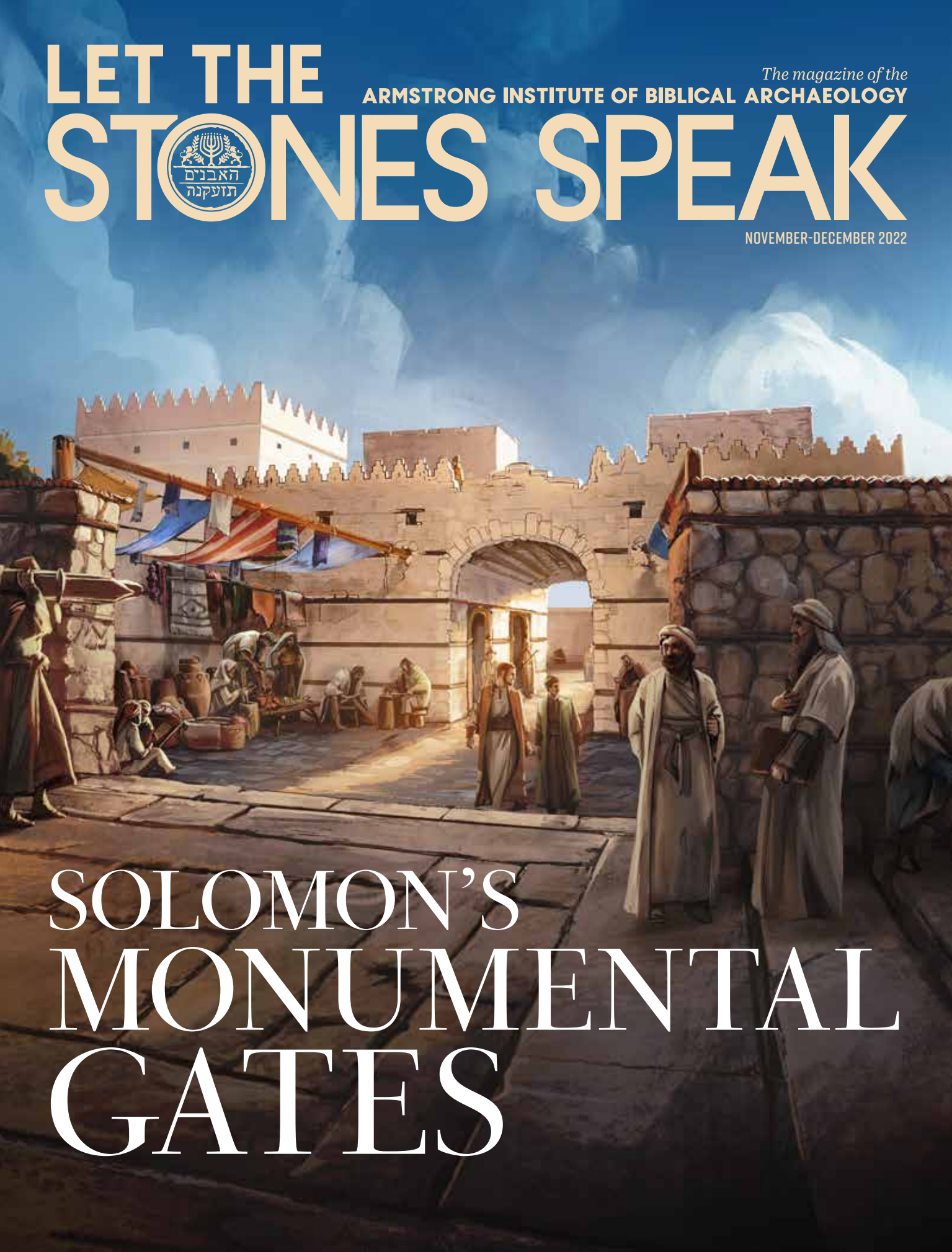
LET THE STONES SPEAK

The magazine of the
ARMSTRONG INSTITUTE OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2022



SOLOMON'S MONUMENTAL GATES

LET THE STONES SPEAK

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2022 | VOL. 1, NO. 6 | CIRCULATION: 2,868

Jerusalem, Israel
GETTY IMAGES

COVER Artist's rendering of monumental gatehouse from the time of King Solomon in the southeast section of the Ophel
JULIA GODDARD/LET THE STONES SPEAK

FROM THE EDITOR | GERALD FLURRY

Our Special History With Israel

A summary of comments made at the opening of the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology on September 4 in Jerusalem

On September 4, we celebrated a very special day. We officially opened the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology in Jerusalem. With our staff, the family of the late Dr. Eilat Mazar, subscribers to this magazine, Hebrew University associates and archaeologists, Israel Antiquities Authority officials, and journalists, around 80 people attended the opening of our building and library.

In my address at the Institute opening, I shared our unique and special history with Jerusalem and its archaeology. I would like to share this history with you in this article. (You can watch this speech, as well as the special presentation by Hebrew University archaeologist Prof. Uzi Leibner, at our website ArmstrongInstitute.org.)

A Harmonious History

This history began with Prof. Benjamin Mazar, president of Hebrew University (1953–1966), launching archaeological activities in Jerusalem. In December 1968, Hebrew University, along with the Israel Department of Antiquities, entered a 50-50 partnership with our namesake Herbert W. Armstrong and Ambassador College. They established what they called an "iron bridge" relationship, which jointly began the most significant excavation ever to occur in Israel!

Mr. Armstrong wrote on Dec. 10, 1968, "Ambassador College has just been given the great honor and responsibility of entering joint participation with Hebrew University of Jerusalem in the most important archaeological excavation of our time—uncovering 3,000 years of history!" We feel exactly the same about the privilege we have in contributing to Jerusalem's archaeology today. It is a great honor to be a part of. That honor, and that responsibility, is the reason for our founding this institute. We have a responsibility to help sustain biblical archaeology in Jerusalem!

Mr. Armstrong visited Jerusalem 50 times in four years. That testifies of how deep his love for that city was. Between 1967 and his death in 1986, Mr. Armstrong met more than 30 Israeli leaders, including five prime ministers and four presidents. The Israeli leaders he worked with also loved Jerusalem. That is why I believe they had an unusual harmony.

Their passionate unity revolved around Jerusalem! The elites, intellectuals and leaders of Israel today may have differing opinions about this history; they may see it differently from the way we view it. But the truth is, this history is all of our history—whether members of the Knesset, professors of Hebrew University, or members of the institute that continues the legacy of Mr. Armstrong. I have studied more deeply into this history, and it bears tremendous lessons for all of us. In my study, I looked into the private conversations between Mr. Armstrong and Israeli leaders, not the public messages. I think you will find their personal comments to each other surprising. I certainly hope you find them interesting. This is something more people should know, yet almost nobody truly understands.

Mutual Friendship

In 1971, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir held an exclusive 45-minute meeting in her Knesset office with Mr. Armstrong. She was the first such prime minister to do so. Mr. Armstrong presented her with a beautiful Steuben crystal. "[S]he is just an ordinary, plain, down-to-earth,

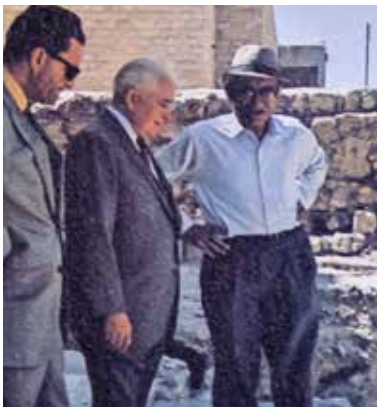
unpretentious homespun woman and mother," he later wrote affectionately. "[W]hen speaking of soldiers risking their lives for her country, this woman sees them through a *mother's eyes"* (*Plain Truth,* June 1971). Mr. Armstrong greatly respected Prime Minister Meir. "Without apology to anyone, I have to attribute to this so common, yet so uncommon a woman, humanly, the quality of GREATNESS, such as is possessed by *so very few,"* he wrote. He then added, "Emphatically, that is not flattery. I never flatter" (ibid).

Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek was another warm friend of Mr. Armstrong's. They would often walk arm-in-arm. During one of Mr. Armstrong's visits, MR. KOLLEK PRESENTED HIM WITH A SILVER-AND-GOLD SCULPTURE OF DAVID DEFEATING GOLIATH. "All your life, you have been a fighter of giant lies and of giant untruths," Kollek said. "And as you regard yourself a descendant of David, and rightly so, here in the City of David, we would like to present you with this symbolic sculpture."

Mr. Armstrong told Mr. Kollek that Jerusalem was destined to become "the greatest city in the world and in fact in the whole universe. THIS CITY IS SOMEDAY GOING TO BE THE CAPITAL OF THE UNIVERSE, because this city is going to exist forever" (emphasis mine). That was a strong statement. And amazingly, those Israeli elites who heard him seemed to agree—they certainly showed no negative reaction to what Mr. Armstrong said.

These men were in a fascinating harmony! It is uncommon to have two men like that operating together so in sync. On one occasion, Prime Minister Menachem Begin was in a meeting in Tel Aviv when he heard Mr. Armstrong was in town; he abruptly left the meeting and drove one hour to Jerusalem. When Mr. Armstrong told him that he should not have left his meeting just to visit with him, Begin said, "Mr. Armstrong, I would get out of bed at 2 in the morning to see you."

Mr. Armstrong had visited with Jordan's King Hussein, who expressed a desire for peace with Israel



FROM TOP Herbert Armstrong meets with Prof. Benjamin Mazar, Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek and Prime Minister Menachem Begin.

but was struggling with internal problems. Later in this trip, Mr. Armstrong visited Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres and told him about King Hussein's comments. He said that although more troubles were coming, world peace would ultimately come, "but it isn't going to come easy."

Mr. Armstrong was talking this way with top leaders in Israel! These men had a certain faith in what they were talking about, and they really did love each other.

Taking It Public

In November 1974, a banquet was held in Tel Aviv to honor Mr. Armstrong. It was at this occasion that this warm friendship between Mr. Armstrong and Israeli leaders finally went public. Government officials, parliamentarians, ambassadors, diplomats and national journalists were all in attendance. And Prof. Benjamin Mazar wanted this relationship revealed. Professor Mazar spoke and told all the banquet attendees that Mr. Armstrong had "a firm faithfulness in the prophecy of Isaiah," which I believe many of those leaders did as well. He then paraphrased Isaiah 2:2-3, which reads: "And it shall come to pass IN THE END OF DAYS, That the mountain of the Lord's house Shall be established as the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And ALL NATIONS SHALL FLOW UNTO IT. And many people shall go and say: 'Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; And He will teach us of His ways, And we will walk in His paths.' FOR OUT OF ZION SHALL GO FORTH THE LAW, AND THE WORD OF THE LORD FROM JERUSALEM." THESE MEN WERE THINKING BEYOND BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY! They had a belief in certain biblical *prophecies!*

This passage in Isaiah is not unique: You'll find this same prophecy in about 20 different passages in the Hebrew Bible. According to this prophecy, *all*

nations will come to be taught at Jerusalem. That is going to bring peace to this world! If someone believes Isaiah 2:2-3, they will be motivated to have a certain hope in their lives. I believe these leaders had a special hope in their lives. Professor Mazar was trying to get this message out to everybody. Mr. Armstrong connected archaeology to Isaiah 2:2-3. He was clearly interested in more than just biblical archaeology. But he didn't take this to the public himself. Professor Mazar did. Why did he do that? We may have to answer that question individually. But he, along with quite a few of those other leaders, did want this message to get out to the people of Israel. It is, after all, taken from the Hebrew Bible.

Professor Mazar continued his public statement, "Mr. Armstrong loves and admires Jerusalem, and wholeheartedly he believes in the future of Israel and the Holy City, and for him Jerusalem, the unified Jerusalem, is not only the metropolis of Israel and the spiritual center of the monotheistic religions, but also the symbol of the great past and the hope for a better future of mankind." I find that incredibly moving. There are so many problems facing our world. You can see that so clearly. But you don't see a lot of hope. What are we going to do without hope? Lacking hope, we won't be doing the positive things we should. We must find hope!

I believe most of these leaders of Israel believed what Mr. Armstrong was saying and reacted to it in a very positive way. To me it appears they looked upon Jerusalem as being a city of hope. This harmony between Mr. Armstrong and Israeli leaders was so unusual; it is rare in the world today! How could they be so united and believe so many similar truths? Notice Mr. Armstrong's perspective: "The favor we were given in their eyes—the warmth of their attitude toward us—was inspiring, astonishing and most unusual" (co-worker letter, May 28, 1971). It certainly is an unusual example. And I believe it stands out all the more in an increasingly divided world. This is our history. When you fully understand it, it can be a great help.

Ambassador for World Peace

These leaders knew something about world peace. Mr. Armstrong was called an unofficial ambassador for world peace. In the 1970s and 1980s, he met with hundreds of world leaders: presidents, prime ministers, kings, emperors, princes, legislators, ambassadors, generals, officers, mayors, judges, scientists, educators, magnates and executives. He talked with heads of state and heads of government in their offices. But he never approached them to visit; they called on him. These leaders wanted to speak to somebody they believed understood something about world peace. He understood how to have it, and recognized that despite humankind rejecting the path to peace, the Hebrew Bible says world peace certainly WILL COME!

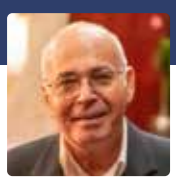
A 1975 Ambassador International Cultural Foundation publication wrote about "a companion brochure to present in a pictorial fashion the activities of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong throughout the world during the past seven years as an 'ambassador for world peace'—a term that people such as Prince Mikasa of Japan, Ambassador Ronn of Israel, Minister Kol of Israel, Dr. Singh of the International Court and others have used publicly ...." You could include Margaret Thatcher, Deng Xiaoping, Anwar Sadat, Hosni Mubarak and many others in that list as well. That work of visiting so many world leaders started at almost exactly the time of the great archaeology project in Jerusalem. These leaders recognized that we desperately need world peace. Looking at this world, you really do see a need for world peace. These leaders were excited that somebody would speak out and talk about Isaiah 2:2-3.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin told Mr. Armstrong, "I know a great deal about you, and we all do deeply appreciate your interest in Israel." Mr. Armstrong truly did have a great interest in Israel. He boldly said on one occasion that for the next 1,000 years of his life, he would be living in Jerusalem. That's the kind of faith Mr. Armstrong had. And these men praised him for that, and they had similar ideas.

In our booklet *A Warm Friend of Israel,* we write about this conference with Rabin: "During the 45-minute meeting, the two leaders discussed Mr. Armstrong's friendships with Arab chiefs of state and peace among nations. Prime Minister Rabin thanked Mr. Armstrong for bringing other nations closer to Israel, especially the Arab nations." At one point, for example, Mr. Armstrong supported an initiative by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to build a peace center at the base of Mt. Sinai. Mr. Rabin said Mr. Armstrong brought those people closer to Israel! This wasn't a man who didn't know what he was talking about—this was a prime minister of the Jewish state saying this!

Regarding those words, Mr. Armstrong said, "He was very appreciative of my efforts toward world peace." World peace is certainly a noble cause. I believe those Israeli leaders were trying very hard to bring the world closer to peace. Prime Minister Meir said, "What we need most of all is peace." What can we do if we lack peace? Without peace, we tear one another apart! Somehow we must learn to have peace and have hope. The Bible is full of statements about that. I believe Herbert W. Armstrong and these Israeli leaders can teach us some important and invaluable lessons. This is a vital and valuable part of our history! I have worked to make sure I understand this the best I can. And that is something we all need to do. ■

THE BIRTH AND DEATH OF BIBLICAL MINIMALISM



BY PROF. YOSEF GARFINKEL

"Biblical minimalism" as it is known, has gone through a number of permutations in the recent past. Its modern career began about 30 years ago, when BAR [*Biblical Archaeology Review*] was still a youngster. Since then it has been part of the ongoing debate regarding the extent to which historical data are embedded in the Hebrew Bible.

In the mid-1980s the principal argument involved the dating of the final writing of the text of the Hebrew Bible. The minimalist school claimed then that it had been written only in the Hellenistic period, nearly 700 years after the time of David and Solomon, and that the biblical descriptions were therefore purely literary.

The main developers of this position were centered at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark (Niels Peter Lemche and expatriate-American Thomas Thompson) and in England (Philip Davies and Keith Whitelam). The titles of their books tell us what they were about: a search for the *real* Israel of the biblical period (if indeed there was a real Israel). Thus Lemche (1988): *Ancient Israel: A New History of Israelite Society*; Thompson (1992): *Early History of the Israelite People*; Davies (1992): *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'*; and Whitelam (1997): *The Invention of Ancient Israel*.

Much of the discussion focused on the biblical narrative about the 10th century B.C.E., the time of David and Solomon, the period known as the United Monarchy. Was there a United Monarchy? Were David and Solomon kings of a real state? Indeed, did they actually exist? Or were they simply literary creations of the biblical writers? For the minimalists, King David was "about as historical as King Arthur."* The name David had never been found in an ancient inscription.

Hardly had the minimalist argument been developed than it was profoundly undermined by an archaeological discovery. In 1993 and 1994, several fragments of an Aramaic stela were found at the long-running excavation of Tel Dan led by Avraham Biran of Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem. The historical references in the inscription and the paleography of the writing make it clear that it dates to the ninth century B.C.E. Moreover, the text specifically mentions a king of Israel and a king of the "House of David" (Hebrew, *bytdwd*), that is, a king of the dynasty of David.

This discovery led to a reexamination of the well-known Mesha stela, a contemporaneous Moabite inscription discovered more than a century ago. André Lemaire, a senior paleographer at the Sorbonne identified in that text an additional reference to the House of David.** This was subsequently confirmed by another senior paleographer, Émile Puech of the École Biblique et Archéologique Française in Jerusalem.[1]

Thus, there is at least one, and possibly two, clear references to the dynasty of David in the ninth century B.C.E., only 100–120 years after his reign. This is clear evidence that David was indeed a historical figure and the founding father of a dynasty.

This led to the collapse of the minimalist paradigm. There was a David. He was a king. And he founded a dynasty. The minimalists reacted in panic, leading to a number of suggestions that now seem ridiculous: The Hebrew *bytdwd* should be read not as the House of David, but as a place named *betdwd*, in parallel to the well-known place-name Ashdod.[2] Other minimalist suggestions included "House of Uncle," "House of Kettle" and "House of Beloved."†

Nowadays, arguments like these can be classified as displaying "paradigm-collapse trauma," that is, literary

The long-running scholarly conversation surrounding the dating of biblical sites and artifacts can quickly become technical and tedious. This subject, however, is essential to the practice of biblical archaeology and, ultimately, the credibility of the Hebrew Bible as an archaeological tool.

The following article, written by Hebrew University archaeologist Prof. Yosef Garfinkel, explores the topic of biblical minimalism. While the science sustaining Professor Garfinkel's view here is both robust and compelling, it's the style of writing—the clarity and vigor, the easy-to-follow logic—that makes it, in our opinion, one of the best elucidations of this subject.

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compilations of groundless arguments, masquerading as scientific writing through footnotes, references and publication in professional journals. The Tel Dan stela ended the first phase of the debate regarding the historicity of the Hebrew Bible, demonstrating that the mythological paradigm was nothing but a modern myth.

After the collapse of this mythological paradigm, a new strategy was developed by the minimalists. The central method was to lower the dating of the archaeological material that had previously been attributed to the time of David and Solomon by nearly a hundred years—from the early to mid-10th century B.C.E. to the late tenth or even ninth century B.C.E. It was an argument based strictly on archaeology. The leading developer and proponent of this argument is Israel Finkelstein of Tel Aviv University. It rests on the so-called "Low Chronology," as opposed to the traditional chronology.


Prof. Israel Finkelstein

Here is how it works: The archaeological period that archaeologists call Iron Age I in Judah and Israel was a period of agrarian communities organized in a *tribal* social organization (described in the biblical tradition as the period of the judges).

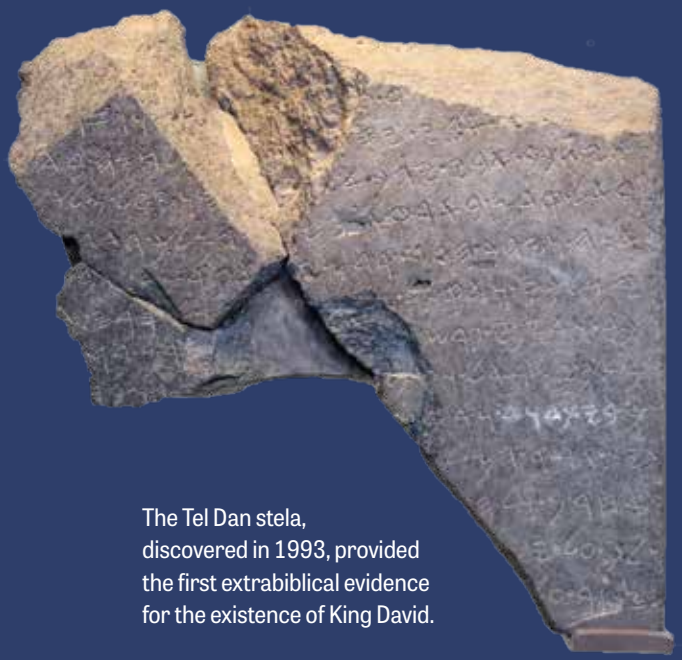
The next period, Iron Age II, was a period of urban society and centralized *state* organization (described in the biblical tradition as the period of the kings). On this there is general, one might almost say universal, agreement. Likewise it is agreed that David and Solomon ruled from about 1000 to about 930 B.C.E. The question is whether this roughly 75 years was in Iron Age I or Iron Age II (or, more specifically, Iron Age IIA). That is, during David and Solomon's time, were Judah and Israel characterized by agrarian communities (Iron Age I) or by urban society and a centralized state organization (Iron Age IIA)?

According to the traditional (or high) chronology, the transition from Iron Age I (agrarian communities) to Iron Age II (urban, centralized states) occurred in about 1000 B.C.E. This places David and Solomon in Iron Age II, ruling a central, organized, urban state. By lowering the date of the transition from Iron Age I to Iron Age II, the minimalists succeeded in placing David and Solomon in Iron Age I. All the magnificent archaeological materials, including monumental architecture, that had been previously dated to the time of David and Solomon were now dated later. And the poor materials that were previously assigned to the pre-state period of the judges (in biblical terms) now became evidence of life in the time of David and Solomon.

Finkelstein's Low Chronology lowered the date of the transition from Iron Age I to Iron Age II to about 925 B.C.E. A more extreme approach lowered the transition to as late as c. 900 B.C.E. (the "Ultra-Low Chronology").[3]

According to the Low Chronology, urbanization in Israel and Judah occurred only at the end of the 10th century B.C.E., and David and Solomon were not rulers of a kingdom but rather local tribal leaders.

The proponents of the Low Chronology place their primary reliance on radiocarbon (also called C-14 or



The Tel Dan stela, discovered in 1993, provided the first extrabiblical evidence for the existence of King David.

A reexamination of the famous Mesha stela, discovered in Transjordan in 1868, revealed that King Mesha of Moab used the same phrase to refer to the kingdom of Judah in his inscription.

carbon-14) dating of organic remains, such as wood and olive pits, found in archaeological excavations. During the last decade, hundreds of organic samples from Iron Age sites were sent to labs for radiometric dating in order to verify or contradict the Low Chronology. Despite the scientific halo that may appear to indicate precision, the dates provided by radiocarbon analysis are often quite iffy.* The organic material being tested may be long-lasting like wood or short-lived like olive pits. The precise archaeological stratum the specimen came from (indicating the archaeological period—Iron Age I, say, or Iron Age II) may be uncertain. The archaeological stratum of the sample may be narrow, lasting only a few years, or broad, lasting a century or more. Moreover, all agree that the resulting date must be adjusted, or "calibrated," to arrive at a more dependable date. There are several different ways of doing this.

Finally, the result gives us only a probability that the material was created at the date given by the carbon-14 analysis; the greater the range of dates, the higher the probability that the true age of the specimen falls within that range. Because of all these uncertainties, many samples must be tested in order to have confidence in the results.

In the early days of attempting to support or refute the Low Chronology, various problems in carbon-14 dating were exposed and corrected, and the advocates of the Low Chronology declared without hesitation that the dating results of hundreds of samples clearly supported the Low Chronology.[4] Conversely, the same dates were also presented as supporting the traditional high chronology.[5] It is indeed quite bizarre to see the same corpus of radiometric dates used to support both chronologies.

More recently, more reliable radiocarbon samples were tested from Megiddo (Stratum K-4), Yokneam (Stratum XVII) and Tell Keisan (Stratum 9a), all in the Jezreel Valley and Acco plain, that is, all in the northern kingdom of Israel. These layers represent the last Iron Age I settlement in each site. All of these strata were followed by destruction layers, which make dating more reliable. The results were written up by 2007, although not published until 2009, by Finkelstein and his colleague Eli Piasetzky.[6] The results show an uncalibrated, weighted average destruction date of 2852 plus or minus 13 years B.P. (before present). After calibration, the date is around 1000 B.C.E. This is exactly the dating indicated by the traditional high chronology decades ago. Thus, Finkelstein is not only the founding father of the Low Chronology but also its undertaker.

This is not the end of the story, however. It is true that radiocarbon dates from other sites in the northern kingdom of Israel do support the view that archaeological material from Iron Age IIA can be dated to the *end*

of the 10th century B.C.E. This of course pleased the minimalists. But these radiocarbon dates from sites in the northern kingdom of Israel did not answer the question with regard to Judah (where David came from).

The argument that Judah was an agrarian society until the end of 10th century B.C.E. and that David and Solomon could not have ruled over a centralized, institutionalized kingdom before then has now been blown to smithereens by our excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa, where we have been in the field for the past four summers.

BAR readers have already had two reports on this exciting excavation.* Qeiyafa is a heavily fortified site in Judah on the Israelite/Philistine border. It clearly reflects a highly organized society. Moreover, it is essentially a one-period site (except for a small occupation in the Hellenistic period and a Byzantine fortress at the top of the site). And this period is clearly Iron Age IIA. The short Iron Age IIA habitation ended with the destruction of the site. Should this settlement at Qeiyafa be dated to some time in the early 10th century B.C.E., when David and Solomon ruled, or to the end of the 10th century, when later kings ruled separately in Judah and in Israel?

Radiocarbon analysis of short-lived olive pits demonstrated that this heavily fortified site could not date later than 969 B.C.E. (with 77.8 percent probability). This date fits the period associated with King David (c. 1000–965 B.C.E.) and is too early for King Solomon (c. 965–930 B.C.E.). The fortified city of Qeiyafa indicates that Iron Age IIA began in Judah at the very end of the 11th century B.C.E., thus rendering the Low Chronology paradigm nothing but a modern myth.

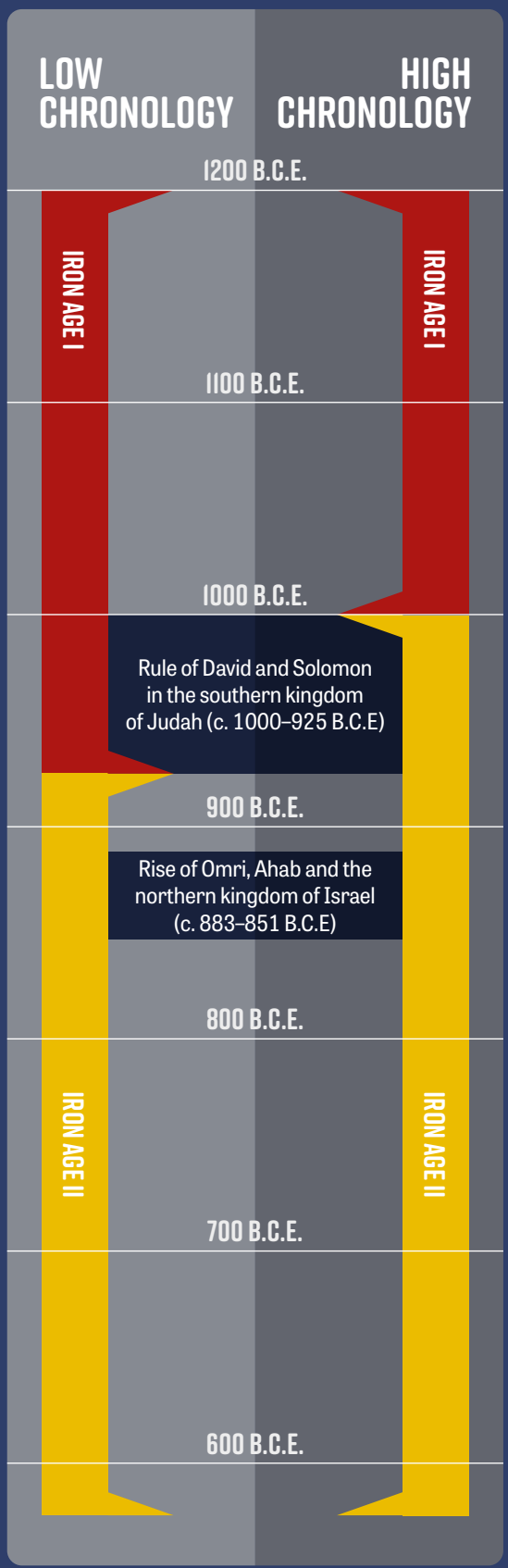
If you think that is the end of the minimalist argument, you would be mistaken. What if Qeiyafa, lying on the Israelite/Philistine border is *Philistine* rather than Israelite (that is, Judahite)?

Thus began a new phase in the evolution of the minimalist approach. The basic minimalist argument now to be considered is very simple: Even if David was a historical figure (given the Tel Dan stela), and even if the transition from Iron Age I to Iron Age II began at the end of the 11th century B.C.E. in Judah (given the dating of Khirbet Qeiyafa), there was still no kingdom in Judah in the 10th century B.C.E. because Qeiyafa (on the Judahite/Philistine border) is a Philistine site, part of the kingdom of Gath, identified as Tell es-Safi, less than 10 miles west of Qeiyafa.[7]

To us, it is clear that Qeiyafa is *not* a Philistine site for the following reasons:

1) No pig or dog bones were found at Qeiyafa, while at Gath (Tell es-Safi) pigs and dogs were part of the diet, as indicated by the bone remains found there.*[8]

2) The main entrance to Qeiyafa faced Jerusalem rather than Philistia.



COURTESY OF THE BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY SOCIETY

On this 6-by-6-inch pottery sherd (or ostracon) discovered at Qeiyafa is the earliest-known Hebrew inscription. The text, which was written with proto-Canaanite letters, is too broken and poorly preserved to provide a full translation, but paleographers have isolated the words and phrases "Do not do," "serve," "judge" and "king." The ostracon's presence in a settlement far removed from Jerusalem, as well as its apparent references to ethics and justice, indicate that the Judahite state, even during the reign of King David, was already using trained and literate scribes to record the day-to-day affairs of the kingdom's villages and outposts.

3) Qeiyafa is encircled by a double, or casemate, wall. City walls like this are unknown in Philistia, but are common in Judah.

4) In Philistia only five major cities—those mentioned in the Bible: Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gaza, Gath and Ekron—were fortified. No field settlement in Philistia is known to have been fortified. This is not so in Judah, consistent with the major fortification at Qeiyafa.

5) The now-famous ostracon from Qeiyafa is inscribed with "proto-Canaanite" letters in the Hebrew language, according to our epigrapher, Haggai Misgav. In the recently published inscription from Philistine Gath, the names are Indo-European. The script of the Gath inscription is also "proto-Canaanite," but the language is probably Philistine.

I suppose if we were ever able to convince the doubters that Qeiyafa is *not* a Philistine site and *not* in Philistia, we would then have to prove that it is not at least seven other autochthonic nations mentioned in the Bible: Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites (Deuteronomy 7:1).

To the extent that radiometric readings do reflect a late-10th-century B.C.E. date for the transition to Iron Age IIA, they come exclusively from sites in the northern kingdom of Israel. The Iron Age IIA samples were taken from places like Megiddo, Tel Rehov, Tel Dor and Hazor, but not from sites in the south like Arad, Beersheba, Lachish or the earlier strata of Tel Beth-Shemesh. Moreover, even in their northern sites, the proponents of the Low Chronology rely on Iron Age IIA samples not from the beginning of this period but only from a later IIA stratum (as at Megiddo). It is a clear methodological error to assume the date of the beginning of a period by dating its later stages.

Paradoxically, the radiometric results relied on by the advocates of the Low Chronology in fact support the chronological sequence described in the biblical narrative. The Bible clearly states that the earliest Israelite kingdom was established in Jerusalem (in the early 10th century B.C.E.) and that the northern kingdom of Israel was created only some 80 years later. The northern Israelite capital of Samaria was not built until about 120 years after Jerusalem had been established as the capital. Some modern scholars try to reverse the sequence indicated in the Bible. They claim that because the biblical narrative was edited and perhaps written hundreds of years later, it cannot be taken as historical evidence. Therefore, they argue, our historical understanding must be based on inscriptions from Mesopotamia and Egypt. Outside the Bible, the kingdom of Israel is first mentioned in Assyrian royal inscriptions and in the Mesha stela in the middle of the ninth century B.C.E. Only much later is the kingdom of Judah mentioned—by the Assyrian monarch Sennacherib at the end of the eighth century B.C.E. Based on this sequence, a new paradigm was created by some minimalists, according to which, contrary to the biblical account, the northern kingdom of Israel was developed first, while the kingdom of Judah arose only two centuries later.

At first, the Low Chronology seemed to support this new paradigm, as it dates Iron Age IIA sites mainly to the late 10th and early ninth centuries B.C.E. Geographically, however, since these dates come only from sites in the northern kingdom of Israel, all they indicate is that building activities in the kingdom of Israel began mainly in the ninth century B.C.E. This is exactly when the biblical tradition indicates that a kingdom was established in this region!

The fallacy in the reasoning of the Low Chronology supporters is to apply these dating results to the kingdom of Judah and argue that urbanism in Judah also started only in the ninth century B.C.E.

The imposing Judahite fortress of Khirbet Qeiyafa, which has been securely dated by pottery and radiocarbon analysis to the early 10th century B.C.E. and the reign of King David, may well be the cemetery of biblical minimalism. Faced with a date for Qeiyafa that confirms the traditional high chronology, the minimalists now desperately argue that Qeiyafa, located less than 10 miles from Tell es-Safi, was a Philistine fort tied to the kingdom of Gath, not a border fortress of the early Judahite state. But the archaeology says otherwise. No pig bones have been found at the site, and Qeiyafa's fortifications and material culture have much more in common with sites in Judah than those in Philistia.

Each of these kingdoms must be dated independently. Independent dating suggests that the kingdom of Judah rose in approximately 1000 B.C.E., as indicated by the radiometric results from Qeiyafa. The northern kingdom of Israel, on the other hand, developed around 900 B.C.E., as indicated by the radiometric dates obtained from that region.

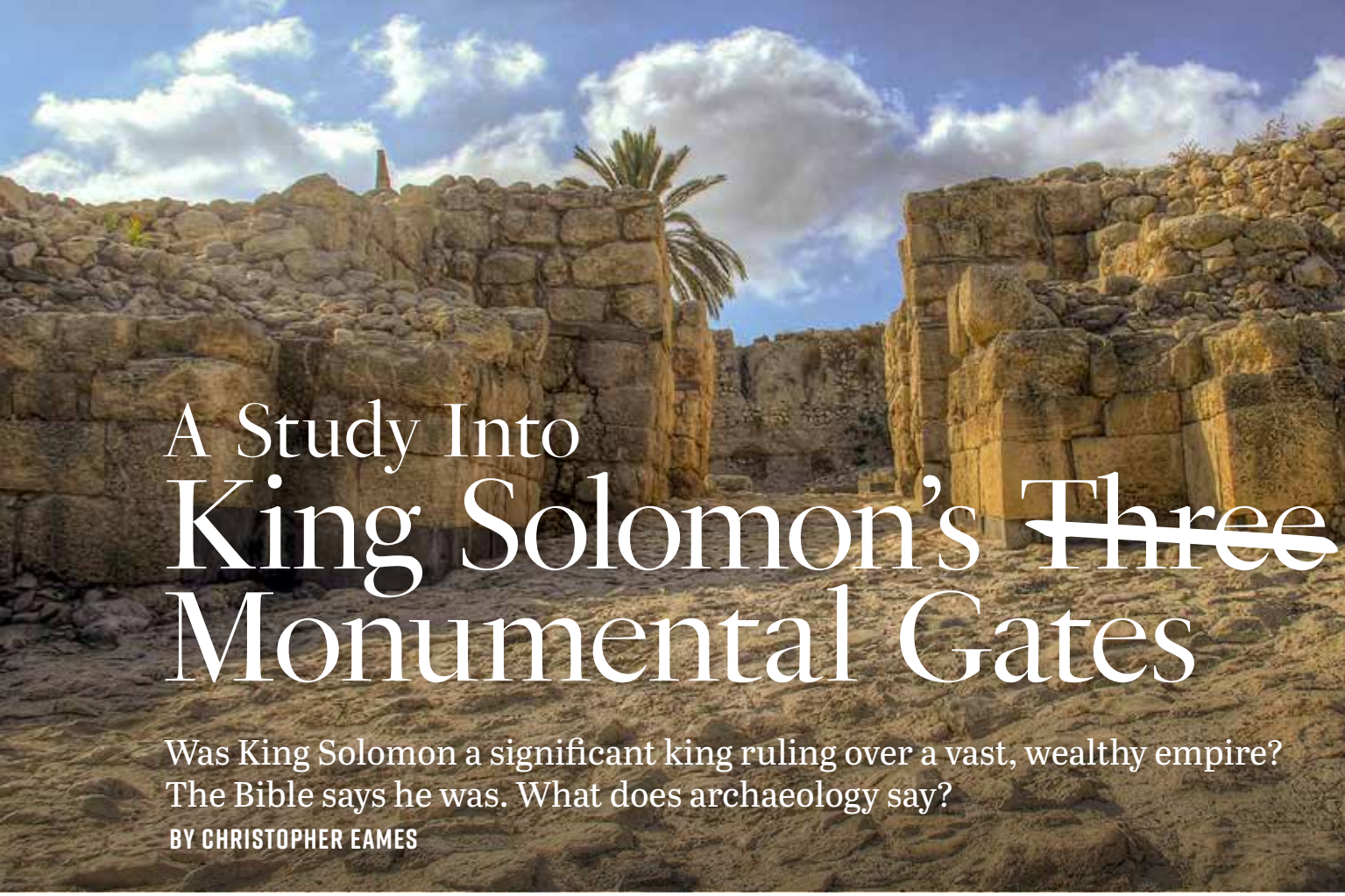
The biblical tradition and the radiometric dating actually support each other. Placing the formation and development of the kingdom of Israel earlier than the kingdom of Judah, as the proponents of the Low Chronology have done, is simply another modern myth.[9]

Some rather mundane finds in our Qeiyafa excavation powerfully buttress the conclusion that an urbanized state and early administration existed in Judah in the early 10th century B.C.E. More than 20 standardized storage jars, each standing about 2 feet high, were excavated near the city gate. The jars are tall and narrow with short necks, rounded shoulders and relatively small, flat bases. On the handle of most of these vessels was the impression of one or two fingers. These pottery containers were probably used for the collection of taxes, in the form of olive oil, wine and other agricultural products. We decided to do a petrographic analysis of the clay, which revealed that they were all manufactured at an as-yet-undiscovered production center near Qeiyafa. These standardized jars from 10th-century Qeiyafa were apparently an early development of the common eighth-century B.C.E. jar handles stamped *l'melekh* ("belonging to the king"). Both the *l'melekh* handles and our Qeiyafa handles impressed with fingerprints reflect a centrally organized society imposing governmental regulation—in short, a state.

Powerfully buttressing this conclusion is the Hebrew ostracon, indicating the existence at this time of a literate society with scribes, even in this settlement far from the state capital at Jerusalem.* Moreover, this inscription is not simply evidence of a commercial transaction, but of a literary composition. Although we can barely recover the text, it seems clear that it relates to ethics and justice. The Qeiyafa excavation indicates that in the early 10th century B.C.E., the time of David, there was already a fortified city at a strategic border location of Judah. This city already reflects a clear urban concept that integrates the casemate city wall with the nearby houses. Four other cities with this urban planning are known from Judah, although from a slightly later time: Tel Beth-Shemesh, Tell Beit Mirsim, Tell en-Nasbeh and Beersheba.

The Qeiyafa excavation shows that this urban concept had already been developed in the time of King David. The reader will notice that I have not used the term "United Kingdom," the common nomenclature for the kingdom of David and Solomon that is supposed to have included both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah (which, for the first seven years, David ruled from Hebron prior to conquering Jerusalem—2 Samuel 5:5). Whether there was indeed a United Kingdom, with one dynasty ruling from Jerusalem over both Judah and Israel, cannot be answered by the Qeiyafa excavations. To date, no fortified urban centers from the early 10th century B.C.E. have been found in the area of the northern kingdom of Israel. Therefore I have avoided the term United Kingdom. What is clear, however, is that the kingdom of Judah existed already as a centrally organized state in the 10th century B.C.E. ■

SEE BIBLICAL MINIMALISM FOOTNOTES ***PAGE 29***



A Study Into King Solomon's ~~Three~~ Monumental Gates

Was King Solomon a significant king ruling over a vast, wealthy empire? The Bible says he was. What does archaeology say?

BY CHRISTOPHER EAMES

Archaeologically, King Solomon is an enigma. No ancient inscription bearing his name has ever been uncovered. In spite of this, in modern scholarship today no one really questions Solomon's existence. After all, we have concrete evidence of his even more legendary father, King David, thanks to the discovery of two (debatably, three) separate inscriptions that refer to him by name.

Today, the debate over King Solomon centers around the significance and might of his kingdom. The Hebrew Bible describes a powerful, extensive and united kingdom, one that extended from Beersheba to Dan, and had a wider sphere of influence beginning at the Nile River in the west, encompassing Edom in the south, and extending all the way to Syria in the far north.

Biblical minimalists believe this account is wildly overdramatized. They believe 10th-century B.C.E. Israel was a poor, fragmentary collection of generally powerless tribes and that David and Solomon were nothing more than trivial, "ragtag," geopolitically irrelevant "hill country chieftains." According to noted minimalists Prof. Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, Israel at this time was "at best, no more than a typical highland village … no empire, no palatial cities, no spectacular capital" (*The Bible Unearthed*).

The above criticism notwithstanding, while we might not have inscriptions bearing his name (which isn't unusual), archaeology is decidedly *not* silent about King Solomon and his empire. There *is* compelling evidence supporting the authenticity of the biblical account of Solomon and the united kingdom. This evidence comes in the form of four monumental 10th-century B.C.E. city gatehouses.

In this article, we will consider these ancient gatehouses—one of which is often overlooked in this debate, yet represents the most critical piece of the puzzle—and what they tell us about King Solomon's empire.

Solomonic Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer

Prof. Yigael Yadin, one of Israel's great "founders," played a key role in the 1948 War of Independence as Israel's head of operations. Later in his career, he became deputy prime minister as well as chief of staff of the Israel Defense Forces. Yet for all his impressive military and political accomplishments, he is perhaps best known for his contribution to archaeology. And among his many archaeological discoveries, none were more dramatic and consequential, as Yadin himself expressed, than those that related to King Solomon.

From 1957 to 1970, Professor Yadin excavated tels

Megiddo gate

at three of biblical Israel's most important and famous sites: Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer. Yadin marveled at the parallels between the construction and layout of all three sites—parallels specifically prevalent within the stratum associated with the 10th century B.C.E. (the period, chronologically, in which King Solomon was on the scene).

Yadin's observations were summarized by Kaitlyn Satelmayer in her research paper titled "The Gates of Hazor, Gezer and Megiddo: Their Origin and Distribution": "The first archaeologist to sufficiently excavate these three sites and specifically note parallels between each city was Yigael Yadin. … When Yadin was excavating at each site, he noticed that several features seemed to be extremely familiar. THE DESIGN, DIMENSION, CONSTRUCTION AND ARTISTIC FEATURES REMAINED CONSISTENT. There was a casemate wall system at each site, a specific architectural feature prevalent during the 10th century in Israel. Yadin remarked on the fact that EACH SITE HAD A CITY GATE THAT CONTAINED SIX CHAMBERS, THREE CHAMBERS ON EACH SIDE" (emphasis added throughout).

Archaeologically, this is remarkable. It's also incredibly informative. Three cities, three distinct locations, some 150 kilometers apart—and all three have almost *exactly* the same design, dimension, construction and artistic features, *all dated to the same time period!*

As for the gatehouses in these three cities: This six-chambered gate style would famously become known as the "Solomonic Gates," or the "Israelite Gates" (and rather more dryly in scientific circles, "Six-Chambered Gates"). At Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer, Yadin didn't merely uncover gates that looked similar; in most cases, the *dimensions* were virtually identical! (see infographic, page 14).

Certainly, there is some degree of variation among these measurements, mainly related to Gezer. But this is also not unusual, given that each gatehouse would have needed to be tailor-made to fit the geographical constraints of the site (particularly in Gezer, where the gate sits against a slope).

But what is remarkable is the overall consistency between the gates, in some cases to the nearest centimeter. Take Megiddo and Hazor: The dimensions are practically identical, right down the list. And in all three cities, the width of the inner part is exactly 4.2 meters, and the width of the walls is exactly 1.6 meters (see sidebar, page 16, "Solomonic Cubits").

"The gates' dimensions were impressively consistent," writes Satelmayer. "Yadin concluded that the gates of Hazor, Gezer and Megiddo were designed *in such a way as to have been a part of a massive, unified building project in ancient Israel.* Looking at each site's specific stratigraphy it reveals that WITHIN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME, THESE THREE CITIES GROW FROM BEING RELATIVELY SMALL FORTIFICATIONS INTO HUGE, FORTIFIED CITIES. All with specific construction pertaining to particular wall systems, and well-built six-chambered city gates, all following a similar construction pattern."

This data tells us a lot about who built these cities. First, it shows that the same government constructed all three cities. *These gates were built using the same blueprint!* Second, the archaeological remains of these cities, including the large six-chambered gatehouses, show that they were of a *monumental* nature. These cities did not belong to a "ragtag" tribal chieftain; they belonged to a *significant* power. Third, the presence of a single blueprint outlining the construction of large, fortified cities reveals the presence of a *centralized* government in this region in the 10th century.

The situation of these cities in relation to each other is also notable, with regard to the last point. They are separated by relatively vast distances, spanning the better part of ancient Israel's geographic territory (see map, page 15). This means that whoever built these three cities had administrative control over a large area.

From the archaeological record, it is evident that Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer must have been built by the same powerful ruler, an individual with *substantial* regional power and influence. Who might this be?

The Bible Answers

In 1 Kings 9, following the account of Solomon building the temple and his own palace, we read about some of his other projects. "And this is the account of the levy which king Solomon raised; to build the house of the Lord, and his own house, and Millo [a location within Jerusalem that is still debated—quite possibly the Stepped Stone Structure], and the wall of Jerusalem, and *HAZOR,* and *MEGIDDO,* and *GEZER"* (verse 15).

Again, what was it that Yadin discovered at these three sites? *He found evidence of Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer emerging suddenly, and in exactly the same pattern, during the 10th century B.C.E.!*

At all three sites, Yadin also found First Temple Period, early-Phoenician-style "proto-Aeolic" capitals

(ornate royal capstones to large pillars). He concluded that the gates' construction style—the ashlar masonry—was reflective of a Phoenician style found at sites further north of Israel. There is a biblical connection here, too; the Bible records that Hiram, the Phoenician king of Tyre, assisted King Solomon in his construction projects (verse 11).

That's not all. The biblical record highlights specific construction methods utilized by Solomon and Hiram. 1 Kings 6:36 says, "And he built the inner court with *three rows of hewn stone,* and a *row of cedar beams.*" 1 Kings 7:12 says, "And the great court round about had *three rows of hewn stone,* and a *row of cedar beams,* like as the inner court of the house of the Lord ...."

Evidence of this method of construction—three rows of hewn ashlar stones, topped by a horizontal row of cedar beams (and then topped by another series of ashlar stones)—has also been found. Consider Megiddo, which has been heavily excavated and written about by Prof. David Ussishkin. In 1980, he wrote, "In Megiddo, a horizontal gap running along the foundation walls of the gate almost certainly indicates that wooden beams were incorporated here. A horizontal gap of a similar kind was found in Lachish .... Here were placed wooden beams whose remains still could be retrieved when uncovered" ("Was the 'Solomonic' City Gate at Megiddo Built by King Solomon?").

Summarizing the conclusions of R. S. Lamon in *Megiddo II*, Ussishkin wrote: "The monumental structures of Stratum IV [at Megiddo], including the 'Solomonic' gate, WERE PARTLY CONSTRUCTED WITH ASHLAR MASONRY IN 'PHOENICIAN' STYLE, IN PARALLEL TO THE BIBLICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF THE SOLOMONIC BUILDING ENTERPRISES, IN PARTICULAR THE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE ASHLAR MASONRY (e.g. 1 Kings 7:12: 'with three rows of hewed stones, and a row of cedar beams')."

Remarkable, isn't it? Archaeological evidence reveals a construction method the same as that recorded in the Bible *and in association with the administration of King Solomon.*

What is the most rational explanation for this? Is it coincidence that the archaeology pertaining to these three cities aligns almost identically with the biblical record?

To some at least, the answer is: *Yes—it's all coincidence.*

The Minimalist View

In the mid-1980s, a new school of thought called *biblical minimalism* took root in the field of archaeology. One of the chief proponents of this view is Prof. Israel Finkelstein, who is also one of Megiddo's chief excavators. (The minimalist position largely marginalizes the biblical record. It sees the Hebrew Bible as a primarily fictional, embellished work written by authors hundreds of years after the events it records.)

Finkelstein, in large part, led the charge in attempting to redate such monumental structures like the gatehouses and *all* previously identified grand 10th-century (scientifically designated the "Iron IIA" period) structures discovered throughout Israel to the *ninth* century B.C.E. In the case of Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer, construction was attributed not to King Solomon, but to the later Omride dynasty that reigned from Samaria over the northern kingdom of Israel in the ninth century.

Archaeologically, the minimalists identified the late 10th century B.C.E. as the *start* of the Iron IIA period. This relegated the period of David and Solomon—the early-to-mid-10th century B.C.E.—to the relatively destitute Iron Age I period (a fractious period that aligns with the events recorded in Judges). This redating effectively expunged the grand biblical united monarchy from ever having existed!

"Finkelstein's primary goal in creating this new argument was to look at the archaeological evidence and material culture from King David and Solomon's reign and suggest that what we think about this period is exceptionally over-exaggerated compared to its actuality," Satelmayer wrote. "In 1996, Finkelstein developed his main argument in this newly redeveloped concept, indicating that none of the architectural features

THE USE—AND

IN THE ANCIENT WORLD, CITY gates were hubs of activity. This is where meetings would often take place, where leaders would address residents, where travelers would enter and exit, and where merchants would sell their goods and tradesmen ply their craft.

Typically, the gates in Near East cities throughout the second millennium B.C.E. contained four chambers. The six-chambered "Solomonic" gates, which are even larger, became prominent in the 10th century B.C.E.

The parallel chambers, which were situated on both sides of the gate passage, were used for a variety of purposes, including meeting rooms and storage rooms for food, water and other goods.

pertaining to the gate systems found at the sites of Hazor, Gezer and Megiddo date to the time period of Solomon. Instead, they all date much later ...."

Finkelstein's low-chronology view is based on two primary arguments. "The first of these ideas is the concept of the absence of Philistine pottery in Stratum VI [at Megiddo], and the second has to do with the dating of ceramics at [the nearby] Tell Jezreel."

To Finkelstein, Jezreel's Period I pottery, which was dated to the ninth century B.C.E., appeared to be similar to Megiddo's Stratum VA-IVB pottery (the stratum associated with the Solomonic gatehouse). This was enough for Finkelstein to claim that Megiddo's gatehouses belonged in the ninth century. He also noted the lack of Philistine bichrome pottery ware within the preceding Stratum VI at Megiddo—this pottery served as a standard chronological marker for the preceding 11th century B.C.E., as found at other sites.

Using these arguments, Finkelstein concluded that there is no discernible difference between Israelite pottery types from the 10th to ninth century B.C.E. anyway, and therefore the formerly identified "grand" structures of the 10th century B.C.E. would be better redated and compressed into a tighter ninth-century B.C.E. time frame.

To make this theory fit, Professor Finkelstein also dismissed the discovery of a royal Egyptian victory-stele fragment at Megiddo. This fragment belonged to Pharaoh Shoshenq I (biblical Shishak), who in the late 10th century B.C.E.—directly following Solomon's reign—invaded Israel. (Shishak's invasion is recorded in 1 Kings 14:25-26 and 2 Chronicles 12:1-9.) Shoshenq/Shishak's campaign is detailed on a wall relief in his temple at Karnak. The relief actually mentions Megiddo by name. And although the Megiddo stele fragment was not found in stratigraphic context (instead found in secondary use), it nonetheless fits with the biblical and Egyptian textual records of the pharaoh's invasion following Solomon's reign, and it attests to the presence of a significant fortress at Megiddo during the 10th century.

Finkelstein summarized: "*Put aside 1 Kings 9:15,* and the Shoshenq stele which came from a dump, the only clue for dating the Megiddo strata is furnished by the Philistine pottery" ("The Archaeology of the United Monarchy: An Alternative View," 1996).

The Dever Is in the Details

Professor Finkelstein's "low chronology" redating of Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer caused an earthquake in the archaeological world. And initially, it appeared the biblical minimalist's case was scientifically reasonable, especially when early radiocarbon dating at first appeared to "prove" low chronology.

Today, the minimalist's view of the dating of these cities is outdated and passe—a reality perhaps even

GENIUS—OF CHAMBERED GATEHOUSES

City gatehouses are prominent in the biblical record. Genesis 23 records that Abraham purchased land "at the gate" of Hebron. Lot was sitting "in the gate of Sodom" when he met the angels who foretold the city's destruction (Genesis 19). The legalities of Boaz's marriage to Ruth were hashed out "in the gate" (Ruth 4). It was a place where those guilty of manslaughter were instructed to plead their case (Joshua 20). Saul first encountered Samuel "in the gate" of a city in the land of Zuph (1 Samuel 9). Joab took his rival, the military general Abner, "aside in the gate to speak with him quietly"—and then murdered him in one of the chambers (2 Samuel 3:27). It was within a gate that David was restored as king following the quashing of Absalom's rebellion (2 Samuel 19). Proverbs 31, the famous passage attributed generally to Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, mentions that a respectable man is "known in the gates" (verse 23). The Prophet Jeremiah was arrested "in the gate of Benjamin" (Jeremiah 37)—the same gate within which King Zedekiah could be found "sitting" (Jeremiah 38). Many more examples could be given.

Besides serving practical day-to-day functions, having a multichambered gate was instrumental to a city's defense. The weakest point in any fortification is the gate. In the event of a siege, the rooms of a multichamber gatehouse could be filled with rubble; this effectively transformed the gatehouse into a solid continuation of the city wall (and the thickest part of the wall, at that).

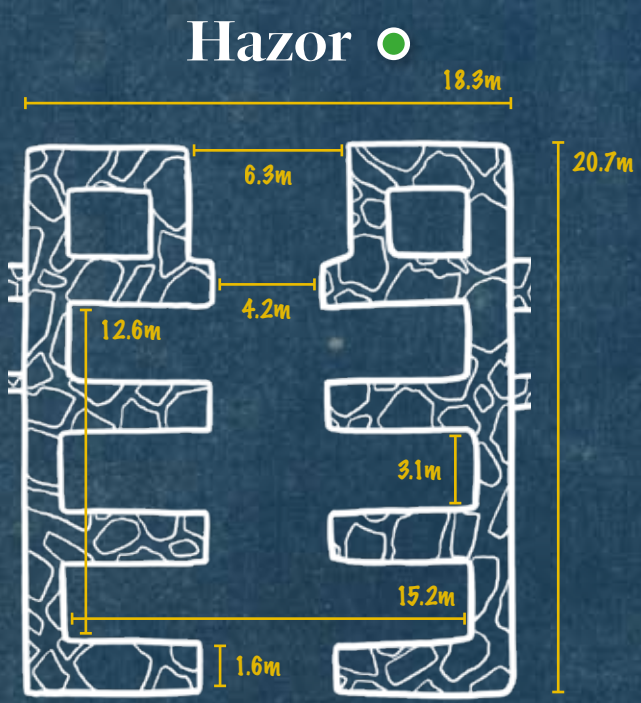
In some cases, gatehouses were positioned above a steep drop with a right-angle entrance. This was the case for both Megiddo and Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, a prominent guard tower (known as Warren's Tower, or the "Large Tower") was built directly in front of the gatehouse. This prevented an invading army from amassing troops directly at the entrance to the gate. To breach the city, enemy soldiers would first have to approach the gate along a narrow path running parallel to the city wall, where they would be vulnerable to attack from soldiers standing on the city walls above. ■

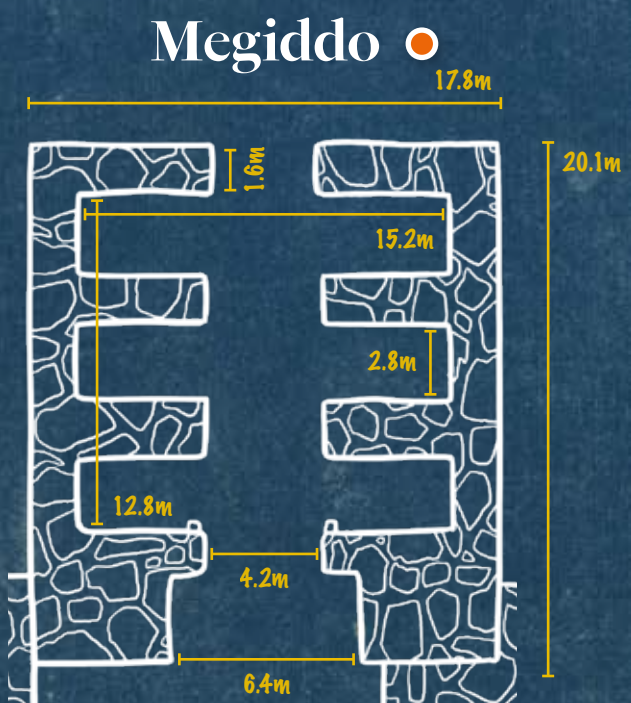
SOLOMON'S BL

Pictured below are overhead-view diagram layouts of the Solomonic gatehouses at Megiddo, Hazor, Gezer and Jerusalem, with select measurements. These gatehouses are oriented here with their entryway at the top.

While each gate exhibits its own unique attributes (additional towers, point of attachment to the casemate city wall, etc), the overall chambered layout and measurements (some of which parallel one another to the nearest *centimeter*) point to the existence of—in the words of Dr. Eilat Mazar—"an identical blueprint, most likely originating in the same architectural office" (*Discovering the Solomonic Wall in Jerusalem*). Further, these parallel 10th-century B.C.E. gatehouses most logically point to a centralized administration exerting authority over a wide area, spanning (at least for these individual gates) the territories of the tribes of Judah, Ephraim, Manasseh and Naphtali.

In other words, a united monarchy—as ruled by the 10th-century King Solomon. "And this is the account of the levy which king Solomon raised; to build … *Jerusalem*, and *Hazor*, and *Megiddo*, and *Gezer*" (1 Kings 9:15).





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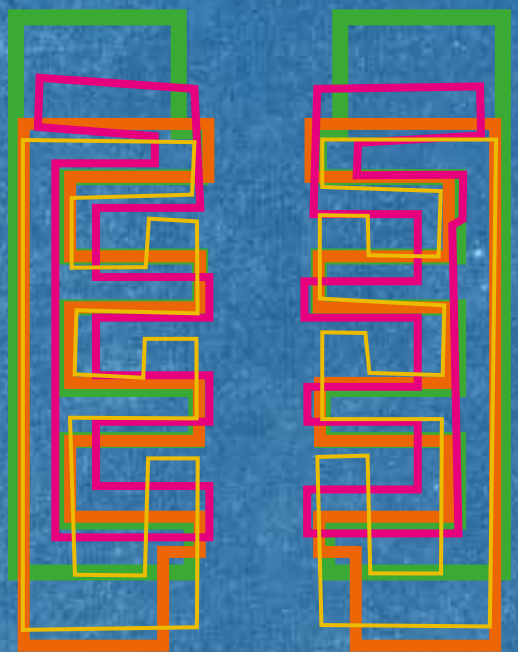

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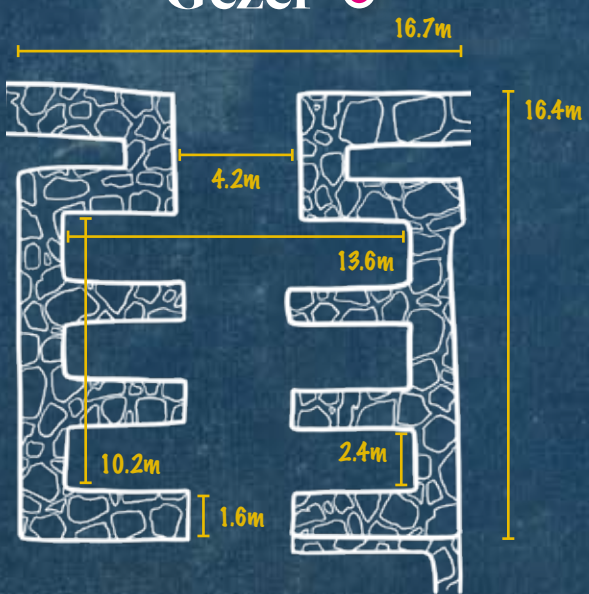
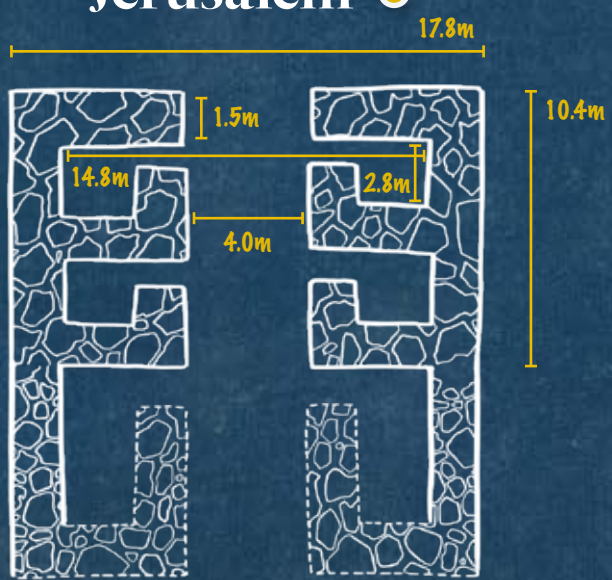


Jerusalem



Finkelstein is beginning to acknowledge; in 2021, he admitted in an interview that "we are in a new phase of attempts to show that archaeology can strike back at the critical approach." Today the traditional, biblically aligned theory of the 10th century is asserting itself as the most consistent with the archaeological evidence. This is thanks in large part to the revolutionary work of Prof. Yosef Garfinkel at the "Davidic" sites of Khirbet Qeiyafa and Khirbet a'Rai (as well as Rehoboam-era Lachish).

In the debate surrounding low chronology, and particularly the redating of the Solomonic gates at Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer, Finkelstein's strongest opponent has been American scholar Dr. William Dever. Dever was the chief excavator of Gezer from the 1960s to '90s, and he dated the Gezer gatehouse to the 10th century B.C.E.

In a recent research piece titled "Solomon, Scripture and Science: The Rise of the Judahite State in the 10th Century B.C.E," Dever reveals new carbon-dating results that corroborate the identification of "Solomon's gates" solidly with the 10th century. "[T]he vaunted C14 dates that were promised have actually dealt the 'low chronology' a death blow," he writes, after outlining the carbon data. "We can move on from excessive skepticism to a modest optimism, from fascination with novelty to serious, responsible work as historians." He notes that of the seven dates provided for Megiddo, "only *one* of the Megiddo dates as published *might* support Finkelstein's 'low chronology' (at a 1 percentage of 68.2 percent accuracy)," while "the other five all support our conventional chronology."

Dever also highlights new analysis of prevalent red-wash ware in the Gezer-gate stratum, which is

SOLOMONIC CUBITS

In his detailed analyses of the Gezer, Megiddo and Hazor gatehouses (published in part in his 1986 article "The Design of the Royal Gates at Megiddo, Hazor and Gezer"), surveyor David Milson deduced that besides the parallel nature of these structures, the engineers who built them used as their standard the Egyptian royal cubit, or "long cubit" (approximately 0.524 meters).

Milson determined this by comparing the width of the entry passages of all three gates. These all measured *precisely* 4.2 meters. As it turns out, this is exactly *eight* lengths of an Egyptian royal cubit, which is 0.525 meters. We know the exact length of a long cubit thanks to several archaeological discoveries. The "Ruler of Maya," an inscribed cubit rod discovered in Saqqara, Memphis, in the early 1800s, is particularly notable. This measuring rod, which dates to Egypt's 18th Dynasty (14th century B.C.E.), is currently archived at the Louvre Museum in Paris (Louvre N1538). The fact that this Egyptian measure dates to the 18th Dynasty is interesting given that this is the Egyptian dynasty of the Exodus.

Numerous references to cubit measurements are found throughout the Bible. There are two primary cubits: one "long" and one "short." The "short cubit" is generally explained as the distance from elbow to tip of the middle finger, otherwise defined as six "hands." As shown by archaeological discoveries, this standardized measurement is 0.44/0.45 meters. The "long cubit," or Egyptian royal cubit, is defined as a short cubit "plus a hand"—or, seven hands (standardized as 0.524/0.525 meters).

There are several interesting biblical references to such "short" and "long" cubits. The "short" cubit was evidently used primarily during *later* monarchical periods. A case in point is Hezekiah's Tunnel (eighth century B.C.E.): The Siloam inscription states that the tunnel length was cut to "1,200 cubits." Dividing the known length of the tunnel (533.31 meters) by 1,200, we have 0.44—the exact measure of the short cubit. Further, even the size of the Siloam Inscription sign itself (0.66 meters) and other contemporary burial inscriptions (1.32 meters) are precise multiples of this short, 0.44-meter cubit measure.

2 Chronicles 3:3—a late passage traditionally ascribed to the hand of Ezra during the fifth century B.C.E.—describes Solomon's temple being constructed with "cubits after the *ancient* measure," translated as "the *first* measure" in the King James Version. Ezra is evidently referring to *long* cubits, as opposed to the standard "short" measure at the time of writing. Likewise, the book of Ezekiel, written in the sixth century B.C.E., clearly denotes that the prophesied temple would be built after the *long*-cubit measuring reed—"of a cubit and a hand-breadth each," or the seven-hands-long royal cubit, paralleling that used for Solomon's temple (Ezekiel 40:5; see also 43:13—"the cubit is a cubit and a handbreadth").

Clearly, the examples in 2 Chronicles 3 and Ezekiel show that these cubit measures were a departure from the norm at the time of writing, hence the necessary specification. The same is true on the opposite end of the time spectrum,

pottery conclusively dated at other sites as exclusively belonging to the 11th–10th centuries B.C.E.—*not* the ninth century. With these "relatively new observations on ceramic typology … plus new and better C14 dates," Dever writes, "we now have at our disposal a securely dated ceramic corpus of the late 11th–10th century B.C.E. that will enable us at last to define the 10th century B.C.E. in stratigraphic, ceramic and truly historical terms." According to Dever, who uses the latest scientific analysis, Gezer is unquestionably dated to the 10th century B.C.E. In other words, it is *Solomonic.*

And what about the biblical record that aligns so well with the archaeology at Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer, which minimalists consider largely irrelevant? According to Dr. Dever, "We cannot simply dismiss the narratives of the Hebrew Bible, our other source for history-writing, as many revisionists (and even some archaeologists) do …."

If you're keeping score, here is where we are at. First, Yigael Yadin excavated all three sites (Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer) and concluded that all three are 10th-century sites. Second, Dr. William Dever has excavated Gezer extensively and concluded that the Gezer gatehouse dates to the 10th century. Third, archaeologist Amnon Ben-Tor excavated Hazor and dated it to the 10th century. Finally, Finkelstein and Ussishkin excavated Megiddo and, at least according to them, date the city to the *ninth* century B.C.E. (It's interesting to note, though, that Ussishkin believed at the time of his above-quoted 1980 article that Dever's excavation showed Gezer's gate "was indeed proven to date to the 10th century B.C., and it seems quite probable that it was constructed during the reign of Solomon.")

Regardless, in all the debate and discussion over Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer, one crucial topic is often missing—and it's the key that could unlock it all.

Enter Jerusalem

Dr. Eilat Mazar was one of Jerusalem's finest, and most experienced and respected, archaeologists. Dr. Mazar directed her first excavation on the Ophel in 1986. More specifically, she excavated an ancient royal ascent situated between the City of David (south) and the Temple Mount (north). While excavating on the inside of a monumental tower on the eastern side of the Ophel—the "Large Tower," still hidden belowground, although revealed by the tunneling efforts of Sir Charles Warren—Mazar and her grandfather, the renowned Prof. Benjamin Mazar, uncovered a peculiar structure that yielded a series of parallel chambers separated by a limestone-floor thoroughfare.

As the walls began to be exposed, measured and recorded, excavation surveyor Leen Ritmeyer overlaid the emerging series of mirrored chambers, including the passageway, onto a larger plan that included the Large Tower.

"When Leen brought his plan to my grandfather and I, we could not believe what we saw," recalled Dr. Mazar in her 2011 publication *Discovering the Solomonic Wall in Jerusalem.* "[T]he symmetry of Building C [the chambered structure], with the Large Tower in front of it, was strikingly evident, and all of a sudden we realized that we were looking at a *typical First Temple Period city gatehouse,* characterized by four identical [still-preserved] chambers and a large approach tower [similar to that at Megiddo]."

This was a light-bulb moment for Dr. Mazar and her grandfather. "Suddenly everything came together! The lime floor that passed through the passageway of the gatehouse led straight to the Large Tower, physically connecting the two buildings! Our city gate closely resembled those known from such other contemporaneous sites …. The realization that we had just

in early Israel. Deuteronomy 3, for example, records the enormous size of the giant Og's bed. Verse 11 says "nine cubits was the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, *after the cubit of a man."* This must have been the short cubit, the length of a man's arm from elbow to fingertip—a measurement that could be more readily and quickly used for measuring mundane items. It is interesting to note, on the other hand, that in the detailed measurements given for the tabernacle (Exodus 25-31) and, later, Solomon's temple (in 1 Kings 6-7), *no* specification is given in these earlier accounts for the cubit length (in contrast to the abovementioned later texts). This must have been because the long cubit was the standard being used already at the time.

Milson's discovery, then, that the Solomonic gates were built using the "long" cubit, is a remarkable fit with the biblical account. It is evident that this was the very measure used by Solomon during his reign—an "ancient measure" that in its own way attests to the antiquity of these structures. ■

discovered an ancient city gate from the First Temple period [which still remains the only such gate discovered in Jerusalem from the period of the biblical monarchy] was one of the most exciting moments that I shared with my grandfather during our work together."

The Mazars posited that, based on the location and surrounding particulars, this gatehouse was most likely the one referenced as the "water gate" in the book of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 8:1, 3, 16).

Later that year, David Milson was brought onto the Ophel team as excavation surveyor and set about measuring the site structures. "Following David's careful measurements of Building C, we were amazed to discover that the DIMENSIONS OF THE FOUR-CHAMBERED OPHEL GATEHOUSE WERE ALMOST IDENTICAL TO THOSE OF THE 10TH-CENTURY PALACE GATEHOUSE AT MEGIDDO," Mazar wrote.

"The overall length of the Ophel gatehouse measured 10.4 meters long and 14.8 meters wide, while the Megiddo gatehouse measured 10.2 meters long and 14.6 meters wide. The passageway of the Ophel gatehouse measured 4 meters wide, while that at Megiddo measured 4.2 meters. Likewise, the walls of the Ophel gatehouse were 1.5 meters thick, while at Megiddo they were 1.6 meters. The similarities between the measurements of the chambers are even more impressive, measuring 2.8 meters long at both sites, 2.4 meters wide at the Ophel, and 2.2 meters wide at Megiddo.

"This discovery was truly fantastic, and seemed to indicate that the two gatehouses were built according to an identical blueprint, most likely originating in the same architectural office," wrote Mazar. Like Gezer, there were certain marginal differences, which, as Dr. Mazar noted, no doubt reflected the geographical situation of the gatehouse, or the specific royal location of this particular gate. The Jerusalem gatehouse is much more fragmentary than the other three, visible in its lowest foundational courses, with only one chamber still preserved at a significant height. And it appears from the remains that this gatehouse had four standard chambers, similar to those of Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer—and that the possible fifth and sixth chambers of the Jerusalem gatehouse were probably somewhat more elongated (if this reconstruction is indeed accurate—again, particularly on this northern side of the gatehouse where the bedrock rises, the preservation of material is not great).

However, several direct parallels *do* exist between the Megiddo gate and the Jerusalem gatehouse—and, by way of association, the gates at Hazor and Gezer. Again, just coincidence? Or is it more rational and logical to conclude, as Dr. Mazar did, that the similarities between these gatehouses are the result of a singular "blueprint, most likely originating in the same architectural office"?

After all, 1 Kings 9:15 doesn't just say that Solomon built *three* particular cities—Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer. It adds a fourth: "And this is the account of the levy which king Solomon raised; to build … *JERUSALEM,* and Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer."

Ignorance Is Bliss

One of the most remarkable outcomes from Dr. Mazar's Jerusalem gatehouse was the *lack of attention and debate.* Strangely, there was—and in many ways continues to be—a virtual blackout on this subject. It was as if, at least in scholarly circles, the discovery of Jerusalem's Iron Age gatehouse didn't even exist!

"I was amazed at how easily our findings at the Ophel were dismissed," Dr. Mazar wrote. "It is difficult to understand how one could ignore the significance of the discoveries from the Ophel, which, it should be noted, had been published in both academic and popular journals—and especially since they pointed to a relatively early date for royal construction in biblical-period Jerusalem. Something like this should have called for further evaluation, specifically in articles and conferences concentrated on the time frame in question. … Still, none of the publications attracted the needed attention" (ibid). *Why* the deafening silence?

Conservative Christian scholar Prof. Douglas Petrovich hints at one reason. In a tribute to Eilat following her death in May 2021, Petrovich described his time as a Ph.D. student at the University of Toronto. In assigned readings on ancient Israel's united monarchy, which included articles and books from critical scholars and archaeologists, there was no mention of Dr. Mazar and her excavations on the Ophel. Petrovich asked his professor why, in their study of Solomonic Jerusalem, they were not required to at least consider the archaeology of Dr. Mazar.

The answer from his professor was shocking. "His reply simply was that books by Eilat Mazar are not necessary *because her work is motivated by political objectives.* He offered no evidence for such an accusation, and we never discussed her findings within our group. This unprofessional response by a scholar who should know better is a perfect example of what an archaeologist faces when he or she attempts to connect monumental architecture or material finds with elements in the biblical narrative."

Basically, Dr. Mazar's Jerusalem gatehouse was blacklisted because she dared to connect it with the biblical record.

Unfortunately, this closed-minded view of Jerusalem archaeology is all too popular today. Too often, we see crucial data or finds from important City of David or Ophel excavations marginalized, ignored and even

discarded because they are deemed "political." Thus, in one convenient fell swoop, the most consequential of biblical cities can be entirely disregarded.

Thankfully, Dr. Mazar's Ophel excavations are gradually beginning to get the attention they deserve. Just this year, for example, archaeologist Ariel Winderbaum published "The Iron IIA Pottery Assemblages From the Ophel Excavations and their Contribution to the Understanding of the Settlement History of Jerusalem, Vol. 1," a 500-page dissertation showing that the Jerusalem gatehouse originates in the 10th century B.C.E.

Why Jerusalem Matters

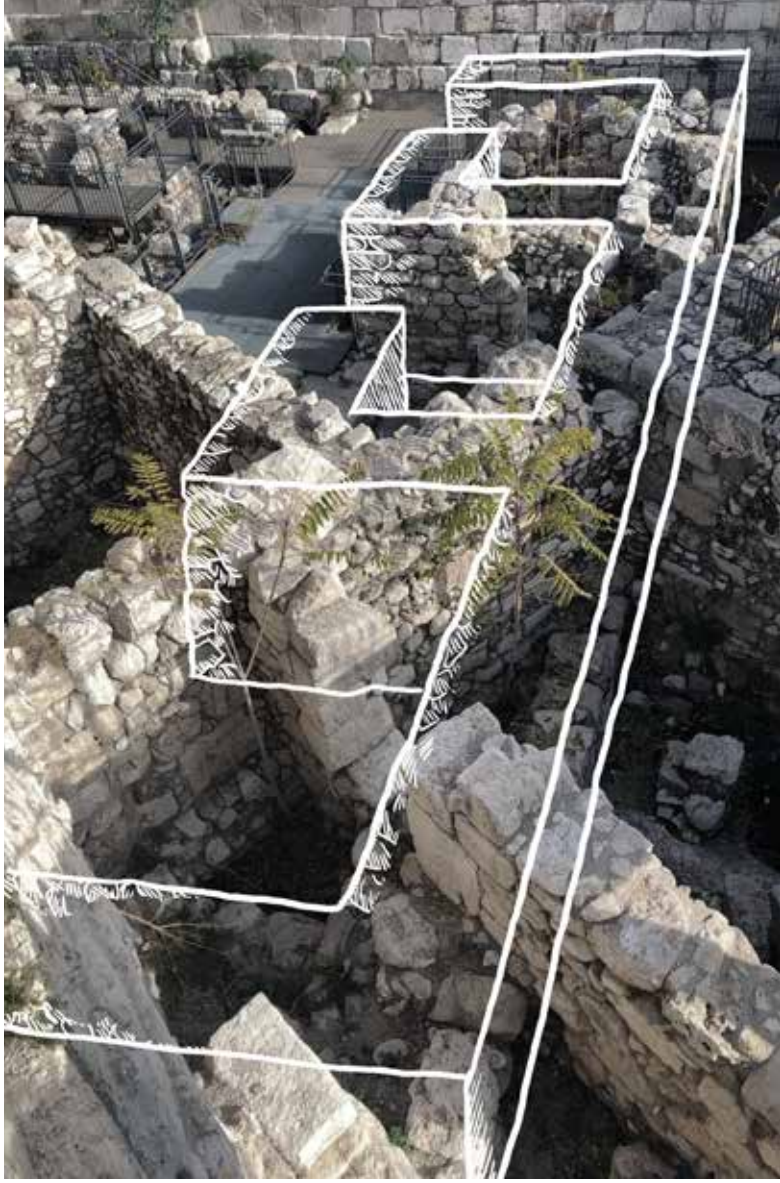
Why is Dr. Mazar's Jerusalem gatehouse so important? The answer relates to Jerusalem's association with Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer. While these three cities are separated by significant distances, all three are situated within the geographical bounds of the northern kingdom of Israel (the tribal territories of Naphtali, Manasseh and Ephraim, respectively). So solely from a geographic point of view, a devil's advocate case *could* conceivably be made that these three cities were the product of a solely northern administration.

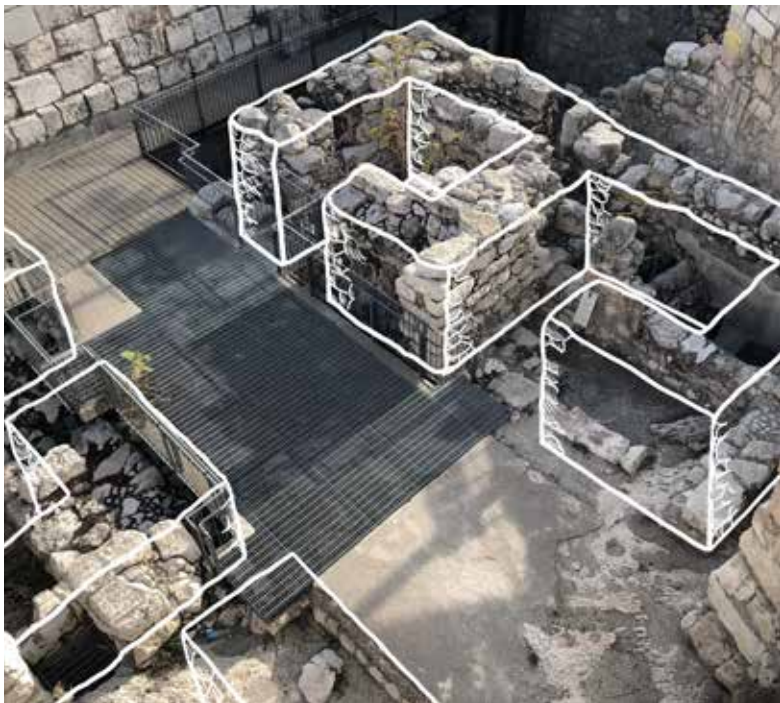
This is what Israel Finkelstein believes. Minimalists argue that the territory of Judah and Jerusalem *could not,* in any way, shape or form, have been of any significance during the 10th century B.C.E. (and that this region only started to become well established during the *late eighth century B.C.E.*—the time period of Hezekiah). Thus, they reassign significant, incontestably early structures, like the securely dated Khirbet Qeiyafa (circa 1000 B.C.E.), to the northern-centric kingdom of *Saul.*

Jerusalem, of course, is famous as the capital of the southern kingdom of *Judah* and was the headquarters of *Judahite* administration. But as the Bible reveals—and as archaeological evidence corroborates—specifically during the 10th century B.C.E., Jerusalem was the administrative capital over *all* Israel.

The discovery of a monumental gatehouse in *Jerusalem*—one that is almost identical in size and nature to the gatehouses uncovered in Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer, all of which have been dated to the 10th century B.C.E.—is the key that unlocks our understanding of this subject. The presence of four strikingly similar gatehouses *all built around the same time* reveals the presence of a singular, overarching blueprint—and *this* suggests the presence of a singular, overarching government.

Finally, we need to put the archaeological record alongside Bible verses like 1 Kings 9:15, which state *explicitly* that King Solomon engaged in significant construction projects in the same four cities. When we do this, the most obvious and logical conclusion is that these monumental cities were built by King Solomon. ■





FROM THE INSIDE LOOKING OUT View of the Solomonic Ophel gate from various angles, with overlaid gatehouse outline, looking to the south (above) and east (below)

Jerusalem's Forgotten

Did King Solomon build the Ophel gatehouse?

BY BRENT NAGTEGAAL

The late Jerusalem archaeologist Dr. Eilat Mazar made some spectacular and historic discoveries. There's the tiny clay bulla inscribed with the name of Judah's King Hezekiah, the trove of gold coins and medallion, and Nehemiah's hastily built wall, to name a few. In 2005, Dr. Mazar captured the imaginations of millions around the world when she announced that she had uncovered archaeological evidence of the palace of King David.

All of these discoveries have been written about, in many cases, at great length and with great fanfare. Did you know Dr. Mazar uncovered another sensational find, one that is as grand and impressive, at least archaeologically, as David's palace? This find has barely been reported on in the media. Even within the archaeological community, it has become a distant memory.

She made this discovery in 1986, a full 19 years before she uncovered King David's palace. It was made during the excavation of a site about 150 meters north of the City of David, in the southeast section of the Ophel. Here, Dr. Mazar uncovered what she came to believe was a monumental gatehouse from the time of King Solomon.

One reason Dr. Mazar's Solomonic gatehouse hasn't made a splash is because it was uncovered in stages. In the 1980s, when she first uncovered the partial remains of the gatehouse, Mazar dated them to the ninth century B.C.E.—not to the 10th century, the time of King Solomon. At the time, she didn't believe there was enough evidence to date the gatehouse to the time of Solomon.

This speaks to Dr. Mazar's scientific integrity and modesty. If she had been driven by an agenda or a longing for the spotlight (as she is sometimes accused of), she could have reasonably suggested early on that the gatehouse belonged to King Solomon. But Mazar, not wanting to get ahead of the science, refrained.

This view changed in 2009, when Dr. Mazar returned to the Ophel to continue excavations on the gatehouse. At the end of the 2009 excavation, she examined the new information and findings alongside the information and evidence from prior excavations. With more of the gatehouse now exposed, and with more information at her disposal and a better understanding of the overall site, Dr. Mazar was in a position to reexamine the dating of the gatehouse. It wasn't until 2009 that she believed this impressive structure was actually from the time of King Solomon.

Unsurprisingly, not everyone agreed. Even today, there is debate about the dating of the Ophel gatehouse. The ramifications of this debate are not insignificant. If this gatehouse was, as Dr. Mazar advocated, built by Solomon, then it is compelling evidence *disproving* the minimalist's view that King Solomon was an insignificant tribal ruler and that Jerusalem in the 10th century B.C.E. was merely a village.

If Dr. Mazar's gatehouse *does* in fact belong to King Solomon, then it is evidence supporting the biblical description of King Solomon as a great monarch who ruled a powerful kingdom.

So, what does the archaeology tell us? Does this gatehouse belong to King Solomon?

Excavating Jerusalem

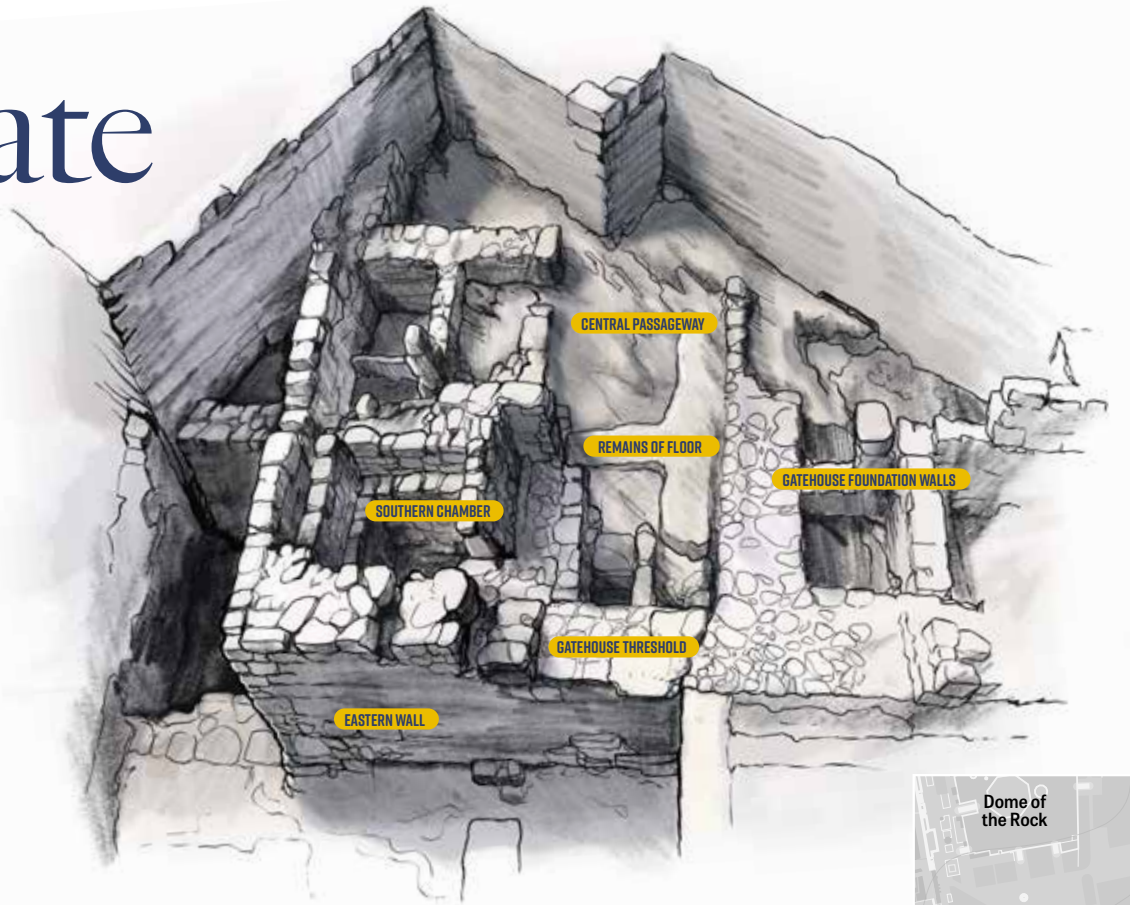
Of all the places on Earth to dig, excavating Jerusalem—especially the earlier archaeological periods—is *incredibly* complex and challenging. First, there's the political and religious sensitivity and tension. Second, modern Jerusalem is densely populated and intensely developed. If you want to dig, especially in ancient Jerusalem, the site very likely sits beneath some sort of building or road.

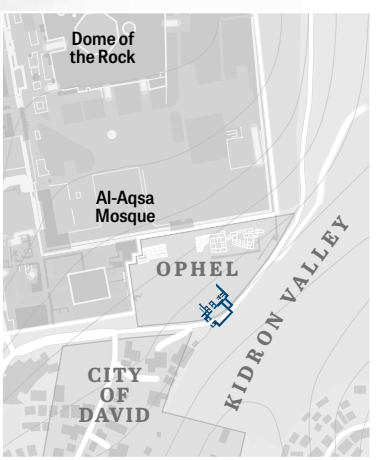
Finally, there's the archaeological complexity. Many areas of Jerusalem, especially the oldest parts, have been the territorial home of *multiple* civilizations. Historically, when one civilization replaced another, the new civilization often demolished the one it was replacing. History books record that some rulers, such as King Herod, literally razed parts of Jerusalem to make way for new construction. In other instances, the new civilization would integrate its infrastructure with previous civilizations' infrastructures. In some parts of Jerusalem, there is archaeological evidence of more than 20 distinct construction levels, the earliest of which date to the early second millennium B.C.E.

The City of David and the Ophel are in the *oldest* parts of Jerusalem, *and the most archaeologically challenging to excavate*.

The area encompassing the Ophel gatehouse was first excavated in 1976, and then again in '86, '87, '94 and 2009. During these digs, which were led by either Prof. Benjamin Mazar or Dr. Eilat Mazar, multiple distinct walls were uncovered. The dating of these walls varies and spans 1,500 years of civilization. One of the main tasks

Gate





(and challenges) of the archaeologist is to identify the walls and then determine each wall's date of construction.

As the site is excavated and more detail is exposed and studied, you can begin to see how the walls and various layers interact. A stratigraphic sequence of construction develops. The layers of earth ("floors") are also studied. If possible, it's extremely helpful to know whether a floor reaches all the way to a wall. Like a jigsaw puzzle, all of these details come together to reveal the history of the site.

In the very first phases of excavation, Dr. Mazar learned that the earliest walls of the Ophel gatehouse were constructed during the Iron II period. Also termed the First Temple Period, this archaeological era is generally dated from around 1000 to 586 B.C.E. (the time of Jerusalem's destruction).

When considering the Ophel's Iron II walls, it's important to remember that we are looking at *partial* walls. Many of the First Temple remains in the area were destroyed by subsequent civilizations. On this site, we have evidence of Hasmonean, Herodian, Late Roman and Byzantine civilizations, all of which dug down to bedrock.

However, while there may not be acres of well-preserved Iron II walls, there is clear evidence of Iron II civilization. Using the evidence, which includes a significant amount of pottery, we can develop a picture of what the Ophel looked like *even as early as the 10th century.*

It helps too that the archaeologist who excavated the Ophel had a gift for exposing complex environments. Even Dr. Mazar's critics agree that she possessed a special talent for examining heavily built-up areas and sites with multiple occupation layers. Where others might throw up their hands and give up in exasperation, Eilat thrived.

The Bible and Archaeology

Dr. Mazar considered the Bible a valuable historical source and used it in her archaeology. Her dating of the gatehouse to the 10th century B.C.E. is consistent with what the Bible records about King Solomon.

1 Kings 9:15 states: "And this is the account of the levy which king Solomon raised; to build the house of the Lord, and his own house, and Millo, and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer." Remarkably, three other gatehouses, all of which are very similar to the one in Jerusalem, have been discovered: Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer (see article, page 10).

For some, the extraordinary convergence of

JULIA GODDARD/ARMSTRONG INSTITUTE OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

archaeology and the biblical record around these four monumental gatehouses is mere coincidence. Others accept it as circumstantial, rather than scientific, evidence.

Let's now consider what the archaeological record says about the construction date of the Ophel gatehouse.

First, it's important to note that the Jerusalem gatehouse is colossal in its preservation height on its eastern side. This is because it is built on the edge of the Kidron Valley. Because the bedrock slopes to the east into the valley, the eastern wall needs to rise higher than the western to make a level platform for the gate. Standing at over 5 meters tall, the southeast corner of the gatehouse is one of the most impressive constructions still standing from any time during the First Temple Period in Israel.

Think about this for a moment: Here in the southeast corner of *ancient Jerusalem* we have a *massive* wall—one that required impressive engineering skills. Doesn't the sheer size of this wall alone suggest the presence of a *significant* ruling power in Jerusalem during this period?

Would an inconsequential tribal leader with only a few hundred followers have the means (the workforce, finances and engineering capability)—let alone the *need*—to construct something so monumental?

Recently, two academic papers published in the *Tel Aviv* archaeological journal have attempted to redate Dr. Mazar's Ophel gatehouse out of the 10th century. The first paper, "The Iron Age Complex in the Ophel, Jerusalem: A Critical Analysis," was written by Prof. Israel Finkelstein, a prominent biblical minimalist. In his paper, Finkelstein posits that the entire gatehouse structure was constructed in the eighth century (or later).

The second paper, "Jerusalem's Growth in Light of Excavations of the Ophel," was written by Dr. Ariel Winderbaum, who recently completed his Ph.D. dissertation on the pottery assemblage of Dr. Mazar's Ophel excavation. Winderbaum believes that while the foundation of the Ophel gatehouse belongs in the 10th century, the upper gatehouse should be dated to the eighth.

Obviously, both of these views conflict with Mazar's dating of the entire gatehouse. Can her dating be defended? To understand why she dated the entire gatehouse to the 10th century, we must examine three distinct features: the eastern wall, the central passageway, and the southeastern chamber.

First, it's important to note: Mazar found what is indisputably 10th-century B.C.E. pottery in all three areas. Any attempt to redate the Ophel gatehouse out of the 10th century must include an explanation for the presence of 10th-century pottery in a gatehouse apparently built much later.

The biblical record shows that King Solomon reigned in Jerusalem for 40 years, and that Jerusalem underwent massive development and experienced significant population growth during this period. This means that the 10th-century pottery Dr. Mazar found is *most likely* associated with Solomon.

Finally, a word about terminology. Scholars use a number of terms to describe the 10th-century period, including "early Iron IIA," "early First Temple Period" and "early 10th century." Going forward, I will mainly use the term "Solomonic period."

Let's now consider the archaeology of each of the three sections of the Ophel gatehouse.

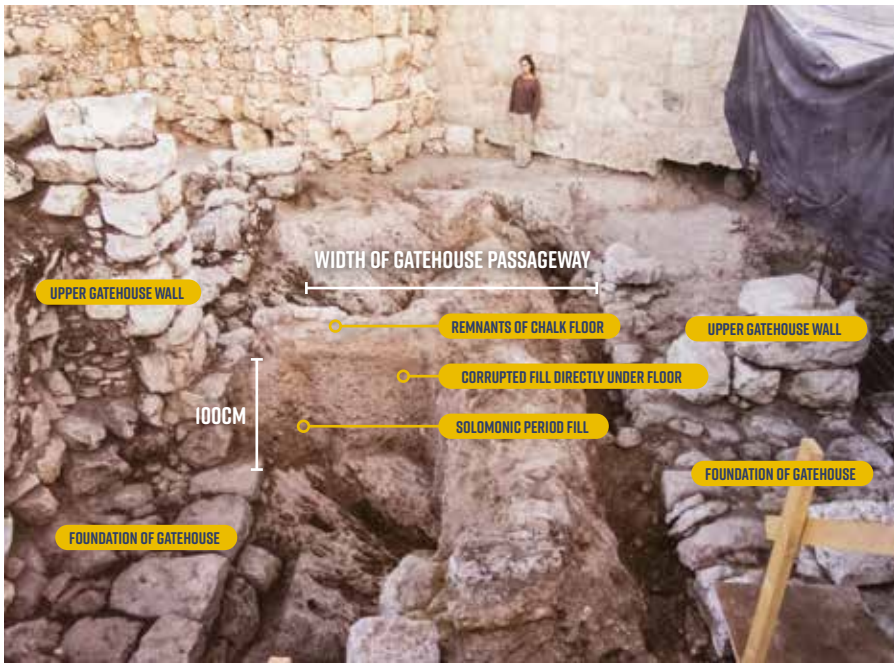
The Eastern Wall

The full extent of the massive eastern wall was uncovered in the 2009–10 excavation. Although there are some slight variations in the wall's construction style—for example, there is a correctional course of stones about halfway up the wall—the wall's look and design are generally consistent from top to bottom. Like all of the First Temple Period walls in the Ophel, the eastern wall is built directly on bedrock.

After the construction of the eastern wall, a massive amount of earth fill was brought in to raise the floor level to the same height as the gatehouse entrance. The pottery found in the lower portion of this fill was dated to the time of Solomon. Using this pottery, Dr. Mazar dated the eastern wall of the gatehouse to the same period.

A separate 4-meter-high wall abuts the north end of the eastern wall. This wall is the same height as the gatehouse entrance. Dr. Mazar interpreted this to be a wall that was built to hold the earth fill in place inside the projecting tower that protected the entrance to the gate. The fact that this supporting wall reaches the same height as the eastern wall at the gate entrance is additional proof this was a walkway.

When it comes to dating, both Winderbaum and Mazar showed that the pottery found in the lowest fills against the eastern wall clearly dates to the Solomonic period. Winderbaum believes the eastern wall's lowest courses were built separately (and earlier) from the upper courses of the gatehouse. Dr. Mazar disagreed; she believed the entire eastern wall was one unit and was constructed at the same time. The reason Winderbaum believes the upper wall was built later is because pottery sherds found in the upper parts of the fill dated to the later period. But this doesn't mean the upper wall had to be built separately. The presence of later-period pottery in the upper level isn't unexpected;



it was likely imported with fill that would have been occasionally brought in to raise the floor (which wore down over time). Importantly, the lowest levels of the fill did not produce any late pottery.

Finkelstein's view is different still. He wrote, "If the latest sherds in this fill indeed date to the Iron IIA, they are in contrast to the lowest fill below the gatehouse." This does not address the issue, but perhaps it is a slight admission that the fill against the wall belongs to the Solomonic period?

While he concedes the presence of Solomonic-period pottery, Finkelstein has a plausible, though creative, suggestion for how it might have found its way into the fill. "Indeed, the earth for the fill could have been brought here at a later phase of the Iron age from a dump-debris with Iron IIA sherds." While possible, the sheer mass of Solomonic sherds *without a single later sherd* makes this extremely unlikely. Furthermore, if according to Finkelstein, Jerusalem was a mere tribal village at this time, how far away did the builders have to travel to find fill that contained so much Solomonic-period pottery? And why would they travel such vast distances to find mere fill?

The Gatehouse Passageway

The excavation of the central passageway of the gatehouse carries with it a long history. In the final two days of excavation in 1986, Dr. Mazar examined a cross-section of the passageway that was situated underneath an early-Roman-period wall. In her sample dig, she found a "wonderfully preserved lime floor" with pottery sitting on top. The following season (summer 1987), Mazar and her team dismantled the later structures, exposing the lime floor to its full extent. All totaled, the limestone passageway floor was preserved to a length of 10 meters and a width of 1.3 meters.

Importantly, Dr. Mazar found that the limestone floor abutted (literally touched) the foundational gatehouse walls. The floor also extended over the threshold at the entrance of the gatehouse (the eastern wall described above), and extended slightly outside the entrance to the gatehouse. This small portion of floor extending outside the gatehouse provides important insight into the function of the gatehouse. It shows that the massive fill against the eastern wall was used to support the chalk floor.

On top of the floor, Mazar found remnants of the latest use of the gatehouse (from the time of Jerusalem's destruction in 586 B.C.E.). "These finds were unmistakable proof that here was the original First Temple Period floor—just as we have hoped," she wrote after the 1987 season. Crucially, this floor sat about 1 meter above bedrock. This meant that there was a large volume of datable material below the floor. In the 1987 phase, Dr. Mazar removed all of the later structures that cut into the floor. Meanwhile, the floor and the 1 meter of fill beneath were not fully excavated until the 2009 season.

In 2009, when Dr. Mazar returned to excavate the passageway fill (about 1 meter deep), there was no discernible change in the nature of the material. Yet she decided to separate the upper half of the fill from the lower material. This separation was not based on pottery typology found after she had begun excavation.

COURTESY DR. EILAT MAZAR (2)

Rather, it was simply good archaeological practice and a decision made before she even began to remove the fill.

Eilat explained why she did this in 2011: "The lime floor, which was discovered during our 1986 excavations comprised the latest floor of the gatehouse passageway. In general, floors in such busy places would definitely wear out very quickly and would require constant repairs: However, unlike its upper layers, the lowest earth fill, which directly overlays bedrock would likely be undisturbed and would perhaps even provide finds that would reveal when the gatehouse had been constructed. The idea behind dividing the excavation of the earth fill beneath the lime floor was meant to isolate the original fill of the floor above later repair layers."

Dr. Mazar's rationale here was genius. By dividing the fill into two and separating the material in the upper part from the material in the lower part, she ensured the preservation of the oldest, and arguably the most important, material. And just as she expected, when the time came to dig, she found later-period items in the upper part of the fill. Meanwhile, also as expected, the bottom half-meter of fill contained no later-period items.

To date this material, Dr. Mazar compared the pottery she found in the passageway fill with pottery found in other 10th-century sites, most notably Khirbet Qeiyafa (a site irrefutably dated to the early 10th century B.C.E.). Based on the lack of red slip and burnishing, as well as other similarities to pottery found at Khirbet Qeiyafa, Mazar was able to date her material (and the gatehouse) to the Solomonic period. In his report, Winderbaum agrees with Mazar's dating of this earlier layer inside the passageway. As he writes, the pottery assemblage "should also be dated to the Early Iron IIA."

Meanwhile, Finkelstein rejected Mazar's rationale for separating the upper fill and the lower fill. He stated that the entire "fill must be evaluated together." Using select pottery and other items uncovered in the upper fill which did date later, Finkelstein dated the *entire* fill down to bedrock to the seventh century.

But what about the fill and pottery at the bottom of the passageway that both Dr. Mazar and Winderbaum dated to early Iron IIA? How does Finkelstein explain its presence? He doesn't—he ignores the Solomonic material found in the lowest parts of the fill.

The Southern Chamber

Finally, we come to the southern chamber of the Ophel gatehouse. This room, which was remarkably well preserved, was first excavated in 1976, and then again in 1986. In this room, Mazar found a white chalk floor that was similar to that in the central passageway. This floor also abutted (literally touched) the gatehouse walls, and appeared to partially enter the room from the central passageway. According to Mazar's 1989 report, both remnants of the floor and the earth fill immediately beneath it (the "make-up") were excavated together. This means that the entire fill, from top to bottom, was combined in excavation.

One wonders: Would we have a clearer understanding of this chamber if Mazar and her grandfather in 1986 had divided the fill into two sections, like Eilat did when she excavated the passageway in 2009?

KHIRBET EN-NAHAS

Given the fragmentary nature of the Ophel gatehouse, not all agreed with the conclusion that it was a gate. One particular disagreement was regarding the nature of the chambers. The Ophel gatehouse exhibited "closed" chambers that wrapped around four sides (with a narrow opening), rather than the more "open" three-sided chambers of Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer. Jerusalem's "closed" chambers had no known archaeological gatehouse parallel. "We kept [Prof. Nahman] Avigad's important critique in mind for many years," wrote Dr. Eilat Mazar, "as it was the strongest argument that we would receive against our identification .... Though no city gate is completely identical to another, the fact that this was the sole known example whose chambers were intentionally closed off was puzzling" (*Discovering the Solomonic Wall in Jerusalem*).

In 2002, a discovery in Jordan shed light on the issue. A four-chambered gatehouse, discovered in Khirbet en-Nahas, featured *exactly the same "closed"-style chambers.* Not only that, this fortress's use (as a copper production site) spanned the *10th and ninth centuries B.C.E.*, as revealed by numerous carbon-14 samples. As Mazar pointed out, this discovery "led the site's excavators, Prof. Tom Levy and Mohammad Najjar, to raise the possibility that it may have been kings David and Solomon who controlled these mines, since, as noted in 1 Chronicles 18:13, they had also ruled over all of Edom where the site was located.

"This discovery solidified our assertion that Building C was indeed a gatehouse, with an atypical, but still known, construction plan" (ibid). ■

Even still, the Mazars' excavation of the fill under the chamber floor produced some dramatic results. According to Mazar's report in 1989, she initially dated the pottery to the ninth century B.C.E., after the Solomonic period. However, in this same report Dr. Mazar clearly identified pottery types that *came into use in the 10th century* and continued into the ninth century. The 1989 report also states that some pottery types were wheel-burnished, which is not a feature of 10th-century pottery.

In 2011, Dr. Mazar reexamined the pottery found in the 1986 dig and modified her dating of the chamber. Studying the pottery again, and considering it against information from sites and pottery not available back in 1989, Dr. Mazar determined that it was impossible to deduce whether the sherds were wheel-burnished or hand-burnished.

In her 2011 analysis, Mazar said that it was a mistake to date the pottery to its latest use (in the ninth century), and explained that it should instead be dated to the median period of use. This would date the pottery in the southern chamber to the 10th century B.C.E.

Dr. Mazar's reexamination and redating of an earlier excavation is not unusual in archaeology. In fact, it is good science (and entirely logical) to reconsider older findings in the context of newer findings and understanding. In this instance, however, some have a problem with Dr. Mazar's reexamination of the 1986 dig. Why? Because the evidence indicates the pottery in this chamber *also* dates to the Solomonic period.

Winderbaum's report on this southern chamber is interesting. He stated that "there were two fills beneath the floor, the lower of which supported an earlier floor that did not survive." He somehow dates this lowest fill to the early Iron IIB (eighth century B.C.E.). His methodology for dividing the fill is unclear, especially considering Dr. Mazar's own conclusion on the fill. "The section of the fill proved uniform, with no changes to the stone plinth [foundation]" (Mazar, 1989). Perhaps Winderbaum has access to more information and data not included in Mazar's final report. Nevertheless, he too—unfortunately—did not address Dr. Mazar's redating of the uniform fill to the Solomonic period.

Conclusions

The fact that three professional and respected field archaeologists have three differing opinions on the dating of the Ophel gatehouse isn't surprising—especially when you consider how much construction (and demolition) has taken place on the Ophel over the past 3,000 years. Archaeologically, the Ophel is one of the most challenging places on Earth to understand.

So who should we believe? Prof. Israel Finkelstein believes the entire structure was likely built in the eighth century. Dr. Ariel Winderbaum believes that while there is clear evidence of Solomonic-period construction at the foundation level, the upper gatehouse as seen today was built during the eighth century.

Finally, Dr. Eilat Mazar, the archaeologist with the most history with the site—who spent the most time thinking about and studying the site—believed the entire Ophel gatehouse should be dated to the 10th century B.C.E.

If we're looking only at the numbers, two out of three of these scientists believe that the major structural elements of the gatehouse were constructed at the time of King Solomon. Both concur that in every place where undisturbed, stratified fills went down to bedrock and abutted walls, the fill dated to the 10th century B.C.E. The weight of the archaeological evidence lies with a 10th-century date for the gatehouse.

But what about the differing viewpoints of Dr. Mazar and Dr. Winderbaum? Who should we believe? It would be easy to compromise and take the middle road, accepting that the gatehouse construction belongs in *both* the 10th century and the eighth century. There is, however, one final, and important, consideration.

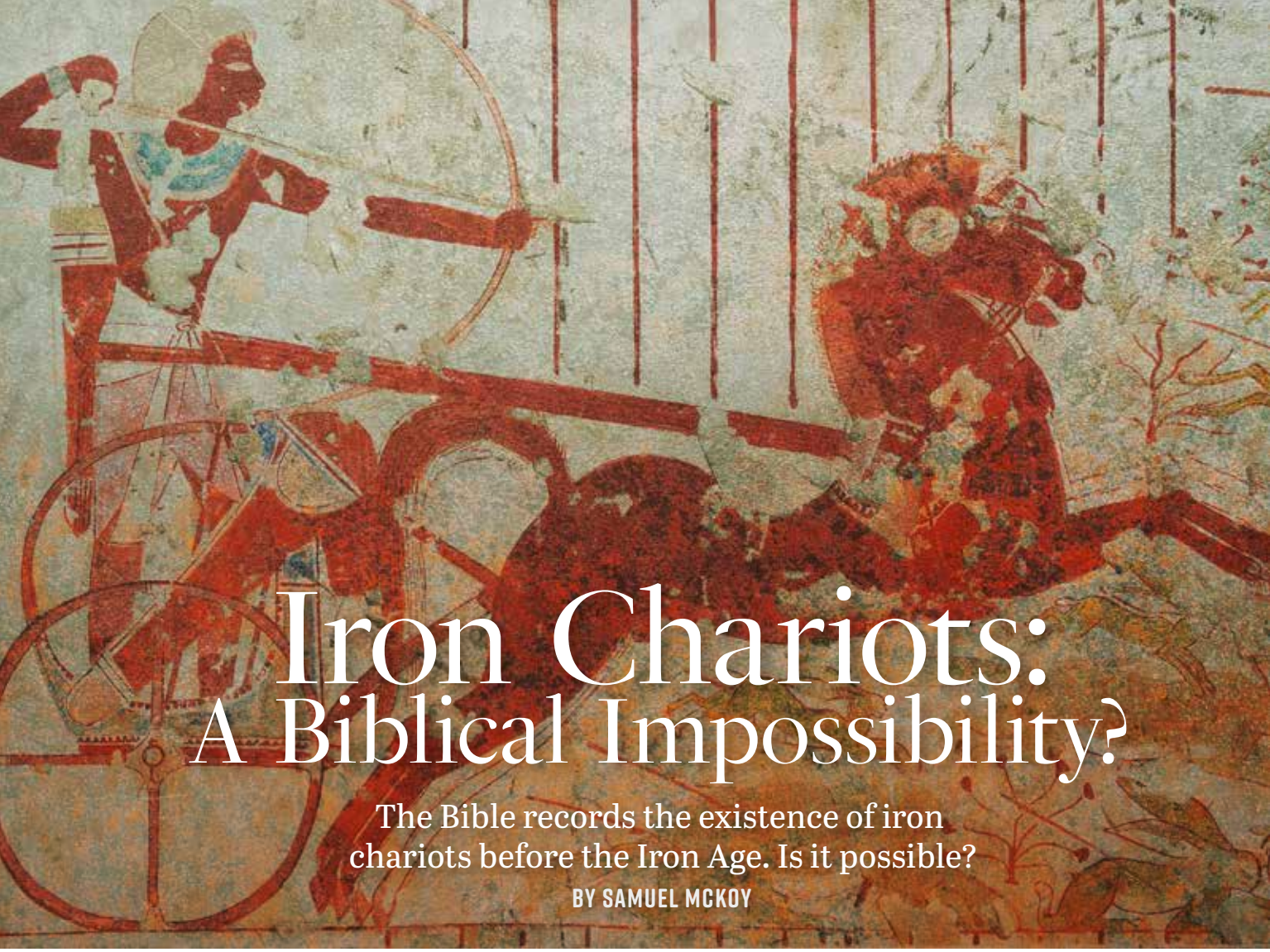
What does the historical text say?

The book of Kings, compiled by Jeremiah in the late seventh century B.C.E.—when the Ophel gatehouse was still in use—documents a massive building project in Jerusalem under King Solomon. 1 Kings 9:10, 15 and other verses record how Solomon expanded Jerusalem from the ancient city of David northward onto the Ophel ridge. Here on the Ophel, he constructed his vast royal complex, which included his palace, the massive armory building, the temple, and city walls and gatehouses.

"And this is the account of the levy which king Solomon raised; to build the house of the Lord, and his own house, and Millo, and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer" (1 Kings 9:15). The historical record is clear and detailed: The 10th-century B.C.E. construction of Jerusalem and its walls, which include gates, was performed by King Solomon!

Every reader will have to weigh the evidence and decide for himself. It would be incredibly helpful if we had more data available—more pottery, more of the walls and floors exposed, more of the gatehouse and its ancillary structures exposed. The only way to do this is to excavate!

For now, it is our view that when you consider the biblical record alongside the archaeological record, it's impossible not to agree with Dr. Mazar. As she wrote, "Dating the construction of the fortification line in the Ophel to sometime in the second half of the 10th century makes King Solomon out to be the best candidate for its architect." ■



Iron Chariots: A Biblical Impossibility?

The Bible records the existence of iron chariots before the Iron Age. Is it possible?

BY SAMUEL MCKOY

The Hebrew Bible records the presence of iron chariots in the Levant in the Late Bronze Age (mid-to-late second millennium B.C.E.). Joshua 17:16 says, "... and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both they who are in Beth-shean and its towns, and they who are in the valley of Jezreel.'"

In verse 18, Joshua assures the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh that they can drive the Canaanites out of the Promised Land, even "though they have chariots of iron, and though they be strong."

The book of Judges shows that the Israelites, in spite of Joshua's encouragement, failed to overcome the Canaanites and their iron chariots. Judges 1:19 says that though "the Lord was with Judah," they "could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron." Israel's failure to drive out the Canaanites from Bethshean during the period of the judges is illustrated by historical sources, including the Amarna tablet EA289 and the stela of Seti I.

For Bible scholars and archaeologists alike, this history raises an important question: Did iron chariots exist in the Levant in the Late Bronze Age?

Many scholars and scientists reject the notion. According to John F. A. Sawyer, an Old Testament scholar and linguist, "It is historically highly improbable ... that the Canaanites were equipped with iron chariots before the end of the second millennium B.C."

Dr. Naama Yahalom-Mack, a senior lecturer at Hebrew University specializing in archaeometallurgy in the Bronze and Iron ages, agrees: "Iron chariots did not exist in the Iron Age at all, certainly not in the Iron I, when these stories are set, where barely any iron was used at all." The events recorded in Joshua took place *before* the Iron I period, which would make the presence of iron chariots even less likely.

Some suggest the term "iron chariots" here is figurative, that the Bible is referring to the "iron" strength of the Canaanites. "The more compelling explanation is that 'chariots of iron' may mean strong chariots," Dr. Yahalom-Mack proposed. "Iron, in this case, would be a symbolic expression of strength, an image well-known

in the Iron Age, rather than an accurate description of the actual chariots used by the Canaanites in the Late Bronze and Iron I."

When you study the context, however, it is clear that the reference in Joshua and Judges is literal—that the Canaanites did indeed possess "iron chariots." How is this possible? The general consensus among historians and archaeologists is that the Iron Age did not begin until the 12th century B.C.E.

How could iron be present in the Levant *before* the onset of the Iron Age? And how likely is it that it would have been used in Canaanite chariot construction?

Evidence of Chariots

One thing we do know is that chariots had long been in use by this period. Four-wheeled carts pulled by draft animals like oxen have been traced back to around 3000 B.C.E. in Mesopotamia. Two-wheeled horse-drawn chariots reached Egypt with the invasion of the Hyksos (from the region of Canaan) around 1750 B.C.E.

In one of the most famous battles of antiquity, the Egyptians and Hittites fought with thousands of chariots at the Battle of Kadesh. Pharaoh Tutankhamen of Egypt had a famous chariot overlaid with gold.

We know the Egyptians and Hittites had chariots, but what about the Canaanites? Pharaoh Thutmose III of Egypt described a military campaign against the Canaanites in the mid-15th century B.C.E., culminating with the Battle of Megiddo. On the temple walls at Karnak, Thutmose III recorded that the Egyptians took over 900 chariots from the Canaanites as booty.

That's a *lot* of chariots. The sheer number of chariots captured shows that the Canaanites were clearly experienced in both chariot design and construction. If iron was being used in the manufacturing of chariots, then it almost certainly would have been used by Canaan's chariot builders.

The Design of the Chariots

Historical records show that chariots underwent many changes during the Late Bronze and early Iron Age periods. Historian Ian Harvey explained that at the Battle of Kadesh, the Egyptians used quick and maneuverable chariots that carried two soldiers. The Egyptians famously used chariots as mobile firing platforms for their composite bows. The Hittites, who bred stronger horses, used larger and heavier chariots. These were used to batter enemy lines. Hittite chariots carried three soldiers: a driver, a spearman or bowman, and a shield bearer.

Geographically, the Canaanites were situated between these two powers. In Canaan, chariots were owned and operated by a class of people known as the "maryannu"

Only one confirmed depiction of a Canaanite chariot has been discovered. This depiction dates to the 13th century B.C.E. and was found at Megiddo.

(wealthy Canaanites who paid for the upkeep of their horses and chariots). Canaanite chariots were believed to be lighter than Hittite chariots, but heavier than Egyptian chariots. Canaanite chariots were used to strike columns of infantry and break their formations, which enabled light infantry to take advantage of the ensuing chaos. In his book *The History of Ancient Israel,* Michael Grant wrote that Canaanite chariots may have had tire rims and scale armor "fashioned of bronze, not iron."

Only one confirmed depiction of a Canaanite chariot has been discovered. This depiction dates to the 13th century B.C.E. and was found at Megiddo. On the right side of the depiction, a king rides alone upon his chariot, with prisoners of war walking before him. Although it depicts a parade, not a battle, and only shows half of the chariot, this ivory furnishes some crucial details. First, it confirms that nobility utilized chariots and that footmen followed the chariots. Second, it shows that the chariot carried both a quiver of arrows and a spear, indicating that Canaanite chariots were a hybrid of both the Egyptian and Hittite chariots.

Sourcing Iron?

We know chariots were used heavily during the Late Bronze Age (the time of Joshua). Now what about iron? Although there is archaeological evidence of iron and iron products in the Late Bronze Age, the metal was not common.

In 1925, an iron dagger was discovered in the tomb of the Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamen, who reigned in the 14th century B.C.E. Iron beads have also been discovered in Egypt dating back to 3400–3100 B.C.E. In 2016, scientific analysis confirmed that the iron in these objects came from meteoroids. Iron-smelting technology (distilling iron from ore by heating it to extreme temperatures) did not exist on a large scale until the Iron Age. Meteoric iron, though rare, is already in its metal state—ready to use. This explains why there have been many discoveries of iron products that predate the advent of iron-smelting technology.

Meteoric iron was a scarce resource, though, which made it highly valuable. "Iron was 10 times the price

Pharaoh Tutankhamen of Egypt had a chariot overlaid with gold.

of gold back then," writes archaeometallurgist Albert Jambon. "It was like diamonds are today, a highly valuable material used only for jewels or tools for the king. My theory is that people were going mad to look for meteorites."

Did iron exist, and was it used in manufacturing weapons and other products, before the Iron Age? The answer is yes, but very rarely.

The Use of Iron

Richard A. Gabriel called the idea of a chariot made entirely of iron "a technological nonsense." He's right. Such a chariot would be far too heavy, and it would have been almost impossible to source enough iron. In all likelihood, these ancient chariots would have been fashioned largely from timber, with some metal reinforcing.

In Psalm 46:10, the author mentions chariots being burned with fire, suggesting they were still primarily made from wood or leather even in the Iron Age. When the Bible refers to iron chariots, it is referring to chariots only partially made from iron.

The *IVP Bible Background Commentary* posits, "References to iron chariots in the conquest narrative most likely refer to the use of iron fittings to strengthen the chariot basket or iron-shod wheels. It is possible that studs or projectile points were added to make this engine of warfare heavier and more of a factor when rammed into lines of infantry."

Historians Marian H. Feldman and Caroline Sauvage have proposed that chariots were objects of prestige among the Canaanite maryannu. Song of Solomon 3:9-10 record that Solomon even made himself a chariot as an object of esteem, which had "pillars thereof of silver" and a "top thereof of gold." Deuteronomy 3:11 specifically records that Og, king of Bashan, had an iron bed. Old Testament scholar Alan R. Millard wrote that this bed was significant because iron was such a precious metal.

Maybe the maryannu put iron on their chariots as a display of wealth? Thutmose III described multiple Canaanites "abandoning their horses and their chariots of gold and silver." Gold and silver would have served no purpose but decoration—so why not use the treasured meteoric iron as well?

It is impossible to know with certainty exactly what constituted a Canaanite chariot. Archaeology has not yet provided the evidence needed to determine the design of these iron chariots, or tell us conclusively what materials they were manufactured from. There is, however, a lot we do know. For example, we know that the Canaanites in the Late Bronze Age had an impressive chariot manufacturing industry.

Is it feasible that Canaan's "iron chariots" might have been manufactured, at least partially, using iron? Absolutely. Is it possible that Canaan's wealthy elite and military leaders could have adorned their chariots with expensive metals like silver, gold and iron? Certainly.

Can the biblical record, which records the Canaanite's possession of "chariots of iron," be categorically rejected? Absolutely not! ■

*FROM **PAGE 9** BIBLICAL MINIMALISM FOOTNOTES*

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FEEDBACK

Your writing is absolutely amazing, mate. I'm totally enjoying going back in time through your biblical archaeology series. The article on Nehemiah is so good you should maybe expand it into a book. Thank you, and God bless.

NEW ZEALAND

IN RESPONSE TO
A TRIBUTE TO OUR FRIEND, DR. EILAT MAZAR

Wonderful, that you remember in such a way the "Lady of Jerusalem"! Her death is a tragedy personally and for the archaeology of Jerusalem! She is missed so much!

Alexander Schick WESTERLAND, GERMANY

I have been reading and rereading this article. I simply had to take time to thank you! Everything I learn from your work thrills me. It must have been a great adventure to work with Eilat Mazar.

Georgy Rock MISSOURI, UNITED STATES

May her memory be blessed. Eilat Mazar also left her mark in Jerusalem.

Ruti Bahar TEL AVIV, ISRAEL

May her memory be for a blessing. Humble, beautiful and very smart woman. I met her a lot in the neighborhood walking her dog. I asked what it felt like to reach discoveries of this scale.

Sergey Engel JERUSALEM, ISRAEL

YOUTUBE COMMENTS

I appreciate your reporting on this and continuing what Herbert W. Armstrong started back in 1968–69.

Walter Dolen

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