

The Shephelah in the Iron Age I and Iron Age IIA: A New Survey of the Emergence of the Early Kingdom of Judah¹

Filip Čapek

The heart of the emerging monarchy in Judah should be relocated from the hill country to the lower land regions. The hillside and lowland regions are pointedly more urbane than the highlands.

Z. Herzog and L. Singer-Avitz

Geography is a hidden skeleton of history.

D. L. Adams

I. Changing perspectives on the United Monarchy and Judah during Iron Age I and IIA

Two issues are frequently discussed in relation to Ancient Judah in archaeological research covering the period of Iron Age I and IIA. The first of these concerns the question of the *existence of a so-called United Monarchy*. Older archaeological research and its findings generally overlapped with the biblical texts related to this period. This was also the case with the United Monarchy, which was dated from the end of 11th century BCE and was considered to be a real historical and political state with three kings – namely, Saul, David and Solomon – who ruled successively. Shortly after 930 BCE, the death of the third ruler was followed by a split in the monarchy. The extent of the political entity that is described in biblical texts included vast territories to the north and south, a portion of land beyond the Jordan River, and part of the Coastal Plain to the west. An extensive description of this period is recorded in 2 Samuel 8, which expresses a particular view regarding the territorial expansion of the Kingdom of Judah during the reign of King David:

¹... David attacked the Philistines, and subdued them.... ²He also defeated the Moabites, and, making them lie down on the ground, measured them off with a cord; he measured

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two lengths of cord for those who were to be put to death, and one length for those who were to be spared. And the Moabites became servants to David and brought tribute.³ David also struck down King Hadadezer son of Rehob of Zobah, as he went to restore his monument at the river Euphrates. ⁴David took from him one thousand seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand foot-soldiers.... ⁶Then David put garrisons among the Aramaeans of Damascus; and the Aramaeans became servants to David and brought tribute.... ⁹When King Toi of Hamath heard that David had defeated the whole army of Hadadezer, ¹⁰Toi sent his son Joram to King David, to greet him and to congratulate him because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him. Now Hadadezer had often been at war with Toi. Joram brought with him articles of silver, gold, and bronze...., ¹²From Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, Amalek, and from the spoil of King Hadadezer son of Rehob of Zobah... ¹⁴He put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all of the Edomites became David's servants.

A problem with such a description immediately suggests itself. From a historical point of view, most of the political entities mentioned in this biblical account – such as Moab, Ammon, Edom,² Aram-Damascus, and other territorial states (especially those in the north) – do not appear to have existed until later, i.e., at the end of 10th century BCE at the earliest.³ As a result, traditional descriptions of the United Monarchy have been examined intensively, in terms of evidence of geographical expansion, on the one hand, and on the basis of analyses of the socio-economical capacity of the specified time and place, on the other. It is especially due to the work of Israel Finkelstein, Zeev Herzog, David Ussishkin and other archaeologists and historians that the picture of Judah and Israel in the 10th century BCE began to change in the late 1980s and early 1990s. According to Finkelstein and others, the existence of a United Monarchy is questionable because ideas about it derive almost exclusively from biblical texts that were composed much later, presumably during the 8th BCE at the earliest. As Finkelstein points out, this *retrospective history* has a clear ideological feature that should be recognized and evaluated *per se*, and should not be seen as an accurate description of Judah and Israel during Iron Age I and IIA.⁴ According to many scholars, this conclusion is supported by archaeological evidence which is less telling compared to biblical texts dealing with the same period of time.

² Regarding Edom, see Thomas E. Levy et al., “Reassessing the Chronology of Biblical Edom: New Excavations and 14C Dates from Khirbet en-Nahas (*Jordan*),” *Antiquity* 78 (2004): 865–79.

³ Horst Klengel, *Syria 3000 to 300 B.C.: A Handbook of Political History* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1992); Peter W. Haider, Mandred Hutter and Kreuzer Siegfried, eds, *Religionsgeschichte Syriens von der Frühzeit bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln: Kohlhammer, 1996); and Benjamin Sass, “Four Notes on Taita King of Palistin with an Excursus on King Solomon’s Empire,” *Tel Aviv* 37 (2010): 169–74.

⁴ See Brian B. Schmidt, Israel Finkelstein and Amihai Mazar, *The Quest for the Historical Israel* (Atlanta: SBL, 2007), 9–33. For a contrasting view, see Jeffrey A. Blakely, “Reconciling Two Maps: Archaeological Evidence for the Kingdoms of David and Solomon,” *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research* 327 (2002): 49–54.

The second issue, which is *not* necessarily directly connected to the first in all respects, concerns the *chronology of Iron Age I and IIA in Judah and Israel*. According to Finkelstein, Piasezky and other scholars, the non-existence of the United Monarchy is supported by both relative and absolute chronology. Thus, one might assume that the issue has been definitely resolved. However, as this paper will demonstrate, the postulated non-existence of the United Kingdom of the 10th century BCE *does not* automatically and necessarily imply that Judah as such did not exist as a specific, although limited, political state that came into existence during the early part of Iron Age IIA. New data from the Shephelah region – and specifically, from Khirbet Qeiyafa – provide fresh interpretative clues for understanding the emergence of Judah's early statehood. Before we turn to this topic, a basic outline of the current debate over possible chronologies of the Iron Age in Judah/Israel⁵ should be presented.

II. Chronologies Surveyed

Chronology occupies a prominent place among the many issues that are the subject of dispute in archaeology and biblical history. It is the concern that underlies scholarly work in the field of archaeology and is the tool used in the cross-examination of all of the material artefacts that are excavated. However, the chronology which constitutes the backbone of interpretative efforts related to debates about Judah individually – or both Judah and Israel as part of United Monarchy – is anything but unequivocal or settled. In fact, chronology stimulates the fiercest disputes over remarkably diverse conclusions with respect to dating and, consequently, with regard to the whole fabric of the historical phenomena that are being studied.

In principle, there are three options in relation to chronology. The first of these, *High Chronology* (HC) – which is also known as conventional or biblical chronology – draws upon the chronology used in biblical texts and seeks to harmonize this with non-biblical evidence. In this chronology, major historical events – whether they are internal to or external from biblical texts – correspond to, overlap with, and complement one another. For example, biblical accounts of the reigns of David and Solomon – and the acts traditionally attributed to these kings – are perceived to be more or less historically accurate. Solomon's building activities are thought to have occurred in the way the biblical texts describe them. According to 1 Kings 9:15, this king built the temple, walls and his own palace in Jerusalem and the cities of Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer. If such activities did take place, this implies that the Kingdom of Judah had a bona fide socioeconomic capacity that was not only evident in Judah itself, but was also demonstrated by the fact that Judah's political influence extended to Israel. According to HC, this fact is confirmed by "Solomonic" six-chambered gates (also known from Hazor X and Gezer VIII) and two palaces from ashlar blocks at Megiddo, which are attributed to Stratum VA-IVB. From the perspective of HC, stratigraphy attributes these strata to the time of Sheshonq I's military campaign

⁵ Judah/Israel and Judaeans(s)/Israelite(s) are used synonymously in this paper.

against Israel, which took place around 925/920 BCE. This connection seems to be confirmed by the fact that Megiddo is mentioned in the pharaoh's list at Karnak.⁶ During the same period, both Solomon's rule and the United Monarchy came to end (see 1 Kings 11–12). According to HC, these historical events were concurrent and bolstered each another. This interpretation enables a clear picture of the United Monarchy and the Kingdom of Judah in the 10th century BCE to be postulated.

The second option, *Low Chronology* (LC), represents a view that is contrary to HC in many respects. In LC, all events and data associated with David, Solomon, and the United Monarchy of the 10th century BCE are reassigned to a later period, specifically the 9th century BCE and the politically influential Omride dynasty in the Kingdom of Israel. Although HC interprets Stratum VA-IVB as verifying Sheshonq I's campaign in Megiddo and as providing evidence that the United Monarchy simply vanished under the attack from Egypt, LC attributes the same layers to the arrival of the powerful Aramaean king, Hazael, (848–803 BCE) from the north. Traces of the massive destruction associated with Hazael are also found at other places outside of Israel. According to Finkelstein, this means that the “great, powerful and glamorous Israelite state was the Northern Kingdom, not the small, isolated, impoverished territory dominated by 10th century Jerusalem,”⁷ which was not able to expand beyond its immediate surroundings. In the case of Jerusalem, LC rejects any argument which holds that monumental architecture existed in the early Iron Age IIA. Rather than attributing slabs of the massive walls (the Large Stone Structure or LSS) unearthed from the City of David, to the 10th century, LC assigns these walls – which extend from the ridge south of the Temple Mount and west of the Kidron Valley in the area that is also known as the south-eastern hill – to the following century.⁸

The third option, *Modified Conventional Chronology* (MCC), represents a reaction to the two previous chronologies. It re-examines the arguments of – and reconsiders the objects studied by – both LC and HC. In addition to analyzing literary sources and material culture, it particularly concentrates on the radiometric measurement of strata whose dating is disputed by LC, and in many cases, it provides modified dating for these.⁹ Important sites examined by MCC include Tel Rehov VI-IV, Tel Dan V-IVA, Tel

⁶ A fragment of a stele excavated in the 1920s could be additional evidence of Sheshonq's campaign in Megiddo. However, it was not found *in situ* and cannot be attributed to a specific stratum.

⁷ Israel Finkelstein, “A Great Monarchy? Archaeological and Historical Perspective,” in *One God – One Cult – One Nation: Archaeological and Biblical Perspectives* (*Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*), ed. Reinhard G. Kratz and Hermann Spieckermann (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2010), 20

⁸ Israel Finkelstein, “The ‘Large Stone Structure’ in Jerusalem,” *Zeitschrift des Palästina-Vereins* 127 (2011): 1–8; Israel Finkelstein et al., “Has King David's Palace in Jerusalem been found,” *Tel Aviv* 34 (2007): 142–64.

⁹ New excavations at Gezer and Hazor support HC. In the case of Megiddo, there are two 14C dates from Level H-5 (which correspond to Stratum IVB–VA). One of these is from the 10th century BCE, and the other is from the 9th century BCE.

Dor D 2/8c+2/8b and Lachish V-IV, among others. In comparison with the chronologies of other Near Eastern cultures, the difference between MCC and LC is astonishingly small since it involves only a few decades. Nevertheless, even this tiny difference opens up the possibility of totally contradictory interpretations being made.

There are other options and differentiations pertaining to chronological matters.¹⁰ Thus, the overview presented here is far from being comprehensive.¹¹ However, the three main chronologies described above constitute the primary frame of reference within which scholarly discussion of Judah and Israel in Iron Age I/II is carried out.¹² The chart below reveals differences in the dates assigned to transitions between different stages of the Iron Age. The transition between Iron Age I and Iron Age IIA (*highlighted in gray*) is of critical importance for the topic under consideration.

	<i>high chronology (HC)</i>	<i>low chronology (LC)</i>	<i>modified conventional chronology (MCC)</i>
Iron Age I	1200–1000 BCE	1125/1071– 920/900 BCE	1200/1140– 970 BCE (964–944 BCE) ¹³
Iron Age IIA	1000–930 BCE	920/900–845 BCE	970–840/830 BCE
Iron Age IIB	930–721 BCE	845–722 BCE	840/830–732/701 BCE
Iron Age IIC	721–586 BCE	722–586 BCE	732/701–605/586 BCE

Comparison of High, Low, and Modified Conventional Chronology (by the author).

¹⁰ For example, see Ilan Sharon et al., “2007 Report on the First Stage of the Iron Age Dating Project in Israel: Supporting the Low Chronology,” *Radiocarbon* 49 (2007): 1–46.

¹¹ Regarding the on-going debate over Tel Rehov and the validity of the interpretative model being used, see Sharon et al. “2007 Report on the First Stage of the Iron Age Dating Project” and two other studies, which express opposing views: Johannes van der Plicht et al., “The Iron Age Around the Mediterranean: A High Chronology Perspective from the Groningen Radiocarbon Database,” *Radiocarbon* 51 (2001): 213–42 and Israel Finkelstein and Eli Piasezky, “Radiocarbon dating the Iron Age in the Levant: A Bayesian model for six ceramic phases and six transitions,” *Antiquity* 84 (2010): 374–85.

¹² It is not within the scope of this study to comment on the discussion of the so-called “minimalists”, primarily European biblical scholars and historians, such as N. Lemche, D. Clines, P. R. Davies and K. Whitelam, who *de facto* deny the relevance of any traceable historical links between biblical texts that describe the early stages of Ancient Israel (12th–7th centuries BCE) and the “real” history of the same period and region.

¹³ The transition between Iron Age I/IIA has been recently specified (for this, see readings in the parenthesis). For details, see Amihai Mazar and Bronk Ramsey, “¹⁴C dates and the Iron Age chronology of Israel: a response,” *Radiocarbon* 50 (2008): 159–80 and a reaction to this proposal by Finkelstein and Piasezky in “The Iron I/IIA Transition in the Levant: A Reply to Mazar and Bronk Ramsey and a New Perspective,” *Radiocarbon* 52 (2010) 1667–80.

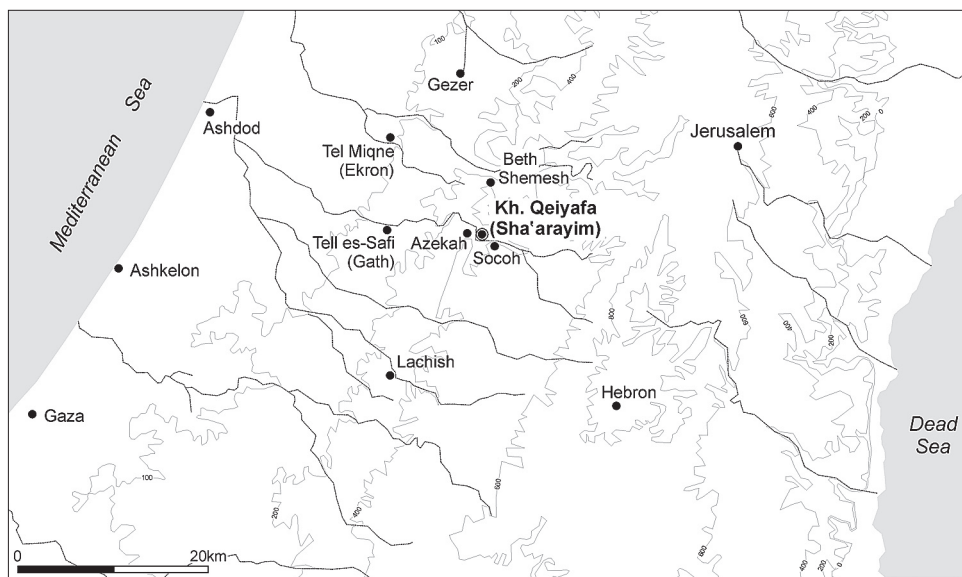
The main significance of the debate over chronology lies in the fact that the *date assigned to the transition* from Iron Age I to Iron Age IIA is important for *defining the material culture* of the United Monarchy, which is alleged to have existed in the 10th century BCE.¹⁴ If, as LC proposes, a later date is adopted – for instance the very end of the 10th century BCE – and the transition from Iron Age I to IIA did not occur at the end of 11th century and the first half of the 10th century, as HC and MCC (in a modified way) contend, this implies that there was no United Monarchy such as the one depicted in biblical texts since the link between material culture and historiographic biblical accounts of the United Monarchy would be missing or would not be based on relevant data.

Nevertheless, even if the existence of the United Kingdom were to be ruled out – as LC proposes – this does not mean that the same conclusion is true of the early Kingdom of Judah as a specific, although limited, political reality in the early 10th century. In the subsequent discussion, this study will expound on the results of excavations that have been completed at Tel Batash and are still going on at Khirbet Qeiyafa and Beth Shemesh in the region of Shephelah. Tentative proposals for interpreting the topic under consideration will also be outlined.

III. Judah in Transition: New Evidence from the Shephelah

The region of the Shephelah lies west and southwest of Jerusalem and serves as the geographical link between the central Judean Hills and the Coastal Plain. This part of Judah was strategically important for its routes going from the Coastal Plain to Jerusalem and Hebron and because it was located near the important Philistine cities of Gath (*Tell es-Safi*) and Ekron (*Tel Migne*). Although there are other valleys in the Shephelah, Sorek Valley and the Valley of Elah played an especially crucial role during the time under consideration.

¹⁴ Amihai Mazar, “Archaeology and the Biblical Narrative: The Case of the United Monarchy,” in *One God – One Cult – One Nation*, ed. Kratz and Spieckermann, 31.



Philistine cities and important places in Judah (courtesy of the Khirbet Qeiyafa Excavation).

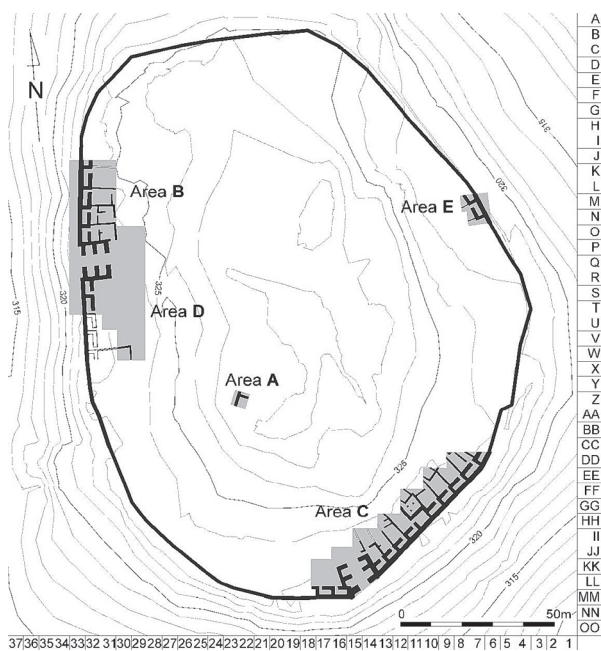
The first valley is well known for Tel Batash (which was excavated between 1977 and 1989) and Beth Shemesh (where renewed excavations have been underway since the 1990s); the second valley is the site of excavations that began at Khirbet Qeiyafa in 2007. In accordance with HC and contrary to LC's conclusion, the latter site has provided new evidence concerning the transition from Iron Age I to IIA. Since Khirbet Qeiyafa offers substantial and simultaneously singular evidence of the early phase of the transition, a more detailed analysis is needed to clarify its significance. Beth Shemesh and Tel Batash will be dealt with after Khirbet Qeiyafa has been discussed because they constitute major sites for understanding the process of ethnic diversification between the Philistine, Canaanite and Canaanite/Judaean cultures which existed along the borders.

KHIRBET QEIYafa

a. The Site and its Geography

Khirbet Qeiyafa is located in the western Shephelah at 328 meters above sea level on the summit of a hill that borders the Elah Valley on the north. This strategically important site occupies 2.3 hectares and is surrounded by a 700 metre massive wall built of megalithic stones. It controls the road that leads

from the Coastal Plain to the Judean Hills. The excavation campaign in Khirbet Qeiyafa, which began in 2007, is being conducted by Yosef Garfinkel of the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University and Saar Ganor of the Israel Antiquities Authority. Five seasons of excavation have been carried out since 2007. The first two seasons have already been summarized in an excavation report.¹⁵ In 2007–8, Areas A and B were excavated (A is located in the centre of the site and B, which includes the walls and the first gate, is in its northwest section). Two days after the beginning of the field survey in the 2008 season, the second gate in Area C was unearthed. In 2009, Area C was substantially enlarged, and Area D was opened up for excavation. This area is an extension of Area B toward the south. These two areas are separated by a four-chambered city gate which has its counterpart in Area C. In 2010, Area E was opened. A whole row of dwellings adjacent to the casemates of the city wall were excavated in the eastern part of Area C.



Topographical plan with individual areas (by courtesy of Khirbet Qeiyafa Excavation).

¹⁵ Yosef Garfinkel and Saar Ganor, *Khirbet Qeiyafa, Vol. 1: Excavation Report 2007–8* (Jerusalem: Printiv, 2009).

Among these are included the pillared building No. 5, which has been identified as a stable, and building No. 7, which is identified as a sanctuary. In 2011, a large number of dwellings in Area C and similar buildings in area D were uncovered. It has been proven that the structure of the wall's casemates and of the buildings abutting it share the same type of 'urban planning' in both areas.

b. Identification of the Site

As a result of the discovery of the second gate in Area C in 2008, the name of the site was changed from Azekah (*Tell Zakariyeh*) to Sha'arayim (Hebr. שַׁעֲרַיִם dual form that means 'gates').¹⁶ This identification is derived from 1 Samuel 17:52, from the list of the territory inherited by the tribe of Judah in Joshua 15:36 and from I Chronicles 4:31–32, which describes the locations where the sons of Simeon resided. Joshua 15:36 is a part of a list of the cities of the tribe of Judah. Here, Sha'arayim follows Socoh (*Khirbet Shuweikah*) and Azekah, which are both important archaeological sites.¹⁷ According to Garfinkel and Ganor, this text fixes the site's basic geographical coordinates. A more detailed description of the area is provided by specific parts of the long biblical narrative recorded in 1 Samuel 17. This text describes a battle between Judah/Israel and the Philistines. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to deal with this text in depth, at least the basic geographical setting of the text should be mentioned briefly. The Philistines pitch their tents between Socoh and Azekah in Ephes-dammim (verse 1), which presumably means in Judean territory on the left-bank side of the Elah Valley. Israel gathers for battle in the same valley, although on the right-bank side (verse 2). The two armies are separated by the Valley of Elah. Additional geographic data are mentioned at the end of the narrative in verse 52. Here, "men of Judah and Israel" pursue the Philistines "as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron." The end of the same verse states that "the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Sha'arayim, as far as Gath and Ekron." As a result, Sha'arayim cannot be far from the Judean sites mentioned in the text. These sites provide the initial coordinates of the biblical incident, and the two Philistine cities, Gath and Ekron, constitute its most distant geographic points. Since Sha'arayim's name is in Hebrew, it is thought to be a place in Judean territory located north of the original encampment of Saul's armies. Khirbet Qeiyafa appears to be one of the possible places that could have been called Sha'arayim. According to Garfinkel and Ganor, the biblical texts support

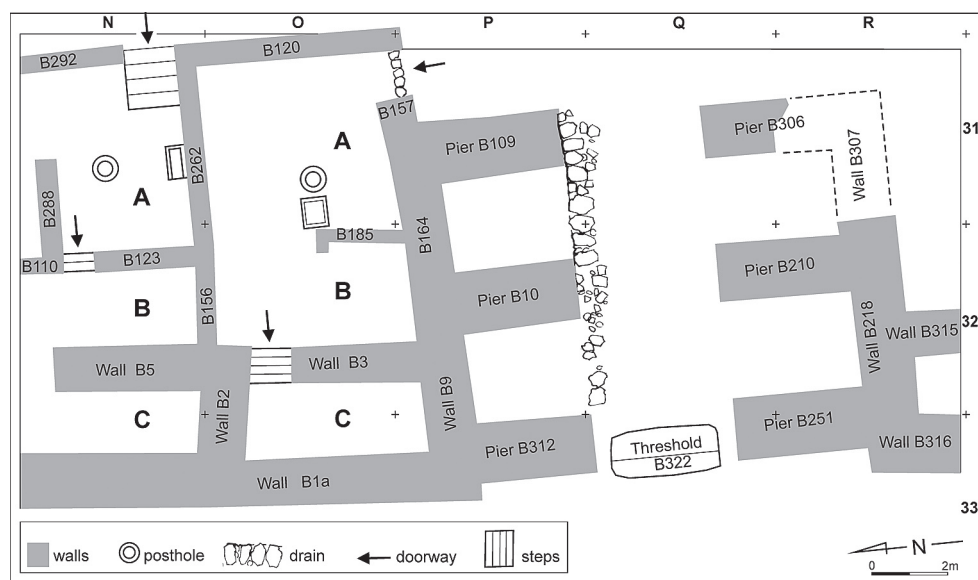
¹⁶ This identification was first proposed at a meeting of The American School of Oriental Research in a lecture entitled "Khirbet Kiafa [Qeiyafa]: Biblical Azekah?" (November 15, 2007) and then, in a lecture at the Yad Ben-Zvi Institute, which was entitled "Ancient Battlefields in the Land of Israel and Neighbouring Regions – Historical and Archaeological Aspects: The Iron Age and Persian and Hellenistic Periods" (January 24, 2008).

¹⁷ For up-coming excavations at Azekah, see <http://archaeology.tau.ac.il/azekah/?q=node/46#overlay-context=user/1%3Fq%3Duser/1>

this identification. Yet, the main argument for identifying Khirbet Qeiyafa with Sha'arayim is derived from material culture, and is based on the fact that two gates have been unearthed in the southern and western parts of the site (Areas B and C): These gates are unique because even large cities in Judah and Israel – such as Lachish or Megiddo – had only one gate. Thus, Garfinkel and Ganor have proposed that Khirbet Qeiyafa is the ancient Judean city of Sha'arayim.

c. The Concept of the Settlement

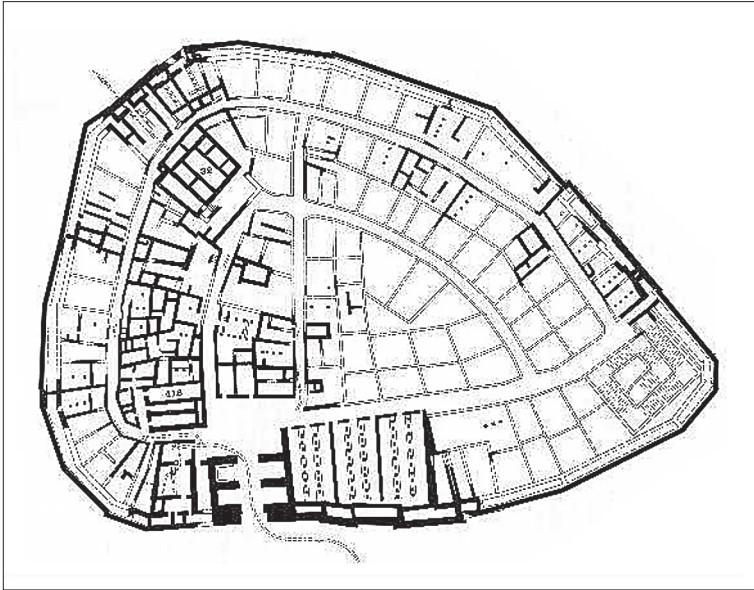
The campaign at Khirbet Qeiyafa has revealed that the site was fortified by massive casemate walls to which dwellings were directly adjoined.¹⁸ In the beginning, it was assumed that Khirbet Qeiyafa was a type of fortification used in Judah during the 9th century BCE and that the site itself comes from the same time period. This type of fortification is not documented in the previous era, i.e., in the early Iron Age IIA of the 10th century BCE – to which the Strata Arad XII, Beer-sheba VII and Lachish V are assigned. During Iron Age IIA, cities in Judah were enclosed by a periphery consisting of the backs of buildings, but they were not enclosed by walls. The type of fortification excavated in Khirbet Qeiyafa is known from fortified cities of the 9th century BCE, such as Arad XI, Beer-sheba VI and Lachish IV.



Area B: Casemate walls, four-chambered gates and abutting dwellings from the Iron Age IIA. (courtesy of the Khirbet Qeiyafa Excavation).

¹⁸ Some of the stones in these walls weigh up to five tons.

The architecture of the dwellings in Khirbet Qeiyafa is also documented in other Judaeen cities. Individual buildings are separated from each other by walls that usually consist of one or two lines of stones. The back room of these buildings is a casemate chamber, which is part of the massive outer wall. The same architectural style is known from Beer-sheba, Tell-en Nasbe (the biblical city of Mizpah), Beth-Shemesh and Tell Beit Mirsim.



Casemate wall and abutting dwellings: Beer-sheba (by Zeev Herzog).

Since the architecture of the cities mentioned above belongs to later centuries, it has been assumed that Khirbet Qeiyafa is another city from the 9th century. However, further analysis of the site (which is discussed below) has led excavators to a different conclusion. In their opinion, Khirbet Qeiyafa is the oldest fortified city ever found in Judah, and as such, it should be taken as an impetus for change in existing understandings of the chronology of Judaeen settlements during the transition between Iron Age I and Iron Age IIA.¹⁹

¹⁹ For a contrary view, see Israel Finkelstein, “A Great Monarchy?”, 18. “Even if the fortification indeed dates to the later Iron I/early Iron IIA, this phenomenon is not unique: contemporary or even somewhat earlier fortifications are known at Khirbet el-Umeiri in Ammon, several sites in Moab and Khirbet ed-Dawwara a few kms northeast of Jerusalem.”

d. Stratigraphy

A stratum from Iron Age IIA has been uncovered in all parts of Khirbet Qeiyafa. It rests on bedrock and is not preceded by earlier strata. This Stratum (determined as IV) is followed by the early Hellenistic period (Stratum III); by an aggregate of Islamic, Byzantine, late and early Roman, and late Hellenistic (Hasmonaean) periods (Stratum II); and finally, by the Ottoman period (Stratum I). The authors of the excavations call attention to the fact that the site was not inhabited continuously, and that Stratum IV and Stratum III – the latter contains a number of coins from the second half of the 4th century BCE – are the decisive strata.²⁰ According to Garfinkel and Sanor, the city is “in a way, a one-period Iron Age IIA site.”²¹

e. Dating (Relative and Absolute Chronology)

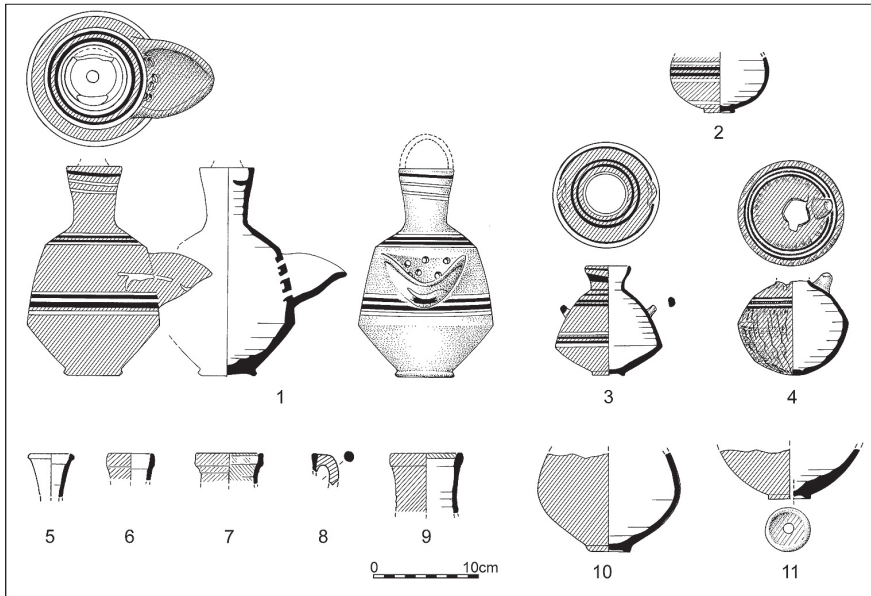
Salient issues, which are mentioned frequently by Garfinkel and Ganor involve 1) assigning the site to a clear place on the timeline and 2) identifying the ethnic group that populated the site during Iron Age IIA. Although ideas about the settlement and architecture of the site are typologically correlated with other Judaeian sites from the 9th century BCE, the relative and absolute chronologies have both steered the analysis toward surprisingly different conclusions.

The relative chronology has been determined by an analysis of pottery carried out by Hoo-Goo Kang and Garfinkel. *The upper limit* has been established by the absence of the debased Philistine pottery known from Tel Qasile X, Tel Migne IV and Ashkelon XIV, as well as by the absence of non-Philistine pottery of the CRJ (*collared-rim jar*) type. This rules out dating the site in the early Iron Age I, i.e., earlier than the second half of the 11th century BCE. On the other hand, in Khirbet Qeiyafa remains have been uncovered of later Philistine pottery, so-called early Ashdod (in the newly proposed classification of Garfinkel and Hoo-Goo Kang labelled as Ashdod I)²² from the end of the 11th century BCE together with the abundance of locally made pottery. (The locally made pottery will be discussed later.)

²⁰ Regarding the analysis of coins from Khirbet Qeiyafa, see Yoav Farhi, “The Coins,” in *Khirbet Qeiyafa*, Vol. 1, 231–40.

²¹ Yosef Garfinkel and Saar Ganor, “Khirbet Qeiyafa in Survey and in Excavations: A Response to Y. Dagan,” *Tel Aviv* 37 (2010): 72.

²² Hoo-Goo Kang, and Yosef Garfinkel, “Ashdod Ware I: Middle Philistine Decorated Ware,” 151–60.



Iron Age IIA pottery: Ashdod ware (courtesy of the Khirbet Qeiyafa Excavation).

The lower limit is based on the absence of the later Philistine, Ashdod II decorated ware that is known from Gath (preliminary Stratum 4 dated ca. 830 BCE), Ekron as well as on the absence of pottery from Lachish V, Tel Batash IVa and Arad XI.²³ Kang and Garfinkel infer that the relative chronology argues for a dating of the site to the period between the late 11th century BCE and the first half of the 10th century BCE.

NOT DOCUMENTED: CRJ, MYC IIIb /MC/+ BC
end of 11th century BCE

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES: specific local pottery (majority),
+ Ashdod I (= LDPW → specified as MPDW)

end of the 10th century BCE

NOT DOCUMENTED: Ashdod II (= LDPW) + /BoR/²⁴

Relative chronology: upper and lower limits of pottery in Khirbet Qeiyafa (by the author).

²³ With regard to Ashdod II, see Kang and Garfinkel, "Ashdod Ware I," 158: "The dating of this stage remains unknown, but we can estimate it to the late tenth/early ninth centuries BCE. Further excavations at Philistine sites may clarify this aspect."

²⁴ Regarding black on red pottery, see Nicola Schreiber, *The Cypro-Phoenician Pottery of the Iron Age* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003).

The absolute chronology is provided by the dating of olive pits from a destruction layer in Stratum IV. These were analyzed in the *Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit* in 2008. The calibrated average of the analyzed samples is 1051–969 BCE (77.8% probability) or 963–931 BCE (17.6% probability). This means that as a fortified city, Khirbet Qeiyafa *antedates* similar sites in Judah from the 9th century BCE and provides possible confirmation of the fact that the transition from Iron Age I to IIA can be dated earlier than Low Chronology has proposed; this means that in terms of biblical chronology, it can be assigned to the time of King David or later (ca. 1000–965 BCE), rather than to the time of Solomon (965–930 BCE).²⁵ The radiocarbon dating that was done in 2008 was confirmed by measurements of two other samples at Oxford a year later.²⁶

f. Ethnic Affiliation

Khirbet Qeiyafa is a fortified city with casemate walls, two four-chambered gates and a specific concept of urban planning that is congruent with Judaeen cities, such as Beer-sheba, Tell-en Nasbe, Beth Shemesh and Beit Mirsim, in the 9th and 8th century BCE. However, the absolute and relative chronology suggests that Khirbet Qeiyafa antedates the other cities. Garfinkel and Ganor make two comments regarding this realization. First, the survey of the Shephelah region has been neglected and is inadequate up to this point.²⁷ Second, it is important to reanalyze the nature of the development of Judah during the Iron Age. This development is far from homogenous; thus, it is essential that distinct places and phases be differentiated.²⁸ According to Garfinkel and Ganor, Khirbet Qeiyafa provides evidence of the notable socioeconomic capacity of early Judah, and offers proof of the existence of fortified cities in the 10th century BCE. This fortress, which was located in the “buffer zone” of the influential Philistia, secured the western border, and according to some scholars, posed a danger to its powerful neighbour. For example, Amihai Mazar has proposed that the weakening influence of the nearby city of Ekron – whose area had shrunk from between 20 and 30 hectares to just four hectares by the 10th century BCE – and the increasing influence of the more distant, coastal city of Ashdod as being the result of pressure from the emerging kingdom of David and Solomon in the east. Mazar considers the hypothesis that Ekron “lost

²⁵ Yosef Garfinkel and Saar Ganor, “Site Location and Setting and History of Research,” in *Khirbet Qeiyafa*, Vol. 1, 35.

²⁶ Yosef Garfinkel and Hoo-Goo Kang, “The Relative and Absolute Chronology of Khirbet Qeiyafa: Very Late Iron Age I or Very Early Iron Age IIA?,” in *Israel Exploration Journal* 61 (2011): 178.

²⁷ Garfinkel and Ganor, “Khirbet Qeiyafa in Survey and in Excavations,” 71 and 77.

²⁸ Also see Zeev Herzog and Lily Singer-Avitz, “Redefining the Centre: The Emergence of State in Judah,” *Tel Aviv* 31 (2004): 209–44.

much of its hinterland south of the Sorek Valley, and many of its people had to move to Gath or Ashdod” to be plausible.²⁹

Yet, what other proof is there for the theory that the ethnic affiliation of the site was Judean? The archaeologists in charge of excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa have answered this question with a whole series of arguments. Although some of these have already been mentioned, it may be good to enumerate all of them so that the complex nature of the arguments in favour of attributing a Judean identity to Khirbet Qeiyafa can be shown and so that the special role of *ethnic affiliation* in the current archaeological debate over the early history of Judah/Israel can be highlighted. The following arguments have been made for identifying Khirbet Qeiyafa as a Judean city:

- i. Its geographic location in the territory of Judah.
- ii. The occurrence of the geographic designation Sha’arayim in the list of Judean cities (1 Samuel 17:52 and Joshua 15:36, in particular)
- iii. An absence of pig bones. Although a number of pig bones from the same period were uncovered in the Philistine cities of Ekron and Ashkelon, this dietary habit was totally absent in Khirbet Qeiyafa.³⁰ A similar absence is documented at the border site of Tel Beth Shemesh that is six kilometres north of Khirbet Qeiyafa in the Sorek Valley.³¹ (*See below.*)
- iv. The existence of an aniconic cult, which is confirmed by the absence of any figurative representations and of any artefacts that could have been cultic objects. At the end of the 2011 excavation season, a basalt altar was uncovered, which was similar to an altar from Tel Rehov, although it did not include any silhouettes of naked females.³²

²⁹ Schmidt, Finkelstein and Mazar, *The Quest for the Historical Israel*, 135. In conjunction with this idea, Mazar points out that 1 Samuel 17 is well informed about the life and institutions of the 10th and the last part of the 9th centuries BCE. The biblical narrative mentions Gath (*Tell es-Saft*), although this city never recovered after Hazael’s campaign in the second half of the 9th century BCE, and the Assyrian king Sargon II describes Gath as being subordinate to Ashdod. According to Assyrian records from the 7th century BCE, Gath later completely disappears from the list of Philistine cities. As a consequence, Mazar considers the biblical text to be in touch with the historical realities of the early 9th century BCE. Cf. Yosef Garfinkel and Saar Ganor, “Khirbet Qeiyafa: Sha’arayim,” *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 22 (2008), 6: “As by the end of the 9th century BCE Gath disappeared as a political power, these traditions must have been created at an earlier time.”

³⁰ Ron Kehati, “The Faunal Assemblage,” in *Khirbet Qeiyafa, Vol 1*.

³¹ See Avraham Faust and Justin Lev-Tov, “The constitution of Philistine identity: ethnic dynamics in twelfth to tenth century Philistia,” *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 30 (2011): 13–31 and Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman, “A Border Case: Beth-Shemesh and the Rise of Ancient Israel,” in *The Archaeology, Vol. 1 of Israel in Transition: From Late Bronze II to Iron IIA (c. 1250–850 B.C.E.)*, ed. Lester Grabbe (New York/London: T&T Clark, 2008).

³² Regarding the altar in Tel Rehov, see Amihai Mazar and Nava Panitz-Cohen, “To What God? Altars and a House Shrine from Tel Rehov Puzzle Archaeologists,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* (July/August 2008): 40–47.

- v. A desacralization of cultic objects. A *massebah*, a standing stone seventy centimetres high, was discovered positioned upside-down and concealed within the wall in Area B close to the city gate.³³ According to the authors of the excavation report, this treatment of a cultic object is similar to the desacralizing activity that took place in Beer-sheba. There, stones from the altar were hidden in the wall close to the city gate and were later reused for a different, non-cultic purpose.³⁴
- vi. Locally made pottery that differs from the ware of the neighbouring Philistine territory. Among the many items found at the site, baking trays that are without a parallel in Philistine pottery should be mentioned. Many jar handles contain finger impressions. (Around 330 of these have been discovered so far.) This fact is interpreted as being evidence of early administration.³⁵ Petrographic analysis has confirmed that the clay used in this pottery is from the adjacent Valley of Elah.³⁶ Only a small amount of Philistine, Ashdod I pottery has been found at the site.
- vii. Cooking habits: Specific kinds of pottery are used, and pork is avoided. (See iii and vi.)
- viii. Urban planning: See above.
- x. The south gate in Area C, which those in charge of the excavation consider to be the main gate, is oriented toward the Valley of Elah and Jerusalem.
- xi. An ostrakon (*See the following paragraphs.*)

g. Epigraphics

The most spectacular discovery from Khirbet Qeiyafa (and the one that the media has covered the most extensively) is probably the ostrakon, which was uncovered at the end of the 2008 excavation season in Stratum IV of Area B. This ostrakon measures 15 x 16.5 centimetres, and contains about 50 letters – most of which are difficult to decipher – written in ink on its inverse side. According to petrographic analysis, the jar from which the ostrakon comes is of local origin.³⁷

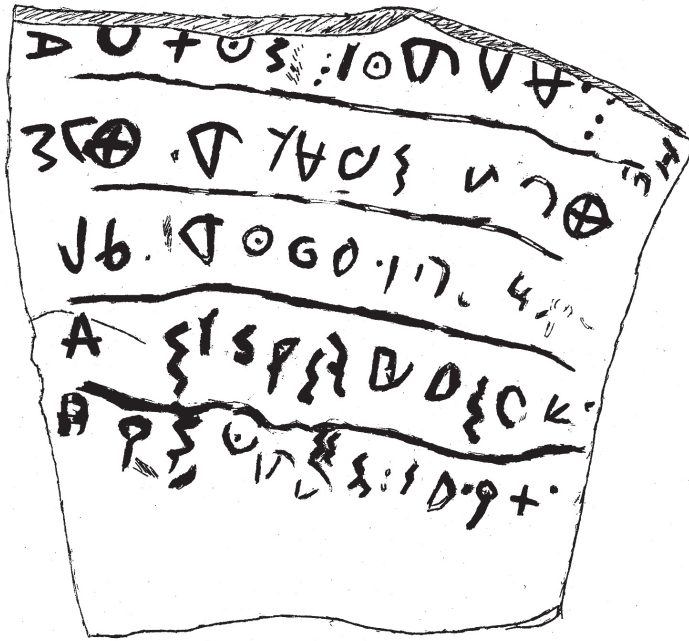
³³ See Yosef Garfinkel, “The Standing Stone near the Western City Gate,” in *Khirbet Qeiyafa*, Vol. 1.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, 198. This argument is far from being definitive, since the concealed altar from Beer-sheba postdates Khirbet Qeiyafa by several centuries. Furthermore, although the objects being compared are both from the ritual sphere, they differ substantially.

³⁵ These finger impressions on pottery jars are sometimes identified as pre-*l^emelekh* impressions. Thus, the 10th century BCE is hypothetically linked to later periods. For further discussion, see Oded Lipschits, Omer Sergi and Ido Koch, “Judahite Stamped and Incised Jar Handles: A Tool for Studying the History of Later Monarchic Judah,” *Tel Aviv* 38 (2011): 5–41 and Itzhack Shai and Aren Maier, “Pre-LMLK Jars: A New Class of Iron Age IIA Storage Jars,” *Tel Aviv* 32 (2003): 108–123.

³⁶ David Ben-Shlomo, “Petrographic Analysis of Iron Age Pottery,” in *Khirbet Qeiyafa*, Vol. 1.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, 163.



Drawing of the ostracon by H. Misgav (courtesy of the Khirbet Qeiyafa Excavation).

On the basis of a newly developed classification, Garfinkel, Ganor, and Haggai Misgav have proposed that the script on the ostracon be identified as being *late Canaanite* (i.e., from Iron Age I and IIA).³⁸ They also judge it to be the *oldest Hebrew* inscription.³⁹ It differs from an inscription from the same period that was found in Gath in 2005.⁴⁰ According to Ada Yardeni, who considers the text to be Semitic and possibly to be Hebrew, the ostracon bears a resemblance to the Hebrew words or the verbal roots for “to serve,” “to do,” “to judge” and “to reign”

³⁸ Haggai Misgav, Yosef Garfinkel, and Saar Ganor, “The Ostracon,” in *Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 1:46. “It seems appropriate to replace the older terms (Proto-Sinaitic, Proto-Canaanite and Old-Canaanite) with the term Canaanite writing, distinguishing two phases: Early Canaanite and Late Canaanite.”

³⁹ Misgav, Garfinkel, and Ganor, “The Ostracon,” 254.

⁴⁰ This inscription, written on pottery typical of Iron Age IIA, was found in Gath/Tell es-Safi under a destruction layer from the 9th century BCE. The inscription consists of two non-Semitic names in proto-Canaanite script. Owing to these names’ similarity to that of the biblical figure Goliath, this artefact is sometimes called the “Goliath shard.” For further discussion, see Aren Maeir et al., “A Late Iron Age I/Early Iron Age IIA Old Canaanite Inscription from Tell es-Safi/Gath, Israel: Paleography, Dating, and Historical-Cultural Significance,” *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research* 351 (2008): 39–71.

(מלך and שפט עשה עבר).⁴¹ Yardeni infers that the text on the ostrakon probably mentions “serving/servant, judging/judge, God(s), a master(?)/child(?), revenge, a king, and perhaps, devotion/ban(?)”.⁴² However, she also does not rule out the possibility that the text represents a list of personal names.⁴³

Although most epigraphers consider the text on the ostrakon to be quite unclear, and where legible not to be very transparent in meaning,⁴⁴ an almost comprehensive, although in many respects speculative, reading has been proposed by Gershon Galil:

- 1) do not do (it), but worship [. . .].
- 2) Judge the slave and the widow / Judge the orph[an]
- 3) and the stranger. Plead for the infant / plead for the poor and
- 4) the widow. Avenge (the pauper’s vengeance) at the king’s hands.
- 5) Protect the needy and the slave / suppo[rt] the stranger.⁴⁵

What Garfinkel, Ganor and Misgav deduce from the discovery of the ostrakon is fundamental to the overall interpretation of the role of Khirbet Qeiyafa. According to them, the text expresses integrated information and is not just a disconnected or haphazard list of names. It is thought to be a skilled work that demonstrates the professional experience of its author. Thus, considered in the broader context, it is conceivable that “scribes had a certain status in the community that lived on the site at that time.”⁴⁶ It is possible that the beginning of the text refers to the field of ethics and justice. (This theory is based on the reconstructed verbs עשק “to exploit” and עשר “to make wealthy” in the first line and שפט “to judge”, which may be in the imperative form, in the second line.) The text appears to go on to discuss the realm of politics and administration (using the words מלך “king” and אדם “man” in the fourth line). The authors of the campaign believe that the site in and of itself supports this conclusion. Khirbet Qeiyafa is “a royal fortress from the early days of the United Monarchy” and “the letter found close to the gates of the city testifies to the presence of literate administrators in the city despite its modest size.”⁴⁷ In Garfinkel and Ganor’s view, this identification is also supported by the particular types of pottery and assemblages of bones found at the site. On the basis of their clear stratigraphic context, these can both be dated to the early 10th century BCE.

According to Garfinkel and Ganor, all of the arguments mentioned above may provide evidence that there needs to be a different view of Judah in the 10th century

⁴¹ Ada Yardeni, “Further Observations on the Ostrakon,” in *Khirbet Qeiyafa, Vol. 1*.

⁴² Yardeni, “Further Observations on the Ostrakon,” 260.

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴ From a personal conversation with Professor Mark S. Smith.

⁴⁵ Gershon Galil, “The Hebrew Inscription from Khirbet Qeiyafa/Neta’im: Script, Language, Literature and History,” *Ugaritische Forschungen* 41 (2009), 196.

⁴⁶ Misgav, Garfinkel, and Ganor, “The Ostrakon,” 254.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 256.

and of its transition from Iron Age I to IIA. Since the excavations are still going on, some of these arguments will require further examination and additional explication. However, a major contribution of these excavations consists of the fact that also due to Khirbet Qeiyafa, the Shephelah has turned out to be an important place for understanding the *early* urban development of this region. Beth Shemesh and Tel Batash, which are discussed below, shed light on this development within a broad time span and a wide cultural, political and religious context since they are *not* sites of ‘one strata’ but ancient sites with long and very complex histories.

BETH SHEMESH

a. The Site and a History of Research

This site was first identified by Edward Robinson in the middle of the 19th century. Excavations at Tel Beth Shemesh (*Rumeillah*), which is located adjacent to the western part of the modern city of the same name, began in 1911–12 under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Fund. They were renewed in 1928 by Haverford College in Pennsylvania. Initially, the site was categorized as Canaanite (Stratum III and the “First City”); later, it was identified as Philistine (Stratum II and the “Second City”); and finally, it was determined that from the late 11th century BCE, it was a place with an Israelite population that was dominated by the Philistines (Stratum I and the “Third City”).⁴⁸ In 1990, new excavations began to be conducted by Bar-Ilan University (1990–6) and subsequently, were carried out by Ben-Gurion University (1995–6). Since 1997, the dig has been conducted by the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University. The latest campaign sheds new light on the Iron Age I/IIA period, which is judged to be much more complicated than previous expeditions had recognized.

b. Borders and Ethnicity

Beth Shemesh is situated on the border between the Canaanite, Philistine and Israelite/Judean cultures. With eleven phases excavated so far, the continuous settlement of the *tel* (20th century – 7th century BCE) provides a broader context for examining the topic of this study. The main issue, which is dealt with extensively by the site directors Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman, concerns cultural interactions and ethnicity. Contrary to the commonly held view that the process of building the identity of Judah/Israel took place in the central hills, Bunimovitz and Lederman offer a more differentiated understanding of the ethnicity of Judah/Israel.⁴⁹ They formulate this in the following way:

⁴⁸ Bunimovitz and Lederman, “A Border Case,” 23.

⁴⁹ For example, see Robert D. Miller, “Identifying Earliest Israel,” *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research* 333 (2004): 55–68.

- a) Ethnicity is not is not just the “sum of pre-existing cultural differences.”⁵⁰ Such a definition is too vague.
- b) Ethnicity is the result of a long-term process of exclusion and inclusion. To use anthropological terms, this process is constituted by *competition*, which stimulates the formation of a specific group, as well as by a *differential distribution* of power, which takes a specific shape expressed by distinctive ethnic elements (traits and markers) that are formed during the process of ethnogenesis.
- c) Ethnicity derives from the behaviour of a group, and this behaviour can best be traced over the long term, i.e., within a “long stratigraphic sequence.”
- d) Most hill country settlements are of a short period or a single period; thus, they cannot provide such a long sequence.
- e) Although current research on the emergence of Israel during Iron Age I is more refined, “no new archaeological information had been added to the discussion” since the 1980s.⁵¹

c. Stratigraphy and Dietary Habits

Because of its stratigraphic abundance, Bunimovitz and Lederman consider Beth Shemesh to be an excellent place for understanding the ethnogenesis of Judah/Israel. Stratigraphy of this site confirms that Level 6-5 is contemporaneous with Tel Batash’s Stratum V, which is identified as a Philistine site. Here, the consumption of pork is documented, whereas no pig bones have been found at Beth Shemesh.

DATES (CENTURIES)	CHIRBET QEIYAFA	BETH SHEMESH	TEL BATASH
12 th century	No settlement	7 6 (mid 12 th century)	V (late)
11 th century	IV (late)	5	V
10 th century	IV	4 (early)	IVA-B
9 th century	Gap	3	continuation? ⁵²
8 th century	Gap	2	IIIA-B
7 th century	Gap	1	II
6 th century	Gap		IIA (early, only scattered remains)

A comparative stratigraphical and chronological chart of Iron Age I and II (by the author).

⁵⁰ Bunimovitz and Lederman, “A Border Case,” 21.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

⁵² Stratum IV will be discussed later in this study.

It has been documented that small amounts of pork were consumed at Canaanite sites in the Shephelah and the Coastal Plain (2–8%) during the Late Bronze Age, and that this situation changed radically with the arrival of the Philistines. At Philistine sites, consumption of pork increased substantially (18–20%), but the consumption of pork at Beth-Shemesh simultaneously decreased to zero. This fact is confirmed by the analysis of six thousand bones from Beth-Shemesh. Nevertheless, according to Bunimovitz and Lederman, the fact that pork was totally avoided at Beth Shemesh does not mean that the site should automatically be associated with Israel/Judah in an ethnic sense.⁵³ They both point out that cultural interaction in the western part of the Shephelah needs to be dealt with in a more comprehensive manner.

d. Pottery and Architecture

The repertoire of pottery at Beth Shemesh, Level 6, which is dated to the second half of the 12th century, shows affinities with lowland sites like Tel Batash, Gezer and Tell Qasile on the Yarkon River. On the other hand, since CRJ is missing at Beth Shemesh, this pottery differs from assemblages found at proto-Israelite sites such as Giloh and Khirbet Raddana, as well as from Philistine assemblages. Monochromatic Ware is completely missing at Beth Shemesh, and only 5% of the Bichrome Ware has been shown to be from the early Iron Age. (A similar situation has been documented at Aphek and Gezer, which are other sites on the border with Philistia.) This is in contrast with Ashdod, Ekron and Tel Batash where Bichrome Ware represents 30% of the pottery discovered. Bunimovitz and Lederman see this as providing proof of *rare* contact between the inhabitants of the site with the Philistine culture and as being evidence of the *continuation* of Canaanite cultural traditions at a place which the biblical tradition has attributed to the Israelites even during the period that preceded the Judges (cf. Joshua 15:10; 19:41; 21:16 and 1 Samuel 5-6).⁵⁴ As Bunimovitz and Lederman note, the evidence from Beth Shemesh “is intriguing – even puzzling – since it raises the question of how to identify Israelite remains in the archaeological record.”⁵⁵

Columns from the early Iron Age I serve as a further example of the difficulties of attributing the site directly to Israelite provenance. During that period, monolithic stone columns were used in the Judean highlands, and later, during Iron Age II, they spread throughout the country. However, at Beth Shemesh, wooden columns, that were closer to the Canaanite architectural tradition, were excavated. More secure grounds for attributing the site to the Judean/Israelite tradition are not provided until later, in the 10th century BCE. In Area B, a new city with massive

⁵³ Bunimovitz and Lederman, “A Border Case,” 25.

⁵⁴ In Joshua 19:41, Beth Shemesh is identified in Hebrew as *Ir-Shemesh*, i.e., “the city of Shemesh.”

⁵⁵ Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman, “Beth Shemesh: Culture Conflict on Judah’s Frontier,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 23/1 (1997): 44.

walls has been uncovered sitting on remains from the 11th century. This city is interpreted as a Judaeon/Israelite administrative centre.

The data from Beth Shemesh suggest that the ethnic affiliation during Iron Age I should be viewed as still being *fluid*. Bunimovitz and Lederman are careful not to draw any premature conclusions. This gives rise to a crucial question regarding whether dietary customs enable the site to be identified as a Judaeon/Israelite town. If this were to be the case, changes in dietary patterns would have to be viewed in broader cultural terms and a wider context of mutual interactions. In all likelihood, the initial impetus for such interaction was provided by the territorial expansion of Philistia and its special culture to which the indigenous population, i.e., the Canaanites, reacted by developing their own multifaceted social, cultural, religious and symbolic boundaries. Presumably, part of this was the pig avoidance, which is demonstrated by the contrast between the neighbouring sites of Beth Shemesh and Tel Batash (*discussed below*). This avoidance gradually became a commonly shared value, not only in the Shephelah, but also in the hill country. Consequently, according to Bunimovitz and Lederman, the ethnogenesis of Judah/Israel suggests the following hypothetical scenario when it is documented with the help of the “long stratigraphic sequence” from Beth Shemesh:

Instead of conceiving the process as taking place in the central hill country and later encompassing the peripheries of that region we would reverse the direction of at least part of it: from the western frontier with the Philistines, where the indigenous population was forced to redefine its identity as a result of daily existential competition with the Philistines – inland into the relatively sheltered mountain area that slowly succumbed to the Philistine pressure. According to this interpretation of the finds from Tel Beth-Shemesh within the Iron Age I cultural and historical context of Shephelah, the emergence of a social and symbolic boundary at the western periphery of the hill country had a profound impact on its core. Israelite identity seems to have been forged to some extent under the Philistine hammer.⁵⁶

It should be noted that the “reversed trend” of Israel/Judah’s ethnogenesis may also be seen with respect to scribal culture.⁵⁷ For example, as Finkelstein points out, all inscriptions from the period under consideration come from the southern

⁵⁶ Bunimovitz and Lederman, “A Border Case,” 28.

⁵⁷ See Finkelstein, “A Great Monarchy?,” 18.

Coastal Plain and the Shephelah, not from Judah proper.⁵⁸ Most of these are from the region near the Philistine city of Gath. Thus, it is possible to infer that they “reflect a lasting administrative and cultural tradition in the region.”⁵⁹

TEL BATASH

a. Site and History of Research

Tel Batash, which is identified as the biblical city of Timnah (cf. Judges 14, Joshua 15:7), is located at an elevation of 132 meters above sea level on the broad, fertile, alluvial plain of the Sorek Valley. It is seven kilometres downstream from Beth Shemesh and six kilometres east of Ekron (*Tel Migne*).⁶⁰ This site was discovered by Clermont-Ganneau in 1871. However, it was nearly forgotten for decades, and it was not until the 1940s that it began to be surveyed again by B. Mazar and J. Kaplan. Beginning in 1977, twelve seasons of excavation, directed by A. Mazar and G. L. Kelm, were conducted by the Hebrew University and a consortium of U. S. institutions. In Tel Batash twelve strata have been unearthed in total (18th century – 4th century BCE).

b. Borders and Ethnicity

During Iron Age I, Tel Batash was a city that bordered on Canaanite and Philistine territory, and later – according to many scholars – became part of Israelite territory in the 10th century.⁶¹ The site initially was under the domain of the influential Philistine city of Ekron and only later, during Iron Age IIA, may have come under the domination of the emerging Judaeon/Israelite monarchy. Its dependence on Ekron is thought to be substantiated by the size of these two sites. Ekron was a city of 50 acres, while Tel Batash a town of only 6 acres. A route running along the Sorek Valley also confirms Tel Batash’s association with Ekron and Philistine culture. However, much as in the case of Beth Shemesh, the site’s connection with the Canaanites/Israelites and the Philistines is very complex. For instance, Amihai Mazar is convinced that a relationship between these two ethnic groups cannot be established. Nevertheless, from the material culture, he infers that it is plausible to consider Tel Batash to have been subordinated to Ekron and the majority Philistine population that lived alongside the indigenous Canaanites.⁶²

⁵⁸ Qubur el-Walaidah, Gath, Tel Zayit, Khirbet Qeiyafa, Beth Shemesh, Gezer and Izbet Sartah

⁵⁹ Finkelstein, “A Great Monarchy?”, 18.

⁶⁰ George L. Kelm and Amihai Mazar, “Three Seasons of Excavations at Tel Batash: Biblical Timnah,” *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research* 248 (1982): 1–36.

⁶¹ Amihai Mazar and Nava Panitz-Cohen, *Timnah (Tel Batash) II – The Finds from the First Millennium BCE* (Text, Plates) [Qodem 42] (Jerusalem: Keterpress Enterprises, 2001), 277.

⁶² Nava Panitz-Cohen and Amihai Mazar, *Timnah (Tel Batash) III – The Finds from the First Millennium BCE* [Qodem 45] (Jerusalem: Keterpress Enterprises, 2006), 328.

c. Stratigraphy, Pottery and Dietary Habits

An analysis of Stratum V at Tel Batash, which is attributed to Iron Age IB in the late 12th and 11th centuries, documents a similarity between the site’s material culture and that of Gezer and Beth Shemesh. Here, pottery of the Canaanite tradition is mixed with Bichrome Ware. However, the ratio of Bichrome Ware is different. In Tel Batash, this Philistine pottery comprises 34% of the pottery found, compared with only 5% in Gezer and Beth Shemesh. The subordination mentioned above suggests that the site was under the influence of the Philistine culture. With regard to faunal remains, the analysis of animal bones shows that pig consumption increased beginning with the arrival of the Philistines.⁶³ The 8% pig consumption in Tel Batash contrasts sharply with 0% in Beth Shemesh. Comparing Tel Batash with other Philistine sites where the pig consumption is even higher is interesting. In the coastal city of Ashkelon, pork consumption increased to 18% during Iron Age I, and in Tel Batash, which neighbours Ekron, it also grew to 18%. During Iron Age II, this trend changed only slightly in Ashkelon and Ekron, while it dropped radically in Tel Batash, where the percentage fell to only 0.9%.

PERIOD	EKRON	ASHKELON	TEL BATASH
LATE BRONZE	8%	4%	5%
IRON AGE I	18%	18%	8%
IRON AGE II	10%	>1 (?) ⁶⁴	0.9%

A comparative chart of pig consumption in Ekron, Ashkelon and Tel Batash (by the author)⁶⁵.

This chart suggests two important observations. Firstly, during Iron Age I, the pig consumption increased markedly, and secondly, during Iron Age II, this consumption

⁶³ “Faunal Remains from Tel Batash” is from an excavation report compiled by Panitz-Cohen and Mazar, which consists of only one page. (See *Timnah (Tel Batash) III*, 311.) The data have not been evaluated in terms of a stratigraphic analysis. The bones were analysed by Brian Hesse at the University of Alabama, but Panitz-Cohen and Mazar did not receive a scholarly report on the material. Hesse included the results of his analysis in “Pig Lovers and Pig Haters: Patterns of Palestinian Pork Production,” *Journal of Ethnobiology* 10/2 (1990): 195–225. Also see Brian Hesse and Paula Wapnish, “Can Pig Remains be Used for Ethnic Diagnosis in the Ancient Near East?, ” in *The Archaeology of Israel*, ed. Neil A. Silberman and David B. Small, Supplemental Series of *Journal for Studies of the Old Testament* 237 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997): 238–70.

⁶⁴ The percentage for this period has not yet been determined. I am grateful to Professor Daniel Master for advising me on this matter.

⁶⁵ See Hesse and the studies mentioned above.

decreased only slightly in Ekron, but substantially in Tel Batash. If one considers that the latter site is located in the most distant part of Philistia, adjacent to unsubjugated territories of indigenous Canaanites in which the city of Beth Shemesh played a key role, it may be inferred that the cultural influence of the Philistines was reciprocated by the Canaanites. Thus, Tel Batash turns out to be a site of interpenetrating cultural influences, and exclusively attributing any given characteristic to only one or the other of these cultures is a very intricate enterprise.

d. The Debate over Stratum IV and the Emergence of the New State

Although it is of critical importance for the topic under consideration, it must be noted that the chronology of Stratum IV in Tel Batash is very complex since it lacks a clear chronological anchor.⁶⁶ The nearest firm data come from a destruction layer in Stratum III that is dated 701 BCE. Stratum IV differs from the previous Philistine city (Stratum V) in many respects. The type of red slip and hand burnished pottery found there is not the same as Philistine and Canaanite pottery traditions. However, this pottery has been documented at other sites, such as Lachish V-IV, Gezer VIII, Tell Qasile IX-VIII, Beer-sheba VIII-VI and Arad XII-XI, as well as Megiddo VA-IVB, Taanach IIa, Yoqne'am XIV and Tel Rehov VI. Since it follows assemblages of painted pottery from Iron Age I, the pottery in Stratum IV is generally interpreted as being typical of the period of transition between Iron Age I and II, and is dated to the 10th century.⁶⁷ This shift in material culture is connected by many with the emergence of the Judaeen/Israelite state.⁶⁸

The city of Stratum IV shares similar features with other Judaeen sites, such as Beer-sheba (which was an enclosed settlement with two solid towers by its gate) and provides evidence of an increasing growth of urban life. Another argument for the thriving influence of the early state of Judah/Israel is provided by a calculation of the area of Philistine cities in the 10th and subsequent centuries and by an analysis of pottery found in Ekron IV and Ashdod XA-B. Around the middle of 10th century, Ekron, which was located on the eastern border of Philistia, shrank from 50 to 7 – 10 acres, while the inland city of Ashdod simultaneously grew from 20 to 50 acres. This reversal is explained by the hypothesis that “Ashdod grew at the expense of Ekron and that Israelite oppression caused many of Ekron’s inhabitants to move to Ashdod, a process that resulted in the decline of Ekron and the growth of Ashdod”.⁶⁹ Although it is also maintained that demographic changes in Philistia were caused by an invasion led the Egyptian King Siamun, who conquered Gezer

⁶⁶ Mazar and Panitz-Cohen, *Timnah (Tel Batash) II*, 273.

⁶⁷ Regarding dating Stratum V in the 9th century, see Israel Finkelstein, “Archaeology of the United Monarchy: An Alternative View,” *Levant* 28 (1996): 177–87. Also see Orna Zimhoni, *Studies in the Iron Age Pottery of Israel: Typological, Archaeological and Chronological Aspects* (Tel Aviv: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 172–4.

⁶⁸ Mazar and Panitz-Cohen, *Timnah (Tel Batash) II*, 277.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, 278.

(see 1 Kings 9:16),⁷⁰ it seems to be more plausible to assume that in the time of Tel Batash IV, Ekron was in decline as a result of the western expansion of an *ethnos* that had been “forged” by Philistia on its eastern border.⁷¹ Nevertheless, this option also has an alternative interpretation.⁷²

IV. COMMENTS AND PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

The three sites examined in this study provide important data for understanding the early development of the nascent Judah/Israel. The material culture of Khirbet Qeiyafa, Beth Shemesh and Tel Batash offers abundant evidence of the rapidly changing cultural, territorial and political climate of the Shephelah in the Sorek and Elah Valleys during the 11th and 10th centuries. This climate and all of the data related to it require interpretation, but that is still far from being complete because only three neighbouring sites that are relatively close to each other have been examined. Thus, instead of there being a clear-cut solution to the question of exactly *when* Judah/Israel first came into existence, the following general points may serve as a foundation from which a possible answer may carefully be inferred.

1. *Complexity*: The pro-Judaeans affiliation of the sites in the Shephelah during the 10th century is derived from the intersection of a variety of data, beginning with pottery and followed by an analysis of architecture, faunal remains and additional material culture. Each inference relies on more or less established evidence which is interpreted in a context that is quite variable. This situation also applies to the formation of the early state of Judah/Israel, which emerged on a border that it shared with late Canaanite and Philistine cultures. On the basis of available evidence, it is possible to infer that this development *was not* unidirectional or limited to one geographical location.
2. *Linking developments*: Some developments that seem to be especially evident and unambiguous on the basis of a detailed chronology are actually far from being clear. As a matter of fact, although juxtaposing and comparing material culture is an inevitable step for any interpretation, such data are often unique to individual sites and are not easy to evaluate in a comparative way. For instance, questions may arise as to how and in which sense Khirbet Qeiyafa IV and Tel Batash IV are linked since both cities were presumably occupied by the same ethnic group, i.e., by Judaeans/Israelites, during the same period. However, did the same

⁷⁰ Donald B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 310–11 and Kenneth Kitchen, “How we know when Solomon Ruled,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* Sept/Oct (2001): 34–7, 57.

⁷¹ Mazar and Panitz-Cohen, *Timnah (Tel Batash) II*, 278.

⁷² In addition to theories which hold that the Israelites/Judaeans or Egyptians caused the demographic change in Philistia, there is also – according to the LC interpretation – the possibility of Aramaean military incursions from the north.

group of people, the same *ethnos*, actually inhabit both places? Did they trade and communicate with each other? If this was the case, it is intriguing that jar handles with thumb impressions are abundantly documented at Khirbet Qeiyafa (with more than 330 samples), while only small numbers of these have been found at Tel Batash V and none (!) at Beth Shemesh, although *both* sites are thought to have been inhabited by Judaeans/Israelites and the latter site is closer to Khirbet Qeiyafa.⁷³ If the impressions on the jar handles are interpreted as being a sign of early administration, their distribution seems to be relatively vague. Ergo, shouldn't these impressions be interpreted as a local potter's mark since proof of their circulation and distribution is not substantiated by clear evidence?⁷⁴

3. *Pitfalls of general patterns*: The patterns used to interpret the emergence of Judah/Israel in the region of the Shephelah have been re-examined intensively in recent years. This is a beneficial trend, which revises general patterns previously used for this area, which described it as an "empty region" or a land "on the margin" that was almost totally lacking in urban settlements. The results of the excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa and Beth Shemesh have brought fresh insight into the ethnogenesis of the Judaeans/Israelites. However, these new discoveries and the interpretations arising from them should be viewed as being tentative. Since Khirbet Qeiyafa is a site having only "one layer", it needs to be investigated in terms of the broader context of other Judaeans/Israelite sites. The *tel* Beth Shemesh, which is located close to Khirbet Qeiyafa, provides data that enables us to propose a new, more nuanced pattern of interpretation, in which the cultural, religious and political turbulence of the late 11th and 10th centuries will be incorporated in a thorough way. In this regard, the postulate about gradual ethnogenesis that has been proposed by Lederman and Bunimovitz is especially promising and stimulating.
4. *Form and extent*: Instead of using general patterns to formulate hypotheses regarding the development of Judah/Israel's early history, it may be possible to direct attention to less all-encompassing ideas about the form, extent and actual scope of the influence exercised by an individual site. Consideration must always be given to the fact that if concrete results are used in broader contexts, they lose their tangibility and specificity as they become part of a larger interpretative enterprise where many more variables are operative.
5. *When biblical texts are involved*: Researching the early statehood of Judah/Israel is especially complex if biblical texts are involved. This fact also applies to the Shephelah because biblical passages frequently refer to this region. Contrary to the conclusion that biblical historiography is simply wrong, it is more appropriate to promote more nuanced interpretative methods that take account of anthropological insights into community identity-building and consider retrospective and commemorative memory that is based on a mnemohistory in which forgetting

⁷³ For a list of sites with jar handles having thumb impressions, see Hoo-Goo Kang and Israel Garfinkel, "The Early Iron Age IIA Pottery," in *Khirbet Qeiyafa*, Vol. 1, 144.

⁷⁴ I am grateful to Professor Oded Lipschits for giving me advice on this topic.

(*amnesia*) and semi-historical remembering (*anamnesis*) play a critical role.⁷⁵ Incorporating these methods would facilitate interdisciplinary dialogue in which the landscape of the Shephelah during Iron Age I and IIA and the emergence of the early Kingdom of Judah could be investigated in terms of one another.

6. *Trends in scholarship*: In keeping with the comments concerning the complexity and pitfalls of general patterns, this study will conclude by using the metaphor of the pendulum as an image of the debate that is currently going on with regard to the emergence of Judah/Israel. This debate is swinging like a pendulum, passing through positions that have been labelled “progressive,” “scientific,” “conservative,” “counter-revolutionary” or “highly literary” with regard to the interpretation of biblical texts. Although it is not clear which position will appear to be the “right” one in the end, there is growing hope that a more precise and sustainable scholarly model of the historical development of Judah/Israel in the Shephelah lies on its trajectory.

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⁷⁵ Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies (Cultural Memory in the Present)* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005); Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); and M. S. Smith, *The Memoirs of God: History, Memory and the Experience of the Divine in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 115

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