

LET THE

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ARMSTRONG INSTITUTE OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

STONES SPEAK



JULY-AUGUST 2023

LETTERS FROM ANCIENT JERUSALEM



LET THE STONES SPEAK

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The 2023 Ophel excavation crew
AUBREY MERCADDO/ARMSTRONG INSTITUTE OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY



FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR | BRAD MACDONALD

Another Ophel Season Complete!

ON AUGUST 3, WE CONCLUDED THE SIXTH PHASE of the Ophel excavation in Jerusalem. We first began excavations in this area in 2009, working alongside the late Hebrew University archaeologist Dr. Eilat Mazar.

Like the digs prior, this excavation was carried out in partnership between our institute (the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology) and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's Institute of Archaeology. This excavation was led by Hebrew University archaeologists Prof. Uzi Leibner and Dr. Orit Peleg-Barkat, both of whom are not only outstanding archaeologists but excellent leaders and natural-born teachers.

This summer's excavation was one of our largest since the 1970s, when Eilat's grandfather, Prof. Benjamin Mazar, excavated in partnership with our namesake Herbert W. Armstrong and his Ambassador College students. This year, we were joined for part of the season by students from Hebrew University of Jerusalem and New York's Yeshiva University. It was a pleasure working with both schools, and we would be pleased to work with them on future excavations.

In addition to these universities, we were joined by enthusiastic volunteers from around the world. Our Ophel excavation team consisted of individuals from Israel, the United States, Canada, Australia, the Netherlands and New Zealand. We were also joined by a fantastic team of Palestinian workers from Hebron.

In a nation and city often marked by tension and divided by race and religion, the Ophel dig was a sanctuary of unity and peace. It was wonderful to see individuals from around the world—Jews, Christians, Muslims and

others—work together in the spirit of cooperation to unveil ancient history that is important to us all.

We are extremely excited about the developments underway at the Ophel. This area received a lot of attention in the 1970s but has since been somewhat overlooked and forgotten. Perhaps this is understandable, considering the remarkable and important developments occurring in the nearby City of David and just up the hill in and around the Western Wall Plaza. But this is changing, and the number of people who recognize the importance of this eastern Ophel area is growing.

We have been talking a lot with Hebrew University and the Israel Antiquities Authority about the Ophel and how the area can be made more accessible to locals and tourists alike. If you can, I encourage you to visit Jerusalem, particularly the City of David and the Ophel. There is no other place on Earth like it. If you come, be sure to request a tour from one of our institute representatives. (You can book a tour by visiting ArmstrongInstitute.org and clicking the Tours tab.)

The location of the Ophel dig is stunning. It is situated adjacent and south of the Temple Mount, just a couple hundred yards east of the Western Wall along the Ophel Road, with fabulous views of the Mount of Olives, the Kidron Valley and the City of David. These views alone drive home the reality that you are standing in the heart of ancient Jerusalem.

The Ophel was originally acquired (and perhaps partially developed) by King David (2 Samuel 24:18-25). When Solomon became king in the 10th century B.C.E., he commenced a massive northward expansion of the City of David. On the Ophel, King Solomon constructed his

impressive palace (which the Bible relates took 13 years to build), a massive royal armory (see 1 Kings 7), a series of fortification walls and gatehouses and, most notably, the adjacent temple and its associated structures. The Bible says that subsequent kings of Judah (particularly Uzziah, followed by his son Jotham) added to Solomon's royal Ophel complex (2 Chronicles 26:9; 27:1-6).

The Ophel was the seat of Israel's (then Judah's, following the separation of the united monarchy) government and religion for roughly 400 years, from the middle of the 10th century B.C.E. to Jerusalem's destruction in 586 B.C.E. The area remained the nucleus of Jewish politics and religion throughout the Second Temple Period all the way up until Jerusalem's 70 C.E. destruction. And some 1,900 years later, in 1949, it became the capital of the Jewish nation once again.

Most of our archaeological work on the Ophel with Dr. Eilat Mazar focused primarily on revealing the First Temple Period. However, before you can excavate First Temple Period material, you have to excavate later periods that typically cover and obscure the earlier, lower layers. This was the case with our 2018, 2022 and 2023 digs, where we excavated Islamic- and Byzantine-period remains before reaching earlier, Second Temple Period, Herodian and Hasmonean material.

Last year, we further exposed the monumental Herodian structure first discovered in the area in 2013. Along the way, we uncovered some amazing artifacts, including remains of the 70 C.E. destruction, hundreds of coins, various small finds and impressive drainage channels relating to a complex purification bath (mikveh) system.

The goal this summer was to continue to reveal this monumental Second Temple Period structure and related material. This dig was significantly larger than the last, both in terms of size and number of people involved. Much of the effort this summer involved the removal of Byzantine structures built on top of the Second Temple Period building (Area D).

In addition to this, Armstrong Institute staff member Christopher Eames led a small team in continuing the excavation of subterranean drainage tunnels that are connected to the mikvehs and the Second Temple Period structure (Area D1). Further, we opened two new areas of excavation (Areas E and F), which provided more finds from the Second Temple Period—namely, the Herodian, Hasmonean and Hellenistic periods—and even some First Temple Period remains.

In the pages that follow, we give a short tour of the site with an overview of some of the artifacts discovered this season. To learn more about the 2023 excavation, visit ArmstrongInstitute.org/913. This year, for the first time, we blogged the excavation on our website, posting photos

and videos. This blog was extremely well received, and we hope to do it with all our future excavations. We are grateful to Professor Leibner and Dr. Peleg-Barkat for opening up the site to the public like this.

Finally, I want to tell you about another exciting upcoming project. At the end of December, the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology will be opening our third major archaeological exhibit in Armstrong Auditorium, at our headquarters location in Edmond, Oklahoma. In 2012, we created the "Seals of Jeremiah's Captors Discovered" exhibit, which featured the bullae of the princes Jehucal and Gedaliah (which we found in the 2005–2008 City of David excavations), individuals responsible for persecuting the Prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 38:1). In 2018, we created the "Seals of Isaiah and King Hezekiah Discovered" exhibit. This world-premiere exhibit featured the seals of King Hezekiah and Isaiah (which we found on the 2009–2010 Ophel excavation).

This next exhibit will showcase the history of Israel during the reigns of kings David and Solomon. Like the previous two exhibits, we plan to feature some truly extraordinary artifacts from the 10th century B.C.E., particularly from Dr. Eilat Mazar's City of David and Ophel excavations, as well as from Prof. Yosef Garfinkel's Khirbet Qeiyafa excavations. We are very excited about this exhibit and believe it might be the most important one yet.

Unfortunately, the history and archaeology related to these archaeological sites, and to David and Solomon, is too often filled with excessive cynicism and controversy. Many of these artifacts, however, speak to the biblical account of the power and strength of Jerusalem and Judah during the 10th-century B.C.E. reigns of David and Solomon.

The exhibit will open at the end of December and will likely run through October. We are still finalizing the details, but we hope to open the exhibit with a special concert and presentation. Just like this magazine, admission to the exhibit will be free of charge. We will provide further details in the next issue and on our website, ArmstrongInstitute.org. If you have further questions, please e-mail letters@armstronginstitute.org.

Even now, we are making plans for the next excavation season on the Ophel during the summer of 2024. And we are in talks to conduct a further Iron Age/First Temple Period excavation in another, adjacent southern part of the Ophel in the near future.

Great developments are happening in the world of biblical archaeology, and we feel privileged to be able to participate, operating from the city at the center of it all—*Jerusalem*. ■

EXPLORE THE 2023 OPHEL EXCAVATION

AREA F

AREA E

EXCAVATION OFFICE

AREA D

AREA DI

SEE MORE ►►

PHOTO: JEFFREY M. HARRIS / JEFFREY M. HARRIS PHOTOGRAPHY

Area D during excavation



Supervisor: Amir Cohen-Klonymous
Assistant: Akiva Goldenhersh
Team: 16

The 2022 excavation revealed that the monumental Second Temple Period building extended northwest beneath a dense collection of large Byzantine buildings. Since the Byzantine period is well represented throughout the Ophel (as opposed to Second Temple Period structures), Israel's authorities approved the removal of select Byzantine buildings to further expose the monumental structure from almost 500 years earlier. Removing these Byzantine structures was the main focus of the 2023 excavation and proved to be a much more extensive effort than originally planned.

Excavation of the Byzantine building revealed two distinct floors, which shows it was constructed in two main phases. Significant quantities of pottery were collected and taken to the lab at Hebrew University for restoration. We did not begin to further expose the monumental structure until the last few days of excavation, when an impressive vaulted chamber started to appear in the eastern part of Area D, as well as an inner wall in the western part. The Herodian vaulted chamber was oriented the same direction as the monumental structure. Although we uncovered only the top and side of the vault, we know it stands at a preserved height of over two meters from the floor of the monumental building.

Small finds include hundreds of coins, several ornately carved stone architectural fragments, numerous Byzantine items carved or embossed with crucifixes, ostraca, several complete oil lamps and other complete vessels, and more.



Ostrakon



Byzantine Oil Lamp



The ceiling panel in situ

ORNATE HERODIAN-PERIOD CEILING PANEL

This amazing discovery was made on one of the final days of excavation while removing a Byzantine wall. The ornate carvings include four separate rosettes, which is a well-known motif from the Herodian period, particularly on the Ophel. Originally, this ceiling panel would likely have adorned the ceiling or lintel of a small room in an important structure. According to dig codirector Dr. Orit Peleg-Barkat, one of the world's foremost experts on Second Temple Period architecture, this Ophel ceiling panel is the most impressive ever discovered in Jerusalem.



**Chancel Screen
Fragment**



**Byzantine
Potsherd**



**Clay Horse
Model**



**Byzantine
Oil Lamp**



**Decorated Stone
Architecture**



**Decorated Stone
Architecture**

COINS!

Hundreds of coins were found across the entire excavation this year. Almost half of these came from Area D. At certain times during the excavation, three metal detectors were in use concurrently over the dig site. These coins have been taken to the lab at Hebrew University and will undergo cleaning. Then they will be analyzed for their date and relative importance. Beyond their intrinsic value, coins have great archaeological value as they help date the archaeological layer (dating material using coins is more accurate than dating material using pottery or even carbon dating). In the 2022 season, a rare silver half-shekel coin from the third year of the Jewish revolt was discovered. Hopefully, such another rare coin is among the hundreds found this season.



AREA D1

Supervisor: **Christopher Eames**

Assistant: **Shoham Buskila**

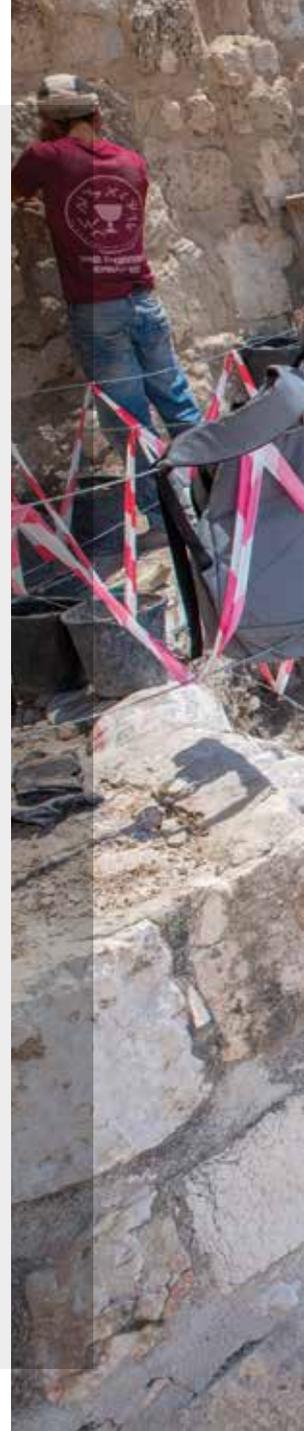
Team: 5

As it has in the past, Area D1 furnished several surprises. Area D1 is a subterranean drainage system consisting of a series of tunnels that carried water from mikvehs (purification baths) built under the grand Second Temple Period monumental building. The tunnel system also makes up a significant foundational part of the upper monumental structure.

The 2022 excavation removed later period fills within the tunnels. This season was primarily conducted outside the tunnel, with the purpose of exploring a barely visible, blocked-off continuation of the tunnel toward the northeast.

During the 2023 season, we were able to expose only around four meters of this tunnel. Our efforts were inhibited by the fact that no ceiling capstones were found, which would have allowed safe passage through its continuation. Instead, the drain had to be followed by excavating sections through above layers of earth and stone, to a depth of around 3½ meters. Given the small Area D1 team (three full-time diggers, besides supervisors), this was a monumental undertaking. Some stellar work was accomplished to follow the drainage system for these four meters. Additionally, several plaster floor layers of the existing drain were excavated in order to provide a date of construction.

Despite not being able to follow the drainage system further, a significant architectural discovery was made in the area. We learned that the monumental building's drainage system—and apparently the building itself—was built atop an even *earlier* grand mikveh structure. This building was constructed using even more beautiful ashlar stones and hewn steps. It remains to be seen just how much earlier this Second Temple Period structure was and how much of it was made redundant by the construction of the later, but still Second Temple Period, drainage system and monumental structure. We await numismatic, plaster and pottery analyses to give us an indication. We also anticipate further, pinpointed excavation in the coming 2024 season.



FINDS

Area D1 was rich in small finds, with numerous Herodian- and Byzantine-period oil lamps, evidence of some form of bone-cutting industry, numerous ornate bone hairpins, a Byzantine tabun (oven), a small ostrakon, dozens of coins, and the ark of the covenant (just kidding). The coins will prove crucial for dating purposes. This year, the D1 team also excavated through the several floor layers of the entire drainage system exposed last year. Coins found within the lowest plaster levels will help provide not only an important date for the drains but, more importantly, the entire monumental structure above that is built into it.



Byzantine Oil Lamp



Area D1 during excavation



Bone Hairpin Piece



Ostrakon



Bone Inlay



Coins and Bone Hairpin Piece

AREA E

Supervisor: **Noa Goldberg**
Assistant: **Nadav Rozenthal**
Team: 15

Area E was excavated in the 1970s by Prof. Benjamin Mazar. Restoration work was then overseen in the 1980s by Meir Ben-Dov. Before her death in 2021, the late Dr. Eilat Mazar had been trying to attain a license to excavate this area because of its promise to find Second Temple Period (or earlier) remains. Area E was opened for the first time this season, and it did not disappoint.

Area E was also a tutorial excavation to teach first-year Hebrew University students, along with other volunteers, about archaeological practice. After squares were marked out and assigned, excavators almost immediately began finding Second Temple Period fills. While the area is extremely complicated, the biggest surprise was the discovery of several walls in the northwest of the site that likely predate the Herodian period. Next season, it is hoped to expand the excavation area to the north to further uncover the purpose and function of the Hasmonean-period walls.



HASMONEAN PERIOD SLINGSTONE

Several lead slingstones were found in the Ophel excavation. Area E's example is the most impressive, as it features a winged thunderbolt (symbolizing Zeus), known from other sites to date from the time of Seleucid ruler Antiochus VII.



COMPLETE HERODIAN PERIOD BOTTLE

While excavating underneath a small limestone floor in the eastern side of Area E, a volunteer from Montana uncovered a complete bottle dating to the Herodian period. The bottle likely held precious oil or perfume.



AREA F

Supervisor: **Ido Zangen**
Assistant: **Amihai Lifshitz**
Team: 7

The "Monastery of the Virgins" (named such in classical sources) is a large, Byzantine-period structure located on the northern Ophel. While exposing the structure in the 1970s, Prof. Benjamin Mazar noted the possibility that its earliest, foundational remains were Herodian. Area F was opened to test this hypothesis with two small probes. These proved that the structure was entirely Byzantine—not built upon earlier



Area E after excavation



Area E before excavation

A F



Area F before excavation



Area F after excavation

Herodian foundations. However, surprisingly, in both of the probes, earlier carved bedrock elements were discovered that follow the Second Temple Period and earlier orientation that is offset by 45 degrees from the Byzantine-period structure. These include a plastered installation that is likely part of a cistern. Among the other surprises of this area were finds from the late Roman period (second to third centuries C.E.).

SMALL FINDS



Glass Fragment



Ostrakon



Roman Legion Brick



Roman Legion Brick

First Temple Period Jerusalem: Unmatched Administrative Powerhouse

Findings from a new corpus of Jerusalem's Iron Age II/
First Temple Period inscriptions BY CHRISTOPHER EAMES



The following article is a summary of a presentation by Christopher Eames at the Second International Conference of the Roger and Susan Hertog Center for the Archaeological Study of Jerusalem and Judah. Titled “Epigraphy in Judah,” the conference was attended by some of the world’s foremost epigraphers. The full academic paper on which this presentation was based will be published at a future date in the *Jerusalem Journal of Archaeology*.

DEBATE SURROUNDING JERUSALEM’S power, as the capital of a united Israelite monarchy and later as capital of the southern kingdom of Judah, has raged for as long as archaeology has been practiced, especially over the past several decades. The biblical account of First Temple Period Jerusalem (circa 1000–586 B.C.E.) spares no detail and makes no apology: Jerusalem, particularly under the reigns of David and Solomon (10th century B.C.E.), was the dominant city in the region, powerful in administration, with unfettered control over a broad territory.

It has become somewhat chic in the world of archaeology, however, to look down on the First Temple Period city as comparatively insignificant—*especially* during the time of David and Solomon. In the words of Prof. Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, Jerusalem went from a “modest highland town of about 10 or 12 acres” during the first half of the First Temple Period (Iron Age IIA) to “an area of no more than 150 acres” by the end of the First Temple Period (Iron Age IIB)—“hardly more than a small Middle Eastern market” (*The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology’s New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*, Pages 243 and 3).

In the critic’s view, the city (and wider Judean territory) could not hold a candle to the mighty northern kingdom of Israel and its own capital, Samaria. According to Finkelstein and Silberman, *Samaria*—quite unlike Jerusalem—was an “impressive,” “opulent,” “stunning” capital that “bespoke wealth, power and prestige”; it was the “most grandiose architectural manifestation of the rule of Omri and Ahab”—a “vast royal compound,” built with “daring innovation” on such an “enormous” scale that “can be compared in audacity and extravagance ... only to the work that Herod the Great carried out almost a millennium later.”

Jerusalem’s physical size and grandeur—especially during the 10th century B.C.E.—has become a

particularly hot topic of discussion over the past 20 years, thanks, in particular, to the remarkable discoveries of the late Dr. Eilat Mazar in the City of David and on the Ophel (discoveries made since the publication of Finkelstein and Silberman’s controversial book). But size is not the only measure of a city’s significance. Consider modern capitals, like the United States’ Washington, D.C., Australia’s Canberra, New Zealand’s Wellington. These cities rank on the lower end of the scale for size and population.

A far more important measure for a capital city is its *administrative power*. This is revealed in particular by its administrative media: inscriptions.

No other Iron Age II/First Temple Period city in Judah, Israel or surrounding Levantine neighbors comes anywhere close to the number of discovered inscriptions, administrative and otherwise, as those found in Jerusalem.

Over the years, various corpora of inscriptions from various periods and geographic regions have been compiled. As yet no single corpus exists to collectively illustrate all First Temple Period/Iron Age II inscriptions found in Jerusalem. This effort, based on an exhaustive combing of existing corpora, excavation reports and individually published articles, seeks to fill that void.

This (forthcoming) corpus will only include items of known provenance that have been officially published and found within the geographic boundaries of the City of David, Ophel, Temple Mount, Old City and adjacent valleys (i.e. Hinnom and Kidron).

The results highlight a Levantine city unmatched in archaeologically attested administrative power across the *entire* span of the First Temple Period, including the earliest phase of the city’s function as capital, during the 10th century B.C.E.

Below is a brief, preliminary summary of the findings in popular format, listed according to respective inscription types.

Monumental Inscriptions

Among Iron Age Judean sites, Hebrew monumental inscriptions have only been found in Jerusalem. The sole *complete* example is the Siloam Inscription: This 132-by-24-centimeter inscription, discovered inside Hezekiah's Tunnel as text commemorating its completion, contains six registers of text made up of 57 words and 200 letters, and dates to the late eighth century B.C.E. This is the most widely known monumental inscription. Discovered in 1880, while the city was under Ottoman control, it is currently housed in Turkey's Istanbul Archaeology Museum.

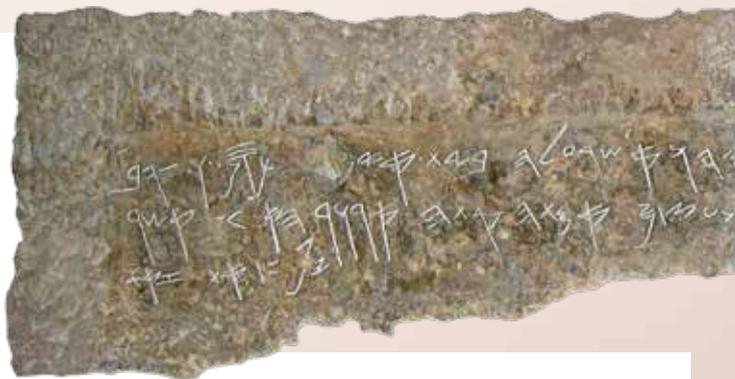
There are, however, an additional three fragments of other monumental inscriptions that have since been discovered in Jerusalem. One was discovered during Yigal Shiloh's 1979–1985 City of David excavations (12-by-8 centimeters, 4 registers, 8 words, 23 letters, circa 700 B.C.E.); one during Meir Ben-Dov's 1982 Ophel restoration work (27-by-24 centimeters, 4 registers, 6 words, 24 letters, early seventh century B.C.E.); and one during Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron's 1995–2010 City of David excavations (14-by-10 centimeters, 2 registers, 3 words, 6 letters, eighth century B.C.E.).

These four monumental Hebrew inscriptions have a combined total of 16 registers of text, containing 75 words made up of 253 letters. (Compare this with Samaria, where one single fragment of a single monumental inscription bearing a single register of text with a single three-letter word—אשר “which”—was found.)

Funerary Inscriptions

In what could justifiably be classed as additional “monumental” inscriptions, four large (or once-large) First Temple Period funerary inscriptions have been discovered in Jerusalem within the Silwan necropolis on the edge of the Kidron Valley.

The most complete of these tomb lintel inscriptions, from Tomb No. 35 (Longer), is that of the “Tomb of the



Tomb of the Royal Steward Inscription

Royal Steward.” This inscription, currently housed at the British Museum, is popularly linked to the account of the steward Shebna in Isaiah 22. Though the name on the inscription has been defaced, the titles of the individuals are exactly the same—אשר על הבית. Both texts contain curses, both date to the same period, and the Isaiah passage condemns Shebna for “hew[ing] thee out a sepulchre on high ... a habitation for thyself in the rock” (verse 16).

Three other fragmentary inscriptions have been found: Tomb No. 35 (Shorter), No. 34 and No. 3. In total, there is a combined sum of eight registers of text, with 30 preserved (or restorable) words made up of 95 letters.

Amulets

Constituting arguably the most significant epigraphic finds ever made in Jerusalem are two small silver amulets: the Ketef Hinnom scrolls. Discovered in a seventh-century B.C.E. tomb on the edge of Hinnom Valley in 1979 by Dr. Gabriel Barkay, these two miniature scrolls contain the as-yet earliest known scriptural text. Ketef Hinnom I contains letter-for-letter identical text to that of Numbers 6:24-25 and Deuteronomy 7:9; Ketef Hinnom II contains text from Numbers 6:24-26. As such, these burial texts are often referred to as “priestly blessings.”

Despite the tiny size of these silver scrolls (27-by-97 millimeters and 11-by-39 millimeters, respectively), they contain a remarkable total of 30 registers of text, with 45 words made up of 162 letters.

Seals

Perhaps nothing speaks to “administration” as much as the prevalence of seals and their impressions.

A total of 32 epigraphic seals, containing 49 discernible names, have thus far been found in Jerusalem. Primarily of scaraboid form, these



Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron monumental inscription



Siloam Inscription



JERUSALEMITE POPYRI

Aside from the Negev desert regions, Israel's climate is not conducive to the preservation of ancient organic materials such as papyrus. Thus, we can only get a sense for the circulation of such documents based on their "ghost" remains on the backs of bullae that sealed them—the papyrus impressions.

Only three First Temple Period papyri fragments are known, all from the Dead Sea region. But perhaps fittingly, one of these fragments actually mentions "Jerusalem" by name, noting a shipment of wine to the city (and thus named, the "Jerusalem Papyrus").

Needless to say, these documents within the capital city—the papyri—would have contained by far and away the greatest percentage of textual material, of greatest textual significance. ■

Jerusalemite seals are made of various materials, including carnelian, agate, ivory, bone, steatite, phosphorite, limestone, bronze, hematite and lapis lazuli. These seals have been dated variously from the ninth to early sixth centuries B.C.E. and contain a combined total of 60 registers of text, with 62 words made up of 260 letters.

The significance of 32 seals is aptly highlighted by Reich and Benjamin Sass's 2006 article, "Three Hebrew Seals from the Iron Age Tombs at Mamillah, Jerusalem." They wrote: "Jerusalem, with *nine seals* ... is the site with the largest number of seals found in excavations, whether inscribed with Hebrew or another language. This phenomenon coincides with the fact that, in Iron Age II, Jerusalem was the capital city of Judah, the seat of the royal court and the temple of יהוה, and the seat of all institutions with extensive enough administrative needs to require the use of inscribed personal seals" (emphasis added).

If *nine* seals were cause enough to highlight the comparative significance of Jerusalemite administration over and above regional sites, this is more than triply the case today.

In total, 52 seals have been discovered in excavations at dozens of First Temple Period Judean sites (including Jerusalem). Most of these seals (46) are listed in Prof. Yosef Garfinkel and Anat Mendel-Geberovich's 2020 paper "Hierarchy, Geography and Epigraphy: Administration in the Kingdom of Judah" (plus an additional six seals). Thus, seals from Jerusalem alone represent nearly *two thirds* the total sum.

Bullae

Perhaps the inscriptions Jerusalem is best known for—in sheer quantity, as well as in their reference to biblical figures—are the *bullae*, or clay seal impressions left by the seals of officials. The names of the

biblical figures Hezekiah, Ahaz, Jehucal, Shelemiah, Gedaliah, Pashur, Gemariah, Shaphan, Hilkiyah, Azariah, Nathan-Melech and Isaiah have all been found on Jerusalem bullae (along with roughly a dozen or more additional names of lesser certainty).

A total of 162 bullae, with a combined total of 319 registers of text containing 377 words made of 1,275 letters, have been discovered from excavations in Jerusalem—and these are only the *epigraphic* bullae (bullae bearing text). A far larger number of primarily *iconographic* bullae (bullae bearing images) have been discovered.

For example, while Dr. Eilat Mazar discovered 57 epigraphic bullae in her City of David excavations, her full count was 256. From the City of David excavations of Reich and Shukron, 14 epigraphic bullae out of more than 170 bullae were found. Dr. Joe Uziel's City of David excavations produced a total of 13 out of 68. The list could go on. If iconographic bullae were included, our total count would be well over 600. These bullae date across the spectrum of the First Temple Period Jerusalem, from the 10th to sixth centuries B.C.E.

Indeed, *all* such bullae, whether epigraphic or iconographic, speak to a high level of literacy and administrative function. This is especially shown by the reverse side of these clay seal stamps: A majority of them bear *papyrus impressions*, showing that they sealed a large number of literary documents that were in circulation (more on this later).

In point of comparison: Lachish is often referenced as Judah's "second city." Lachish is even recognized for having a comparatively high number of bullae, as discussed in Garfinkel and Mendel-Geberovich's article. Yet against the many *hundreds*



of bullae discovered in Jerusalem, how many have been discovered at Lachish? A mere 23.

A final point about bullae. There is a certain classification known as “fiscal bullae” (the vast majority in this corpus are “private bullae”). Presently, a total of 35 fiscal bullae are known, almost all, regrettably, from the antiquities market. Still, a general belief is that they logically originated from Jerusalem. Of these 35, three (and arguably a fourth) are of known provenance: All are from *Jerusalem*.

Jar Handle Seals

In a similar manner to bullae, jar handles can often bear private or public seal impressions. Thirteen private jar handle seal impressions are known from excavations in Jerusalem, bearing 24 personal names (22 of which are unique). These 13 seal impressions, dating between the eighth to early sixth centuries B.C.E., have a combined total of 25 registers of text, containing 27 words made up of 105 letters.

Far more common, however, are jar handle impressions known as *lmlk* (למלך)—“Belonging to the King.” The exact function of these seals, which emerged during the reign of Hezekiah, is still debated. One common theory is that they were an administrative measure implemented in advance of the oncoming Assyrian invasion by Sennacherib.



LMLK Seals

In addition to the *lmlk* text, these seals typically bear the name of one of four cities: *Hebron*, *Ziph*, *Socoh* or *Mmst* (ממסט, a still-debated Hebrew word). They also bear a motif of either an Egyptian-style winged scarab beetle (compare with 2 Kings 18:20-21; Isaiah 30:1-3; 31:1-3) or a winged sun (compare with the motif on King Hezekiah’s bulla, Malachi 3:20—Malachi 4:2 in other, non-JPS translations—and Dr. Mazar’s belief that the bulla’s winged sun best relates to Hezekiah’s later life, post-healing—*The Ophel Excavations: Final Reports Vol. II*, Pages 255-256).

An accurate count of such seals is hard to come by, as they are relatively common and comparatively underreported. The dedicated website LMLK.com is sometimes cited in print, totaling 294 for excavations within Jerusalem. Unfortunately, this resource has not been updated in a while. Based on a review of subsequent excavation publications, it is safe to say that we

WOMEN OF JERUSALEM



THERE IS A FAIRLY COMMON modern assumption that during this “biblical period” there was some kind of a suffocating patriarchal system in place, oppressive to women and causing them to all but disappear from society. This decidedly is not the case, as both archaeology and the Bible illustrate (the latter as argued by Carol Meyers in her 2014 *Journal of Biblical Literature* article “Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society?”). At least, this certainly wasn’t the case in the capital, Jerusalem.

Of the 32 seals discovered in Jerusalem, at least four owners are

women. Further, if we compare the number of seals that *clearly* belong to women with those that *clearly* belong to men (excepting names that are too damaged to identify), we have a ratio of female-to-male stamp holders of 4:20, or exactly 20 percent. (In a 2006 paper, Dr. Gabriel Barkay submits an additional five Jerusalemite seals, not included in this corpus as they do not sufficiently fit the parameters of known provenance. However, if proved legitimate, they would bring the total to 37 for Jerusalem—and the fact that one of them also belongs to a female owner perfectly

fits with the 4:20 ratio!)

Consider also: Lachish is often cited as Judah’s “second city,” yet from Jerusalem we have as many female seal holders as we do seals from Lachish in their entirety. In fact, provenanced seals belonging to female owners are *only* known from Jerusalem.

Also of note is that one of the private jar handle seals mentioned in the article belonged to a female owner, and two ostraca make reference to women—one being a record of wheat or barley to be supplied to a list of female recipients. This, again, is the only such known

have a present minimum of 317 *lmlk* seal impressions from Jerusalem—but that number is likely much higher. The largest chunk of these, a total of 107, came from Kathleen Kenyon’s City of David excavations.

Ostraca

Jerusalem is not known for its quantity of *ostraca*—inked pottery sherds. The practice of using broken pottery sherds as a writing medium is most famously known from hoards at Samaria (102), Arad (over 200) and other sites. Still, 21 ostraca have been uncovered in Jerusalem, containing a total of 62 registers of text, with 102 words made up of 355 letters. Notable among them are administrative lists of names.

Actually, the comparative *lack* of ostraca found at Jerusalem compared particularly to other, smaller Judean sites is interesting from another angle. In their excellent 2020 article, Garfinkel and Mendel-Geberovich wrote: “*Prima facie*, this situation is paradoxical: Do marginal sites actually contain more evidence for writing than the kingdom’s main centers?”

“Evidently, most of the bullae come from Lachish and Jerusalem,” they wrote. “We argue that the distribution of ostraca and that of bullae are mutually complementary and compensatory. It was in the two major centers of the kingdom, Jerusalem and Lachish, that the holders of the highest bureaucratic positions

were active. They wrote on expensive papyrus and used their seals to seal them. On the other hand, at minor sites and in the kingdom’s periphery, papyrus was harder to come by and therefore minor officials working there wrote on potsherds, available in abundance in any ancient site. This explains the prevalence of inscriptions in ink on ostraca at minor sites and of bullae in the major centers.”

Thus, a prevalence of ostraca could actually be construed as a sign of administrative *poverty* (here’s looking at you, Samaria—again, *comparatively*)—as opposed to a rich, seal-stamped, papyrus-based administration.

Other Pottery Inscriptions

Around 60 pre-fired and post-fired, chiseled and inscribed pottery inscriptions have been uncovered in Jerusalem, dating from the 10th century to early sixth century B.C.E. They contain a combined total of 61 registers of text, with 72 words made up of 151 letters.

Notable among these are five inscriptions in the South Arabian Script—four from the City of David, dated tentatively to around the ninth century B.C.E., and one from the Ophel, dated to the 10th century B.C.E. The latter, recently identified and published by Dr. Daniel Vainstub as a South Arabian text referring to incense, has made headlines around the world; this is thanks to its implicated connection to the biblical account of incense trade between the South Arabian kingdom of Sheba and Jerusalem during the 10th century B.C.E. (see ArmstrongInstitute.org/901).

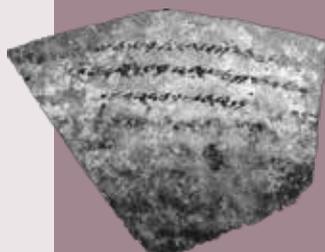
Other Inscribed Objects

Other notable inscriptions found in Jerusalem include a sizable (38-by-14 centimeters) cylindrical stone object containing a single register, four-word, 17-letter sentence. The stone piece, based on “edits” or “corrections” contained within the inscription, is believed to have been some sort of scribal exercise. Dated to the eighth century B.C.E., it was discovered during Shiloh’s City of David excavations.

Additionally, a cube-shaped bronze weight (a *pym*) bearing a three-register, three-word, 13-letter inscription was discovered in the topsoil of the Temple Mount. First published in 1903 by George Barton, Dr. Barkay

list of women in an Iron Age II archaeological context, leading Garfinkel and Mendel-Geberovich to conclude that “[a]pparently, only Jerusalemite women held high social and economic positions” (“Hierarchy, Geography and Epigraphy: Administration in the Kingdom of Judah”).

Perhaps such discoveries should not be surprising, however: The presence of women fulfilling certain high-ranking positions in Jerusalem is highlighted in the Bible, such as the prophetesses Huldah and the wife of Isaiah (2 Kings 22:14; Isaiah 8:3). ■



Ophel Ostracon



Pre-fired inscription

dates the item palaeographically quite early, to somewhere within the 10th to ninth centuries B.C.E.

The list of inscriptions could go on. This working corpus does not (yet) include the large quantities of inscribed, limited-character stone weights found in Jerusalem. Nor does it include the hundreds of “potters’ marks” and other such single-character inscriptions that have been discovered (many of which contain some form of x, +, n or o symbols; also jar handles bearing a 9 or 7 symbol, the latter suggested as signifying “korban”). Yair Shoham noted 304 such incised hands from Shiloh’s City of David excavations alone (*Qedem*, 41). Combining these additional inscriptions would surely put the total number of First Temple Period inscriptions found in Jerusalem into the *thousands*.

Still Only a Blinkered View

Even still, this only gives us an extremely blinkered view of the level of administration and literacy in the Judean capital. Again, this corpus is strictly limited geographically only to the very nerve center of Jerusalem—to the territory of, or directly adjacent to, the western hill/Upper City and eastern hill/Lower City. In immediate proximity, however, are several nearby, important First Temple Period administrative buildings whose function was directly connected to, and an outgrowth of, Jerusalem’s.

One such example is the eighth-century B.C.E. palatial complex recently discovered at Armon HaNatziv, overlooking the City of David from the south. Another similarly dated and proximate administrative compound is in Arnona, where excavations have recently furnished a trove of 124 *lmlk* seals and 17 private jar handle seals—the latter hailed in reporting as “one of the largest [corpora] exposed in excavations in the region of Judah.” Slightly further southwest, yet still within close proximity, is Ramat Rahel, another site known for its significant quantity of *lmlk* seals (around 200) and from which two inscribed seals have been found.

First Temple Period Jerusalem, as administrative capital, was no single, small, outlying city, and thus neither should it be solely examined as such. Certainly, comparison of such rich and varied epigraphic remains from the central city environs alone show Jerusalem to have been *incomparable* as an administrative powerhouse. Yet outside of its city walls was also a necessary administrative satellite support structure for managing the affairs of the state, and these, along with their inscriptions, should be considered jointly in assessing the significance and strength of the capital.

Answering Some Objections

Naturally, objections to this analysis of Jerusalem’s administrative power will (and have) come. One such

objection is that *Jerusalem has been heavily excavated*, hence the large number of inscriptions uncovered. This is true. Over the past century and a half, numerous excavations have taken place in the city. But the same is true at other locations around Israel—many of them on a large scale.

Jerusalem, however, is a *far* more difficult location to excavate. It is, in most areas, densely populated. Even in those limited areas that aren’t, politics and other factors make it incredibly difficult to carry out excavations. Further, most of these excavations in Jerusalem have been concentrated on much *later* period remains (Islamic, Byzantine and Roman). And excavating the Temple Mount, at the heart of ancient Jerusalem, is out of the question. Most excavations in the city have largely been piecemeal, in very select and restricted areas. On the other hand, for example, Tel Megiddo is a *massive* tel that is *entirely* open to excavation. The same is true at numerous other sites, such as Tel Dan and Tel Hazor—and the site of ancient Samaria.

But for argument’s sake, take any *single* excavation within Jerusalem, concentrating on Iron Age remains. Reich and Shukron’s City of David excavation produced 170 bullae; Uziel’s City of David excavation, 68 bullae; Mazar’s City of David excavation, 256 bullae; Kenyon’s City of David excavations, 107 *lmlk* seals; the recent excavations at Arnona, 141 jar handle seals. The list goes on.

Entire sites aside, are there any *single* excavations that so consistently compare?

A further objection, regarding the quantities of bullae found at Jerusalem, is that wet-sifting—a practice which has only come into vogue over the past two decades—has helped produce the abundance of administrative inscriptions. This, again, is true. But the practice of wet-sifting is not limited only to Jerusalem. And none of Jerusalem’s four monumental inscriptions were wet-sifted. None of the four large funerary inscriptions were wet-sifted. Neither was the trove of 51 bullae, one of the largest bullae hoards in Jerusalem, found during Shiloh’s excavations.

Jerusalem of David and Solomon?

It is true that *most*—but not all—of our referenced inscriptions date to around the eighth to early-sixth centuries B.C.E. Against the backdrop of the debate about the significance and administrative power of Iron Age IIA (10th century B.C.E.) Jerusalem—the period of David and Solomon—this could perhaps be seen as a validation for theories of a comparative *weakness* of the city, at least during *this* time period. Should this lead us to conclude that writing, scribal activity and significant administration only emerged in Jerusalem from the eighth century B.C.E. onward?

Quite the contrary.

This corpus has concentrated *solely on epigraphic finds*. We do still have several such items from the 10th and ninth centuries B.C.E.—still a significant amount compared to discoveries from other sites (something highlighted by Prof. Christopher Rollston in his 2017 article “Epigraphic Evidence From Jerusalem and Its Environs at the Dawn of Biblical History: Methodologies and a Long Durée Perspective”).

The majority of epigraphic remains from Jerusalem are in the form of seals and seal impressions. It is abundantly clear by now that such methods of administration—the use of epigraphic seals, seals containing either partly or primarily text—only really came into practice during the eighth century B.C.E. But this does not mean the practice of sealing documents was non-existent, nor even diminished, during prior centuries.

This corpus is concentrated on *inscriptions*. But even here we get a limited view of administration because it *does not include solely* ICONOGRAPHIC material. Prior to the eighth century B.C.E., administrative documents were still circulating within Jerusalem (and to a significant degree)—but during the Iron IIA period, they were being stamped by *iconographic* seals.

This is aptly demonstrated in Othmar Keel’s *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel* (2017, Pages 282-511). His corpus contains 65 such “glyptic” seals that have been found in Jerusalem, dated between the mid-11th and eighth centuries B.C.E.—the *majority* of them attributed to the 10th to ninth centuries. Of these glyptic seals, some contain hieroglyphs and a handful “pseudo script.” The majority, however, are purely iconographic. Actually, for this *earlier* period of First Temple Period Jerusalem, we have a significantly higher quantity of iconographic seals than we do epigraphic seals from the latter.

It is a similar story with the seal *impressions*—the bullae. Keel documents 176 bullae from this equivalent period that have been discovered in Jerusalem. Likewise, the majority are from the 10th to ninth centuries B.C.E. And again, in this case, we have more iconographic bullae from the *earlier* half of Jerusalem’s history than we do epigraphic bullae from the *latter*.

During the era of David and Solomon, stamps are in circulation and items are being stamped with arguably no less fury than during the later years of Jerusalemite development and administration.

To this end, even more consequential are the reverse impressions on these early bullae. It is unfortunate that for much of Keel’s corpus, impressions on the reverse side are either unidentifiable (due to damage), or otherwise not stated. Yet for those that are, the *majority* of these 10th-to-ninth-century bullae contain

papyrus impressions (47 in total). This shows that a significant quantity of *written documents* were being circulated among a necessarily literate Jerusalemite administration, during the very earliest period of the capital city.

Certainly, it is from the latter half of Jerusalem’s First Temple Period history that we have the largest quantity of strictly text-based seals and bullae. But that in no way, shape or form implies a lack of literacy or administrative ability for the *earlier* time period. We still have a large quantity of seals, bullae and, most significantly, papyrus-document impressions.

What is evident is that sometime during the eighth century B.C.E. there was *simply a change in Judean administrative method*—switching from largely iconographic seals to epigraphic. Whether this was a religious decision, a political one or otherwise remains to be seen. But it certainly was not one based on *literacy* or administrative strength.

One could compare this with our modern age. Many, if not most, of our seals, signet rings, etc are *motif-based*—family crests, symbols, designs—*not* the type of bland text found on many later, Iron Age IIB bullae. Does that make us any less literate?

In Sum

Where are such vast quantities of inscriptions from other sites? Samaria? Megiddo? Hazor? This article is not arguing that there were none, or even that there were an insignificant quantity. But if a paucity of finds is taken as “proof” of insignificance—as is often the case with Jerusalem (particularly of the 10th and ninth centuries)—then are we not to determine that such northern Israelite cities were at least comparatively poorer, administratively? That *Jerusalem* stands head-and-shoulders above the others as an administrative powerhouse?

Based solely on the sheer quantity of Iron Age II inscripational remains, *no* city, within the entire *Levant*, compares to Jerusalem. No other Judean city. No northern Israelite city. No Phoenician, Philistine, Moabite, Edomite or Ammonite city, capital or otherwise. Other such sites may be known for their quantities of individual epigraphic media, such as ostraca (for example, Samaria—though as we have seen, this medium can be described, if anything, as a mark of administrative *poverty*). Yet Jerusalem stands apart, unequalled in *quantity* and *variety* of inscripational remains, and with examples from *all* centuries—the 10th, ninth, eighth, seventh and early sixth centuries B.C.E.

Based on known epigraphic remains, First Temple Period Jerusalem stands chief among the cities of the ancient Levant as an unmatched administrative powerhouse. ■

Jerusalem's Inscriptions

Quantitatively and qualitatively, the city of Jerusalem has yielded up the finest array of Israelite/Judean First Temple Period inscriptions discovered within Israel. Below is a map of Jerusalem, showing the findspots of some of the more major and most famous epigraphic discoveries that have been made over the decades of archaeological exploration within the city.

	Number of Finds	Word Count	Individual Letters		Number of Finds	Word Count	Individual Letters
● Monumental Inscriptions	4	75	253	● Private Jar Handle Seal Stamps	13	27	105
● Funerary Inscriptions	4	30	95	● LMLK Jar Handle Seal Stamps	317	430	1658
● Amulets	2	45	162	● Ostraca	21	102	355
● Seals* *Epigraphic Only	32	62	260	● Pre-Fired and Post-Fired Pottery Inscriptions	58	72	151
● Bullae* *Epigraphic Only	162	377	1275	● Other (Stone/Metal Inscriptions)	2	7	30

Plus hundreds more potters' mark inscriptions, weights, and other single-character inscriptions.



● **Ketef Hinnom Scrolls**
Gabriel Barkay, 1979

VALLEY OF HINNOM

OLD CITY

Western Wall

Al-Aqsa Mosque



Monumental Ophel Inscription
Meir Ben-Dov, 1982



Pithos Inscription
Eilat Mazar, 2012

Hezekiah and Isaiah Bullae
Eilat Mazar, 2009-10
Plus 23 other bullae from Dr. Eilat Mazar's Ophel excavations



Ophel Road

Nathan-Melech Bulla
Gadot and Shalev, 2019



Jehucal and Gedaliah Bullae
Eilat Mazar, City of David 2005-07
Plus 55 other bullae from Dr. Eilat Mazar's City of David excavations



Gemariah and Azariah Bullae
Yigal Shiloh, 1982
Plus 43 other bullae from Prof. Yigal Shiloh's City of David excavations

Monumental Gihon Inscription
Reich and Shukron, 2007



Ophel Ostrakon
Macalister and Duncan, 1924



Royal Steward Inscription
Charles Clermont-Ganneau, 1870

Monumental Date Inscription
Yigal Shiloh, 1978



CITY OF DAVID

SILWAN



Siloam Inscription
Jacob Eliahu, 1880





Revolt Coins and the Fall of Jerusalem

Two recent discoveries highlight one of Jerusalem's most turbulent epochs. **BY GEORGE HADDAD**

THE GREAT REVOLT WAS A dramatic time for Israel. For four years (66–70 C.E.), the Jewish population put up fierce resistance against Roman rule, determined to establish their independence and defend their claim to Jerusalem. Few archaeological discoveries highlight the determination of the Jews at this time as vividly as revolt coins.

After the Great Revolt began, limited minting of bronze coins was granted to certain local rulers. To assert dominance and independence, Jewish rebels began minting their own currency.

Revolt coins were either made of silver or bronze. But the value of such a coin was greater than just the metal it was made with. “Coins are

very symbolic,” numismatics expert Dr. Yoav Farhi said in an interview with the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology late last year. “Striking a new coin was not unimportant; it provided the Jews an opportunity to develop their own national symbol. With this coin, it not only showed the Romans, ‘We can strike silver coins without your permission,’ it also replaced the somewhat offensive coins that were used for the temple tax.”

The Romans used depictions of animals, rulers and gods on their coins. The Torah, however, prohibits such images of deities and deified rulers. The Jews used vegetal and temple-related religious motifs. They also used the archaic Hebrew script for their coinage,

reinforcing their defiance and desire to return to their administrative roots from centuries past.

Two recent discoveries published shortly before Tisha B’Av—a day of mourning that commemorates the destruction of Jerusalem’s temples—are an important and sobering reminder of this history.

‘Holy Jerusalem’

A silver half-shekel coin, dating to the first year of the Great Revolt, was discovered in the En Gedi Nature Reserve.

For six years, the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) along with the Ministry of Heritage and the Civil Administration Archaeology Staff Officer have been conducting the “Judean



Pierced revolt-era coin found in the City of David



Silver Half-Shekel Revolt Coin found at En Gedi

Desert Survey.” This project aims to retrieve archaeological treasures before looters get to them.

On one side, the coin, which dates to 66–67 C.E., bears an inscription in ancient Hebrew script that reads, “Holy Jerusalem,” as well as an engraving of three pomegranates. The other side depicts a chalice with the Hebrew letter “aleph,” which indicates the coin was minted in the first year of the revolt.

Found at the entrance to one of the caves, archaeologists theorize that this coin, minted in Jerusalem, was in the pocket of a rebel and fell out during their escape to the desert.

“The discovery of the half-shekel coin is ... first-hand evidence of a turbulent period in the history of our

people 2,000 years ago, in a period of extremity and discourse that divided the nation and led to destruction,” IAA director Eli Eskosido said. “After two millennia we have returned to our country, and Holy Jerusalem is again our capital. The find of the coin at these times is a reminder for us of what happened in the past, teaching us the importance of working toward unity.”

‘Freedom of Zion’

Archaeologists working under the direction of the IAA unearthed remains of collapsed buildings when excavating what would have been the main street of Second Temple Period Jerusalem (now referred to as the “Pilgrim’s Road”). Inside the structures, archaeologists discovered charcoal, fragments of decorated stone vessels, a stone weight, a crucible for metal melting and a bronze bowl.

Perhaps the most fascinating discovery, however, was a second-year Great Revolt coin that bears the inscription: “For the freedom of Zion.”

A key feature of the coin that makes it especially interesting is a hole pierced through the center. Yaniv David Levy, a researcher in the coin department at IAA, said: “It is clear that the coin was intentionally pierced, and the hole was not the result of natural wear of the material. The coin was deliberately pierced to allow it to be hung. The identity of the person to whom the coin belonged will likely never be known, but preserving objects as souvenirs is not a new phenomenon.” It is clear that this revolt coin was hung (perhaps around the neck) as an item of pride.

IAA excavation directors Shlomo Greenberg and Rikki Zalut Har-Tuv conclude: “All these findings together paint a picture of the lives of the residents who lived in Jerusalem just prior to the destruction. To return to Jerusalem after 2,000 years and rediscover the remains of the destruction, especially in an excavation taking place shortly before Tisha B’Av, is a very moving experience that cannot leave us indifferent.” ■



New Evidence for King David's Kingdom: An Interview With Prof. Yosef Garfinkel

Hebrew University archaeologist Prof. Yosef Garfinkel recently published a paper presenting evidence that the kingdom of Judah was established by a centralized government at the time of King David. In June, Professor Garfinkel spoke with *Let the Stones Speak* assistant managing editor Brent Nagtegaal about his paper and the ongoing debate over King David and 10th-century B.C.E. Judah. The following interview has been edited for clarity.

BRENT NAGTEGAAL (BN): Professor Garfinkel, welcome to *Let the Stones Speak*. Your latest academic paper was published in the *Jerusalem Journal of Archaeology* and is titled, “Early City Planning in the Kingdom of Judah: Khirbet Qeiyafa, Beth Shemesh 4, Tell en-Nasbeh, Khirbet ed-Dawwara and Lachish V.” It’s quite an academic title, but the evidence you present has significant implications on our understanding of the time period of kings David, Solomon and Rehoboam. In the paper, you explain how some scholars claim that Judah’s expansion—contrary to what the biblical record says—began in the ninth century, or even as late as the eighth century B.C.E. But as you explained, the data you have uncovered presents a different picture.

PROF. YOSEF GARFINKEL (YG): It’s a big question of how you make theories and prove theories in archaeology. Many scholars like to believe the theories that King David never existed, or that there was no kingdom at the time of David. These theories are wasteful and totally without evidence. As an archaeologist, my job is to go to the field and collect data at important archaeological sites, data that will illuminate what really happened in the 10th century B.C.E.

So far, I have excavated three sites that relate to the 10th century B.C.E. The first two sites are Khirbet Qeiyafa and Khirbet al-Ra’i [see map]. Our excavation at Khirbet Qeiyafa shows that it was a big fortified city. We’ve discovered inscriptions, public buildings, metal objects and other material that prove it’s really a very large and important city. Our dig at Khirbet al-Ra’i, on the other hand, has revealed a small village. We have only six rooms from the time of King David. So together we have a city and a village from the time of David [10th century B.C.E.].

What are the implications of what we have found at Khirbet Qeiyafa? First, Khirbet Qeiyafa was built with specific urban planning. We have a casemate city wall. This is a city wall that has two

parallel walls. There's an outer wall, an inner wall, and in between we have rooms. It is in a way a hollow city wall. It is not as strong as a solid city wall. But on the other hand, it's cheaper and you can build it faster. So, there are advantages and disadvantages to this type of casemate city wall. But this is clearly what we have at Khirbet Qeiyafa. After doing further research, I discovered that we have similar urban planning in level four at Beth Shemesh.

BN: The excavation at Qeiyafa is important because you were able to use olive pits for radiometric dating to date the site to the early 10th century B.C.E., which is clearly the time period of King David. In your paper, you explain that the similarities between Beth Shemesh and Qeiyafa indicate that Beth Shemesh should also be dated to the 10th century B.C.E. So now we have two significant cities dated to the early 10th century B.C.E.?

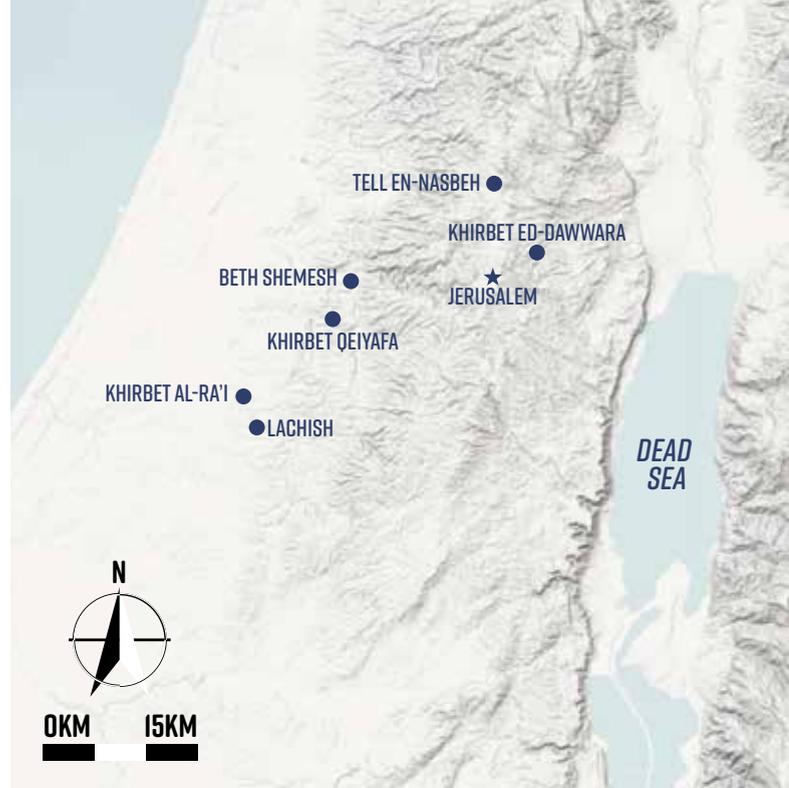
YG: Beth Shemesh is a very important site and has been excavated a number of times. There was an early excavation between 1911–1912 by Duncan Mackenzie in the Turkish period. And then Elihu Grant excavated it during the British time (1928–1933). And from the 1990s onward, another expedition, led by Israeli archaeologists from Tel Aviv University Shlomo Bunimovitz and Tzvi Lederman, took place over 20 or more seasons.

During the British expedition, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, a casemate city wall was found. At the time, Grant and G. Ernest Wright wrote in their final reports that they found a casemate city wall like in Tel Beth Mirsim and Tell ed-Nasbeh. So here we have two other sites with the same pattern. In the 1950s and 1960s, archaeologists such as Nahman Avigad and W. F. Albright also wrote about accepting the presence of the casemate city wall at Beth Shemesh.

More recently, the site was excavated by archeologists who have a minimalistic view. Unfortunately, they completely ignored the earlier archaeology. Instead, they claimed that level four was a village, and even said it was a Canaanite village. But the pottery and the carbon dating of level four is exactly like Khirbet Qeiyafa. But they ignored the casemate city wall. Yet when you add the city wall to the pottery and the other carbon dating, what do you get? Another city like Khirbet Qeiyafa.

BN: The geography of Beth Shemesh and Qeiyafa is important too, right?

YG: Both of them are situated on the western border of the kingdom of Judah and on a main route leading from west to east.



BN: And valleys?

YG: Yes, you have the Valley of Elah, where Khirbet Qeiyafa is located, and the Valley of Sorek, where Beth Shemesh is located. So, both sites are on the border, where you have a main route, and both of them have the same urban planning.

We have two more sites that are in the northern part of Judah. First, there's Tell en-Nasbeh. Some people identify this site with biblical Mizpeh, which is where the Prophet Samuel stayed. At Tell en-Nasbeh we also have a casemate city wall, which means the same urban planning. And where is this site? It is in Benjamin, in the northern border of the kingdom of Judah, on the main road leaving from the hill country, from Shechem and Samaria, into Jerusalem. So, it is the same pattern again, the same urban planning and the same location on the border. This is the third site.

The fourth site is Khirbet ed-Dawwara. This site was excavated more than 30 years ago. And again, it was published that this site was dated to the 12th to 10th century B.C.E. This would be the time period of the judges or maybe the first kings of Judah. Khirbet ed-Dawwara is a one-layer site. It is a small site, but there is urban planning and again you have casemate city walls and pottery just like that in Khirbet Qeiyafa. Remember, this site was excavated more than 30 years ago, before the dig at Qeiyafa, so the excavator didn't fully understand what he was excavating. But here we have another stronghold, and this one is also on the border, on a route leading into the kingdom of Judah.

BN: In your paper you combine two important observations. You combine the dating of certain structures and layers with the urban planning that is associated with that specific dating. Why weren't the earlier archaeologists stronger in dating these sites to the 10th century B.C.E.? Is it because they didn't have the understanding of pottery that we now have?

YG: I think the main lack was Khirbet Qeiyafa, which was built and destroyed after 20 or 30 years [thus enabling the dating window to tighten].

BN: And when did you excavate [Qeiyafa]?

YG: We excavated from 2007 to 2013.

BN: So this is relatively recent in terms of excavation history.

YG: Yes, Khirbet Qeiyafa is like a biblical Pompeii from the time of David. It was built and destroyed within 20 or 30 years, so everything inside it is from the time of David. This is the first time we have a kind of fingerprint of what the material culture from the time of David looked like: how the pottery looked, how the metal objects looked, what was the religion, what were the animal bones, what was the economy, what was the international connection. This was not known before. When you excavate a site that existed for 300 or 400 years, it is very hard to find 25 or 30 years. So, it was a kind of luck. In antiquity, it was a big catastrophe that Khirbet Qeiyafa was destroyed so shortly after it was built. But from an archaeological point view, it creates that biblical Pompeii from the time of David.

BN: We have a snapshot from 3,000 years ago. And what you have done is you have taken the finds from Khirbet Qeiyafa, which we know for certain are Davidic, and you have set them alongside these other cities. Then based on the similarities, you conclude that these other cities can also be dated to the 10th century B.C.E.

What about the urban planning? You mentioned casemate city walls. This is where two walls are parallel and perhaps rooms attached to them as well. Is the use of casemate walls Judean, Israelite or Philistine?

YG: There are no casemate city walls at any Philistine or Canaanite sites. Archaeology shows that casemate walls only existed in this period in Israel in sites that belong to the kingdom of Judah, and later to the kingdom of Israel. But there is one big difference between casemate walls in Judean cities and Israelite cities. In Judah, you have the casemate city wall, and you have the private houses abutting the city wall, and

Khirbet Qeiyafa is like a biblical Pompeii from the time of David. It was built and destroyed within 20 or 30 years, so everything inside it is from the time of David.

the casemate is part of the house. So, it means that the city wall is public, the houses are private and you combine public and private together. But when you study ancient cities in the kingdom of Israel, you have casemate city walls, but then you have a street and the houses starting after the street. So, the city wall is standing for itself. The urban planning between early Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel is clearly distinct, and this is important.

BN: Does the casemate wall style, architecture or urban planning go back before Iron IIA, before 1000 B.C.E.?

YG: Here in Israel, in the four sites I mentioned in my article, the casemate walls all date to around 1000 B.C.E. But we have casemate walls in Jordan that date a bit earlier. This too is quite interesting because tradition says that the Davidic family originated from Moab. So, maybe there was some influence from the area of Moab? Perhaps the casemate wall was not invented in Judah, but adopted from the Moabite people?

BN: Looking at these four cities, all of which can be dated to the 10th century B.C.E., you believe it is impossible to conclude that Judah expanded as late as the ninth century? What was happening in Judah in the 10th century? We've discussed that this was the time of David. Does the situation of these four distinct cities on the frontiers of Judah and the level of urban planning suggest the presence of a significant kingdom with a centralized government?

YG: Before David, in the time of the judges, we have only small villages. These were about 1,000 to 2,000 square meters, 1 dunam to 2 dunam (0.1 to .2 hectares). But now look at the new cities, these are 2 to 2.5 hectares. These urban centers are 20 to 25 times larger than the judges-era sites. It's a real revolution. People at this time aren't dwelling in small, tribal communities or extended families. They now live in a city. And in one city you can have four, five or 10 extended families. So it is a totally different way of social organization.

BN: Were these cities, in your opinion, created by a central authority or a merely a tribal authority?

YG: The fact that all of them have the same urban concept and that they are all sitting on the borders of the kingdom where a main route leads into Jerusalem, means it was a planned operation. You don't build a city here, a city here, a city here, and then suddenly you have the border of the kingdom. I think before they put the first stone, there was a concept about how this thing should be organized.

BN: You discuss a fifth city in your paper, the city of Lachish. Where does Lachish fit? This city is dated a bit later than the others?

YG: As my understanding about the early 10th century B.C.E. grew, I decided to start investigating the latter part of the 10th century B.C.E. The biblical text says that King Rehoboam fortified 15 cities in Judah. One of these cities is Lachish. So, I decided to go to Lachish and see if we can find a city wall or what happened in Lachish in the latter part of the 10th century.

Lachish was first a big Canaanite city. It was destroyed in the time of the judges. Then the city was not inhabited for about 200 years, and some people believe it was more like 300 years. So, Lachish wasn't inhabited during the second half of the 12th century, the 11th century and the first part of the 10th century. The last Canaanite city was level six, and after 200 years or so, they built a new level, which is level five. There is big debate about level five. Is it a fortified city or merely a village? And what time period is it dated to exactly?

BN: Level five had been discovered before you started excavating Lachish, but the consensus was that it was not fortified. Is that right?

YG: There was debate about it, yes. The first excavator said it was built by kings David and Solomon and destroyed by Pharaoh Shishak; and then level four was built by Rehoboam. This was one of the ideas of the first expedition. But if you look at all the different opinions, they vary from the early 10th century B.C.E. to the middle of the eighth century B.C.E.—250 years between the highest and lowest dating for level five at Lachish.

BN: This is the way archaeology was 30 years ago. But carbon dating has helped us get more accurate with our dating, right?

YG: I am not making new speculations. I said, "OK, let's go and see what has happened." We were the fourth expedition to Lachish. The three earlier expeditions worked in the southern, eastern and center regions of

the site. Almost nobody examined the northeast side of Tel Lachish. But I thought that this was the most important part of the city. Why? It's near the river. And the river is important because it gives you water and fertile land in the valley. This is also the main route leading from Ashkelon, the port city, to Hebron, in the hill country. Lachish is halfway between Ashkelon and Hebron. Caravans leaving the port city of Ashkelon could walk one day, stay in Lachish, do economic transactions, and then walk another day to Hebron. For this reason, I believed that this point close to the river would be the most important part of the city.

I wondered, "Maybe in the beginning, in the Iron Age, they built a smaller city" because the whole tel of Lachish is about 7½ hectares, which is rather big. I think it is logical that when they built the first Iron Age city, in the times of the kings of Judah, the first city was maybe three hectares or four hectares. And indeed, we excavated the northeast corner, and we found a new city wall that was not known before. Then we found houses abutting the city wall. We also found olive pits that we sent to be carbon-dated. These were dated to the latter part of the 10th century and the first part of the ninth century B.C.E.

Now we know that Lachish was not built by David and Solomon. It was built and used by Rehoboam. This fits the biblical tradition that Rehoboam fortified 15 cities in Judah, including Lachish.

If you look at the earlier fortified cities with casemate city walls, they are located up to a one-day walk from Jerusalem. Khirbet Qeiyafa and Beth Shemesh are a one-day walk. Tell en-Nasbeh and Khirbet ed-Dawwara are a half-a-day walk. But Lachish is much further away; it's a two-day walk from Jerusalem. Under Rehoboam, the territory was expanded.

It's also interesting to consider sites further to the south in the Be'er-Sheva valley, like Arad and Be'er-Sheva. In the 10th century, these sites were unfortified villages. But later in the middle part of the ninth century, they became fortified. The kingdom of Judah expanded over time. It didn't happen suddenly.

BN: You come to these conclusions separate from the Bible. However, the Bible shows that David initially ruled from Hebron. This indicates that Judah was already established 30 kilometers south of Jerusalem at the start of the 10th century. So, according to your model of expansion, would you expect to find similar 10th-century construction in ancient Hebron.

YG: I am trying to build a scenario on archaeological data. It is independent. I look at the facts, a city wall, a city

situated on a geographical border, the main routes leading into the kingdom. These are fixed and incontestable. And it's evident that they all belonged to the same wave of urbanism.

According to the carbon dating from Khirbet Qeiyafa and Beth Shemesh, they are from the earlier part of the 10th century B.C.E. The other sites where we don't have carbon dating because they were excavated much earlier, have the same pottery or the same urban planning. And then Lachish is different. When we were excavating level five at Lachish, the pottery is not like Qeiyafa. It is different. And not only the local pottery, also imported pottery from Cyprus. In Khirbet Qeiyafa, we have an earlier type of Cypriot vessel, which is decorated with "black on white." And then later in Lachish, in level five, we have "black on red." So the Cypriot pottery is earlier in Qeiyafa according to Cypriot archaeology, and later in Lachish.

The same happened with the local pottery because what we have in Khirbet Qeiyafa is the beginning of a new tradition, which is where you have red slip and irregular hand burnishing. In Khirbet Qeiyafa, it is very rare, but it is already there. When you go to Lachish level five, it is very common. So, you can see the development over time in the local pottery and the exported pottery from Cyprus.

BN: Have you studied any other tels or mounds? You have obviously gone back to see what they found at Beth Shemesh and these other sites after they were excavated. You didn't excavate them. You looked through their discoveries, their pottery. Are there any other cities with this 10th-century pottery on the periphery of Judah?

YG: I heard that they have an excavation now at Tel Burna, which is between Qeiyafa and Lachish; it also has early 10th-century B.C.E. pottery. But I don't know if it was fortified or not fortified. I haven't yet seen a meaningful report about these discoveries. But I am sure that there will be more sites.

Personally, I don't believe in exceptional discoveries because people behave in a pattern. The goal of archaeology is to find the pattern. When you find the first city, you don't have a pattern yet because it is just one. But after 10, 20 or 30 years, you can have the second example. And after another 10 or 20 years, you might have the third, the fourth and the fifth. And I think today we have enough examples that are pointing to a pattern. And this is what I think is so important in this article.

So far, I have published all the results of Khirbet Qeiyafa, but it was only one site. From one site, you don't

I've never worried about what other scholars might say. I am always saying, "We have fresh data. They have a collapsed theory." That's what has happened time and again.

have a kingdom. And now because it was possible to see the pattern also in four other sites, you really get a nice picture.

BN: I think it is just amazing because people know that archaeology has gone on for a long time. A lot of digging has gone on over the past 100 years here in the land of Israel. And yet here we are in 2023, and we have this dramatic discovery of a pattern, a model that shows Judah was established in the 10th century B.C.E. Do you feel like there is going to be pushback from some archaeologists?

YG: No, I've never worried about what other scholars might say. I am always saying, "We have fresh data. They have a collapsed theory." That's what has happened time and again. But I also think that sometimes people don't understand how archaeology works. Do you think it is possible for me to go to Washington, D.C., excavate and find the man Abraham Lincoln? It's not possible. So in a way, it is not possible to find David. But what do we see? We see the transition from a tribal community into a state, and we can see that it happened around 1000 B.C.E., the time of David. But we cannot have David himself. It is not possible in archaeology to find one person. And the same, by the way, with Solomon. You cannot find Solomon. But we have traditions that in the time of Solomon there were intensive royal activities—building activities in Jerusalem, like a palace and a temple. And in Khirbet Qeiyafa, we have a building model, an elaborate model, which has the same architectural features that appear in the Bible in relating to the building activities of Solomon. So, you can see that this type of royal building was known in Jerusalem at the time of David and Solomon.

BN: So you might not have found the individuals themselves, but you have found evidence that the state existed at the same time that the biblical record puts David and Solomon on the scene. Thanks very much for explaining this to us.

YG: You're most welcome. ■



Uncovering Khirbet Qeiyafa

Prof. Yosef Garfinkel's excavation of an ancient fortress city is uncovering some important biblical history.

BY ARMSTRONG INSTITUTE STAFF

KHIRBET QEYAFYA IS AN EXTREMELY UNIQUE SITE in Israel. Unlike most other ancient Israelite cities that have been excavated, this fortress site is relatively “easy” for archaeologists. This is because it only *briefly* functioned as a city and has only *one* principal layer of settlement (contrasted against Megiddo’s 26, for example). It has only one layer of destruction. Everything on the site, essentially, is from the same time frame (aside from some much later and less-extensive additions).

Let’s establish one thing from the start: Khirbet Qeiyafa has not definitively been linked with a specific city in the Bible (hence the commonly used Arabic name). A few options are on the table, as this article will describe. However, this special site, inhabited for only a short number of decades, does go a long way in establishing the context of the earliest (and much debated) years of the kingdom of Israel, during the time of King David himself.

Philistine or Israelite?

Khirbet Qeiyafa is a large fortified hill mound about 32 kilometers southwest of Jerusalem. It stood directly

between the geographic boundaries of Israelite and Philistine land, overlooking the Elah Valley, where the battle between David and Goliath occurred (1 Samuel 17:2). This fortress was established in a contested area. To whom did it belong: the Philistines, the Israelites or another culture?

Attempting to prove the ownership of this fortress has yielded some interesting information. Biblical minimalists claim that, at the time this structure was built, Israel was too small, lacking a centralized government, and therefore incapable of establishing such a monumental fortress. They assert that Khirbet Qeiyafa must have been built by Philistines or some other culture—but certainly not Israel. Bible traditionalists accept the biblical and historical view, and believe Israel was capable of producing a structure such as this and that the remaining question is whether this site served the Israelites or the Philistines.

Archaeological excavations at the site, led by Prof. Yosef Garfinkel from 2007 to 2013, have revealed thousands of animal bones. After the bones returned from analysis, an interesting revelation emerged: *None* of them were from pigs. In Philistine and Canaanite

cities (especially the former), pig bones are commonly found—pigs were used as food and probably as sacrifices as well. In this aspect, Khirbet Qeiyafa stands apart—and parallels *Judahite* sites, where little to no pig remains are found.

Linguistic evidence of the site’s residents included a large pottery sherd, or *ostrakon*, covered in ancient script that can be identified as an early Hebrew precursor. Structural evidence includes the fact that houses at Khirbet Qeiyafa were built abutting the city wall in what is known as a casemate plan, not found in Philistine or Canaanite cities, but unique to Judahite cities. The site also has no central location of cult worship within. Other artifact-based evidence includes the lack of idols present at the site—“graven images” are common to Philistine and Canaanite cities.

A number of olive pits were excavated from Khirbet Qeiyafa and carbon-14 dated. The analysis returned a date range of circa 1020 to 980 B.C.E., directly within the biblical chronology of kings Saul and David. (Roughly, Saul’s reign can be identified from 1050 to 1010 B.C.E., David’s from 1010 to 970 B.C.E., and Solomon’s from 970 to 930 B.C.E.)

The majority of collective evidence at Khirbet Qeiyafa, then, points to it being a Judahite site.

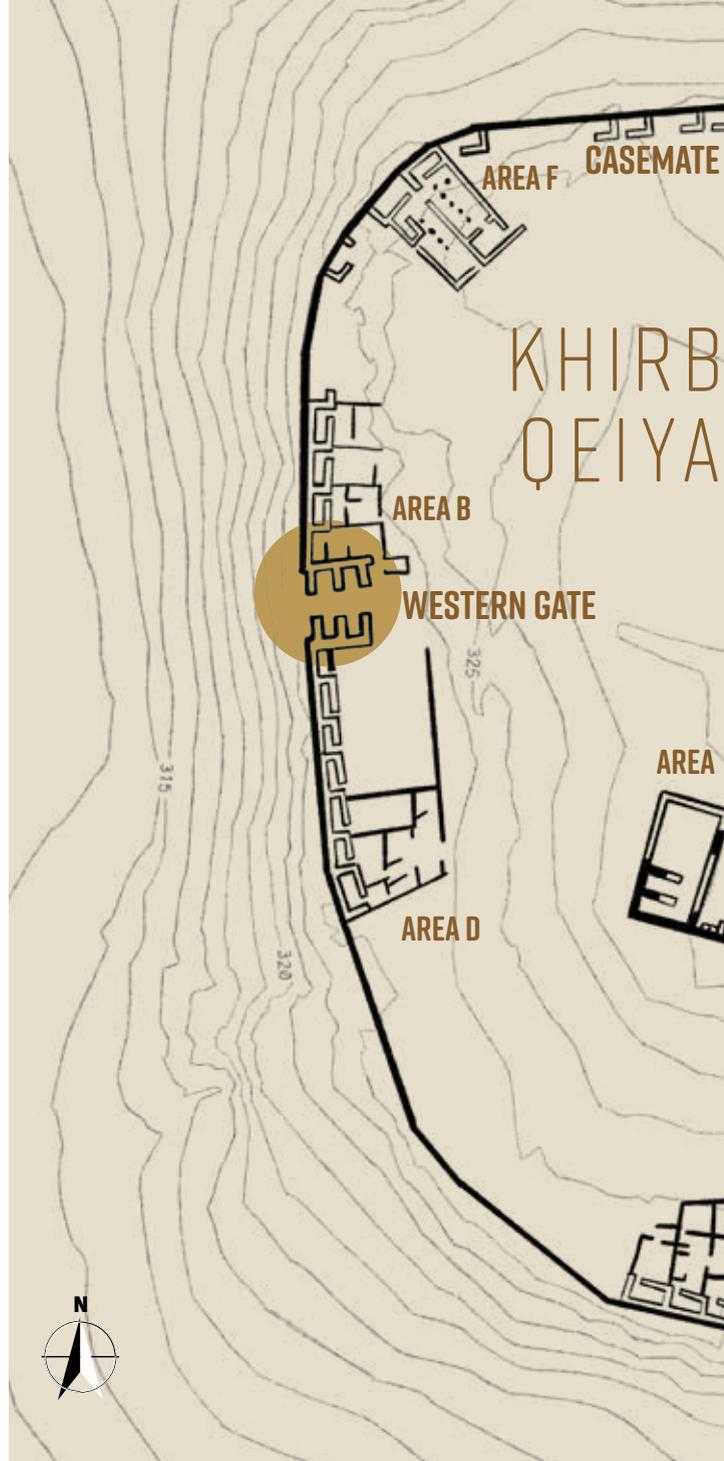
Dating to King David?

In light of this evidence, why the contention that Khirbet Qeiyafa was not Israelite? The reason is because of its dating. The city is dated by pottery and carbon-14 analysis to the late 11th to early 10th centuries B.C.E. This means the site was built around the time of King David (possibly even the time of King Saul). Minimalists claim that David was merely a tribal chieftain with minimal control over a small area of Israel at this time. That means that if a major fortress like Khirbet Qeiyafa is found dating to King David’s time, they conclude it must have been built by some other polity. Judahite-style pottery, building methods, missing pig bones, missing cult centers and missing idols notwithstanding, Such minimalists believe Khirbet Qeiyafa was not part of an Israelite kingdom because Israel—and especially the southern tribe of Judah—could not have had the national unity and infrastructure to necessitate or build this large fortress.

And yet the archaeological evidence, corresponding with the biblical record, reveals just the opposite. This was a powerful early fortress in the kingdom of Israel, guarding the nearby tribe of Judah’s border with the Philistines.

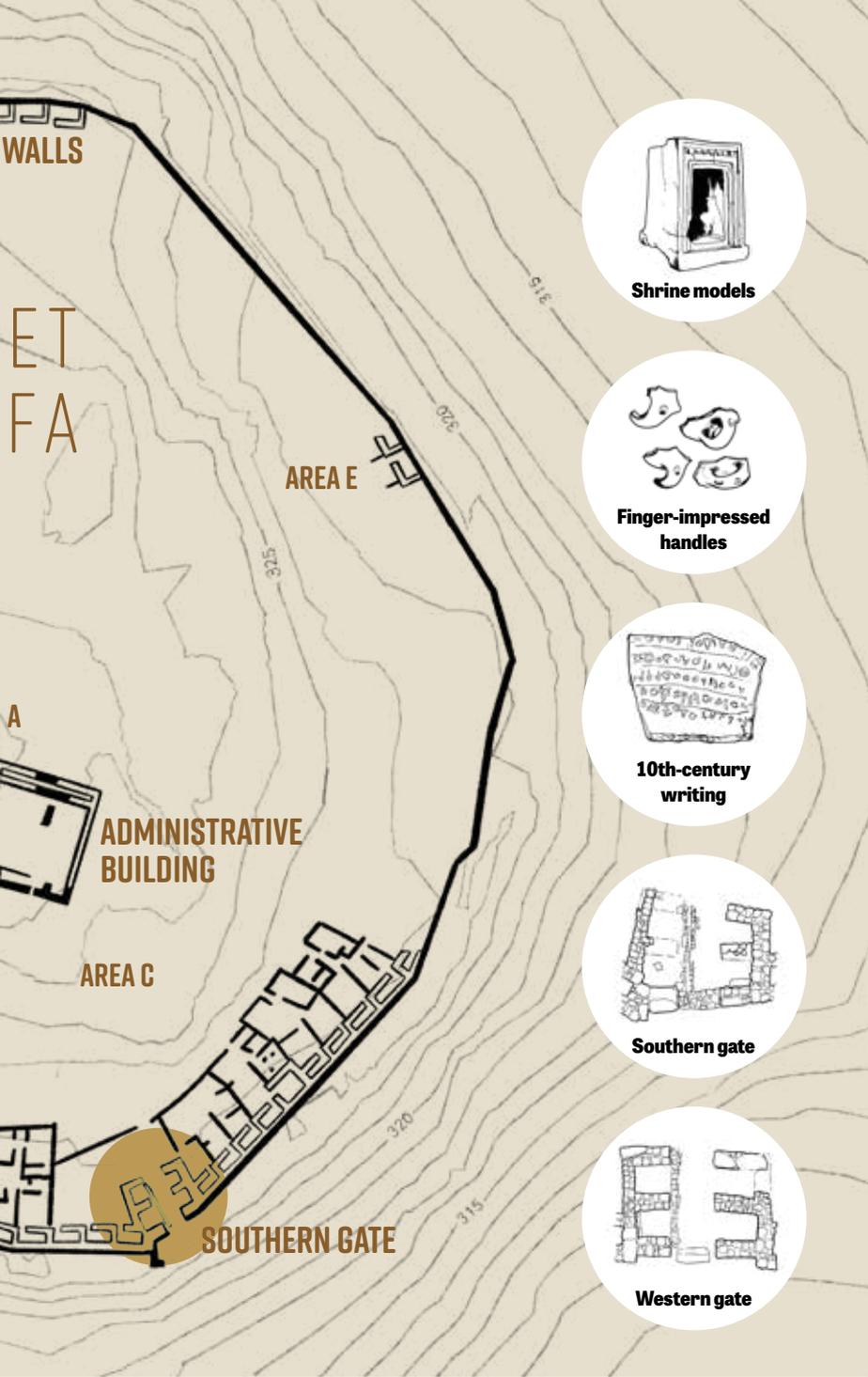
Biblical Equivalent

Is Khirbet Qeiyafa mentioned in the Bible? Archaeologists have presented certain possibilities. One is *Adithaim*, mentioned in Joshua 15:36. This



speculation is based on the cities listed in this verse following a precise geographic order: Based on the geographic location of other cities listed in this chapter, Khirbet Qeiyafa could be a fit for Adithaim.

Another possibility is Netaim. This city is referenced poorly in most English-language Bibles: “These were the potters, and those that dwelt among plantations and hedges; there they dwelt occupied in the king’s work” (1 Chronicles 4:23). The word “plantations” is actually the name of a city, Netaim. And the word “hedges” refers to the city *Gederah*. Based on Khirbet Qeiyafa’s nearby



Visit ArmstrongInstitute.org/visuals/619 to see our infographic on Khirbet Qeiyafa.

described.) Yet for some reason, Khirbet Qeiyafa has *two* identical, large, four-chambered gates—one on the south and one on the west. The reason the city had two gates is unclear, but what is clear is that this city certainly matches up with the name “two gates”: *Shaaraim*.

Shaaraim is mentioned in a few Bible verses, all in early contexts (thus corresponding to the early inhabitation of Khirbet Qeiyafa). It is mentioned alongside the city of Adithaim in the list of cities discussed in Joshua 15:36, showing Shaaraim was located in the same general geographic area.

Another reference to this city is recorded in 1 Samuel 17:52, which describes the aftermath of David’s battle with Goliath: “And the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued the Philistines, until thou comest to Gai, and to the gates of Ekron. And the wounded of the Philistines fell down by the way to *Shaaraim*, even unto Gath, and unto Ekron.”

Khirbet Qeiyafa directly overlooks the Valley of Elah, where this battle between David and Goliath (and the ensuing defeat of the Philistine army) took place. Thus, both the time frame and location fit for identifying Khirbet Qeiyafa as Shaaraim.

Another verse provides an interesting possible reference to this city. It comes earlier in the

story of David and Goliath. Verse 20 records David arriving with supplies for the Israelites encamped against the Philistines: “And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the *barricade*, as the host which was going forth to the fight shouted for the battle.”

This word for “barricade” (“trench” in the King James Version), *magal*, can mean a *circular rampart*. Khirbet Qeiyafa is a circular fortress atop a mound, or

KHIRBET QEYyafa PAGE 36 ►

location to Gederah spoken of in this same verse (these cities being near to the Valley of Elah), some speculate that Khirbet Qeiyafa could be Netaim.

The more commonly accepted name is the one chosen by the site’s excavator, Prof. Yosef Garfinkel: *Shaaraim*. Shaaraim means “two gates.” Khirbet Qeiyafa has the unique distinction of being the only known First Temple Period city equipped with two gates. Typical fortress cities were built with only one gate, since the entry and exit point is the weakest part of the installation. (Jerusalem is another case entirely, with many gates

THE SECRETS OF TEL SHIKMONA

Snails, stained pottery and the world's most sought-after color BY MIHAİLO S. ZEKIC

IT WAS A TRADE SECRET that its harvesters protected heavily. God commissioned Moses to use it in the most holy structure in ancient Israel. The Romans esteemed its value more than that of gold. What was it? Dye from a sea snail—specifically, the *murex*.

Murexes were harvested for the production of *argaman*, a purple dye highly prized as a luxury commodity. During the Iron Age (1200–586 B.C.E.), the Phoenicians, a seafaring people based in what is today Lebanon, had a near-monopoly on the production of this dye, also known as “Tyrian purple.” But *where* did they produce it?

The first ever *argaman* factory was discovered in *Israel*—at Tel Shikmona.

A Peculiar Location

Tel Shikmona is an archaeological site on Israel's northern coast, near the modern-day city of Haifa. Originally excavated during the 1960s and '70s, archaeologists didn't know what to make of it. It's not on an easily accessible harbor, making it a curious choice for a maritime settlement. It is fortified despite not being on any apparent strategic territory.

Starting in 2016, when the University of Haifa began the “Shikmona Early Periods Project,” scholars started piecing together what made Tel Shikmona so significant.

Large quantities of pottery fragments with Phoenician designs suggested a Phoenician, rather than Israelite, settlement. Analysis of purple-stained clay vats and other tools helped clarify Tel Shikmona's purpose: It was a mass production facility for Tyrian purple. And it is the first one from the biblical era to be discovered.

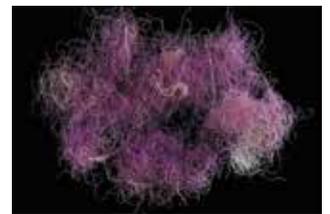
Tyrian purple was a prized commodity in the ancient world. The fourth-century C.E. Roman Emperor Diocletian, in his *Edict of Maximum Prices*, lists 1 pound of the dye as costing 150,000 denarii—three times the value of gold.

Tyrian purple was used in the construction of the biblical tabernacle. According to Exodus 26:1, the curtains of the tabernacle were dyed “blue, and purple, and scarlet.” Exodus 39:1 shows the garments of the high priest were also dyed purple. In 2 Chronicles 2:13, the Phoenician King Hiram sent an artisan “skilful to work ... in purple” for Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. The purple dye for these projects may have come from Shikmona.

THE FOURTH-CENTURY C.E. ROMAN EMPEROR DIOCLETIAN, IN HIS EDICT OF MAXIMUM PRICES, LISTS 1 POUND OF THE DYE AS COSTING 150,000 DENARII—THREE TIMES THE VALUE OF GOLD.



Pottery with purple stains



Fragment of rare purple fabric

This explains some of the peculiarities of Shikmona’s location. It lacks a harbor and is close to a rocky reef, which according to Prof. Ayelet Gilboa and Dr. Golan Shalvi, two of the main scholars affiliated with the excavations, “endangered any boat approaching the shore.” Tel Shikmona’s fortifications were designed to protect its valuable cargo. Additionally, its “maritime environment is one of the best [murex] habitats along the coast of the Southern Levant,” wrote Gilboa and Shalvi.

Shikmona’s strata date from between the 11th to the sixth centuries B.C.E. in 10 different layers. The vats date to all 10 different Iron Age strata, showing both the longevity of the site and the value of its commodity. The fact that Tyrian purple stains have survived on the vats up to now shows how long-lasting the luxury dye is.

We also have an idea of who the workers at Tel Shikmona were trading with. Archaeologists have discovered large quantities of Cypriot “Black-on-Red ware” at the site. This pottery style originated in Cyprus but has been found elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean. Cyprus was evidently a major trade partner. Meanwhile, Isaiah 23 verses 1 and 12 show Cyprus (under the archaic name *Kittim*) as a significant area associated with both Tyre and Sidon, Phoenicia’s two leading city-states.

But in these early findings, the mysteries of Tel Shikmona were only just beginning to be solved.

A Peculiar Influence

Much of the pottery found at the site was Phoenician style. This is unsurprising as Shikmona is in northern Israel, near Phoenicia’s heartland in Lebanon. But some of the site’s other aspects suggested influence from a different group of people.

Tel Shikmona contains a casemate city wall, a primarily *Israelite* construction made up of two parallel stone walls with a cavity between them. In times of siege, the cavity would be filled with sand and other debris, adding an extra layer of defense. Other tels that exhibit this feature include Megiddo and Hazor. Tel Shikmona also has Israelite-style three-room houses. Both architectural elements are normally found at inland sites.

What could account for Tel Shikmona having evidence of both Phoenician *and* Israelite occupation? Gilboa and Shalvi believe they may have an answer. They published their findings in June in an article for the *Journal of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University*.

The factory seems to have been rebuilt following destruction at the time of King Ahab. It is during this period (early-to-mid ninth century B.C.E.) when this composite Phoenician-Israelite material culture becomes especially apparent. Gilboa and



THAT JOSEPHUS CALLS JEZEBEL'S
FATHER KING OF BOTH TYRE AND
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RIVAL PHOENICIAN CITY-STATE.

Shalvi suspect that sometime during Ahab's reign, the northern kingdom of Israel conquered Tel Shikmona for its economic value.

"The Israelite kingdom recognized the amazing economic potential of the luxury trade in *argaman*, and they wanted a piece of the cake," Shalvi told *Haaretz*. But producing the dye "is a very traditional industry that requires deep knowledge of chemistry. Plus, it's very stinky work, and not everyone is willing to do it." While Israel maintained control of the site, it employed Phoenician workers.

Phoenician sites containing Israelite architectural influence are not unheard of. Phoenician colonies in Spain and North Africa show this. But the level of cultural overlap in Tel Shikmona, according to Shalvi, is unique.

There is, however, a wrinkle to this hypothesis.

A Strategic Alliance

According to the Bible, during Ahab's reign, Israel and Phoenicia weren't warring, but rather allied. This is best represented by Ahab's choice of queen: the infamous Jezebel, "the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians" (1 Kings 16:31).

"Zidonian" is an early modern English designation of the people of Sidon, one of the most powerful Phoenician city-states. The first-century C.E. Jewish historian Josephus calls Ethbaal "king of the Tyrians and Sidonians." This implies that "Zidonian" was a name used for Phoenicians in general, beyond the inhabitants of the single city of Sidon.

It seems unlikely that Ahab would go to war with a realm he was allying with through diplomatic marriage. It may be possible that the city was conquered by Ahab's immediate predecessor, King Omri. The Bible doesn't have many details on Omri. But 1 Kings 16:16-22 show that Omri was one of Israel's prominent generals and attained

power following a civil war. Verse 27 says his reign was illustrated by "might." He may have expressed some of this might in some coastal conquests.

Another piece of biblical evidence is found in 1 Kings 5. King Hiram of Tyre was a friend and ally of King David. This strategic alliance continued into King Solomon's reign. Solomon took advantage of Tyre's trade connections and skilled labor force. He asked of Hiram: "[C]ommand thou that [your servants] hew me cedar-trees out of Lebanon; and my servants shall be with thy servants" (1 Kings 5:20).

According to 2 Chronicles 2, one of Hiram's most valued craftsmen was of mixed Phoenician-Israelite heritage, suggesting a normalized population exchange (verses 12-13). 1 Kings 9:10-13 show Solomon giving Hiram control of 20 cities in Galilee.

Meanwhile, Solomon married the daughter of Egypt's pharaoh. Pharaoh gave Solomon the city of Gezer as a gift (1 Kings 9:16-17).

While this history predates Ahab, the precedent for Phoenician-Israelite exchanges and rulers gifting cities in the context of diplomatic marriages does exist. There is no concrete proof that the site at Tel Shikmona was a similar gift to Ahab. If this were the case, this would raise the follow-up questions of who destroyed Tel Shikmona at the time of Ahab and why. But considering Ahab's links to the Phoenicians through his wife Jezebel, the "gift from the father-in-law" theory is intriguing. That Josephus calls Jezebel's father king of both Tyre and Sidon may suggest he was an expansionist and could have conquered Tel Shikmona from a rival Phoenician city-state.

Gilboa and Shalvi date Tel Shikmona's final destruction layer to the second half of the eighth century B.C.E., which would roughly correspond to when Israel was defeated and taken captive by the rising Assyrian Empire at around 721-718 B.C.E. (see 2 Kings 17).

In Isaiah 10:5-6, God poetically describes Assyria as a power charged "to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets." Tel Shikmona was "tread down," but the sands of time couldn't erase its story from historical memory. It still survives in the tel's ruins. And like the Bible that illuminates its historical context, Tel Shikmona's secrets are there for anybody to examine. ■



Talea Gregory (second from left) participates in a sharsharet with other excavation volunteers.

A DAY ON THE DIG

Ever wondered what it's like to participate in an archaeological excavation? Join Armstrong College student Talea Gregory as she treks through the streets of Jerusalem and digs in the dirt of the Ophel.

BY TALEA GREGORY

MY DAY BEGINS EARLY, *REALLY* EARLY. THIS IS because summer in Jerusalem is hot. The average temperature is normally in the mid-30 degrees Celsius (low 90 degrees Fahrenheit). To beat the heat, most archaeological excavations in Israel start early in the morning and end early afternoon. For the diggers on the Ophel excavation, our workday begins at 6:30 a.m. and ends at 2 p.m. This means leaving home by 6 a.m.

The walk from the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology to the Ophel is about 30 minutes, and it's beautiful. The sun is rising and early morning light shines through Jerusalem's streets. The morning air is crisp, and you can hear the sounds of a city waking up. Jerusalem is mountainous and there are so many sites to see: the city's stone architecture, fruit trees and flowers line the sidewalks, and stray cats dart in and out of the bushes (Jerusalem has a lot of stray cats).

Occasionally we drive to the dig, allowing for a slightly later departure (and a little more sleep). On those days, *Let the Stones Speak* assistant managing editor Brent Nagtegaal stops by the institute at 6:15 a.m. with a nine-passenger van. Jerusalem's roads are narrow, packed with cars, and marked by bumps and potholes. Add to the experience the fact that most drivers are impatient and aggressive, and a drive through Jerusalem is quite the adventure.

There are numerous close calls, drivers cutting off the van, and motorcyclists squeezing in gaps barely large enough for them. And there's the endless cacophony of horn honking. Stop for a split second and the driver behind you will soon express disapproval with his horn. Fail to move quickly enough, and he will blow past, even if it means taking the sidewalk.

At the dig site, we're greeted by the other volunteers with a chorus of "*Boker tov*" (Hebrew for "Good



Jenna discovers an oil lamp.



Julia scoops dirt out of her locus.

morning”). This season there are over 50 people working on site each day. Our crew is composed of students and faculty from Herbert W. Armstrong College, New York’s Yeshiva University, and Hebrew University, as well as some other local volunteers and a handful of full-time staff members.

There is a lot to take in when you enter the Ophel site. When you pass through the metal gate and walk up the stairs, you’re face to face with the giant southern wall of the Temple Mount, with the gray dome of al-Aqsa Mosque peeking over top. Standing on the path and looking east over the treacherously deep Kidron Valley, you see the Mount of Olives. Look south and you see the City of David, buttressed by the impressive Stepped Stone Structure. Look due west and you see the Dung Gate entrance into the Old City and a line of tourists entering the Western Wall Plaza. Working here is an extraordinary experience. Is there another place on Earth with such an iconic vista in every direction?

Walking the short distance from the top of the stairs to the Byzantine building we use as the dig office, we cross over an iron bridge and pass by the wet-sifting station. We begin the day by filling the water jugs with cool water, prepping the pottery station, and grabbing stacks of empty buckets for the day’s excavations. Then we grab our tools: a small pickax, hand shovel, brush and bucket. With our supplies in hand, we head to our respective areas.

The majority of the Armstrong crew goes to either Area D or Area D1. Area D works under supervisor Amir Cohen-Klonymous, and Area D1 is supervised by Christopher Eames. A handful occasionally assist in Area E or Area F.

Digging begins at 6:30 a.m. sharp. By this time, Amir is already on site working; he typically begins his day by taking measurements of each of the loci (each area is divided into sections, or loci). He’s often joined by dig photographer Aubrey Mercado, who snaps some photos to document where the day began. Aubs is a busy gal.

Every new discovery and every new layer of material must be photographed and documented, which means Aubrey spends a lot of time each day bouncing back and forth between the four areas.

The elevation of each locus is documented at the start of each day. Amir does this using an optical level and with the help of a volunteer brandishing a long measuring device (called a “lata”). A few minutes later, and a few numbers in Hebrew, the final documentation is complete and we’re ready to excavate.

Generally, most diggers remain in the locus they were assigned on the first day. The locus quickly becomes your safe space, your pride and joy. You get to know the soil, rocks and other material. The more familiar you are with the locus, the easier it is to tell when there’s a change in strata or something is out of place, or maybe a wall is coming into focus. In Area D, where I’m digging, we’re excavating Byzantine material from the fourth to seventh century (324–638 C.E.).

Each locus is shaped like a rectangular room or hallway-like section amongst large stone walls. As the excavation goes on, we clear off layer after layer of Byzantine dirt and material, transforming our loci into deep pits. Our goal is to understand the Byzantine structure better, to learn what the rooms were used for and, as we progress deeper, to reach the next level of stratum.

While Amir gives us instructions (which always include some jokes), his assistant, Akiva, labels tags for our pottery buckets. Each locus is assigned a locus number, which is attached to the bucket that will hold soil dug from that locus. This way we know exactly where every bucket of soil originated. Akiva brings life to Area D with his singing and cheerfulness.

In my locus, the finds come thick and fast. It’s usually pottery, including broken pieces of jugs, jars, bowls and others such items. The best pottery finds are intact pieces, rims, handles or even painted pottery (called a “slip” in archaeological terminology). However, it is also common to find a lot of glass shards and maybe a few



Christopher holds a recently discovered jar rim.



Ian breaks down a large stone.

animal bones. As you dig, it's important to pay attention to detail and keep a careful eye out for anything unusual in the soil. Everything is a potential clue that could help explain the strata of soil, what the area was used for, and why that specific material is there.

On our dig, the discovery of coins elicits the most excitement. Ancient coins are a porthole into the ancient culture. A coin is usually associated with fixed dates, which gives the general time period. And there are often other meaningful symbols and iconography. To help find coins, Armstrong student Christopher Stiles visits our loci with his metal detector.

While the coins can be hard to spot—they're usually tiny and caked in dirt—a few eagle-eyed volunteers are able to spot a few coins on their own without the use of a metal detector. Earlier in the dig, Armstrong alumnus Emma Moore even spotted a coin at the top of a bucket of dirt that was just about to be lugged off to the dump pile.

One of the most fun parts of the day are when we do a bucket line, or *sharsharet*. When our loci become crowded with full buckets of dirt, or if we run out of empty buckets, we line up and work together to pass the full buckets to where they are dumped into a lift, which is then hoisted up by a crane over the large Muslim-period wall that borders Area D. The loose soil is then dumped into a large pile to be taken by the tractor and hauled out of the Ophel. As we swing the heavy buckets down the line, we sing songs, make jokes, and chat about the day. The *sharsharet* is hard work, but with everyone working together, it is the most effective way to move the buckets and clean up the area.

After the *sharsharet*, we get back to work at our loci. Depending on your locus, this can involve a myriad of different tasks. Some loci are filled with boulders that require large pickaxes to remove and hammers to break them. Some loci have lots of broken pottery shards that need to be brushed off and left *in situ* so a photo can be taken. Then there are some that simply need to be brushed and cleaned for a photo because a new layer has been found.

At 9:00 a.m., we take our first break, or *hafsakah*. All the volunteers from every area meet under a shaded picnic place with tables. During this break, we eat breakfast together. Our excavation logistics manager, Yadidya, always has a surprise for us at breakfast. Sometimes it is delicious shakshuka, or maybe even pancakes. After a half hour, we get back to work.

At 12:00 p.m., we have another short *hafsakah*. On this break, Yadidya provides us with watermelon, dates, coffee and crackers. It's also time for show-and-tell! This is when excavation codirectors Prof. Uzi Leibner and Dr. Orit Peleg-Barkat present recent discoveries and explain their meaning and significance. It is a nice quick rest before heading back to work.

After lunch, it's time to think about wrapping up for the day. We might finish a little more digging and try to level out our loci. There's usually another *sharsharet* or two. We also take a few final measurements. Amir and Akiva finish up paperwork and logging the day's finds.

At 2:00 p.m., work at the site is finished, and we get ready to go home. All buckets and tools are put away; the pottery buckets are taken to the pottery washing station, where the pottery will be cleaned and sorted for future examination.

After cleaning up and putting everything away, we say goodbye to the other volunteers and begin heading back to the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology building. When we get back to the institute, we all work a few more hours. Some of us work on maintenance and house painting. Others do custodial, kitchen and library office work. Some work on art, writing and editing for our publications.

Our day ends with a family-style dinner. We all sit around the table telling stories about the day and talking about any discoveries we made. After we finish eating, everyone pitches in to help clean up and do the dishes. Then we all start to wind down and get ready for bed so that we can get a good night's rest and wake early to do it all again the next day! ■

► **KHIRBET QEYAFYA** FROM PAGE 29

“rampart.” Is it possible that David brought his supplies to this circular fortress where the Israelite army was based and from which he went down to fight Goliath?

The Bible contains one more reference to Shaaraim, in the book of Chronicles: “And Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters; but his brethren had not many children And they dwelt at ... Beth-marcaboth, and Hazar-susim, and at Beth-biri, and at *Shaaraim*. These were their cities unto the reign of David” (1 Chronicles 4:27-31).

This passage specifically relates the city of Shaaraim to the time of David’s rule. This verse says Shaaraim was populated by Shimei’s family until the reign of David. Judging by this verse, and the verses above, we see that if Khirbet Qeiyafa really was the biblical Shaaraim, it was established as at least a strategic location before David even became king, yet completely fell out of view afterward—a good match for the carbon-14 data.

The Discoveries

Khirbet Qeiyafa is a relatively new site to excavators. Its existence has been known to archaeologists and surveyors since the late 1800s, but it was regarded as an Arab village having little to do with Bible archaeology. Only within the last 20 years have archaeologists begun to note in more detail the intriguing structure of the ancient fortress. As such, excavations began in 2007 and have since yielded numerous intriguing finds.

One such item is the large shard of pottery mentioned above, which bears five lines of proto-Hebrew text. This type of artifact is referred to as an *ostrakon*. The weathered, 3,000-year-old ostrakon is incomplete and difficult to properly translate, but Émile Puech proposes one possible (albeit fragmentary) reconstruction: “Do not oppress, and serve God ... despoiled him/her The judge and the widow wept; he had the power Over the resident alien and the child, he eliminated them together The men and chiefs have established a king He marked 60 [?] servants among the communities/habitations/generation.”

This reading is strikingly similar to the biblical record of the nature of King Saul’s appointment (1 Samuel 8:11-19). This could provide support for Khirbet Qeiyafa as a functioning Israelite fortress at the establishment of the kingdom of Israel. Of further note are the individual words used in the inscription—according to Prof. Gershon Galil, eight of the words present in the text appear *only* in the Bible.

Not only does Khirbet Qeiyafa validate the presence of a strong early Israelite kingdom, it also shows that writing—one of the vital necessities for operating a kingdom in the first place—was known and practiced.

Khirbet Qeiyafa also yielded another interesting inscription on a storage jar. This inscription bears the words “Ishbaal, son of Beda.” Saul himself had a son by this name (1 Chronicles 8:33). This inscription therefore confirms the use of the name for figures belonging to the same period. Moving into later periods in Israel’s history, however, names like this that include the term “Baal” fall out of use.

Additional interesting finds include two medium-size portable “box” shrine-like objects, one of clay and one of stone. Their design features have been compared to similar descriptions in the Bible of Solomon’s 10th-century temple and palace in Jerusalem.

There are three recessed doorposts on the stone model. 1 Kings 7:4-5 describe Solomon using this style of architecture for his palatial building near the temple (and it is likely he used the same technique for the first

There is still much archaeological work to be done at this unique site. While a wealth of discoveries have already been found, only an estimated 20 percent of the mound has been excavated.

temple itself). Further, the Mishnah (Middoth 3, 7) shows that the doorframe of Herod’s temple was built in the same manner as shown on this model.

The model door opening itself is 20 centimeters tall by 10 centimeters wide. The Mishnah describes the second temple as having a door 40 amah tall by 20 amah wide—the same proportions (Middoth 4, 1; it is important to note that much of the design of the second temple was influenced by the first).

The model has seven protruding “squares” beneath the roof. Each square is divided by two lines, into three small rectangles. It is clear that these are meant to represent the ends of wooden crossbeams supporting the roof. This depiction is actually a comparatively “advanced” design feature called a “triglyph,” appearing in Classical Greek buildings some 400 years later. The fact that the design was already known at such an ancient time—the 10th century B.C.E.—indicates that the early Israelite kingdom was far more advanced and influential in construction and design than first believed.

Furthermore, this triglyph construction technique is almost certainly mentioned in the description of Solomon’s “forest of Lebanon” (1 Kings 7:2-3), in the

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FEEDBACK

IN RESPONSE TO

LET THE STONES SPEAK PODCAST

Your exceptional programs carry well beyond academic research and intellectual effort. Your labors are a gift to a multitude.

YEHUD, ISRAEL

I want to thank you for the amazing job you're doing. To not just give the attention-grabbing headlines but also the dirty work of archaeology. Of all of the YouTube channels on Israel's archaeological history you're the best by a long ways. Not even the Israeli official channel does as well. Kudos. My most sincere thanks for the outstanding job.

FLORIDA, UNITED STATES

In 2022 I learned about the institute and requested your publication. I found the content to be excellent—particularly the articles written by Christopher Eames, which have all been outstanding and readily understandable for a “non-scholar.” With sincere appreciation for your great work and efforts to produce a quality publication.

OREGON, UNITED STATES

IN RESPONSE TO

ARTICLE: “THE HEBREW YEAR 5783—OR IS IT?”:

I just read the article “The Hebrew Year 5783—or Is It” by Christopher Eames and wanted to say, “Thank you. Thank you. Thank you!!” Mr. Eames did a lot to settle my mind by writing we are more likely in the year 5950 or even several decades beyond. FINALLY something that makes sense and aligns with global trends and events!!

NEW YORK, UNITED STATES

description of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6:5), and in Ezekiel's description of the temple (Ezekiel 41:6). Translations of these passages are problematic, but when viewed in light of this recent discovery, they make sense. Here is Professor Garfinkel and Madeleine Mumcuoglu's translation of Ezekiel 41:6: “And the planks were organized three together, as 30 triglyph-like groups, placed on top of the wall, around all the building, without being integrated into the walls of the building.”

It would be fair to surmise that the inspiration for the Classical Greek triglyph came from an impressive Israelite building that used such techniques. And what more impressive, influential building than the temple itself? The clay shrine model likewise contains these features (along with a pillar on either side of the entrance—again, in this case, paralleling the temple design).

In addition to these other discoveries, archaeologists have uncovered a large palatial structure at the center of Khirbet Qeiyafa. This is probably where the governor would have sat. The city itself is believed to have housed about 500 to 600 people within its fortified walls, some of the stones of which weighed as much as 8 tons.

Khirbet Qeiyafa Today

It is unknown why Khirbet Qeiyafa was abandoned so early in the kingdom of Israel's history. Perhaps it was no longer needed as a deterrent against the Philistines after King David finally eliminated them as a threat and once Solomon began his long and peaceful reign. The general nature and date of the site's abandonment and destruction require further investigation.

Khirbet Qeiyafa was somewhat reused on and off after the kingdom of Judah was conquered by Babylon in the sixth century B.C.E., generally as an agricultural area. There were a couple of instances of isolated building projects at the site, within a late-Persian/early-Hellenistic time frame, as well as during the Byzantine period. Yet the city-fortress never returned to its state of former glory as during the early 10th century under King David.

There is still much archaeological work to be done at this unique site. While a wealth of discoveries have already been found, only an estimated 20 percent of the mound has been excavated. So, while debates and arguments abound regarding the veracity of the biblical account of the kingdom of Israel under Saul and David, the history uncovered at Khirbet Qeiyafa remains a witness, just as it did more than 3,000 years ago—as it looked out over the Valley of Elah, where a young man, full of faith and sling in hand, approached a giant. ■

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