of the ancient world, pantheons were relatively fluid, with multiple levels of divinities. The eighth century saw an increasing diversification of bureaucratic positions and mid-level bureaucratic mediator deities. The biblical text reflects something of this development in the passages dealing with seraphim, cherubim, spirits, and the messenger of Yahweh. In some texts these forces were used to inflict illness and destruction, and in others they save people from the same.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps, JPFs represent a similar divine or semi-divine intermediary, hinting at the complexity of the ancient religious landscape.

### JPFS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

The emergence of a distinct style group across different regions of Judah seems to reflect the formation of a distinctive Judean “national identity.” Yet unlike other measures normally associated with national identity, such as *lmlk* seals or weights, there is no evidence that JPFs were imposed by the central government. Rather they seem to arise in distinct settlements perhaps reflecting a grass-roots movement rather than one tied solely to a central authority.

At the same time, the state mechanism that provides the infrastructure for urbanization and the development of production industries seems to have enabled the propagation of the images and their distribution. In other words, some level of

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3. Gallagher notes the evidence for plagues in Assyria during 802, 765, 759, and 707. See also Martinez 1990, 413–57. Both Gallagher and Martinez argue that plague may have been even more widespread than these dates suggest, based on the common six-year interval between plague outbreaks.

4. Handy 1994, 154–56, 162–63; 2 Kgs 19:35 // Isa 37:36 // 2 Chr 32:21; 2 Sam 24:16–17 // 1 Chr 21:12, 15–16, 18, 30; Ps 78:49; Judg 9:23; 1 Sam 16:14–16, 23; 18:10; 19:9; 1 Kgs 22:21–23 // 2 Chr 18:20–22; Ps 91; Gen 16:7–13; 19; 21:17; Exod 23:20; Ps 34:8; Gen 3:24; Exod 25:22; 1 Kgs 6; Isa 6:2, 6.



state organization seems to have facilitated the explosion of JPFs in Judean population centers. This is demonstrated by the fact that JPFs are most widely attested in sizeable settlements and may correlate with population density. Although some publications still connect JPFs with village farming culture (Borowski 2003, 24–25; Davies 2010, 111), these artefacts are absent during the Iron I, when village culture predominated in the Judean hill country, and only arise in the Iron IIB, alongside urbanization and the development of pottery production as an industry (Steiner, 2008, 193–202; Franken 2005). One possible interpretation of this trend is that JPFs (1) were tied to concerns that disproportionately affect larger settlements, like public health crises; (2) were associated with locations that could support large-scale ceramics production, and/or (3) that related rituals were officiated or at least made popular by ritual experts associated with urban centers.

Whatever our interpretation, the facts suggest a complex interaction between the rise of national identity and the state infrastructure that facilitated its development. When JPFs are not reduced to either *ad hoc* ritual or top-down state imposition, they belie a far more interesting, albeit convoluted, process. This means that many questions remain for future research. For example, given the diversification of production units, what might account for the rise of a “Judean” style? The stylistic coherence in Judah in the eighth through sixth centuries might be contrasted with more heterogeneous pillar figurine styles attested in surrounding polities. Does this suggest that various Judean sites, artisans, or ritual experts were, in some ways, more integrated when compared to surrounding polities?

Another promising question waiting to be explored is the rise of JPFs in the eighth century. While some sites may attest to fragments in late ninth- to early eighth-century contexts, fragments rarely come from loci that date exclusively to the early Iron IIB. This means that we do not have enough data to decide whether figurines arose at the end of the ninth century, at the beginning of the eighth century, or in the middle of eighth century. Nor do we have enough data to know whether they emerged at different times in different regions within Judah. At present, the data may suggest that JPF fragments were produced earlier in the Shephelah than in Jerusalem, but the data may be skewed due to problems with preservation, dating, stratigraphic sequence, and publication. Problems with dating pillar traditions in Philistia, Phoenicia, and Jordan also impede our ability to determine where female pillar figurines arose earliest and to track technological and iconographic adaptation (Darby 2014, 252–56, 313–19, 322–24, 342–44, 349–53).

While much work remains to be done on the origins and function of JPFs, the most promising path forward leads to studies that focus on sound archaeological context, make and manufacture, and the integration of these artefacts with other eighth century data. Regardless of whether we can identify their identity or the exact purpose of the figurines, JPFs can help us construct a picture of daily life-ways in the Judean state during the period of its ascendancy.

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## Enculturating Children in Eighth-Century Judah

*Kristine Henriksen Garroway*

Children were an integral part of the biblical Israelite household economic system to which they contributed actively. At the same time, children represented the future of Israelite culture and religion; more than just receptacles for the wisdom of the ages, they were the living, breathing incarnation of Israelite culture and the insurance for its continuity.

For scholars, the study of the lives of children—a vein that only recently have scholars begun to mine—provides a natural wealth of information on how the Israelites understood themselves and offers new insights even on some of the most thoroughly researched topics in Ancient Near Eastern studies.

### CHILDIST THEORY

Like children, new fields of biblical interpretation have been birthed and grown into maturity. Early studies on children arose around the turn of the twenty-first century, grounding themselves in the works of Philippe Ariès (1962) and Victor Turner (2002, 358–74). Ariès asserted that, until the modern era, children were understood as miniature versions of adults. As such, children went through rites of passage, each moving the child further toward becoming a full-grown adult. Turner picked up on Ariès's work, exploring the various stages in the rites of passage and the liminal states between each passage.

In keeping with Turner and Arie, initial studies of Israelite children explored the experience of the biblical child (Bunge 1997, 48–103; King and Stager 2001). As the field has begun to “grow up,” as it were, scholars such as Julie Faith Parker have urged colleagues to stop asking whether the Israelites treated children like miniature adults, but instead to ask, “How can we discover what the ancient writers of the Hebrew Bible thought about children and childhood?” (Parker 2013, 12). Parker along with Laurel Koepf-Taylor (2013) and Naomi Steinberg examine Israelite children and childhoods via a literary and linguistic methodology. Others,

have incorporated archaeological sources from the larger world in which the Hebrew Bible arose and placed them in conversation with the biblical texts (Garroway 2014).

Scholars have debated what to call this new field. Suggestions have included child-centered, childish, childism, and childist interpretations (Aasgaard 2006, 37; Parker 2013, 16–17; Koepf-Taylor 2013, 523–48; Young-Bruehl 2012). Following Parker’s suggestion, I too use the term “childist” to qualify the approach taken in this essay, which brings to the fore the suppressed other, in this case, the child (Parker 2013, 16–18; 2014). In doing so, a childist reading reassigns agency and a voice to the silent child.

Taking a cue from feminist scholarship, which considers gender, social classes, and ethnicity, my childist interpretation also takes a multi-disciplinary approach to the text. It utilizes the social sciences, cultural anthropology, and archaeology to examine issues of a child’s gender and social status. My childist approach also considers how the archaeological record can aid our understanding of the child in biblical Israel. Such an approach that combines scientific fields and humanities has been called processual-plus by archaeologists and a “coffeehouse” model by Koepf-Taylor (Hegemon 2003, 231–43; Bray and Pollard 2004, 180).<sup>1</sup> While the data from a single discipline alone offers much, combining data from various disciplines can provide even more insights into the child in biblical Israel.

A childist approach is complicated because it is difficult to find children in the ancient historical record, whether in texts or in material cultural remains. For example, the Bible, which is a production of male adults, focuses on male adults. The collection of stories about the patriarchs, judges, military leaders, and kings, as well as tales of long journeys, spiritual quests, wars, et cetera, has little to say about children. Yet the adult-centered historical record presents only the surface layer. As feminist biblical scholarship proved, scratching below the surface reveals more layers that concern the voiceless other whose stories offer fresh insight into another dimension of biblical Israel.<sup>2</sup> The difficulties faced by scholars seeking to uncover women in biblical Israel are multiplied exponentially for the scholar focusing on children, for we have fewer extant texts and artifacts related to children. Nevertheless, by engaging all the tools at our disposal we can flesh out various aspects of biblical Israelite children and their childhoods.

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1. Koepf-Taylor (2013, 9) points to the importance of the conversation between multiple disciplines, hence her decision to call this approach a “coffeehouse” method wherein the data from each approach is in dialogue with the others.

2. Works such as Carol Meyers’s *Discovering Eve* (1991) and *Rediscovering Eve* (2012) have paved the way.

### BACKGROUND: THE HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE<sup>3</sup>

The *bet 'av*, “house of the father,” was the core of Israelite social structure throughout the history of biblical Israel.<sup>4</sup> The *bet 'av* includes the nuclear family: the mother, father, and unwed children. Other extended family might live close by in adjacent houses sharing a common courtyard. Such groupings of families made up villages and small towns. As William Dever (2012, 186–87) notes, “This pattern produces an extremely close-knit society, based on family ties, commonly shared traditional values, and loyalty to the clan and to tribal sheiks rather than to any external authority such as the state.” The physical domain of the *bet 'av* is most closely associated with the so-called “Israelite house,” or “pillar-courtyard house,” which springs up throughout the Central Hill Country in Iron Age I (1200–1000 BCE). Even after the initiation of the Israelite state, when larger towns arose, the *bet 'av* and its value system prevailed within Israelite society as most of the population remained in small villages and towns.<sup>5</sup>

The *bet 'av* was more than a means to organize social groups, it was also a socioeconomic unit. Using this understanding of the *bet 'av*, we can begin to talk about the biblical Israelite household. The household encompasses the most basic unit of society, representing a microcosm of the society in which it exists.<sup>6</sup> Each member of the household, no matter their age, was responsible for contributing to the economic wellbeing of the household. More laborious tasks were assigned to the adults in the prime of their lives (ages 20–40 years). Older adults were given less strenuous tasks, ones that could be done without great physical effort. All work, within the house or outside of it, domestic or agricultural, was vital to the survival of the household (Meyers 2012, 37–58). Even though they were young, children were not exempt from contributing to the household. Unlike modern Western society in which children might have more emotional value than economic value, cultures based on subsistence agriculture, like Israelite culture,

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3. For those wishing to know more about families in Ancient Israel, the bibliography in this background section provides references to many of the staple works in the field.

4. On the importance of the household as a structuring unit, see King and Stager 2001, 36–40; Schloen 2001; Stager 1985, esp. 29; Meyers 2003.

5. IA II towns from the eighth-century Judah containing pillared houses include: Tell en-Nasbeh, Beersheba, Tell el-Far'ah, and Tell Beit Mirsim. On population density, see Knight 2011, 70. For the relationship between the pillared house and Israelite identity, see Bunimovitz and Faust 2002, 32–14, 59–60; 2003, 22–31.

6. The field of household archaeology is dedicated to researching various aspects of the household, including gender, production, archaeology of the family, social organization, and the household cult. For a review of literature, see Yasur-Landau, Ebling, and Mazow 2011; Hardin 2011, 9–25.

placed equal if not greater weight on the economic value of children. Young children could gather firewood while older ones could tend animals, draw water, watch younger siblings, and help the women with time-consuming domestic chores.<sup>7</sup>

As I have argued, there is a direct correlation between an individual's age and the degree to which he or she is considered a member of the household (Garroway 2014, esp. 245–53). The older a child, the more she can contribute and the more vested she becomes in the household. To some extent, one can compare membership in a household to membership at a country club. Due to high infant mortality rates, an infant would be given a guest membership. Once a child is weaned and has a fully functional immune system (ages 3–5), she receives a trial membership, during which she must provide “credentials;” the child must demonstrate she is capable of carrying out the tasks required of young members. As the child gets older, she is awarded a basic membership in the household. The older and more vested children become, the more integral they are to the household, and thus the more they are understood as members. The degree to which children were considered members of the household is also contingent upon where they are in the process of being enculturated and engendered (Lévi-Strauss 1963; Garroway 2014).

#### CHILDREN AS THE FUTURE: ENCULTURATING AND ENGENDERING CHILDREN

Societies are concerned with reproducing their culture through their children. Without children, there is no “next generation,” and without properly taught children, the next generation will not carry on the beliefs and values of the present generation. We find evidence of this notion throughout the Hebrew Bible. It is reflected in the legal instructions as one of the many commandments given to the Israelites. For example, Deut 6:7 states *שננת לבניך*, “incise them [your values and beliefs] on your children.”<sup>8</sup> In the fashion of wisdom literature, Proverbs opines that passing on one's beliefs and values is of utmost importance (Prov 3:1, 4:1, 4:10–11, 4:20). Its teaching was meant to properly enculturate Israelite children so that “even in old age he will not swerve from it [the parents' instruction]” (Prov 22:6). Thus the child who listened to his elders and emulated their values brought

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7. Jer 7:18, Gen 24:13–14, 29:9, 30:14, 37:12; Exod 2:16; 1 Sam 16:11, 17:15. See too Meyers 1997, 27. For ethnographic studies on children and economic production, see Koepf-Taylor 2013, 27–28.

8. Brown, Driver, and Briggs states that *שנן* means “teach the words incisively.” BDB, s.v. “שנן.”



joy and pride to his family, but the child who strayed brought them grief (Prov 10:1, 15:20, 17:25).

This act of passing on information to the next generation is called enculturation, and it is how a society hands down their culture.<sup>9</sup> The process of enculturation is multifaceted, so that there are many ways to help children learn the values, skills, language, and behaviors that their society understands to be normative.

Articulating key societal values through written texts, like those of Deuteronomy and Proverbs, is one means of enculturating a child into society. Verbal transmission of values and culture is another method. Cultural behaviors include reproduction of material culture, religious beliefs, and engenderment, among others.<sup>10</sup> These avenues of enculturation have something in common: they are all learned. Parents, peers, siblings, and other members of society model correct cultural behavior for the child. Children, as “active participants in the economic, social, political, and religious aspects of cultures,” repeat the learned information for future generations (Baxter 2005, 11). Enculturation is the process by which cultural norms are set.<sup>11</sup>

Engendering is a part of enculturation. Many recent gender studies conducted from a historical perspective come from archaeologists who utilize aspects of anthropology and sociology in order to understand the way gender functions and is created in archaeological cultures (Baxter 2000; Derevenski 1997, 192–202; Gero and Conkey 1991; Crawley, Foley, and Shehan 2008; Nelson 2006). These studies stem from Judith Butler’s work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, in which she asserts that gender is a performance. Children and other members of a society learn how to become male or female by watching others within their society act out these roles (Butler 1990). The repeated actions demonstrating femaleness and maleness are passed on to future generations.

Because gender is learned, it is culturally constructed (Garroway 2012). Consider, for example, a baby dressed in yellow. A person walking down the street might exclaim, “What a cute baby! Is it a boy or a girl?” If the parent had dressed

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9. Many essays within the volume *The Archaeology of Childhood* (2015) provide examples of the enculturation of children through the use of material culture both by the adult, and by the child.

10. The reproduction of material culture functions as a means of enculturation. Consider, for example, the Lakota Native Americans of the Great Plains. The women in this group passed down their ethnic and cultural identity by teaching their children how to make traditional Lakota dresses. Through this process, children not only learned key elements of their ethnic and cultural heritage, but also participated in producing tangible objects of their culture. See Rassmussen 1997.

11. Ideologies within a society can and do change over time and through interaction with other cultures. When a culture takes on elements of another culture, the process is called acculturation (Berry 2005).

the baby in pink, a color the current American culture commonly associates with girls, the ambiguity is removed and the same person walking down the street might say, "What a cute little girl!" Yet before the 1950s, pink was a color associated with boys, whereas light blue, a more-dainty color, was associated with girls (Paloti 1997, 32). A less subtle means of engendering children comes today via the toys or stories children are encouraged to associate with. Such books as *Cinderella Ate My Daughter* document parents' battles to counter some of the cultural norms engrained in their children (Orenstein 2011). Just as children today are products of the society they live in, so too were children 3000 years ago.

#### CHILDREN IN IRON AGE IIB (EIGHTH CENTURY BCE) ISRAEL

On the one hand, there is not much to differentiate Israelite children in the Iron Age IIB from their counterparts in other periods. This is because the basic structure of the Israelite household did not change much. The *bet 'av* reigned supreme. When the family structure breaks down, when children are no longer viewed as members of the Israelite household, children cannot be enculturated and Israelite culture cannot be properly reproduced.<sup>12</sup>

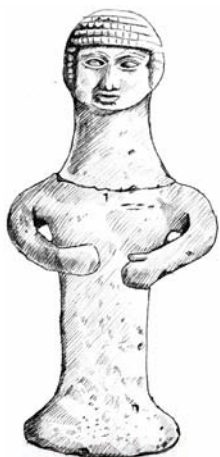
On the other hand, it is reasonable to assume that while children/childhood in eighth century BCE (Iron Age II) Judah might be similar to children/childhood of other periods, there must also be nuances. Since the biblical texts underwent a long process of editing and redacting, scholars may have difficulty placing a text definitively in the eighth century BCE.<sup>13</sup> Archaeological remains, while not without their own challenges, are often easier to date and can be combined with textual data for a more complete picture. The phenomenon of Judean Pillar Figurines (see Darby in this volume for more details) which became popular in the eighth and seventh centuries, when viewed through the prism of the following case study turns to one of the most well-known artifacts in Israelite history to demonstrate how childist theory can be used to re-examine a topic in order to gain new insight into the lives of children. In doing so, this example can be shown to demonstrate how enculturating children becomes especially important in eighth century BCE Judah.

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12. Koepf-Taylor's (2013) work discusses how children were necessary for the continuance of both the family and the community *en large*.

13. This said, portions of First Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos have been assigned an eighth century date (Berlin and Brettler 2004, 780, 1144, 1176).

## PILLAR FIGURINES: A CASE STUDY



**Fig. 1:** Judean Pillar Figurine: Molded Head: Tel Duweir, IA II. Drawing by Paul Butler Metropolitan Museum of Art, AN 34.126.53.

Nothing shouts “Iron Age II Judah” more than the Judean pillar figurines (JPFs). While some JPFs appeared as early as the tenth century BCE, the eighth–seventh centuries BCE witnessed an explosion in the popularity of these figurines. Whether sporting a pillar base and molded face, or a handmade base with a pinched face, JPFs have one thing in common: prominently displayed breasts. The volumes by Raz Kletter (1996) and more recently Erin Darby (2014) provide catalogues of the figurines, noting where they were found, and cover the basic theories on their function. Much ink has been spilt trying to determine who these figurines represent (Asherah, Astarte, generic fertility goddess), how they were used, and why they suddenly appear in the archaeological record. While the specific questions remain, many believe that these objects had some relationship to fertility.<sup>14</sup>

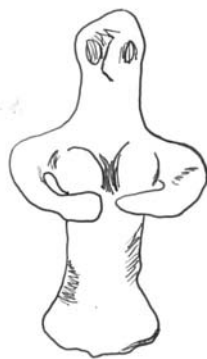
Two theories provide a good starting point for a childist interpretation of the JPFs. Ryan Byrne (2004, 137–51) and Ian Wilson (2014, 259–78) both discuss the role of JPFs in maintaining ethnic boundaries. Linking the distribution of JPFs with *lmlk* seals and rosette stamps (the other quintessential IA II Judean artifacts), Wilson (2012, 19–54) notes that during the seventh and eighth centuries BCE, “Judah, as an ethnos, was maintaining boundaries between itself and its neighbors—and vice versa—and the imperial force of Assyria provided a catalyst.” While Wilson focuses his argument solely on ethnic identity, Byrne starts with ethnic identity in order to take his argument in another direction. He understands the proliferation of JPFs as a reaction by the state to the very real concern that Israel might get wiped out by the Assyrian war machine. “Social reproduction is the salient mechanism for the preservation of identity and the survival of community, and as such represented a priority of state as well as family in Iron Age Judah” (Byrnes 2004, 145). JPFs represent buxom women, women with engorged breasts, women who can nurse children. Building on the work of anthropologists, Carol Meyers (2007, 115–30) argues that the JPFs fit into a typology of both magical and cultic figurines, which were manipulated during a ritual meant to result in a viable infant. Accordingly, the state may have used JPFs as a means of promoting a political agenda steeped in biblical ideology: Be fruitful and multiply!

14. For a counter-argument, see Zevit 2001, 273.

The notion that Israelites needed to be encouraged to have children during times of crisis is not particularly surprising. Meyers (2012, 97–102) argues the same thing needed to be said to the Early Israelites. Whether it was the state’s message or a communal sense of urgency, the sheer number of JPFs emphasizes the preoccupation and vested interest seventh and eighth century BCE Israelites had in reproducing.<sup>15</sup> In this childist interpretation, the “who” behind the message is secondary. Here, I am interested in (1) how children heard the message, and (2) what role JPFs played in a child’s enculturation into Judean culture, that is, how the message might have been internalized and then reproduced by Judean children in the eighth century BCE.

The answer to the first question is likely multifaceted. Considering that material culture is a socially and culturally created medium that conveys information, JPFs are in essence a symbol (Bowie 2007, 70). Symbols, in turn, are created and used with the intent to identify (Hodder 1982, 206–9). Thus the very presence of a JPF within the eyesight of a child, be it in the domestic or public arena, conveys a message to the child. What is that message? I think one reasonable communication is, “You, child, are valuable and desired,” both within the household and Judean culture *en large*. Previous studies have highlighted the preoccupation of women with their fertility, but none have thought about how that message comes across to the children already present in the household.<sup>16</sup> The notion that children received a message that they were desired puts a positive spin on the more mundane fact that children were considered an essential cog in the household economic system.<sup>17</sup>

We might then ask ourselves why Judean children were valued and desired. The answer here sinks back into practicalities. Judah’s immediate neighbors, and



**Fig. 2:** Judean Pillar Figurine:  
Pinched Face;  
Beer-Sheba/ Tel  
Erani; IA II (Israel  
Museum, Wiki-  
media).

15. To date, the published finds include 515 figurines from Jerusalem, 115 from the hill country around Jerusalem, 50 from the Negev, and 96 from the Shephelah (Darby 2014, 252–53).

16. For studies on women and (in)fertility, see Koepf-Taylor 2013, 33–63; Meyers, 2012; Stol, 2000.

17. For an overview of children as economic assets, see Koepf-Taylor 2013; Parker 2013, 41–44.

more importantly Assyria, presented a threat to Judah for most of the eighth century BCE. After the fall of the Northern Kingdom, one can only imagine the reaction in Judah as Israelites fled south to find refuge in Judah. Jerusalem tripled its size while new settlements popped up in the surrounding hill country (Broshi and Finkelstein 1992, 47–60). Preparation for war would be in the air. In order to raise a large army, you need a large population. If Israel did go to war with Assyria, they as the smaller nation faced the possibility of national extinction. A larger population provides better odds that some fraction of Judeans and their culture would survive.<sup>18</sup>

If one goal of the JPFs was to preserve Judean culture, we can then look at the role JPFs played in enculturating children. Children must encounter an aspect of their culture over and over to internalize it. It is like the difference between cramming for a test and studying for a comprehensive exam or boards. Most people who cram for a test cannot remember the information they studied in the months or years to come. A student studying for boards, on the other hand, takes months, if not years to learn and internalize the information. This student will not only remember the information, but will put it to use during their medical career. In the same way, a child's repetitive interaction with JPFs causes this element of his culture to take root.

In the theory of membership presented above, I noted a direct correlation between the child's age and her perceived membership within the household. I think we can apply a similar method for understanding the use of JPFs during different stages in a child's enculturation. Upon birth, the infant becomes the actualization of the JPF's intent. As the infant grows into a toddler, becoming aware of her surroundings, she begins to observe how the adults interact with JPFs. She might see a parent saying a prayer aloud, presenting offerings or libations, or simply treating it with reverence. She might even be privy to a scolding for trying to touch or play with it! Gradually the growing child begins to understand the reason for the JPF's presence. If the JPF is in her house, she might start to ingest a sense of Judean ethnic pride. She might also experience the JPF as a part of the house and family traditions. In the same way that a person might eat only her grandmother's chocolate chip cookies to the exclusion of others simply because they came from grandma, a child might begin to see the JPF (as opposed to other plaque figurines) as a part of her family tradition. So if asked why her house has a JPF, she would say: "Because our family has always had one" (Nakhai 2014, 165–98).

As with any piece of material culture, and any symbol, "homogeneity of appearance does not proscribe heterogeneity of meaning" (Byrne 2004, 148). With this in mind, we might surmise that the JPFs had a primary function as well as secondary uses. Setting aside the issue of which goddess—if any—JPFs might

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18. In the sixth century BCE this is exactly what happened. Babylonia destroyed Judah, deporting a large portion of the population while a remnant remained in the land.

represent, if their main use was as fertility figurines or talismans, it is likely they had rituals associated with them. For example, if a talisman, a grown woman might have touched it for good luck every time she walked by it. Children learn by example, so at some point they too might have walked by and reached out to touch it without even knowing why they were doing so.

#### MOCK-JPFs—A CHILDREN’S TOY?

Keeping in mind that JPFs could function differently, we might even wonder if some were used by children as a sort of toy. Scholars often suggest this use and then immediately refute the idea.<sup>19</sup> However, I think that in accordance with the way enculturation works, this idea should be revisited. Little children today tote baby dolls, and young Jewish children are given stuffed Torahs to carry at Simchat Torah. In each case, the children are emulating adult activities. The former enculturates the child into a parenting society and the latter into Jewish society. I think it is possible some of the JPFs were given to or used by older children as replica “god-dolls.”<sup>20</sup> The intent might have been for children to practice emulating the adult aspects of Judean culture with a JPF of their own.

Children might have come into possession of JPFs by other means as well. It seems to me not impossible that children might have made imitation JPFs for their own use. Such an activity would be open to children of any social status or gender as the material (clay) was readily available near domestic quarters.<sup>21</sup> Adding a little water, rolling a pillar, and pinching a face does not take much coordination or artistic ability. The activity could be supervised by an adult, older sibling, or even made without outside direction. Like playdough or molding clay, unfired clay hardens and then crumbles. Thus such imitation JPFs would not be found or, more likely, not be recognized in the archaeological record. This latter point is important, for just as archaeologists only recently started paying attention to children’s bones in mortuary contexts, so too have they only recently begun to look for evidence of children in domestic settings (Uziel and Lewis 2013, 268–93).

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19. DeVaux 1961, 82. Meyers (2007, 119) notes that from a typological perspective, the JPFs have two out of three characteristics of a toy: they are small and are found in or near dwellings. However, she dismisses them as toys because they lack the third characteristic: they are not found in a group of other human and zoomorphic figurines. This “almost but not quite” approach is characteristic of Levantine archaeology, which seems hesitant to identify anything as being used first or second hand by children.

20. While no biblical texts reference JPFs, Jeremiah does mention children participating in rituals for the Queen of Heaven (Jer 7:18), thus demonstrating that household religious activities were not limited to the adult sphere.

21. On the use of clay, see Darby 2014, 308.

Evidence of children making their own renditions of JPFs might have been, quite literally swept away.

Of the JPFs found and recorded, the majority of both the handmade and molded headed ones are poorly made. A petrographic analysis performed on the largest extant corpus of JPFs, those from Jerusalem, provides some telling information (Darby 2014, 210–12). It confirms no precious materials were used, some have not been properly fired, and in many cases the clay has not been properly prepared (levigated).<sup>22</sup> All this means that JPFs were made quickly and *en mass*. Secondly, the petrographic analysis confirms that the clay came from a few areas adjacent to the City of David. This information contradicts the popular suggestion that each household was preparing JPFs in their own home. (However, it does not preclude my suggestion above that children might have made imitation JPFs, for such imitations would not be fired in a professional kiln.) What it does suggest is that JPFs were produced in ceramic workshops outside the city. Darby states, “Based on analogy with Near Eastern texts and ethno-archaeology, the figurines were probably made in workshops, run by males, with female and child participation” (Darby 2014, 211). As demonstrated by other ancient Near Eastern societies, potting was a family trade, and all members of the family were involved (Darby 2014, 196–97 and the examples therein). Here it should be pointed out that as participants in the household economic system, children of both sexes would work in the family business. Depending on their age, male and female children might have participated in different aspects of a family business, with younger children and older girls helping the women and older boys helping the men (Garroway 2015, 45–46). If this holds true for Judah, imitation JPFs were not the only way children could replicate an aspect of Judean culture; children also did so by participating in the production of official JPFs.

Whether a child made an unofficial JPF or worked in a workshop producing them by the tens of hundreds, the child would be participating in a silent form of self-affirmation as the symbol the child replicated signified how valuable and desirable the child was.<sup>23</sup>

## SUMMARY

This case study examines how childist theory can be applied to a well-known topic. While the subject matter is arguably all about bearing children, until now

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22. Levigation refers to the process by which clay is refined: Clay is mixed with water and then left to sit. The coarse material sinks to the bottom, and the water and other impurities rise to the top. The clay found in the middle is the highest quality, without major imperfections.

23. While it is true that male children were more desirable than females, both sexes were needed to continue Judean culture. On desirability, see Nakhai 2008, 245–60.

no one has thought about JPFs from the perspective of the child. The analysis above argues that children become enculturated through exposure to repeated performances of culture, in this case the use of JPFs. It also draws an analogy between a child's membership in the household and the degree to which she is enculturated. Whether children were making or possessing JPFs of their own or simply observing how Judean adults interacted with JPFs, a childist interpretation demonstrates that children were active participants in their enculturation, internalizing and reproducing Judean culture for the next generation.

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## Religion in Eighth-Century Judah: An Overview

*Zev I. Farber*

### INTRODUCTION

Religion is hard to define and harder to identify in material culture. When we speak of religion, we are imagining a construct made of worldviews or beliefs on one hand and actions or rituals on the other. Using archaeological data in conversation with critical biblical scholarship, this article will offer an overview of what we know, and what we can speculate, about religious beliefs and practices in eighth-century Judah.

We will start with a discussion of god(s), with special focus on the Israelite god, Yahweh. We will then move on to goddesses, with a special focus on Asherah, who appears to have been Yahweh's consort. From there we will discuss cultic officials, and then cultic practices, places, and paraphernalia, and then holidays. Next, we will discuss purification, and practices and beliefs surrounding death. Afterwards, we will look at various forms of divinatory practices, followed by the related topic of prophecy. Finally, we will deal with Judahite (and Judahite-Israelite) national identity and how Judahites understood their place in the world.

### GOD, GODS, AND YAHWEH

What gods or goddesses did the Judahites worship during this period? The Bible presents the "official religion" of Judah as monotheistic. Despite the multiple names used for God in the Bible, we are told that these are simply different names for the same deity. In this portrayal, the deity's personal name is Yahweh (pronunciation uncertain). Nevertheless, he—Yahweh is decidedly male—is also referred to by the more generic name 'Elōhîm (a plural form of the Hebrew word for "god"), as well as 'El (the head of the West Semitic pantheon) and Šadday. The Bible also uses an honorific title, *ʿĀdōnāy*, meaning "my master" (in plural), which is parallel to the popular honorific *Bā'al*, "the master" for the West Semitic storm god Hādad or 'Ādad (spelling varies depending on dialect).

The biblical idea that “properly religious” Judahites worshiped only Yahweh does not describe the reality of eighth-century Judah adequately. As we do not know the date of many biblical texts or upon what earlier traditions they may be based, it is possible that this idea could have had currency among eighth century elite scribes. Moreover, since we know little about what went on in the Jerusalem temple proper, archaeologically speaking, it may even reflect the worldview of the Jerusalem priesthood; then again, it may not. The Bible itself informs us that the temple had two large statues of cherubim in the Holy of Holies (1 Kgs 6–8), implying that, at the very least, Yahweh had a retinue of heavenly beings.

#### YAHWEH IS MANY: SYNCRETISM AND MULTIPLE MANIFESTATIONS

Outside the world of scribes, the situation is more complex. First and foremost, the conception of Yahweh with which we moderns are familiar as one independent and unique being does not reflect how the ancients conceptualized a god. Instead, Yahweh, like other ancient gods, existed in multiple manifestations. In Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, we hear about a “Yahweh of Teman” and a “Yahweh of Samaria.” The geographical references do not simply refer to places in which this same deity is worshipped, nor does it mean two entirely distinct beings. Rather, ancient Near Eastern religions thought in terms of “local manifestations” (McCarter 1987). A god/goddess can manifest himself/herself in more than place at one time (Sommer 2009). Worshipers may be attached to one or another of these manifestations and apparently, considering that both of these Yahwehs were invoked in the same place (Kuntillet ‘Ajrud), remained loyal to them even when travelling to other regions.

This concept of multiple manifestations of one god is a form of syncretism, the idea common to the majority of ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean religions, that one group’s god is really the same as another group’s god, despite the different name. For example, the Greek Zeus and the Latin Jupiter were considered to be different versions of the same storm god. To this could be added Canaanite Hadad (*Bā‘al*) and even Egyptian Seth and Sumerian Iškur.

In Egyptian religion, another form of syncretism was common: a given Egyptian god could manifest himself in a hybrid form with another god. To take the most prominent example, the Egyptian creator-god Amun, who gained prominence during the Middle Kingdom as the patron god of the Twelfth Dynasty, could also manifest himself as the sun god, Ra, in a hybrid form, Amun-Ra. Thus, Amun was his own god, Ra, was his own god, and Amun-Ra was his own god, but he was also a form of Amun and Ra.

The multiple manifestations of Yahweh fit with the syncretistic mindset, which does not imagine a deity as identical to a human persona, which must have one identity and manifest himself/herself in only one place at any given time. The description of the patriarchs’ behavior in Genesis may represent worship of Yahweh or ‘Elōhîm through his multiple manifestations. Abraham, after making a

peace accord with the king of the nearby city-state of Gerar, plants a tree in Beer Sheba, and calls upon Yahweh the eternal god (Gen 21:33), an epithet he had not before used in his numerous callings upon Yahweh. Jacob, having made a covenant with 'Elōhîm in Bet-el (Gen 28:20–22), believes he must return to this very town to fulfill his promises of honoring *this* god. Years later, 'Elōhîm tells Jacob to return to the area and make an altar “to the god ('El) who appeared to you” (Gen 35:1) and Jacob does so, calling the place 'El Bet-el (“‘El of Bet-el” or “god of Bet-el,” Gen 35:7). In this latter case, 'Elōhîm speaks to Jacob outside of Bet-el, but still expects the particular manifestation of himself, 'El Bet-el, to be worshiped properly on his own turf.

### YAHWEH AND 'EL(ŌHÎM) ARE ONE

It is not clear when in the development of Israelite or Judahite religion Yahweh and 'El (or 'Elōhîm) become the same god. 'El is very well attested in the archaeological record. As a general portrait (it varies depending on time and place), 'El was the head of the West-Semitic pantheon. His wife was 'Āšērāh (Asherah) and among his children was Hādād, the storm god, who eventually replaced his father as the main god, taking on the epithet *Bā'al* (“Master”).

It seems likely that, over time, the once independent patron god of the Samaritan and Judean highlands, Yahweh, began to syncretize with the chief of the Canaanite pantheon, 'El, and be seen as a manifestation of this powerful god. The name Israel (meaning “‘El strives”), which was the group’s moniker starting no later than the thirteenth century BCE (it is mentioned in the Merneptah Stele, ca. 1208), implies that 'El, not Yahweh, was this group’s main god in the early period. In fact, many of 'El’s classic characteristics—a connection to the wilderness, a holy mountain, the epithets “bull,” “creator,” and “eternal”—became part of the description of the syncretized biblical god.

Unlike 'El, Yahweh is virtually unknown outside of Israel and Judah. The earliest attestation of this god, and the only certain one outside of an Israelite/Judahite context, is the reference in Amunhotep III’s Soleb inscription to the Shasu Land Yahu (early fourteenth cent). This is generally understood to refer to a people named the Shasu that lived in the area later known as Edom. We do not know who these Shasu are—many theories have been suggested—but it seems likely that some connection or continuity, now lost in history, exists between this group and the Israelites.

### A PATRON GOD

Judah and Israel’s promoting a small tribal god to chief or national deity fits with what we know about some of their neighbors. Whereas the Canaanites worshipped the god of the traditional West Semitic pantheon such as 'El (in his classic form) and Hādād, the Moabites worshiped their patron god Kēmōš, the Ammonites,

Milkōm, and the Edomites, Qos. These patron gods were not necessarily worshiped exclusively in their respective lands, but they were of central importance to the local cult. In fact, in the Mesha Inscription (ca. 840), we hear the king of Moab speaking about Kēmōš in ways very reminiscent of biblical tropes about Yahweh. In describing how Moab had been defeated by the Israelite king, Omri, in earlier times, Mesha claims that this was because “Kēmōš was angry with his people.” It is also worth noting, that Mesha refers to the Israelite god as Yahweh. Thus, it appears that these groups worked with the idea that each had the backing of a powerful patron god, to whom they were loyal and who controlled the fate of his people.

#### THEOPHORIC NAMES

The significant place Yahweh held among the Israelites and Judahites is clear from the record of names both in the biblical texts as well as in the archaeological record (Tigay 1986; Golub 2014 and 2015). In Judah the form it takes in names is the full YHW and sometimes the shorter YH, whereas in Israel (Samaria province) it was YW. *Bā'al*, whether as a separate god (Hādad) or as an epithet for Yahweh, does not appear in Judahite names in the eighth century. El appears less frequently, whereas, comparatively speaking, it was popular among the Ammonites in this period. Ancient Israelite/Judahite names with theophoric elements such as *'am* (people), *'ah* (brother) and *'ab* (father), although originating in the world of ancestor worship, were also likely references to YHWH by the eighth century (Golub 2014 and 2015).

Names with theophoric elements that are definitively not Judah's patron god are almost entirely absent. This makes sense considering the patron god system that dominated Judah. The same is true with Judah's neighbors, where we find gods names in regions where they were venerated: Qos in Edom, Hādad near Aram (in Dan), Kēmōš in Moab, Horus in the south near Egypt, et cetera.

#### ICONOGRAPHY OF DIVINITIES

Contrary to the polemical claim in Deut 4:35, that “Yahweh is the only *'elōhīm* (god), there is no other beside him,” iconographically, we can still find gods other than Yahweh depicted in Judahite material culture from this period. Bes, for example, appears with his usual feathered hat in seals and scarabs, and his name appears in amulets (Keel and Uehlinger 1998, 220). We also find classic Egyptian religious iconography in Israel and Judah, such as the winged sun disc and the eye of Horus (256–59). This implies either that deities other than Yahweh (and Asherah) maintained some hold on the Israelite and Judahite religious imagination or that their images were considered decorative or sophisticated—most likely both explanations are correct.



## GODDESS, GODDESSES, AND ASHERAH

Male theophoric names do not generally have goddesses as the divine element. It is possible that this would have been different for women's names, but from the biblical evidence this does not seem to be the case. Moreover, we have precious little evidence about women's names from archaeology since women were much less involved in business activities and were less likely to have seals or their names on documents. Nevertheless, even if their names do not appear as theophoric elements in Judahite (or Israelite) names, various pieces of evidence point to the probability of goddess worship in Judah in this period.

The Bible polemicalizes specifically with goddess worship in seventh century Judah. The book of Jeremiah even describes the preparation for this ritual: "The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven" (Jer 7:18 NRSV). A number of west-Semitic goddesses—'Ānāt, 'Aštōret (Astarte), 'Āšērāh (Asherah)—could be referred to, in theory, as the goddess of heaven, and the ritual described seems relatively standard, an offering of food to the goddess, and such worship could extend back to earlier than the seventh century. Nevertheless, it has been argued that the Queen of Heaven is Ishtar, the east-Semitic version of Astarte, and that her worship only took root in the seventh century, influenced by Assyrian and the Babylonian domination (Albertz 1994). If so, this text would have no bearing on eighth-century Judah.

Another biblical text, describing Josiah's religious purge, writes: "He broke down the houses of the male prostitutes that were in the house of Yahweh, where the women did weaving for Asherah" (2 Kgs 23:7). Here the goddess is named explicitly, and although the ritual is unclear (weaving what?), we learn that Asherah worship occurred in the Jerusalem temple. Putting aside the biblical scribe's negative evaluation of these practices, it seems likely that they describe something real and that these were longstanding practices that would have taken place in the eighth century as well.

## YAHWEH'S WIFE

The word 'āšērāh dominates both the biblical evidence and, more importantly, the archaeological evidence. Inscriptions in Kuntillat 'Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qom use some version of the phrase יהוה ואשרתה "Yahweh and his 'āšērāh." The meaning of this phrase is a subject of debate (see Strawn and LeMon in this volume). Is 'āšērāh the personal name of a goddess (Asherah) or a reference to the tree (or ritual pole) that the Bible calls an 'āšērāh? In favor of the first interpretation is that offerings are generally made to divine beings, not to ritual objects. In favor of the latter two interpretations is that Hebrew grammar does not allow the placing of a suffixed particle at the end of a proper name. (Some scholars have suggested that the word means "shrine" like the Phoenician term 'aṭrt [a variant

of *ʾašērâh*] in certain contexts, but this meaning is not attested in Hebrew usage and even the meaning in Phoenician is contested. Thus, this interpretation seems to be quite a stretch.)

The translation of *ʾāšērāh* as the personal name of a goddess (Asherah) seems more likely, but even if it refers to a ritual object, the use of the name *ʾašērâh* for this object implies her presence. In the “standard” west-Semitic pantheon, Asherah is the wife of El. Since El and Yahweh were syncretistically merged in Israel and Judah by this period, it seems that part of this merger was that Asherah became the wife of Yahweh. What this means is that at least some, perhaps many, Judahites worshiped Yahweh as part of a divine couple and not as the lone deity we picture from the biblical depictions. In this context it is worth mentioning that flanking the entrance to the adytum (innermost holy place) of the Arad sanctuary were *two* altars with accompanying pillars (*maṣṣēbōt*), perhaps implying that two deities were worshiped there. (More on this sanctuary and the use of pillars later.)

#### JUDEAN PILLAR FIGURINES

Finally, a common item found in Judahite houses in this period are terra cotta figurines of a naked woman, referred to in scholarship as Judean Pillar Figurines (JPFs). Although figurines of naked goddesses are common in the ancient Near East, the JPFs have a particular style and were common specifically in the late eighth and seventh centuries (see Darby in this volume). We do not know for certain what these figurines meant to the Judahites or whether it was a figure of a generic “lower” or “mediator” divinity, or a specific high goddess (Dever suggests Asherah). Whatever the identification, it seems clear that these were not merely decorative depictions of a human female and were meant to serve a ritual purpose, strengthening the observation that goddesses played a role in Judahite religion in this period.

#### PRIESTS AND LEVITES

Moving on from the discussion of gods and goddesses, we turn to the cultic officials whose job it was to serve them, starting with the priesthood. The term for priest in ancient Hebrew is *kōhēn*, but what made a person a priest in this period is unclear. Archaeology sheds little light on this problem and the biblical data supply contradictory information, which implies that the process was fluid in time and place. In other words, different areas may have had different answers to this question and these answers likely evolved over time.

Deuteronomy describes priests as coterminous with Levites, or, at least, as the term for Levites who actively serve. This differs from the Priestly conception—almost certainly representing a post-eighth century viewpoint—in which Levites, understood as members of the tribe of Levi, serve in a secondary capacity

under the charge of the Aaronide priests, that is, descendants of the (mythic?) first high priest, Aaron, who was himself, a Levite.

The Bible presents Levites as a tribe, that is, a group connected by lineage and descended from a man named Levi, but this is almost certainly a later meaning. The Hebrew root ל-ו-ה meaning “to attach,” could mean that the group attached themselves to the Israelites or that members of the group were attached or dedicated to Yahweh in some way. Whatever it means, the Levites were likely a solidified, tribal group by the end of the First Temple period, but what they were in the eighth century is not clear.

#### NONLINEAGED PRIESTS

In addition to these two “official” depictions of priests, a number of biblical accounts strongly imply that Israelites (or Judahites) without a given lineage could serve as priests. Samuel the Ephraimite serves as a priest (1 Sam 2:18), the Judahite sons of David serve as priests (2 Sam 8:18), the son of Micah, an Ephraimite, serves as a priest (Judg 17:5). This last story is instructive, since Micah “upgrades” by hiring a Levite when the opportunity arises (Judg 17:10). This implies that, at least during the time this story was written, there were cultic professionals (Levites) who could serve as priests as well as “regular” Israelites. The Bible’s accusation against Jeroboam I of Israel, that he employed non-Levitical priests (1 Kgs 12:31), highlights the tension between “priest” and “Levite.”

The depiction of Israelite and Judahite sons becoming priests is reminiscent of the Pentateuch’s claim that originally firstborn Israelites were to be dedicated to God (Exod 34:20, Num 3:11–13, 8:17–18). The Pentateuch describes this as merely a theoretical possibility that was altered already in the wilderness period, but this is a fanciful depiction of a longer and more complex historical process. The question of what that process may have been is open. It is possible that the firstborn were dedicated to local altars to serve there, perhaps making them coterminous with the Levites of old. Alternatively, this could be a depiction of household religion, in which the firstborn were charged with worship of the deity (Yahweh or perhaps an ancestor) in the home (Leuchter 2017).

The Bible also references a kind of priest called *kēmārîm*, who are associated with Judean high places (2 Kgs 23:5), the calves of the Israelite temple in Beth-el (Hos 10:5), and even Ba‘al (Zeph 1:4). The biblical texts describe them only in polemical terms, and we know nothing about who they were and what made them different from *kōhanîm* (Edelman 2010).

Finally, the Bible references a kind of holy ascetic called the *nāzîr* (nazirite). Though we only have snippets of descriptions from very different periods, it seems these people would take a vow of unknown duration to avoid wine and grow their hair long, and were forbidden become impure by contact with the dead. In later biblical texts (Num 6), they seem to be connected to the temple in some way, but earlier texts imply that their holiness was independent of the cult.

Amos, for instance, uses them as a parallel to prophets (Amos 2:11–12). Samuel, who appears to be a lifelong nazirite, dedicated to Yahweh by his mother (1 Sam 1:11), wanders the countryside performing sacrifices and delivering prophecies. Another lifelong nazirite, Samson (Judg 13:7), claimed by YHWH before his birth, does neither. Thus, it seems that the nazirite's position was much more amorphous than that of the priest (Landy 2015; Levine 2018; Niditch 2008).

#### PRIESTESSES

One category of priest we never see mentioned is “priestess.” The word does not exist in the Bible. This stands out in comparison with what we find with other types of religious practitioners (Ackerman 2008). For example, Deborah (Judg 4:4) and Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14) are described as prophetesses and Ezekiel (13:17) makes mentions of women who prophesize, and Num 6:2 allows for female nazirites. We also hear of female musicians, at least in the Second Temple period (Ezra 2:65). Politically, the Bible speaks of queens with power (e.g., Jezebel and Athalya) and Deborah is described as one of the pre-monarchic judges and a leader in battle (Judg 4:4, 9, 5:7). We are even told of women who supported cultic activities with their finances, such as the mother of Micah (Judg 17:3) who made an idol of Yahweh, and the queen-mother of King Asa who had designed a “monstrosity” (*mifleset*) for Asherah (1 Kgs 15:13).

The lack of priestesses is striking since in other ancient Near Eastern religious cultures, women did serve as priestesses (Taggar-Cohen 2016). It is possible that this lack is purely a biblical construct and that there were, in fact, priestesses or Levitesses. It is also possible that the biblical picture reflects the reality in the Jerusalem temple, but that priestesses existed in local shrines or high places or even just served in family ritual (where “priests” per se may have been unnecessary). Finally, it is possible that Judahites (and Israelites) did not have priestesses, which would make the Judahite/Israelite cult the most patriarchal west-Semitic cult of which we know.

#### WORSHIP

Moving on from cultic practitioners, we shall now discuss cultic practices.

#### ALTARS

The standard form of worship in the ancient Near East was the offering of an animal, accompanied by a grain offering and a wine libation, on an altar (Zevit 2001, 276–314). Incense was also offered on altars though altars for animal offerings needed to be much larger than those for incense offerings. Exodus 20:20–21 (E) requires the altar to be made of earth and/or unhewn stone; Deut 27:5 and Josh 8:31 (D) say complete stones uncut by iron. Exodus 27:1–8 (P), on the other hand, describes an altar made of bronze plated acacia wood with horns. The much

smaller incense altar was also to be horned and made of acacia wood but plated with gold (Exod 30:1–3 P). Solomon's altars are described as cedar plated with gold (1 Kgs 6:21), presumably referring to the main altar, and solid gold (1 Kgs 7:48), presumably referring to the incense altar.

An altar's horns are described as the place blood would be sprinkled for atonement, whether it be the incense altar (Lev 4:7), or the main altar (Lev 8:15, 16:18). Horns were also the place people needing asylum could grab, although in the story of Joab running from Solomon it did not help him (1 Kgs 1:50–51, 2:28).

Archaeologically speaking, we have no idea what was in the Jerusalem temple. However, a number of altars have been found in other places. In Arad, for instance, a large altar of dirt and stones was found. It had no horns. In Beer Sheba, a smaller altar of cut stones was found, and it did have horns. Smaller altars have been found in a number of other sites, some with horns, some without, and some with rudimentary horns. Incense altars, which are much smaller, were found in even greater number, but it isn't always clear that they were for worship and not for fragrance. The olive presses in Philistine Tel Miqne (stratum 1B, seventh century), for instance, had a number of four horned incense altars, carved from stone, which were probably used to mask odor.

#### SACRIFICES, TEMPLES, HIGH PLACES, AND HOME WORSHIP

The Bible describes a number of offering types, some of which overlap with forms we know of in other ancient Near Eastern cultures. Among the animal sacrifices, some were entirely burned as a food gift for the deity (*'ôlâ*) others were eaten primarily by the person bringing the offering (*šĕlāmîm*) after the blood was sprinkled on the altar. The Bible also describes sin (or purification) and guilt offerings that need to be partially eaten by a priest (*ḥaṭṭā'î* and *'āšām*). These latter were almost certainly offered only at temples or larger cult centers where priests served, but animal sacrifices may have been largely restricted to cult centers in any event. This seems to be behind the biblical law in Lev 17 that all animals must be slaughtered at the Tent of Meeting; it is virtually impossible that such a law could have arisen in the context of a centralized cult, such as envisioned by Deuteronomy and Second Temple sources.

That said, the Bible does contain accounts of people building their own altars in order to make offerings. The patriarchs are said to have built altars, but these stories are likely meant as foundation myths for existing Israelite/Judahite altars, so this example is not probative. A better example is the story in which King Saul, upset that his soldiers were eating meat "on the blood," that is, without first offering the blood to Yahweh, builds an altar in the camp (1 Sam 14:32–35). An even stronger example is that of Manoah and his wife, who build an altar outside their house in response to a visit from a prophet, who turns out to be an angel of Yahweh (Judg 13:19–20).

## CULTIC PARAPHERNALIA

In addition to the altar, it is likely that cult places would have had a pillar or pillars (*maššēbâh*, *maššēbôt*) and an *ʾašērâh* (sacred tree/stylized tree/sacred pole). Pillars could either represent the presence of the god (this is called a “baetyl”) or it could represent the presence of a supplicant, implying that the supplicant is “always” worshipping at the foot of the god (Bloch-Smith 2015; Sommer 2009). Some sites in Iron Age Israel (Hazor for instance) have yielded multiple pillars, implying many worshipers, who likely paid for the privilege of having a pillar placed on their behalf. The *ʾašērâh* was likely meant to signify the presence of the goddess, Asherah, wife of Yahweh (discussed above). This trio of ritual items is referenced in the biblical polemics against high places (Exod 34:13; Deut 7:5; 12:3, also 2 Kgs 18:4). The Deuteronomy verses also reference images or figures (*pesel*) which implies that an image of the god, most likely Yahweh, would have been a feature of some (many?) of these worship centers, the aniconism of the Bible being either an elitist or a later development.

## TEMPLES, SHRINES, AND HIGH PLACES

The general assumption among scholars is that animal offerings occurred in local cult centers. This is based both on the biblical claim that centralization of worship was only first attempted in Hezekiah’s reign (729–697), and only implemented seriously in that of Josiah (640–609)—the latter is more likely historical than the former—as well as the reality we find in most other ancient Near East cultures. Nevertheless, very few temples or shrines can be found in Iron Age Israel or Judah.

We know from biblical texts that a temple stood in Jerusalem. In addition, at least one temple has been uncovered in Arad. Although the dating of the strata and the question of how many phases the temple went through is debated, it is unquestionably a cultic building with an altar, and it functioned into the eighth century. Another cult center that was most likely a temple was uncovered in Dan. This was not a Judean temple, of course, but was the northernmost Israelite temple in the eighth century. (It is unclear if Dan always identified Israelite, but certainly the Arameans dominated the area at one point.) One biblical account has this cult center being founded by King Jeroboam I, another has it founded by roving Danites who robbed Micah of his cultic paraphernalia and his Levite (Judg 18:30–31). The cult center was large, with multiple cult corners, pillars (*maššēbôt*), and a large horned altar. A further possible temple has been uncovered in Motza, not far from Jerusalem.

Even assuming all three of the above-mentioned structure are temples, and even assuming that there are a few more to be found, this is a far cry from what we find in Bronze Age Canaan, with a temple in every town and village and multiple temples in large cities, or even among Israel and Judah’s contemporaries,

such as the Philistines (Faust 2010). Four stark examples of the Israelite aversion for temples come from Shechem, Megiddo, and Beth-Shean, all of which had long standing temples when they were Canaanite, but once they turn Israelite the temples were not rebuilt. The same occurred when the Philistine city Tel Qasile became part of Israel; its temple was destroyed and never rebuilt.

In short, for the most part, Israelites and Judahites did not build temples. Instead, they apparently preferred open-air high places (*bāmôt*), that is, outside worship areas, with no physical structure, but containing an altar. A high place, of course, is much more difficult to identify archaeologically than a shrine. One example may be in Beer Sheba, where an altar was found, but no shrine. This altar was found dismantled, and its stones reused in walls of public buildings. (Some scholars have identified this as evidence for Hezekiah's attempted cult centralization, but this interpretation is contested by many.) In addition to these more central high places, which would have likely appeared in every region, some cities had cultic spots in the city gates, what archaeologists refer to as "gate shrines."

#### DOMESTIC RITUAL

The Israelite/Judahite Four-Room House was designed to contain multiple spaces dedicated to different purposes. Some (many?) individual houses had their own "cult corners," that is, rooms/spaces dedicated to ritual or cultic purposes.

The biblical texts generally ignore domestic ritual, even in its polemics, but here and there some hints are dropped. The story of Micah's image is about a domestic cult facility (Judg 17:5) and the description of the cakes for the queen of heaven seems to have a home ritual in mind (Jer 7:18). Jonathan's lie to his father that David must attend a family meal implies specific family rituals and a family cult (1 Sam 20:29). It has recently been suggested that the biblical reference to firstborn boys serving Yahweh in some ritual capacity is an oblique reference to their service in home rituals (Leuchter 2017).

As archaeology has had more success in identifying cult corners than high places, we have more details about what would be found there. Some examples are Beer Sheba (houses 25 and 430), Tel el-Farah north (house 440), Tel Halif (from field IV of stratum VIB), Megiddo (locus 2081, Iron Age IIa [slightly earlier period]), and possibly Tel Bet Mirsim. (In an earlier period, we find cult rooms with benches and non-horned incense altars in places like Lachish [room 49], Hazor, and Et-Tell.)

The best-preserved cult corner from this period is from Ammonite Tel Jawa. As it is not Israelite or Judahite, we are limited in what we can learn from it, but it is useful as a comparative model as well as in helping to identify less well-preserved cult corners in Judah. Among the objects found in the Tel Jawa assemblage are figurines (male, female, and animal), decorated vessels and chalices, model shrines, lamps, game pieces (for divination), libation stands, censor cups (perforated and unperforated), and baetyls.

Libation and incense were certainly part of Judahite ritual as well, and model shrines, such as was found in tenth century Kh. Qeiyafa, were also part of the Israelite or Judahite domestic cult at some stage. Grain offerings (*minḥâ*) also appear to be part of domestic cult practice (Greenhut 2011). On the other hand, some differences that stand out are the strong preference for only female figurines (JPFs) in Judah and the Judahite use of limestone altars.

#### PERSONAL PIETY: NONSACRIFICIAL EXPRESSIONS

Rituals such as burning incense or grain and pouring libations leave their marks in the archaeological record, but prayer does not. Nevertheless, an analysis of the biblical psalms, combined with examples of personal prayers in the biblical narrative demonstrate that personal expressions of piety were part of the Israelite and Judahite religious practice (Albertz 2010). The possibility that hymns were recited during home rituals and offerings would fit with the descriptions of Levitical psalms and royal psalms that appear to have been sung as part of the royal cult in Jerusalem, though it is also likely that some hymns and even spontaneous prayers were recited as standalone expressions of “personal piety” and not as part of other rituals or offerings.

The variety of names in the biblical and archaeological record that express thanksgiving to the deity for life giving, especially as it relates to various stages of pregnancy and childbirth, gives us a sense of how the ancient Israelites and Judahites experienced this process as an encounter with the divine. In addition, the morals and life-lessons of wisdom literature, although reflecting scribal ideals, may also give us a glimpse at ideals for which the Israelites and Judahites may have strived. Finally, the orientation of the houses generally towards the east, likely representing Yahweh’s abode, and *always* avoiding the western orientation for buildings cannot be explained as due to practical considerations and almost certainly reflects religious considerations (Faust 2001).

#### HUMAN SACRIFICE

Perhaps the most controversial question is whether human sacrifice was part of Judahite ritual. The Holiness Collection in Leviticus (18:21, 20:2–4) forbids a ritual of passing a child to a god called *môlekḥ*, meaning “king.” Whether this is the god’s name or his epithet, and whether he should be understood as an instantiation of the Ammonite god Milkom, the Israelite god Yahweh (Stavropoulou 2012–2018), or an independent god is a matter of debate. We don’t even know for certain whether the act was merely ritually passing a child through (or over) fire, or burning the child in a ritual sacrifice.

That said, the Bible clearly accuses the Judahites of offering human sacrifices (Ps 106:37–38). It describes a *tophet* in the Valley of Ben-Hinnom near Jerusalem (2 Kgs 23:10, Jer 7, 19), that is, a place for burning children as offerings to the god, where this ritual is said to have taken place. We do not have archaeological



evidence for this in Judah, but it is clear that the Phoenicians had these *tophets*, and they have been uncovered in Carthage (Vainstub 2010). The books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel debate whether this practice was Yahweh's command or not; the former says it was not (Jer 32:35), and the latter that it was, but only because Yahweh was angry with his people and desired them to destroy themselves with bad laws (Ezek 20:25–26).

Ezekiel's "bad law" appears explicitly in Exod 22:28, which can be interpreted as a command to sacrifice firstborn sons, though the law is revised in Exodus 34:20 to demand financial redemption of a firstborn as opposed to sacrifice. That such a thing was conceivable seems clear both from the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22)—which likely originally ended with the deed being done—and the story of Jephthah and his daughter, which also seems to end with her being sacrificed (Judg 11:39). In addition, Lev 27:28–29 allows for voluntary offering of a person's "human holdings," perhaps a child though more likely a slave.

## HOLIDAYS

Many rituals may be daily or based on the lifecycle, but many are also relegated to specific times of the year, as determined by the groups calendar, an essential feature of any society. Israel and Judah had a number of these holidays; yearly ones focused on agriculture while monthly ones focused on the moon's cycle.

### MOON HOLIDAYS (ḤŌDEŠ AND ŠABBĀT)

The Israelites/Judahites in this early period celebrated moon holidays monthly: *Ḥōdeš* (the new moon) and *Šabbāt* (full moon). It was forbidden to do commerce on these days (Amos 8:5), family meals would be eaten (1 Sam 20:24, 34), and prophets or other religious figures could play some role (2 Kgs 4:23). Eventually *Ḥōdeš* became merely a temple ritual with no popular practice while *Šabbāt* fell out of practice altogether and merged with the (originally unnamed) weekly rest day (Wright 2015), but these changes probably occurred after the eighth century (perhaps even after the exile).

### HARVEST HOLIDAYS (MAŠŠŌT, QĀŠĪR, AND ʿASĪP)

The Pentateuch mentions three core harvest holidays, in which the Israelites/Judahites were to visit a local cult center (eventually reinterpreted to mean the Jerusalem temple). The first of these is *Maššôt* (Exod 23:15, 34:18, Lev 23:6) and seems to be an apotropaic ritual to prepare for the wheat harvest by baking barley flat breads from the first cuts of barley, which ripen well before wheat (Avrahami 2018). This holiday is eventually connected to the exodus story, but whether this took place by the eighth century or not is unclear (Farber 2018).

The other two are called different names in different places, and may not even be the same holidays, though their timing and purpose overlap to some extent. Exodus (23:16, 34:22) refers to spring and autumn harvest holidays, *Qāṣîr* and *ʿAsîp* respectively, the former explicitly for wheat. Deuteronomy (16:17) refers to these holidays as *Šābuôt* and *Sukkôt*, Leviticus (23:17, 34) as *Bikkûrîm* and *Sukkôt*. These harvest holidays, no matter the exact name or date, involved bringing first cuts or produce to the local altar, likely as a gift to the priests and the deity. First born animals would also be brought.

#### PESAḤ

The *pesaḥ* (paschal sacrifice) was to be brought annually at the beginning of spring, and in the eighth century was likely still a home ritual. (In the seventh century, it becomes a temple offering.) In the *pesaḥ* ritual, a year-old lamb is sacrificed and its blood put on the doorposts. Then it is roasted whole and eaten in its entirety overnight by a family. This likely originated as an apotropaic ritual, perhaps as a substitution ritual to protect babies (Garroway 2015). This may be why it is so closely associated with circumcision in biblical texts (Exod 12:43–49; Josh 5:2–11), since this too likely originated as an apotropaic ritual to protect babies, though it eventually took on first ethnic then covenantal significance (Eilberg-Schwartz 1990). It is eventually reinterpreted in light of the Egypt story, and this may already have occurred by the eighth century (more on this later).

#### OTHER HOLIDAYS

In addition to these “national” holidays, local altars may have had their own unique festivals, as the Bible implies about Shilo (Judg 21:19, 1 Sam 1:3, 2:19) and the story about how maidens weep yearly over Jephthah’s daughter (Judg 11:40). Moreover, the temple in Jerusalem likely celebrated a Fall New Year’s festival on the first and/or tenth of the seventh month (Lev 23:23–32; Num 29:1–11), something akin to the ancient Near East Akitu festival, though it is unknown when this began. (Perhaps it was a purely Second Temple phenomenon.)

#### PURIFICATION

Biblical texts discuss the issues of purity and impurity at length. During the early period, this may have been aimed mainly at priests, who were forbidden to serve at the altar while impure. Animals were divided into pure and impure, for sacrificial purposes and (priestly) consumption. Nevertheless, some evidence points to purity being a concern of non-priests even during this early period. The book of Samuel describes Bathsheba purifying herself after menstruation (2 Sam 11:4), and her husband was not a priest (or even an Israelite).

More significantly, a number of features of the Israelite/Judahite Four-Room House point to the strong probability that it was either designed with the specific

intention of avoiding impurity or that the practice resulted from the opportunities afforded (and limitations created) by the architecture, or both (Faust and Katz 2017). Specifically, there seems to have been a room designated for impure people; these rooms have no ceramic finds in them (pottery is subject to impurity) and had what appears to have been a washing stand for pouring water over oneself as the final act of purification before reentering regular society. This observation fits with the findings of access analysis, which indicates that the Four-Room House was designed so that any room can be entered without the necessity of walking through another room, thus avoiding the problem of impure people contaminating the space and objects of the pure.

The book of Leviticus also discusses purity issues surrounding bodily emissions, including ejaculation, menstruation, childbirth, and what seem to be varying forms of genital illnesses. It also discusses skin diseases, mold on houses, food that becomes impure through contact with dead bodies or impure animals, etc. We do not know if these rules were enforced during the eighth century, and if so, in what way. Nevertheless, since religious practices are generally conservative, it seems likely that purity and illness were concerns of the average Judahite even at this time.

## DEATH AND BURIAL

The topic of impurity leads naturally to questions of death, the treatment of the dead (corpses are impure), and beliefs about death.

### BURIAL AND MOURNING

Israelites and Judahites would have a double burial. Upon death, the person would be laid out (a wealthy person's family would build a bench tomb for this purpose) and left to decompose. After decomposition, the bones would be placed together with the bones of his or her ancestors in that same tomb.

In addition to a requirement to bury the dead, the Bible describes tearing one's clothes, donning of sackcloth and ashes, and a seven-day mourning period (see, e.g., Gen 37:29, 34; Josh 7:6; Judg 11:34; 2 Sam 13:31; 1 Kgs 21:27; 2 Kgs 19:1; Job 2:13; Esth 4:1). In addition to these, it is clear from biblical polemics that Judahites would cut themselves and tear out clumps of hair (Lev 21:5; Deut 14:1; Isa 22:12). It is unclear why the biblical authors were so against these latter practices; apparently, they were identified with either sorcery or foreign worship.

### ANCESTOR WORSHIP

The Bible refers to the place where the dead go as *še'ōl*. This is often used as a euphemism for "grave" or as a poetic parallel with "dead" but many scholars also understand it as a place in which the dead are living an alternative existence (reminiscent of the underworld in book 11 of Homer's *Odyssey*), hence the biblical

expression “gathered to his ancestors.” The same is true for the word *šāḥat*, which can mean “pit” but also “realm of the dead” (Niditch 2010).

The idea of a quasi-living dead was common in ancient Near Eastern cultures and fits with the evidence of food offerings uncovered in a number of Judahite tombs (Bloch-Smith in this volume). The discovery in a seventh century Judahite burial cave near Jerusalem (Ketef Hinnom) of silver amulets upon which a version of the “Priestly Benediction” was written supports the idea that the Judahites believed that magical protection would be useful to the deceased in the next world, a concept that was particularly dominant in ancient Egypt.

Ancient Hebrew names with theophoric elements such as *ʿam* (people), *ʾaḥ* (brother) and *ʾab* (father), might support this view, as these theophoric elements originated as references to deified (deceased) relatives (even if these terms came to refer to YHWH in Judahite parlance).

The above are just some of the various pieces of evidence scholars use to argue that ancestor worship was part of the Israelite and Judahite sphere. Such worship likely took place in domestic ritual contexts as well as in family tombs. These names became less popular in the eighth century and afterward, with Yahwistic names becoming noticeably dominant, which implies a shift in the centrality of ancestor worship in comparison with private worship of Yahweh (Albertz 2010).

## MAGIC AND DIVINATION

The discussion of ancestor worship and talismans brings us to the subject of magic in general. Magic, that is, powers or forces in the world of which a human with proper know-how can make use, was an important part of the prescientific ancient world. (The idea of magic in the ancient Near East overlaps both with modern notions of science and with superstition. Before the advent of scientific method, it would be hard to tell the difference.) The Pentateuch polemicizes against virtually any sort of magical practice such as divination (Lev 19:26), augury, soothsaying, divining, or casting spells (Deut 18:10–11). It even goes so far as to prescribe execution for sorceresses (Exod 22:17) and death by stoning for those who consult with the dead (Lev 20:27). Deuteronomy (4:19–20) further declares that the sun, moon, and stars have no power over the Israelites, though they do have over other peoples.

The repetitive and detailed prohibitions imply that these were a regular part of Israel’s practices. Other biblical accounts make this clear. For example, 1 Sam 28 tells a story about King Saul, in which he is afraid of an upcoming battle, and after unsuccessfully attempting to contact Yahweh, he goes to a female necromancer (*ʾôb*)—apparently women could be diviners—to call up his deceased mentor, the prophet Samuel.

## HARUSPICY AND HEPATOSCOPY

Other forms of divination include omen reading, dream interpretation, astrology, and the reading of entrails, called haruspicy or extispicy. This latter form, especially the reading of livers (hepatoscopy), we know quite a lot about. The Bible hardly mentions this practice (Ezek 21:26 mentions it as a Babylonian form of divination) and only using the Bible we would have had no idea about this ritual's scope and popularity. Fortunately, many Akkadian tablets have been found describing how to read livers and discussing cases when it was done and what was learned. Archaeologists have even discovered clay liver models used to instruct up-and-coming haruspices. Some of these tablets and models were found in remains of Canaanite towns, so the practice was clearly found among West Semitic peoples as well. The ritual would work with a god being consulted on a question. Then an animal was brought for sacrifice and its entrails/liver would be read by the priest or haruspex/hepatospex, to find the gods' answer.

## TĒRĀPĪM

The Bible also discusses objects called *tērāpīm*. The matriarch, Rachel, steals them from her father Laban, and Michal, the daughter of King Saul and wife of David, has them in her house. We do not know what the exact purpose and function of *tērāpīm* were. Laban describes them as gods (Gen 31:30, 32), but Micah seems to have them in addition to his figurines (Judg 18:14–18), implying they are not exactly idols though were to be found in cultic contexts (see also 2 Kgs 23:24; Hos 3:4). We also do not know what they looked like, but they were likely variable in size since Rachel hides some in her bag on the camel and sits on them (Gen 31:34), implying they are small, but Michal puts one in her bed under a blanket and pretends it is David sleeping (1 Sam 19:13–16), implying a large object with a more or less human shape. Their purpose seems to have been divination, since when they function properly, they would (somehow) answer questions (Ezek 21:26; Zech 10:2). A modern-day Ouija board comes to mind as an object of equivalent function (though not form).

## ĒPÔD

Another ritual object, called an *‘ēpôd*, may also have been a divining mechanism. Abiathar the priest carries one (1 Sam 23:9) and David makes use of it to find out whether Saul will show up at Keilah to capture him. The object seems to have been a feature of worship places; Gideon establishes one for people to see (Judg 8:27), as does Micah and the Danites (Judg 17:5, 18:20), and it is sometimes paired with *tērāpīm* (Judg 17:5, Hos 3:4). From the references to the high priest's *‘ēpôd* in Exodus (28:4) and to David wearing an *‘ēpôd* cloth (2 Sam 6:14), we learn that it was an object that could be attached to clothing and worn, perhaps depending on any given *‘ēpôd*'s size and weight.

## URIM VE-TUMMIM

Despite the Bible's strident stand against divination, the Jerusalem temple or royal cult seems to have had yet another form of approved divination in addition to the *'ēpôd*, called the *Urim ve-Tummim*. Divination from the *Urim ve-Tummim* functioned by asking a question of Yahweh that could be answered in binary form (yes or no, this or that). The *Urim ve-Tummim*, seem to have been two objects (or one object with two sides?), a cursed one (*Urim* from  $\text{ר-ר-א?}$ ) for a negative answer and a blessed one (*Tummim* from  $\text{ט-ט-ת?}$ ) for a positive answer. (Sometimes the Bible refers only to *Urim* [Num 27:21, 1 Sam 28:6] or only *Tummim* [1 Sam 14:41] but this is likely shorthand and not an alternative form of the ritual.)

One biblical account describes people standing on opposite sides with [*Urim ve-*] *Tummim* choosing between them (1 Sam 14:40–42, LXX), so perhaps these were thrown and the proximity of one or the other determined the answer, but this is just a guess. Other accounts of an unspecified permitted divination (not explicitly *Urim ve-Tummim*) describe a narrowing down procedure (Josh 7:14–18; 1 Sam 10:20–21), perhaps with lots (Stökl 2018).

## PROPHETS

Related to divination, but treated as a special and highly-regarded subset of communicating with the divine among the ancient Israelites/Judahites was prophecy. The term “prophet” (*nābîʿ*) or “seer” (*hōzē*) may refer to multiple phenomena including miracle workers (such as Elijah and Elisha), sometimes in a fee-for-service model (see, 1 Sam 9:6–9; Amos 7:12–15), predictors of the future, conduits for consulting the deity and receiving messages, and orators on matters religious (including ethics).

It is almost certain that the royal houses of both Israel and Judah supported court prophets. These prophets are described as playing key roles in the royal courts of Ahab (Israel), Hezekiah, Josiah, and Zedekiah (Judah). These prophets were not always in agreement. Michaiah ben Yimla says the opposite of all the other court prophets (1 Kgs 22), warning the kings of Israel and Judah that they will lost the battle. Jeremiah and Chananiah have a contest of speeches, debating whether Babylon will prevail over Judah (Jer 28). Even Isaiah (by this I mean the eighth century figure from whose oracles the first part of the book of Isaiah was composed), whose ethical visions of the future we know from the book of Isaiah, is described as a court prophet with whom king Hezekiah would consult (2 Kgs 19).

Unlike the situation with priests, women did serve as prophets (Ezek 13:17). The prophetess Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14) is even consulted by King Josiah on the important question of whether the book of the Torah found in the temple was the legitimate word of Yahweh.

Sometimes, prophets functioned exactly like oracles, interpreting things they would see as portents (Jer 1:11–15, 24:1–10; Amos 7:7–9, 8:1–3). Other times, prophets would envision the heavenly court, and hear Yahweh speaking with them directly. Michaiah describes seeing Yahweh sitting on his throne with the host of heaven standing to the right and left (1 Kgs 22:19). Isaiah also describes Yahweh sitting on a throne, but with winged *seraphim* offering praises in booming voices (Isa 6). Exodus (24:10–11) describes a meal with God on God's mountain, in which the participants see him standing on pure sapphire (Stökl 2012).

#### WANDERING DEITIES

The distinction between a wandering prophet, an angel (that is, messenger) of God, and the deity himself was porous (Kugel 2008). The possibility that a random stranger could be an angel or even a deity was a staple in ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean religion. As Penelope's suitors say to Antinous, after he is rough with a stranger begging for food, "Your fate is sealed if he's some god from the blue. And the gods do take on the look of strangers dropping in from abroad. Disguised in every way as they roam and haunt our cities, watching over us" (*Odyssey* bk. 17, Fagles trans., p. 370).

Jacob wrestles a man who turns out to be an angel or a god (Gen 32:25–31), Abraham serves food to three strangers who turn out to be Yahweh and two angels (Gen 18), et cetera. Moreover, Deuteronomy (23:14–15) explains the law of burying feces outside the war camp "Since Yahweh your God moves about in your camp to protect you and to deliver your enemies to you, let your camp be holy; let Him not find anything unseemly among you and turn away from you" (NJPS adjusted).

#### ISRAEL'S (AND JUDAH'S) NATIONAL STORIES

Although not cultic or "religious" per se, Israel and Judah's national stories and identities give an important added dimension to any attempt to understand the phenomenology of Israelite or Judahite religion. Here scholarly work on dating biblical texts, especially the Pentateuch and its layers, plays a crucial role.

What we see from most models of textual development is the increasing importance over time of the Israelite/Judahite national stories such as the exodus from Egypt, the wilderness wandering, the conquest of Canaan, the patriarchs, and the revelation at Sinai or Horeb. As part of Judahite identity was (or later became) their embracing of Israelite identity as part of their own cultural memory, it is almost impossible to distinguish the national stories of one from the other.

The national stories became part and parcel of Israelite/Judahite ritual, including and perhaps especially in the holidays. By the end of the First Temple period, the *Pesah* became about how Israel's firstborn were spared when Yahweh struck down the Egyptian firstborns and *Maṣṣôt* became about how Israel left

Egypt in a rush without having time for their bread to rise. This process continued in the early Second Temple period with *Sukkôt*, which became about the wilderness wandering, and finally in the late Second Temple period with *Šābuôt*, which became about the revelation at Sinai (Frankel 2015).

It is difficult to say when Israel's national story coalesced. At one point, it seems that different groups within Israel and Judah had separate national stories, likely connected to one founding father or major event. Thus, there was an exodus story, about how the Israelites were slaves in Egypt and saved by Yahweh (and Moses). There was a wilderness story, in which Yahweh found Israel in the wilderness and brought them back to his land. There were various patriarch (and matriarch) accounts, focusing on Abraham or Jacob, including promises about the land, et cetera.

These accounts were eventually all combined in a timeline in which one happened after the other, with the story of Egypt as the dominant trope. Significantly, part of the coalescing of these national stories was also the coalescing of national identities, in which Judah firmly placed itself in the Israelite story. This was likely the culmination of a long process of partial identification between the two polities going back to their roots. The earliest traces of what became Israel and Judah, which appear in the Iron I highlands of Judea and Ephraim, were virtually identical in their material culture (Faust 2006), so strong identification between the two polities is not surprising.

The authors and scribes who put together the Bible clearly understood whatever political considerations led the Israelites and Judahites to create separate polities to be artificial. With the destruction of the northern kingdom as an independent power, the Judahite scribes adopted the pan-Israelite identity of "twelve sons of Jacob" as axiomatic with Judah as the favored son of Israel.

In the end, the stories of Judah and their northern brethren would be told together in the biblical texts, and the religions of Israel and Judah, with their joint worship of Yahweh, would become one religion in the eyes of the Bible, its editors, and its readers.

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Part 5  
BIBLICAL AND LITERARY



## Scripture and Inscriptions: Eighth-Century Israel and Judah in Writing

*Christopher Rollston*

### THE EARLY HISTORY OF WRITING, SOME BASICS

During the late fourth millennium BCE (perhaps around 3200 BCE +/- 50 years), writing was invented in the great cultural centers of the ancient Near East: Mesopotamia and Egypt.<sup>1</sup> The writing systems of Mesopotamia and Egypt were complicated nonalphabetic writing systems, with large inventories of signs that can be classified as logograms (where one sign represented an entire word), syllabograms (where one sign represented an entire syllable), and determinatives (where a single sign signified something about the nature of the noun or substantive that it preceded or followed). A scribe writing texts in these non-alphabetic writing systems would need to know scores of signs, often totaling a couple hundred (and the total of the signs for these languages numbers many hundred). Naturally, years of education would be required to learn these writing systems (even for someone who was a native speaker of the language). For this reason, writing was a technology that normally resided in elite hands, that is, those associated with the royal bureaucracies of the great powers: scribes, priests, high-level governmental officials, military officers, ambassadors.

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1. I am so very pleased to be able to have this article included in this Festschrift for Professor Oded Borowski, a scholar from whose writings I have learned so much and whose friendship and kindness I treasure. Moreover, I am also particularly grateful to Zev Farber and Jacob Wright, editors of this volume, for their many kindnesses and great patience. Finally, I should like to emphasize that I am grateful to the National Endowment for the Humanities for the fellowship (during September 2013–January 2014) that provided substantial funds upon which some of the research for this article is based, and I am also equally grateful to the Albright Institute of Archaeological Research (Jerusalem) for the use of its peerless library, residential facility, and for their tremendously supportive staff.

Naturally, part of the reason for the fact that literacy resides mostly with the elites is the fact that numerous vocations simply did not require knowledge of writing. Thus, the average pastoralist, agriculturalist, blacksmith, carpenter, or potter would not have found a knowledge of writing all that necessary, something that is emphasized especially in the Egyptian Satire of the Trades (and analogous literature) and is also readily apparent in a fair number of the school texts from ancient Mesopotamia (Rollston 2001). To be sure, some merchants would have had some knowledge of literacy, but often this may have been just a basic functional literacy (e.g., the ability to recognize or read very simple words, write one's name, and perhaps pen a few words associated with certain commodities), rather than the full-blown training of elites within the governmental hierarchy (for the UNESCO definition of literacy and further discussion, see Rollston 2008, 61–63). In other words, there is much truth in the words of the Second Temple Jewish sage Ben Sira regarding the dramatic contrasts between the scribal profession and that of the trades.

Thus, according to Ben Sira, the farmer does not have the luxury of acquiring wisdom because “his objective is to complete the fattening (of the cattle) and his attention is turned toward the fields” (Sir 38:26). The engraver does not acquire wisdom because the exigencies of his craft require that he “labor night and day” in order to “make a realistic likeness” (Sir 38:27). Similarly, the smith “contends with the heat of the furnace,” “sears his flesh,” and “deafens his ears,” so that he can “complete the projects” (Sir 38:28). Likewise, the potter toils endlessly at “the wheel,” employing both “hands and feet” because he is compelled to “finish his work” (Sir 38:29). In contrast the scribe, “seeks out the wisdom of all the ancients,” “is in the midst of the great,” “travels in the land of foreign peoples,” and “many praise his understanding” (Sir 39:1, 4, 9).

Moreover, in terms of longevity, nonalphabetic writing systems had a very long history in both Mesopotamia and Egypt. Indeed, non-alphabetic writing in Mesopotamian cuneiform and Egyptian (e.g., Hieroglyphics, Hieratic, and Demotic) endured for more than three millennia, with the final texts in these scripts written around the beginning of the Common Era. Furthermore, the number of textual materials in these (and related) non-alphabetic writings systems was vast. That is, even though just a small percentage of the total population of these regions could write and read (most estimates put the percentage in the lower single digits, around one or two percent; for references see Rollston 2010, 127–35, especially 134 n. 3), the amount of textual material produced was staggering. In fact, hundreds of thousands of texts have been found in Mesopotamia and Egypt during the past two hundred years.

Upon reflection, this is not surprising. After all, during the course of a lifetime, someone with formal training in writing and reading could produce thousands of texts. Thus, during the course of three thousand years, millions of texts were written. Some were long, some were short, but the sheer number is



massive. In addition, it should also be emphasized that the technology of writing spread rapidly from Mesopotamia and Egypt throughout the ancient Near East, from Anatolia to Persia and all points in between and beyond. Thus, the technology of non-alphabetic writing pervaded much of the ancient Near East.

There is an aspect of the usage of non-alphabetic writing in the ancient Near East that must be emphasized strongly in this connection: The Canaanites of the Levant were capable of writing in these complicated nonalphabetic scripts, and they did so a great deal. That is, in the northern and southern Levant, the Canaanites of the Bronze Age were writing and reading texts in non-alphabetic scripts, especially (but not only) Akkadian. Thus, the ancient Levant was certainly not some sort of a cultural backwater devoid of writing and literature.

The Amarna Letters of the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1550–1200 BCE) are perhaps the flagship example of such a literate culture (and in addition to the Amarna corpus, there are a number of extant international treaties, hundreds of legal texts, as well as sophisticated urban centers and powerful regional kings). The Amarna letters are diplomatic correspondence (written primarily in Akkadian, but with some in Hittite and Hurrian, for example) between the royal court of the fourteenth-century Egyptian King Amenhotep III and King Akhenaten (Amenhotep IV) and (among other places such as Babylon, Assyria, Mitanni, Cyprus) the local rulers of Levantine cities such as Jerusalem, Megiddo, Shechem, Gezer, Ashkelon, Byblos, Tyre, Sidon, and Damascus (Moran 1992). As for the letters from the local rulers of Levantine cities, many of these reflect heavy “Language-1 Interference,” that is, linguistic features (e.g., syntax, morphosyntax, and tense-and-aspect) from the Canaanite native language of the Levantine scribes (Moran 2003; Rainey 2015). In any case, although the Canaanite scribes of the Levant lived in the periphery (compared to the regions of Mesopotamia and Egypt), they too had a long history during the Bronze Age of writing and reading nonalphabetic texts.

#### THE INVENTION OF THE ALPHABET: THE LEVANT’S EARLY CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF WRITING

Significantly, the Canaanites of the second millennium BCE were not simply writing and reading nonalphabetic texts. Rather, in point of fact, the Canaanites of the early second millennium were responsible for a dramatic new writing technology that developed: an alphabetic writing system. In alphabetic writing, each grapheme (that is, a “letter”) is intended to signify a distinct phoneme. A phoneme is the smallest, meaningful unit of sound. Ancient Phoenician, Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, and Coptic are all written in an alphabetic writing system. However, these are not the world’s first alphabetic writing systems.

The world’s first alphabetic writing system hails from ca. the eighteenth century BCE and was invented by Levantine peoples (that is, Canaanites) who were

familiar with the Egyptian writing system (as the shapes of Early Alphabetic letters are based heavily on the shapes of the Egyptian letters; and there were even a few Egyptian hieroglyphic signs that stood for single consonants, which might have been part of the inspiration for the Canaanites who invented the alphabet), but spoke an early dialect of Northwest Semitic. The inscriptions from Serabit el-Khadem and Wadi el-Hol are the oldest known attestations of the world's first alphabetic writing system. With regard to terminology, "Early Alphabetic" is arguably the best term for this writing system (as it is the most descriptive, and it contains the least number of assumptions about putative origins), although terms such as "Proto-Sinaitic," "Proto-Canaanite," and "Canaanite" are the older terms used for this same writing system.

The letters of Early Alphabetic were around twenty-seven or twenty-eight in number (the term "grapheme" is often used as a synonym for the term "letter"). These graphemes represented consonants, not vowels (methods of representing the vowels would develop later, in the first millennium BCE). These consonantal graphemes could be written on the line dextrograde (left-to-right), sinistrograde (right-to-left), boustrophedon, or columnar (that is, vertically). In addition to this variation in the direction of writing (on the line) in Early Alphabetic, there was also variation in the stance (e.g., fairly upright, or leaning left, leaning right, or even rotated 90 degrees or more), as well as substantial variation in morphology (that is, the shapes of the letters).

Also of import, alphabetic writing was very pictographic in nature at the time of its invention (gradually through time it became more linear). Especially important, the acrophonic principle was operative: namely, the first sound of the *object* being depicted was the *sound* the letter was intending to *signify* (e.g., the picture of a person's head, Semitic *rā'su* [*rō's*] stood for the "r" sound; the picture of a house, Semitic *baytu* [*bayit*] stood for the "b" sound, etc.).

Significantly, alphabetic writing continued to be used throughout the lion's share of the second millennium BCE as a peripheral script, never really gaining much hegemony (in terms of writing technologies) even in the Levant. To be sure, there is an important basic exception to this in the case of the Ugaritic writing system of the Late Bronze Age. The Ugaritic writing system is alphabetic, is cuneiform in shape (but entirely different from the non-alphabetic cuneiform of Mesopotamia, etc.), has a grand total of just thirty letters (three of which were later additions), was carefully standardized (Segert 1984), and was centered at the great Levantine site of Ugarit (although a handful of Ugaritic texts have been found at a few other sites). The Ugaritic script (and language) was used for some of the great Ugaritic epics (such as Ba'al, Aqhat, Kirta), as well as for some letters, rituals, legal texts, and administrative texts (Bordreuil and Pardee 2009). But even at Ugarit (and surrounding regions) the majority of texts were still written in the prestige script of the ancient Near East: Mesopotamian cuneiform.

During the final decades of the second millennium BCE, however, things began to change: the Early Alphabetic script was standardized (beginning around the middle of the eleventh century BCE). That is, the number of consonantal graphemes was fixed at twenty-two, the direction of writing was fixed as sinistroke (right-to-left), and the basic morphology and stance of the letters gradually became more consistent, as has been succinctly stated by Joseph Naveh (1987, 42). Since the earliest of these inscriptions in the script's standardized form hails from Phoenicia (especially Byblos), and since twenty-two is the number of consonantal phonemes in the Phoenician language, the most apt term for this script is "Phoenician." The Phoenician script and language was used for the great Early Byblian Royal inscriptions, including the Azarba'al Bronze Inscription (late eleventh or early tenth century BCE), the King Ahiiram Sarcophagus Inscription (tenth century), the King Yehimilk Inscription (tenth century), the King Abiba'al Inscription (inscribed on a statue of the Egyptian Pharaoh Shishonq I, tenth century), the King Eliba'al Inscription (inscribed on a statue of the Egyptian Pharaoh Osorkon I, late tenth century or early ninth century), and the King Shipitba'al Inscription (early ninth century).

In the wake of the standardization, the history of writing would never be the same. Although the usage of the Early Alphabetic script persisted in some circles for a number of decades (e.g., Tel es-Safi), the Phoenician script was soon used to write inscriptions in various parts of the Levant, both north (e.g., the Tell Fakhariyeh Statute Inscription of King Had-Yithi in north Syria, written in the Phoenician script but the Aramaic language) and south (e.g., the Kefar Veradim Bronze Bowl, the Tel Zayit Abecedary, the Gezer Calendar, all of which are written in the Phoenician script). These inscriptions date variously to the late-eleventh, tenth, and ninth centuries BCE.

It should be emphasized (as is evident to some degree from the statements above), the Phoenician script was used to write inscriptions that were written not only in the Phoenician language, but also in the Old Aramaic language (as in the case of the Tell Fakhariyeh inscription, among many others) and perhaps also in the ancient Hebrew language (although this is often difficult to determine with short inscriptions, as the ancient Hebrew language was very similar to the ancient Phoenician language). Ultimately, however, a distinctive Old Hebrew script and a distinctive Aramaic script soon developed (both were derived from the Phoenician script, and scripts such as Moabite, Ammonite, and Edomite later developed from these).

#### THE INVENTION OF THE HEBREW SCRIPT: NINTH CENTURY ISRAEL'S FOUNDATIONAL CONTRIBUTION

There has long been substantial debate about the precise century for the origin of the Hebrew language. It seems reasonable to posit that some of the most archaic

Hebrew of the Bible (e.g., the Song of the Sea in Exod 15 and the Song of Deborah in Judg 5) hail from the final century or two, or even the final decades, of the second millennium BCE. It is difficult to be more precise than this with regard to the origin of the Hebrew language. However, because of the epigraphic data, the date for the first inscriptions to be written in the Old Hebrew script and language can be ascertained in a fairly empirical fashion: the ninth century BCE. Some have suggested the tenth century, but I find the evidence for this to be too thin (Rollston 2008, with literature; Rollston 2010, 30–35). And the recent contention that the Old Hebrew script is first attested in inscriptions of the late eighth century (Schniedewind 2013, 82) is problematic especially in light of the fact that we have inscriptions written in the Old Hebrew script a century prior (Rollston 2016, 33–34 and n. 37). Thus, the ninth century is a pivotal one in the history of the Old Hebrew language and script, for it is then that inscriptions in the Old Hebrew script are first attested.

The find-spots for the earliest inscriptions written in the Old Hebrew script and language are Rehov (in the Northern Kingdom of Israel) and Arad (in the Southern Kingdom of Judah, with Arad 76 being the prime early exemplar). The inscriptions from Rehov are of particular importance for a number of reasons. First and foremost is the fact that these Hebrew inscriptions come from a stratified ninth-century archaeological context and also because the inscriptions from the two prior strata are written in the Phoenician script. Thus, at the site of Tel Rehov, we have a perfect textbook case of the transition from the Phoenician script (in the tenth century) to the Old Hebrew script (in the ninth century).

The most salient points regarding this transition are these: from Tel Rehov Stratum VI come inscriptions number 1, 2, 3, and 4; from Tel Rehov Stratum V comes inscription 5; from Tel Rehov Stratum IV come inscriptions number 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. Based on the stratigraphic analyses of the gifted excavator Amihai Mazar, as well as on the basis of the carbon dates of associated remains, Mazar dates Stratum VI to the mid-tenth century BCE, Stratum V to the last decades of the tenth century or to the beginning of the ninth century BCE, and Stratum IV to the ninth century BCE, ending no later than 834 BCE (Ahituv and Mazar 2014). Based on the totality of the palaeographic evidence (especially the absence of curvature in the terminal portions of the preserved *mem*), I would contend that the script of inscriptions of Stratum VI is Phoenician, not Hebrew. Based on the totality of the palaeographic evidence (especially the absence of curvature at the terminal portions of the *mem* and *nun*), the script of the inscription from Stratum V must also be classified as Phoenician. However, based on the totality of the palaeographic evidence (especially the curvature present on the *mems* and *nun*), the script of the inscriptions from Stratum IV is definitely Hebrew. In this connection, it is useful to restate a basic principle of Hebrew palaeography: namely, in contrast to Phoenician, Old Hebrew script features a (leftward) curvature of the

terminal portions of *kaph*, *mem*, *nun*, and *peh* (Naveh 1987, 66; Rollston 2008; Rollston 2010, 42–46).

It is also worth noting that the Mesha Stele and the el-Kerak Fragment are written in the Moabite language, but in the Old Hebrew script (as noted long ago by Naveh 1987, 65, among others). Of course, both the Mesha Stele itself (*KAI* 181) and the analogous tradition enshrined in the book of Kings declare that the Omrides of Israel had hegemony over Moab during a large portion of the ninth century BCE (2 Kgs 3). For this reason, it comes as no surprise that the Mesha Stele script would be that of the hegemonic regional power of that era: the Old Hebrew script that was arguably invented in the court of the Omrides of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

In addition, although the evidence is slight, even at the Judean site of Arad, we have epigraphic evidence from the ninth century BCE (e.g., Arad Ostrakon 76, in Aharoni 1981). Some might suggest that the Old Hebrew script was invented in Judah, not Israel. This is possible. But the cumulative evidence demonstrates rather nicely, I believe, that Israel was a larger and more powerful kingdom (for recent discussion, see especially Finkelstein 2013). And my own sense is that Jehoshaphat of Judah (r. ca. 873–849 BCE) was not really a peer of Omri (r. ca. 876–869 BCE) and Ahab (r. ca. 869–850), but rather more of a junior partner at best (pace Bright 1981, 242). In any case, after the invention of the Old Hebrew script in the ninth century, the usage of it in the eighth century mushrooms in the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and it does so from the very beginning of the eighth century.

#### ISRAEL AND JUDAH ACCORDING TO EIGHTH-CENTURY HEBREW INSCRIPTIONS

For the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, the eighth century was a period of real textual depth and richness. Thus, it can be stated on the basis of the evidence at hand that during the ninth century the Old Hebrew script had become a distinctive national script (that is, the Old Hebrew script broke away from the Phoenician “Mother-Script” during the ninth century), but it was during the eighth century that first real *floruit* occurs. After all, during the eighth century, we begin to have many scores of Old Hebrew inscriptions, some hailing from Israel and some hailing from Judah; some of these hail from the earliest chronological horizons of that century, some from the middle horizons of that century, and some hail from the late horizons of that century.

From the late ninth century BCE or the very early eighth century BCE (Rollston 2006, 52 n. 14) are the Old Hebrew inscriptions from Kuntillet Ajrud (Ahituv, Eshel, and Meshel 2012, 73–142). These inscriptions are of particular importance for multiple reasons. For example, the (red) ink inscription on Pithos

A reads (in part:) “blessed by Yahweh of Samaria and by his Asherah” (Inscription 3.1). Similarly, an inscription in (red) ink on Pithos B reads: “I have blessed you by Yahweh of Teman and His Asherah” (Inscription 3.6). These references to Yahweh of Samaria and to Yahweh of Teman are noteworthy: these are sites in Israel *and* Judah respectively (the attested personal names are normally considered Israelite, not Judean, as the theophoric is *yod-waw*, just as in the Samaria Ostraca).

This phenomenon of a “local manifestation of a deity” (that is, in the inscriptions from Kuntillet Ajrud, “Yahweh of Samaria,” and “Yahweh of Teman”) is well attested in the broader ancient Near East, with Mesopotamian inscriptions, for example, referring to Ishtar *of Arbela*, Dagan *of Tuttul* and (in the case of the Tell Fakhariyeh Akkadian and Aramaic Bilingual Statue Inscription) to Hadad *of Sikanu* (McCarter 1987). Thus, at the level of Early Israelite Religion, these inscriptions are of great importance because they demonstrate that some in ancient Israel believed that there was not just one Yahweh, but rather there were local manifestations of Yahweh (that were arguably different “Yahwehs” in some fashion, hence the geographic designation; cf. Deut 6:4 in this respect, as McCarter 1987 has done).

Moreover, the fact that both red and black ink is used is also an important aspect of these inscriptions, with red arguably functioning as a rubric of sorts, much as was the case for the inscriptions from Deir Alla (McCarter 1996, 97). Also of import with regard to this corpus, both the script and the orthography of the Old Hebrew inscriptions from Kuntillet Ajrud are very well done, the work of those with formal, standardized training in the writing of the Old Hebrew script. This is something that is a reflection of a sophisticated Old Hebrew scribal apparatus, present already in the late ninth century or early eighth century BCE (Rollston 2006, 50–65). Furthermore, as the authors of the *editio princeps* aptly and rightfully noted, some of the Old Hebrew inscriptions from Kuntillet Ajrud are epistolary in nature (Ahituv, Eshel, and Meshel 2012, 90). Of course, letters (that is, epistolary correspondence) are very well attested in the ancient Near Eastern world, with many exemplars in the Hebrew Bible as well as in epigraphic Hebrew, Aramaic, and Phoenician (Pardee 1982). This too is something that I have long argued is an aspect of the scribal curriculum in ancient Israel (Rollston 2006, 67; Rollston 2010, 111–12; Rollston 2015). In sum, the Old Hebrew inscriptions from Kuntillet Ajrud are particularly impressive and especially important.

Finally, it should also be emphasized that some of the inscriptions from Kuntillet Ajrud are written in the Phoenician script (these were written on plaster and in ink), rather than in the Old Hebrew script. Someone might contend that this is the result of the presence of Phoenicians (or Arameans) at the site, and this is certainly possible. Nevertheless, the divine name “Yahweh” is present in one or

more of these inscriptions (that is, in at least one of the inscriptions in the Phoenician script) and so this could be adduced as evidence for the knowledge and use of the Phoenician script by Hebrew scribes. Naturally, this is not surprising, especially in light of the fact that the Old Hebrew script derived from the Phoenician script. It is worth emphasizing in this connection that the Old Hebrew script is entirely distinct from the Phoenician, already in the late ninth century or early eighth century at Kuntillet Ajrud. No modern scholar with formal training in Hebrew and Phoenician epigraphy could miss this critically important facet of the evidence.

From the Northern Kingdom site of Samaria (Reisner 1924) hail some one hundred ostraca (some sixty of which are legible) in the Old Hebrew script, dating to the early eighth century BCE, arguably to the reign of Israelite King Jeroboam II (r. 786–746 BCE; for the archaeological context, see especially Tappy 2016). It should be remembered that “ostrakon” is a technical term and refers to inscriptions written in ink on broken pieces of pottery (these are to be distinguished from inscriptions that were written on whole pots, such as the pithoi of Kuntillet Ajrud). Many of these inscriptions have date-formulae, with some of these inscriptions referring to the “the ninth year,” some to “the tenth year,” and some to “the fifteenth year.” It is most reasonable (especially in light of the standard practice in the ancient Near East of referencing regnal years in inscriptions) to understand these references to be the regnal years of Jeroboam II (thus, 777, 776, and 771 BCE), the king of this chronological horizon who had a reign of at least fifteen years.

Also of import, the script and orthography of these inscriptions are very well done, revealing the presence of a sophisticated scribal apparatus at the major capital city of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. In addition, the numeric symbols used in the Samaria Ostraca are Hieratic, a complicated numeric system that originated in Egypt. The scribes penning these Old Hebrew inscriptions were, therefore, formally trained not only in all things Hebrew, but also in a sophisticated numeric system (these numerals are attested in Old Hebrew inscriptions from numerous sites, most notably Kadesh-Barnea, Arad, and Lachish; for the most recent, exhaustive discussion of Hieratic numerals in the Levant, see Wimmer 2008). In terms of content, these ostraca from Reisner’s expedition are economic dockets, referring to commodities of oil and wine that were being sent from the Northern Israelite capital of Samaria or sent to Samaria (over the past century, arguments have been made for each of these proposals).

Because it certainly hails from the reign of Jeroboam of Israel (based on the morphology and stance of the script), the seal from Megiddo that reads “Shema the servant of Jeroboam” merits reference (Avigad and Sass 1997, no. 2, p. 49). Perhaps most striking is the fact that this inscription, though referencing a king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (King Jeroboam), is written not in the Old Hebrew script, but in the Phoenician script. In particular, the stance of the *bet* as well as



the absence of curvature at the terminal portion of the *mems* are tell-tale signs that the script is not Old Hebrew, but rather Phoenician. Although this seal has sometimes been attributed to the reign of Jeroboam I (r. ca. 922–901 BCE), it is most easily attributed to Jeroboam II. Striking in this regard, therefore, is the fact that this seal, written in the prestigious Phoenician script, was commissioned and used by an Israelite king after the rise and development of the Old Hebrew script. Since the Phoenician script was known and used by Old Hebrew scribes, as is also witnessed in the wall-plaster inscriptions from Kuntilet Ajrud (discussed above), this is not entirely surprising.

Another seal, the “Seal of Asap” was also found at Megiddo (in 1905) and it also dates to the eighth century BCE (Avigad and Sass, 1996, no. 85, p. 77). The iconography on this seal is that of the winged griffin and the letters are written below a register-line near the bottom of the seal, namely, *l’sp*, namely, “belonging to Asap.” Also from Megiddo (discovered in 1929) is another eighth century seal, this one with two registers, with the upper register having a winged griffin and an ankh and the lower register adorned with a locust. The upper register has the letters *lhm* nicely inscribed under the griffin. This seal can be dated on palaeographic grounds and archaeological context to the eighth century.

In this connection, it is useful to mention that seals were often used to seal papyrus documents (or vellum, in some cases). In essence, it worked in this fashion: the papyrus (or vellum) document would be folded up, or rolled up, and then a string would be wrapped around it. A piece of wet clay would be placed on the string and then a seal (often with names and patronymics, of course) would be impressed into the wet clay. Once sealed, the document could only be opened in a manner that would be detectable. The pieces of clay, once impressed by the seal, are called bullae (sg. bulla). Legal documents, such as the purchase or sale of something, the adoption of a child, or some sort of legal judgment (etc.) were the ones most often sealed in this fashion.

Seals can be epigraphic (with writing) or anepigraphic (without writing). Seals can be iconic (with imagery) or aniconic (without imagery). Archaeologically, a fair number of seals have been found on excavations and many bullae have as well. There are also some biblical references to sealing documents. One of the most interesting and descriptive texts of the sort is that of Jeremiah (Jer 32:6–14), in which we see Jeremiah purchasing a plot of land, and as part of the agreement two copies of the contract are written, a sealed one (which in most cases would be the archived legal copy) and an open one (that would be kept for quick reference). Papyrus (and vellum) are often not preserved, as these are particularly perishable materials in the Levantine climate. Hence, all that is often found are the bullae, the documents they once sealed having been destroyed by fire, moisture, or vermin. In any case, seals and bullae are important evidence for writing in the eighth century BCE.



A burial tomb at the site of Khirbet el-Qom is the source of some very important Old Hebrew inscriptions chiseled into stone (Dever 1969–1970). In some respects, some of these inscriptions are similar in content to those of Kuntillet Ajrud, since one of these inscriptions arguably refers to “Yahweh and his Asherah.” Also present at Khirbet el-Qom are two versions of this inscription: “This chamber belongs to Ephai son of Nethaniah.” The Old Hebrew script of these inscriptions is slightly later typologically than the Old Hebrew script of the inscriptions from Kuntillet Ajrud and the Reisner Samaria Ostraca. The script of these inscriptions is quite cursive in nature. Based on the morphology and stance of these inscriptions, I would date them to the middle of the eighth century BCE. Naturally, the orthography of these inscriptions is such that dating them to this chronological horizon is entirely permissible.

The fact that the Khirbet el-Qom is a Judean site is important to emphasize, but these inscriptions are certainly not alone as Old Hebrew inscriptions from eighth-century Judah. For example, dating palaeographically to the eighth century are also the inscriptions from Khirbet Beit-Lei, not far from the Judean site of Lachish. One of the inscriptions (carved into stone) actually mentions Jerusalem (Naveh 1963). Furthermore, although the most famous of the Lachish inscriptions hail from the early sixth century BCE (Tur-Sinai 1938), some inscriptions from Lachish are from the eighth century, including and especially the “Bat-Lamelech Jar Inscription,” as well as a very beautiful seal with a four-winged beetle and Egyptian ankhs. It is inscribed “Belonging to Ahimeleck (son of) Samak (Avigad and Sass 1997, no. 59, page 70). This seal can be dated to the eighth century as well. In short, from both Israel and Judah, we have numerous Old Hebrew inscriptions.

But there are still more. For example, several additional Old Hebrew inscriptions come from the latter part of the eighth century, shortly before the fall of Samaria in 721 BCE to the Neo-Assyrians (Crowfoot, Crowfoot, and Kenyon, 1938, 11–25). They include a famous incised potsherd known as the “Barley Letter” (because of its reference to barley-grain). Of particular importance is a monumental Old Hebrew stone inscription (regrettably, with only four preserved letters) that was discovered at Samaria, often dated to the terminal period of the history of the Northern Kingdom. The *editio princeps* referred to it as a Stele Fragment and this title is entirely fitting (Crowfoot, Crowfoot, and Kenyon 1938, 33–34). But this is not all. A fragmentary cuneiform inscription on stone was also discovered there, and it should be dated to period around the time of the fall of Samaria. Indeed C. J. Gadd stated that it was probably part of a monumental inscription “of Sargon II, the captor of Samaria” (Crowfoot, Crowfoot, and Kenyon 1938, 35).

A real gem is the inscription known as the Siloam Tunnel Inscription, discovered in 1880. It is one of the most important Old Hebrew inscriptions and can be dated with confidence (on historical and palaeographic grounds) to the late

eight century BCE, with the construction of the tunnel arguably beginning around the time of Sennacherib's rise to the throne of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (r. 705–681 BCE). Knowing that Sennacherib would come knocking on Jerusalem's door (in the form of a punitive raid, as Hezekiah had rebelled against Sennacherib and refused to pay his annual tribute), King Hezekiah commissioned the Siloam Tunnel, an underground tunnel that diverted the water from a major spring outside the walls of Jerusalem to a pool inside the city of Jerusalem (cf. 2 Kgs 20:20; 2 Chr 32:30; Sir 48:17–18 for biblical references to this feat).

The inscription, chiseled into the wall of the tunnel, recounts that two crews of workmen tunneled through rock. One started at the Gihon spring outside of the city. The other crew started from inside the city walls of Jerusalem. Sometimes these crews followed natural fissures in the rock rather than always hewing through the stone (which accounts for the somewhat winding nature of the tunnel as well as the very high "ceiling" in some places and the much lower "ceiling" in other places). Ultimately, the two crews finally met. It is this moment that the inscription, six lines of Old Hebrew, narrates:

- (1) [...] the tunneling. And this is the narrative of the tunneling: While [the stone-cutters were wielding]
- (2) the picks, each toward his co-worker, the picks, each toward his coworker, and while there were still three cubits to tunnel through, the voice of a man was heard calling out
- (3) to his co-worker, because there was a fissure in the rock, running from south [to north]. And on the (final) day of
- (4) tunneling, each of the stonecutters was striking (the stone) forcefully so as to meet his co-worker, pick after pick. And
- (5) then the water began to flow from the source to the pool, a distance of 1200 cubits. And 100
- (6) cubits was the height of the rock above the head of the stone-cutters (Rollston's translation).

Some have argued that the Siloam Tunnel Inscription dates to the Hasmonean period (second century BCE), while others have contended that it dates not to the late eighth century BCE but much earlier, namely, to the late ninth century BCE or the early eighth century BCE. Ultimately, though, the Old Hebrew script used for this inscription (a very fine cursive script of a trained Old Hebrew scribe) dates to the late eighth century (that is, not earlier and not later). Also hailing especially from the late eighth century and the early seventh century are the *lamelech* jar handles, totaling in excess of a thousand, mostly from the reign of Hezekiah (r. ca. 715–687 BCE), connected with officialdom's control of, and activities in, agricultural commodities (among the many works on the subject of the *lamelech* jar handles, see especially Vaughn 1999). Also from Judah in the eighth century are the Gibeon Inscribed Jar Handles, some sixty of which have been discovered,

a reflection of the governmental activities in agrarian commodities (Pritchard 1959; 1960; Frick 1974).

In short, from both Israel and Judah, we have scores of inscriptions from the eighth century, the reflection of an active, educated, capable scribal apparatus. Because most of these inscriptions (e.g., Reisner Samaria Ostraca, the Samaria Joint-Expedition Inscriptions, the Siloam Tunnel Inscription, the Gibeon Inscribed Jar Handles, the *lamelech* Jar Handles) hail from officialdom, it is most reasonable to contend that most scribes functioned in some component of the governments of Israel and Judah. Of course, this is not surprising, but rather predictable.

#### SCRIBES OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH, SCRIBES OF MESOPOTAMIA, AND THE BIBLE: A SELECTION

Before concluding this article, it is useful to put the Old Hebrew epigraphic evidence into a broader context, especially as it relates to the eighth century and the Bible. First and foremost, some decisive epigraphic evidence reveals that there were formally trained scribes (and high officials) in Israel and Judah during the eighth century BCE. In fact, they were writing in the distinctive Old Hebrew script, were consistent in the morphology and stance of the letters, they were employing Old Hebrew orthography in a consistent manner, they were capable of using a complicated numeric system that originated in Egypt, and they were using standard epistolary formulae. At least some of these scribes were also capable of writing inscriptions in the Phoenician script as well. For some time, I have contended that the epigraphic data is most consistent with some sort of formal, standardized education for scribes, governmental officials (palace and temple), and military officials (Rollston 2006, 2010, 2015). I find it difficult to avoid that conclusion. In sum, writing was an elite activity and there were elites in Israel and Judah who flourished in writing technologies. We have much evidence demonstrating this fact.

But there is something else that is also interesting with regard to the scribes of Israel and Judah during the First Temple period: In certain cases, we can test the accuracy of some of the historical details of the *literary output* of the scribes of Israel and Judah. For the purposes of this article, a few examples must suffice, revolving especially around the historical details in book of Kings regarding eighth-century kings (see especially the fine work of Mykytiuk 2014, with earlier references).

1. The book of Kings (2 Kgs 13:10–13) refers to King Joash of Israel as a king of the early eighth century (r. ca. 802–786). In Assyrian inscriptions (written in Akkadian), King Adad-Nirari III of Assyria refers to Joash of Samaria (the main capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel) and states that he received tribute

from him (Cogan 2008, 39–40). Joash's payment of tribute is not included in the brief discussion of Joash in Kings, but it is noteworthy that Adad-Nirari III of Assyria (who ruled from ca. 811–784 BCE) refers to King Joash of Israel as a figure of the early eighth century and the book of Kings refers to him as a king of Israel from the early eighth century as well. This is not a complicated historical datum, but it is useful to know that a text in Mesopotamian cuneiform and the book of Kings state that there was an Israelite King Joash in the late ninth and early eighth centuries.

2. Similarly, the book of Kings refer to Menahem as a king of Israel during the second half of the eighth century BCE (r. ca. 745–737 BCE). Moreover, the book of Kings states that King Menahem of Israel paid a large tribute (2 Kgs 15:19–20) to King Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria. Strikingly, King Tiglath-pileser III (r. ca. 745–727 BCE) refers to his having received tribute from Menahem of Samaria (Cogan 2008, 51–59 *passim*). Thus, the writer of Kings is correct with regard to the name of the King of Israel, the period of the reign of this king of Israel, the name of the Neo-Assyrian king reigning at the time of the Israelite king, and the fact that the Israelite king paid the Neo-Assyrian king tribute. This suggests that there were scribes in ancient Israel keeping fairly good historical records and these records are reflected in the details present in the book of Kings.

3. The book of Kings refers to King Pekah of Israel (r. ca. 736–732 BCE) and King Rezin of Damascus (r. ca. 740–732 BCE) as having formed a coalition against King Ahaz of Judah (r. ca. 735–715 BCE). As a result, Ahaz of Judah (whom Pekah and Rezin wished to overthrow and “to replace with the son of Tabeel,” Isa 7:6) contacted Tiglath-pileser III, sent him tribute and offered to become his vassal. The end result of this was the subjugation of Damascus to Tiglath-pileser III, the toppling of Pekah (via assassination), and the rise of Hoshea to the throne of Israel (2 Kgs 15:29–31; 16:5–10; cf. Isa 7). Ultimately, the book of Kings states that King Hoshea of Israel paid tribute for a time to Assyria, but at some point rebelled against the Assyrian king (namely, Shalmaneser V, who was the successor of Tiglath-pileser III); so Shalmaneser V captured and imprisoned Hoshea and destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel (2 Kgs 17:1–6). Significantly, in his own inscriptions, King Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria states that he initially received tribute from Rezin of Damascus (who ruled “the House of Hazael”) and later he vanquished Rezin's territory and annexed it entirely to Assyria. On top of that, he states that he (Tiglath-pileser III) replaced Pekah of Israel and put Hoshea in his place. In addition, Tiglath-pileser III also states that he received tribute from (his vassal) Ahaz of Judah. (Cogan 2008, 34, 51, 54, 58, 60, 66). Similarly, in a Neo-Babylonian Chronicle, it is stated that Shalmaneser V destroyed Israel (Cogan 2008, 178). The high number of precise historical details that are present in Kings, and corroborated in Mesopotamian inscriptions, is impressive. Again, this demonstrates that the authors of Kings were able to draw upon some precise historical records, records that were arguably contemporary with the events they narrate (this is the simplest

and best manner of accounting for the accuracy and precision of the records in the book of Kings) produced by some very talented scribes in Israel and Judah during the period of the Divided Monarchy.

4. Of course, among the most important historical events of the eighth century is the 701 BCE punitive campaign of King Sennacherib of Assyria (r. ca. 707–681 BCE) against Judah during the reign of Hezekiah (r. ca. 715–687 BCE), including Sennacherib's destruction of all of the fortified cities of Judah (including the military fortress of Lachish that stood as a bulwark to protect Jerusalem), Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem, and Hezekiah's decision to pay a large tribute, with specific reference to "three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold" (2 Kgs 18:14). The narratives about these events loom large in the book of Kings (2 Kgs 18–19) and are also present in the book of Isaiah (Isa 36–37) and Chronicles (2 Chr 32). Within his own inscriptions (see especially in the famed Oriental Institute Prism of Sennacherib and the Taylor Prism of Sennacherib), Sennacherib states that he vanquished forty-six fortified cities of Judah, had Hezekiah trapped in Jerusalem like a bird in a cage, with Hezekiah ultimately deciding to pay a large tribute, including "thirty talents of gold and eight hundred talents of silver" (Cogan 2008, 114–15), with the difference in the amount of silver either a mistake in Kings or the Prism, or just hyperbole in the Prism. This campaign loomed so large in the mind of Sennacherib that he had massive reliefs of the siege of Lachish made so as to decorate his palace (Mitchell 2004, 67–72; Young 2017; Gallagher 1999). Finally, it is worth noting that although it occurred in the early seventh century (namely, 681 BCE), the authors of Kings also accurately recorded the fact that Sennacherib was assassinated as well as the very name of his primary assassins: his own sons "Adra-melech" and Sharezer (listed in that order in 2 Kgs 19:37). Strikingly, a name (fairly) recently deciphered in a Neo-Babylonian letter records the fact that Sennacherib's sons Arda-Mulišši was his assassin, or at least the primary one (Mitchell 2004, 74, with the biblical Hebrew version of the personal name being a corrupt variant of the Akkadian of the name, but the same name nonetheless). Again, there are a number of precise historical details in the book of Kings that can be compared with the material in Mesopotamian inscriptions. The most reasonable manner of accounting for the precision and accuracy of the authors of Kings is to state that they had access to precise, contemporary historical records that were produced by some talented, conscientious Old Hebrew scribes of Israel and Judah.

To be sure, much more comparison could be done with regard to the details of the book of Kings and the textual and archaeological data from the broader ancient Near East (e.g., the comparative materials about Merodach-Baladan of Babylon). But I do find it difficult to contest the fact that the scribes of ancient Israel and Judah who were responsible for the material in Kings about the eighth century, and the sources upon which these are dependent, were careful, sophisticated, and (when dealing with many, but not all, historical matters) quite

accurate. This, of course, stands in strong contrast to the abundance of historical errors in much later books like Tobit and Judith.

In sum, the eighth century was a century of great literary prowess in Israel and Judah. In an earlier publication, I have argued as well that the ninth century BCE (and to some degree even the tenth century) was a period of great literary capacity in Israel and Judah (Rollston 2016). Here I have argued that the eighth century was a period of great *floruit* in both North and South, Israel and Judah. This is something that is particularly clear from the totality of the epigraphic and biblical evidence. I find no reasonable way of avoiding this conclusion.

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## The Shock of Assyrian Imperial Ideology and the Responses of Biblical Authors in the Late Eighth Century

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### 1. INTRODUCTION TO EMPIRE

In the second half of the eighth century, Assyrian expansion to the west forever changed the history of Judah and the other kingdoms of the southern Levant. (The term “southern Levant” refers to the region along the Mediterranean coast from around Byblos in Lebanon, eastward to the Arabian desert and south to the Sinai desert.) The coronation of Tiglath-pileser III as king of Assyria in 744, and his resolute decision to expand the empire westward into southern Anatolia and the Levant, marked the beginning of a new period in the region's political history. From around 1200 BCE until the reign of Tiglath-pileser III, the southern Levant was controlled from within this region, by small ethnically-based nation states competing for hegemony. But as Israel Eph'al has remarked (personal communication), from the reign of Tiglath-pileser III until modern times, the southern Levant was controlled by empires, whose centers lay outside the region.

Assyria's imperial expansion to the region was enabled partly by a powerful army and by effective and efficient administrative services, both of which were controlled by the royal household and its officials. These served a state which lasted through the seventh century BCE, whose size and complexity represent “an unprecedented political phenomenon in the ancient Near East” (Machinist 1993, 77). But the army and administration alone do not explain the rapid expansion of Assyria and its transformation from a state centered around the Upper Tigris to an empire which controlled the Near East.

Assyria's political ideology provided the conceptual impetus fueling this rapid expansion. (Note that this period of the Assyrian empire is often called the “Neo-Assyrian Empire,” with the term “Neo-Assyrian” referring to the period between approximately 1115 and 612 BCE) This ideology sought to perpetuate the

empire by according it legitimacy. It ordained how the state was to be governed and legitimated the ruling group's expectation of cooperation from the ruled.

At the centre of this ideology are the characters of the god Assur and the king, his representative. The link between these two is the most critical part of the ideology. The king embodies the will of Assur and acts as his vicar (Sum: EN<sub>2</sub>.SI; Akk. *iššakku*) and his priest (Sum: SANGA; Akk. *šangû*; for more on the king as vicar, see Parpola 1993, 167 n 28). Assyrian palace art, as well as Assyrian inscriptions designed to broadcast the king's power (and therefore called "royal inscriptions") consistently portray the link between the king and Assur. One depiction of this link shows the king in ritual pose, in duplicate, standing below a winged disk representing Assur. The most famous example of this motif is found on Slab B-23 of the throneroom of Ashurnasirpal II, who reigned in the early ninth century BCE (For more on this image, see Reade 1979, 336, fig. 15; Winter 1983; Parpola 1993, 167; Aster 2015, 20–21 and 25–32.) In this image, the king is flanked by multi-winged creatures who hold purifying implements, designed to remove any evil forces threatening the king. The image conveys that the king's power and will are those of the god Assur.



**Fig. 1:** BM 124531 Reproduced from Reade 1979, 336, fig. 15.

In the royal inscriptions, the king is consistently portrayed as acting at the behest of the god Assur, and his conquests are attributed to the might of Assur. The following example, taken from the annals of Shalmaneser III (858–824 BCE), portrays foreigners who are overwhelmed by the god's power but react as though it were the king's power:

I approached the city Suru, which belongs to Bit Halupe. Awe of the overwhelming force of Assur, my lord, overwhelmed them. The nobles (and) elders of the city came out to me to save their lives. They submitted to me (lit., they seized my feet), and said: As it pleases you, kill! As it pleases you, spare! As it pleases you, do what you will! (Grayson 1991, inscription A.O.101.1, page 199, column 1, lines 79–81)

In the last twenty years, new editions of the royal inscriptions of most of the Neo-Assyrian kings, with English translation, have been published.<sup>1</sup> These inscriptions describe how Assur sends out the king against the unsubmissive enemy to conquer foreign lands and expand Assyria's territory (Tadmor 1997, 327). This ideological demand for constant territorial expansion provides an important impetus for the growth of empire.

The god Assur issues this command for conquest in his capacity as chief of the pantheon, with the king as his earthly representative. (See further on this subject in Garelli 1979). The god Assur's rule was geographically unlimited, and he was a deification of both the city and empire of Ashur (Lambert 1983). The king's rule was conceived as parallel to that of god Assur, and since Assur's rule was geographically unlimited, the empire's reach was universal. The universal reach of the Assyrian empire, one of the more practical elements of Neo-Assyrian imperial ideology, is the direct result of the link between the god Assur, his representative (the king), and the empire.

A second practical element of Neo-Assyrian imperial ideology is also directly connected to this theoretical construction: the "heroic principle of royal omnipotence" (Tadmor 1997, 326). In royal inscriptions, as in art and ritual, the king is consistently portrayed as all-powerful and therefore invincible. The theoretical construct of royal invincibility is the direct result of the link between god and king described above. The power of Assur, who is head of the pantheon, is consistently on the side, and in the service, of the king. The position of Assur and his relationship to the king create a system of relationships in which no human force superior to the king exists.

One might summarize Neo-Assyrian royal ideology as follows: The dominion of the god, the power of the king, and the reach of empire have no bounds.

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1. Grayson 1991; Grayson 1996; Tadmor and Yamada 2011; Grayson and Novotny 2012; Grayson and Novotny 2014; Leichty 2014.

This ideology was impressed upon the minds of both conquerors and conquered in a variety of sophisticated methods. As we shall see below, palace art and royal inscriptions both played an important role in the propagation of this ideology to conquered peoples. This ideology existed in large measure prior to the reign of Tiglath-pileser III, yet it was this energetic king who translated the ideology into practice by centralizing power in the empire, power which had often been delegated to magnates in the half-century which preceded his rule.<sup>2</sup> Tiglath-pileser III harnessed that power to expand a network of vassal states into the southern Levant, conquering and annexing any states that did not agree to vassalage.

Vassal states were those that paid tribute to Assyria, but vassalage implied more than simple tribute. As Assyria projected its power into the Levant, the small ethnic states in the region were threatened with conquest and therefore became tributary to Assyria. The annual tribute they paid might be seen by the rulers of these small states as a sort of bribe (cf. 2 Kgs 16:8) to deter Assyria from attacking them. However, Assyrians saw this payment as a sign of these states' submission and their ideological acquiescence to the Assyrian imperial order described above.

As a way of acquainting subject peoples with their imperial ideology, the Assyrians required representatives of their vassal states to visit the Assyrian capitals annually when they delivered the precious items assigned to them as tribute payment. The Assyrians designed these visits to transmit Assyrian ideology not only to the representatives who visited Assyria, but also to the royal courts of their homelands, with these representatives serving as vectors for conveying the ideas of Assyrian royal omnipotence and universal domination (Postgate 1974, 127–28). Essentially, the foreign emissaries were converted from representatives of their kingdoms to Assyria to ambassadors of Assyrian ideas to their kingdoms. The Assyrians conveyed imperial ideology partly by exposing the emissaries to the detailed art program of the Assyrian palaces, which used artistic depictions to convey this ideology, and partly in meetings with Assyrian court officials. These officials, in conversing with the emissaries, would have impressed them with imperial power by using stock motifs similar to those we find in the royal inscriptions (Morrow 2011).

## 2. THE IDEOLOGICAL CHALLENGE OF EMPIRE

Assyrian imperial expansion posed a serious political problem for each of the kingdoms of the southern Levant. But for the Israelite kingdoms, these political challenges presented a larger series of theological issues. Did Assyria's conquest

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2. In the period between the latter part of the reign of Adad-nirari III (reigned 810–783 BCE) and the rise of Tiglath-pileser III in 744, Assyrian rulers were pre-occupied by consolidating the empire, and much of the effective power lay in the hands of various magnates. For a full discussion of this period, see Siddall 2013.

of the nation-state signify Assur's conquest, and replacement, of Israel's national God? Israel and Judah had previously encountered mighty foes, and Israelites may well have asked questions like those of Gideon: "If YHWH is with us, then why has all this happened to us, and where are all the miracles about which our ancestors told us, saying: 'Did YHWH not bring us up from Egypt?' And now he has abandoned us!" (Judg 6:13). But the previous encounters with powerful invaders lacked the sense of permanence that the Assyrian expansion signified. Midianite, Egyptian, and Aramean armies did not invade the Land of Israel accompanied by an efficient royal administration, capable of establishing permanent rule of conquered territory. And while many of these invaders had devised a royal ideology that legitimated the rule of their king, none had designed a sophisticated mechanism for conveying this royal ideology to the invaded states impressing upon them the empire's universal dominion and invincibility. Furthermore, as Peter Machinist noted (1992), none of these invaders had succeeded in conquering with the lightning speed that Assyria evinced, since none of their armies were as powerful or their states as complex.

Assyrian expansion required that Judah develop a "God-idea" strong enough to respond to empire (Levine 2005). This requirement primarily concerned those sometimes called the "YHWH-alone" party, whose members argued that not only was YHWH all-powerful but that He was also the only God.

Among those who responded to this challenge was the prophet Isaiah of Jerusalem. Scholars have noted similarities between the language and motifs of the Assyrian royal inscriptions and of certain passages in Isa 1–39 (Cohen 1979, Machinist 1983, Aster 2007, Chan 2009, Aster 2017, and others). These similarities are best explained as resulting from the biblical authors' awareness of the Assyrian imperial motifs, and their attempt to respond conceptually to Assyrian imperial ideology. In this inter-cultural polemic, the biblical authors develop and articulate important concepts of monotheism.

One example of this response was noted by Machinist (1983, 726–27) in discussing Isa 8:7–8. The prophecy warns of a potential invasion of Judah by Assyria, and it was delivered in response to Ahaz' submission to Assyria, which took place sometime between 738 and 734 BCE. The prophecy warns that although Judah submitted to Assyria in an attempt to defend itself, the submission will cause unseen dangers. Drawn into the Assyrian orbit, and taxed with vassal tribute that it will one day weary of paying, Judah will ultimately be invaded by Assyria. But Assyria is not the ultimate cause of this invasion. It is rather Israel's God:

Therefore, behold YHWH will bring upon them [that is, upon the people of Judah] the great and mighty waters, the king of Assyria, with all his importance, and will run up over all his watercourses and go up over all his banks. He shall

run through Judah, overflowing and passing, till the neck he will reach. His outstretched wings will fill the breadth of your land, Immanuel!

The imagery corresponds to that found in Assyrian royal inscriptions and palace art. The king of Assyria as an unstoppable flood is a motif found repeatedly in the royal inscriptions (see references in Machinist 1983, 727). His outstretched wings probably refer to the outstretched wings of the disk representing the god Assur in the image noted above. (This representation of Assur is found in many Assyrian palace reliefs.) While using motifs that describe Assyrian power in the Assyrian sources, the prophecy actually notes the limits of that power in two respects. First, it refers to Assyria reaching “till the neck” of Judah. In other words, Assyria will not drown and submerge all of Judah (as is the wont of the Assyrian king described in the inscriptions); it will rather threaten Judah and leave enough “above water” so that it will survive. The second limitation in this passage is the ascribing of ultimate power to Israel’s God, who brings the Assyrians upon Judah, as in Isa 7:17. He is the ultimate source of power, with the Assyrians in both passages serving as his tool. Thus, this passage subtly recognizes both Assyrian claims of invincibility (by evoking the flood imagery), and worldwide dominion (by evoking mention of Assur), but simultaneously limits both claims.

A further example of this sort of “reworking” of Assyrian motifs appears in Isaiah’s throne room vision in Isa 6 (see the detailed analysis in Aster 2015, revised in Aster 2017, 56–80). In that vision, the palace relief presented above is evoked while also satirized. The description of God sitting on a high and mighty throne, surrounded by multi-winged creatures responsible for purifying others, which we find in Isa 6:1–7, seems to respond to the artistic depiction in the palace relief in several ways.

The palace relief is designed to highlight the tight link between the king and the god Assur, and to portray how magical forces (the multi-winged purifying creatures) protect the king. In contrast, Isa 6 uses a very similar image to portray distance between YHWH and humans. Unlike the creatures in the Assyrian reliefs who assist the king by deflecting danger, the multi-winged creatures in Isa 6:1–3 emphasize the conceptual distance between themselves and YHWH. Awed by His presence, they hide their bodies, and declare His separateness from the world. Most significantly, they purify not the occupant of the throne (as in the Assyrian relief) but rather the prophet himself (6:7–8). Further emphasizing the distance between man and God, the prophet bemoans “Woe is me, for I am destroyed, for the King the Lord of Hosts I have seen” (6:5). This statement of the prophet, emphasizing that man must not arrogantly place himself on a plane with God, underlines the actions of the winged creatures, who hide their faces so as not to see God (6:2).

Isaiah’s descriptions evoke the Assyrian palace reliefs while undermining the ideas they aim to convey. Besides mocking the idea that a human can be on the

same plane as God, Isaiah's imagery derides the idea that a human being can be invincible, highlighting the inherent weakness of flesh and blood. Only human beings, Isa 6:5–7 emphasizes, can become impure, and need purification. God, in contrast, is beyond categories of purity and impurity. This points to the portrayal of the Assyrian king as protected by multi-winged purifying creatures: if he were truly invincible (as God is), would he need such protection?

### 3. THE MILITARY CHALLENGE OF EMPIRE

The examples noted above seem to belong to the initial period of Judah's encounter with Assyria, during the reign of Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria (744–727 BCE) and Ahaz king of Judah (who reigned during much the same period). By the beginning of the reign of Sargon II of Assyria (720–705), Judah had been an Assyrian vassal for at least fourteen years, and there are clear signs that Judah began to consider rebelling against Assyria. While Isaiah may have found Assyria's imperialism grating, the fact that he developed ideological responses clearly shows that he did not consider Assyrian domination ephemeral.

Political leaders, on the other hand, seem to have thought repeatedly of ways to rid themselves of the yoke of vassalage and ruinous demands for tribute. (Although the economic system of Judah eventually tried to adapt to these demands [Gadot 2015, 13], there is no doubt that initially, the demand for tribute was a heavy burden for Judah to bear.) The possibility of rebelling against Assyria continued to entice Judah during much of the reign of Sargon II, although Judah continued to pay tribute to Assyria. We have an Assyrian administrative document that clearly details the arrival of Judean tribute bearers during the reign of Sargon (SAA vol. 1 letter 110, Nimrud Letter 16), and it is highly likely that Judah continued to pay tribute during much of this period.

Nevertheless, Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, who became king around 727 BCE, engaged in a policy of "brinksmanship," in which he explored possibilities of rebellion during the reign of Sargon II. An explicit sign of such rebellion is recorded in Sargon's inscriptions from Nineveh relating to the years preceding 711 BCE (Cogan 2008, 103–5). These record how the king of Ashdod sought to encourage other southern Levantine states to rebel against Assyria, sending messages seeking allies in his rebellion to "the kings of Philistia, Judah, Edom, and Moab." Ashdod's king would not have sent such an invitation had he known that Judah's king was committed to remaining an Assyrian vassal. Furthermore, by explicitly naming Judah as a recipient of the rebellious message, Sargon's inscriptions effectively accuse Judah of lack of loyalty.

It appears likely that in response to Judah's attitude, the Assyrians included the city of Azekah, on the western border of Judah, in their campaign against Ashdod. (This conquest is recorded in the "Azekah Inscription," which can be found in Cogan 2008, 107–9; see there on the reasons for dating this campaign to



the period of Sargon.) It is clear that Sargon boasted of being the “subduer of the land of Judah, which is located far-away” (Cogan 2008, 100), and this may imply a military encounter with Judah (Aster 2017, 154–61).

There is further evidence that Judah prepared for a possible rebellion against Assyria over a period of several years. Part of this evidence comes from the distribution pattern of jars with the *lmlk* seal stamped on them. (*Lmlk*, or *lam-melekh*, means “of the [Judean] king.”) These jars were used to collect commodities for royal use, and their geographic distribution pattern is significant. They are found primarily in the Shephelah of Judah and in the northern hill country of Judah. There is extensive discussion in scholarly literature about the dating of these jars (see Vaughn 1999 and subsequently Lipschits, Sergi, Koch 2010), from which it is clear that many of the jars date to the period before Sennacherib’s campaign of 701. It therefore appears that at least some of these jars represent a preparation for an anticipated Assyrian assault (as Na’aman 1986, 18 argued). That Hezekiah expected such an assault suggests that he was not a completely loyal vassal and that he prepared for a revolt. I would argue that these preparations began already during the reign of Sargon II. In the years around 712 BCE, as Judah’s leadership explored possible diplomatic avenues towards revolt, they also invested in practical preparations to counter an expected Assyrian onslaught.

In commenting on the distribution of the jars with the *lmlk* seal, several of the scholars noted above assume that Hezekiah began to prepare for his revolt only after the death of Sargon II in 705. However, the chronology I suggest above, in which Hezekiah cautiously began preparation for a possible revolt before 705, might be more plausible. Sargon’s 705 death on the battlefield following an Assyrian campaign in the north, near Urartu, and the loss of his corpse to the enemy, shocked the southern Levant, broadcasting Assyrian weakness, and appearing to herald the imminent collapse of the Assyrian army. This led to a general revolt against the empire by nearly all the vassal kingdoms of the southern Levant, including Judah. This revolt lasted until Sennacherib re-asserted Assyrian authority in his campaign in 701. Since there is clear textual evidence that Assyria considered Judah rebellious some years before Sargon’s death, there is no reason to assume that Judah only began military and structural preparations for a possible revolt in 705.

Other preparations for possible revolt included the broad wall in Jerusalem and probably the construction of the Siloam tunnel, each of which were large projects that took several years to construct. These may well also have begun somewhat before 705, even though Assyrian officials visiting Judah might have observed these projects with disfavor.



## 4. THE CRISIS OF 701

The revolt of 705, for which Judah seemingly worked hard to prepare itself, led to a severe Assyrian reaction: Sennacherib's campaign of 701. Much has been written about the result of this campaign (see most recently the papers in Kalimi and Richardson 2014), and there is no question that many locations in the Judean Shephelah were devastated (Faust 2008, 172–73 and 180). The desolation of these towns is mentioned in Sennacherib's inscriptions (Cogan 2008, 110–23) and in Micah's lament (Mic 1:8–16). The conquest and destruction of the major Judean city at Lachish (stratum III) is well-known, and is attested in the reliefs from Sennacherib's palace (Ussishkin 1982). At the same time, there is clear evidence that the Assyrians did not cause serious damage to the region surrounding Jerusalem in this campaign (Faust 2008, 177–80; see also Isa 1:3–10).

While the military and demographic picture is fairly clear, and somewhat bleak, the theological picture depicted in literary reflections is more complex and in one instance, salvific. We find two accounts of this single campaign in the biblical book of Kings. The fairly laconic account that scholars label "Source A" appears in 2 Kgs 18:13–16, and it seems to reflect a temple or palace ledger detailing the losses of property. But the detailed account in 2 Kgs 18:17–19:37, which parallels Isa 36–37, and which scholars label "Source B," reflects a more complex approach to the Assyrian threat.

"Source B" does not concern itself with the military aspects of the Assyrian threat, but with the theological challenge posed by Judah's defeat in the battles of 701 BCE. Many scholars have argued that this source was largely composed by the Deuteronomistic Historian who edited the book of Kings (Childs 1967, 137–40; Gonçalves 1986, 342–50). However, in its theological focus on Assyrian claims of power, it is similar to the passages from Isaiah cited earlier in this essay. I have therefore argued that large parts of this source were composed by Isaiah of Jerusalem, shortly after the events of 701 BCE (Aster 2017, 248–74). Instead of detailing the military campaigns, it focuses on purported Assyrian messages to the Judeans in a besieged Jerusalem. The two speeches of the Rab-shakeh (2 Kgs 18:19–25 and 28–35, which respectively parallel Isa 36:4–10 and 13–20) and his letter to Hezekiah (2 Kgs 19:10–13, paralleling Isa 37:10–13), gradually focus in on theological issues, rather than military ones. While the first speech ridicules Judah's weakness and the unreliability of Egypt as an ally, and the second one mentions the advantages of surrender, all three speeches emphasize the impotence of YHWH. This becomes the sole and unique focus of the last message (Isa 37:10–13, corresponding to 2 Kgs 19:10–13), which (like the second speech) explicitly compares YHWH to the gods of other nations, and constructs a sort of power hierarchy, at the top of which rests the king of Assyria, and beneath him the gods of all other nations:

(10) Speak thus to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying: “Let not your God in whom you trust seduce you, saying ‘Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.’ (11) Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, destroying them, and you will be saved? (12) Have the gods of the nations delivered them, which my fathers have destroyed, Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden that were in Tel-assar?”

We have other examples of Assyrian messages designed to elicit surrender (Moran 1991, 320–21) and other ancient texts with similar objects (such as Thucydides’s famous Melian Dialogue in *The Peloponnesian Wars*). None of these emphasize theological arguments to the extent that the speeches in “Source B” do. At most, theological arguments are mentioned briefly and in passing (as in *P.W.* 5.105). Gallagher (1999, 188–200) argued that the Assyrians knew Judah’s theology and sought to demoralize Judeans by undermining it.

But a different explanation suggests itself when examining this narrative within the parallel account of Isa 1–39, the context to which I believe the Hezekiah story originally belonged. Like other passages in this corpus, Isa 36–37 interprets the conflict between Judah and Assyria as an ideological one. Assyrian claims of empire, which vaunt the worldwide dominion of Assur and the invincibility of the Assyrian king, are taken as implied attacks on the worldwide dominion and omnipotence of YHWH. There is no reason to assume that Assyrians actually mentioned YHWH in their propaganda, but the prophet interprets Assyrian claims of empire as implicit attacks on YHWH. This sort of prophetic reinterpretation of Assyrian claims of empire is clearly at work in other parts of “Source B.”

Near the end of the narrative, in the prophet’s victory song celebrating Assyria’s failure to conquer Jerusalem (Isa 37:21–32, parallel to 2 Kgs 19:21–32), he addresses Sennacherib:

(24) By means of your messengers, you have denigrated the Lord. And you have said: “In my many chariots, I have gone up to the peaks of mountains, to the high points of Lebanon, and I have cut down the heights of its cedars, its choicest junipers, and I have reached its highest peaks, its lush forests. (25) I have cooled and drunk water, and I have dried up with the sole of my tread all the rivers of Egypt.”

A careful examination of these two verses can teach us a great deal about the prophet’s attitude towards Assyrian claims of empire. All of the motifs which appear in verses 24 and 25 (ascending in chariots to mountain peaks during military campaigns, cutting down trees in mountains, drinking water in mountains during military campaigns, drying up rivers) appear in the Assyrian royal inscriptions of Sennacherib (for citations, see Aster 2017, 262–73), and were cited by the prophet from the actual Assyrian claims of the period surrounding 701 BCE. Note that these motifs do not explicitly ridicule YHWH; they merely declare the power of

Sennacherib. Yet the prophet interprets the motifs as derision of the deity: “By means of your messengers, you have denigrated YHWH, and you have said....”

Based on this analysis of verses 24–25, we can understand the overall attitude of the author of much of “Source B” to Assyrian claims of empire. He understands all such claims as implying YHWH’s weakness. In his estimation, the dangerous element in the Assyrian attack on Jerusalem is not the military threat they pose, but the theological implications of the victory of their ideology. As such, the battle over Jerusalem is not a military battle per se, but rather a theological battle, in which the victor of the struggle over Jerusalem will be known to all the world as the true omnipotent ruler of the universe. And the question at issue is: Whom will this be? God or Sennacherib? This view is placed in the mouth of the King Hezekiah, who prays during the Assyrian attack:

Now therefore, YHWH our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You, You alone, are YHWH. (Isa 37:20, parallel to 2 Kgs 19:20)

## 5. CONCLUSION

In the campaign of 701 BCE, Assyria defeated Judah and gave it no practical choice other than to remain an Assyrian vassal. Judah’s important Shephelah region was devastated and a ruinous tribute was imposed on the kingdom. Yet from the jaws of military defeat, the prophet Isaiah, author of the prophetic narrative labelled “Source B,” extracts an important theological victory. The failure of Assyria to conquer Jerusalem showed the limits of Assyrian power. And the limits of that power, vast though it might have been, showed that Assyria was not invincible and its king not omnipotent. Those superhuman characteristics belong properly to the transcendent God of Israel, who is beyond all flesh and blood.

Isaiah refashions the military battle between Judah and Assyria, one which Judah could not hope to win, into a theological battle between Assyria’s claims to the invincibility of a human empire and his own claims that only YHWH is invincible. It is theologically significant that the prophet does not try to align the interests of YHWH and those of Judah: It remains entirely possible that YHWH will support Judah’s enemies (as in Isa 7:17) and will use them to punish Judah for its sins. Unlike Assur, YHWH transcends identity with any specific political power.

From a military and demographic point of view, Judah emerged impoverished and humbled from its eighth-century encounter with Assyria, and its leaders in the subsequent half-century labored hard and long to encourage recovery. But one ought not ignore the important literary messages that emerge from this encounter, which enrich us theologically to this day.

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## The Biblical Writings in the Late Eighth Century BCE

*Konrad Schmid*

For two main reasons, the late eighth century BCE was a crucial period for the formation of what later became biblical literature: First, only beginning in the mid-eighth century do we have literary texts from Israel and Judah, such as the Khirbet el-Qom texts and the Siloam inscription (Dobbs-Allsopp 2004). In addition, from this time onward there is a significant increase in the amount of epigraphic material (Rollston 2010). Only a little earlier, from the ninth century BCE onward, Israel and Judah had begun to be perceived as politically relevant entities by the Mesopotamian empires and are mentioned in these empires' epigraphic records. What can one deduce from such observations?

In the second part of the eighth century BCE, there seems to be significant development in both the possibilities and extent of Hebrew writing. The numbers of texts increase significantly; there is clear standardization of language and script; and the states of Israel and Judah are recognized as such by their neighbors. These points are all relevant hints at the development of a scribal culture that was sufficiently developed to produce (sizable) literary texts.

With regard to the biblical traditions, one may assume that while their oral substance could reach back to earlier times, their earliest literary forms took shape in the eighth century (or at least not much earlier). The earliest period in ancient Israel and Judah when extensive texts become possible is apparently the time of Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah. This also seems to be the reason why there are "books" of Amos or Isaiah, but no equivalent "books" of Elijah, Elisha, or other earlier prophetic figures from the books of Samuel and Kings. Again, this is not to say that no biblical text predates the eighth century BCE—especially if one accounts for oral pre-stages or memories that have been reworked and included in the texts as they now stand. But the eighth century seems to mark a caesura regarding the evolution of Israelite and Judahite scribal culture and therefore also of its literature.

What biblical texts might reach back into that period and how can they be identified? To consider this question, a basic distinction needs to be highlighted

between the biblical and the historical Israel (Kratz 2015). According to the biblical perspective, most texts of the Hebrew Bible date to the First Temple period or even earlier. All sixty-six chapters of the book of Isaiah were written by the prophet Isaiah in the eighth century; the books of Qohelet and Song of Songs are of Solomonic origin; and the Pentateuch was already known at the time of Joshua. These observations are very traditional, but they nonetheless highlight the noteworthy point that the Hebrew Bible develops its own perspective on literary history: Not everything in the Bible goes back to the same origin; rather, the writings stem from different periods.

Nevertheless, since the rise of historical-critical scholarship in the late eighteenth century, it has become apparent that the biblical perspective on the Bible's literary history is not identical with the historical one. What the Bible presents as the oldest material is in fact not necessarily the earliest, but rather the most important. Accordingly, for instance, it is conspicuous that the Torah is not the founding charter for a monarchic Israel in its own land. Rather, the Torah's storyline takes place largely outside the land and seems to address an audience acquainted with life in the diaspora. The Torah may include many earlier literary traditions, especially in the Jacob cycle, the Moses story, and some of the legal materials (Schmid 2014b), but its overall shape seems to reflect at least the exilic period. The text of the Torah points to a complex editorial and redactional process that led to the canonical text.

While such profile-based observations would suggest that the Bible's main formation was not during the monarchic period, many Hebraists today, appealing to linguistic arguments, argue otherwise (Hurvitz 2014). They hold that Genesis–Kings and many prophetic books are written in Classical Biblical Hebrew (CBH), which is linguistically different from the Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH) that one sees in books like Chronicles, Ezra–Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel, and Qohelet. They are linked by what is identified as Transitional Biblical Hebrew (TBH). Usually, CBH is assigned to the monarchic period and LBH to the post-exilic period, with the break between these strands located in the Babylonian exile. However, many linguists or linguistically trained biblical scholar are flexible about extending CBH and TBH into the Persian Period in order to secure results in dating biblical texts that do not immediately conflict with redaction-critical studies. The following three arguments explain why this is justified.

First, there is a significant gap in the external, nonbiblical corpora for Hebrew from the sixth to second centuries BCE: There are many inscriptions from that period, but they are in Aramaic, not in Hebrew. Therefore, we are unable to define a clear *terminus ante quem* for CBH on the basis of external evidence. This *terminus ante quem* for CBH could be in the sixth century, but it could also be later.

Second, there is a basic asymmetry between traditional linguists' methods for dating CBH texts, on the one hand, and LBH texts, on the other. According to such linguists, biblical texts written in CBH belong to the timeframe of the eighth



to sixth century because the external evidence dates to that period. The external evidence for LBH is mainly found in the texts from the Dead Sea from the second and first centuries BCE, but biblical texts in LBH (such as Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, and Esther) are dated much earlier by linguists because they are, at least in part and for a variety of reasons, *obviously older* than the second or first century. Therefore, the arguments regarding LBH show, minimally, that a multitude of arguments need to be considered when dating biblical texts, and what seems fair for LBH should also be accepted for CBH.

A third argument by Hebraists for an early (that is, preexilic) dating of CBH texts is the idea that it should be impossible to reproduce real CBH in later times without slip-ups. The problem with this argument is a fundamental methodological one: It is *a priori* and therefore not falsifiable. If a biblical text is written in clear and flawless CBH, then it is *by definition* preexilic because otherwise it would not be in correct CBH. In such an argument, the possibility of a *late* text in correct CBH is excluded as impossible *from the outset*. Determining CBH as copy-safe is therefore begging the question. Of course, languages evolve over time, but in a learned elite idiom like CBH, a certain degree of inertness is likely as well.

Of course, it is not possible to date biblical literature with the precision of specific decades, so, in what follows, assigning specific texts to the eighth or even late eighth century may remain tentative in nature (for a more detailed presentation cf. Schmid 2012, see also Day 2004). Nevertheless, the uncertainties in dating biblical texts cannot be an excuse to completely abandon this task.

## 1. THE ANCESTRAL STORIES IN GENESIS 12–36

The ancestral stories in Genesis include traditional material that probably goes back to oral pre-stages with potential roots in the second millennium BCE. Their literary shapes, however, can hardly be dated much earlier than the ninth or eighth century BCE (Rollston 2010). From the narrative's geographical locations, one can see that, of the three patriarchal traditions, the Jacob cycle originally belonged to the central hill country (Bethel, Shechem, etc.), while the tales about Abraham (Hebron, Mamre, etc.) and Isaac (Beersheba, Gerar) originated in southern Judah.

Since Genesis depicts Abraham as the father of Isaac, Hebrew Bible scholarship in the nineteenth century assumed the literary traditions about Abraham are the older texts. But as Wellhausen noted, the contrary is much more likely. The present shadowy existence of Isaac alongside his “father” and the parallel traditions featuring Abraham and Isaac are more simply explained as borrowing from the less important Isaac in favor of the more important Abraham than the other way around. As a rule in the history of storytelling, motifs are often transferred from minor to major figures: The story about the endangered ancestress, for instance, seems to have been transferred from Gen 26 (Isaac and Rebecca at

Abimelek's court) to Gen 12 and 20 (Abraham and Sara at the Pharaoh's viz. Abimelek's court). In addition, one should consider the references to Abraham and Isaac outside the patriarchal history. For Isaac we can adduce two Amos passages indicating that, in the monarchical period, "house of Isaac" could be regarded as eponymous for the Southern Kingdom (Amos 7:9,16). For Abraham, by contrast, there are no references from the monarchical period outside Genesis. None of the "Abraham" references in Isa 29:22; 41:8; 51:2; 63:16; Ezek 33:24; Jer 33:26; Mic 7:20; Ps 47:10; 105:6, 9, 42; 2 Chr 20:7; Dan 3:35 can safely be dated before the exile. One should not immediately conclude here that the Abraham narratives are purely redactional constructions from the seventh or sixth century BCE, nor that their content is wholly dependent on the Priestly document. Rather, we may posit that Abraham became a prominent figure in the Hebrew Bible tradition at a comparatively late date, that is, the sixth century BCE, as texts like Isa 41:8, 51:2 or Ps 105:6, 9, 42) suggest. The present genealogical sequence of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as grandfather, father, and son is probably a basic reflection of the transformations in these figures' political significance: With the fall of the Northern Kingdom and the dissolution of the sanctuary in Bethel, the originally important figure of Jacob from central Palestine gradually declined in significance in contrast to the Judahite figures of Abraham and Isaac. Ultimately, Jacob took his place at the end of the relational sequence.

In literary-historical terms, the Jacob cycle in Gen \*25–35 is the core of the book of Genesis, even of the Torah (de Pury 1991; de Pury 2010; Blum 2012). It is of northern origin, as indicated by the locations named in the cycle. Especially striking is the close connection of the cycle to Bethel, which is the starting and ending point of Jacob's wanderings (28\*:10–22; 35:6–7), including the institution of an offering at the sanctuary (28:20–22). It thus appears that the Jacob tradition was handed down there. It owes its literary survival after 722 BCE primarily to the later redactional connection with the Abraham and Isaac traditions from Judah.

## 2. THE MOSES-EXODUS STORY

The Moses-Exodus story, which functions in the Pentateuch's current narrative sequence as the continuation of Genesis, was originally a separate tradition complex that formed an independent and self-standing legend for Israel's origins (Gertz 2000; Schmid 2010). It is based on older oral tradition, as indicated by the anchoring of the exodus credo in various strands of tradition (Becker 2005; Levy et al. 2015). One can assume the Moses-Exodus story is of northern origin for several reasons: the evidence of 1 Kgs 12:28, which anchors the exodus credo in the sanctuaries of Bethel and Dan ("Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt"); the prominence of the exodus in Hosea and Amos,

but not in Isaiah and Micah; and the literary similarities between Jeroboam I and Moses in 1 Kgs 12 and Exod 2–4.

Its earliest literary form probably presupposed the prophetically announced fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BCE, since it neither mentions a king nor leads to a depiction of state formation. The story originally began with Moses' birth in Exodus 2, which has a close ancient Near Eastern parallel in the Sargon legend (COS 1.133), a text that had been found in Ashurbanipal's library (seventh century BCE). Exodus 2 identifies the non-monarchical figure of Moses as the one chosen by God, not the great Assyrian king (Otto 2009). The Moses-Exodus narrative seems to be an anti-imperial literary document from the Neo-Assyrian period that at the same time acknowledges God as the absolute "imperial" power. Thus, it develops the same ideology in narrative terms that Deuteronomy's core develops in legal terms (Levinson 1997; Oswald 2011).

### 3. LEGAL TRADITIONS

The Pentateuch contains three large bodies of law: the so-called Covenant Code in Exod 20–23 (for its designation cf. Exod 24:7) the Holiness Code in Lev 17–26, and the core of Deuteronomy in Deut 12–26). Of these legal texts, the Covenant Code—or, more precisely, its literary kernel—is rightly regarded as the oldest. Even though all three corpora were subject to literary expansion and thus contain elements from different times, the basic relationships among them can be clearly determined on the basis of inner-biblical interpretive relationships. To a large extent, Deuteronomy marks a reinterpretation of the Covenant Code (Levinson 1997), while the Holiness Code in turn accommodates material from Deuteronomy to the Priestly document (Nihan 2007). The literary core of Deuteronomy (in Deut 12–26) is usually assigned to the late Neo-Assyrian period (though some date it to the Babylonian exile; cf. Kratz 2010, 2013; differently MacDonald 2010), and the Holiness Code is probably a Persian period composition, as it presupposes both Deuteronomy and the Priestly Code (Nihan 2007).

For the eighth century BCE, only the earlier texts in the Covenant Code (Exod 20:22–23:33) comes into consideration. In the last ten years, the evaluation of its basic literary-historical evolution has shifted significantly. While traditional scholarship in the twentieth century determined the core of the Covenant Code to consist of religious laws, newer approaches agree that its earlier components are social laws (*mishpatim*) stemming from ancient Near Eastern legal tradition and not mentioning or presupposing God as their stipulator, so that the "theologizing" of this material was secondary (Otto 1988; Albertz 2003).

This conclusion is based not only on a new evaluation of the literary development of Exod 20–23, but also on changed religious-historical perspectives on the Hebrew Bible that precludes the classic approach to legal history pioneered by Albrecht Alt (1934). Alt and his followers generally distinguished between

apodictic and casuistic legal statements and identified apodictic law, with its categorical prohibitions independent of case-based punishments (“you shall not ...”), as the genuine nomadic heritage of Israel. By contrast, the casuistic provisions that associate particular punishments with particular offenses (“if ... then ...”) were thought to have been adopted from Canaan. It has now become clear that neither the division of apodictic and casuistry between Israel and Canaan nor the thesis of Israel’s exclusively nomadic origins can be maintained.

The theologizing of the law was accompanied by a completely altered conception of law. It needs to be highlighted that the traditional ancient Near Eastern law corpora were—contrary to what they have been called—not “codices” but law collections (cf. Assmann 2000, 178–89). That is, these are not prescriptive texts, but descriptive, representing “an aid for discovering the law, but not a rule” (Assmann 2000, 179). The legislative authority in the ancient Near East was not a written rule of law, but rather the monarch. Accordingly, we should understand the older law rules in the Covenant Code as model cases that aided legal scholars but were not binding on them as such.

This self-understanding changed the moment when the Covenant Code—especially through the introduction in Exod 20:22–21:1 and the insertion of the second person—became “divine law” and thus the standard for the further history of law in the Hebrew Bible. It is quite reasonable to assume that this shift towards “theologizing” the law resulted in the aftermath of the fall of the Northern kingdom. The law became detached from the traditional royal authority and was, so to speak, “excarnated” into written form (Assmann 1999). The legislative norm was no longer the king, but a book. For that reason, about half of all Hebrew Bible statements of law are equipped with an introduction containing an explanation of the law’s origins, a promise for those who keep this law, a reason for it, a threat, or a clarification of its meaning. This can be explained by the fact that these laws no (longer) had an authority that would see to it that they were carried out. Instead, they apparently rest on their authority as *divine* law alone (Frymer-Kenski 2003, 979).

Concerning the content of the Covenant Code as divine law, it is striking that it is no longer the model character of complex legal situations that shapes the tradition, but instead the central theological statements of law, justice, and mercy, which are in the foreground of the prophetic proclamation of Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Isaiah.

#### 4. TRADITIONS IN THE BOOK OF JUDGES

The story in the book of Judges plays out in the period before state formation in Israel and Judah. In historical terms, this pre-monarchic setting does not indicate the time of origin of these narratives. There is sufficient evidence that especially the stories of the judges in Judg 3–9 belong to the time after the fall of Samaria

(Guillaume 2004, 5–74). The fact that except for Othniel (Judg 3:7–11) all the judges—Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Barak, Gideon, and Abimelech—stem from the territory of the Northern Kingdom suggests that Judg 3–9 preserve specifically northern Israelite traditions. These chapters propose and advocate that Israel could exist under Assyrian hegemony without state or a king—a figure ridiculed in the image of the bramble (Judg 9). In particular, the episode of unsuccessful institutionalization by Abimelech in Shechem (Judg 9), which probably presupposes Shechem’s destruction in 722 BCE, warns Israel against having its own king. Additionally, Israel’s enemies in Judg 3–9 point to a context in the ninth–seventh centuries BCE: Moab first appears as a state capable of threatening Israel in 845 BCE under King Mesha (Judg 3:12–14). Something similar is true of the depiction of conflicts with the Midianites, who seem to reflect Israel’s experiences with the Arabs beginning in the seventh century BCE. Judges 3–9 can thus be characterized as a post-monarchical writing that opposes institutionalized kingship in Israel and favors a theocracy steered by charismatic savior figures. The inclusion of the book of Judges in the Deuteronomistic History changed the outlook of the book significantly and shaped it as a transition from Israel’s pre-monarchic past to the era of the monarchy (see Judg 2:6–19 and the discussion in Römer 2005, 136–39).

## 5. THE BEGINNINGS OF WRITTEN PROPHECY

The beginnings of biblical prophetic traditions lie in books whose protagonists belong to the eighth century BCE: Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Isaiah. There is no reason to doubt the basic historicity of those four prophets and their setting as presupposed by the Bible; Micah and Isaiah are even mentioned in biblical books other than their own (Jer 26; 2 Kgs 18–20). The earliest written forms of prophecy can be found in the books of Hosea and Amos (Jeremias 1996). It is true that Amos may have appeared as a prophet before Hosea, but it seems that the Hosea tradition was the first to be given its fixed form, and the prophecy of Amos was assembled in its literary form only under the influence of Hosea. In turn, the book of Amos had a retroactive effect on the book of Hosea as shown by Hos 4:15; 7:10; 8:14; and 11:10, using language and themes from the book of Amos and thus interpreting both books as proclaiming one and the same will of God.

Hosea has an elusive style that leaves a great deal unclear to later readers, but from it, we can see how individual texts in the book stem from the beginning phases of written tradition: they presume a good deal of knowledge on the part of the readers. At the same time, the core of the book of Hosea (that is, chapters 4–9) seems to have been formed from the outset as a continuous text. There are no superscriptions or closing formulae, and the book as a whole makes no use of the messenger formula. The formula of divine speech is found only in 2:15, 18, 23, and 11:1. The current presentation of the book of Hosea thus places no value on

the original smaller units. Instead, the imperatives in 4:1; 5:1, 8; 8:1; 9:1 that provide its structure indicate a dramatic sequence illustrating the approach, execution, and consequences of judgment. A composition of this sort can scarcely be imagined before 722 BCE.

Because of its social-critical acerbity and Amos's independence of any institutional group of court or cultic prophets (for Amos those are "the prophets," cf. Amos 7:14), it may be assumed that at first, Amos's prophecy scarcely had any chance of becoming theologically influential. There were probably two primary moments of historical resonance in the Amos tradition that were important for its influence. For one, the superscription of the book shows that the earthquake that took place under Uzziah may have been understood to be an early affirmation of the truth of Amos's prophecy. The earthquake motif then becomes prominent in the proclamation contained in the book of Amos (Amos 2:13; 9:1). In addition, the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BCE would have aided the reception of the Amos tradition in its breakthrough so that it was expanded to include Judah. The book of Amos itself seems to reflect on these problems in the visions in chapters 7–9. The visions, with their structure toward a climax, played out in some sense in private communication between YHWH and Amos. Without any command to proclaim them, they apparently serve to show that Amos's prophecy of judgment was forced on him by God and did not arise of his own will.

The literary core of the book of Isaiah can be found in chapters 1–39. Within Isa 1–39 the earliest texts are identified especially in Isa 1–11, 28–32, a result made plausible by the principle of exclusion: Isa 12 is an eschatological song of thanksgiving, and in Isa 13–23 we find sayings about foreign peoples, only a portion of which, in Isa 17, could go back to the eighth century BCE. Isaiah 24–27 contain a proto-apocalyptic vision of world judgment that should probably be dated to the post-Persian period, and in Isa 33–35 we find various bridging elements to the subsequent tradition of Deutero-Isaiah. Isaiah 36–39 contain stories about Isaiah taken from 2 Kgs 18–20.

Where exactly the oldest texts in the book are to be found is a matter of dispute. Of primary importance for a decision is the interpretation of the so-called memoir of Isaiah in chapters \*6–8. Above all, the step by step origins of Isa 8:1–4, 5–8 reveal that Isaiah at first only pronounced judgment against the Syrian-Ephraimite coalition (cf. Isa 17:1–6), while the theologized pronouncement of judgment against Judah in 8:5–8 is secondary: Its ideological profile is clearly different from 8:1–4, and 8:5 is even introduced as an addition: "And YHWH spoke to me again," even though 8:3b–4 is already shaped as divine speech. The literary findings are difficult to interpret (Schmid 2014a), but the connection between Isa 8:1–4, 5–8 is already presupposed in Isa 6 which announces judgement against Judah as well. Due to its concept of God dwelling in the temple (and not in heaven), Isa 6 is a preexilic text, maybe from the early seventh century BCE. Isa 6 is in the center of a larger composition comprising Isa 1–11 that presupposes

and takes up the older Amos tradition (Blum 1996, 1997; Schmid 2014a). Isaiah 1–11 thus extends the announcement of doom found in the Amos tradition for Judah. The fact that Judah and Jerusalem were conquered only 150 years after the historical Isaiah gave rise to a supplement in Isa 6:9–11, which explains that no one would understand Isaiah’s prophecy. Only after 587 BCE, which historically vindicated the message of doom, the Isaiah tradition gained a wider audience and broad acceptance.

This is also true for the Micah tradition, especially Mic 1–3, which has a contemporaneous point of origin in the eighth century (Jeremias 2007, 114–27). Due to Micah’s rural origins (he stems from Moreshet), Micah’s prophecy is less saturated with Jerusalemite traditions, but nonetheless he was remembered as an authority in Jer 26:18 in the discussion between the elders and the officials regarding the question whether or not Jeremiah needs to be put to death because of his detrimental announcement of doom.

## 6. PSALMS

The question of dating in the Psalms is rendered difficult by the very nature of the material: Because of the genre, the individual and collective circumstances they describe remain relatively constant through time. However, a few psalms may be assigned with reasonable probability to the eighth century BCE. The psalms traditions from that era reflect the traditional Jerusalem cult that fits structurally with the national religious orthodoxies of neighboring states. The central theological promise of Zion’s security based on the presence of YHWH received a strong impetus from Jerusalem’s experience of rescue from the Assyrian siege of 701 BCE. Thus the basic form of the Zion Pss \*46 and \*48 probably belongs to the Assyrian period (Spieckermann 1992; Körting 2006). Their theological statement about the impregnability of Zion would be hard to explain after 587 BCE, and they are probably not to be interpreted just as a reflex against the experiences of 701 BCE.

In addition, hymns like Pss \*24 or \*93 are often counted among the older materials in the Psalter (Jeremias 1987). They probably reflect corresponding cultic activities. Whether or not they were composed in the eighth century BCE is difficult to decide; but a setting in the monarchic period is more likely than not. Northern Kingdom psalms such as 29 and 68 may also have reached Jerusalem after 722 BCE (Jeremias 1987). It is hard to say whether these early psalms already constituted an “early stage” of the Psalter—that is, a book—given the existing and very complex structure of the Psalter in its received forms. Thematic collections of individual psalms during the eighth century BCE are not improbable, but they are difficult to reconstruct.

## 7. EARLY WISDOM LITERATURE

Biblical wisdom literature is traditional to a very high degree (Saur 2012), that is, its materials were probably in many cases oral traditions that, given their nature as sayings, were relatively stable even without being shaped in written form. On the basis of their theological-historical profile, it is likely that the oldest parts of the book of Proverbs are to be found in chapters 10–29. That at least some parts may have been collected in the monarchic period (at least during the Judahite monarchy) and might reach back into the eighth century BCE, is seen from the fact that their redactional coherence is obtained by the inclusion of a series of statements about kings, which seems to presume the existence at least of the Judahite kingship (cf. Prov 14:28, 35; 16:10–15; 20:24–28; 21:1–2, 30–31; 25:6–7, etc.). If this is so, the collection and writing down of these sayings probably took place at the royal court. It would also match the self-attestation in Prov 25:1, which assigns a special role in the composition of parts of the book of Proverbs to the “men” of Hezekiah: “These are other proverbs of Solomon that the men of King Hezekiah of Judah copied.”

However, one should take into account that in many texts the word “king” is simply used as a code for rule or leadership, so that an evaluation in terms of institutional history is not absolutely compelling. It is also possible that texts which idealize the kingship were composed or handed down as a reaction to defeat.

As regards the theological profile of Proverbs, contrary to previous attempts by scholars, one should not lump all the YHWH-sayings together and evaluate them as secondary (Ernst 1994, 68–79). Ancient wisdom was by no means “secular.” Rather, it was at least implicitly “theological” which often yielded a later more explicit “theologization” (Schmid 2015).

A special case can be found in Prov 22:17–24:22 (Schipper 2005). This collection derives from Egyptian tradition, the so-called teachings of Amenemope from the Rameside period, and often quotes its source in a verbatim manner. Their reception most probably took place by way of the Phoenicians. Exactly when the collection was put together in Judah is difficult to determine, but an eighth century date is not impossible.

## 8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The late eighth century BCE is a highly important yet often neglected period for the formation of biblical literature. In twentieth century scholarship, especially in the aftermath of Noth’s interpretation of the Deuteronomistic History (Noth 1943), the significance of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem in 587 BCE tended to be overestimated over against the fall of Samaria in 722 BCE and its theological consequences. But it is quite probable that the literary beginnings of



biblical literature in some way or another were intellectually connected to, or even motivated by, this historical experience (Schmid 2015; Kratz 2015). From an archaeological perspective, it is sufficiently clear that the Northern Kingdom in the ninth and eighth centuries was both more developed and more significant than Judah. With the fall of Samaria in 722 BCE, it became the “forgotten kingdom” (Finkelstein 2014). Yet many northern traditions found their way to Jerusalem, though with remarkable transformations. Characteristic is the creation of origin accounts in which the king is absent: The ancestral stories in Genesis and the Moses-Exodus narrative in Exodus do not culminate in the establishment of a kingdom, and the theological reinterpretation of the earliest legal material in Exod 20–23 leads to the notion of “divine laws.” On good grounds, one can assume that only by integrating the Northern kingdom’s traditions into a postmonarchic framework, Judah was eventually able to cope with its own catastrophe in 587 BCE and to preserve its own legacy.

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## Prophetic Discourse on “Israel”

*Reinhard G. Kratz*

### 1. THE IDENTITY OF “ISRAEL”

In the Hebrew Bible, the name “Israel” designates two things: (1) the whole people of Israel (including Judah) as the people of God; (2) the political entity of the northern kingdom of Israel (Samaria) in contrast to the southern kingdom of Judah (Jerusalem). In his *History of Israel*, Martin Noth, a renowned biblical scholar and historian of ancient Israel, tried to explain the double usage of the name “Israel” (Noth 1954, 9–15; ET 1960, 1–7). He located the first usage in “the language of faith” (Noth 1954, 169; ET 1960, 184) and thought that it was the original meaning of the name “Israel.” The political and geographical usage, however, is—according to Noth—secondary. And the reason is because it covers only parts of the twelve tribes of the people of Israel and consists also of some foreign (Canaanite) elements.

Noth deserves the credit of having expressed the problem so clearly at the beginning of *The History of Israel*. His explanation and historical reconstruction, however, is highly problematic and fails to be convincing anymore (Kratz 2015a and 2015b; for discussion, see Crouch 2014; Weingart 2014). Outside the Hebrew Bible, the name “Israel” is first attested in the famous stele of Pharaoh Merneptah (around 1200 BCE) for a group of people somewhere in the land of Canaan. It is not attested again until the ninth century BCE, when Neo-Assyrian and Moabite inscriptions refer to the northern monarchy as Israel and/or Bit Humri (that is, the house of Omri, after the king that founded the capital city, Samaria). While the political and geographical usage is thus well attested, and is quite natural and easy to explain, the other usage of the name Israel is in “the language of faith.” This biblical notion of “Israel,” including Judah and designating the people of YHWH, is rather curious and requires an explanation. The question, then, for us is: When and under which circumstances did the notion of a unity of Israel and Judah as one people of the same God emerge?

For Noth, the Israel in the “language of faith” dates to pre-monarchic times, to the time of the “Conquest.” Following the analogy of a Greek model of settlement, he saw the historical context as the “amphictyonic” organization of Israel’s tribes. Since many can no longer embrace the historical hypothesis of a tribal amphictyony, we have to look for alternatives. Some think of the time of the “United Monarchy” under David and Solomon in the tenth century BCE, the splendid beginning of the monarchic period according to the Hebrew Bible. However, the idea of a united Davidic-Solomonic empire was recently questioned by archaeology and cannot be taken for granted anymore (Finkelstein 2001; Finkelstein and Silberman 2006a). The same holds true for the alternative: the Josianic period (late seventh century BCE). The Tel Aviv archaeologist Israel Finkelstein, along with many others, tend to date the emergence of the pan-Israelite national identity of “Israel” to Josiah’s reign. Yet we know as much, or as little, about the Josianic period as we know about the Davidic-Solomonic era. And what we know, or think we know, comes from (late) biblical accounts.

Another possibility for a political and social explanation is the time between David and Josiah—under the dynasties of Omri (first half of the ninth century BCE) and Jehu (second half of the ninth and first half of the eighth century BCE). In this period, the kingdom of Judah existed more in the shadow of the northern kingdom and was a kind of vassal to it. Temporarily, it was even connected to the house of Omri through marriage. Others think of the time of the destruction of Israel and Samaria in 722 BCE, when a number of refugees from Israel came into Judah. And still others of the time after 701 BCE, the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib under king Hezekiah, when the territory of the province of Judah was reduced.

Many scholars suggest a pan-Israelite movement in the seventh century BCE under Hezekiah or Josiah, and they combine this idea with the emergence of the book of Deuteronomy and its notion of a unified people of God as expressed in the centralization of the cult and the *Shema* ‘*Israel*: “Hear, O Israel: YHWH is our God, YHWH alone” (for the discussion, see Na’aman 2009; Finkelstein 2011; Finkelstein and Silberman 2006a; 2006b; Crouch 2014).

However, I am convinced that historical, political, and social circumstances alone do not explain the emergence of the inclusive identity of biblical Israel. They are a historical precondition, and may have stimulated or supported the process. But they are certainly not the main reason and driving force. Other peoples of the same region and in the same time—such as Ammon, Moab or Edom (of which we have relatively meager extant sources, yet enough in order to compare with the equally meager extant sources of Israel and Judah)—experienced similar political fates, yet, as far as we know, they did not end up with a new identity in the “language of faith.” The new identity of “Israel” (including Judah) as the people of YHWH does not mirror accurately a historical reality of political or social unity. Rather, this identity is a theological concept that sets forth a new basis for

a national, political, and social unity of “Israel.” This new identity is not primarily defined by factors such as monarchy, temple, geography or genealogy. The identity is rather defined by the relation between the people of “Israel” and its God YHWH. The pan-Israelite identity reflected in the Bible is built upon this theological category. We must therefore search for factors that can account for both YHWH’s new identity and “Israel” as the people who belong to him.

## 2. THE END OF ISRAEL

In what follows I argue that it is not the historical reality or possibility of a united kingdom of “Israel” but rather the loss of the monarchy and Israelite identity in 722 BCE that led to the creation of the new identity of biblical “Israel.” The historical caesura of 722 (and again of 597/587 BCE) must have been—at least in the eyes of some—dramatic, though more in mental or conceptual than in material terms. In fact, many other nations besides Israel and Judah experienced the downfall of their political and cultural system during the military campaigns of the Neo-Assyrian and the Neo-Babylonian empires against Syria and Palestine in the ninth to sixth centuries BCE. Materially, there was some destruction, but everyday life went on as usual. We do not know how these other peoples—or indeed the majority of the population in Israel and Judah—thought about these events. What we do have is the literature preserved in the Bible, which has its own way of interpreting the historical events of that period.

Let us first consider the Arameans as an example (see Niehr 2014; Younger 2016). What exactly became of the Arameans in Syria subsequent to the Assyrian invasions remains a mystery. Launched much earlier than those against Israel and Judah, these campaigns always concentrated on individual city-states, while other political actors—like Zakkur of Hamath or the kings of Sam’al/Yadiya—temporarily profited from the Assyrian presence by pledging themselves as loyal vassals. In this way, the end of political sovereignty for one did not necessarily mean the immediate end of another. Under Assyrian hegemony, whether with or without a local king, most aspects of life continued as before. The patron god Baal or Hadad survived the Assyrian invasion, both in the Aramean capitals still under his rule and in contractual coalitions with the gods of the Assyrian empire. We do not find in Aramaic sources the idea of a united people of Aram as the people chosen by the (one and only) god Baal/Hadad.

At the end of the eighth century (720, 701 BCE), and again in the early sixth century (587/597 BCE), Israel (Samaria) and Judah (Jerusalem) would have followed essentially the same course as their neighbors. This was, indeed, not inevitable, but still quite natural and normal. What was the usual reaction in such situations? At the end of the eighth century BCE, prophets of the patron god YHWH in the kingdom of Israel probably saw destruction coming and then began their lamentation, while prophets in the kingdom of Judah, in the name of YHWH

no less, desired this destruction for Aram and Israel alike, who had conspired against Assyria and Judah. In this view YHWH of Judah and Jerusalem—with the help of the Assyrians and the god Ashur—was triumphant over Hadad of Damascus and YHWH of Samaria. Once the downfall of Israel had occurred, however, northern calamity meant danger for the south. Accordingly, Judah probably came to terms with Assyrian rule as soon as possible, which persisted until Assyria's own downfall and the ensuing campaigns of Babylon at the end of the seventh century BCE. Ultimately, the same events befell the kingdom of Judah.

Yet, as we can see in the biblical tradition and especially the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible, other interpretations of the historical events and reactions also emerged following the fall of the northern kingdom. These included the relationship between Israel and Judah, which had the same patron deity, YHWH. During the monarchic period, YHWH and other deities manifested themselves in any number of guises, whether YHWH of Samaria or YHWH of Teman and probably YHWH of Judah and Jerusalem as well. It is quite understandable, then, that Israelites and Judahites would have waged wars and formed coalitions together in his name. With the downfall of the northern kingdom, however, the Assyrians defeated YHWH in Israel but did not conquer him in Judah.

Though not impossible or unusual, this constellation of events proved incomprehensible for some, leading to a reconsideration of YHWH's relationship to Israel. The nascent prophetic tradition (namely, Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos) provided an explanation (Kratz 2015c). For this tradition, YHWH himself bears responsibility for the liquidation of his kingdom and his people, and this assertion in turn triggered the search for reasons in Israel's own behavior.

From the usual prophetic premonition of catastrophe, the biblical tradition developed a notion of retribution, the total judgment that YHWH would enact. From the usual lament over tumultuous circumstances came the denunciation and exposition of a judgment already effected in Israel but still impending for Judah. Due to the deep impression left by Israel's downfall and the prospect of Assyria's imminent southward expansion, the conception of YHWH's singularity and the people's oneness first emerged, at least explicitly, in the prophetic tradition and thereby overcame the historical and political opposition between Israel and Judah. In other words, the end of the kingdom of Israel was the beginning of "Israel" as the people of God in biblical tradition.

Proclaimed by the prophets in the name of YHWH himself, absolute judgment fell upon Israel (and Judah) so that the God of Israel could in fact survive. But what about the Israelites who had survived the catastrophe and resided in either the former territory of Israel (now the Assyrian province of Samaria) or in the diminished kingdom of Judah, where the patron deity YHWH continued to receive veneration? For those northern Israelites, biblical tradition



was forced to find a future for YHWH and his people beyond the existence of the monarchy. Revealed by the prophets and then projected onto both kingdoms’ prehistory, that future was found in the unity of YHWH and the unity of his people. Although—or perhaps because—such a theological ideal never actually converged with historical reality, biblical literature stressed it all the more. Based on the prophetic message of an abrogated relationship to the divine, a foundation narrative for the people of YHWH—a *historia sacra* or “sacred history”—came into being. It was that relationship that helped achieve a positive perspective on the future.

To this end, individual narratives from the diverse domains of tradition and different times were all collected within Israel and Judah, and consolidated into distinct narrative cycles and historical works. In the process, disparate elements were transformed into a coherent narrative of YHWH’s history with his people, Israel. Three narrative works bear witness to this development, which provided hope not only for the future but also for the present. Likely formed—as an outcome of the eighth century and the prophetic tradition—over the course of the seventh century BCE, each offers a legend of Israel’s origins that also clarifies its relationship to Judah: the legend of the kingdom’s beginnings and those of the Davidic dynasty in 1 Sam 1–1 Kgs 2, the pre-priestly primeval and patriarchal narratives in Gen 2–35, and the exodus-conquest narrative in Exod 2–Josh 12. In this way, the myth of a united kingdom and of a united “Israel” before that kingdom were born (see Kratz 2000 [2005]; 2015a, 79–82, 112–14).

As already mentioned, all of this is rooted in the prophetic tradition of the Hebrew Bible. How did this tradition, in which the idea of biblical Israel first appeared, come into being?

### 3. REMNANTS OF ISRAELITE AND JUDAHITE PROPHECY

The existence of prophetic books in the Hebrew Bible is surprising in certain respects. As far as we know, prophets in the ancient Near East did not write books (see Nissinen 2003; Stökl 2012; Kratz 2011; 2015c, 11–17). Once they had received their oracles, they conveyed them (either orally or in writing) through the medium of a professional scribe. Most of their oracles are lost forever; just a few were retained in letters and inscriptions and conserved in the royal archives. We know of them only through accidents of archaeology, which has brought them to light again, just like the Lachish ostrakon no. 3, which quotes an authentic Judean prophetic oracle from around 587 BCE: “take heed, beware!”

With rare exceptions (such as the Neo-Assyrian prophecies and the Balaam texts from Deir ‘Alla), a formal prophetic literature never clearly developed there. With the decline of the ancient Near Eastern monarchies and their archives and inscriptions, the prophetic tradition also regularly came to a halt. All that has survived is the religiohistorical phenomenon of ancient Near Eastern prophecy,

which sprang up recurrently at various times—mostly times of crisis—and in various places in the Syro-Mesopotamian area.

The situation in the Hebrew Bible is different (see Kratz 2011; 2015c; 2016). Here, too, we find a few remnants, mostly fragments, of authentic prophetic oracles from the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. There is a debate in scholarship about what is an authentic oracle in the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible and what is inauthentic and comes from later scribes. In fact, we have to admit—and this is more or less consensus in scholarship—that we do not have direct access to the *ipsissima vox* (the authentic voice) of the biblical prophets at all. Their utterings—spoken in each certain time for an individual historical situation—are transmitted in written form and in the form of prophetic books, which were not written by the prophets themselves but by later scribes.

This began with scribes picking up and writing down some of the prophets' oracles, but adding interpretation to these oracles as well. Over time, scribes added more and more material within the framework of prophetic scrolls. Thus, the main question is not what might be inauthentic or a later addition but what can be proven as possibly authentic by means of internal literary analysis and historical analogy with ancient Near Eastern examples of prophetic oracles.

Some major criteria are form and genre (*Gattung*) of an oracle. Another important criterion is the conceptual question of whether or not an oracle fits with the political and social system of its time—even if it criticizes some grievances or is concerned about a coming military defeat. In other words, whether it is trying to stabilize this system or if it is working with a later conception such as the “prophecy of doom,” the fundamental idea of the scribal tradition in the prophetic books according to which God (YHWH) himself, who once was worshiped for having established this system, is now willingly acting against his own people and destroys this political and social system.

Using the critical tools of analysing prophetic books, we thus find a few salvation oracles from the prophet Isaiah, which announce the downfall of Judah's northern enemies, Aram and Israel, originated at the time of the so-called Syro-Ephraimite War, around 730 BCE (Isa 7:4, 7–9; 8:1–4; 17:1–3). The same kind of prediction came from the prophet Nahum almost a century later, with reference to the downfall of Assyria. Oracles from both fronts of the Syro-Ephraimite War seem to have entered Hos 5:8–11. Genuine words of the prophet Hosea were collected in Hos 6:8–7:7 to bewail the imminent destruction of the Israelite kingdom, which came to pass in 722 BCE. The same incident occasioned parables (Amos 3:12; 5:2, 3, 19) and lamentations (Amos 5:18; 6:1ff; cf. 3:12; 4:1; 5:7) from the prophet Amos. These oracles, which are preserved only fragmentarily, portray the end of Samaria as ineluctable, regardless of whether they originally bemoaned and hoped to deflect it (from an Israelite perspective) or welcomed and, in a certain sense, helped to bring it about (from a Judahite perspective).

From the standpoint of those immediately affected come the oldest words of the prophet Micah in Mic 1:11–15, which probably reflect the Assyrian invasion of Judah around 701 BCE. The same is true for the original words of Jeremiah, which consist of lamentations about Judah's destruction in 597–587 BCE, reflecting the prophet's fullest and innermost sorrow (Jer 4:7, 11, 13, 19–21; 6:1, 22–23). In these "jeremiads," Jeremiah speaks, not YHWH. Utterly terrified by what he sees and hears befalling Judah, Jeremiah only hints at the cause. Clearly, though, a threatening war machine—the ominous "enemy from the north"—is marching toward Jerusalem, not the deity YHWH who wants to punish them for their transgressions.

Zephaniah's oracle on the "day of YHWH" (Zeph 1:14–16) is quite similar and aligns with the lament of Jeremiah. This oracle is rooted in the ancient Near Eastern tradition of hemerology, a cultural practice of connecting the success or failure of actions and events with favorable or unfavorable days of gods. Thus, the oracle says that it is the time of wrath and anger (and not the time of salvation), but gives no reason or explanation. It describes the situation as it is, maybe in order to conciliate YHWH and motivate him to stop his wrath and the disaster that is occurring.

When all was said and done and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were destroyed, the prophets lost their social setting and with it their significance. A few did speak on occasion. Some, like Hananiah (Jer 28:10–12), maintained the tradition and told of triumph over the enemy in the name of the God YHWH. Others raised their voice again only when the new rulers of the land and keepers of the temple became clear. Dated to the second year of King Darius (presumably Darius I), two oracles have survived that call for reconstruction of the temple and announce the advent of YHWH's glory (Hag 1:1, 4, 8 and Hag 1:15b+2:1, 3, 9a). During the time of the Second Temple, we hardly hear of prophets any longer, though the absence in the sources does not necessarily indicate an absence in reality (cf. Neh 6:7, 10–14; Zech 13).

These are just a few examples of the fragmentary remnants of authentic oracles from prophets in the two kingdoms and later provinces of Israel/Samaria and Judah/Yehud. How did they find their way into the prophetic books and what was their contribution to the construction of biblical Israel?

#### 4. THE BEGINNINGS OF THE PROPHETIC TRADITION

A good example of how prophetic oracles became a prophetic book and shaped the notion of biblical Israel is Isa 8 (for what follows see Kratz 2011, 49–70; 2015c, 40–45; also de Jong 2007; 2011; for a different view, see Williamson 2013). At the beginning stands a rather cryptic prophetic slogan, dating to the end of the eighth century BCE: "The spoil speeds, the prey hastens," with which

YHWH entrusted Isaiah of Jerusalem (Isa 8:1, 3). This slogan derives from Egyptian military rhetoric of the Eighteenth Dynasty, where we find two imperatives *'is h'k* 'haste, make prey' used as nouns (Morenz 1949); see, for example, in the Biography of Amhose of Nekheb relating the Nubian rebell (Hallo and Younger 2003, 6): "His majesty carried him off as the prisoner of war, and all his people being *easy prey*." In Isaiah the expression promises Judah a victory over its enemies, a coalition of Aram and Israel.

The prophetic slogan was transmitted in two different scenarios. Once it appears as the inscription on a tablet that Isaiah is to prepare: "Then YHWH said to me, Take a large tablet and write on it in common characters, 'The spoil speeds, the prey hastens'" (Isa 8:1). The writing on the tablet is a symbolic act that wants to make the message public and at the same time has a magical function bringing the message into reality. In the following scene, the same prophetic slogan appears in connection with the birth of a child: "And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then YHWH said to me, Name him 'The spoil speeds, the prey hastens'; for before the child knows how to call 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away by the king of Assyria" (Isa 8:3–4).

These two scenes support the policy of King Ahaz, who, as we know from the books of Kings, appealed to the major power, Assyria, for help against the coalition of Aram and Israel and paid tribute to it (2 Kgs 16:5, 7–9). The prophet indicates that the liberation of Jerusalem from its northern enemies through Assyria is YHWH's work. In the present text of Isa 8:1–4 the two scenes are narrated one after the other and are connected by the shared expression. The first-person report by the prophet—most likely the same Isaiah who gave the book his name—conforms to what one would also expect from any ancient Near Eastern prophet. If we had only these four verses, it would never occur to anyone to think that they formed the oldest part of the book of Isaiah and represent the beginning of the idea of biblical Israel.

By way of comparison we may take an example from ancient Near Eastern prophecy, an oracle of the god Dagan of Terqa, which similarly occurs three times in letters from the archive from the Old Babylonian city of Mari (see Nissinen 2003, 28–29, 30–31, 34–35). It reads: "Beneath straw water runs." The saying is directed against an alliance of the king of Mari with the king of Eshnunna, a city on the Tigris. It is repeated in a varying form by three prophets who had appeared at the court of Mari, as a warning against the alliance. The first derives from it an exhortation to the king to obtain another oracle first. Second, a prophetess finds in it the political advice that the king should mistrust the king of Eshnunna and his flattering speeches. Finally, the third promises the king of Mari unequivocal victory. There is no difference in the substance: Dagan of Terqa desires peace, not through an alliance but rather through victory. But the prophets, or the letter writers who forwarded the prophets' words, formulated the divine message (except

for the basic metaphor "Beneath straw water runs," which occurs in all three versions) in various ways—in their own words as much as in those of the god Dagan of Terqa. As far as we know, no prophetic book arose from this.

Isaiah's saying "The spoil speeds, the prey hastens," in contrast, became the starting point of a prophetic writing. The two scenes of the first-person report, which prophesy that Judah's enemies will fall to Assyria, take on a surprising twist in what follows:

YHWH spoke to me again: Because this people has refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently, and melt in fear before Rezin and the son of Remaliah, therefore, YHWH is bringing up against it the mighty flood waters of the River, the king of Assyria and all his glory; it will rise above all its channels and overflow all its banks; it will sweep on into Judah as a flood, and, pouring over, it will reach up to the neck. (Isa 8:5–8)

The "River" is the Euphrates; its "mighty flood waters," which "overflow all its banks," are the Assyrian armies, which are marching from east to west and from north to south. After Damascus and Samaria, they will reach Judah and Jerusalem themselves. What has happened here?

The text is evidently formulated in hindsight. It presupposes that the original prophetic saying has come true and that Assyria has overrun the enemy in the north. The tribute to the Assyrian king must therefore have paid off, ensuring the liberation of Judah from its northern enemies. This must have been how the king and the majority of Judeans—presumably including the prophet Isaiah—took the announcement of the end of Samaria in 732 and the end of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE, at least as long as the kingdom of Judah still stood.

But the scribes who made the first edition of the book of Isaiah saw it differently. For the original oracle of Isaiah, the end of the kingdom of Israel primarily meant that the God of Israel—YHWH of Samaria—and his institutions had fallen to the Assyrians. Responsibility for this event lay with the God of Judah—YHWH of Jerusalem—in whose name Isaiah had uttered the oracle "The spoil speeds, the prey hastens." Yet after 722, and especially in 701 BCE, when the threat arose that the Assyrian armies would advance on Judah, the scribes—against Isaiah's original intention!—drew the astonishing implication that YHWH had determined judgment not only against Israel but also against Judah and Jerusalem. They held fast to the God of the prophet, and as a consequence gave up not only on the enemy in the north but also on their own people in Judah.

Thus, the violent impression made by Assyria's progress into Syria-Palestine resulted in the fact that the scribes who were responsible for the codification and transmission of the prophetic tradition saw less significance in the local differences and rivalries between Israel and Judah. Most scholars assume that there was a natural sense of a (genealogical, religious, or political and social) unity between

the two monarchies of Israel and Judah long before the destruction of Samaria in 720 BCE, dating from the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries BCE or even earlier (see Weingart 2014; Crouch 2014). This assumption, however, has no other basis than the biblical narrative about the twelve tribes chosen by YHWH as the people of God and passages in the prophets related to this narrative. Therefore, if there is no other (external) evidence for such a common sense of unity (*Gemeinbewusstsein*), we cannot easily argue on the basis of this assumption. In fact, I see no evidence for it. Thus we have to look for the factors, which led some of the intellectual elite in Israel and Judah (not all of them and certainly not the whole population, as usually suggested) to the conclusion that Israel and Judah are to be treated as a unity.

The explanation offered here is the common experience of the political events under Assyria, combined with reflection of the fact that both Israel and Judah worshiped the same deity and suffered the same fate under this God. In YHWH of Samaria and YHWH of Jerusalem the scribes discovered the same God, and in Israel and Judah they discovered the one people of God, which elsewhere in the original composition of Isaiah is called “Israel” (Isa 5:7; 9:7). That is how the people “Israel” came to be the object of “the language of faith” throughout the Hebrew Bible. The prophet of salvation—the historical Isaiah—became in biblical tradition a prophet of judgment, whose book has a single motto: “If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all” (Isa 7:9; cf. 30:15).

Thus the transition from prophetic oracle to prophetic book is connected with a far-reaching reinterpretation of the historical prophet in the biblical tradition. This reinterpretation explains the downfall of both kingdoms—first Israel in 722 BCE, then also Judah in 587 BCE—as an act of God, his judgment on his people. Correspondingly, the books of the prophets in the Hebrew Bible contain almost exclusively prophecies of judgment. And even where the books speak (once more) of God’s salvation (as, for example, in the second half of the book of Isaiah, Isa 40–66), the act of salvation is always preceded by divine judgment. But even the proclamation of the end implies a new beginning: it forces a rethinking of the future. God’s judgment on his people, and the faith that the prophets of the prophetic books demand, set new standards for the people of “Israel” in relation to God as well as among human beings.

Any number of examples might be given for these new standards set for “Israel” by the prophetic books. Just two will have to suffice here: Hosea’s criticism of the cult and Amos’s social criticism (see Kratz 2011, 273–379; 2015c, 45–50). Only a few fragments have survived from the authentic oracles of these two historical prophets, dating to the final years of the northern kingdom of Israel (the end of the eighth century BCE; see section 3 above). These fragments—which would have been immediately comprehensible in their own day—no longer make it possible to judge whether they originally related (in the interests of Israel) to a survival of the northern kingdom or (in the interests of Judah) took their stand

against the enemy in the north. The biblical tradition, as preserved in the books of Hosea and Amos, set this lack of clarity aside and discovered in the oracles of both prophets an accusation against, and judgment on, "Israel," understood to mean the one people of God. In the reasons it offers for the disaster, however, the tradition gives different accents to Hosea and Amos.

In the book of Hosea the people are reproached for a false cult. YHWH's dictum is: "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings" (Hos 6:6). It is not obvious from this what was "false" in the Israelite cult or why YHWH suddenly no longer wanted the usual sacrifices. The later scribes explained the matter by implying that it was not YHWH who was worshiped in the Israelite cult but Baal and the "other gods," so that the sacrifice was therefore not acceptable to YHWH. At any rate, YHWH demands more than regular sacrifices and thus puts the relationship between God and people, founded on and mediated by the cult, on a new footing. What is demanded is complete commitment to God and the knowledge of God, which renders everything else of secondary importance. This does not lead to a new ordering of worship or community; yet the demand does have in it the potential to relativize traditional religious norms, if not to destroy and then remake them, with divine rather than human needs in mind.

In the book of Amos, social critique dominates. This has been attached to the prophet's old metaphors, which originally simply foresaw a great disaster coming on Israel: "As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel be rescued" (Amos 3:12). In other words, they will *not* be rescued but will be totally consumed by the lion. Attached to this is a saying that was originally directed only against the upper class in Samaria; it has now been generalized and turned against the people of Israel as a whole: "As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who live in Samaria be rescued, with the corner of a couch and part of a bed"—as if all Israelites spent the whole day lolling on divans. In order to make it quite clear who has brought on this disaster—and that it is a punishment from God—the tradition adds a word of judgment that is directed against the material basis for the evil: "I will tear down the winter house as well as the summer house, and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall come to an end, says YHWH" (Amos 3:15).

What on the face of it seems just a small-scale polemic against luxury turns out, on closer inspection, to be an innovation in social and legal history. The social and legal inequalities that have always existed and always will exist come to be explained as the reason for YHWH's judgment, and this turns them into sins of the whole people of biblical "Israel" against God. "Justice and righteousness" (Amos 5:7, 6:12; cf. Isa 5:7) become God's main demand, which he makes primarily for himself but also for human beings among themselves—through the

prophets and, later, in the law of Moses. We cannot derive from this a comprehensive domestic reform program and foreign policy in order to solve the problems of this world. Yet, presented with a divine demand, the old standards of justice and righteousness in the human polity acquire a higher value and become a possible means of changing the world: “No one can serve two masters.... You cannot serve God and Mammon” (Matt 6:24; see also Luke 16:13).

## CONCLUSION

Our objective here has not been to give a full picture of the phenomenon of prophecy in Israel and Judah and the growth of the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible (on this, see Kratz 2015c; 2016). Rather, we explored how the notion of biblical Israel first appeared in prophetic literature and how this idea emerged (Kratz 2015b, 274–76). Here, a remarkable metamorphosis took place: the end of the kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE became the “end of my people of Israel” (Amos 8:2), including Israel and Judah. This was the starting point for the biblical tradition in the prophetic literature as well as in the narrative books, the legal tradition and finally also the poetic literature of the Hebrew Bible. The prophetic discourse on “Israel” was followed by the biblical narrative, the *historia sacra*, which (re)constructed the history of this people of “Israel,” God’s people. Both prophets and narrative were finally followed by the Mosaic discourse, which spelled out the prophetic standards of justice for biblical Israel in terms of the divine law.

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## Israel and the Jerusalem Temple in the Time of Two Kingdoms

*Daniel E. Fleming*

Nonbiblical sources make it clear that two kingdoms occupied the highlands of the southern Levant during the ninth and eighth centuries BCE, matching what the book of Kings identifies programmatically as Israel and Judah. The oldest of these texts (853 BCE), from the annals of Assyria's king Shalmaneser III, names the more northern realm Israel, as do two later ninth-century texts, the Mesha inscription from Moab and the Tel Dan inscription from the king of Damascus. Only the Tel Dan text names the southern kingdom at all, calling it the House of David, rather than Judah, a name first attested outside the Bible in late eighth-century references from the Assyrian annals (Tiglath-pileser III, "Jehoahaz of Judah," 734; Cogan 2008, 56). Eighth-century Assyrian texts abandon the name Israel in favor of the capital Samaria, or the House of Omri, taken from what the foreign power took to be a founding royal house.

The name Israel thus appears to have been the primary designation for the northern of the two kingdoms in the mid-ninth century, while it remains less clear what the southern realm could be called at this time. Based on the nonbiblical texts alone, there is no indication that the two kingdoms had a common origin, though the king of Damascus addresses only these two by name in the public text he set up at Dan (lines 7–9).

The Bible takes for granted that Israel and Judah belonged to a single people from which the northern kingdom took its name. More narrowly, it launches a history of the two kingdoms in 1 Kgs 12 with an explanation of how the united Israel was split in two under Rehoboam son of Solomon. The chapter tells how he was forced to take refuge in his Jerusalem capital, where he could fend off any attempt to restore unity by his removal and execution. The same event appears to be recalled in an eighth-century text that has Isaiah declare to Judah's king Ahaz, "Yahweh shall bring on you and on your people and on your father's house days that have not come since the day Ephraim departed from Judah" (Isa 7:17). While

the lengthy narrative devoted to Saul, David, and Solomon (1 Sam 1–1 Kgs 11) takes for granted that Israel is the people ruled by these first kings, its authors write from a Judah-oriented perspective and in keeping with a long tradition that every king must be descended from the line of David. We are thus left with a potential tension between biblical texts from Judah that insist on an original unity between the two kingdoms under David and external evidence that leaves the relationship an open question.

In recent decades, one solution to this problem has been to conclude that the name Israel could not have been used in the Jerusalem-centered kingdom during the ninth and eighth centuries, when the name was identified solely with its northern neighbor (Kratz 2000; Levin 2000). The success of this approach requires explanation of two main textual obstacles: the complex and many-layered account of David in 1 and 2 Samuel; and the oldest material from the book of Isaiah, which appears to have been composed while the northern kingdom still stood or had only just fallen.

David's kingship is defined above all in terms of Israel, with references to rule over Judah relatively marginal (Leonard-Fleckman 2016, 115–17); and in Isa 8:14 the prophet speaks of two extant kingdoms as “the two houses of Israel” (Williamson 2011). In order to remove all association with Israel from ninth- and eighth-century Jerusalem writing, David's southern activity and eventual brief rule over Judah must be given priority in the composition of 1 and 2 Samuel (Kratz 2005, 174–82; Römer 2005, 91–96; Wright 2014), and all references to Israel in Isaiah must be located after the northern kingdom fell (Becker 1997; Kratz 2006).

These solutions have gained considerable traction, yet they demand interpretations of the biblical material that are not the most straightforward. Their plausibility depends also on a negative assertion: that the name Israel would have made no sense if applied to the people of the Jerusalem-centered realm of the south as long as it could still identify the northern kingdom. This challenge is both serious and problematic, and it calls for more extended investigation. It is no longer possible to regard the core David narrative as a work that was constructed from near-eye-witness accounts (cf. Halpern 2001), a perspective that had long provided scholars with an easy explanation for Jerusalem's identification with Israel. If we set aside the David material as a problem unto itself, the notion of two “houses of Israel” in Isa 8:14 could be explained by other settings, given the frequent dominance of Israel over the Jerusalem-centered kingdom (Konrad Schmid, oral communication). The northern kingdom's later power over its southern neighbor, however, does not explain David's identification with Israel in the books of Samuel and the tale in 1 Kgs 12 that the two kingdoms were created by what Judah regarded as secession of the north.

Yet if identification of Jerusalem with Israel could go back to a time when it served as the capital of a kingdom by that name, how could the name have remained alive in that setting once the body politic of Israel had rejected rule by

David's descendants? "What share do we have in David, or inheritance in the son of Jesse? To your tents, O Israel" (1 Kgs 12:16). In the Bible, we have no access to the royal ideology of David's line at Jerusalem in the late tenth and ninth centuries, except perhaps in early portions of the David narrative of 1 and 2 Samuel. It is impossible to know what the Jerusalem-centered kingdom under Rehoboam and sons would have been called in its early stages.

One peculiarity of the narratives linked to the first kings at Jerusalem is the association of Yahweh's temple with Solomon rather than David. One explanation for this oddity, again perhaps too obvious in its simplicity, is that the temple was indeed built under Solomon, providing a distinct repository for identification of Jerusalem with Israel. The object of this essay is to explore possible traces of communal worship at Jerusalem in biblical writing that could have carried with them a connection with the name. In particular, on some occasions, the people who gathered to worship Yahweh may have done so as Israel.

## 1. ISAIAH IN THE EIGHTH CENTURY

One ideal biblical location to pursue perspectives from Jerusalem in the eighth century is the book of Isaiah. The book is layered with generations of scribal care, built upon stories and poetic pronouncements associated with a man called Isaiah son of Amoz. Some portion of the material in Isa 1–39 addresses settings where two kingdoms are still in play (e.g., in chs. 6–8) and where the Assyrian power overshadows the land (e.g., in chs. 9–10, 30–31, 36–38). Other texts show no sign of concern for the Babylonian defeat and deportations that are central to Isa 40–55, no sign of the language and ideas typical of that material, and nothing that points clearly to even later adjustments. For example, the song of the vineyard in 5:1–7 and the woes of 5:8–24 are often attributed to the general setting of the late eighth century. While the dates of composition for individual texts in Isaiah must be considered with caution, these parts of the book offer glimpses of the ideas and terminology available to people of the southern capital when a northern kingdom was still active or recently dismantled by the Assyrians.

Isa 6 begins with a first-person vision dated to the death of Judah's king Uzziah (ca. 736?). The writer sees "Yahweh of Hosts" (*Yhwh šēbā'ôṭ*) enthroned with guardian seraphs stationed around him and the deity himself visible in the temple only through a cloud of smoke, understood to reveal the skirts of his robe. The guardians are calling to each other in constant witness to his ruling presence: "Holy, holy, holy! Yahweh of Hosts! His glory fills all the earth!" (6:1–4). No congregation of human worshipers is named, and the writer expects death to result (v. 5) from this too-intimate contact with a being whose radiant divine presence is unapproachably "holy" (*qādôš*). According to this account, Yahweh was encountered at the Jerusalem temple under this title, the god defined as ruler of the sky, with all its divine population as "hosts" (*šēbā'ôṭ*).

The language of holiness defines the relationship between Yahweh and the humans who would encounter him in his focused temple presence, when the writer is “impure of lips” amidst “a people impure of lips.” His fear is well-founded, yet these lips can be purified by a coal from the temple’s altar, which removes “guilt” (*’āwôn*) and “sin” (*ḥaṭṭā’t*) (vv. 6–7). Although the narrator recounts a solitary vision, the passage reflects the ingredients of worship in the Jerusalem temple: Yahweh among “the Hosts”; the vulnerable yet receptive people who can only make contact with a “holy” god by removal of what is “impure.”

Chapter 7 moves to a third-person exchange between Isaiah, who was not named in chapter 6, and king Ahaz, the successor to Uzziah in Jerusalem during the late 730s. Representing the “House of David,” Ahaz faces an alliance between Aram, the kingdom centered at Damascus, and its neighbor “Ephraim.” The people of Ahaz are only named in the last line of the prose narrative, which recalls when Ephraim departed “Judah” (v. 17). The name Israel is never applied to any participants in this conflict.

A shorter prophecy tale is recounted in the first-person in 8:1–4, with focus on the same hostile kings at Damascus and Samaria, and the tale is followed by first-person poetic reports of messages from Yahweh “to me” in 8:5–10 and 8:11–16. In the first of these, Yahweh promises that Assyria will rise “in Judah” like floodwaters, without reference to the other kingdom. The second enjoins the writer not to follow the people in what they fear, or revere, but to treat only “Yahweh of Hosts” as holy (verb *qdš*, v. 13), the language of worship linked to the Jerusalem temple in 6:3. This is the god who will prove a stumbling stone “for the two houses of Israel” and a trap “for those who dwell in Jerusalem” (or, “the one enthroned” there, v. 14). While Jerusalem and the southern kingdom remain the writer’s immediate interest, Yahweh maintains a claim on two “houses” identified with Israel, a name not applied to the northern kingdom in chapters 7–8. The name Israel is invoked specifically with the demand that both kingdoms worship only Yahweh of Hosts, the god who must be respected as “holy” in his Jerusalem sanctuary.

From this Jerusalem perspective, which stands in both textual and conceptual proximity to the other materials gathered in Isa 6–8 (including the lamented split of Ephraim from Judah in 7:17), the name Israel comes to the fore not to identify kingdoms but rather a people bound to Yahweh of Hosts at Jerusalem, a people unified in spite of political division. The language of two houses does not come from elsewhere in Isaiah or in the Bible and does not indicate a narrative reference to a distant past.

The “house of Israel” appears in the eighth-century prophetic judgments of Amos (especially 5:1, 3, 4, 25; 6:1, 14), but it is also associated with Jerusalem and the people of Judah. While the writings in Jeremiah call out the “house of Israel” and the “house of Judah” together (e.g., 3:18; 5:11), the people of Jerusalem are also confronted as the house of Israel (2:4, 25). In Ezekiel, the basic

audience is commonly addressed as the house of Israel, and it is the house of Israel that profanes the Jerusalem temple by its abhorrent worship, provoking Yahweh's irrevocable withdrawal (8:6, 10–12). In what appear to be Psalms from the second Jerusalem temple, this phrase comes to represent the Jewish congregation gathered for worship, distinguished from a priestly "house of Aaron" and others "who fear Yahweh" (115:12–13; 135:19–20; cf. 118:2–4).

The notion that the people of Yahweh at Jerusalem could be called the "house of Israel" is anchored in practice from the first temple that plausibly goes back to the late eighth century, as exhibited in Isa 5:1–7, the Song of the Vineyard. This elegant poem envisions Yahweh as the writer's "beloved," whose devoted cultivation has failed to produce anything but rotten fruit (v. 2). The wine-maker sheds his metaphorical garb to confront the writer's people directly: "So, (you) residents of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard" (v. 3). Why keep a vineyard with a worthless product? He will let it go to ruin, and as only a divine gardener can do, even command the clouds to withhold their rain (vv. 4–6). The poem concludes with the writer's explanation: "For the vineyard of Yahweh of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his treasured planting" (v. 7). Named by his title for worship at the Jerusalem temple, Yahweh of Hosts regards the population of the southern kingdom as "the house of Israel," the ancient people specified as "two houses" in Isa 8:14.

One more element from the early writing in Isaiah suggests a Jerusalem temple setting as one location where the name Israel could be preserved in the southern kingdom during the late eighth century. With a divine title that becomes emblematic of Isaiah as a book, embraced in the sixth-century composition of chapters 40–55 (e.g., 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14; etc.), the older writing identifies Yahweh by the term that defines the essential boundary between the human and the radiant divine: the "Holy One of Israel" (*qēdōš yiśrā'ēl*). As often the case, it is difficult to demonstrate secure dates for material in Isaiah. One cluster of poetic condemnations that suggests the eighth-century conflict with Assyria, scoffing at hope in Egypt's help against the empire, has Yahweh speak repeatedly by this name (30:11, 12, 15; 31:1). In the earlier collection of "woes" pronounced against the disobedient, the third one (5:18–19) ridicules those who hope "the plans ('ēṣā) of the Holy One of Israel" will come to quick fruition, given the effort they put into "guilt" ('*āwôn*) and "sin" (*ḥaṭṭā'ā*), the same burdens that the writer knows to bring death in Isa 6:7. Independent of the vision in chapter 6, the "Holy One" title in 5:19 reflects the framework of temple worship, and by rendition of "holy" as a divine title attached to Israel, we are given the name of the gathered people who are absent from the temple vision.

These are not the only texts in Isaiah that present Yahweh of Hosts in some relation to Israel with plausible reference to Jerusalem, but they provide the most promising early material from which to draw conclusions. In the early writing from the book of Isaiah, it appears that the name Israel was understood as one way

to identify the people bound to the worship of Yahweh at Jerusalem. This early material does not name the northern kingdom as “Israel” but rather as Ephraim or its capital of Samaria, and the writer appears to take the name from contemporary Jerusalem usage rather than from other writing or lore that has found its way into the Bible.

Nothing in these texts suggests a new and ultimately foreign terminology introduced as a novelty, inspired by a newly arrived northern population. Even if we took “the two houses of Israel” in Isa 8:14 to reflect conditions after the fall of Samaria in 722/720, it still appears to be an extension of the single “house” on display in the vineyard song of 5:7, where it is at home with Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah. Late eighth-century sections in the book of Isaiah preserve a use of the name Israel that belongs to local custom in Jerusalem, not a recent loan from northern refugees.

## 2. THE ASSEMBLED PEOPLE IN TEMPLE WORSHIP

It is one thing to identify references to the local people as Israel in writing from Judah while the northern kingdom still stood; it is another to explain how such independent use of the name survived alongside a separate realm that could likewise be called “Israel.” In Isaiah, the oldest uses of Israel appear in contexts with strong coloring from Jerusalem worship, and this suggests one answer to the above question. We have no access to palace writing that could preserve royal ideology from the ninth and eighth centuries, when kings from David’s line could have cast themselves as heirs to the rule of Israel. The caustic account of division under Rehoboam in 1 Kgs 12 hardly represents the voice of the Jerusalem palace, but it does assume that Israel was the body that rejected rule by David’s line and such an idea could have been maintained in the royal circle.

The Bible, however, may offer more direct evidence for preservation of the name in the practice of the Jerusalem temple. As a name for the ninth-century kingdom and as the identity of a people who fought Egypt in the thirteenth-century Merenptah stela, Israel represented a collective not identified by king or capital. The Bible’s various origins tales account for Israel as a body, never by a ruler. In 2 Samuel, David is understood to have been chosen as king to rule “all the tribes of Israel” (5:1–3), and Absalom undertakes to steal the throne from his father not by direct assassination in a coup from the top but rather by patiently wooing the same tribes of Israel to his side (15:2, 10). Israel is above all the people in joint action, and if we are to find the name in Jerusalem during the ninth and eighth centuries it will be most likely as a body in action.

While both archaeology and biblical writing indicate that Jerusalem long predated David, the Bible understands David to have seized the city from the Jebusites to make it his capital after Israel made him king (2 Sam 5:6–9). In this biblical vision, a move from Hebron (v. 1) to the more northern site placed him at



the gateway to the central highlands of Ephraim and Benjamin, occupying almost the same terrain as Saul at Gibeah.

According to the books of Samuel and Kings, Israel was ruled by a sequence of royal houses, each of which was linked to a new capital. These combinations include: Saul at Gibeah; David and Jerusalem; Jeroboam at Shechem; Baasha at Tirzah; and Omri at Samaria. After Jehu overthrew the house of Omri (2 Kgs 9–10), he kept Samaria as capital, a sign of growing centralization in the northern kingdom. This pattern would have made Jerusalem the capital of Israel under the royal house of David. It was abandoned with the rejection of this family, and only preserved as a separate capital when Rehoboam in effect seceded from Israel, and proved too resilient to remove and execute (Fleming 2012, 293–300).

The Bible preserves two distinct claims regarding the establishment of Jerusalem as a center for the worship of Yahweh, both of which imagine that the Jerusalem-based kings embraced this god as essential to their success. As already observed, the old Jerusalem temple, which Jer 36 and other texts assume to have been adjacent to the royal palace, is said to have been built by Solomon, the son of David (1 Kgs 6–7). The detailed account of temple construction is presented as if the king himself carried out the task (6:1, 11, 14, 21; 7:1), so that it is hard to strip the text of its royal subject (see Hurowitz 1992). Its form does not offer an easy match to the tabernacle of Exod 26–27, most notably the enormous temple cherubim that mark Yahweh's presence without reference to an ark (1 Kgs 6:27–28; cf. Exod 25:18–20).

The finished text in 1 Kgs 6–8 makes Solomon's temple the destination for all the worship traditions otherwise linked to Moses and David. When the temple is opened for use in 8:1–9, the "priests and Levites" serve "the ark of Yahweh" at a "tent of meeting," the ark equipped with cherubim and carrying poles to suit its creation in Exod 25. The basic idea that "the men of Israel" assembled before Solomon at the new temple (v. 2), however, may reflect the conclusion of a building account independent of biblical writing about Moses and David. Solomon is said to have begun building the temple in the month of Ziv and completed it in the month of Bul, using a rarely cited Phoenician calendar of named months (1 Kgs 6:1, 37–38). The assembly in 8:2 is dated by the same calendar to the month of Etanim, a likely survival from an older temple-building text (Cogan 2000, 236–37). The construction text is of uncertain date, but this concluding line would introduce into it the name Israel for the specific purpose of identifying the body assembled to worship at the Jerusalem temple.

In a completely separate tradition, David is understood to have brought Yahweh to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6). The book of 2 Samuel makes this act the conclusion to his consolidation of power. After David is chosen by Israel as its king and takes Jerusalem as his capital, he inflicts defeat on the Philistines, thus clearing the way for genuine independence (5:17–25). Then, the king brings "the ark of God" from Ba'alath of Judah, where it has been ensconced in the house of Abinadab with the

priestly care of this man's two sons, Uzza and Ahio (6:1–3). It appears that this narrative reflects a regular ritual practice, probably an annual procession of Yahweh into Jerusalem (Fleming 2013), and that the text has been joined secondarily to the ark narrative of Shiloh in 1 Sam 4–6. The basic ritual account in 2 Sam 6:1–15 lacks reference to Michal and Saul (vv. 16–23) and likewise has no concern for how the ark will be lodged once it resides in “the city of David” (v. 12).

On its own, the text served to link a longstanding ritual practice with David as the founding king at Jerusalem. It is replete with unique names for participants and places: the house of Abinadab and sons; the threshing floor of Nacon, where Uzzah touches the ark and is killed; and the house of Obed-Edom, where the ark spends three months before David can bring it the rest of the way into the city. Such processional entry from outside a city to celebrate the principal god's residence there has counterparts across the Near East—in the *zukru* festival of Emar in Syria, rites for the storm god in Anatolia, and the *akītu* festival in eastern Mesopotamia, all of which take place at the spring or fall axes of the year.

This ritual account of the ark's procession to Jerusalem brings us back to the language for the community at worship encountered in Isa 5:7 and 8:14. The account concludes, “And David and all the house of Israel were bringing up the ark of Yahweh with shouting and with the call of the horn” (2 Sam 6:15). In the context of the David narrative, where his rule over Israel is central from the moment of his selection in 5:1–3, such a description may be read without remark. But reference to the assembled people for worship at Jerusalem as the “house of Israel” matches what we find in Isaiah and suggests a continuity of language grounded in practice. The account in 2 Sam 6:1–15 is not a temple text and presents a rite distinct from anything else in the Bible, with no evidence that later writers integrated it with other known texts, in contrast to the ark's arrival at Solomon's temple in 1 Kgs 8:1–9. Nothing about David's ark and its bearers evokes the account of Exod 25, as with the priestly porters and carrying poles in 1 Kgs 8:3–4 and 7–8. In general, the biblical ark is associated with movement, and at Jerusalem it is associated with David not Solomon, the establishment of the city as Yahweh's residence without concern for the temple. Psalm 132, the only psalm occupied with the ark at Jerusalem, likewise recalls its movement into the city in the context of David's devotion.

The account of the ark's procession in 2 Sam 6:1–15 offers no clear basis to date it, but it naturally belongs to monarchic Jerusalem in celebration of its founding king. We have no reason to connect it to some external disruption and influence, whether from domination by the kingdom centered at Samaria or from migration after its demise. “The house of Israel” gathers with David himself, the figure who gives his name to the southern kingdom as House of David in the ninth-century inscription from Tel Dan. There is no barrier to locating 2 Sam 6:1–15 in the ninth or eighth centuries, but if it came from the seventh century, the

ideas, terminology, and ritual reference points would still represent longstanding Jerusalem tradition.

It is noteworthy that the most compelling cultic situation of Israel in monarchic Jerusalem appears in a ritual narrative about David and not in the Psalms. One reason for this may be that the book of Psalms does not generally preserve collective or “communal” poems from the monarchic period. The segment devoted to celebration of Yahweh as radiant “king of the glory” in Ps 24:7–10 finally identifies this king as “Yahweh of Hosts” (v. 10), the name of the deity encountered in the Jerusalem temple vision as “holy” in Isa 6:3. The opening hymn in Ps 89 concludes, “Indeed our shield is of Yahweh, and our king is of the Holy One of Israel” (v. 19), the other title familiar to the Jerusalem worship of monarchic writing in Isaiah.

One social location, therefore, for maintenance of the name Israel in Jerusalem and Judah during the period of two kingdoms could have been the gathering of the population for festivals. Such festival assembly need not have been attached to the central temple. The procession of the ark in 2 Sam 6 raises the possibility of a separate and coexisting sacred site in Jerusalem, defined by ark and tent. It is significant that Yahweh is worshiped at the central temple as “of Hosts,” not as “God of Israel” (Stahl 2018). It seems that however important that temple must have been, the worshiping public was not defined by it.

### 3. “ISRAEL” IN DEFIANT JERUSALEM

We began with the question of how the name Israel could have remained alive in Jerusalem during the ninth and eighth centuries, when the separate kingdom to the north could be identified by the same name. Early material in the book of Isaiah preserves the name with two associations, for “the house (or two houses) of Israel” and for Yahweh as “the Holy One of Israel”—not to invoke the god in his temple. The processional festival of the ark in 2 Sam 6 presents “the house of Israel” as the public assembled for religious purpose, yet not at the city’s central temple. All of these monarchic Judah references bring up the name Israel when representing the people as accountable to Yahweh through his presence at Jerusalem, yet in terms not bound solely to the temple. Understood this way, the oldest biblical references to Israel at Jerusalem reflect the continuity of religious practice traditionally traced back to the founding royal house of David.

In 1949, Chiang Kai-Shek, who had led the Republic of China for the past twenty years, withdrew from the mainland to the island of Taiwan, where he set up a government under the same name. The Communists who drove him from the mainland could not follow up their victory by pursuing Chiang to Taiwan and removing him. They defined the new state as the “People’s Republic of China,” so that now there have been two Republics of China for more than sixty years.

In the case of ancient Israel, David is best understood to have ruled this people before a separation that is recalled in two distinct biblical texts: the failure of Rehoboam in 1 Kgs 12; and Ephraim's departure from Judah in Isa 7:17. The placement of Rehoboam and Jeroboam as the first kings of neighboring realms is confirmed by the interlocking chronology of precisely counted reigns beginning with these two in 1 Kgs 14:20–21.

It is not clear what Rehoboam would have called his kingdom based at Jerusalem in the years following his expulsion as king of Israel. Our one non-biblical reference to the southern kingdom from the ninth century calls it the House of David, sharing a form of political naming that becomes typical of Aramaic-speaking entities in Syria during this period. Whatever the reduced kingdom of Rehoboam could have been called, we must consider the most obvious possibility, following a course charted much later in post-World War II East Asia.

Rehoboam could claim legitimate sovereignty over the same people ruled by his father and grandfather, holding onto the name Israel. With the passage of time and the greater power of Jerusalem's neighbor, the southern kingdom required separate identification, which was eventually adopted from the highland region of Judah that ran south from the capital. The people, however, could still be called Israel when assembled in Jerusalem to worship Yahweh of Hosts.

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## Appendix

### Survey of Scientific Methods in Archaeology

*Yair Sapir, with Shani Libi*

#### OVERVIEW

When we talk about science in archaeology we do not mean that archaeology is not itself a science. Rather, the meaning is that it might be prone to a higher degree of speculation and interpretation than natural sciences, as archaeology is like an experiment that cannot be repeated.

In many cases, archaeological research encounters difficulties in its interpretation of finds. Sometimes this is because vital information has been wiped out over time through decay or looting. Other times we are simply unable to date artifacts or architecture by typology due to lack of sufficient information. Other interpretive problems come from lack of clarity in delineating the boundaries of buried sites, understanding ancient technology, and so forth.

When traditional methodologies cannot provide reasonable tools to solve certain questions, we need to apply techniques from other disciplines, including the hard sciences. Besides deciphering specific research questions, these tools can sometimes raise new research questions of which we were not previously aware, offering insights that would not have been revealed by the naked eye.

The use of hard sciences as auxiliary tools for archaeological research is relatively new, and the evolution of archaeology in this respect is only now coming out of its infancy, especially in Mediterranean archaeology. At the beginning, there were sporadic studies here and there, but these were not standard and had little effect on the general field of archaeology. The change began during the second half of the twentieth century, with the advent of radiocarbon dating. The utility of the technique opened the floodgates for numerous studies making use of other hard sciences in order to solve archaeological problems. Today the application of at least some of the hard sciences in archaeological projects is considered standard.

The scientific methods that assist an archaeological project may come from various fields, including physics, chemistry, biology, geology, and computer sciences. These studies generally come as a result of cooperation between archaeologists and natural scientists within the framework of an active archaeological project, either in the field or in the laboratory. Archaeologists are not themselves expected to master all these scientific methods or to be able to conduct the laboratory experiments on their own. Nevertheless, a basic fluency and understanding of the capabilities and limitations for each technique to enrich their studies is quickly becoming the gold standard.

In what follows, we survey a sampling of the scientific methods used in current archaeological research to give the readers a sense of how they work and what kind of knowledge can be gleaned from them. We have chosen to concentrate on methods that are most relevant to the current research in Judah in the eighth century BCE, and will try to make this review as simple and non-technical as possible.

Selected general bibliography: Butzer 1982; Weiner 2010; Goldberg and Macphail 2006; Rapp and Hill 2006; Holliday 2004; Banning 2000; Brothwell and Pollard 2001; Rapp 2009. In addition see *Israel Journal of Earth Sciences* vol. 56 (2007) and Greene and Moore (2010) which give good introduction to many subjects in this section.

## DATING

Dating, whether relative or absolute, is of paramount importance in archaeology. Therefore, a large part of this appendix is dedicated to this issue. Relative dating is usually based on the stratigraphy, namely the inter- and intra-relations between deposited layers and architectural features, and the relation between these to the other remains. When the finds are in good context and can be classified into groups that are related to specific periods, a typology can be established. The most common tool for relative dating in the historic periods is the typology of the ceramic assemblage.

After a sequence of strata has been compiled so that their relative dating is clear, the next step is to tie them to absolute dates if possible. The traditional absolute dating is based on historical texts, ancient inscriptions that are found in sites, and the numismatic finds. In some cases, the absolute dating can be refined based on other types of evidence. For example, earthquake signs from a historically documented earthquake found in the architecture of a roughly dated stratum can give us more exact boundaries for its dating.

Therefore, in the past, most absolute dating was necessarily limited to historic periods. The radiocarbon revolution, along with the other dating techniques that



followed it, changed the field dramatically in this regard—not only for the prehistoric periods but for the historic periods as well. Here we will outline some of the methods most relevant to the historic periods.

#### RADIOCARBON DATING

General references: Aitken 1990; Bowman 1990.

This method is by far the most common dating technique in archaeological research. It is based on the radioactive decay of carbon 14 ( $^{14}\text{C}$ , radiocarbon), and was developed in the middle of the twentieth century by Willard F. Libby.

To clarify the process of the radioactive decay, a very brief introduction to the structure of atoms is required. An atom is composed of a nucleus which includes electrically positive protons and neutral neutrons, surrounded by shells of negative electrons. The nature of the atom is determined by its protons and electrons, but its mass is dependent in the number of the particles in its nucleus (that is, the number of protons and neutrons). Two atoms which have the same number of protons but have a different number of neutrons are isotopes (same nature but with different mass) of the same element.

The element carbon has a few isotopes in nature. The most common is  $^{12}\text{C}$  (six protons and six neutrons), which comprise some 99 percent of all the carbon isotopes. This isotope is stable, which means it is not radioactive. Another stable carbon isotope which is less common is  $^{13}\text{C}$  (six protons and seven neutrons), which comprise about 1 percent of the carbon isotopes. Another isotope of  $^{14}\text{C}$  (six protons and eight neutrons) is relatively rare, only 1 part in a million millions (that is, one in a trillion).  $^{14}\text{C}$  is constantly produced in the atmosphere, by collisions between neutrons from cosmic rays and nitrogen atoms ( $^{14}\text{N}$ , seven protons and seven neutrons), in which a neutron takes the place of a proton, turning  $^{14}\text{N}$  into the isotope  $^{14}\text{C}$ , which is unstable or radioactive. What this means is that after some time the  $^{14}\text{C}$  particle decays to become  $^{14}\text{N}$  again. This happens when one of the neutrons in the nucleus breaks down into a proton and an electron, the latter of which is emitted from the atom. (Radiation is the emission of energy from an atom either in an electromagnetic wave or a subatomic particle.)

Radioactive decay is characterized by exponential decrease in the amount of the initial number of radioactive atoms. Usually, a radioactive decay is described by its half-life, which is the time period in which half the radioactive atoms will decay. Every radioactive element has its own half-life, and for  $^{14}\text{C}$  it is  $5730 \pm 40$  years.

To exemplify what this means, if a charred olive pit contains 1000 atoms of  $^{14}\text{C}$  at the time of the charring, 5730 years later it will contain only 500 atoms of  $^{14}\text{C}$ , and after 11460 years only 250 atoms of  $^{14}\text{C}$  will remain. While the radioactive  $^{14}\text{C}$  atoms decay and become  $^{14}\text{N}$  atoms, the amounts of the stable  $^{12}\text{C}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$

atoms remain unchanged. This phenomenon is utilized for dating, by the measurement of the initial ratios between the carbon isotopes in modern samples, and comparing the ratios to those in samples of unknown dates. The half-life time of 5730 years, along with the continuous formation of the  $^{14}\text{C}$  in the atmosphere, makes it appropriate for dating most archaeological cases.

After its creation in the atmosphere, and like other carbon isotopes,  $^{14}\text{C}$  rapidly combines with oxygen atoms to form carbon dioxide ( $\text{CO}_2$ ).  $\text{CO}_2$  molecules formed with these isotopes are chemically the same as  $\text{CO}_2$  molecules with other carbon isotopes. The  $\text{CO}_2$  molecules dissolve in lakes and the sea water, and are absorbed in plants through processes such as photosynthesis. Herbivores receive their carbon through eating plants, and predators or omnivores from the meat of the herbivores they consume or, if they are young mammals, by nursing. Therefore, all plants and animals have all the various carbon isotopes in their body with similar ratios to those in the atmosphere.

To simplify things, let us assume (for now) that the ratios of the isotopes in the atmosphere are constant over the years, and that there is no mechanism with preference of intake for one isotope over the other. If so, all plants and animals have constant ratios of carbon isotopes in their body tissues. As long as they live, plants and animals constantly renew their carbon and the relative amounts of the various carbon isotopes remain the same. From the moment they die, however, the metabolism stops and the radiocarbon clock starts to tick, namely the unstable  $^{14}\text{C}$  atoms decay without a renewal process.

Organic materials such as charred plant remains are the preferred materials for dating. Inorganic materials, such as plaster and shells can be dated, but they are not preferred since they may have geologic carbon atoms and/or are prone to contaminations that are hard to get rid of. Bones are complicated as they contain inorganic and organic materials; assuming some organic material remains preserved in the bone, this is the required part for dating and it should be extracted before the  $^{14}\text{C}$  analysis begins.

How do archaeologists choose what to test? First, good archaeological context is important in order to date a site or a stratum. But this is not the only consideration. It is also important to consider what kind of information can be gleaned from the dating. Thus, wood timbers are no longer a popular choice, as they were in the past, since they might have been reused over many years and thus the results do not yield a firm date. (Archaeologists call this “the old wood problem”). The best practice, therefore, is to use short-lived organic materials such as twigs, seeds, parchment, hair, fabrics and bones. As organic material hardly ever survives in the Mediterranean climate for thousands of years, a particularly popular choice for dating in Judah is clusters of charred olive pits or other seeds.

Radiocarbon dating used to be conducted by measurement of the radioactive decay activity using a Geiger counter, which counts the number of emitted electrons per time unit and sample weight. Currently, the common radiocarbon dating

is by AMS (accelerator mass spectrometer), which measures the ratios between the carbon isotopes. The measurement results are not a single date but a statistical range of dates BP (Before Present, with “present” defined as 1950). This range is a (Gaussian or normal) distribution curve of a central date with error margins. The error margins reflect either multiple measurements or the known analytic error, which is usually the estimation of the uncertainty reflecting what range of results would have been obtained if the measurement had been repeated many times.

**DENDROCHRONOLOGICAL CALIBRATION.** Dating calculations used to be based on the assumption that the ratio between the isotopes in the atmosphere was always constant. This assumption, however, has proven to be incorrect. Ratios between isotopes do, in fact, vary over time, caused by various natural factors such as fluctuations in the flux of cosmic rays caused by solar cycles, adjustments in the Earth’s temperature and magnetic field, as well as human activities such as air pollution from fossil fuels and atomic weapons tests.

To calibrate the measured results, we make use of dendrochronology, a science that relates to climate studies by studying tree-rings. Many trees produce a ring at the outer part of the trunk every year. The width of the rings is related to the climatic conditions. Due to the variability in the widths of the rings, and since all the trees in a given region go through similar climatic conditions, a unique series of rings is created for every period (like a barcode series).

It is therefore possible to take trees that lived during overlapping periods and create a cross-dating sequence of the “barcodes,” thus establishing a continuous sequence to thousands of years. These rings keep records of the past radiocarbon concentrations and therefore enable the calibration of the measurements. Currently, a good calibration has been achieved going back 28,000 years; dating to 50,000 years can even be done, though with less accuracy and precision. “Accuracy” of measurement refers to the difference between the measured value and the true value. “Precision” is the variation in a series of repeated measurements.

If there were no variations in the ratios of the carbon isotopes, the (ideal) plot of the measured radiocarbon age vs. calendar date would have been a straight 1:1 line. This is what we could hypothetically expect if every year the production and the intake of  $^{14}\text{C}$  by plants was constant. In this case, the results would have the shape of a nicely curved Gaussian distribution. However, the actual calibration curve derived from dendrochronology shows that there are variations in the  $^{14}\text{C}$  production of a general sinusoidal pattern with a frequency of thousands of years, with superimposed wiggles of a few decade lengths.

For this reason, the calculated age becomes more complicated and the wiggles make the measured date more complex, so that it becomes a range or ranges of calendar dates with probabilities. This calculation is done by a computer program, which determines the  $\pm 1\sigma$  range(s), which is the calibrated date with confidence level of 68.3 percent, and the  $\pm 2\sigma$  (95.4 percent). In some cases—

whether due to a unidirectional shift in  $^{14}\text{C}$  concentrations or carbon-intake ratios, or some other factors—the calibration curve is steep, which enables the precision of the dating to be high. However, there are cases in which the calibration curve is effectively flat (usually termed as a plateau), thus the precision is very poor. Such a plateau exists at the years 800–400 BCE, thus blurring the radiocarbon dates of the late Iron Age and the Persian period.

#### TRAPPED CHARGE DATING

Main reference: Grün 2001.

While radiocarbon dating deals mainly with organic materials, sometimes there are no such finds in a good context (or no organic finds what so ever). For example, if the finding is a flint tool or sediments in a terrace. Other cases may be where the findings are particularly ancient and are beyond the range of radiocarbon dating. Thus, we turn to another type of dating technology, one that is relatively new: trapped charge dating.

The trapped charge dating estimates the amount of time elapsed from the last exposure of a mineral to heat or sunlight. Since the formation of the mineral, it is prone to radiation from radioactive elements in its surrounding. In quartz and feldspar, this radiation traps some of the electrons (or their complementary holes, that is, the absence of the electron in its original position in the atom makes a local positive charge) in certain places in the crystal lattice of the mineral.

The amount of these electron-hole pairs depends on the time and the amount of the surrounding radiation. An exposure to sunlight or heat of over  $300^{\circ}\text{C}$  would release the electrons from their trap and reset the mineral, returning it to its original state. This mechanism can be utilized to date the minerals, namely to measure the accumulation of the trapped electrons or the recombination of electron-hole pairs.

Trapped charge dating is actually a family of dating techniques:

- Electron Spin Resonance (ESR) is used mainly for dating of tooth enamel;
- Thermo-Luminescence (TL) is used mainly for burnt flint and for sediments;
- Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL) is used for sediments.

The methods have an accuracy of 5–10 percent, and the range is from a few hundred years to around 100,000 years.

As in every dating method, the contexts that are dated should be as certain as possible. For example, while the OSL method is usually successful for geological and prehistoric sediment studies, its reliability is more doubtful when it comes to historic period test-cases, due to various disturbances that mix the soil. Thus, samples should be taken from secure layers.

## ARCHAEOMAGNETISM

Main reference: Ben-Yosef et al. 2008.

The ancient Greeks were aware of the magnetic force, and they named the magnets after Magnesia (an area in ancient Greek), where magnetized iron mineral was found. The leading theory about what causes magnetization (named Geodynamo) understands the source of natural magnetism to be the movement of the outer (liquid) part of the Earth's core. Since the liquid flow changes over time, the polarity of the earth's magnetic field changes. Records of the magnetic north, taken over the span of a few centuries, show that it changes its direction (that is, the direction of the magnetic north) in an irregular manner and its polarity even reverses (the mean time between reversals is roughly 200,000 years with individual reversal events taking only a couple thousand years).

However, the change in the intensity of the magnetic field is less known, as these measurements have only been taken since the mid-nineteenth century. Yet, the measurements show constant change in geomagnetic field intensity, which relates to the production of cosmogenic isotopes (such as radiocarbon), as it effects the flux of the cosmic rays that arrive in the atmosphere.

Some materials, both geological and archaeological, can record the geomagnetic field. These recorders are rocks, usually volcanic, or fired clay artifacts such as pottery, mud-bricks, and cooking installations. These materials contain ferromagnetic minerals, that is, minerals that are affected by the Earth's geomagnetic field. Each of these minerals has a critical temperature, called a Curie temperature, usually in the range of 300–600°C. Heating of a mineral to above its Curie temperature enables the ferromagnetic minerals to change their magnetic direction, and while cooling to below this temperature, they acquire thermal remanent magnetization (TRM), meaning they acquire the magnetic field of the environment at that time, essentially recording it.

As long as the rock or the artifact stays in situ, both the intensity and the direction can be studied, otherwise, only the intensity remains unchanged. As archaeological contexts can often be dated by radiocarbon or by cultural context, archaeological artifacts are attractive for studies of the magnetic field in the past. Concomitantly, comparison of the magnetic vector with known magnetic fields can provide age constraints on archaeological material with poor dating (e.g., same age implies same intensity).

Another possible application of archaeomagnetism is the study of fired mud-brick walls, for example, in order to understand whether they were fired as a consequence of destruction, where all the bricks are expected to have the same field direction if they remained in situ, or prior to their construction, where the field vectors are expected to have multiple directions.

A unique test case that made use of archaeomagnetic field intensity was conducted in Timna, Israel and Faynan, Jordan (Ben-Yosef et al. 2008). In this study,

copper smelting slag deposits from an archaeological context were studied. Smelting slag deposits are the fast-cooling residue of melted copper ore, which include high amounts of iron oxides. Sometimes these slags contain charcoal, enabling radiocarbon dating of slag layers accumulated one on top of the other. The study found that geomagnetic field intensity fluctuated rapidly over the historic periods. Significantly for dating samples, their study identified a long period of low intensity during the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze periods and a peak around 3000 years ago (during the Iron Age), which enables the identification of contemporary materials that were fired.

## GEOPHYSICS AND REMOTE SENSING

*Shani Libi*

One of the first steps in many archaeological studies, is to identify the locations of past human activities, in order to reconstruct the ancient landscape. While tells (mounds) literally stick-out from their surroundings, other sites are buried below the ground.

Pedestrian survey is a simple and common method for aboveground nondestructive exploration of archaeological remains. While such surveys do identify many sites (on the basis of sherd concentrations or other visible remains on the surface), they have many limitations and often fail to identify other sites, especially loci of nonintensive human activity. Moreover, such a method cannot discover buried features such as walls, caves, etc.

Thus, other methods are required for nondestructive exploration of below-ground remains. For that purpose, archaeologists use sophisticated equipment and geophysical methods that can be widely grouped under the name “remote-sensing.”

Archaeologists in the United States have been using geophysical methods since the 1950s (Rapp and Hill 2006, 110–22). These methods include passive methods and active methods. The passive methods, such as magnetic, micro-gravitational and thermographic, measure existing physical data, while the active methods broadcast waves/fields and measure the physical reflection data (such as seismic, electrical and electromagnetic and ground penetrating radar) (Campana, Dabas and Morelli 2009; Herz and Garisson 1998). Here we will survey only the more commonly used methods, whose efficacy has been proven.

### PASSIVE METHODS

Among the passive methods are the following:

**MICRO-GRAVITATIONAL.** The micro-gravitational method is based on calculations using the earth’s gravitational force to measure soil density. This method is used mainly for mapping layers and locating large hollow spaces.

**MAGNETIC.** The magnetic method measures the magnetic charge in the soil: the ability of the soil to become magnetized and to retain the magnetization of an object after the removal of the magnetic field. This method is not accurate in deep soil and will usually not be effective beyond a depth of one meter. This method is effective if the object being sought is magnetic or if the soil surrounding the object is rich in iron. Mud bricks, for example, can be identified using this method if they have been fired (Hasek, 1999, 17–25; Schmidt 2007). This method is, therefore, effective only at specific sites. A number of other methods are available for measuring the electrical or thermal potential of the soil (Hasek 1999, 8).

#### ACTIVE METHODS

Among the active methods are the following:

**GEO-ELECTRICAL.** In the geoelectrical method, an electrical current is introduced into the soil and is measured upon its return. Most of the differences in the measurements will be caused by the electrical resistance in the area being examined.

There are several configurations for the array of transmitting and receiving electrodes: Wenner—for mapping soil layers; Schlumberger—for detecting lateral changes in resistivity in a horizontal level, et cetera. There are also several measuring techniques, such as VES (Vertical Electrical Sounding) for depth measuring around a specific point, providing a one-dimensional result that is an expression of the resistivity of the soil along the entire depth measured.

Other techniques are:

- Profiling: which provides a soil resistivity value to a certain depth (depending on the spread of the electrodes);
- CVE: Continuous Vertical Electrical Sounding;
- ERT: Electrical Resistance Tomography.

These methods are used on a multi-strand electric line with electrodes, with each one constituting a separate channel. This type of measurement provides a two-dimensional picture, and can be used to create a three-dimensional picture. The advantage of the electrical method is its efficiency even in conductive soil. This method will provide information mostly on the soil layers and the existence of hollows (Gaffney, Gater, and Ovenden 2002, 10; Loke 2013).

**SEISMIC.** Seismic analysis is based on the theory of elasticity, which states that substances with different elastic durability will have different wave frequencies. This method uses acoustics and measures P waves—pressure (initial), S waves—orthogonal resistance/shear (secondary), and surface waves (Rayleigh waves). This system has very deep mapping capability, but with resolution of approximately one meter.

Analysis of the changes in the waves aids in the detection and depth of geological layers and large objects beneath the ground. The findings of this method

are harder to interpret, but it is not limited by wetness as the other geophysical methods are, but rather only by sound (Herz and Garisson 1998, 148–57; Parasnis 1997, 173–345).

There are two main measuring methods: (1) Refraction—the measurement and mapping of the waves in the soil layers and the arrival time of the waves. (2) Reflection—the measurement of the reflection of the waves, and therefore the contrast between the layers in the soil, thus producing data on their geometry and physics. (Herz and Garisson 1998, 148–57; Parasnis 1997, 173–345).

In addition, there is a method called GDT (Geophysical Diffraction Tomography), which uses seismic data measurements, increases their diffraction, and uses the results to create a computerized 3D image of an underground area (Witten 2006, 272–89).

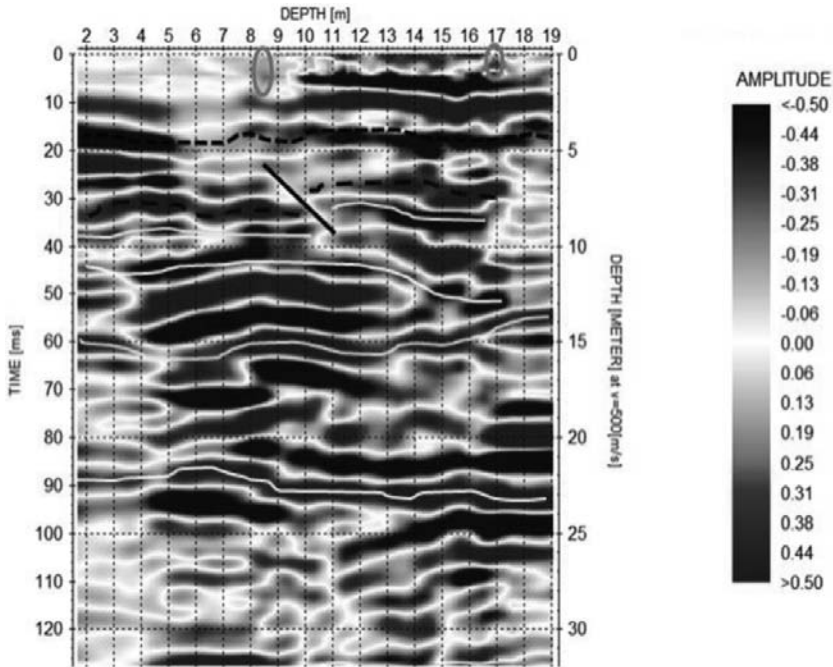
**ELECTROMAGNETIC.** The electromagnetic method is used for measuring underground electrical conductivity, which differs in accordance with the soil content and composition (Herz and Garisson 1998, 157–64). The electromagnetic device consists of an active broadcaster and a receiving coil. The magnetic field is broadcast to the soil, changes over time and creates electrical currents, called Eddy cranes, in the substrata. These currents create a secondary magnetic field that also changes with time. This change is called EMF (electromotive force).

The electrical force is received by the receiver and, using a formula for calculating the differences between the current and the voltage recorded, the electrical conductivity of the subsoil can be calculated, to the penetrated depth (Parasnis 1997, 194–245). Archaeologists use electromagnetic frequency technology, which is more sensitive to objects close to the surface (Herz and Garisson 1998, 157–64). This technology is intended for searching for irregularities, including architectural elements, but relatively large ones.

**GROUND PENETRATING RADAR (GPR).** Ground penetrating radar is based on the broadcasting of electromagnetic waves to the desired area in microwave frequencies, and the reception of the waves returned to the surface (usually using the same antenna). The returned waves are converted into a digital display. This is an active geophysical method and the most advanced of all the geophysical methods.

The GPR system records the changes in the electrical properties in the area being examined, which depend on the dielectric constant of each substance (the relative permittivity or electrical conductivity). These are dependent on the type and structure of the material and its water content. In underground mapping, the amplitude and transmission time of the returned waves is measured, and the type of antenna is selected in accordance with the size and depth of the target object in the area being scanned. The lower the broadcasting frequency, the deeper the penetration (Conyers and Goodman 1997; Conyers 2004, 2009).





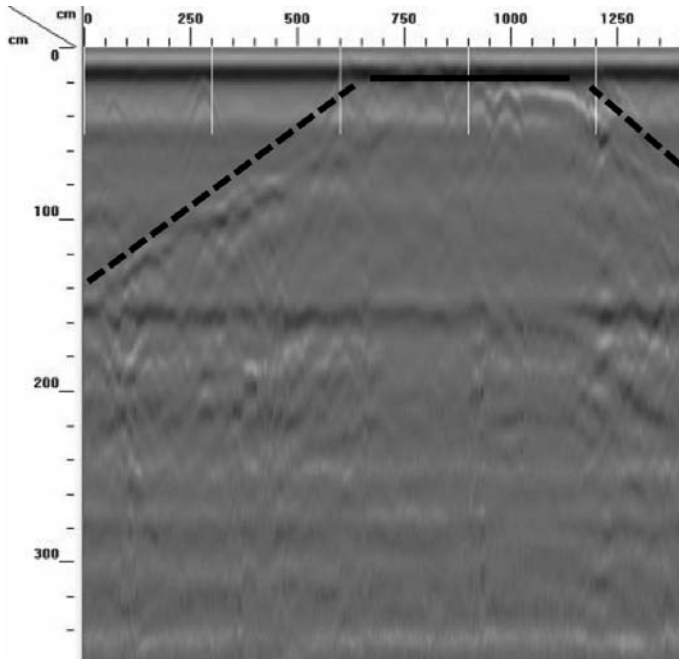
**Fig. 1:** Seismic cross section at Tel 'Eton. Possible archeological elements are circled. The estimated line of the bedrock is marked with a dashed line. Additional testing is necessary to establish the depth data.

Archaeologists use radar for identifying sites (Nobes 1999), hollows (Batey 1987), architecture (Leucci and Negri 2006), various soil layers (Weinstein-Evron, Beck, and Ezersky 2003), et cetera. GPR devices are also faster to use than the other geophysical devices reviewed above.

#### AERIAL AND SATELLITE PHOTOGRAPHY

Remote sensing includes the photographing and mapping of a site using various methods. There are aerial and satellite photographs that use a variety of sensors and platforms, as well as field photography, such as thermal photography (Campana 2009). The mapping of a site is conducted using total station systems, and advanced mapping includes laser point clouds that map an entire area hermetically (Oswin 2009).

Aerial photography includes a variety of options, such as optical, hyperspectral, thermal (IR), radar and Lidar photographs. The sensors can be mounted on satellites or various types of aircraft, which also have an effect on the resolution



**Fig. 2:** Cross section of ground-penetrating radar at Tel Ashdod Yam. The wall is marked with a solid line and the rampart is marked with a dashed line. Used with permission from the Tel 'Eton Excavations. The analysis was made with the help of Geotec.

of the images (Campana 2009; Hadjimitsis et al. 2013; Kvamme 2005; Lasaponara and Masini 2011; Parcak 2009, 13–41; Sarris 2008; Sarris et al. 2013).

Aerial and satellite photographs can be processed, particularly using color presentations. Sometimes color changes provide the contrast in the ground required to assist archaeologists. The processing stages can also include algorithms and linear transformation. Employing an additional sensing method will increase the certainty of the findings (Beck, Wilkinson, and Philip 2007; Beck 2007; Lasaponara et al. 2014; Masini et al. 2008; Parcak 2009, 81–113).

Aerial photography is used mainly for identifying archeological sites and understanding their outlines (Campana 2009; Parcak 2009, 147–73; Salvi et al. 2011), identifying roads in open areas (Fixler 2001; Campana 2009), tracking changes at a site (Lasaponara and Masini 2011) and indicating built-up areas of a site (Bauman et al. 2005).

It is noteworthy that aerial photography is not particularly efficient for identifying the remains of walls and has led to partial success when the remains of

walls above the surface have been covered with fresh soil (Masini et al. 2008). Aerial photography is also helpful in height mapping, which contributes to the stratigraphy of the site (Kedar and Danin 2000, 150–60).

## GEOARCHAEOLOGY

General references: Goldberg and Macphail 2006; Butzer 1982; Walkington 2010; French 2003; Ackermann 2007.

Dirt is the most common substrate found in excavations. While in the past it was treated as a material that disturbs the exposure of the “interesting” remains only, in the past few decades, it is becoming a very important source of data. The sub-field that deals with dirt in an archaeological context is called geoarchaeology. It is the interface of earth science (e.g., geology and soil science) methodologies with archaeology.

Geoarchaeology mainly studies rocks and dirt, the latter of which can be subdivided into soil or sediment. Soil is the outcome of weathering that occurs near the surface and *in situ*, and its formation requires long term stability. Sediments are transported from one location to another by natural or cultural processes, and generally include almost all the matrix of the archaeological layers.

In its widest sense, geoarchaeology may include all the subfields of the archaeological sciences that are used for archaeological research. Here, however, we will deal with its narrower and more common meaning: the combined study of archaeological and geomorphological records and of the processes, both natural and cultural, that alter the landscape as a whole. The main aim of geoarchaeology is to construct integrated models of human-environmental systems and to study both human and natural impacts on the landscape. While it needs to combine support of several other sets of data, a good understanding of geoarchaeology is essential for “reading” the landscape as well as to provide context to the archaeological record.

The archaeological record can (and should) be studied on a number of scales. The largest scale is landscape, which includes sites and their environment; a smaller scale is archaeological layers and fills; and finally, there is the microscopic context. Natural processes and human activities may change the properties of the sediments in various ways, and therefore studying the variability of the sediments has implications for understanding the past. This variability can be traced by measuring parameters that may differentiate between sites and their environment, between loci, dirt-features and layers.

Geoarchaeological research uses various tools and methods, here we will briefly outline some of them, with a look at what substances each method focuses on.

## ORGANIC MATTER

Buried soil horizons are ancient surfaces whose study enables estimation of the climatic conditions during that time interval. Occasionally, buried soils exist in archaeological sites, but their identification can be done only by analytical methods. One of these methods is the analysis of organic matter content. Organic matter originates from decaying biota components. Naturally, the values should be higher at the surface and decrease with depth, and the identification of such trends in deeper strata can indicate a buried surface.

## GRANULOMETRIC STUDY

Granulometric study refers to the study of the texture of the sediments, that is, their grain size distribution (also called texture). A few granulometric methods can be utilized, each with its advantages (e.g., sifting, pipette, hydrometer, and decantation). An assemblage of grains that is dominated by large particle sizes is one that was brought by high-energy such as river transport or by strong winds. In contrast, airborne dust (loess) and slow river flow have finer characteristic particle deposition.

Texture may be studied in sections of an archaeological excavation, in drilled cores, or in sections of a stream channel embankment. It may assist in the reconstruction of the paleohydrology of an area or the wind regime, by determining erosion rates and energy (implied from the size and sorting of the sediments), and to study geomorphic processes that affected a site through time and space.

Analyzing the texture of sediments in archaeological mounds can also have implications for the understanding of the latter's formation. Specifically, texture may explore the composition of decayed mud-bricks that donors the matrix of mounds, and whose source in the environment can also be traced by the texture.

## CARBONATE CONTENT

Texture analysis alone is not generally sufficient for the identification of the source material or for following the changes in mud-features throughout time and space.

Another method that may be used to characterize the sediments is determining carbonate content, which refers to the percent of calcium carbonate in the sediment. The natural deposition of carbonates occurs because of sedimentation in watery environment. Carbonate in the ground may originate from the degradation of limestone rocks, which were formed from skeletons of living organisms. The vertical distribution of the carbonates in the ground depends on natural processes such as leaching. Unlike the texture, carbonate distribution does not change as a result of most human activities such as fire, and therefore may assist in finding the location of source material for mud-features (where the dirt was quarried).

## ALKALINITY AND ACIDITY (pH)

One of the most widely used measurements available to characterize a soil, is the measurement of pH (potential of the H<sup>+</sup> ion). Its simplicity and the speed of its implementation make measuring soil pH a routine laboratory operation. The alkalinity or acidity of the sediments (represented by pH values) is determined naturally by the soil type, but it is affected by some natural agents, such as the presence of carbonates, or bat-guano in caves, or as a result of various human activities that leave salts or organic matter in the ground. Besides the characterization of sediments, pH affects the materials buried in the soil, for example, it may damage charcoal, bones, and metal objects, up to their complete dissolution.

## PHOSPHATE ANALYSIS

Main references: Holliday and Gartner 2007; Holliday 2004.

One of the endeavors that geoarchaeology tries to deal with is to locate the places, type, and intensity of past human activities. Phosphorus (P) is an element common in plants and their remains such as ash, in faunal and human flesh and bones, and also in their waste. In natural soil, the phosphate concentration remains +/- the same along the years, as new plants consume the P of decomposed plants. In loci of human activity, however, the concentrations are expected to be higher than normal, as new materials with high P content are brought there.

When P is added to soil, it quickly bonds with other elements, and a stable chemical compound named phosphate is formed. Compared to other elements that remain from vegetal/fauna/human, phosphate is less susceptible to soil processes such as leaching, and plant uptake, and therefore, when P enters the soil it becomes relatively immobile and accumulates. These characteristics of P make it a sensitive and persistent indicator of human activity, and suitable for geoarchaeological studies in a wide range of sites and environments.

A number of methods have been developed to extract and measure soil P. These methods are related to the environmental characteristics and to the form of P that one looks for. For example, the P that is available to plants and is easily extractable may be used as an indicator of human activity in relatively dry environments. In archaeology, phosphate analysis is used in surveying possible sites of human habitat and their boundaries, and studies of past agricultural practices.

## MICROMORPHOLOGY

Main references: Holliday 2004; Weiner 2010; Goldberg and Macphail 2006.

Micromorphology is a powerful tool for studying soils and unconsolidated sediments in small thin sections, using microscopy. The use of soil micromorphology in archaeological contexts became more mature in the last two decades of the twentieth century. By examining the texture of the sediments that were deposited at specific locations in and around the site, micromorphology provides data that complements other data gathered from the more traditional macro-morphological analyses (above).

The data types that can be obtained from micromorphology are natural processes that are responsible for the formation of the sediment; anthropogenic materials and structural disturbances due to the human activities; insights into the processes that affected the sediments (after their deposition); and occasionally a sequence of events that can be deduced. This method is ideal for the understanding of microstratigraphy, such as looking for signs of trampling.

The limitation of the method is mainly in its imperfect representativeness in relation to a given location: It covers an area of only a few centimeters, while archaeological layers and loci are usually at least on the scale of a few meters. Another limitation has to do with the difficulty of good implementation: an experienced researcher will identify more materials than a beginner, and therefore will provide a better interpretation. In order to improve the interpretation, complementary tools for the identification of minerals can be utilized (such as an electron microscope with an elemental analyzer).

## ARCHAEOMINERALOGY

Main references: Weiner 2010; Pollard and Heron 2008.

In many cases, archaeologists want to identify the minerals that compose the sediments, features, or artifacts. These minerals assist in revealing their provenance and the way in which they arrived at their current location. Besides the identification of the minerals, their spatial distribution in the vertical and horizontal planes may produce information about the activities that occurred in that space and as well as changes through time.

Minerals in archaeological sites are produced in a number of ways:

- Geogenic: Minerals produced by the wearing down of rocks.
- Authigenic: When chemical processes, as a consequence of changes in the surrounding conditions (such as a change in the pH), change the minerals after their deposition; the process is called diagenesis.
- Biogenic: Minerals produced by organisms (e.g., shells and bones).

- Anthropogenic: Minerals produced by humans.
- Pyrogenic: Products of exposure to fire, such as plaster, glass, and pottery.  
(This is really a subgroup of anthropogenic minerals).

The minerals most commonly found in archaeological excavations are quartz and other silicates, clays, carbonates, and phosphates. However, beside these common materials, most of the materials contain very small quantities of impurities (called “trace elements”), which can be measured with high precision methods. The composition of the trace elements in the material may assist in locating the provenance of the raw material.

For both the common materials and the trace elements, the interpretation and identification is done using a comparative library with a large number of previously measured samples with known materials and origins.

Many methods and tools are available for the study of mineralogy, some are non-destructive and some cause (minimal) damage to the material.

#### INFRARED SPECTROSCOPY (FTIR)

Main reference: Weiner 2010.

Infrared spectroscopy is a method with minimal destructive effect on the analyzed substance, as it requires a very small amount of material. It has the major advantage of being able to identify both crystalline and amorphous minerals (as well as many organic materials). When an infrared light beam is transferred through the sample, the photons whose wavelength matches the energy of a molecular bond in the analyzed material are absorbed in it, while photons with other wavelengths pass through. This absorption is expressed as a peak in the wavelength spectrum.

Different materials have chemical bonds in various energies. Therefore, each material has its unique signature, and the peak combinations enable us to identify it. The difficulty with infrared spectroscopy is that the interpretation of the spectra is often complicated, especially when it comes to mixture of minerals.

The nuances of the peaks and their locations (e.g., presence/absence of a peak, peak ratios, location of peak's maxima) help us identify changes in the materials, for example exposure to heat, bone preservation, differentiating between plaster (anthropogenic), and geogenic calcite and more. Due to its very quick measurement time (less than ten minutes from taking the sample to the analysis results) and the small and robust equipment, it may be utilized in the field.

## INSTRUMENTAL NEUTRON ACTIVATION ANALYSIS (INAA)

Main reference: Yellin and Maeir 2008.

INAA is a nondestructive method, as long as the sample is not too large. It works by irradiating a sample with neutrons from a nuclear reactor. The neutrons activate the elements in the sample so that some of them are artificially converted into radioactive elements. These then decay by one of the standard pathways for radioactive decay, which can be measured and analyzed and related to the parent elements. The method requires no pretreatment (as opposed to NAA), and therefore it is relatively rapid and simple.

This method assists in tracing the provenance of archaeological materials, such as pottery. The approach is to compare a large suite of elements in sherds, with those in possible source materials or within a ceramic assemblage and between assemblages (to determine whether one or more source materials were used).

## X-RAY FLUORESCENCE (XRF)

Main reference: Shackley 2011.

X-rays are a high energy (that is, high frequency and short wavelength) form of electromagnetic radiation, in the range between gamma rays and UV. If the energy of the radiation is sufficient to displace a tightly-held inner shell electron when the material is excited with X-rays, the atom becomes unstable and an electron from an outer shell replaces the missing (inner) electron. When this happens, energy is released in the form of secondary X-ray light (a photon with lower energy than the primary incident X-rays) and is termed fluorescent radiation.

Energy differences between electron shells are known and fixed, so the emitted radiation always has characteristic energy, and the resulting fluorescent X-rays can be used to detect the abundance of elements present in the sample. The use of portable XRF (PXRF) makes this method a remarkable tool for the study of minerals in the field, since it is nondestructive, requires little or no preparation of the analyzed material, is fast, and easy to use. However, the samples should be of minimal size (a few millimeters), as only the surface are measured, and it cannot measure elements with low atomic number.



## PALEOBOTANY

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL BOTANY

Main references: Zohary and Hopf 2000; Hastorf and Popper 1988; Weiss and Kislev 2007.

Archaeological botany deals with the identification of plant remains in archaeological contexts and the use of this data to gain new insights on subjects such as economy, food, fuels, climate, ecology, and evolution.

That organic materials would be preserved is not obvious at all. Various organisms, from large mammals through insects, bacteria and fungi feed on organic materials and bring them to deteriorate. Therefore, preservation of organic materials occurs only when environmental conditions inhibit those organisms, such as in very dry environments (e.g., in the Judean desert), frozen environments, or anaerobic environments (e.g., waterlogged or inside thick plaster). In such cases, organic materials, such as seeds, wood pieces, and leather scrolls can be studied in similar ways to modern artifacts, and comprehensive data can be obtained. One of the most exciting examples is the “Methuselah palm,” grown from a 2000 year old seed (Sallon et al. 2008).

The other main pathway for preservation of organic materials is if they become unsuitable for the deterioration agents, most commonly because they have been charred. Specifically, if the charring takes less than ten minutes, or if heating takes place in anaerobic conditions (e.g., seeds inside sealed vessels or within the sediments under a cooking installation), the organic matter carbonizes and becomes charcoal (otherwise it becomes ash).

Even when remains are charred, we can learn about their morphology, such as the identification of species types and their proportions, the relationship between them and other species, and even just their presence or absence. It should be noted that as a result of the firing conditions, there might be differential preservation depending on the type of organic remains, for example, olive pits versus wheat grains.

Botanical remains are usually very fragile and tend to be small. They are usually found using meshes with various hole-sizes. Smaller remains can be found using floatation (as charcoal, as opposed to sediments, float in water). Even when no charcoal remains are visible, microscopic remains may be found in the sediments (see below).

## PHYTOLITHS

Main references: Weiner 2010; Piperno 2006.

While charcoal studies have great importance, some archaeological contexts yield no carbonized plant materials. Nevertheless, this does not mean that no organic material can be retrieved. When plants decompose, it may seem that they vanish completely, leaving no remains. But this may be true only for visible remains. Some microscopic remains may be preserved and these can contribute to our understanding of the archaeological record.

Most plants absorb ground-water, which contains soluble ions. Some of these ions are deposited in cell walls, or between cells, and become minerals (such as opal, calcite and gypsum). These minerals are called phytoliths (from Greek: “plant stone”). In archaeology, most studies deal with the siliceous mineral opal, which preserves well.

When a plant dies and its organic components decompose, phytoliths are sometimes preserved in the original morphology of the cell in which they were deposited. These morphologies can be seen with a light-polarizing microscope or an electron microscope, and thus can be used for taxonomy (identification of the plant species).

The information obtained from this can be used in studies of fuels, food sources, space usage, etc. A good example for that is the phytoliths-rich layers found at Tel Dor, which have been interpreted as degraded livestock dung (Shahack-Gross et al. 2005).

## PALYNOLOGY

Main reference: Jansonius and McGregor 1996.

Another type of microscopic plant remains is pollen (“fine dust” in Latin), an organic material from the stamens of flowers, and spread by winds, insects, or water. Fossilized pollen can remain preserved for thousands of years. The study of pollen is called palynology, and it enables the identification of vegetation in paleo-environments, as plants often produce pollens with characteristic morphologies.

The best conditions for the preservation of pollen are environments devoid of oxygen (e.g., lake sediments) and extremely arid environments. Even in good conditions, the inner part of the pollen does not survive; only the exine or outer coating of the spores is preserved.

Sampling pollen requires in situ sealed contexts (e.g., excavated vessels found in situ, layers of drilled cores), otherwise the specimen may be contaminated by contemporary plants. Pollen extraction requires a chemical preparation procedure and its examination is done using microscopy. A very nice example for the use of pollen in the reconstruction of the past vegetation is the study of the

garden in the palace at Ramat Rahel (Langgut et al. 2013), where pollen extracted from ancient plaster enabled researches to reconstruct the vegetation of this special garden and its environment, including some imported species.

## ZOOARCHAEOLOGY

Main references: Brothwell and Pollard 2001, sec. 5; O'Connor 2004.

Zooarchaeology (or archaeozoology) deals with ancient faunal remains in order to study such subjects as domestication, economy, diet, ecology, and evolution. It also enables the identification of social structure, economic status, culture, and even ethnicity, looking at, for example, butchery patterns or the presence or absence of certain species such as pigs (e.g., Marom et al. 2009; Sapir-Hen et al. 2013).

While microscopic remains can be detected, most fieldwork focuses on macro remains. As the soft tissues of living creatures deteriorate completely (unless special conditions enable their preservation), the only remains will be the skeleton for mammals and shells or external skeleton for invertebrates.

As in mineralogy and botany, reference collections of modern and archaeological bones are essential in order to identify species. We can also obtain the approximate age and the sex of the specimen (by ossification and size of bones respectively).

The identified bones in large collections can be measured in number of identified specimens (NISP), which give the range of all the records of the faunal remains. However, in order to make interpretations, it is much more useful to determine the actual number of animals in an assemblage, which is customarily represented by the minimum number of individuals (MNI), estimated by a bone of which each species has only one (e.g., skull).

The bones may serve as indicators for processes that the deposit or site had been through. For example, bones that went through taphonomy (processes through which the bone is deteriorated, such as breakage by trampling, weathering, or signs of dog teeth) are easily distinguished from bones that were buried immediately.

Fresh bones have three main constituents: The mineral phase (also called apatite), is composed of carbonates and phosphates, and it constitutes some 70 percent of the weight. The organic matrix is mainly collagen, and it constitutes some 20 percent of the bone. The rest is water. As the bone deteriorates, the water evaporates and the collagen disintegrates. Thus, in many cases only the mineral phase remains (though the morphology does not change). This is a problem since the important part for radiocarbon dating and most other analyses such as DNA studies and reconstruction of the paleo-diet of the animal or human (using ratios of stable isotopes) is specifically the organic matrix. Therefore, selection of bones

for such analyses requires not only contextual significance but also pre-screening to choose the “candidates” with the best chances to produce sufficient amounts of clean collagen.

#### ARCHAEOMALACOLOGY

Main reference: Bar-Yosef Mayer 2007.

Archaeomalacology is the study of mollusk shells from archaeological contexts. The shell is the external skeleton of the mollusk, made of aragonite (biogenic calcium carbonate). While in prehistoric ages they were used as beads in ornaments, during the historic periods they may have been used as food or served other purposes, such as currency, musical instruments, construction material (embedded in plaster) and raw material for dyes (such as purple). Occasionally, shells can be used for dating and for environmental reconstruction (as land-snails are sensitive to climatic and other ecologic changes).

#### CONCLUSION: THE STATE OF SCIENTIFIC ARCHAEOLOGY

The use of archaeological sciences has become standard in most archaeological projects, and many scientific methods are used in the service of archeology. Each method has its advantages and disadvantages, which must be examined on an individual basis when considering its suitability for use at an archeological site. Moreover, these methods are scientific aids for the archeologist’s work; a site must always be excavated in order to verify the findings and complete the picture.

The use of “hard” sciences in archaeological projects is growing fast and becoming more and more sophisticated. While before the 1990’s, such studies were very few and sporadic, especially in modern Israel, in current studies the cooperation with scientists from other fields, such as geologists, chemists, and biologists is almost obvious, and there are centers which are dedicated to archaeological sciences. It is hard to imagine an ongoing project that does not use, for example, radiocarbon dating or remote-sensing. The use of such methods opened a new dimension for new research questions that can be scientifically studied, and many of the hottest debates are based on data acquired by these methods. Therefore, archaeologists should be familiar with many scientific methods, at least superficially, in order to understand what problems they can tackle and who they should refer to.

However, the situation far from perfect. The integration between archeologists and scientists from the “hard” sciences is lacking. The common case is that a scholar from the natural sciences joins a project for a specific question such as one that is of their personal interest. Very few integrative studies are carried out.

Most field excavators are lacking in natural sciences expertise, and most archaeological scientists are lacking in the archaeological “language.” Perhaps the most important goal is not to develop new methods, but to establish a common language between the archaeological sciences and the field excavators. The outcome will be a better integration of “hard” sciences in archaeological projects.

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