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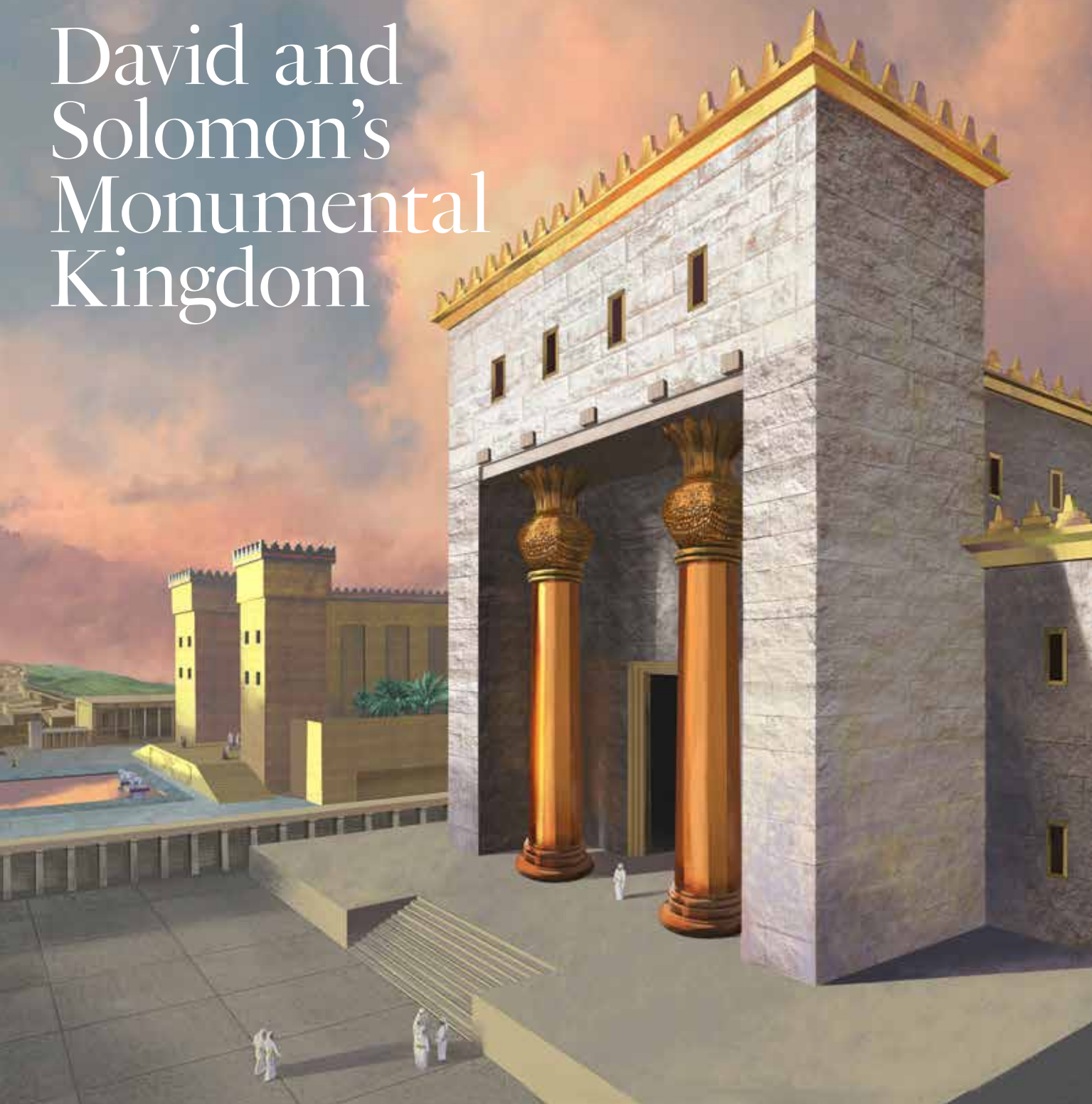
The magazine of the  
ARMSTRONG INSTITUTE OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

# STONES SPEAK



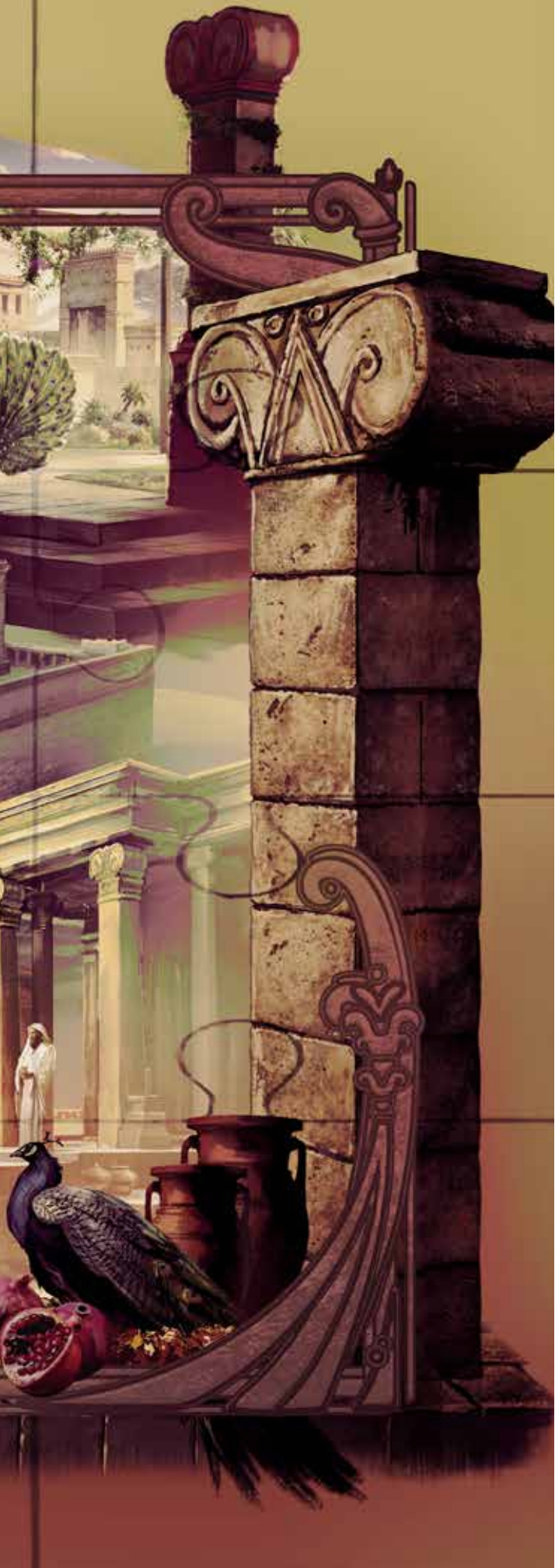
EXHIBIT EDITION

## David and Solomon's Monumental Kingdom





# Israel's Most Precious History



# LET THE STONES SPEAK

EXHIBIT EDITION | VOL. 3, NO. 1 | CIRCULATION: 8,627



FROM THE EDITOR GERALD FLURRY

**W**E ARE EXCITED TO BRING YOU THIS SPECIAL issue of *Let the Stones Speak*. Our institute and publishing staff worked tirelessly to put together this one-of-a-kind issue. I hope you will find it informative, engaging and inspiring.

Now, more than ever, the world needs the vision and hope contained within Israel's archaeology and biblical history. Problems are quickly mounting. Increasingly wicked men are committing ever worsening atrocities.

Israel, in particular, faces a deadly dangerous situation. What happened on Oct. 7, 2023, and in the time since has exposed just how much animosity there is for not only the modern Jewish state but also the heritage and history of the Jewish people.

At the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology, we recognize how intricately connected Jewish heritage is to biblical history and how important it is to emphasize this connection and share it with the people of Israel and mankind.

That gets to the heart of what this issue of *Let the Stones Speak* and our archaeological exhibit are about: This is a message about the golden era of Israel's biblical heritage—the kingdom of David and Solomon.

This is Israel's most precious history!

On Jan. 17, 2023, the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) exhibitions department reached out to our office in Jerusalem. They knew we had hosted successful exhibits in the past and asked if we would be interested in hosting another. We were thrilled and honored by the prospect.

For over two years, we hosted the “Seals of Jeremiah’s Captors Discovered” exhibit (2012–2015), which showcased the Jehucal and Gedaliah bullae and highlighted the turbulent history of Judah at the time of the Prophet Jeremiah. From 2018 to 2019, we hosted our second exhibit: “Seals of Isaiah and King Hezekiah Discovered.” This world premiere of the bullae of King Hezekiah and Isaiah recounted the inspiring history of Judah during the reign of one of Israel’s greatest kings.

After the IAA contacted us, we sat down to discuss what history we wanted to exhibit next. It had to be unique and inspiring. It had to excel our previous exhibits. It had to be truly monumental.

Only one subject can do this. Having already showcased two of Judah’s greatest prophets and one of Judah’s greatest kings, we decided it was time to explore the pinnacle of Israel’s history. The time had come to showcase the abundant—albeit often overlooked—scientific and historic evidence PROVING THAT THE KINGDOM OF DAVID AND SOLOMON WAS MONUMENTAL AND IMPRESSIVE, just as the Bible describes.

It’s hard to believe, but this has never been done before, certainly not like this. No historian or archaeologist, no institution or university, has ever collected all the evidence into one place. No book, website or documentary brings together and presents *all* the evidence of a 10th-century B.C.E. monumental Israelite kingdom. Part of the reason is that more archaeological evidence has been discovered in the past decade than ever before.

This presents an incredible opportunity for the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology (AIBA). It is also a weighty responsibility.

Our previous exhibits attracted thousands of visitors. The Hezekiah exhibit received Oklahoma Tourism’s 2020 award for Outstanding Temporary Exhibit. However, I believe the “Kingdom of David and Solomon Discovered” is the most important we have ever hosted! This is why we have worked extremely hard to create something truly impressive.

We have brought together some 50 artifacts and around 25 historical- and archaeological-based proofs of the monumental nature of David and Solomon’s kingdom.

This wasn’t a simple task, but I believe our nearly 60-year history of involvement with archaeology in Israel has prepared us for this project.

Many of those who worked directly on this magazine and the exhibit—the artists, writers, editors, curators, laborers—have been involved in AIBA’s archaeological projects in Jerusalem. I have studied biblical history and ancient Jerusalem since 1961. My education included three years at Ambassador College, a liberal arts institution (now closed) founded by late educator and scholar Herbert W. Armstrong. Mr. Armstrong



A tour group visits “Seals of Jeremiah’s Captors Discovered” at Armstrong Auditorium in Edmond, Oklahoma.



“Seals of Isaiah and King Hezekiah Discovered” exhibit

loved Jerusalem; had a close relationship with several of Israel’s prime ministers, presidents and leading figures; and had a profound understanding and connection with the city, both ancient and modern.

I was at his college in 1968 when Mr. Armstrong and Ambassador College forged, with Hebrew University and the late biblical archaeologist Prof. Benjamin Mazar, what both sides affectionately called an “iron-bridge partnership.” Between 1968 and 1986, these institutions conducted a series of major excavations in both the City of David and on the Ophel, the heart of ancient Jerusalem. Mr. Armstrong further invested tremendous resources in several humanitarian projects across the city.

Since Mr. Armstrong’s death in 1986, I have worked to continue his legacy in Jerusalem. The iron-bridge



**Armstrong Auditorium  
in Edmond, Oklahoma**



**Armstrong Institute  
of Biblical Archaeology  
in Jerusalem, Israel**

partnership continues and, together with Hebrew University and the late Dr. Eilat Mazar (Benjamin Mazar’s granddaughter), Herbert W. Armstrong College and AIBA have conducted eight more excavations in Jerusalem. We have also worked on several other major Jerusalem-focused projects.

Working alongside Dr. Mazar, Hebrew University, the Israel Antiquities Authority and others, we have uncovered some extraordinary history and artifacts.

In a way, creating the kingdom of David and Solomon exhibit is the crowning achievement of our long history with and enduring love for Jerusalem and biblical archaeology.

We realize there may be some who will take issue with this history, or parts of it. Unfortunately, there is a great deal of contention and disagreement over this

period of Israel’s history. Some of this controversy is understandable; after all, these events did unfold 3,000 years ago in a region that has since been repeatedly destroyed and rebuilt. But much of the tension is the result of a strong and pervasive anti-Bible bias. Too often, discoveries that tie into the monumental nature of Israel’s 10th-century B.C.E. kingdom are suppressed, ignored or belittled solely because they relate to the biblical text.

Few today take the approach of Prof. Benjamin Mazar, who said: “Pore over the Bible again and again, for it contains within it descriptions of GENUINE HISTORICAL REALITY.”

One of the fundamental lessons of this exhibit and this special issue of *Let the Stones Speak* is that the Bible is a legitimate and crucial book of *history*. We need to understand that without the biblical text, we cannot fully or accurately understand the ancient history of Israel. And without this, we cannot understand modern Israel.

Modern education and science argue that the Bible and archaeology are mutually exclusive. The “Kingdom of David and Solomon Discovered” exhibit dispels this view. Archaeology and the biblical text, as you will see, complement one another magnificently.

We hope you will study, ponder and enjoy this magazine. It contains remarkable information that brings to life one of the most wonderful epochs in Israel’s history. As troubles in the world mount, the history of kings David and Solomon can be a shining beacon of hope. ■

# LET THE STONES SPEAK

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Exhibit Edition 2024, Vol. 3, No. 1 is published bimonthly by the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology. Address all communications to Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology; David Marcus 1, Jerusalem, 9223101, Israel.

How your subscription has been paid: *Let the Stones Speak* has no subscription price—it is free. This is made possible by donations freely given to the Armstrong International Cultural Foundation. Those who wish to voluntarily support this worldwide work are gladly welcomed as co-workers.

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# KINGDOM OF DAVID AND SOLOMON



# DISCOVERED

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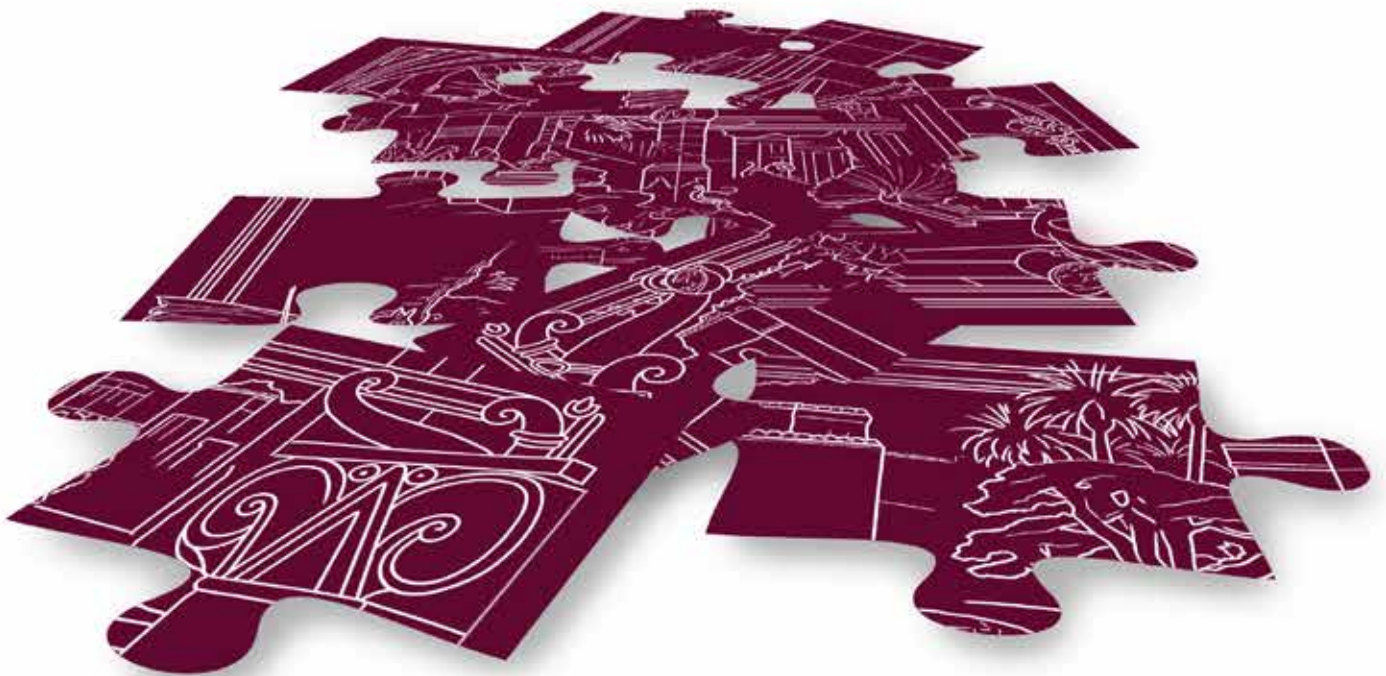
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THE  
DAVID  
AND  
SOLOMON  
PUZZLE





**T**HE DEAFENING PEAL OF SILVER TRUMPETS REVERBERATED between the giant limestone walls of the royal complex. Throngs of curious residents lined the streets; countless others peered down from walls, windows and rooftops. The eager onlookers were hoping to catch a glimpse of their exotic visitor: a queen from a faraway kingdom. She was in Jerusalem to visit with their king, a monarch whose wealth, wisdom and wit “exceeded all the kings of the earth” (1 Kings 10:23).

The Queen of Sheba stepped gracefully away from her caravan and was escorted into the palace. She walked only a few steps inside before she gasped and stood in stunned silence. It was unlike anything she had ever experienced: towering stone pillars with ornate Phoenician-style capitals; walls fashioned from massive handcrafted, polished limestone; sprawling mosaic ceilings; marble floors bejeweled with precious stones; and exquisite purple and gold tapestries. The sheer majesty was stupendous. The queen was soon jolted from her reflections by the sound of footsteps. Israel’s king was approaching.

King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba toured the royal complex, the armory, the stables with Solomon’s prized stallions, the lush gardens, including a small zoo of exotic animals, and of course, the crown jewel of the kingdom: the temple. Israel’s king was a warm and gracious host, and completely transparent: He “answered all her questions” (verse 3; New King James Version).

As the sun set, the queen joined King Solomon for a banquet. This too was a singular and inspiring experience. The table was laden with delicacies from across the kingdom: beef from the Transjordan, dates from the Negev, wine from Jezreel, fish from the port of Joppa. They sipped from goblets made of gold imported from Ophir. The bronze came from Solomon’s mines in Timna and was fashioned by his Phoenician friends. The queen was overwhelmed. “And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, the food on his table, the seating of his servants, the service of his waiters and their apparel, his cupbearers, and his entryway by which he went up to the house of the Lord, *there was no more spirit in her*” (verses 4-5; NKJV).

When the time came to depart, the queen was at a loss for words. Her only recourse was honesty. “I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes,” she told Solomon, “and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard” (verses 7-8; NKJV). As the queen’s caravan exited the giant gates of Jerusalem, she sighed with relief and anticipation. The long journey through the barren deserts of Arabia would

give her time to process all that she had experienced. As she turned to steal one last look, one word sprang to mind. *This was*, she thought, *MONUMENTAL*.

This is a fantastic scene.

*But is it real?*

## **Fact Versus Fiction**

This special issue of *Let the Stones Speak* revolves around the reality of the monumental nature of the kingdom of David and Solomon—what might be the most controversial and complex question in the field of biblical archaeology and scholarship. It isn’t an easy question to tackle. This history, if true, transpired three millennia ago, more than enough time for evidence to deteriorate and disappear.

The history of Jerusalem, and the region in general, is one of ruin and destruction. The city has been conquered and rebuilt over and over again by all manner of peoples. In the words of historian Eric Cline: “There have been at least 118 separate conflicts in and for Jerusalem during the past four millennia .... Jerusalem has been destroyed completely at least twice, besieged 23 times, attacked an additional 52 times, and captured and recaptured 44 times. It has been the scene of 20 revolts and innumerable riots, has had at least five separate periods of violent terrorist attacks during the past century, and has only changed hands completely peacefully twice in the past 4,000 years” (*Jerusalem Besieged*).

Repeated bouts of demolition aren’t exactly good for the safe-keeping of ancient history and archaeology. Add to this the significant challenges associated with researching and excavating land that sits beneath the most politically and religiously volatile city and territory on Earth, and it is undeniable: This history is difficult to uncover and understand.

Yet does exploring 10th-century B.C.E. Israel need to be as complex and controversial as it is? Why is it this way?

Many Bible believers, as one might expect, accept the biblical description of 10th-century B.C.E. Israel. They accept King David as the mighty warrior-king responsible for completing Israel’s subjugation of the Promised Land. They accept that Solomon ruled a vast and wealthy kingdom, constructed the greatest temple ever built, and was the envy of kings.

Bible historians and biblical archaeologists generally have much more nuanced views of the biblical text. Some will accept the historicity of a biblical united monarchy, but only as and when the archaeological evidence supports it. For most biblical archaeologists, the Hebrew Bible is more a helpful supplement than a principal source.

Finally, there are the Bible skeptics and minimalists. In this group is a spectrum of cynicism. Some are much

more suspicious than others. There was even a time when hardcore skeptics doubted the very existence of David and Solomon, to say nothing of the presence of any kingdom to speak of. This view significantly changed after inscriptional evidence of King David was discovered in 1993.

Today, even the staunchest Bible critics recognize David as a historical figure. But the tide of criticism remains high. Many academics and archaeologists, as well as journalists, still view the biblical text as mostly fictional and a wholly unreliable source of history.

The reality is that, for most scientists and historians trained within an educational system that rejects the Bible and detests religion, the Bible is consulted, if at all, as an afterthought. Educated to ignore biblical history while at university, they ignore biblical history in their profession.

This is one reason the discussion and debate around David, Solomon and 10th-century Israel carries on *ad infinitum*: The historical record, which provides crucial detail and clarity, is left out of the conversation.

## A Jigsaw Puzzle

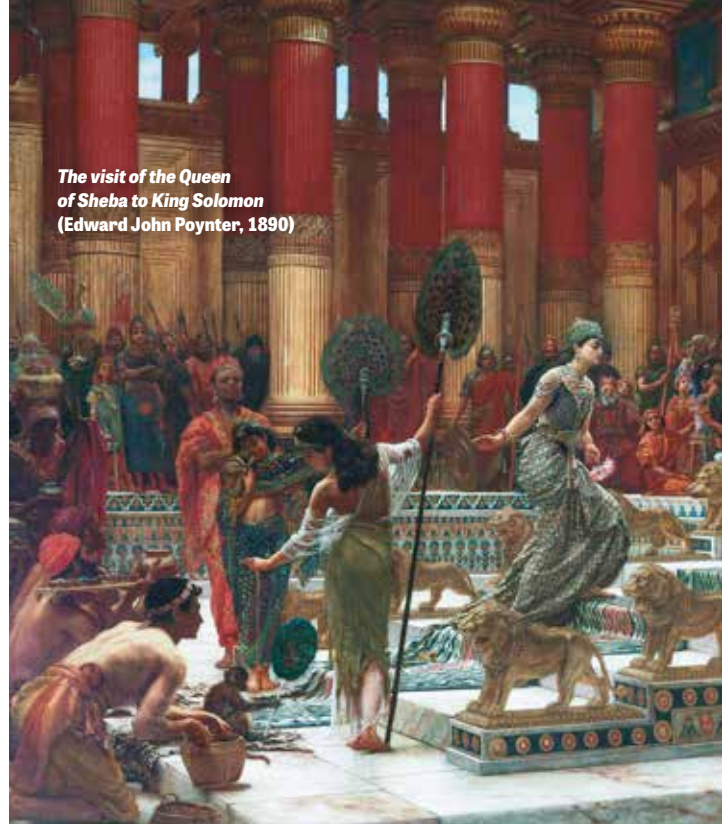
How accurate is the Bible's description of David and Solomon's kingdom? Answering this question is a lot like doing a jigsaw puzzle. Like a puzzle, the view that David and Solomon were powerful kings who presided over a large, prosperous kingdom is comprised of several constituent parts. This is not unusual. Every historical figure, civilization or event is multidimensional, and to gain a complete understanding, one must consider all the pieces.

Take Napoleon, for example. To truly understand the "little corporal," one must study his childhood, education and personality; the political, financial and social conditions of revolutionary France; and the geopolitics of early 19th-century Europe—to name only a few puzzle pieces.

The same is true of the kingdom of Israel in the 10th century B.C.E. To build a complete picture, we must locate and consider every available piece of the puzzle. Individual pieces can be interesting and informative, and might hint at the overall picture, but the ultimate potential of an individual piece to educate and inspire is manifested only when placed alongside the other pieces as part of the larger tableau.

This is what we have endeavored to do in this issue of *Let the Stones Speak* and with our "Kingdom of David and Solomon Discovered" exhibit. We have attempted to put together what has been considered an *impossible* puzzle.

When it comes to kings David and Solomon, and the nature of 10th-century B.C.E. Israel, *this puzzle has*



*The visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon*  
(Edward John Poynter, 1890)

*never been completed!* This is surprising considering the importance of the subject. David and Solomon might have reigned over 3,000 years ago, but they remain two of the most epic figures in ancient history. Yet remarkably, no archaeologist or Bible historian has ever collected the pieces and put them together in their entirety to create one overall picture.

There are experts who specialize in *specific* puzzle pieces. The late Hebrew University archaeologist Dr. Eilat Mazar possessed a masterful understanding of 10th-century Jerusalem, including the Stepped Stone Structure and the Large Stone Structure (King David's palace). Dr. Mazar had an unmatched grasp of the monumental structures and artifacts on the Ophel that attest to Solomonic Jerusalem.

Dr. Mazar's archaeology in the City of David and the Ophel certainly testified to the united monarchy documented in the Bible. But Dr. Mazar focused on only three or four pieces of the puzzle. These must be considered alongside many other distinct pieces of evidence.

Prof. Yosef Garfinkel from Hebrew University has done fantastic work excavating 10th-century B.C.E. biblical sites such as Khirbet Qeiyafa. These sites reveal the territorial spread of the kingdom, as well as urban planning by a centralized government, providing further pieces of the puzzle.

The same can be said for archaeologist Dr. Erez Ben-Yosef and his brilliant work uncovering the 10th-century B.C.E. copper mines in the Arabah Valley in southern Israel. Then there are the late Prof. Yigael



Yadin, Prof. William Dever and Prof. Amnon Ben-Tor, with their study of Solomon's gigantic gatehouses in Megiddo, Gezer and Hazor. Each of these is one piece of a much larger picture.

All the pieces have never been combined—until “Kingdom of David and Solomon Discovered”!

## The Biblical Guide

Before we start assembling the puzzle, consider one last crucial parallel: What makes the completion of a jigsaw puzzle possible? On every puzzle box is a picture. This illustration is the guide. It informs one of what pieces to look for and shows where they fit in the larger scene.

Without this image, all you have are a bunch of seemingly random pieces. Completing the puzzle without the guide is an almost impossible task.

To complete the “Kingdom of David and Solomon Discovered” puzzle, the Bible provides this illustration.

Unfortunately, this a problem for some. Cynics and minimalists claim the Bible cannot be trusted, even as a historical source. “First and foremost, ... *the Bible does not mean to speak history*. The Bible is all about theology, about ideology ... and we scholars, researchers, need to speak facts and data” (emphasis added throughout issue). Prof. Israel Finkelstein, perhaps the most outspoken biblical minimalist, made this remark, and others like it, in a 2020–2021 interview series hosted by the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research. Notice the preface of his remark: “[f]irst and foremost.” This is *fundamental* in the approach skeptics take to archaeology and science: The biblical record is not a history book.

This is why the question of the monumental nature of the kingdom of David and Solomon has never been sufficiently explored and answered.

And yet how can you discuss, let alone research and study, biblical history without at least objectively considering actual *biblical history*?

Bible skeptics and minimalists distrust the Bible. For the most part, they will not read it objectively. To critics, most of the biblical record is pure fiction, even though this accusation is demonstrably false. Take, for example, Assyria's eighth-century B.C.E. invasion of Israel and Judah. Compare the biblical account with the archaeological record and Assyrian history. The synergy across all three dimensions is remarkable and proves that the Bible *does* speak history.

Those who ignore and reject the biblical text consider anyone who employs the Hebrew Bible as religious or spiritual—a fanatic, driven by ideology and bias. And to most modern scholars and scientists, there is no worse epithet than the label *religious*.

Ironically, rejecting historical texts is neither logical nor scientific. Archaeologists and historians studying ancient Greece consult Herodotus, Homer and Thucydides without dread of being labeled Hellenistic pagans. When they study ancient Egypt, they consult the historian and priest of Ra, Manetho—again, without fear of being pilloried as a sun worshiper. Yet an archaeologist or historian cannot study ancient Israel and too closely consult the Hebrew Bible without being disdained or having his work marginalized and rejected.

It takes some courage to enter the world of biblical David and Solomon. The truth is, no matter what the skeptics might think, consulting biblical history is not a religious or spiritual experience. There are theological dimensions to the subject, but one is not miraculously “converted” merely by considering the history recorded in the Hebrew Bible. In spite of what modern education teaches, the Bible and science are not mutually exclusive. You can use both.

In fact, to complete this puzzle, we need both!

There is nothing religious or spiritual in the “Kingdom of David and Solomon Discovered” exhibit or in this special issue. Our aim is simple: We want to present all the pieces of the puzzle that is David, Solomon and the 10th-century B.C.E. kingdom of Israel. To do this, we must consider *all* the facts and evidence. This means studying the archaeology: the walls, gatehouses and cities, the pottery, inscriptions and textiles. It also means considering the historical text: the Hebrew Bible.

Before we begin, let's look at what the biblical text records about the united monarchy and Israel in the 10th century B.C.E. ■

# A SNAPSHOT OF 10TH-CENTURY B.C.E. ISRAEL

**I**N THE PAGES THAT FOLLOW, YOU WILL BE PRESENTED with a reasonably thorough examination of a wide variety of scientific and historic evidence associated with David, Solomon and the 10th-century B.C.E. kingdom of Israel. This evidence, each a piece of the larger puzzle, comes in the form of several archaeological sites; monumental walls, gatehouses and structures; inscriptions, fragments of pottery, textiles, metals and foodstuffs, among other items.

As we consider these individual pieces and then connect them, we need an illustration of what we are creating. As previously mentioned, our “image on the box” is provided by the biblical text, three books in particular: Samuel, Kings and Chronicles. Compiled between the ninth and fifth centuries B.C.E. using earlier writings from the prophets Samuel, Nathan and Gad, these books give a detailed description of the united monarchy.

They reveal the names of all the major and many of the minor characters; their relationships with one another; the duration of the reigns of Saul, David and Solomon; the nature of Israel’s economy (for example, where it sourced its gold and silver); the identity of Israel’s neighbors, and many of their interactions, skirmishes and wars; Israel’s territorial boundaries, many of the main regions and cities; and even specific projects, such as the construction of cities, walls and buildings. They provide detailed insight into Israelite culture and society, their diet, the style and color of their clothing, their marriage and family life.

It is extraordinary just how much detail is recorded in the historical text—and a good portion of it, as we will see, is confirmed, directly and indirectly, by the archaeological record.

## Judges to King Saul

In many ways, the origin of 10th-century B.C.E. Israel is found in the time period of the judges. This was a dark, dangerous and largely hopeless time for Israel. “In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25).

Lacking a monarch, or any sort of centralized government outside of the tabernacle, the nation was

a company of relatively independent tribes. Israel’s vulnerability was made worse by the fact that most of the tribes didn’t get along especially well. The period of the judges lasted roughly 300 to 350 years (from the early 14th to mid-11th century B.C.E.). It was a time of oppression and conflict. Enemies included the Philistines, Canaanites, Zidonians, Hivites, Arameans, Moabites, Midianites and Ammonites.

To learn more, visit [ArmstrongInstitute.org/350](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org/350).

The situation marginally improved in the mid-11th century, when God granted the wish of the people and instructed the Prophet Samuel to anoint a king. Saul—a tall, muscular and handsome Benjaminite—looked the part.

Saul ruled from Gibeah in the tribal territory of Benjamin. His rule began with promise. He led a united Israelite army to defeat the Ammonite siege of Jabesh-gilead (1 Samuel 11) and was initially victorious against the Philistines. But the headstrong, self-reliant king soon began to stumble. Over time, he became increasingly disobedient and indifferent to the Prophet Samuel’s warnings (1 Samuel 13:13-14). The Philistines, situated on the coastal plain beside the Mediterranean Sea, were Israel’s greatest threat and Saul’s greatest stress.

King Saul’s fate was finally sealed during a battle with the Amalekites, during which he flagrantly rejected the instructions of Samuel the prophet. “And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou” (1 Samuel 15:28). Samuel distanced himself from Saul and mourned the king’s descent into madness.

## Enter David

In 1 Samuel 16, God commanded the prophet to travel to the farm of Jesse, a Bethlehemite in the land of Judah, where he was to anoint Israel’s next king. Samuel surveyed Jesse’s impressive sons but was informed by God that Israel’s next king was in the field, tending his father’s sheep. The lad, probably only 12 or 13 years old, was summoned. Surrounded by his surprised family,

who had forgotten to invite him to the special occasion, the ruddy David was anointed Israel's next king.

David then returned to his father's sheep. For how long, we don't know. We next read of him being invited to Gibeah, where Saul was depressed and in need of a musician to soothe his troubled mind. A servant suggested David: "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, that is skilful in playing, and a mighty man of valour, and a man of war, and prudent in affairs, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him" (verse 18). David began to spend more time at the king's court.

When the Philistines, pursuing eastward expansion, marched into the hill country of Judah, they were met in the Valley of Elah by King Saul and his army. For 40 days, the armies glared at each other across the valley. Israel's fear was compounded by the presence of Goliath, a Philistine giant who taunted cowardly Saul and his army.

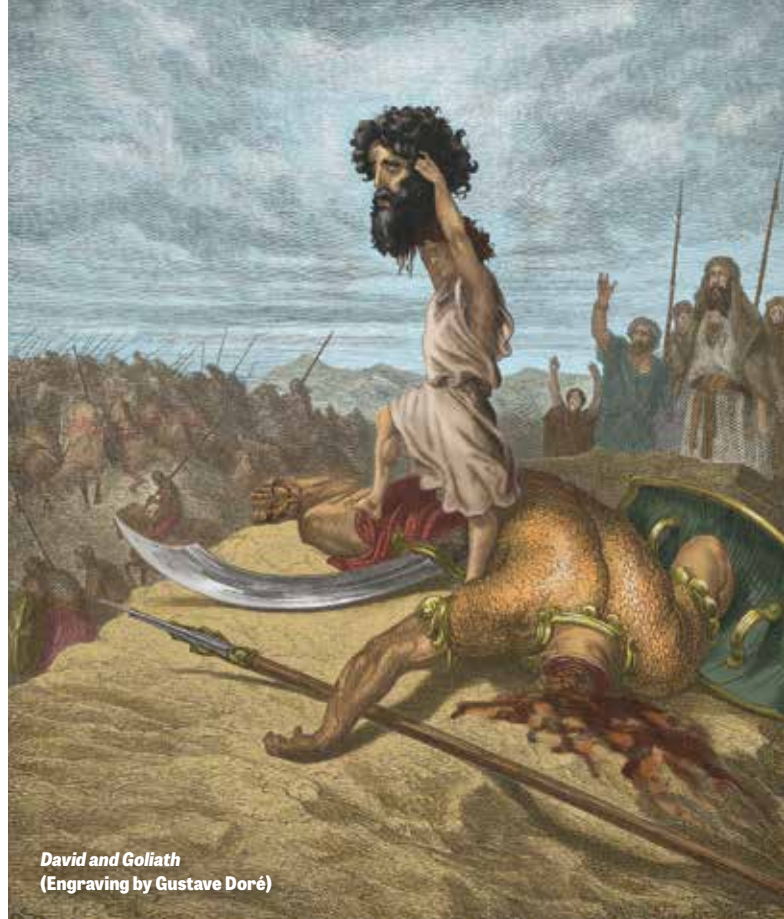
During this standoff, Jesse dispatched his youngest son to the battlefield. When David arrived and was briefed by his brothers, he grew furious. "[W]ho is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Samuel 17:26; NKJV). King Saul granted the teenager his request to challenge Goliath. David grabbed his slingshot and ran toward the giant. Goliath was in the middle of his rant when he felt a blow to his forehead and warm fluid trickling down his face. Everything turned black, and he crumpled to the ground. His life had come to an end at the hand of a boy. The Philistines panicked and fled.

David's victory over Goliath catapulted him to national fame. He was invited into King Saul's inner circle. "And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house" (1 Samuel 18:2). But David's success in the Valley of Elah marked the beginning of a challenging new phase. Across Israel, people praised and adored David more than the king. "Saul hath slain his thousands," the women and children sang, "and David his ten thousands" (verse 7). King Saul grew jealous: David had to die.

Left with no choice, David fled. David and a growing entourage ended up being fugitives on the run from Israel's increasingly psychotic king for over a decade. In this trying time, the young man found solace and strength by writing psalms. David and his men migrated around Judah's mountains and deserts, sleeping in caves, begging for sustenance, engaging in occasional battles. David was always glancing over his shoulder.

## David Becomes King

Then came the day that King Saul and three of his sons died on Mount Gilboa in a battle with the Philistines. Saul's son Ishbosheth was anointed king over Israel at Mahanaim. Meanwhile, in Hebron, one of the six cities



David and Goliath  
(Engraving by Gustave Doré)

of refuge, David became king of Judah. A seven-year civil war ensued. But when Ishbosheth and his commander Abner were assassinated, Judah and Israel reconciled. Around 1003 B.C.E., King David finally became king of the united nation of Israel.

"David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah" (2 Samuel 5:4-5).

As king, David's first priority was Jerusalem. He was aware of Jerusalem's strategic situation between Israel and Judah, its impressive fortifications and, most importantly, its illustrious history with Melchizedek, Abraham and Isaac. This city had to be Israel's capital. There was only one problem: Jebus, as it was then called, was inhabited by the Jebusites, a Canaanite people who boasted that they would never be removed.

David was undeterred. He captured the city by sending soldiers through a water conduit. From then on, the city became known as the "City of David." Jerusalem became Israel's royal capital. "And David dwelt in the stronghold, and called it the City of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward. And David waxed greater and greater; for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him" (verses 9-10).

1 Chronicles 18 summarizes King David's military exploits, including the subjugation of the Philistines



David commissions  
Solomon to build the temple  
(Wood engraving, 1886)

(taking Gath) and making the Moabites, Syrians, Ammonites and Edomites tributaries. The inflow of booty from conquered peoples quickly enriched Israel: bronze from Syria, “shields of gold” from Hadarezer (verse 7), and “all kinds of articles of gold, silver, and bronze” (verse 10; NKJV).

Under David, Israel adopted the accoutrements of a true kingdom. 2 Samuel 8:15-18 say it had a standing army, with an organized leadership structure; a ministry of records, with an official recorder; a scribe, a cabinet of ministers, and a well-developed priesthood and religious system.

2 Samuel 6 records David’s greatest accomplishment: relocating the ark of the covenant, a symbol of God’s presence in the nation, to Jerusalem. To house the ark, David petitioned God to let him build a temple (2 Samuel 7), a magnificent building that would glorify God’s greatness, majesty and power.

Territorially, Israel expanded massively under David. The kingdom stretched from near the Euphrates River in the north, to the “Brook of Egypt” in the southwest, to the deserts of Arabia in the east. David conquered most of the remaining territories of Canaan, much of Syria, and the Transjordan peoples (the Edomites, Moabites and Ammonites). Meanwhile, the Phoenician city-states were friends, helping build and develop the nation. “And the Lord gave victory to David whithersoever he went” (2 Samuel 8:6).

When King David died around 971 B.C.E., Israel was well positioned to thrive. After 40 years of fighting untold battles, conquering numerous lands, and suppressing rebellions, the kingdom was ready for peace and stability—and more phenomenal growth.

## Solomon’s Rise

Solomon was crowned around 971 B.C.E. at the Gihon Spring. “And Zadok the priest took the horn of oil out of the Tent, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the ram’s horn; and all the people said: ‘Long live King Solomon.’ And all the people came up after him, and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of them” (1 Kings 1:39). His father, King David, heard the celebratory trumpet blasts from his deathbed.

King Solomon made the powerful kingdom he inherited even more expansive and powerful. He began by stamping out every last vestige of rebellion and treason. He secured an alliance with Egypt by marrying the daughter of Pharaoh Siamun (the pharaoh who conquered Gezer and gifted it to Solomon; see page 79).

Solomon added to Israel’s territory, mainly in the north (Hamath). He consolidated Israel’s control of the Levant, in part by strengthening relations with Phoenicia (1 Kings 5:1) and subjugating local tribes (1 Kings 9:20-21).

Solomon further developed Israel’s government. 1 Kings 4:4-6 show that he had a chief of staff, a ministry of finance and records, a ministry of defense, a ministry of labor and a well-organized department of religion. Israel was divided into 12 districts, each with its own governor. “And Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel, who provided victuals for the king and his household ...” (verse 7).

Economically, the kingdom thrived. Subjugating the surrounding nations meant that Solomon now controlled the two main trade routes connecting Egypt to Mesopotamia. This provided a huge boost of revenue into state coffers, allowing for a new monumental building program.

Solomon had a first-class merchant navy that sailed the known world, shipping gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks back to Jerusalem. His fleets were divided between the Red Sea in the south and the Mediterranean Sea to the west (1 Kings 9:26-28; 10:22-23). Israel’s king became a major arms manufacturer and a merchant man, importing goods from Egypt, and selling chariots and horses to kingdoms as far north as Turkey (verses 28-29). More than 20 tons of gold were imported every year (verse 14). Silver was so common that it became worthless (2 Chronicles 9:20, 27).

Famously, Solomon married 700 wives, many from faraway exotic lands. Many were likely the result of a political alliance, giving Solomon influence in Egypt, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Zidon, Turkey and elsewhere (1 Kings 11:1-3). All of these peoples—from the Ethiopians to the Zidonians to the Arabians, “all the kings of the earth”—brought gifts of all types to

Solomon (2 Chronicles 9:14, 23-24). The Bible declares that the “riches and wisdom” of Solomon were unmatched by *any* king during his lifetime. “[A]nd his fame was in all the nations round about. ... So king Solomon *exceeded all the kings of the earth* in riches and in wisdom. And *all the earth* sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart” (1 Kings 5:11; 10:23-24).

Solomon was an ambitious and lavish builder. He expanded Jerusalem considerably, constructing another palace, an immense armory and imposing fortified walls. All this was accomplished through an extensive organized workforce. “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. ... And Solomon built Gezer, and Beth-horon the nether, Baalath, and Tadmor in the wilderness, in the land, and all the store-cities that Solomon had, and the cities for his chariots, and the cities for his horsemen, and that which Solomon desired to build for his pleasure in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion” (1 Kings 9:15-23).

The crowning achievement of Solomon’s reign was the construction of the temple in Jerusalem. His father had spent the final years of his life planning for this magnificent structure. He aimed to make it the pinnacle of architecture, beauty and brilliance. Just before he died, he told his son: “Take heed now; for the Lord hath chosen thee to build a house for the sanctuary; **BE STRONG, AND DO IT**” (1 Chronicles 28:10). This would be Solomon’s most important and impressive task.

David spared no effort in his preparation for the temple, and Solomon was equally unreserved in its construction. It could arguably be the most impressive structure ever built. This gold-gilded temple must have been a veritable wonder of the ancient world. In today’s money, the value of just the gold (according to 1 Chronicles 22:14, “a hundred thousand talents” worth) has been estimated at around \$300 billion.

The dedication of the temple was an earthshaking occasion. “Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house” (2 Chronicles 7:1). This holy structure was the crown jewel of the kingdom of Israel.

Solomon’s kingdom, according to the biblical account, was renowned far and wide. Leaders and representatives traveled great distances to pay their respects to Israel’s king and to see his kingdom.

In the full picture view provided by the Bible, the 10th-century B.C.E. kingdom of Israel truly was a monumental empire—unmatched in the world at the time. ■



## DEFINITIONS

**United monarchy:** This term refers to the kingdom of Israel during the reigns of Saul, David and Solomon, when all 12 tribes were united as one nation under a single monarchy. (The “divided monarchy” refers to Israel following Solomon’s death, when the kingdom split into two separate entities ruled by two separate monarchies.)

**Levant:** This is the region along the eastern edge of the Mediterranean that constitutes the modern-day nations of Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

**Why B.C.E., not B.C.:** The Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology uses the B.C.E./C.E. appellation mainly because we are an Israel-based organization with a large Jewish audience, and this is the conventional terminology used in Israel and by a large body of our audience.

This is not the only reason we use the “common era” dating. While the use of B.C. (“Before Christ”) and A.D. (“In the Year of the Lord”) is widespread and common, the “common era” terminology (B.C.E. and C.E.) is, technically, more accurate.

**Why the JPS:** We use the 1917 Jewish Publication Society version of the Bible for most of our scriptural references (unless otherwise noted). The primary reason is that a significant portion of our audience is Jewish. The King James Version is the most popular translation used elsewhere around the world, yet the 1917 JPS gives us the best of both worlds, with direct similarities in language and style to the KJV. Note: While chapter and verse numbering in the JPS usually matches scriptural citations in many other English translations, in some instances it doesn’t.

To learn more, visit [ArmstrongInstitute.org/840](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org/840).

# DATING THE UNITED MONARCHY TO THE 10TH CENTURY B.C.E.

**W**HEN, EXACTLY, DID DAVID AND SOLOMON reign? In the vociferous debate over Israel's kings and the nature of their kingdom, this is probably the easiest question to answer, and one on which there is almost total agreement. Kings David and Solomon lived and ruled mainly in the 10th century B.C.E.

More specifically, King David ruled Israel from around 1011 to 971 B.C.E. King Solomon ruled Israel from around 971 to 931 B.C.E.

The regnal information documented in the biblical books of Kings and Chronicles provides sufficient data to trace David and Solomon back, at least generally, to this 10th-century period. Further, using established dates and synchronisms, it is reasonably easy to determine specific dates for both kings.

A benchmark for these calculations is the year in which construction on Solomon's temple began. 1 Kings 6:1 records that it began in the fourth year of Solomon's reign. The commonly cited and widely accepted date is 967 B.C.E. Using this date, we can calculate that David's 40-year reign (2 Samuel 5:4) began around 1011 B.C.E. 1 Kings 11:42 says Solomon reigned for 40 years, putting his death around 931.

How do we know Solomon's temple was built in 967? What is especially unique about this date is that it has been established entirely independently, through several methods and chronological directions.

The typical method of dating biblical kings and events is to combine archaeological information with the biblical text. Several Israelite and Judahite kings are mentioned on artifacts from set periods and time-stamped to the reigns of specific Assyrian and Babylonian kings of known dates.

Of these, the most significant key is one provided by combining biblical data with the inscriptions of a ninth-century B.C.E. king of Assyria: Shalmaneser III.

Take Shalmaneser's Kurkh Monolith. This stele describes his victory at the Battle of Qarqar against



KURKH MONOLITH

a Levantine alliance in “Year Six” of his reign (853 B.C.E.). One of the belligerents he mentions is “Ahab the Israelite,” who had provided troops and chariots for this effort.

Next is Shalmaneser's Kurba'il Statue. This statue records that in his “eighteenth year,” Shalmaneser received tribute from Israel's king “Jehu.” (Another of Shalmaneser's monuments—the Black Obelisk—actually depicts Jehu bowing down and offering this tribute, in the context of this 18th-year campaign into the Levant.)

Thus, we have two kings of Israel mentioned on Shalmaneser's monuments—Ahab, in the context of the Battle of Qarqar in Shalmaneser's sixth year, and Jehu, in Shalmaneser's 18th year—12 years apart.

Now notice the biblical account. Ahab was succeeded by his son, Ahaziah, who is credited with a *two*-year reign (1 Kings 22:51-52). Ahaziah was succeeded by Jehoram, who reigned for 12 years (2 Kings 3:1), after which Jehu took the throne.

At face value, this appears to give 14 years between Ahab and Jehu—as opposed to Shalmaneser's 12-year gap. Which, then, is wrong—the biblical account or the Assyrian?

Neither. We know this due to the remarkable work of arguably the most-respected Bible chronologist, Edwin Thiele (1895–1986), who determined that these data points actually contain the key for unlocking and synchronizing biblical timelines. Thiele showed that this proves the kingdom of Israel was using what is known as a *non-accession year* method of counting reigns. This method counts the first, partial calendar



KURBA'IL STATUE

LATE BRONZE 1550–1200 B.C.E.

PERIOD OF THE JUDGES 1400–1050

IRON AGE I 1200–1000 B.C.E.

EARLY TO MID-11TH CENTURY ► SAMUEL JUDGESHIP



year of a king's reign as his first year. Thus, Ahaziah reigned only one *full* year, and Jehoram 11 full years. This, then, gives a total of 12 years separating the reigns of Ahab and Jehu.

Given that Shalmaneser also recorded that these kings are 12 years apart, Ahab must have been in his *final* year at the time of the Battle of Qarqar, in the sixth year of Shalmaneser's reign, and Jehu in his *first* year in Shalmaneser's 18th.

**There is some remarkable circumstantial evidence for the Battle of Qarqar in the Bible; visit [ArmstrongInstitute.org/703](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org/703).**

This gives us a good synchronism from which we can work backward: Shalmaneser's sixth year, the year of the Battle of Qarqar, aligns with the *last* year of Ahab's 22-year reign. From this point, using internal biblical chronology and applying a non-accession year method of counting, we can work back to the time of David and Solomon.

But when was Shalmaneser's sixth year—the year of the Battle of Qarqar—and thus the final year of Ahab's reign?

This can be derived from a type of Assyrian record known as "Limmu Lists." These constitute year-by-year records, spanning centuries, of every major event in each specific year of the kingdom: conquests, coronations, disasters and—importantly—eclipses.

These lists likewise can be merged and synchronized with records of other kingdoms, including those of Israel and Judah (using the mention of the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel, 721–718 B.C.E.). And the records of astronomical events (eclipses) allow us to further pinpoint dates, even to the nearest *day*, by using the calculations of modern astronomers. Taken together, this allows us to pinpoint, with high confidence, the year of the Battle of Qarqar—year six of Shalmaneser III's reign—and most importantly, the *last year* of Ahab's reign—to 853 B.C.E.

By working backward from 853, with the internal biblical information and a non-accession year count, the construction of the temple can be dated to 967.

But these remarkable pieces of evidence are only part of the story. Unbeknown to Thiele, another scholar—using a different method entirely—had

already arrived at this exact date for the temple's construction. This work was done by the Belgian scholar and priest Valerious Coucke (1888–1951). Coucke had deliberately set aside *both* the biblical and contemporary archaeological information and attempted to date the temple's construction using only information from classical history.

One of Coucke's sources was the third-century B.C.E. Greek Parian Chronicle, which stated that Troy fell "945 years" before the chronicle's creation—putting the fall of the city at around 1208 B.C.E. Coucke then noted the first-century historian Pompeius, who wrote that the Phoenician city of Tyre was founded one year before Troy's fall. Next, he turned to Josephus, who stated that King Hiram began to help Solomon with building the temple in the 241st year after the founding of Tyre—circa 968 B.C.E.

Coucke then double-checked this by working backward. He noted the record of the Tyrian King List, preserved through Menander, based on which Josephus gave 143 years from the time of Hiram's assistance with Solomon's temple to the founding of the Phoenician city of Carthage. Pompeius stated that the founding of Carthage was 72 years before the founding of Rome, which Roman classical historians set at 753–752 B.C.E. Thus, Carthage's founding was in 825–824, placing the start of construction on the temple in 968–967.

Coucke then noted the Bible's peculiar use of Phoenician month names in the account of the temple's construction and concluded that Solomon and Hiram used the same Tishri-based calendar in this effort. He concluded that Solomon's fourth year began in Tishri 968 and that temple construction started the following spring of 967.

The harmony in these conclusions is astonishing. Two scholars, working independently of one another, using completely different methods, arrived at exactly the same date for an early biblical event—in complete harmony with the biblical, Assyrian, classical and even astronomical records. In such manner, chronology alone provides powerful proof for the historicity of the biblical account in accurately relating details surrounding David, Solomon and the construction of the temple. ■

## IRON AGE IIA 1000–800 B.C.E.

## IRON AGE IIB 800–586 B.C.E.

SAUL 1050-1010

◀ ISHBOSHETH 1011-1009

DAVID 1011-971

SOLOMON 971-931

United Monarchy (Saul, David, Solomon)

DIVIDED MONARCHY 930-718

1000

900

800

700

David conquers Jerusalem (1003)

First temple construction begins (967)



# SUDDEN REGIONAL COLLAPSE



*The Course of Empire: Destruction*  
(Oil painting by Thomas Cole, 1836)

**W**HEN KING DAVID ARRIVED ON THE SCENE IN THE late 11th century B.C.E., Israel was in a pathetic condition. Underdeveloped and disunited, the nation was more a loose alliance of tribes than an integrated people with strong borders and an established national identity led by a capable central government.

However, the fledgling nation did have some conditions in its favor. One of the most important was the geopolitical dynamic of the larger region. For a feeble nation aspiring to power, the state of its neighborhood can be decisive. Competition and war stunt growth. When thousands of young men are on the battlefield,

farming, industry and the economy suffer. Peace, by contrast, is conducive to growth.

When David first became king, Israel had local rivals, including the Philistines. Remarkably though, there was no competition or threat from any of the major civilizations. By the time Solomon became king, even the local threats had been subdued, and the entire region had peace.

Even today, the late Bronze Age collapse of virtually *all* of the major powers in the Near East befuddles historians. Experts don't know the precise cause of the region-wide slump, which began roughly between 1200 and 1150 B.C.E. and continued for 100 to 150 years.



Was it famine? War? Climate change? Or perhaps a combination of these? With the exception of some local powers, all of the major civilizations—including Egypt, Babylon and Assyria—languished at exactly the same time.

This “collapse” is documented in the archaeology and ancient texts of these states, as well as the biblical text. 1 Kings 5:4, for example, records the calm that prevailed across the region during the reign of Solomon: “For he had dominion over all *the region* on this side the River, from Tiphseh even to Gaza, over all the kings on this side the River; *and he had peace on all sides round about him.*”

It is remarkable and noteworthy that these nations suffered collapse at exactly the same time.

### Failing Empires

First, Egypt was an overwhelming regional power for most of the second millennium B.C.E. But at exactly the time Israel was emerging, Egypt largely lost its footing and never again rose to the same heights. Egypt’s New Kingdom Period—when it reached the peak of historical power—waned and ended around the mid-11th century B.C.E. At this time, Egypt entered the Third Intermediate Period. This period, during which Egypt was ruled by non-native pharaohs, is sometimes referred to as “chaotic” and one of “decline,” “instability”

and “division.” “At the end of the New Kingdom, Egypt was divided,” summarizes *Encyclopedia Britannica*. “The north was inherited by the Tanite 21st dynasty ... [and] much of the southern Nile River Valley came under the control of the Theban priests ....

“After the demise of Egypt’s Asian empire, the kingdom of Israel eventually developed under the kings David and Solomon. During David’s reign, Philistia served as a buffer between Egypt and Israel; but after David’s death the next to the last king of the 21st dynasty, Siamon, invaded Philistia and captured Gezer. If Egypt had any intention of attacking Israel, Solomon’s power forestalled Siamon, who presented Gezer to Israel as

## CANAAN’S VANISHING TEMPLES

**B**EFORE THE ISRAELITES ARRIVED, IT WAS common for every ancient town in Canaan to feature its own temple for cultic practice. However, for Israel, “temple” worship was reserved for one sanctified location: At first, wherever the tabernacle was, then later at the temple in Jerusalem.

For archaeologists and historians studying settlements in Canaan, the lack of a functioning temple can be used as a cultural marker to show Israelite control. This phenomenon is evident in the highland settlements of the Iron I period, where Israel retained control. But during the Iron II A period something interesting happened: Towns further from the central highlands lacked temples.

Prof. Avraham Faust from Ben Gurion University drew attention to this change in his 2021 *Jerusalem Journal of Archaeology* article, explaining that during Iron II A, temples at major northern cities—such as Megiddo, Hazor, Beth-Shean, as well as Tel Qasile close to the Mediterranean coast—ceased to function (“The ‘United Monarchy’ on the Ground”). In Megiddo, a millenniums-old tradition of temple worship abruptly ceased during this Davidic period.

What happened at these cultic sites during Iron II A? According to Professor Faust, it’s clear that the Israelites had taken over: “This was a major transformation, and it is important to stress that not only did it take place at the same time as so many other changes, but it also directs us toward the only society we know of that did not have temples in every settlement—the Israelite society.”

These templeless cities provide additional proof of the extent of the united monarchy during the 10th century B.C.E. They show that David’s territorial hold extended far beyond Jerusalem. He didn’t just rule over the southern highlands as a petty tribal chieftain; instead, his kingdom grew in size to engulf the Plain of Sharon and into the northern valleys, destroying foreign temples as he went. A generation later, the Bible relates that Solomon consolidated his rule in these cities through his intense building program (1 Kings 9:15). ■

a dowry in the diplomatic marriage of his daughter to Solomon. This is indicative of the reversal of Egypt's status in foreign affairs since the time of Amenhotep III, who had written the Babylonian king, 'From of old, a daughter of the king of Egypt has not been given to anyone'" ("The Third Intermediate Period").

To the north and west of Israel, the Mycenaean Greek civilization also collapsed during the mid-late 11th century B.C.E., plunged into what is commonly called the "Greek Dark Age." "A society that once ruled the Late Bronze Age of Greece, they promptly vanished from history and slowly faded into legend," wrote author Van Bryan. "We may never know what truly killed the Mycenaean civilization so abruptly and with such finality. Their sudden disappearance would plunge Greece into a dark age for hundreds of years" ("The Rise, the Fall, and the Mystery of the Mycenaean").

East of Greece, the powerful Hittite empire (which controlled much of Turkey) collapsed and disappeared *entirely*. In its place, mini-kingdoms known as the "Syro-Hittite states" arose, each a limited, minor power. "[D]rought was just one of the numerous problems that the Hittites and others were facing at that time," wrote Prof. Eric Cline. "There was a cacophony of catastrophes that led not only to the collapse of the Hittite empire but also to the collapse of other powers as well. They include climate change, which led in turn to drought, famine and migration; earthquakes; invasions and internal rebellions; systems collapse; and quite possibly disease as well. All probably contributed to the 'perfect storm' that brought this age to an end, especially if they happened in rapid succession one after the other, leading to domino and multiplier effects and a catastrophic failure of the entire networked system" ("Tree Rings, Drought, and the Collapse of the Hittite Empire").

Farther east, the story was the same. The powerful Middle Assyrian Empire was drawing to a close. The mid-11th to late 10th century have been described as a catastrophic period of decline for Assyria, due to some kind of mysterious, otherwise-unknown major crisis. (Interestingly, it is only at the very *end* of this period—the late 10th century B.C.E.—that the Neo-Assyrian Empire begins, catapulting Assyria to unmatched power as one of the greatest empires the world had ever seen.) The same is true of the Babylonians. Within a roughly 100-year period from the late 11th through the 10th century, Babylon languished in a so-called Period of Chaos sometimes described as "weak" and "anarchic."

J. A. Brinkman describes this history of Assyria and Babylonia in his book *A Political History of Post-Kassite Babylonia* in the vague context of a rise in Levantine

powers: "The Arameans and their semi-nomadic confreres were to prove a major factor in the political decline of Babylonia and Assyria over the next two centuries," with "seeds of chaos implanted by the surge of Arameans."

"Both Babylonia and Assyria were soon on the decline [at the end of the second millennium], militarily speaking," wrote Brinkman; "and for approximately the next century, they were occupied principally with keeping rampaging semi-nomads out of their ever shrinking territories" (*ibid*).

Further east, the Elamite empire—at the height of its power in the 12th century—ended abruptly around 1100, following the death of Emperor Hutelutuš-Inšušinak. It entered a 300-year period of "obscurity," when "Elamite power faded from the political scene for a long time," writes *Encyclopædia Iranica*. "No Elamite document from this ... phase of 2½ centuries provides any historical information" ("The History of Elam").

The infant kingdom of Israel, certainly at the beginning of David's rule (circa 1011), wasn't entirely without competition or threat. The Philistines, situated southwest of Jerusalem on the coastal plain, were a menace, as were some of the powers in the Transjordan. But compared to Egypt, Assyria and Babylon, these local powers were relatively insignificant and certainly surmountable.

## History Abhors a Vacuum

In his landmark 2003 book, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, Prof. Kenneth A. Kitchen explores the timing of Israel's rise. "A fact that is almost totally unknown to nearly all commentators on 2 Samuel 8 to 1 Kings 11 is that the scale and nature of the wider realm of David and Solomon ... belong to a specific period of history, namely, circa 1200–900—neither earlier nor later," he writes.

In other words, the dynamics of the larger region presented Israel with an opportunity. "The limits are set by the demise of the great Egyptian and Hittite Late Bronze Age empires within 1200/1180, just before our period (introducing it), and by the rise and





# Late Bronze Age Regional Powers

initial expansion of the Neo-Assyrian Empire within circa 870–850 and onward, just following our period,” writes Kitchen.

It is said that nature abhors a vacuum. So too history: It abhors vacuums of power. Is the period from the late 11th to 10th century best characterized by the timid growth of a fledgling Levantine kingdom within an overall void of wider regional powers? Or could the biblical account of a superb *Israelite* empire—which happens to slot *perfectly* into this precise time frame and geopolitical situation—be the *explanation* for this power vacuum?

Could the presence of an *Israelite* empire explain why, when the Greeks suddenly emerged from their “Dark Ages,” they were using an entirely new alphabet, one with fascinating similarities to the one used by Israel? Could this explain why it was *precisely at the time of the COLLAPSE of Israel’s united monarchy* that Assyria-Babylonia immediately reemerged as the dominant power of the Near East?

This explanation is consistent with the biblical text, which describes Israel’s ascendancy over its neighbors and even its power projection deep into Mesopotamia.

1 Chronicles 18-19 summarize the growth and consolidation of Israel’s “empire.” These chapters describe David’s conquest of the Philistines (1 Chronicles 18:1), of Moab (verse 2), the Syrians (verses 3-10), and of the Edomites, Ammonites and Amalekites (verse 11). 1 Chronicles 19:6 even describes the period of chaos in Mesopotamia (fitting well with the description above of the Assyrian and Babylonian powers being overrun by “Arameans” and “semi-nomadic peoples”).

This further raises the question: Did 11th-to-10th-century Israel become a comparatively powerful entity only *because* of the collapse of surrounding, powerful kingdoms? Or did Israel’s rise contribute to the otherwise “mysterious” *collapse* of other surrounding powers?

What we know is that **EXACTLY** within the period during which the Bible describes a fantastic Davidic and Solomonic kingdom, we see the complete collapse of **ALL OTHER MAJOR REGIONAL POWERS**—including those specifically described as being conquered by Israel in the biblical account—followed by the sudden **RISE** to power by enemy states in the years following the collapse of Israel’s united monarchy. ■



# KING DAVID

“I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, that thou shouldest be prince over My people, over Israel. And I have been with thee whithersoever thou didst go, and have cut off all thine enemies from before thee; and I will make thee a great name, like unto the name of the great ones that are in the earth. ... When thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, that shall proceed out of thy body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. ... And thy house and thy kingdom shall be made sure for ever before thee; thy throne shall be established for ever.”

—2 Samuel 7:9-10, 12-14, 16



# INSCRIPTIONS PROVE THE ‘HOUSE OF DAVID’

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN BIBLICAL MINIMALISTS QUESTIONED NOT ONLY the size and nature of King David’s kingdom, but whether David was even a real historical figure. Today, this question has been answered, even to those who consider the Bible an unreliable source of history. An extra-biblical inscription—and likely two more—proves conclusively that King David existed and that he was the patriarch of a royal dynasty.



## THE TEL DAN STELE

DISCOVERED IN 1993 BY ISRAELI ARCHAEOLOGIST AVRAHAM BIRAN, THE Tel Dan Stele made international headlines and astounded biblical scholars and the archaeological community. The inscription was found during excavations at Tel Dan, an archaeological site in the Upper Galilee situated more than 220 kilometers (136 miles) from Jerusalem.





The text on the Tel Dan Stele records the deaths of kings Jehoram of Israel and Ahaziah of Judah during their battle against the ninth-century B.C.E. Syrian King Hazael. This history, written from the perspective of Israel's enemy—the Arameans—is recorded in 2 Kings 9.

It is the inscription on the ninth line of the stele that stunned the world. It reads, דודתיב, or *bytdwd*, which is translated “House of David.”

The discovery of the Tel Dan Stele marked a milestone in the understanding of biblical Israel. Prior to 1993, *no conclusive archaeological evidence* mentioning the name of Israel's most famous king had ever been discovered. The Tel Dan Stele not only confirmed David's existence, it identified him as the head of a royal dynasty.

Some scholars were skeptical. Initially, only the larger of the three pieces was discovered. The discovery of two more fragments provided additional context. Combining the second fragment with the first, we see a listing of both the kings of Israel and Judah:

קתלת.אית.יהו[הו]רם.בר.[אחאב].מלך.ישראל.וקתל[ת.אית.אחז]יהו.בר.[יהורם.מלך].ביתדוד  
“... [killed Jeho]ram son of [Ahab] king of Israel and kille[d Ahaz]  
iah son of [Jehoram king] of the House of David ....”

The stele's credibility was further proved by the presence of a destruction layer firmly dated to the late eighth century B.C.E., which allowed archaeologists to confidently date the Tel Dan Stele (and associated pottery) to the late ninth and early eighth centuries, little more than 100 years after King David died. (When pottery and other artifacts are sealed beneath an ash layer, they can be confidently dated to before the date of destruction.)

The listing of these two kings side by side made clear that *bytdwd* was a reference to the “House of David,” a Judahite royal title used 26 times in the Hebrew Bible.



## THE MESHA STELE

**T**HE MESHA STELE (OR MOABITE INSCRIPTION) IS A VICTORY RELIEF belonging to the ninth-century B.C.E. Moabite King Mesha. The text on the stele pairs with the biblical account recorded in 2 Kings 3.

This formerly complete inscription was found in Jordan by local Bedouin and became known to French archaeologist Charles Clermont-Ganneau in 1868. In 1869, Arab intermediaries were sent to the camp to make a “squeeze,” a papier-mâché, schematic copy of the impression. Not long after the copy was made, the stele was smashed in pieces by the tribespeople and distributed among themselves—probably in order to make money off the separate pieces.

Large chunks have since been acquired and pieced together. The majority of the Mesha Stele was reproduced, thanks largely to Clermont-Ganneau's “squeeze.” The stele currently sits in the Louvre Museum in Paris.

About 30 percent of the text remains obscure, with the lowest lines difficult to read. In 1992, French scholar André Lemaire proposed the following translation: “[to herd] the small cattle of the land, and Horonen, in it dwelt the house of [D]avid ....”



Translated one year before the Tel Dan discovery, the phrase proved to be similar in form to *bytdwd*—missing only the initial “d.”

Lemaire’s translation is consistent with the biblical record. The upper section of the stele references the territory of northern Moab; the southern portion, including Horonen (biblical Horonaim), could easily relate to control by Judah, the “House of David.” There even appears to be some connection between Horonen and David’s reign, as related in 2 Samuel 13:34 (note especially the Septuagint version). According to Lemaire, alternative readings of the text are awkward. Still, alternative theories have been put forward.

In 2019, Prof. Israel Finkelstein, Nadav Na’aman and Thomas Römer performed new photo analysis of the Mesha Stele squeeze and claimed that the preserved text could not be confirmed as reading “House of David.” They stated that only the “b” character was clear. They also concluded that space allowed for only three letters, thanks to what they identified as a dividing line in the text—thus proposing the Moabite name “Balak” as perhaps a centuries-old memory of the personality in Numbers 22.

Immediately following their release, a response was given by Associate Professor Michael Langlois, whose own research was about to be published. Langlois spent years poring over the Mesha Stele, utilizing his own new 3-D digital imaging of the artifact. With this technology, Langlois was able to identify a previously unnoticed punctuation mark in the stele, fitting squarely with Lemaire’s original translation. He also noted that there was no evidence for Finkelstein, Na’aman and Römer’s dividing line in the text—dismissing the theory and stating that “the space [for “House of David”] is exactly perfect—no more, and no less.”

Professor Langlois’s latest research confirms with nearly as much certainty as possible that the original proposal, “House of David,” is indeed the correct reading.



## THE KARNAK INSCRIPTION

**T**HE KARNAK INSCRIPTION IS AN EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHIC INSCRIPTION dated to the 10th century B.C.E. The text, inscribed on the walls of the famous Karnak temple in Luxor, Egypt, documents Pharaoh Sheshonq I's invasion of Israel and Judah. The Bible records this invasion in 1 Kings 14 and 2 Chronicles 12 (where the biblical name *Shishak* is used).

Many of the names of conquered locations in the southern Levant have eroded or been destroyed. One name, however, apparently relates to a group of areas in the Negev, or southern, region of Judah. The hieroglyphic text is transliterated as: *h[y]dbt dwt*, and translated by Egyptologist Prof. Kenneth Kitchen as “Heights of David.”

The first Egyptian word indicates heights, or highlands, and fits with the geography of this area of Judah. The second word is more problematic. While the first two letters match the Hebrew *dwd* for David, the “t” does not.

According to Professor Kitchen, there is no better option. “It could not really be Dothan [probably the closest-spelled alternative]—no final ‘n,’ and in entirely the wrong context for a north Palestinian settlement” (*On the Reliability of the Old Testament*). Even at face value, the “t” sound in Egyptian hieroglyphs is no great problem—“d” and “t” are similar dental consonants and are readily interchangeable.



As Kitchen notes, the name *Davit/Dawit* for David from these regions is not unknown. “[I]n an Ethiopic victory inscription of the early sixth century A.D. in southwest Arabia, the emperor of Axum cited explicitly passages from the ‘Psalms of Dawit,’ exactly the consonants *dwt* as found with Shoshenq” (*ibid*).

Kitchen cites other examples of the interchangeable Egypt “t/d” during the period. For example, *Megiddo* and *Damascus* are both spelled by the Egyptians with a *t*.

Kitchen summarizes: “This would give us a place-name that commemorated David in the Negev barely 50 years after his death, within living memory of the man. The Negev was an area where David had been prominent in Saul’s time (1 Samuel 24:1; 27; 30).” This would make the Karnak Inscription the earliest reference to this king.



# THE SEARCH FOR KING DAVID'S PALACE

“**D**ID I FIND KING DAVID'S PALACE?” Archaeologist Eilat Mazar headlined with that bold question in the January-February 2006 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review*. Her lengthy article summarized her 2005 archaeological excavation at the northern tip of the City of David and the evidence she had uncovered.

Dr. Mazar's article and her excavations in the City of David have drawn a spectrum of responses from the scholarly and scientific communities as well as the public. Some are convinced, others are uncertain, and some are dismissive of, even hostile to, Dr. Mazar's discovery and identification.

Unfortunately, much of the reporting on Dr. Mazar's

archaeology in the City of David and on the Large Stone Structure is superficial, unfairly critical and dismissive. While there are nuances in the points of discussion around the Large Stone Structure, the mainstream media tend to downplay and even ignore the scientific evidence and historical record Dr. Mazar unearthed and rely too heavily on the theories put forward by anti-Bible, anti-David minimalist critics.

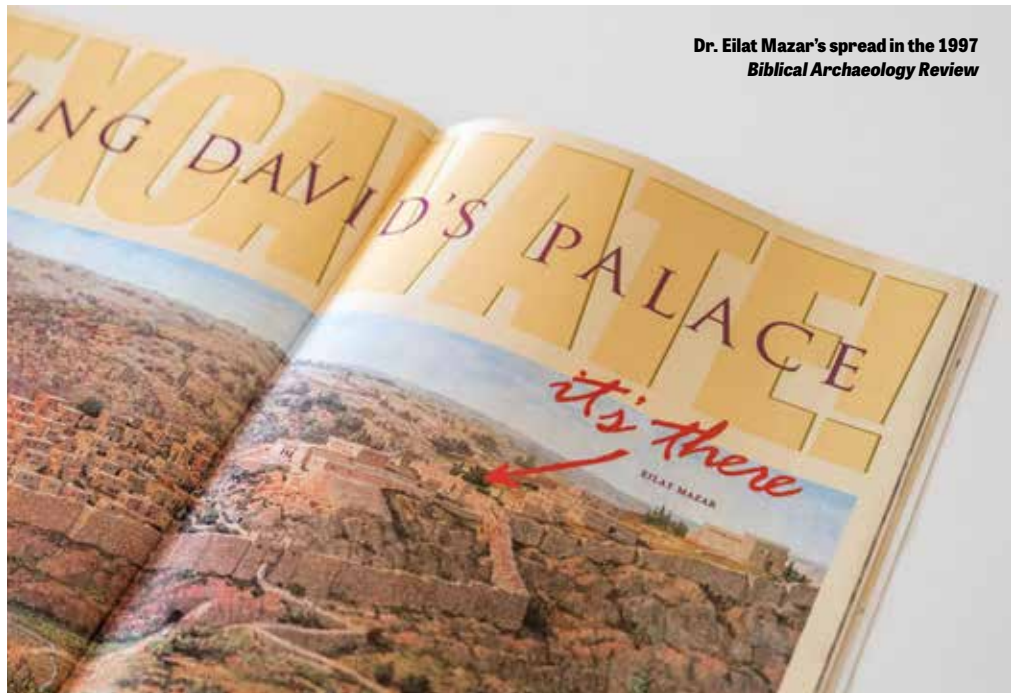
Here is the archaeological evidence that led Dr. Mazar to conclude she had discovered King David's palace.

## **Pinpointing the Location**

Almost 10 years before she began digging in the City of David, Dr. Mazar wrote an article explaining why she



The 6-meter-wide eastern palace wall



Dr. Eilat Mazar's spread in the 1997 Biblical Archaeology Review

believed King David's palace was located in the northern end of the City of David. The article, "Excavate King David's Palace!", appeared in the January-February 1997 *Biblical Archaeology Review*.

"[A] careful examination of the biblical text combined with sometimes unnoticed results of modern archaeological excavations in Jerusalem enable us, I believe, to locate the site of King David's palace," she wrote. "Even more exciting, it is in an area that is now available for excavation. If some regard as too speculative the

hypothesis I shall put forth in this article, my reply is simply this: Let us put it to the test in the way archaeologists always try to test their theories—by excavation."

Dr. Mazar's hypothesis relied on clues found in the Bible, specifically 2 Samuel 5. This chapter describes David's capture of Jerusalem (verses 6-9) and the construction of his new palace (verse 11). A verse further in the chapter particularly caught Mazar's eye: "And when the Philistines heard that David was anointed king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek David; and David heard of it, and WENT DOWN TO THE HOLD" (verse 17).

This verse contains several details that Dr. Mazar found notable. First, the word "hold" refers to the original walled fortress of Jebus (Hebrew: *metsudah*). It is named

the *metsudah of Zion* during David's attack described in verse 7. Verse 9 records that after David conquered the *metsudah*, he immediately moved into it. Verse 11 records that not long afterward, the Phoenician King Hiram sent skilled laborers and "built David a house."

King David clearly had a palace. So, Dr. Mazar asked, where exactly was this palace situated?

The fortress-city of Jebus covered only about 48 dunams (12 acres), primarily comprising the southern sloping ridge of Mount Zion. Archaeologists have revealed a general idea of the extent of Jebus and estimate that around 500 people lived within its walls. Given that this was such a compact and densely populated area, there would not have been sufficient room inside the city for a grand palace. Did David build his new palace just *outside* the original walls?

As explained, verse 17 shows that *after* David settled into his new palace, he heard reports of an imminent Philistine attack and *went down into* the *metsudah*, or fortress/hold. David's palace, then, was built on an *elevated* location, *above* the fortress, and just *outside* the city walls. (Later, David's palace would be surrounded by a fortified city wall. The Bible records that David's son Solomon and other kings built additional walls around Jerusalem as the city expanded further north.)

Based on verse 17, Dr. Mazar believed that David's palace would be found just outside the *northern* wall of Jebus, in an elevated position on Mount Zion.

When she discussed this theory with her grandfather, former Hebrew University president



Prof. Benjamin Mazar, just before his death in 1995, he reminded her of an impressive royal Phoenician-style pillar capital that had been discovered by archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon during excavations in the City of David in 1962. This, he suggested, was further evidence that David's palace would be situated on the northern part of Mount Zion. (You can read more about this capital on page 38.)

Kenyon's report stated that the capital, of a type belonging to the early Israelite monarchy, was found partway down the eastern side of the hill, directly below the location where Mazar believed David's palace would be found. Evidently, the capital had fallen from a palatial structure above. Did this pillar capital belong to David's palace?

Dr. Mazar compiled her research and presented her theory in that 1997 *Biblical Archaeology Review* article. The theory met with little enthusiasm from the academic world. Some archaeologists questioned the merits of excavating where Mazar suggested, doubting that she would find *anything*, let alone something monumental. Earlier excavations in the City of David, they reasoned, had uncovered all that there was; there was nothing left to excavate.

Dr. Mazar was undeterred. While previous excavations in the City of David had unearthed plenty of later period walls, she believed that Iron IIA remains would still be discovered below these structures. More than anything, Mazar, like any good scientist, wanted to put her theory to the test. She wanted to dig.

But she lacked financial support for the proposed excavation. It wasn't until nearly a decade later, in 2005, that she received funding from Roger and Susan Hertog and Eugene and Zara Shvidler. Finally, she could dig!

### The Stepped Stone Structure

When Dr. Mazar published her article in 1997, she was most interested in excavating the area north of the

## STEPPED STONE STRUCTURE

The Stepped Stone Structure (gold) supporting the Large Stone Structure (blue) above. Buildings incorporated into the side of the Stepped Stone Structure are later additions.

famous Stepped Stone Structure in the City of David. But by the time she received funding, the only area available for excavation was a little further south, just above and slightly north of the Stepped Stone Structure.

The Stepped Stone Structure in the City of David is one of the largest, most impressive archaeological features in all of Israel. Situated on the east side of Mount Zion, this monumental terraced stone edifice is 20 meters (65.6 feet) high and can be easily seen from the Mount of Olives on the east side of the Kidron Valley.

The structure was first excavated by R. A. Macalister in the 1920s and has been excavated multiple times since, including by Kathleen Kenyon (1960s), Yigal



# LARGE STONE STRUCTURE

EASTERN WALL  
35 METERS LONG

EASTERN WALL  
6 METERS WIDE

NORTHERN WALL  
30 METERS LONG

NORTHERN WALL  
3 METERS WIDE



Shiloh (1980s) and Dr. Eilat Mazar. Since the 1970s, archaeologists believed it was constructed during the Jebusite period or perhaps earlier, with some additions occurring in the ninth century B.C.E.

Dr. Mazar believed, like many of her colleagues, that the area just above the Stepped Stone Structure belonged to the northern part of the Jebusite fortress that David “went down to” from his palace. “Eventually they gave me the option to excavate in a place where I thought the [Jebusite] fortress of Zion was going to be revealed,” she told the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology in late 2019. “I thought I was going to miss King David’s palace. But I excavated where they let me excavate. It’s not like I could choose. I took what I got.”

## The Large Stone Structure

Dr. Mazar began digging in mid-February 2005. Within two weeks, her team had unearthed massive walls. They were staggered by their size. One wall running east-west was 30 meters (98 feet) long and up to 3 meters (10 feet) wide. Another, even larger wall was uncovered during the next season of excavations (summer 2006). This wall ran north-south and was 6 meters (20 feet) wide.

That’s not all. This massive north-south wall directly abutted the top of the Stepped Stone Structure. A small excavation in the summer of 2007 revealed that this wall not only touched the Stepped Stone Structure but *interlocked* with it, indicating that both edifices were PART OF THE SAME BUILDING.

This was a crucial discovery. “The fact that the two structures were part of the same construction was an astonishing discovery for us,” Dr. Mazar said. “Laid before our very eyes was a structure massive in proportions and innovative in complexity. It bears witness to the impressive architectural skill and considerable investment of its builders, to the competency of a determined central ruling authority, and most notably to the audacity and vision of that authority.”

Dr. Mazar also discovered the reason the Stepped Stone Structure was constructed in the first place. The bedrock at the top of Mount Zion contained a large void. If the ruler of the fortress wished to extend his city further to the north along the ridge of Mount Zion, this gap would have to be bridged by a massive foundation fill so a sturdy structure could be built on top of it. This would require, to use Dr. Mazar’s words, the “audacity and vision” of a “determined central ruling authority” to devote enormous resources to build such a brace, descending down into the Kidron Valley.

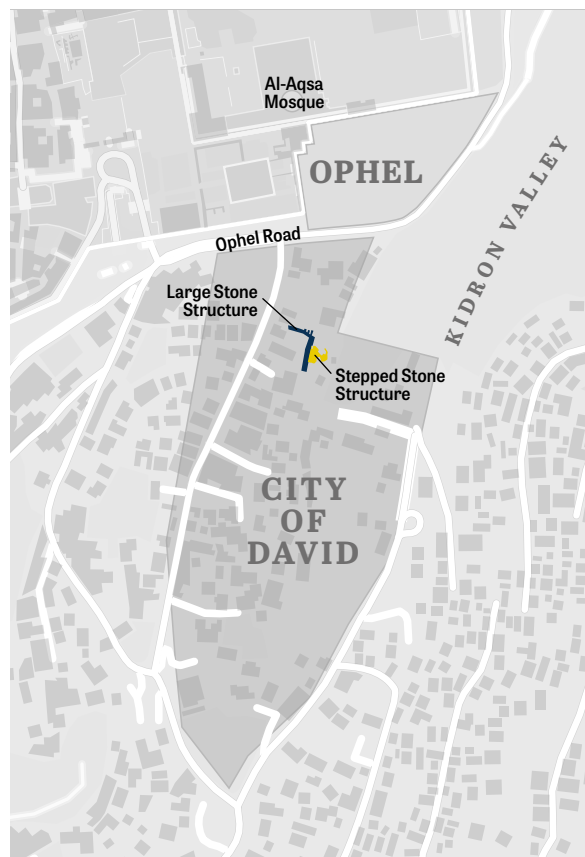
This, then, is what we see with the foundational Stepped Stone Structure and building above: the construction of a gigantic palatial structure with walls up to 6 meters (20 feet) wide, woven into a 20-meter-high (66-foot-high) Stepped Stone Structure that provides a firm foundation down the steep eastern edge of the City of David. This joint building effort constitutes the *tallest* known structure in all Israel until the time of Herod the Great, nearly 1,000 years later. The height and mass of the Stepped Stone Structure testifies to the outstanding size and magnificence of the building it supported.

Dr. Mazar called the newly discovered massive building, built directly atop and interlocking with the Stepped Stone Structure, the “Large Stone Structure.” This structure could only be built with a significant amount of wealth, infrastructure and power. This raised a crucial question: Who built it? Could it have been King David?

### Was This Really the Palace?

To determine if the Large Stone Structure was David’s palace, Dr. Mazar needed more than a large building underpinned by a gigantic supporting structure. She needed to date the building. The standard way to do this is to use material remains, especially pottery and carbon samples, that relate to the structure.

During her 2005–2008 excavations, Dr. Mazar’s team uncovered a significant amount of pottery and many carbon samples related to the Large Stone Structure. When studied in the laboratory, the material found directly *under* the Large Stone Structure dated to the last part of the Iron I period—around the 11th century



B.C.E. This was the last period in which the Jebusite Canaanites occupied Jerusalem, just before David conquered the city.

These fragments—alongside the lack of any structural remains dating to *this* period—indicated that the Jebusites had left this area open and undeveloped, just outside the northern extent of their city.

In the 2006 season, Dr. Mazar found evidence of a localized metal industry inside the lowest levels in the building. This layer included smelting hearths, numerous ceramic crucibles and blowpipes, as well as a large amount of copper dross and waste associated with the creation of metal objects. Dr. Mazar showed that this was evidence of the construction phase of the building.

The artifacts discovered abutting and directly associated with the Large Stone Structure—and thus the Stepped Stone Structure—were scientifically dated to around late Iron I to early Iron IIA: the decades surrounding 1000 B.C.E.

The combined dating evidence left a window of less than 100 years in which this massive building could have been constructed. And directly within that time period is the biblical account of *the reign of King David*.

Based on her discoveries, Dr. Mazar found that



the evidence fit *precisely* with the biblical account of David's palace: She had found a massive, 3,000-year-old building right where the Bible says David's palace should be.

There is certainly room for scholars, based purely on the archaeological dating, to suggest that it was built immediately before King David's time. Dr. Mazar recognized that this was possible in her preliminary report published in 2009. But she also explained why it was highly unlikely. While the dating of the structure could support that conjecture, logic does not. Why would the Jebusites invest time and resources building a massive palatial structure *outside* their fortress city—and at a time when the Israelites were growing in power and preparing to conquer the Jebusite city nestled in Canaan's heartland? This and other theoretical attempts to explain away the structure are much more of a stretch, and take far more imagination, than pairing it up with the straightforward biblical account.

Such a grand structure built on new ground, outside the defensive fortification, is hardly the work of a Jebusite population in its twilight years. The more rational conclusion is that the construction indicates a new, bold, confident vision for Jerusalem—such as the biblical description for King David's palace.

### Additional Evidence

Alongside the location and dating, a number of smaller discoveries also serve to identify the Large Stone Structure as King David's palace. The Bible records that the *Phoenician* King Hiram sent *stone masons* to work on David's palace (2 Samuel 5:11). This fits with the discovery of the beautifully worked Israelite-Phoenician-style stone capital that Kenyon found below the now-uncovered Large Stone Structure.

Other royal items were discovered in and around the palace, including ornate ivory utensils and the remains of exotic foods, likewise indicating the royal nature of the structure.

The Bible records that after

King David died, his son Solomon built another palace further north of the City of David (1 Kings 7:1). Future kings ruled from *this* northern palace, which became known as the "upper house of the king" (Nehemiah 3:25). But the palace David built continued to function as a royal building and was still identified as the "house of David" in the days of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 12:37).

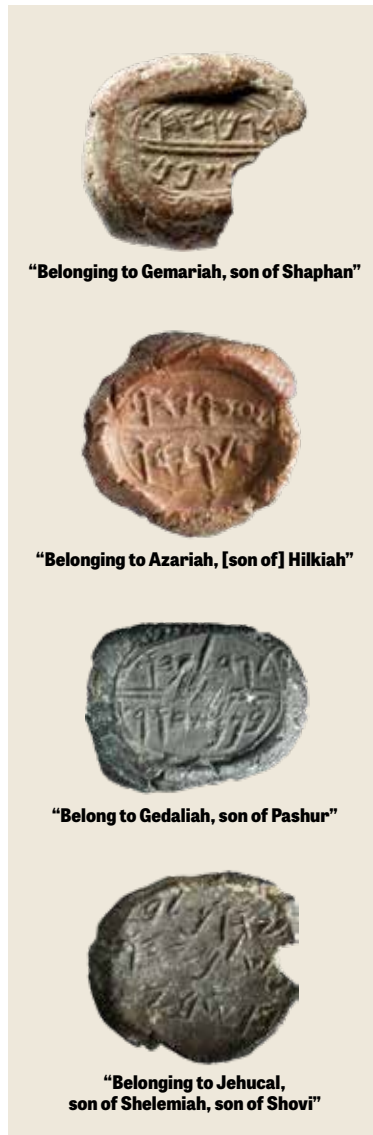
Jeremiah 36:12 describes an officer going "down" into a scribal chamber near the "king's house" and meeting with several officials, including Gemariah the son of Shaphan. Excavations of the Stepped Stone Structure in the 1970s by Prof. Yigal Shiloh revealed a scribal chamber at the base of the structure containing 51 bullae. The building became known as the "House of Bullae." One of the bullae contained an inscription reading "Belonging to Gemariah, son of Shaphan." The

House of Bullae, then, is a close link to the "scribe's chamber" near the "king's house."

Within and around the Large Stone Structure, the bullae of two princes were discovered by Dr. Mazar in 2005 and 2007. The first reads: "Belonging to Jehucal, son of Shelemiah, son of Shovi." The second reads: "Belonging to Gedaliah, son of Pashur." These royal princes are described together in Jeremiah 38:1 as the enemies of the Prophet Jeremiah. It would be fitting to find evidence of *princes* around a royal palace structure.

In excavations to the west of the Large Stone Structure, two other notable bullae were found in the 2019 excavations of Prof. Yuval Gadot: One that was inscribed, "Belonging to Nathan-Melech, Servant of the King," belonged to one of King Josiah's royal chamberlains (2 Kings 23:11). The other, "Belonging to Ikar, son of Mattaniah," may have belonged to a prince and son of King Zedekiah (whose original name was Mattaniah).

Dozens of other bullae from royal officials and princes scattered in and around the Large Stone Structure and the nearby scribal building together indicate that the Large Stone Structure was a royal edifice, a *palace*.





An aerial, painterly illustration of a lush, hilly landscape. In the foreground, a fortified city with stone walls and a large, circular stone structure sits on a cliffside. The surrounding terrain is a mix of green fields, brown earth, and distant hills under a soft, hazy sky. The overall style is that of a historical or biblical illustration.

# KING DAVID'S JERUSALEM

David was about 30 years old when he became king of Judah. For the first 7½ years, he ruled Judah from the city of Hebron, situated about 32 kilometers (roughly 20 miles) southwest of Jerusalem. When he became king over all of Israel, David immediately determined to conquer the Jebusites and take control of Jebus (Jerusalem).

Jerusalem was a perfect site for Israel's capital. The city, located in the Judean mountains, was strategically positioned between Judah and the northern 10 tribes and was extremely well-fortified with steep valleys on three sides. The gushing waters of the Gihon Spring provided a reliable supply of water. Most importantly, Jerusalem had a distinguished history with Israel's patriarchs. The city was founded by Melchizedek roughly 1,000 years earlier and was situated adjacent south of Mount Moriah, where Abraham took Isaac to be sacrificed.

The Jebusites peered down on King David and his army from their elevated position and boasted that Jebus could never be taken. David was undeterred. He captured the city by sending soldiers through a water conduit. David built himself a palace, cementing Jerusalem as Israel's royal capital. "And David dwelt in the stronghold, and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward. And David waxed greater and greater [from Jerusalem]; for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him" (2 Samuel 5:9-10). King David's conquest of Jerusalem marked the beginning of a golden period in Israel's history.



Dr. Eilat Mazar standing within the tunnel

## IS THIS JOAB'S TUNNEL?

**I**N 2008, DURING EXCAVATIONS ON THE STEPPED STONE STRUCTURE IN THE City of David, Dr. Mazar and her team discovered an opening into an ancient water tunnel. The tunnel walls, which follow a natural cavity in the bedrock, run along the upper part of the eastern slope of the City of David. Dr. Mazar believed the tunnel was eventually integrated into the construction of the Stepped Stone Structure during the 10th century B.C.E. and was probably used to channel water to a man-made pool built on the southeast side of the palace, referred to in Nehemiah 3:16. (This pool is described as being near to a large “stepped” structure—see verse 15 and Nehemiah 12:37. This is almost certainly a reference to the Stepped Stone Structure.)

After stumbling upon the opening, Dr. Mazar investigated the narrow tunnel. Buried at the entrance were layers of debris that dated to the end of the First Temple Period (sixth century B.C.E.). The passage ran from north to south and was wide enough for one person at a time to pass through.

The Bible records that Joab, one of King David's leading military officers, initiated Israel's capture of Jerusalem from the Jebusites by infiltrating the city via a water shaft (2 Samuel 5:8; 1 Chronicles 11:6). According to Dr. Mazar, “The tunnel's characteristics, date and location testify with high probability that the water tunnel is the one called *tsinnor* in the story of King David's conquest of Jerusalem.”

While this is an interesting and dramatic suggestion by Dr. Mazar, the tunnel remains elusive and requires further excavation. As Mazar recognized, “We have a general knowledge of the tunnel, but we are far from having a complete picture.” ■

CONTINUED  
FROM PAGE 31

### A Sensational Discovery

When Dr. Mazar released her discovery to the public in 2005, it generated attention around the world and even made the front page of the *New York Times*. However, some scholars decried it as sensationalism.

Dr. Mazar's remarkable find was greeted with some skepticism because she committed two cardinal sins: First, she discovered what she was looking for; second, her science was informed and influenced by the Bible.

Regarding the first point: Remember that Dr. Mazar initially believed David's palace to be slightly farther north than where she was approved to excavate. Like other archaeologists, Mazar believed the area directly above the Stepped Stone Structure was likely part of the Jebusite fortress that was built well before David was born. Not until the discovery was dated did Dr. Mazar change her mind and conclude that the Large Stone Structure was built *too late* to be the Jebusite fortress—it had to have been constructed during King David's reign.

“Even when I proposed looking for the remains of King David's palace at this spot, I did not imagine that the Stepped Stone Structure would form an integral part of it,” Dr. Mazar wrote in 2009. “Indeed, reality surpassed

all imagination.” Integral to science is the development and testing of a *theory*. Finding what you are looking for is not a sign of bias; it's a sign of a good theory.

As for the second point: It is important to note that while Dr. Mazar did consider the Hebrew Bible a valuable resource for studying history, she was not religious and did not pursue a religious agenda. “Archaeology cannot stand by itself as a very technical method,” she said. “It is actually quite primitive without the support of written documents. Excavating the ancient land of Israel and not reading and getting to know the biblical source is stupidity. I don't see how it can work. It's like excavating a classical site and ignoring Greek and Latin sources. It is impossible.”

Dr. Mazar dug up stones, walls and pottery. If she found that they matched the biblical record, she did not shy away from making the obvious associations (as some archaeologists admittedly do out of fear of their work being branded “sensationalist” and discredited by their fellow academic).

To Dr. Mazar, the Bible recorded ancient history in Jerusalem relating to ancient structures in Jerusalem. “I am interested in history, not just about stones. I am

interested in stones that can speak. I don't care about stones that have nothing to talk about—that are speechless. Who cares about speechless stones? Let the stones speak," she so often said.

Following her initial 2005–2006 excavation, some of Dr. Mazar's colleagues rejected the conclusion that she had discovered King David's palace. Some said the Large Stone Structure was from 700 years later. Some said it was totally unrelated to the Stepped Stone Structure.

Others held fast to the original theory and maintained that it was a Jebusite fortress. One professor dismissed Dr. Mazar's discovery, falsely claiming she hadn't done carbon dating. She most definitely *had*—we should know; we helped in her excavations. But this is an example of the careless *dismissal* of Dr. Mazar's evidence—without evidence of their own.

*These* conclusions are the hasty speculations and assumptions based on limited evidence, in some cases made by individuals who have never led excavations in Jerusalem. Dr. Mazar's conclusion came from years of theorizing and leading actual excavations that produced a growing body of supporting evidence.

It is true that 3,000 years of habitation and development make it impossible to distinguish the precise design and layout of David's palace. However, the main outer walls dated to the time of King David are readily visible at the site.

In recent years, since the conclusion of the 2008 excavation, biblical minimalists have started to acknowledge that although the walls are not inscribed with King David's personal signature, they are inarguably the foundations of a massive building within the (albeit contested) time frame supported by pottery reading, carbon dating, many traditional archaeologists and the Bible.

If you follow the evidence furnished by both archaeology and the historical record (the Bible), the most logical explanation is that the Large Stone Structure and the Stepped Stone Structure form one massive edifice: the palace of David, king of Israel.

"There may be times when it will take 10 years for people to adjust to, support and even accept the idea," Dr. Mazar said, "but I am not going to wait for them." She estimated that only 20 percent of the royal building has been uncovered.

Dr. Mazar concluded her 2006 *Biblical Archaeology Review* article by writing: "The biblical narrative, I submit, better explains the archaeology we have uncovered than any other hypothesis that has been put forward. Indeed, the archaeological remains square perfectly with the biblical description that tells us David went down from there to the citadel. So you decide whether or not we have found King David's palace." ■

## THE CHRONOLOGICAL DEBATE ABOUT KING DAVID'S PALACE

CENTRAL TO THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE LARGE Stone Structure as the palace of King David is its dating to around 1000 B.C.E. This is within the early part of David's 40-year reign, which, using biblical and secular chronologies, can be dated to around 1010–970.

This dating of the Large Stone Structure squares nicely with the historical account recorded in 2 Samuel 5: David conquered Jerusalem 7½ years into his reign, and immediately following this, the Bible describes Hiram building a palace for him (verses 4-12).

But for some, this early dating of the Large Stone Structure disqualifies it as the palace mentioned in 2 Samuel 5. This is due to a particular chronological issue. Dr. Eilat Mazar hinted at it in her 2009 preliminary City of David excavation report: "The Bible recounts that Hiram, King of Tyre, built David his palace (2 Samuel 5:11). *Hiram assumed the throne in 979 B.C.E., at the earliest*, and David ruled until 965 B.C.E. [following a slightly later chronology] (Tadmor, 1962, page 299). Therefore, the construction of the palace could not have commenced prior to the last decade of David's reign in Jerusalem" (*The Palace of King David: Preliminary Report of Seasons 2005–2007*).

At the time, Mazar believed that the Large Stone Structure must have been built toward the *end* of David's reign. Yet in the decade following her 2009 publication, further investigation and research led Dr. Mazar to realize that the finds at

the site should be dated to on or around 1000 B.C.E.—either at the very end of the 11th century or right at the start of the 10th century.

While this date fits well with the chronological flow of 2 Samuel 5, it appeared too early for the reign of King Hiram. This caused some to contend that the Large Stone Structure could not have been David's palace built by Hiram. How could King Hiram have built a palace more than 20 years before he assumed the throne?

The primary question here is, how do we know when King Hiram of Tyre ruled? And more importantly, can this date be trusted?

## Enter Josephus

Josephus, the late first-century C.E. Jewish historian, wrote in his lengthy treatise *Antiquities of the Jews*: “Now that year on which the temple began to be built was already *the 11th year of the reign of Hiram ...*” (8.3.1). This date is somewhat different from the one he gave in *Against Apion*: “Since then the temple was built at Jerusalem *in the 12th year of the reign of Hiram ...*” (1.18). 1 Kings 6:1 informs us that the temple began to be built in the fourth year of Solomon's reign.

These passages indicate that King Hiram's reign overlapped with only the last seven to eight years of King David's reign. No matter what specific date is given for David, Solomon or Hiram, this Tyrian king could only have built a palace for David *within the final decade* of the Israelite king's 33-year reign from Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:5; 1 Kings 2:11; 1 Chronicles 3:4; 29:27).

For roughly the past half century of biblical scholarship, the fairly standard interpretation of these scriptures is that—despite the impression given by the Bible that King David's palace was built near the beginning of his reign—it must have actually been built near the *end*. Therefore, 2 Samuel 5 must not represent a sequential account of events.

But breaking apart 2 Samuel 5:11-12 to fit with Josephus's Hiram chronology begins a chain reaction of irreconcilable scriptural difficulties.

## 'House of Cedar'

Note that the house Hiram built for David was constructed of *cedar* (2 Samuel 5:11). Famously, the territory of Lebanon—Phoenicia of old—had a virtual monopoly on cedar. Tyrian kings were sought from abroad to construct palaces and temples of cedar. Hiram also supplied cedar for the building of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 5:22), his palace and his palatial “house of the forest of Lebanon” (1 Kings 7:2).

Despite some theories of a nonchronological layout for *all* the chapters from 2 Samuel 5 to 10, there is a general flow: Chapter 5 describes David's establishment

as king in Jerusalem; chapter 6 describes David bringing the ark of the covenant into the city, followed by his separation from his first wife; and chapter 7 describes David's plan to build a temple for the ark. “And it came to pass, *when the king [David] dwelt in his house*, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies round about, that the king said unto Nathan the prophet: ‘See now, *I dwell in a house of cedar*, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains’” (verses 1-2). King David makes this remark while living within his cedar palace.

The chapter proceeds to describe God's words to David through the Prophet Nathan: “When thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, *that shall proceed out of thy body*, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name ...” (verses 12-13; see also Psalm 89:31-38). This was, of course, the promise of David's future son Solomon. This passage implies that King David was *already* living in his cedar house and that Solomon was *not yet born*.

How old was Solomon when he began to reign, four years into which Hiram aided him in building the temple? Unfortunately, we are not given the exact age. But a pairing of 1 Kings 11:42-43 and 1 Kings 14:21 reveals that when Solomon assumed the throne, *he already had a 1-year-old son*, Rehoboam.

This means that between God's promise to David of his future son Solomon in 2 Samuel 7 (when the king resided in his cedar palace) to the fourth year of Solomon's reign (who started his reign with a 1-year-old child), we logically have a period of at least 25 years, and likely even longer.

Recall what Josephus wrote: “Now that year on which the temple began to be built [Solomon's fourth year] was already *the 11th year* of the reign of Hiram.”

Archaeological associations aside, the Bible and Josephus are in clear contradiction—therefore, a harmonizing of all accounts, together with discoveries from the Large Stone Structure, could *never have worked*. Mazar's discoveries only highlighted an existing chronological conundrum. Josephus's Hiram, biblically, could *never have built David's palace*. The dates cannot fit, no matter how hard we try to deconstruct the chronological framework of 2 Samuel 5-10.

## Contradictions

This is not the only chronological contradiction between Josephus and the Bible and not the only contradiction directly relating to Solomon and Hiram.

Take the following example: The Bible credits Solomon with a 40-year reign (1 Kings 11:42; 2 Chronicles 9:30). In the very next passage of *Antiquities*, following the discourse on Hiram, Josephus attributes to Solomon a reign of 80 years (8.7.8).

1 Kings 6:1 states that Solomon began building the temple, with Hiram's assistance, 480 years after the Exodus. In *Antiquities*, Josephus contradicts not only this, but also himself, and gives this period as 592 years (8.3.1). In *Against Apion*, he says it was 612 years (2.2).

Recall too Josephus's contradictory statements in relation to the year Hiram began building the temple. In *Antiquities* (8.3.1), construction began in Hiram's 11th year. In *Against Apion* (1.18), it began in Hiram's 12th year. This is a "minor slip," wrote scholar Lowell Handy, "but one worth noting."

Should we accept Josephus's chronological information for Hiram as more accurate and accept that King David's palace was constructed in the mid-10th century B.C.E., thus disqualifying the identification of the Large Stone Structure as King David's palace and further breaking apart the chronological flow of 2 Samuel 5? Or is the biblical text, which puts construction of the palace at the end of the 11th century, correct?

Is Josephus an infallible source of Phoenician history?

When it comes to Phoenician chronology in particular, there is significant wariness among scholars toward Josephus's account.

## Chronological Malaise

Lowell Handy analyzes Josephus's Phoenician chronologies in his book *Phoenicians in the Tenth Century B.C.E.* He writes that "while the names of the rulers have generally been accepted as reflecting accurate records of kings of Tyre, the dates provided for the length of their lives and reigns have serious problems, [and] these have tended to be 'corrected' before being used."

Josephus's *Against Apion*, for example, lists in detail the individual regnal lengths of Phoenician rulers from Hiram to the construction of Carthage. He then concluded this list by stating that there was a sum total of 155 years across this period, with 143 years from the building of the temple to the building of Carthage. When we add up the regnal information Josephus gave, however, we arrive at a period of only 137 years.

"Hiram, if the numbers in Josephus were correct (which they are probably not), came to the throne at the age of circa 19 and reigned for 34 years," writes Handy. "The treaties between David and Solomon [with Hiram] ... depend on a chronology that cannot be reconstructed with any certainty."

Historian David Henige's book *Historical Evidence and Argument* is a lengthy treatise on what constitutes "evidence" and the pitfalls for historians in determining historical reliability. Chapter 5 of his book uses Josephus's Tyrian chronology as a case in point. He points out various contradictions in Josephus's regnal numbers, including some of their ridiculous

implications (for example, Tyrian King Metten becoming a father at 11; Ithobaal becoming a father at 9). Henige highlights some of the hair-pulling attempts to harmonize the lists, as well as related problematic archaeological discoveries.

"The modern historian's dilemma is to wonder whether to attribute the peculiarities in Josephus's account of Tyrian royal chronology to Josephus himself, to the sources he named, or to some anonymous post-Josephan scribe/s," Henige writes. "In short, Josephus stands virtually alone, forcing those who wish to fill in Tyrian history to believe that both he and his sources were unimpeachable .... [T]he king list as Josephus passed it down, and as modern historians have grasped it, is as much parody as history." Clearly there are flaws in Josephus's chronology. He is not an infallible source.

## In Sum

Putting absolute faith in the chronology provided by Josephus's Tyrian king list—particularly as it relates to Hiram and the subsequent attempted synchronization with Solomon's reign—would be a mistake. The data contradicts material discoveries, for one. It repeatedly contradicts *itself*. And it directly contradicts the biblical account. The *reason* for such internal contradiction remains speculative, as mentioned by Henige. But as it is, attempts to cut-and-paste the biblical account to fit with it are misguided.

The Bible implies that King Hiram was on the scene contemporaneously throughout most, if not all, of King David's reign. And as we have seen, Josephus's flawed Tyrian chronology is far too suspect to call that into question.

This brings us back to Dr. Mazar's Large Stone Structure and a comparison of the archaeological data with 2 Samuel 5. The early date for the Large Stone Structure does *not* fit with Josephus's chronology. But it does fit tidily with that implicit in the Bible: a palace structure built early in the reign of King David, just after he became king of *all* Israel and conquered Jerusalem.

After all, as 2 Samuel 5:11-12 state (in a closed-paragraph Hebrew section, meaning these two verses are directly connected): "And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar-trees, and carpenters, and masons; and they built David a house. *And David perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that He had exalted his kingdom for His people Israel's sake.*"

Did David only realize that God had made him king over Israel at the *end* of his reign, after Hiram constructed his palace?

Of course not. David's palace was constructed at, or near, the *beginning* of his reign from Jerusalem. ■



## ASHLARS AND CAPITALS: A NEW STYLE OF MONUMENTAL ARCHITECTURE

**I**N THE 10TH CENTURY B.C.E., A NEW STYLE OF MONUMENTAL architecture began to emerge in Israel. This style featured two new and distinctive elements. Israeli archaeologist Prof. Yigal Shiloh understood this change in architecture as a common practice in the ancient Near East where most “cultures resorted to splendid building at the time of their eruption” (*Qedem 11*, 1979)

The first change revolved around the type of stone used for construction at royal cities. Instead of unhewn fieldstones, monumental structures began to be built using large, finely dressed stones known as ashlar. Evidence of this ashlar stone construction method in the 10th and ninth centuries B.C.E. has been discovered in several Israelite cities, including Dan, Hazor, Jerusalem, Khirbet Qeiyafa, Megiddo and Samaria. According to Professor Shiloh, the use of ashlar for monumental construction provided a suitable alternative to timber, which would inevitably grow scarcer as construction increased.

The second change concerned the development of a new style of capital stone, known as proto-Aeolic, or volute capital.

A capital (from the Latin word *caput*, meaning “head”) is the decorative uppermost stabilizing part of a column, or pillar. The presence of a capital is evidence of a substantial structure. Tents and regular homes don’t typically feature giant pillars with large capitals. The discovery of a capital testifies to the monumental architecture, and the general wealth and power, of the ruling entity.



“Proto-Aeolic” refers to a particular early Phoenician-Israelite-style design, which depicts two palm motifs, classic symbolism found in Israel, Moab and Phoenicia.

About three dozen proto-Aeolic capitals have been found at sites in the Levant and Cyprus. The highest concentration of these capitals comes from sites in Israel and Judah. According to Prof. Oded Lipschits, these capitals give insight into the scale and opulence of the gates and palaces in these kingdoms.

The finest example of a proto-Aeolic capital was discovered by Kathleen Kenyon in Jerusalem in 1963. The capital, which was found in two pieces, is massive. Measuring 1.27 meters (4.2 feet) long, 0.63 meters (2 feet) tall and 0.42 meters (1.4 feet) thick, it weighs almost 1 ton. Kenyon uncovered this impressive feature, which would have adorned a massive pillar, during excavations at the base of the Stepped Stone Structure in the City of David. She found it among debris and large ashlar stones that had evidently fallen from a royal structure atop the hill.

Professor Shiloh described Kenyon’s capital as “especially superior.” He also called it “the finest of all the proto-Aeolic capitals in this country. The proportions achieve perfect harmony.”

When Kenyon found it, she concluded that it was obviously from an important building that had stood on the top of the scarp. She theorized that it “may be the one architectural relic of Solomon’s Jerusalem so far found.” Thirty years later, after reading about David’s palace in 2 Samuel 5, Dr. Mazar theorized that it might have belonged to David’s palace. Dr. Mazar wrote: “This was just the kind of impressive remains that one would expect to come from a 10th-century B.C.E. king’s palace.”

It is difficult to assign a specific date to a capital. Unfortunately, like the Kenyon capital, almost all of the capitals discovered across Israel were found broken and not standing in their original contexts. Some scholars have attempted to push the dates of the “first” proto-Aeolic capitals into the eighth century B.C.E. This is problematic for at least two reasons.

First, many of the royal structures associated with these capitals were *destroyed* in the eighth century. To be destroyed at that time, they would have had to have been constructed earlier.

Second, early shrine models dating to the ninth century feature the same style capital. Archaeologists have also discovered

several seals dating to the ninth century in Jerusalem that feature the capital motif. Clearly, the proto-Aeolic capital design was an established style earlier than the eighth century B.C.E.

Kenyon’s capital was discovered among a pile of ashlar debris that most likely fell during the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. Originally, it was part of a royal building structure situated above the Stepped Stone Structure, which has been dated to the time of King David. While one cannot be certain about the dating of the capital itself, it is reasonable to conclude that it dates to the same time period.

2 Samuel 5 records the construction of David’s palace. Soon after David became king of Israel, Hiram, the Phoenician king of Tyre, sent craftsmen and materials to help build the palace: “Then King Hiram of Tyre sent messengers to David, along with cedar timber and carpenters and stonemasons, and they built David a palace” (verse 11; New Living Translation).

Earlier examples of the volute style capital are found in Israel, rather than in Phoenicia itself. Thus it is plausible to consider the emergence of proto-Aeolic capitals, and the associated ashlar masonry, as a new Israelite style of royal architecture created alongside the genius of the Phoenician artists and stonemasons.

As Yigal Shiloh wrote in his defining text on proto-Aeolic capitals, “It would be too simple to ignore this official development and to separate the process of crystallization of the material culture (mainly from the 10th century B.C.E. on) from the process of political and economic growth of the kingdom of Israel and Judah in the period under consideration and to ascribe the origins of its appearance solely to the import of knowledge of neighboring lands.” ■



The proto-Aeolic capital discovered by Kathleen Kenyon in the City of David on display at the Israel Museum of Jerusalem

West facade of the  
Temple of Concordia  
(Agrigento, Italy)



## TRIGLYPHS: ANOTHER NEW STYLE OF MONUMENTAL ARCHITECTURE

**T**RIGLYPHS ARE AN ARCHITECTURAL FEATURE FOUND on monumental structures all around the world. This feature consists of a (usually stone) row above a set of pillars, with sets of three embossed protrusions jutting out at regular intervals. This design is meant to imitate sets of projecting wooden beams holding up a roof structure. Triglyphs were generally considered to have been a Greek invention, with the earliest-known examples dating to well within the first millennium B.C.E.—that is, until the discovery of a peculiar stone model in the Judean foothills, dating centuries earlier to around 1000 B.C.E.

Not only did this item predate the earliest examples from the Classical Greek world, it also unlocked otherwise confounding biblical passages relating to Solomon's construction projects, revealing that he was already using this architectural feature at this time.

### **One Strange Stone Box**

During 2007 excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa, Prof. Yosef Garfinkel's team uncovered a pair of unusual "shrine" building models, one clay and one stone, dating to

around 1020–980 B.C.E. The most architecturally intriguing of the two is the stone model. Its doorway consisted of a multi-recessed frame. This matched the biblical description of the doorframe entrance to Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6:31-33). More fascinating was a clear and distinct row across the top of the model, with seven sets of protrusions "holding up" the ceiling, each divided into sets of three—precisely paralleling the triglyph design.

In their 2016 book *Solomon's Temple and Palace: New Archaeological Discoveries*, Professor Garfinkel and Madeleine Mumcuoglu write: "It is clear that ... these protrusions, although they were made of stone, were meant to imitate [protruding] wood [beams] ....

"The triglyph decoration in the temple model from Khirbet Qeiyafa predates the Greek temples several centuries; for example, it predates the Acropolis temples of Athens by about 500 years. Our new find revolutionizes the understanding of the development of public construction in biblical times and attests that it began as early as the late 11th to early 10th centuries B.C.E. It also shows that architectural phenomena that

developed in the East migrated and influenced Greek Classical architecture. Various scholars have pointed out the strong influences of the ancient Near East on elements of the culture of Classical Athens; we can now add triglyphs as one of these elements.”

With this discovery, an otherwise peculiar biblical passage suddenly clicked in Mumcuoglu’s mind. “I’ll only tell you if you promise not to laugh,” she recounts having told Professor Garfinkel.

### 4 x 15 = 45?

This specific passage has to do with Solomon’s construction of a grand cedar building called the “house of the forest of Lebanon.” 1 Kings 7:2-3 read: “He built also the house of the forest of Lebanon; the length thereof was an hundred cubits, and the breadth thereof fifty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits, upon *four rows of cedar pillars*, with cedar beams upon the pillars. And it was covered with cedar above upon the beams, that lay on *forty five pillars, fifteen in a row*” (King James Version). *Four rows of 15 cedar pillars, consisting of a total of 45 pillars? Four rows of 15 pillars makes 60, not 45; 45 pillars, 15 in a row, would mean three rows, not four.*

This passage of scripture has, for thousands of years, provided a headache for translators and commentators, many of whom declared the scripture confused or wrong; some Bible translations have even gone so far as to change the numbers to fit. The early Greek Septuagint translation (second century B.C.E.), for example, gives *three rows of pillars*, instead of four. And an early Arabic translation changes the total to 60 pillars, rather than 45. Even the modern Revised Standard Version, while following the Masoretic Hebrew text at large, follows the Septuagint in changing “four rows” to read “three rows.”

But the number of rows of pillars—four—is clear, and the numbers 45 and 15 in the Hebrew text *are* clearly related to one another (in the Hebrew, they are placed back-to-back, literally “45, 15 in row”). And there is a very clear mathematical relationship between these two numbers: They are both divisible by three.

To learn more, visit [ArmstrongInstitute.org/851](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org/851).

This discovery of *triglyphs* being used in 10th-century Israel proved to be a eureka moment. Garfinkel and Mumcuoglu continue: “Based on the Khirbet Qeiyafa stone model, which presents roof beams organized in groups of three like the triglyphs of Classical architecture, we understand the [Hebrew] *slaot* [of 1 Kings 7] as *roof beams organized in groups of three*. Our new interpretation explains the mathematical formula ‘45, 15 in each row.’ These numbers relate not to the [four rows of] columns, as believed by most biblical scholars, but to the roof beams.”

Thus, the last half of verse 3 is better translated, “the beams [*slaot*] that lay on the pillars: 45 in 15 rows.”

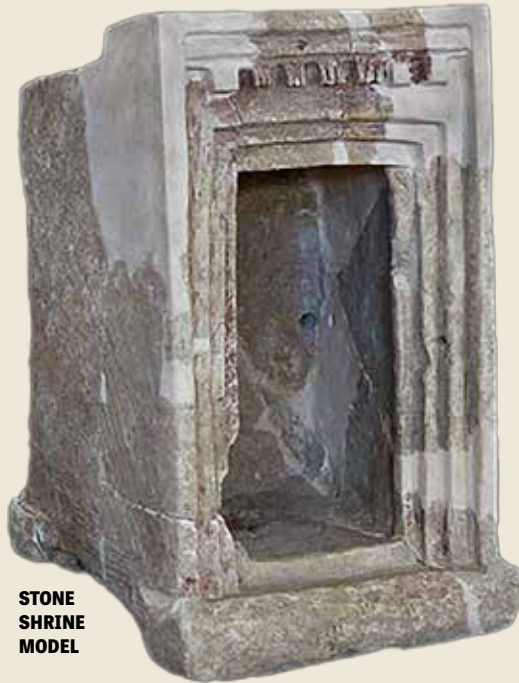
The authors back up this interpretation with an even more clear parallel described in the account of Ezekiel’s temple—a structure utilizing this same triglyph construction method (Ezekiel 41:6). With this

secondary passage, they summarize: “The descriptions of the roof in Ezekiel’s temple and Solomon’s palace share the same terminology (‘ribs’/צלעות [*slaot*]) and the same mathematics (groups of three). Based upon the stone building model from Khirbet Qeiyafa and the description of Solomon’s ‘house of Lebanon,’ it seems to us that Ezekiel described roof beams organized in a triglyph-like arrangement. This would create 30 groups of roof beams with three individual planks in each, yielding 90 planks altogether.”

Thus, we have an entirely logical explanation for the biblical account of Solomon’s monumental

constructions in Jerusalem, utilizing the architectural feature of triglyphs—now with remarkable archaeological precedent from the same general period, at Khirbet Qeiyafa.

One does start to wonder: With the earliest evidence of such prominent architectural features found 3,000 years ago, in ancient *Judah*, and a textual parallel to their use at this same time in Solomon’s renowned temple—who *should* be credited with the design of this monumental architectural style we see all around us? ■



STONE SHRINE MODEL

# Israel During David's Reign

MEDITERRANEAN  
SEA

PHILISTIA  
Brook of Egypt

SINAI  
PENINSULA

NEGEV  
EDOM

ARABAH VALLEY

ZOBAB  
PHOENICIA  
ARAM  
GESHUR

AMMON

MOAB

ARABIAN  
DESERT

HAMATH

•Hamath

Gebal•

Sidon•

Tyre•

Acco•

Megiddo•

Beth Shean•

Rehov•

Jabesh-gilead•

Shechem•

Joppa•

Shiloh•

Rabbath Ammon•

Gezer•

Bethel•

Jericho•

Ashdod•

Gibeon•

Ekron•

Gath•

Jerusalem•

Ashkelon•

Gaza•

Hebron•

Dibon•

Ziklag•

Beersheba•

MOAB

Tamar•

Bozrah•

Timna•

Ezion-geber•

RED SEA

0 25 50  
KILOMETERS





# KHIRBET QEYAF A

**K**HIRBET QEYAF A IS AN EXTREMELY UNIQUE SITE in Israel. Unlike most other ancient Israelite cities that have been excavated, this site is relatively “easy” to excavate because it has only *one* principal layer of settlement (contrasted against Megiddo’s 26, for example). Essentially everything at the site is from the same time period (aside from a few later and less-extensive additions).

Khirbet Qeiyafa has not definitively been linked

with a specific city in the Bible (hence the commonly used Arabic name). There are a handful of candidates, as this article will describe. However, this special site, inhabited for only a few decades, does go a long way in establishing the context of the earliest (and much debated) years of the kingdom of Israel during the time of King David himself. Khirbet Qeiyafa, thanks to its firm dating, can be used as a benchmark site against which other archaeological sites and finds can be compared.





The remains of a royal storeroom in Khirbet Qeiyafa

## Philistine or Israelite?

Khirbet Qeiyafa is a large fortified mound situated about 32 kilometers (20 miles) southwest of Jerusalem. The city stood directly between the geographic boundaries of Israelite and Philistine land, overlooking the Elah Valley, where the battle between David and Goliath occurred (1 Samuel 17:2). The fortress was established in a contested region, which raises the question of ownership.

Minimalists claim that Israel was small and lacked a centralized government at the time this city was built and was therefore incapable of establishing a monumental fortress. They assert that Khirbet Qeiyafa must have been built by the Philistines or some other culture, but certainly not Israel. Bible traditionalists accept the biblical and historical view and believe Israel was capable of producing a sizable, well-planned city.

To the traditionalists, the question remains: Was this an Israelite or Philistine site?

Several pieces of evidence answer this question.

The first revolves around the discovery of *thousands* of animal bones. Analysis of the bones provided an important revelation: *None* of the bones belonged to pigs. It is common in the excavation of Philistine and Canaanite cities (especially the former) to uncover pig bones. Pigs were used as food and probably as sacrifices as well. If Khirbet Qeiyafa was a Philistine city, the absence of pig bones makes it an anomaly. On the other hand, the absence of pig bones is totally consistent with

other *Judahite* sites, where little to no pig remains are found.

Second, evidence of Qeiyafa's Israelite origins came in the form of linguistic evidence, most notably a large pottery sherd, or ostrakon, covered in ancient script. Experts identified the script as an early Hebrew precursor. (See page 97 for more information.)

Third, structural evidence showed that the houses at Khirbet Qeiyafa were built abutting the city wall in what is known as a casemate plan. Casemate urban planning is not found in Philistine or Canaanite cities. It is, on the other hand, a known feature of Judahite cities.

Fourth, unlike most Philistine and Canaanite cities, Khirbet Qeiyafa has no central location of cult worship. There is no city center where idols were placed and worshiped. The site also had a noticeable lack of idols. This too is

unusual for Philistine sites but entirely consistent with what we would expect of a Judahite city.

Finally, a number of olive pits excavated from Khirbet Qeiyafa were carbon-14 dated. The analysis returned a date range of around 1020 to 980 B.C.E., directly within the biblical chronology of kings Saul and David (see timeline on page 14). The evidence at Khirbet Qeiyafa, then, suggests it being a Judahite site.

## Qeiyafa's Biblical Identity

Is Khirbet Qeiyafa mentioned in the Bible? Possibilities have been presented. One is Adithaim, mentioned in Joshua 15:36. This speculation is based on the cities listed in this verse following a precise geographic order. Considering the location of other cities listed in this chapter, Khirbet Qeiyafa could be Adithaim.

Another possibility is Netaim. This city is referenced poorly in most English-language Bibles: "These were the potters, and those that dwelt among *plantations* and *hedges*; there they dwelt occupied in the king's work" (1 Chronicles 4:23). The word "plantations" is actually the name of a city, Netaim. And the word "hedges" refers to the city *Gederah*. Based on Khirbet Qeiyafa's proximity to Gederah (these cities being near the Valley of Elah), some speculate that it could be Netaim.

The more commonly accepted biblical name is the one accepted by the site's excavator, Professor Garfinkel: Shaaraim. The word *Shaaraim* means "two

gates.” And Khirbet Qeiyafa has the distinction of being the only known Iron II city equipped with two gates.

Typical fortress cities had only one gate, since the entry and exit point is the weakest part of the installation. Yet Khirbet Qeiyafa has *two* identical, large, four-chambered gates—one on the south and one on the west. The reason is unclear, but this city certainly matches the name “two gates.”

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

This city is also referenced in 1 Samuel 17:52, which describes the aftermath of David’s battle with Goliath: “And the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted,

and pursued the Philistines, until thou comest to Gai, and to the gates of Ekron. And the wounded of the Philistines fell down by the way to *Shaaraim*, even unto Gath, and unto Ekron.”

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

Another verse provides an interesting possible reference to this city. It comes earlier in the story of David and Goliath. Verse 20 records David arriving with supplies for his brothers, who were part of the Israelite army: “And David rose up early in the morning ... and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he *came to the barricade*, as the host which was going forth to the fight shouted for the battle.”

## KEEPING KOSHER IN IRON IIA JERUSALEM (AND PHILISTIA)

**W**HEN WERE BIBLICAL KOSHER LAWS INSTITUTED? When were they written, and when did they begin to be followed? Detailed instructions for keeping kosher are found in the Torah (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14) and thus are ascribed traditionally to the hand of Moses (during the mid-to-late second millennium B.C.E.).

But were Israelites *really* “keeping kosher” so early in their history? A growing body of evidence suggests they *were*, particularly within Iron IIA Jerusalem, and potentially even influencing surrounding regional entities to do the same.

It is generally well known that pig remains from Israelite sites are next to none compared to the neighboring Philistines (who were prolific pork consumers). But that is only part of the picture, as Prof. Avraham Faust revealed in his 2021 *Jerusalem Journal of Archaeology* paper, “The ‘United Monarchy’ on the Ground.”

During the transition into the Iron II (Israelite kingdom) period, there is a “significant *decrease* in the consumption of pork” within Philistine sites (aside from the chief Philistine city of Gath). This is in contrast to the prior Iron I period, which is marked by “extremely high consumption [of pork] by the Philistines ....” (Faust noted a Philistine adoption of “local script,” the Hebrew-Phoenician alphabet, at this time as well.)

What central power would have influenced such a “kosher” revolution in these peripheral Philistine areas?

Perhaps the same one the Bible identifies as quieting the Philistines at the start of this Iron II period: that of King David.

Unclean land animals, however, are only part of the picture. In Dr. Eilat Mazar’s *The Summit of the City of David Excavations, 2005–2008: Final Reports Vol. I*, archaeozoologist Omri Lernau notes a striking lack of catfish remains in the capital city during this Iron IIA period—compared to the end of the Iron IIB period, just before the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar’s armies (notably, a time when the biblical prophets were *decrying* the consumption of unclean foods).

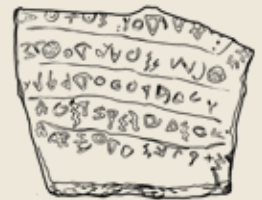
Lernau writes: “Catfish, as mentioned, were deemed non-kosher by Judaic laws in the Bible. Apparently, Iron IIA Israelites in Jerusalem, whose food remains were found in the ‘pool,’ *did in fact refrain from eating catfish*, while the inhabitants of the *later* buildings above the dumps in Area G *did not*. The reason for the latter could be connected to a *reduced adherence to biblical tradition ...*” (Chapter 16, “Fish Bones”).

In sum, it appears that not only were the leaders of the united monarchy “keeping kosher,” they were possibly even influencing others to do the same. Perhaps that is unsurprising for a king who “delight[ed] in the law [Torah] of the Lord, meditating on it day and night” (Psalm 1:2; New Living Translation). ■



# A FORTRESS FROM THE TIME OF DAVID

From 2007 to 2013, archaeologists Prof. Yosef Garfinkel and Saar Ganor led excavations at this fortress that overlooks the valley where David killed Goliath. The discoveries at the site proved beyond doubt that major urbanization and statehood took place during the 10th century B.C.E., the time of King David. Here are some of the key discoveries from Qeiyafa.



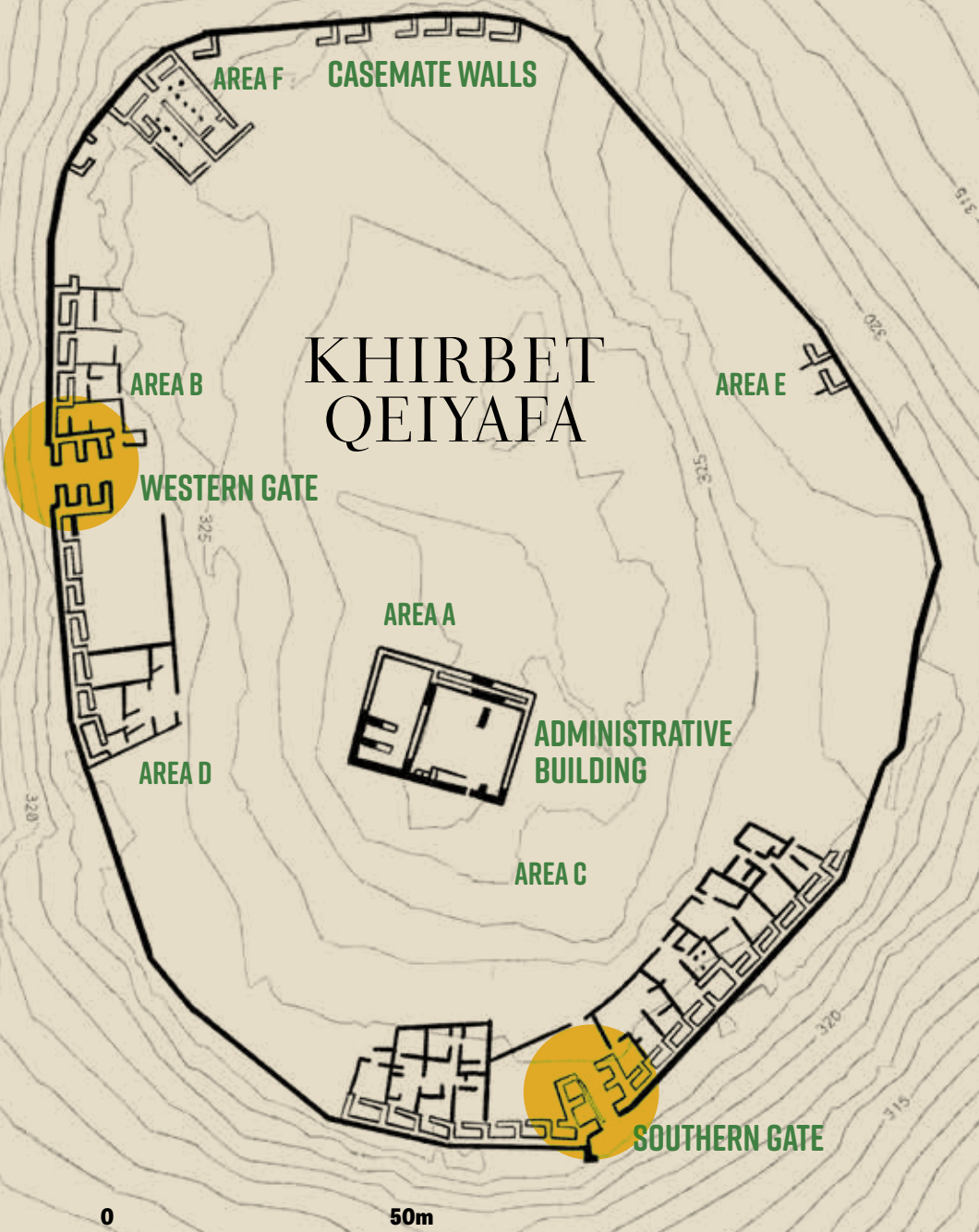
## 10TH-CENTURY WRITING

Out of all examples of 10th-century writing discovered in Judah, the largest is the Khirbet Qeiyafa Ostracon. Though difficult to clearly translate, the inscribed potsherd is evidence of writing during the time of David, a critical aspect to any royal administration.



## FINGER-IMPRESSED HANDLES

Over 700 examples of finger-impressed handles of storage jars found at the site are likely evidence of the early administration in Judah. The famous lmlk ("to the king") handles of King Hezekiah's time followed this uniquely Judean tradition.



0 50m





The word for “barricade” (“trench” in the KJV), *magal*, can mean a *circular rampart*. The excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa clearly reveal a circular rampart fortress. Is it possible that David visited his brothers at this circular fortress?

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

This passage specifically links Shaaraim to the time of David’s rule. Verse 31 says Shaaraim was populated by Shimei’s family *until* the reign of David. Judging by this verse and the verses above, we see that if Khirbet Qeiyafa really was biblical Shaaraim, it was established as at least a strategic location before David even became king, yet completely fell out of view not long afterward—a good match for the carbon-14 data.

### The Discoveries

Khirbet Qeiyafa is a relatively new site to excavators. While its existence has been known to archaeologists and surveyors since the late 1800s, it was not considered significant. Only within the last 20 years have archaeologists begun to note in more detail the intriguing structure of the ancient fortress. Thus excavations began in 2007 and have since yielded numerous intriguing finds.

One of the most dramatic finds is a large sherd of pottery that bears five lines of proto-Hebrew text. The suggested translation of this ostracron reads strikingly similar to the biblical record of King Saul’s appointment (1 Samuel 8:11-19). This could support the view that Khirbet Qeiyafa was a functioning Israelite fortress at the establishment of the kingdom of Israel.

The presence of writing is significant. Khirbet Qeiyafa shows not just a strong early Israelite presence, but one that used writing—a vital necessity for operating a kingdom. (For more information on literacy in 10th-century Israel, see page 97.)

Khirbet Qeiyafa also yielded another interesting inscription on a storage jar. This inscription bears the words “Ishbaal, son of Beda.” Saul had a son by this name (1 Chronicles 8:33). This inscription confirms the use of the name during the same period. During later periods in Israel’s history, names that include “Baal” fell out of use.

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



### SHRINE MODELS

Predating the temple in Jerusalem, these two shrine models discovered at Qeiyafa bear architectural elements similar to those described in the Bible for King Solomon’s building projects in Jerusalem.

### OLIVE PITS

Twenty-seven short-lived carbon samples (mainly olive pits) found at Qeiyafa were radiocarbon-dated, proving that the site was built around 1000 B.C.E. and fell out of use around 980–970 B.C.E.



### WESTERN GATE

Two four-chambered gates were discovered imbedded within the casemate-style city wall, another hallmark of Judean cities. The gates were similar in size and plan.

### SOUTHERN GATE

Its two gates are a unique feature of Khirbet Qeiyafa. They provide a possible link to the biblical city of *Shaaraim*, which means “two gates.”



Artifacts discovered at Khirbet Qeiyafa



10th-century B.C.E. writing: Ishbaal inscription from Khirbet Qeiyafa

On the stone model are triple-recessed doorposts. 1 Kings 7:4-5 describe Solomon using this style of architecture for his palatial building near the temple (and he likely used the same technique for the temple itself). Further, the Mishnah (Middoth 3, 7) shows that the doorframe of Herod's temple was built in the same manner as shown on this model.

The model door opening is 20 centimeters (8 inches) tall by 10 centimeters (4 inches) wide. The Mishnah describes the second temple as having a door 40 amah tall by 20 amah wide—the same proportions (Middoth 4, 1; it is important to note that much of the design of

the second temple was influenced by the first).

The model has seven protruding “squares” beneath the roof. Each square is divided by two lines, into three small rectangles. It is clear that these are meant to represent the ends of wooden crossbeams supporting the roof. (For more information on this design feature, see page 40.)

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

### **Khirbet Qeiyafa Today**

Archaeologists don't know why Khirbet Qeiyafa was abandoned so early in the kingdom of Israel's history. Perhaps it was no longer needed as a deterrent against the Philistines after King David eliminated them as a threat and once Solomon began his long and peaceful reign.

Khirbet Qeiyafa was somewhat reused on and off after the kingdom of Judah was conquered by Babylon in the sixth century B.C.E., generally as an agricultural area. The site includes a couple of instances of isolated building projects, within a late-Persian/early-Hellenistic time frame, as well as during the Byzantine period. Yet the

city-fortress never returned to the glory it experienced during the early 10th century under King David.

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



# A NETWORK OF DAVIDIC CITIES

OVER THE DECADES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL research across Israel, piecemeal evidence of the 10th-century B.C.E. kingdom has been uncovered at various sites. There are the widely spread Solomonic cities of Gezer, Hazor and Megiddo, paralleling 1 Kings 9:15, with all sites featuring matching Iron Age gatehouses (see page 71). There’s a Davidic-era site here, another there, like Khirbet Qeiyafa and Tel ‘Eton. And then there are the impressive remains of 10th-century construction in Jerusalem.

Until recently, these sites were generally studied individually. Archaeologists had not seriously investigated whether these individual sites, or at least some of them, might be part of a broader network of urban centers.

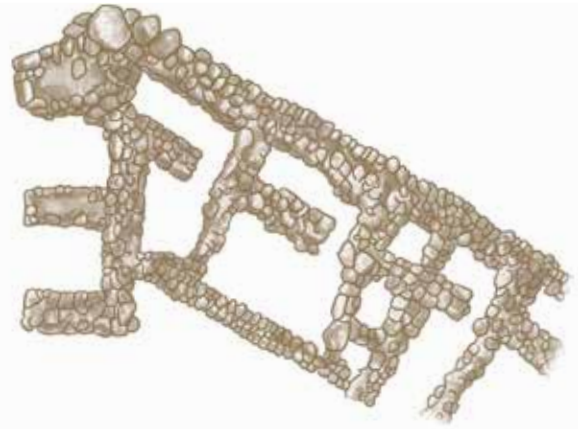
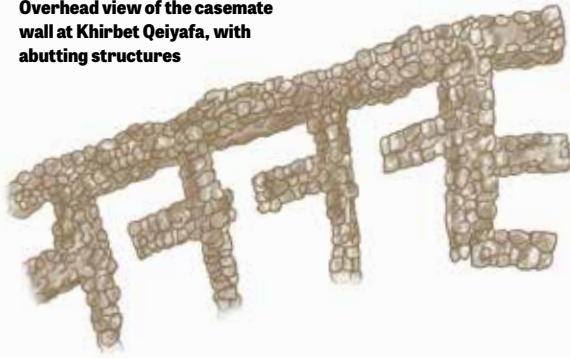
Prof. Yosef Garfinkel from Hebrew University has been examining the question of the formation of David’s kingdom more methodologically, from a geographical perspective. In May 2023, he published

what may prove to be a watershed article in Hebrew University’s *Jerusalem Journal of Archaeology* (JJAR) titled “Early City Planning in the Kingdom of Judah: Khirbet Qeiyafa, Beth Shemesh 4, Tell en-Nasbeh, Khirbet ed-Dawwara, and Lachish V.”

His publication presented a brand-new reexamination of cities geographically proximate to one another and bearing similar design and construction parallels, with similar 10th-century dating. His article presented evidence not of a random smattering of independent Davidic-period structures, but rather, of a carefully planned and geographically linked network of cities forming the very core of the united kingdom of Israel—particularly during the reign of King David and, later, kings Solomon and Rehoboam.

“These sites have far-reaching implications for understanding the urbanization process, urban planning, and borders of the earliest phase of the kingdom of Judah,” wrote Garfinkel.

**Overhead view of the casemate wall at Khirbet Qeiyafa, with abutting structures**



## Case Made by Casemates

During excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa from 2007 to 2013, Professor Garfinkel was stunned to find evidence of a single-period Judahite site that was in operation for only 20 to 30 years. The site was radiocarbon-dated squarely to the end of the 11th and start of the 10th century B.C.E., the time of King David (see page 43 for a detailed explanation of Khirbet Qeiyafa).

Khirbet Qeiyafa is situated in the strategic Shephelah (Judean lowlands) region and is a “day’s journey” southwest of Jerusalem (30 kilometers, or 20 miles). This distance was confirmed by Professor Garfinkel and Ganor when they (in true experimental archaeological fashion) made the trek on foot themselves.

Given the exceptionally tight window of dating, various unique aspects of Khirbet Qeiyafa can be used as a diagnostic parallel in comparison to surrounding locations. Armed with the findings from Khirbet Qeiyafa, Professor Garfinkel compared its closely confined, cleanly defined stratum with a handful of other, more loosely anchored regional sites that have been excavated over the past century. He reexamined finds from Beth Shemesh, Tell en-Nasbeh and Khirbet ed-Dawwara and summarized the results of his research in the above-mentioned *JJAR* article.

The most notable parallel between these cities was the presence at all sites of a unique, Judean-style casemate wall system, which is particularly endemic to the southern Levant (Israel). A casemate wall is a fortification line made up of essentially two parallel walls—a “double wall”—separated by a space in between. These parallel walls are each typically of a much narrower width than that of a solid fortification wall. In peacetime, the open corridors between these parallel walls can be used for storage or even as residences. In war, however, these open spaces can be filled with rubble, essentially transforming the two weaker, parallel walls into one massive, solid-style construction. (Casemates are alluded to in several biblical passages, including Joshua 2:15 and Isaiah 22:9-10.)

Still, examples of casemate walls can be found in Israel spanning the Middle-Late Bronze and Iron Ages. As highlighted by Professor Garfinkel, however, the nature of the casemate wall at Khirbet Qeiyafa—and at these other, related sites—is much more particular.

These city walls consist of a casemate, but more specifically with a notably Judahite-style peripheral belt of residential buildings attached to and incorporating this fortification wall. In addition, these wall-and-residential structures are then followed by an inner, peripheral street circuit. Examples of such specific city plans can be seen at Khirbet Qeiyafa, Beth Shemesh Level 4, Tel en-Nasbeh and Khirbet ed-Dawwara. (Lachish Level v is another case—more on this further down.)

## Material Culture and Dating

Utilizing the tightly dated, single-use material and material culture from Khirbet Qeiyafa, Professor Garfinkel was able to identify other parallels between the sites—most notably, in the pottery assemblage, with parallel forms and key diagnostic sherds, such as those belonging to black juglets, Ashdod ware, red-slipped and hand-burnished pottery, and Cypriot black-on-white ware. Other parallels in material culture included similar faunal assemblages, notably with the exclusion of pig remains. Additionally, various examples of parallel proto-alphabetic script have been found at certain of the sites.

Beth Shemesh was one of the most remarkable sites highlighted by Garfinkel. This city is also a day’s walk from Jerusalem. This major biblical site had not previously been clearly linked specifically to the 10th century B.C.E., at least as a fortified settlement. Major excavations in the 1910s, ’20s and ’30s were less scrupulous but had at least recognized an Iron Age II city surrounded by a casemate wall. In the 1970s, utilizing excavation maps from earlier excavations, Prof. Yigal Shiloh was able to interpret at least part of an Iron Age city with a casemate wall, rounded by an interconnected belt of houses within and



## TEL 'ETON

**L**ARGE-SCALE EXCAVATIONS AT TEL 'ETON IN southern Judah have added critical evidence in favor of the biblical description of the united monarchy. Tel 'Eton is situated in the Judean Shephelah, east of the hills of Hebron, and over 40 kilometers (25 miles) from Jerusalem, as the crow flies. Prof. Avraham Faust and his Bar-Ilan University team have excavated the site since 2006. Throughout 10 seasons of excavation, an extremely large residential building (Building 101) was excavated at the very top of the mound.

The building is a variation of the typical four-room house common to Israel from the 10th century B.C.E. onward. Building 101 is unique, however, because it is over three times larger than most other urban Iron Age dwellings; the ground floor is 230 square meters (nearly 2,500 square feet). Given its large size, its location on top of the mound, as well as the use of large ashlar stones in its construction, Faust's team called Building 101 the "governor's residency."

According to Faust's report, published in the *Radiocarbon* scientific journal in 2018, the building was excavated meticulously, with all the earth sifted and every pottery sherd documented ("The 'Governor's Residency' at Tel 'Eton"). The results showed that the large building was destroyed during the late eighth century B.C.E., likely at the time of Assyrian King Sennacherib's invasion of Judah. However, the date of its construction was harder to determine.

Typically, archaeologists date the construction of buildings by analyzing the material remains belonging to the earliest floor of the structure. By dating the material remains on top of the floor, and directly underneath it, a window of time is produced showing the date of construction. Most often, the material on top of the floor is sealed by a destruction, thus giving the latest possible time the building could have been built. Most of the finds would relate to the time the building

was destroyed and a few from the construction period. Nevertheless, this is an accurate enough method to date the building if it was only in use for a few decades before it was destroyed. But what if the building was in use for hundreds of years before it was destroyed? In that case, following the typical archaeological method for dating the building is insufficient.

This is what Faust believes happened with the governor's residence at Tel 'Eton. Faust wrote in 2018, "Buildings and strata can exist for a few centuries, until they are destroyed, but almost all finds will reflect this latter event. We there-

fore suggest that Building 101, despite the differences between it and other buildings, is representative of a much more widespread phenomenon—the old-house effect—which should warn us against using the rarity of well-dated Iron Age IIA finds as evidence for the late development of social complexity in Judah."

Faust believes not taking into account this old-house effect is the reason many archaeologists have "misconstructed the social and political history of the region" during the time of David and Solomon. Since there were almost no large-scale destruction events that took place in Judah from the time of David to the time of Sennacherib, the archaeological remains at sites appear to favor a later date for construction, when in reality the structures were built much earlier. As such, the projects of the earlier builders (such as David and Solomon) are always going to be under-recognized.

With that in mind, when was Building 101 built? For this, Faust's team excavated through the single floor and took four well-chosen carbon samples for radiometric dating from the floor's makeup and below fill. Two of these were short-lived samples (olive pits) and two were pieces of charcoal. The dating of the samples pointed to a late 11th- or early 10th-century time frame—the time of the united monarchy.

According to Faust, not only was the governor's house built at this time, but so too was the fortification line around the tel. During the first half of the 10th century, the village transformed into a central town replete with a city wall and a large residency made of ashlar stones.

Faust concluded, "The construction of the building coincided with the expansion of the mound (and probably also with the erection of the city wall), signifying a major change of the entire site. Both historical circumstances and the plan of the building—a classical four-room house—connect the changes with the highland polity, most likely the contested united monarchy." ■

a peripheral road. Excavations at the site from the 1990s until recently, conducted by Prof. Shlomo Bunimovitz and Dr. Zohar Lederman, successfully provided a sequence of strata for different periods (Levels 1-8).

While they identified Level 4 as an Iron I Canaanite village, they stated that “the Level 4 assemblage gives the impression of a pottery horizon belonging to the very end of the Iron I—beginning of Iron II [circa 1050–950 B.C.E.]” (*Tel Beth-Shemesh: A Border Community in Judah, Renewed Excavations 1990–2000: The Iron Age*).

Professor Garfinkel notes that their excavations “overlooked the casemate city wall addressed by Grant, Avigad, Albright, Wright and Shiloh,” noting in addition that barely 100 square meters of Beth Shemesh Level 4 was uncovered—compared to 5,000 square meters of Khirbet Qeiyafa—and despite this, the Beth Shemesh 4 assemblage is “almost identical to the early Iron Age IIA Judahite Khirbet Qeiyafa assemblage.”



Prof. Yosef Garfinkel  
tours Khirbet al-Ra'i.

## KHIRBET AL-RA'I

“WE HAVE FOUND BIBLICAL ZIKLAG,” DECLARED A July 7, 2019, press release from the Khirbet al-Ra'i excavation team. Between 2015 and 2019, archaeologists conducted a massive archaeological effort, excavating through a square kilometer (0.4 square miles) and uncovering evidence of what could be considered King David's “first” city.

Ziklag is mentioned 15 times in the Bible and has a rather peculiar story. The Bible says that the western city belonged to the Philistines until it changed hands rather peaceably with an unlikely individual: King David.

The history is recorded in 1 Samuel 27. David, who was on the run from King Saul with 600 men, had become weary of being constantly on the move within

He also highlights radiometric dating, particularly in regard to Level 4. “Why did Bunimovitz and Lederman fail to recognize the urban character of Level 4? Most likely, this is because they did not excavate the Level 4 casemate wall,” he writes. As such, Professor Garfinkel identifies Level 4 not as a late Canaanite site but rather as a powerful, fortified, urbanized Davidic-Solomonic site directly paralleling the other exemplar locations highlighted in his academic paper.

Garfinkel's proposition is tantalizing for future excavation at this most significant site (one that is, unfortunately, heavily embroiled in controversy due to the major highway and surrounding constructions that cut right through the middle of it).

The two other sites highlighted by Professor Garfinkel in relation to the core kingdom of David and Solomon are Tell en-Nasbeh and Khirbet ed-Dawwara. Both sites are half a day's walk from Jerusalem, due north and north-east of the capital city, respectively. Both sites likewise feature parallel pottery, stratigraphy and site layout.

Of Tell en-Nasbeh, Garfinkel suggests that despite

the land of Israel. He decided to take his men to the Philistine city of Gath and seek refuge with King Achish. Surprisingly, the Philistine king befriended David, seeing in him a fellow “enemy” of Israel (or, at least, an enemy of the Saulide regime).

King Achish gave David a remarkable gift: “And David said unto Achish: ‘If now I have found favour in thine eyes, let them give me a place in one of the cities in the country, that I may dwell there; for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee?’ Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day; wherefore Ziklag belongeth unto the kings of Judah unto this day” (verses 5-6).

Ziklag was the first city David received, even before he officially became king following Saul's death. Verse 7 shows that David lived at Ziklag for one year and four months.

Ziklag has long been an elusive city for archaeologists. At least a dozen different biblical sites have been suggested over the years. None, however, quite fit the bill—until 2019.

Finds at Khirbet al-Ra'i match with several elements of the biblical account of Ziklag.

First, the city showed heavy evidence of Philistine settlement from the 12th to 11th century B.C.E. (the period of the primary Philistine invasion into the Levant). Finds include “foundation offerings” set beneath buildings in order to bring good luck to their construction, massive stone structures and general

the lack of radiocarbon dating from the site, the evidence indicates that the “earlier city with its casemate city wall was built during the early 10th century B.C.E.,” citing Dr. Omer Sergi’s 2017 article, “The Emergence of Judah as a Political Entity Between Jerusalem and Benjamin.”

Khirbet ed-Dawwara was excavated by Prof. Israel Finkelstein in the 1980s. At the time, the small (0.5 hectare) desert site was associated by the excavator with Iron Age I (just preceding the Israelite monarchy). However, Garfinkel notes that since the excavation of Khirbet Qeiyafa, it is clear that the pottery assemblage is comparable, and alongside the site plan of a casemate fortification with Judahite-style four-room houses, “the site might be more suitably dated to the early 10th century B.C.E. and the Iron Age IIA.”

The final city highlighted by Yosef Garfinkel is Lachish. This city is slightly different from the other sites (it dates slightly later) and makes a good comparison with the ensuing urbanization of the kingdom. Professor Garfinkel has led several excavations within this prime

Philistine pottery—discoveries that matched with the other excavated Philistine sites of Gath, Ashkelon, Ekron and Ashdod.

Remarkably, the remains of Philistine settlement showed a smooth transition into evidence of rural Judean settlement, dating to the early 10th century B.C.E.

Discoveries belonging to this Judean settlement included nearly 100 complete vessels, identical to another early Davidic city: Khirbet Qeiyafa (biblical Shaaraim). Like Khirbet Qeiyafa, Khirbet al-Ra’i (Ziklag) was a frontier city, located atop a prominent hill near the border between the two nations of Israel and Philistia. (The similarity of Khirbet al-Ra’i and Khirbet Qeiyafa is well attested to, as they were both excavated by professors Yosef Garfinkel and Saar Ganor, and carbon-14 dated to the identical period.)

It is during this period of Judean occupation that an intense fire destroyed the site. This, too, matches with the biblical account of Ziklag. While David and his men were drafted on an expedition with Achish, “the Amalekites had made a raid upon the South, and upon Ziklag, and had smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire” (1 Samuel 30:1), taking the women and children captive. When David returned, he and his men quickly routed the Amalekites and rescued the captives. ■

site, located two days’ journey southwest of Jerusalem (with Khirbet Qeiyafa located directly in between). Within Level v of the site, Garfinkel’s team has uncovered (and continues to uncover) part of a fortified city exhibiting radiocarbon dates from the late 10th century B.C.E.

Like the other slightly earlier sites, Lachish exhibits a similar belt of peripheral structures abutting the city wall. However, the previously unidentified, 3-meter-wide wall itself is of a solid, rather than casemate, construction. Given these dates and slight divergences in style, excavators Garfinkel and Hoo-Goo Kang identify Lachish Level v as the city attributed to Solomon’s son Rehoboam, last ruler of the united monarchy (2 Chronicles 11:5, 9).

### It’s in the Geography

Professor Garfinkel identifies these four cities in particular as the key that unlocks the “plan” of the early Iron IIA kingdom of David and Solomon. In particular, he notes the deliberate geographical positioning of each city: “[N]one [is] more than a day’s walk from Jerusalem and, thus, may be considered as marking the kingdom’s geographical core.”

Each city was selected for its strategic situation. “They were calculably positioned to guard strategic roads leading into the kingdom,” Garfinkel writes. “Khirbet Qeiyafa controlled the Elah Valley, Beth Shemesh controlled the Soreq Valley, and Tell en-Nasbeh controlled the northern road to Jerusalem.” Khirbet ed-Dawwara, a smaller site in an arid climate, sat atop a strategic location overlooking the Transjordanian plateau and Judean desert.

Professor Garfinkel’s research provides important insight into the question of when Judah’s lowlands began to be developed. As he notes, “[S]ome scholars have argued that the kingdom of Judah’s expansion into the Shephelah occurred in the mid- or late ninth century B.C.E. .... However, Khirbet Qeiyafa IV and Beth Shemesh 4 show that this process was already on its way in the early 10th century B.C.E. at sites located one day’s walk from Jerusalem.”

That’s not all. Logically, with major sites located a full day’s walk one from another, smaller satellite sites will appear halfway, or a “half-day’s walk.” This is highlighted in more detail by Garfinkel, Igor Kreimerman and Peter Zilberg in their 2016 book *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa: A Fortified City in Judah From the Time of King David*.

Garfinkel and his colleagues identified two particular sites, each a half day’s walk north of Jerusalem. The first is the aforementioned Khirbet ed-Dawwara. The second is Gibeon, a city identified as having been destroyed in the late 10th century B.C.E. by Pharaoh Sheshonq I (biblical Shishak) during his invasion of the Levant, and thus is another city on the scene during



Basalt stele erected near the Iron Age gate at Tel Et-Tell

## TEL ET-TELL

**T**WO MILES NORTH OF THE SEA OF GALILEE IN THE fertile delta of the Jordan River lies Tel Et-Tell, an ancient site that is likely the ancient city of Bethsaida—an important city at the time of Jesus. This city is excavated annually.

According to excavation director Prof. Rami Arav, the excavations have yielded a massive gate complex, which was in use from sometime in the 11th century B.C.E. to 920 B.C.E., when the city was destroyed. That means this gate was in use during the reigns of both David and Solomon.

Finding a gate in an archaeological site is significant, as city gates were often a hub of political, cultural and economic activity. The gate at Tel Et-Tell is no exception.

The gate's preserved height of around 3 meters (10 feet) makes it one of the largest and best-preserved gates in the land of Israel from this time period.

It is not just the size of the gate that makes it important,

this early-to-middle, united monarchy time period. Tell en-Nasbeh can also now be added to this list.

Other sites are intriguing and await investigation. “Half a day’s walk from both Khirbet Qeiyafa and Hebron [Tell Rumeidah, David’s capital prior to Jerusalem, and a site of only limited, not properly published excavation] is Khirbet Kila, identified with biblical Keilah,” Garfinkel and his colleagues wrote. “It should be excavated to obtain information about the nature and size of the settlement during the 10th century B.C.E. ... Now, since we have the Khirbet Qeiyafa assemblage and the pottery typical of the 10th century B.C.E. in Judah is known, it will be possible to identify these sites” (ibid).

Other Davidic sites highlighted, at least briefly, both

but what might have taken place there and how it relates to the biblical narrative and King David himself.

The Bible records that this area was given to the tribe of Manasseh, but they were unable to drive out all of the inhabitants, whom the Bible calls the Geshurites (Joshua 13:13). The people of Geshur were an elusive people who may have been a subgroup of the Arameans who occupied the area to the northeast, including Damascus.

The Bible indicates that the Geshurites lived in this area from the time of Joshua through the reigns of David and Solomon (Deuteronomy 3:14). Given that Tel Et-Tell is the largest of the known settlements in the area, archaeologists conclude that it was the capital city of the Geshurites.

Other Geshurite sites have been discovered. In 2020, archaeologists uncovered the remains of an impressive fortification dating to the time of King David. The fortress, discovered near the Golan Heights town of Hispin, is believed to have been originally built as part of the kingdom of Geshur.

The fortress encompassed a strategic hilltop location overlooking the El-Al canyon and sported 1.5-meter-thick walls built of large basalt boulders. One of the boulders near the entrance to the fortress bears an engraving of two horned gods with outstretched arms. A near-identical discovery was made at Tel Et-Tell.

The Geshurites reappear in the biblical record during the last year and a half before King Saul’s death. After being gifted Ziklag and remaining there 16 months, “David and his men went up, and made a raid upon the Geshurites, and the Gizrites, and the Amalekites ...” (1 Samuel 27:8). David also married the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur (2 Samuel 3:1-3).

The evidence at the site of Tel Et-Tell reveals that



in this 2016 book and in Garfinkel's latest paper, include Tel 'Eton, Tel Sheva VIII, Arad XII and Khirbet al-Ra'i VII. Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg categorize these early kingdom sites into three types of settlement: 1) royal centers, 2) regional centers and 3) villages and farmsteads.

The royal centers within the core Davidic territory of *Judah* have been identified as Jerusalem, Hebron and Khirbet Qeiyafa (biblical Shaaraim). When this city fell out of use, it was replaced by Beth Shemesh. This site was later replaced by the Rehoboam-era sites of Lachish, Tel Zayit and Khirbet Shuwayka (Socho). These compare with parallel-sized cities (and even structural parallels, such as casemate walls) to the northern Israelite royal city sites such as Gezer and Hazor.

the city continued to be inhabited throughout the reign of King David. David's son Absalom retreated to the house of his grandfather the Geshurite King Talmai after killing his half-brother Amnon (2 Samuel 13:37). He stayed there for three years.

After being accepted back into the fold at Jerusalem, he staged a revolt against his father David. But while the coup eventually failed and Absalom was killed for his treachery against his father's house, the Bible records that the family of Geshur was still part of David's royal line. Absalom had a daughter, whom he named after his mother, Maacah. She was the favorite wife of Solomon's son Rehoboam. From their relationship, the next king of Judah, Abijah, was born (1 Kings 15:1-2).

Archaeological evidence shows that Tel Et-Tell was partially destroyed, perhaps at the hands of Pharaoh Shishak around 925 B.C.E. ■

Examples of the regional centers highlighted by Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg are Khirbet ed-Dawwara, Gibeon, Keilah and possibly Kirjath-jearim.

Finally, there are the comparatively minor (in terms of archaeology) villages and farmsteads that would have been scattered in and around these centers. Naturally, most of these are unnamed and furnish only piecemeal archaeological remains. However, each provides evidence of the most important part of a kingdom—the general populace and productive citizenry. (See Chapter 14 of their book for more information.) One example of such is a 10th-century B.C.E. farmstead at the northern site of Horvat Assad. In 2022, excavators announced the discovery of a “substantial 10th-century B.C.E. Iron Age agricultural settlement.” This region makes up part of the wider territory allotted to the biblical tribe of Naphtali, as well as to the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar. The Bible describes this as an important agricultural area, particularly during the 10th century. 1 Chronicles 12:41 specifically names these three tribes as supplying agricultural produce to King David “in abundance.”

### Tip of the Iceberg

In Prof. Yosef Garfinkel's paper, only four Judahite cities were highlighted as providing convincing, clear representations of a carefully mapped, datable and comparable system of cities belonging to the Davidic-era kingdom. It is important to note, these cities do not constitute the sum total. In fact, they represent only a fraction of the cities of the kingdom of David and Solomon—or more specifically, a fraction of the *core* of the kingdom of David and Solomon.

For now, they represent some of the leading primary pieces of evidence attesting to the centralized administration and urban planning and development of the 10th-century B.C.E. kingdom. ■

Iron Age gate at Tel Et-Tell





# DAVID'S EDMITE GARRISONS

“AND HE PUT GARRISONS IN EDMITE; THROUGHOUT all Edom he garrisons, and all the Edomites became servants to David” (2 Samuel 8:14).

This chapter famously accounts David's victories in the south, conquering the land of Edom and bringing it under his control via a managed network of military outposts. 1 Chronicles 18 provides additional details of this event and concludes with a similar statement, saying David “put garrisons in Edom; and all the Edomites became servants to David. And the Lord gave victory to David whithersoever he went” (verse 13).

In the early 20th century, archaeological research spearheaded by Prof. Nelson Glueck demonstrated that Edom was a major industrial base for the kingdom of Israel in the 10th century B.C.E. More recent excavations, especially at Faynan and Timna, have confirmed Glueck's conclusion and have shown that the copper mines in this region reached peak power and productivity during the 10th century (see page 99).

Extensive mining operations would have required security. The abundance of copper (and probably other minerals too)—and the flow of goods across the sparsely populated Negev region of southern Israel en route between Arabia and the Mediterranean Sea—would have been a temptation for Israel's enemies and certainly the local Edomites, known for their hostility. The establishment of military outposts “throughout all Edom” was a strategic necessity, not just to defend the mines, but to protect the trade routes from the Gulf of Aqaba to Jerusalem.

Surprisingly, in the research into the kingdom of Israel under David and Solomon, these biblical garrisons appear to have been largely overlooked. This is not due to a lack of evidence or archaeological excavation.

This could now be changing, however, thanks to a recent marshaling of remarkable evidence—old and new.

## ‘We Will Not Be Defeated’

The events of Oct. 7, 2023, shocked Israel and the world. Following the horrifying massacre perpetrated by Hamas, Israelis rallied together to support the war effort and bolster national unity. In an effort to educate Israelis about their national history, the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) hosted a four-part online lecture series between October 23 and 26, titled “We Will Not Be Defeated: From Crisis to Revival in the Archaeology of the Land of Israel.”

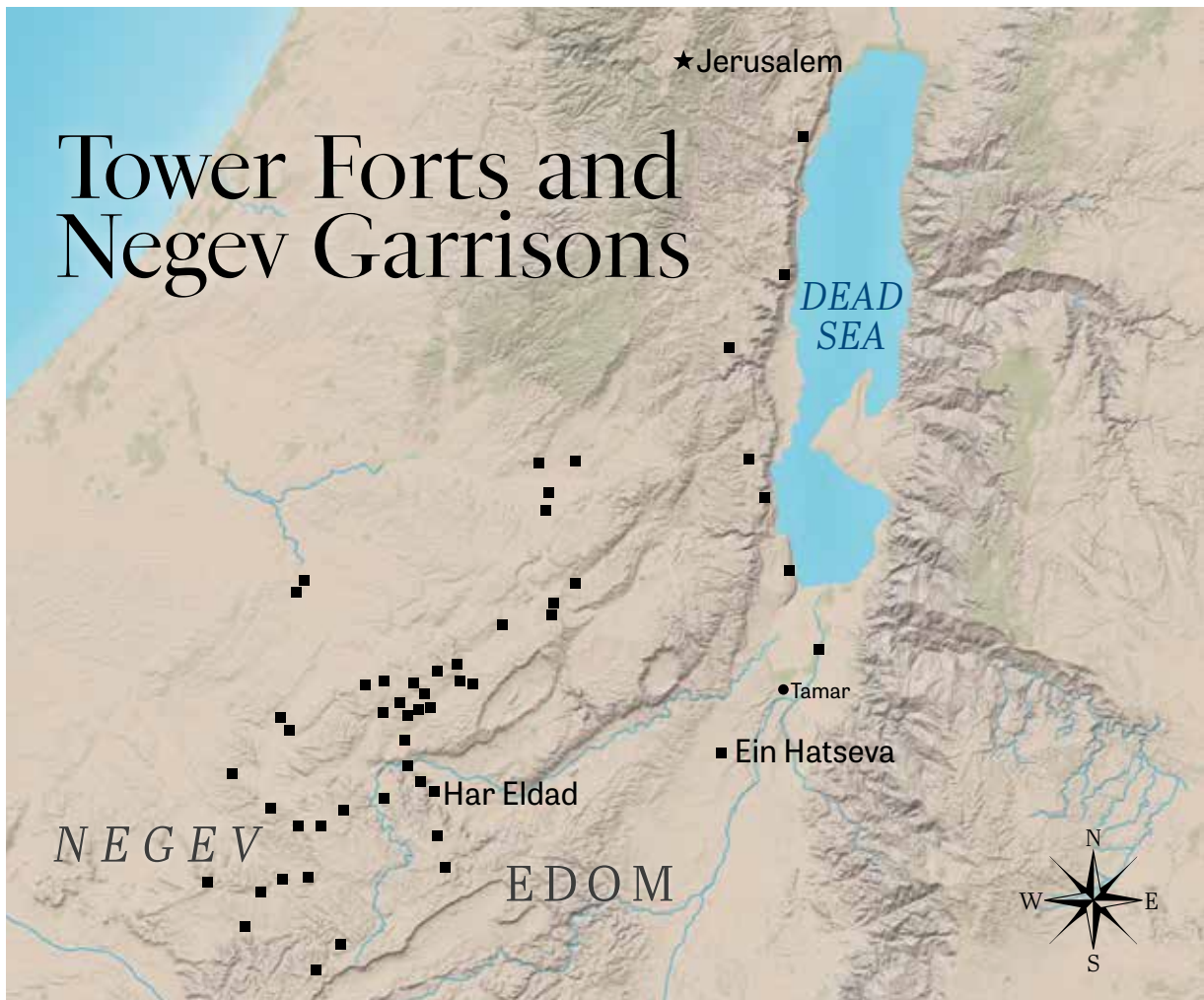
Dr. Tali Erickson-Gini, the IAA's former archaeology inspector for the Southern Negev, delivered the first lecture on a topic related to her area of jurisdiction and expertise. Her presentation was titled “The Early Challenges of the United Kingdom of Israel: Facing the Edomite Frontier 3,000 Years Ago.” Dr. Erickson-Gini began with a bang: “Most people, even Israelis, are not so aware of the fact that 3,000 years ago, there were Hebrew soldiers there [in the Negev Highlands] and there were Hebrew fortresses there.”

There is, in fact, a significant amount of evidence attesting to Israel's control of this area in the 10th century B.C.E., she stated. Unfortunately, as Erickson-Gini explained, the research has been “swept under the rug.” This is partly due to the “controversies between archaeologists and researchers,” she explained. (In a Nov. 5, 2023, interview with AIBA, Dr. Erickson-Gini explained her reticence to dive into the “shark tank” that is the debate about Israel's Iron Age.) “But I think today, as we have more information, more data coming out from different research groups, we're able to see very clearly that we're talking about something that's militarily [oriented],” she said.

## Garrisons—by the Dozens

In her lecture, Erickson-Gini reviewed the history of the discovery of *dozens* of early fortresses within the

# Tower Forts and Negev Garrisons



Negev desert. Some of the garrisons were first identified during a British Army survey in the early 1900s led by Sir Leonard Woolley and T. E. Lawrence (the famous “Lawrence of Arabia”) and published in their 1915 book *The Wilderness of Zin*. The researchers could not date the sites with absolute confidence but concluded that they were “very early.” Later, several researchers, including Professor Glueck, attributed their use to the early Iron Age. They also concluded that these fortresses fell out of use around the time of the invasion of Pharaoh Shishak at the end of the 10th century B.C.E. (circa 925 B.C.E.)

One of the leading experts in these Negev sites was the late Dr. Rudolph Cohen. Dr. Cohen and other colleagues concluded that the structures dotted throughout the Negev were military fortresses. There are, of course, those who disagree. These include the late Prof. Beno Rothenberg, as well as Prof. Israel Finkelstein, who believe that these were perhaps some sort of earlier settlements or even animal pens.

Dr. Erickson-Gini has researched the sites and strongly disagrees with their opinions.

According to Cohen’s extensive research, these sites are notable for their lack of burial and cultic remains, as well as a lack of oil lamps—otherwise ubiquitous finds that would be expected for a settlement. He also noted the presence of large storage vessels at the sites, necessary for food and water supplies to sustain whomever was posted within the structures. Dr. Cohen also noted the presence of wheel-made pottery comparable to other examples found in Judah, which indicates the garrisons were associated with settlements in the north. Dr. Erickson-Gini noted that establishing settlements would have been impossible due to the lack of reliable water sources.

Citing Ben Gurion University’s Uri Nissani—whose 2023 master’s thesis addresses and maps these fortresses—Dr. Erickson-Gini noted the existence of “over 60” fortification sites and added: “I would say that there’s probably even more fortifications that have not been investigated. I know for a fact that there have been

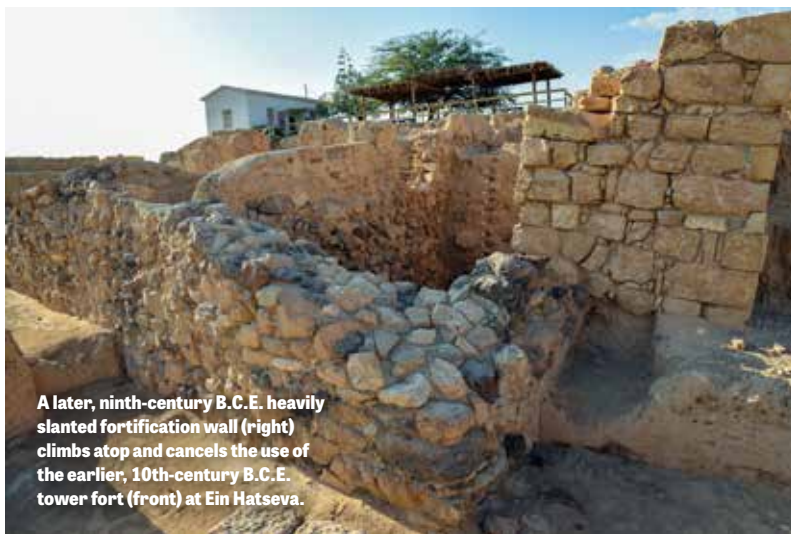
areas that have not been properly surveyed yet .... There are smaller sites, that are towers, that are dotting along roads going between the bigger sites .... I can't even bring you, in this presentation, everything. There's just too many. We're talking about at least 60 of them. And there's actually more than that."

The strategic placement of these fortresses is important. Erickson-Gini said: "In my mind, for all the years that I've worked down here—and I've worked in this area for over 30 years—one thing that struck me very strongly is how they are situated along ... what would have been ancient roads.

You can see them particularly along this front facing the Ramon crater, facing Edom. But we also see them blocking basically every single wadi [deep river gorge] that is going from south to north. ... You can see how these forts, and even small towers—some of them have never been excavated, or they've been excavated and they haven't been reported—you can see how they're lining roads, they're lining along wadis that are used as roads, and they're blocking wadis. So there was a great amount of control exerted through this area."

Dr. Erickson-Gini has divided the many fortresses into three potential categories based on size and layout. The first category is comprised of small square or rectangular tower-like forts divided up into interior chambers. The second is made up of medium-size rectangular or irregular rectangle forts, with a central courtyard surrounded by casemate walls. The third consists of large, rectangular or irregular fortresses, with much larger open central courtyards, ringed by chambered casemate walls. "Probably the most important is that [these different fortress types] are coming from the same chronological phase," she said. "There's no difference chronologically if the shapes are different."

Dr. Erickson-Gini also noted the rough handmade pottery items found at these sites, termed "Negebite ware." This pottery is "particularly abundant in the 10th century and maybe ... the late 11th century B.C.E." Importantly, Dr. Mario Martin discovered that these Negebite ware vessels had high percentages of copper slag inclusions (Erickson-Gini speculated that this helps in heat conductivity). Martin noted in his research that these vessels were not the product of unskilled nomadic settlers, as had been thought previously; rather, they must have originated in these major Arabah Valley areas of copper production (particularly Faynan and Timna).



A later, ninth-century B.C.E. heavily slanted fortification wall (right) climbs atop and cancels the use of the earlier, 10th-century B.C.E. tower fort (front) at Ein Hatseva.

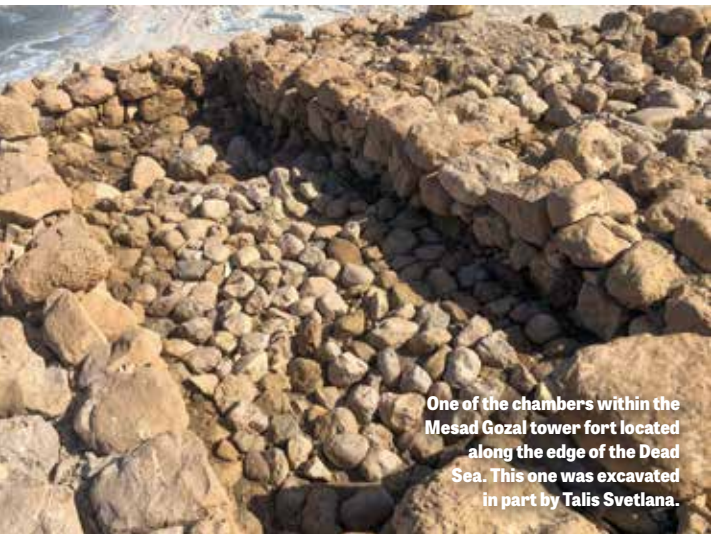
### Lynchpin Site 1: Ein Hatseva

One of the key sites highlighted by Dr. Erickson-Gini, and representative of the small forts, is Ein Hatseva. This site is situated in the central Arabah Valley roughly 40 kilometers (25 miles) south of the Dead Sea.

Ein Hatseva is a remarkable archaeological site that has been popularly identified as biblical Tamar (Ezekiel 47:19; 48:28; 1 Kings 9:18; 2 Chronicles 8:4; also identified as the Roman and Byzantine *Tamara*). The tel exhibits several periods of use, including the remains of a later Iron Age fortress, with famously heavily slanting walls (commonly attributed to "Amos's earthquake" of the mid-eighth century B.C.E.). An impressive, large Roman fortress was also discovered at this site.

One of the most intriguing features, however, was the "very little known" discovery of an earlier Iron Age tower, first found at the site by Dr. Cohen and Yigal Israel. This smaller, earlier tower fort was dated firmly to the 10th century B.C.E. through both radiocarbon dating and pottery dating. The pottery is exactly the same as the Iron II<sup>A</sup> Negebite ware found throughout the region, with the same slag inclusions. Later excavations in and around this tower were conducted by both Dr. Doron Ben-Ami and Dr. Erickson-Gini.

This small, 10th-century tower fort is identical—in size, style and material finds—to a chain of other small tower outposts interspersed at regular intervals along the Dead Sea route to the north (with a possible example as far north as Qumran, on the northern end of the Dead Sea). This chain of forts extends as far south as Tell el-Kheleifeh, on the Red Sea coast (although the dating of the Tell el-Kheleifeh site to the 10th century is uncertain). Tell el-Kheleifeh is identified with biblical Ezion-geber, the port of Solomon's navy (1 Kings 9:26).



One of the chambers within the Mesad Gozal tower fort located along the edge of the Dead Sea. This one was excavated in part by Talis Svetlana.

“All of these [forts] are connected with the copper trade in some way,” noted Dr. Erickson-Gini.

These small outposts are what Erickson-Gini termed “podium” towers, or squarish towers integrated into and atop podium-like stone mounds. Interestingly, they are entirely enclosed by walls, without side entrances. According to Dr. Erickson-Gini, “You have to go to the top and go down, probably with ladders to get into them.” Unfortunately, “most of them have not been investigated, or they’ve been investigated and not published, for example, by Yohanan Aharoni. But we know for a fact that they’re early. Almost all of them have some kind of earlier pottery and Midianite pottery ... the painted pottery of the Qurayyic tradition, which we find in the matrix underneath.” (Qurayyah Painted Ware is a pottery type dating to the end of the second millennium B.C.E.)

Following our interview with Dr. Erickson-Gini at Ein Hatseva, we visited four additional, relatively proximate sites recommended by her: Mesad (Fort) Mazal, Mesad Gozal, Mesad Zohar and Rosh Zohar. These sites were remarkably similar in construction, size, style and materials. Some of the sites had barely been excavated—a fact Erickson-Gini lamented in our interview, saying, “Most researchers are not even aware that they exist.”

The obvious similarities between these fortresses with the one at Ein Hatseva, which has been firmly dated to the 10th century B.C.E., strongly indicates that these sites date to the same period and were part of a deliberately placed string of north-south guard stations.

## Lynchpin Site 2: Har Eldad

The fortress at Har Eldad, situated roughly 100 kilometers (62 miles) southwest of the Dead Sea and much deeper in the Negev Desert, is an example of one of the

larger fortification types. This site was excavated in 2017 by Dr. Haim Mamalya and Dr. Erickson-Gini. This significantly larger fortress, which overlooks a wadi, is distinguished by a large open central courtyard and an external casemate wall all around.

During their 2017 excavation, the archaeologists uncovered a clay vessel, known as a wine krater. The discovery of this vessel, which was used for mixing wine, was important for two reasons: 1) It was complete and perfectly preserved; 2) it contained grape seeds within and around the vessel. The seeds were an especially crucial find as they could be readily carbon-dated. To what time period did the remains belong?

The carbon-dating results (facilitated through Prof. Erez Ben-Yosef, who had been at the site with his own students) pointed to somewhere between the end of the 11th and mid-10th centuries B.C.E.—precisely aligning chronologically with the rule of King David.

Not only that, the vessel itself was of a particular type discovered a few weeks earlier at Khirbet al-Ra’i and part of a Judahite assemblage found during the excavations by Prof. Yosef Garfinkel and Saar Ganor at the site in the Judean Shephelah (lowlands). The Khirbet al-Ra’i assemblage was also dated to the same time period: around 1000 B.C.E. “[H]ere we are seeing some more things that we’re tying in with the northern pottery that Cohen had noted earlier,” Dr. Erickson-Gini stated. “We were lucky enough to be able to find the seeds and the vessel together and to be able to date it.”

Most of the dozens of fortresses scattered throughout the Negev, and territorial Edom, have yet to be properly excavated. But the pattern is the same. The sites have the same primary layouts (small podium towers and medium-to-large courtyard fortresses with casemate walls); the same style stone construction; the same pottery, which can be dated to the same time period (Iron II A Negebite ware); the same pottery connected to copper use and trade, which research at Timna and Faynan shows spiked during the 10th century B.C.E.; and even more conclusively, carbon-dated material returning the same 10th-century B.C.E. date.

There’s the same material underneath these fortress structures (where excavated), identified as earlier, end-of-the-second-millennium “Midianite” (Qurayyah Painted) ware; the same end of use in the late 10th century B.C.E., at the time of Shishak’s invasion; and the same strategic placement of these garrisons—all along trade routes, ancient roads and wadis.

All of this evidence should be considered alongside the biblical text, which describes a chain of garrisons being built in this area at this exact time. Dr. Erickson-Gini concluded: “From my knowledge of these places—where they’re placed along the roads, the topography—I don’t

think that there's any doubt that we're talking about something to do with some kind of fortifications in the Negev Highlands and control of this region between Edom and the area of Judah under the united monarchy."

### King David's Garrisons

1 Samuel 14:47 describes King Saul's initial battles against the Edomites. The Bible later describes Saul's alliance with a notorious Edomite named Doeg, who presided over a devastating massacre of men, women, children and babies of the priestly town of Nob, following aid given to David by one of the individuals there (1 Samuel 22:21-22). This was one of many outrageous acts instigated by the Edomites, and it may have been the reason behind Joab's later vengeance on the population (1 Kings 11:15-16).

During David's reign, however, the dynamic changed. Psalm 60 describes a situation of desperation for David in relation to Edom and Syria. "O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again. ... [O]ver Edom will I cast out my shoe .... Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom? Wilt not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off? and thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies? Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help

of man. Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies" (Psalm 60:1, 8-12; KJV).

2 Samuel 8 and 1 Chronicles 18 record David's victory against this Edomite-Syrian alliance in the "valley of salt" (Dead Sea region). Following his victory, "he put garrisons in Edom; and all the Edomites became David's servants. Thus the Lord *preserved* David whithersoever he went" (1 Chronicles 18:13; KJV). "Preserved" is the same Hebrew word David used in his prayer in Psalm 60:5, when he asked God to "save" him (KJV).

2 Chronicles 8:17 records Solomon's safe passage to "the sea-shore in the land of Edom"—undoubtedly facilitated by these defensive garrisons along the route that David had installed.

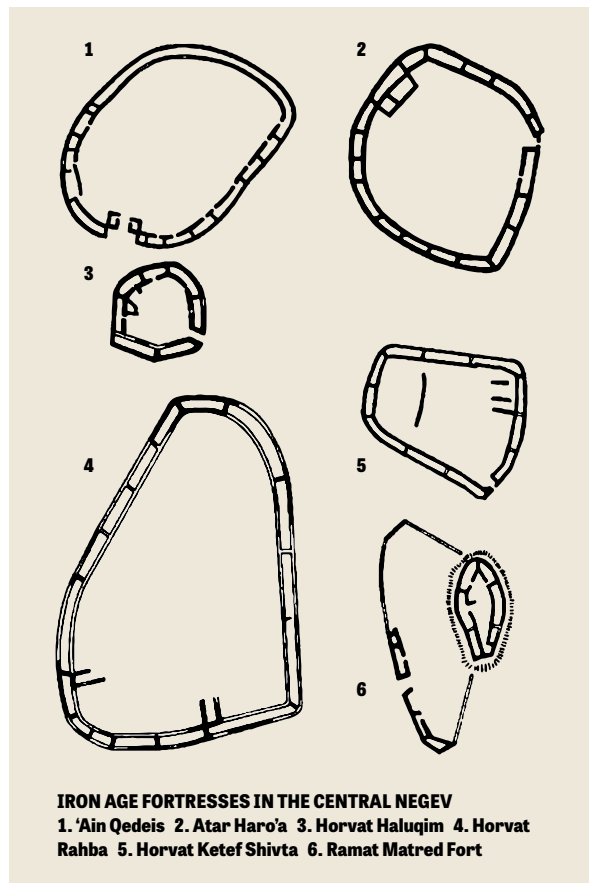
### Going Back to the Bible

For early 20th-century excavators, such as Nelson Glueck, it was routine to use biblical passages like these to illuminate findings on the ground. "Each generation has had its own biblical archaeology," write Prof. Yosef Garfinkel, Dr. Igor Kreimerman and Dr. Peter Zilberg in *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa: A Fortified City in Judah From the Time of King David* (Chapter 5, "The Bible and Archaeology: Methodological Remarks"). "In the days of Albright and Wright [and, it might be added, Glueck] it was theologically oriented. ... Albright's conception of the relationship between the Bible and archaeology is best expressed in his own words: 'Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details of the Bible as a source of history' .... Today, this statement seems very naïve" to those in modern scholarship.

Professor Glueck is known for having made similar statements. He wrote in *Rivers in the Desert: A History of the Negev*: "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible. And by the same token, proper evaluation of biblical descriptions has often led to amazing discoveries."

Comparing modern scholarship with the sentiments of earlier archaeologists, Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg lament: "Today we are in a postmodern and deconstructive era. Everything is relative, there is no right or wrong." But "[b]iblical archaeology was not 'born in sin,' as some scholars think today," they write, pointing out the fundamental contributions and methodologies of these early archaeologist forebears.

When it comes to her Edomite garrisons, Dr. Erickson-Gini speaks to the same theme: "I know that in recent years it hasn't been so popular to use the Hebrew Bible as an historical source. But I think we're starting to go back to that." ■





Battle against the Philistines on the Gilboa  
(Oil on wood by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1562)

# ISRAEL'S PHILISTINE FOES

**G**ATH! THE NAME IS SYNONOMOUS WITH AN EVIL giant; though it means “winepress.” According to the Bible, 11th-century B.C.E. Gath was home to Philistine giants, including the infamous Goliath. It was also one of the major cities of the Philistine pentapolis, a confederation of five large city-states: Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath and Gaza.

The Philistines were Israel’s greatest adversary during the early Iron Age (the late judges period through the reign of King Saul and into David’s kingship). The Bible says that at this time Philistine garrisons controlled certain Israelite cities and were even powerful enough to prohibit Israel from sharpening their tools of iron. (1 Samuel 13:19-21 record that Israel had to pay the Philistines exorbitant prices for the service.)

This dynamic changed early in the reign of King David, when the kingdom of Israel, after a series of battles, broke free from the Philistine yoke and grew significantly more wealthy and powerful. Although defeated, the Philistines were apparently allowed to remain in their homeland (1 Chronicles 18:1).

The Philistines are often ignored or forgotten in the discussion about the archaeology of David and

Israel. This is surprising considering the amount of archaeological evidence attesting to the presence of the Philistines in the 11th century B.C.E.—evidence that is in harmony with the biblical text.

In *Has Archaeology Buried the Bible?*, William Dever writes that “recent archaeological excavations ... have illuminated Philistine culture .... All of the somewhat cryptic information concerning the Philistines in the Hebrew Bible has proven correct, even though they are portrayed as ‘the bad guys’ and are hardly the focus of the stories.”

While the Philistines might be relatively insignificant during the latter years of King David’s reign and through King Solomon’s, they are an important piece of the puzzle. If specific cities, events and practices recorded in the biblical text about the Philistines are consistent with what has been demonstrated archaeologically, this attests to the accuracy of the biblical text and certainly what it records about kings David and Solomon, both of whom ruled *after* the Philistine period of dominance.

In short: If the biblical text is accurate in what it records about the Philistines, isn’t it reasonable to accept that it is accurate in what it records about 10th-century B.C.E. Israel?

## Who Were the Philistines?

The Philistine city-states were situated primarily on the coastal plain in the southwest Levant (their territory extended from the modern Egyptian border with Israel to southern Tel Aviv). Today it is accepted that the Philistines migrated into the region from the Aegean region (Greece), notably the island of Crete, around the 13th to 12th century B.C.E.

The Philistines' origins have been confirmed by the DNA sampling of human remains collected from an ancient cemetery in Ashkelon. Even before the DNA testing confirmed Cretan origins, excavations at several Philistine cities revealed a material culture (pottery and other artifacts) remarkably similar to the Mycenaeans. The biblical prophets Amos and Jeremiah also relate that the Philistines of Saul and David's era migrated from the Mediterranean and, more specifically, "the isle of Caphtor," the ancient name for Crete (Jeremiah 47:4; Amos 9:7).

The timing of the Philistine migration matches perfectly with the biblical epoch in which they are featured—the latter part of the judges, when Samson, Samuel and Saul were on the scene. As the Philistines' power increased, they expanded territorially. Several archaeological sites along the Yarkon River, in the heart of modern-day Tel Aviv, feature Philistine construction.

One of the most impressive Philistine sites is Tel Qasile (you can visit this site in downtown Tel Aviv). Coincidentally, Tel Qasile was the site that received the first excavation license in the modern State of Israel—and it was granted to Prof. Benjamin Mazar.

Built on virgin soil by the Philistines in the 12th century B.C.E., this ancient port city flourished until the time of King David. Tel Qasile is one of three Philistine sites with a unique temple design that features two central pillars erected within arm's reach of one another, underscoring the biblical account of Samson's death when he pushed over two foundational pillars of a Philistine temple.

During the time of King Saul, the Philistines' sphere of influence extended east into the highlands, where they dominated Israelite settlements. 1 Samuel 10:5, 26 and 2 Samuel 23:14 show that the Philistines had garrisons at both Bethlehem and Gibeah.

Daniel Master—longtime excavator of Ashkelon, a prominent Philistine city—wrote in 2021 that "there was a moment in the 11th century B.C.E. when Philistia turned to the east [to the highlands of Israel]—not out of imperial ambition, but out of necessity because of broader Mediterranean patterns."

This archaeologically based



assessment matches the biblical account, which relates that throughout the reign of King Saul and into the reign of King David, the Philistines maintained the upper hand over Israel. The biblical text identifies the city of Gath as a key Philistine city. From Gath, which is situated close to Israelite territory, the Philistines were able to project power into Israel.

## Excavating Gath

Gath is mentioned several times in the Bible, most famously in relation to events near the end of King Saul's reign, when the Philistine giant Goliath taunted Israel's terrified armies and was courageously confronted by David, who was just a youth. 1 Samuel 17 records that after David slew the giant, the Philistine army hastily retreated to nearby Gath (verse 52).

The city is mentioned again in 1 Samuel 21:13, where David—several years later but still in the late 11th century—escaped the wrath of Saul by seeking protection in Gath.

The original city of Gath has been identified with the modern-day site of Tell es-Safi. Situated in the western reaches of the Valley of Elah, the ancient mound of Gath rises 80 meters (263 feet) above the valley floor, giving it an elevated strategic position.

Like most ancient cities in the land of Israel, Tell es-Safi is a composite of numerous settlements built over centuries, each erected on top of the previous. For the longest time, excavations at Tell es-Safi mainly revealed a large biblical city constructed toward the end of the 10th century. Archaeologists dated the city to the time of Rehoboam, David's grandson. This city apparently thrived for around 100 years until its destruction, most likely at the hands of the Aramean King Hazael (2 Kings 12:18).

But what about Gath from the time period of King David? Does it exist?





For more about recent excavations at Gath, visit [Gath.Wordpress.com](https://gath.wordpress.com).

The Tell es-Safi expedition is led by archaeologist Prof. Aren Maeir, from Bar Ilan University. Maeir first began excavating Gath in 1996. It wasn't until the summer of 2019, after 23 seasons of excavation, that Maeir and his team began to expose 11th-century B.C.E. Gath. The discovery occurred after Maeir opened a new excavation area a short distance from the top of the tell, on the southern bank of the Elah stream.

Maeir is not a biblical maximalist. In the debate over King David and the biblical record, he is probably right in the middle. Yet even he was surprised by the discoveries of the 2019 season. "Up until now we thought that the city from the Iron II A, the one that Hazael destroyed, was the largest and most important period in Gath," Maeir said in 2019. "This year we got a different story."

During the excavation, Maeir shared the discoveries of massive walls and datable pottery on his excavation blog. "It looks like the motif for the 2019 season at Tell es-Safi/Gath is: 'The awakening giant'—the massive early Iron Age city of Gath begins to surface! This, I believe, will change a lot of what we know about southern Canaan in the early Iron Age."

By the end of the excavation, Maeir and his team had revealed a significant amount of the Iron I city of Gath—and it was gigantic: walls measured more than 4 meters (13 feet) thick (the largest walls from later periods measured 2 to 2.5 meters wide); some stones measured 1 to 2 meters (3 to 6 feet) long. Maeir learned that these walls and structures made up a large fortification, perhaps even two massive gates.

Archaeologists also found hard kiln-fired mud bricks, rather than softer sun-dried bricks. Kiln-fired bricks are rarely found earlier than the Roman period. Using pottery associated with the fortification, Maeir's team was able to date construction of the site solidly to the Iron I period.

"No comparably colossal structures are known in the rest of the Levant from this period—or even from the later incarnation of Philistine Gath," Maeir related to *Haaretz* at the time. The fact that the fortification was found some distance from the top of the mound indicates that Iron I Gath had expanded to its maximum size during this period. According to Maeir, the city covered just over 120 acres—more than twice the area of most comparable cities in the Levant. The sheer size of the Iron I Gath toppled the prior assumption that Ekron was the major Philistine city of the era.

While there is plenty of excavation yet to be done at Tell es-Safi, enough archaeology has been conducted to clearly attest to the biblical description of 11th- to 10th-century B.C.E. Gath.

The Bible shows the prominence Gath had among the Philistine cities during the time of King Saul. While David was on the run, the Gittite king granted him and his men safe haven in Gath. When Saul heard that David had Gath's protection, Saul "sought no more again for him" (1 Samuel 27:4). Evidently, Saul was unwilling to pick a fight with the Philistine juggernaut.

Prior to 2019, after 23 seasons of excavations, the Gath of King Saul and David's era remained elusive. Yet more recent excavations at Tell es-Safi not only reveal 10th-century B.C.E. Gath, they are revealing a city that looks very much like the one described in the Bible.

Excavations at Tell es-Safi, along with ongoing excavations at other 11th-century Philistine sites, are providing one more piece of the King David puzzle. At the same time, the fact that it took 23 years of excavation at Tell es-Safi to do so exposes the limits of archaeological excavation to be the absolute judge of biblical accuracy. ■

## 10TH-CENTURY PHILISTINE NAMES MIRROR GOLIATH

While the famed giant Goliath has not been attested to archaeologically, his name has. We have the evidence in the form of two names inscribed on a potsherd discovered at Tell es-Safi in 2005. The inscription, which dates to around the 10th century B.C.E., is the earliest alphabetic Philistine inscription ever discovered. The two names, *Alwat* and *Wlt*, provide a linguistic link to the name Goliath.

Our Anglicized version of "Goliath" is much different from the original—pronounced in Hebrew as *Galyat*. Additionally, the English transliteration of these three names does not clearly illustrate their similarities. These names all show Indo-European roots (rather than Semitic roots like the Canaanite and Hebrew names). The significance of these inscriptions is made clearer when considered in terms of their spelling:

גלית (*Galyat*) אליות (*Alwat*) ולת (*Wlt*)

The dating of the inscription is also significant. "Since the inscription dates to circa 950 B.C.E., it comes from almost the same period as the battle of David and Goliath according to the biblical chronology!" wrote Aren Maier on the Tell es-Safi excavation blog.

This confirms the distant Mediterranean origins of the Philistine peoples and lends support to the biblical accuracy of the story of Goliath—authentic in name.



*Cedars of Lebanon for Temple Construction*  
(Wood engraving by Gustave Doré, 1866)

## Who Were the Phoenicians?

The name “Phoenicia” comes from the ancient Greeks. Homer wrote in the *Iliad* of fine craftsmanship that “far exceeded all others in the whole world for beauty; it was the work of cunning artificers in Sidon, and had been brought into port by Phoenicians.” High-quality craftsmanship, skill in commerce, and the production and trade of luxury goods were hallmarks of ancient Phoenician culture.

The first biblical reference to the Phoenicians is in Genesis 10: “And Canaan begot *Zidon* his first-born, and Heth” (verse 15). *Zidon*, or *Sidon*, was one of the major Phoenician city-states of the region. (Other known Phoenician city-states include Tyre, Byblos and Beirut, Lebanon’s capital city.)

The Phoenicians are not classified as a civilization or empire, like Assyria or Babylon. Rather than being identified as a common culture or people, the Bible (as well as Greek literature) identifies the early Phoenicians according to the city-state they belonged to.

Sidon and Tyre are the two main cities referenced in the Hebrew Bible. While *Phoenician*, these two cities were within the originally assigned borders of the territory

allotted to the Israelite tribe of Asher.

God intended much of what is modern Lebanon to be part of the original allotment for the 12 tribes of Israel. Joshua 11:8 describes the Israelites chasing Canaanite armies “unto great *Zidon*.” Joshua 19 describes the territorial boundaries for the tribe of Asher, which would include the following cities: “Rehob, and Hammon, and Kanah, even unto great *Zidon*; And then the coast turneth to Ramah, and to the strong city Tyre” (verses 28-29; KJV). References to “great *Zidon*” and “the strong city Tyre” demonstrate how powerful these two key Phoenician cities were compared to the other Canaanite entities in the Late Bronze/Early Iron Age (circa 1400–1050 B.C.E.).

But Israel did not follow through on God’s command to conquer this territory (Judges 1:31-32). Judges 3 states: “Now these are the nations which the Lord left ... namely, the five lords of the Philistines, and all the

**T**HEY TAMED THE HIGH SEAS CENTURIES BEFORE the Vikings and the buccaneers. They rode elephants while the rest of the world was riding horses. They were the world’s luxury craftsmen millenniums before the Swiss were making watches. And they were one of Israel’s most steadfast allies.

The Phoenicians, an ancient civilization located in the area of modern-day Lebanon, are credited with some remarkable achievements. The Bible reveals fascinating details about the Phoenician civilization. It also explains one of the primary reasons this civilization flourished.

A significant part of the Phoenicians’ success can be attributed to their relationship with Israel. The Israelite-Phoenician partnership lasted centuries and impacted both civilizations, allowing both nations to experience their golden ages at the same time.

Canaanites, and the Zidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baal-hermon unto the entrance of Hamath” (verses 1, 3).

History and archaeology can teach us a lot about these close neighbors of Israel and shed light on the kingdom of David and Solomon.

## Cedars From Lebanon

The Israel-Phoenicia alliance was built mainly on trade and commerce. The Phoenicians had access to many raw materials. Through their maritime ventures, the Phoenicians traveled the Mediterranean and established colonies in Cyprus, Crete, North Africa, Spain and some parts of France. Israel, through Tyre, had access to these extensive trade networks. And Tyre, through Israel, had access to the most powerful economy in the region.

One of the Phoenicians’ most well-known raw materials was home grown: cedarwood.

The cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*) today grows natively in Lebanon, Israel, Syria, Turkey and Cyprus. The timber from these trees, which grow up to 35 meters (115 feet) tall, has been used in construction since ancient times.

Cedarwood is especially prized for boatbuilding; it is highly durable, easy to shape and mold, and resistant to deterioration in seawater. Having such an abundant supply of quality wood so close to home surely was one of the reasons the Phoenicians were able to become such skilled sailors.

King Solomon requested cedarwood for the construction of the temple in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 2:15). The Tyrian King Hiram told him: “My servants shall bring them down from Lebanon unto the sea; and *I will make them rafts to go by sea* unto the place that thou shalt appoint me ...” (1 Kings 5:23).

The Phoenician technique of shipping cedarwood to their clients is well documented. A wall relief from the palace of Assyrian King Sargon II shows Phoenician



Phoenician sailors transporting logs from Lebanon

## KING OF TYRE

King Hiram is the Phoenician ruler that the Bible describes ruling over Tyre during the reigns of kings David and Solomon. Menander of Ephesus, a second-century B.C.E. Greek historian, recorded a Tyrian king list based off of the Phoenician king lists. Various Phoenician kings on the list have been cross-corroborated archaeologically.

This document mentions King Hiram I who ruled during the 10th century B.C.E. Menander even further expounds on Solomon and Hiram’s interactions.

For archaeological evidence that relates to King Hiram: A royal sarcophagus from the 10th century B.C.E. was discovered at the Phoenician city of Byblos, inscribed with the words “Ahiram, King of Byblos.”

The Bible specifies that Hiram was “king of Tyre,” however, so the sarcophagus may belong to another king (Byblos was situated further north along the coast). But it is possible the site was under King Hiram’s jurisdiction within wider Phoenicia. There is biblical evidence of crossover in Phoenician regional names, given that Solomon refers to the Tyrian Hiram’s people as “Zidonians” (1 Kings 5:20).

Nonetheless, the discovery of this inscription proved that the name of the biblically famous king of Tyrus was in use during that era, in a region not far from Hiram’s headquarters.

sailors transporting large quantities of logs from a port across the sea.

Archaeological excavations on the Ophel in Jerusalem have provided evidence that the cedars of Lebanon made their way to this capital city. Amid the charred remains of the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem (586 B.C.E.), Benjamin and Eilat Mazar found evidence that several types of wood, including cedar of Lebanon, were used in the construction of the royal building they were excavating (*Qedem 29*).

## Ivory in Jerusalem

The Bible relates that during the time of Solomon, ivory was one of the main commodities imported into Israel with the help of the Phoenicians. “For the king had at sea a navy of Tarshish with the navy of Hiram; once every three years came the navy of Tarshish, bringing gold, and silver, *ivory*, and apes, and peacocks” (1 Kings 10:22). Verse 18 even says that Solomon’s throne was made of ivory.

Evidence of 10th-century B.C.E. ivory was discovered in Jerusalem by Dr. Eilat Mazar. Remarkably, the only

known parallel discovery was found in ancient Phoenicia.

While excavating the palace of King David, Dr. Mazar's team uncovered a 10-centimeter-long (3.9 inches) stylized ivory inlay. It consisted of two identical halves that would have adorned either side of an iron shaft, perhaps part of a knife or mirror. The ivory item was found alongside an elegant black-on-red Cypriot juglet in an area of the palace that was dated through carbon dating and pottery analysis to the second half of the 10th century B.C.E.

According to Dr. Mazar's preliminary excavation report, an identically designed inlay was discovered attached to a sword at the excavations of the Phoenician site of Achziv on the northern coast of Israel. The sword was alongside other funerary goods that dated to the 10th century B.C.E.

The discovery of a Phoenician-style ivory handle in Jerusalem makes perfect sense. As Dr. Mazar wrote in her excavation report, "The ivory inlay and the fine Cypriot important jug ... are markers of the luxury of the assemblage, as well as the connection to the Phoenicians, who were renowned, among other things, for their maritime commerce on the Mediterranean shores and their expertise in ivory carving."

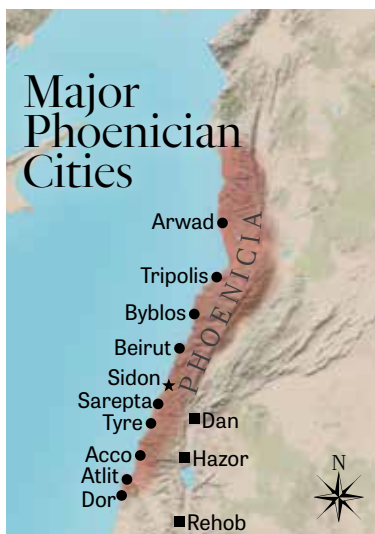
## Purple Dye From Shikmona

Tel Shikmona is an archaeological site on Israel's northern coast, near the modern-day city of Haifa.

When Israeli archaeologist Joseph Elgavish first excavated the site in the 1960s and 1970s, he found evidence of a flourishing and productive 10th-century B.C.E. settlement, which he called "a city from the days of David and Solomon."



Excavation site of Tel Shikmona near the city of Haifa



However, there remained gaps in the understanding of the site. It's not on an easily accessible harbor, making it an unusual choice for a maritime settlement. It is fortified despite not being situated on any apparent strategic territory.

In 2016, the University of Haifa began piecing together what made Tel Shikmona so significant.

While both Israelite and Phoenician pottery were discovered at the site, the presence of larger amounts of Phoenician pottery indicated it was primarily a Phoenician settlement. However, the existence of both styles of pottery side by side indicates a

harmonious relationship between the Israelites and Phoenicians, as described in the Bible.

Analysis of purple-stained clay vats and other tools found at the site helped clarify Tel Shikmona's purpose: It was a mass production facility for Tyrian purple. And it is the first one from the biblical era to be discovered. The vats date to all 10 different Iron Age strata, showing both the longevity of the site and the value of its commodity.

The Phoenicians were known for their near-monopoly on the production of purple dye, also known as Tyrian purple. They harvested the dye from the murex shellfish, a sea snail with natural purple coloring that thrived off the coast of Lebanon.

Tyrian purple was a highly valued luxury for a long time; the fourth-century C.E. Roman Emperor Diocletian, in his Edict of Maximum Prices, lists 1 pound of the dye as costing 150,000 denarii, *three times* the value of gold. Only the richest in society could afford Tyrian purple. This is why, today, we associate the color purple with royalty.

2 Chronicles 2:3 and 6 reveal that Solomon asked King Hiram to supply a workman who was skilled in working with "purple" dye for the construction of the temple.

According to Prof. Ayelet Gilboa and Dr. Golan Shalvi, two of the main scholars affiliated with the Tel Shikmona excavations: "Because it was the most active purple production factory and the closest to Jerusalem—and in fact the only one known to us from these periods—it was most likely the prestigious supplier of dyes for the temple."

## Golden Partnership

The alliance between Israel and the Phoenicians is unique in the Bible. Few of Israel's neighbors were as

supportive of Israel as the Phoenicians. Using the Bible together with archaeology, it becomes apparent that Phoenician history is Israelite history.

Israel and Tyre reached their golden ages at the same time, with kings from both nations willing to work together to accomplish exploits. The two nations used each other's strengths for simultaneous prosperity. In fact, even with its trade routes and scattered colonial possessions, it is unlikely a city-state like Tyre would have become as wealthy as it did if it had not been for the backing of the Israelite empire.

Tyre's association with the strong, prosperous empires of David and Solomon undoubtedly contributed to it becoming an economic powerhouse. Solomon's Phoenician-engineered temple would have been the pinnacle of artisanship from a culture already renowned for fine craftsmanship. And there is further evidence of this interconnectedness in the shared language of the Phoenicians and Israelites. ■

For more information on the Phoenicians' contribution to the alphabet, visit [ArmstrongInstitute.org/396](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org/396).

## THE PRICE OF WISDOM

**S**OLOMON IS DESCRIBED AS HAVING “WISDOM [THAT] excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men: than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all nations round about” (1 Kings 5:10-11).

Ancient historical records may explain how Solomon's wisdom was tested against “all men.”

Hiram, king of Tyre, congratulated Solomon on his coronation, saying: “Blessed be the Lord this day, who hath given unto David a wise son over this great people” (1 Kings 5:21). Hiram aided Solomon in building the temple and, later, his own palace (1 Kings 6-7).

While Hiram and Solomon had a good working relationship, they allegedly had more personal correspondence as well, as evidenced by writings from Jewish historian Josephus.

In *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus wrote: “Moreover, the king of Tyre sent sophisms and enigmatical sayings to Solomon, and desired he would solve them, and free them from the ambiguity that was in them” (8.5.3).

In *Against Apion*, Josephus further added: “[T]here was another passion, a philosophic inclination of theirs, which cemented the friendship that was betwixt them [Hiram and Solomon]; for they sent mutual problems to one another, with a desire to have them unriddled by each other; wherein Solomon was superior to Hirom, as he was wiser than he in other respects: and many of the epistles that passed between them are still preserved among the Tyrians” (1.17).

Perhaps the individuals mentioned in 1 Kings 5:11 had also sent Solomon “enigmatical sayings,” therefore establishing Solomon's famed wisdom as greater than “all men.”

Josephus further cited a remarkable quote from the otherwise unknown, now lost writings of Dios,

which according to Josephus were titled *The Histories of the Phoenicians*. Dios wrote: “They say further, that Solomon, when he was king of Jerusalem, sent problems to Hirom to be solved, and desired he would send others back for him to solve, and that he who could not solve the problems proposed to him should pay money to him that solved them. And when Hirom had agreed to the proposals, but was not able to solve the problems, *he was obliged to pay a great deal of money, as a penalty for the same.*”

There is possible biblical evidence for such payments.

1 Kings 9 records Solomon gifting Hiram 20 cities in Galilee (verse 11). However, Hiram was displeased by these cities (verse 13). Yet in the very next verse, Hiram is recorded as paying Solomon 120 talents of gold—over \$200 million in today's value, according to some estimates. Why would Hiram pay so much money for something that was so displeasing? Clearly, something is “missing in translation.”

The paragraph layout of the Masoretic text reveals a paragraph separation between verses 13 and 14. Though it is sometimes lumped together with the verses before it, verse 13 actually ends with a paragraph marker, and verse 14 begins a new thought: “And Hiram sent to the king sixscore talents of gold.”

*Cartelli di matematica disfida* is Italian for “bills of mathematical challenge.” These were infamous in Renaissance-era Italy, where skilled mathematicians would test the mettle of their fellows by issuing a series of challenges to each other to solve. These were the “knightly duels” of the scholarly world, and success meant gaining clients and money.

Perhaps this out-of-the-blue payment from Hiram was in the context of Solomon and Hiram's own *cartelli di matematica disfida*. ■

An aerial, painterly illustration of a large, walled city built on a hillside overlooking a valley. The city is densely packed with stone buildings and has a prominent wall with battlements. The surrounding landscape is lush and green, with rolling hills and a river or stream winding through the valley. The sky is a soft, hazy blue, suggesting a bright but slightly overcast day. The overall style is reminiscent of a historical or biblical illustration.

# KING SOLOMON

“Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel hearkened to him. ... And the Lord magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel.”

—1 Chronicles 29:23, 25

“So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. And all the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart.”

—1 Kings 10:23-24



# Israel During Solomon's Reign



Euphrates River

HAMATH

• Hamath

Gebal

ZOBAH

Sidon

• Damascus

Tyre

Abel-beth-maacah

ARAM

Hazor

GESHUR

Acco

Cedarwood

Megiddo

JEZREEL VALLEY

Beth Shean

Rehov

Jabesh-gilead

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Shechem

Rabbath Ammon

Joppa

Shiloh

AMMON

Bethel

Gezer

Jericho

Gibeon

Ekron

Gath

Jerusalem

Gaza

Hebron

DEAD SEA

Dibon

PHILISTIA

Ziklag

MOAB

Beersheba

NEGEV

Tamar

Bozrah

EDOM

Khirbet en-Nahas

ARABIAN DESERT

Timna

Ezion-geber

RED SEA

SINAI PENINSULA

0 25 50  
KILOMETERS







# SOLOMON'S MONUMENTAL REGIONAL GATEHOUSES

**P**ROF. YIGAL YADIN WAS ONE OF ISRAEL'S GREAT founders and played a key role in the 1948 War of Independence. 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 tells at two of biblical Israel's most important and famous sites: Hazor and Megiddo. He meticulously studied earlier excavation reports of a third: 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.

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 ... [two] sites and specifically note parallels between each city [in connection with Gezer] was Yigael Yadin. ... When Yadin was excavating ..., 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.”

Archaeologically, this is remarkable. It’s also incredibly informative when trying to understand a site and its relationship with other sites from the same period. Here we have three cities, three distinct locations, around 150 kilometers (almost 100 miles) apart—and all three have almost exactly the same design, dimension, construction and artistic features, *and all dated to the same time period!*

The six-chambered-style gatehouse would famously become known as “Solomonic Gates,” or “Israelite Gates.” At Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer, Yadin didn’t merely identify gates that looked similar; in most cases, the *dimensions* were virtually identical.

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 (13.8 feet), and the width of the walls is exactly 1.6 meters (5.2 feet) (see sidebar “Solomonic Cubits,” page 77).

“The gates’ dimensions were impressively consistent,” wrote 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; *their 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 infers 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. This points to administrative control over a large area.

From the archaeological record, it is logically evident that Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer were built in the 10th century B.C.E. by the same powerful ruler, an individual with *substantial* regional power and influence.

Who might this have been?

## The Bible Answers

In 1 Kings 9, following the account of Solomon building the temple and his own palace, some of his other projects are listed: “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).

# THE USE—AND GENIUS—OF CHAMBERED GATEHOUSES

**I**N THE ANCIENT WORLD, CITY GATES WERE HUBS of activity. This is where meetings took place, where leaders addressed residents, where travelers entered and exited, and where merchants sold their goods and tradesmen plied their craft.

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.

City gatehouses are prominent in the biblical record. Abraham purchased land “at the gate” of Hebron (Genesis 23). 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 the place where those guilty

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, First Temple Period, early Phoenician-style “proto-Aeolic” capitals were discovered (see page 38). 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).

Furthermore, 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—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. Case in point: 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 the same construction method 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

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 into the midst of 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 says 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 cited.

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 and passage of a multichambered gatehouse could be filled with rubble, effectively transforming the gatehouse into a solid continuation of the city wall (and the thickest part of the wall, at that).



Solomonic six-chambered gate at Hazor

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 positioned on the city walls above.

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 minimalist school of thought promoting a “low-chronology” theory 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

marginalizes the Hebrew Bible as a largely 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 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.

## GEZER’S CARBON FINALLY SPEAKS: SOLOMONIC CITY AFTER ALL

**I**N THE DECADES FOLLOWING THE INITIAL IDENTIFICATION of “Solomonic” remains at Tel Gezer, the city has been subjected to intense focus from the low-chronology camp seeking to redate the remains out of the 10th century B.C.E. and into the ninth. While debate has raged for the past three decades, one area has been lacking for the all-important Stratum 8 in question: radiocarbon dating.

Lacking—that is, until late last year.

In November 2023, the carbon-dating results of more than a decade of fieldwork at Gezer by the Tandy Institute of Archaeology were published in the scientific journal *PLOS ONE*. Titled “The Chronology of Gezer From the End of the Late Bronze Age to Iron Age II: A Meeting Point for Radiocarbon, Archaeology, Egyptology and the Bible,” Lyndelle Webster et al presented the “first substantial radiocarbon dataset and Bayesian chronological analysis for Gezer spanning the last part of the Late Bronze Age through Iron Age II.” The study fills a gap in the literature, for which “only a few ad-hoc <sup>14</sup>C [radiocarbon] measurements were available at Gezer for any stratum or period.” The results were stunning.

“I wasn’t expecting these results,” said the lead author in a later interview. “I was expecting later dates.”

The radiocarbon samples were unequivocal: They showed that Gezer’s monumental Stratum 8—the “Solomonic” gate, related palace and other monumental construction at the site—could not be associated with the ninth century at all, but rather, the early to mid-10th.

“The transformation of Gezer in Stratum 8 ... likely

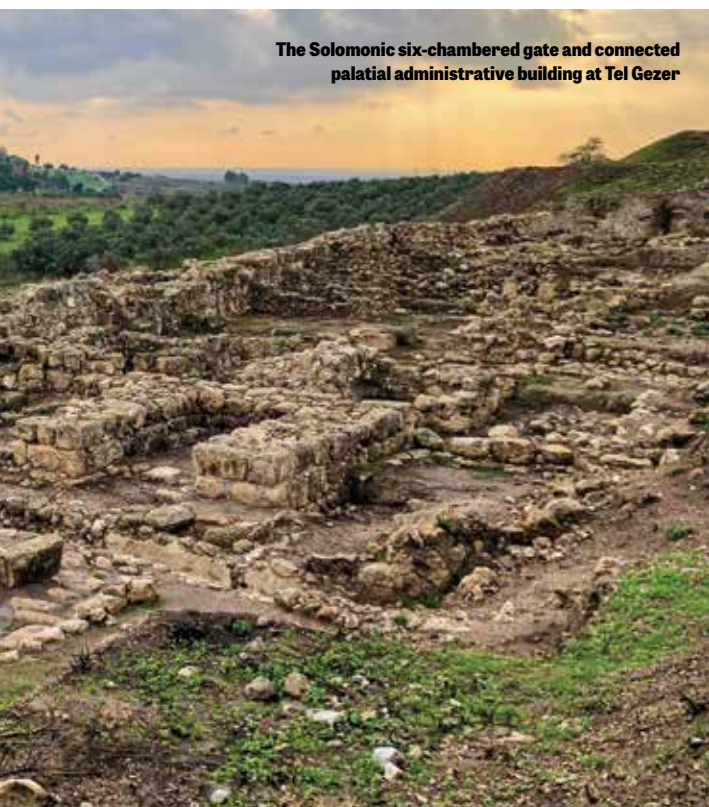


began in the early part of the 10th century B.C.E. (998–957 B.C.E., 68.3 percent HPD).” And that’s not all. Additionally constraining the Stratum 8 dates are those for the following, later destruction layer and next phase of construction: Stratum 7. “[T]he chronological position of this horizon [for Stratum 8] is hard to dispute thanks to constraint provided by the overlying Stratum 7,” they write. “The data and model—with constraints provided by overlying Stratum 7—rule out a ninth-century B.C.E. date for Stratum 8.”

Based on radiocarbon dating, the authors reiterate that the monumental construction of Gezer’s Stratum 8 “cannot date beyond the first part of the 10th century B.C.E.”

Archaeologically, the minimalists identified the end of the 10th century B.C.E. as the *start* of the Iron II<sub>A</sub> period. This relegated the period of David and Solomon—the main part of the 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 re-dating 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



**The Solomonic six-chambered gate and connected palatial administrative building at Tel Gezer**

The paper summarizes: “The 10th-century B.C.E., 14C-based date for early expansion in the Shephelah notably rules out an association with the northern Israelite Omride dynasty; however, it is chronologically compatible with Saul, David and/or Solomon, whose text-based dating (albeit approximate) falls in the 10th century B.C.E. (perhaps also the late 11th century B.C.E.). ... The Tandy excavation directors consider that the most logical historical reconstruction based on the archaeological remains and 14C dates is the westward expansion of a nascent Judah already in the 10th century B.C.E.”

So long, King Omri; welcome back, King Solomon. ■

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 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” (ibid).

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). 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.; therefore, the formerly identified “grand” structures of the 10th century B.C.E. would be better re-dated and compressed into a tighter ninth-century B.C.E. time frame.

Additionally, Professor Finkelstein necessarily dismissed the discovery of a royal Egyptian victory-stele fragment at Megiddo. This fragment belonged to Pharaoh Shishak, who in the late 10th century B.C.E.—directly following *Solomon’s reign*—invaded Israel (1 Kings 14:25-26; 2 Chronicles 12:1-9).

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 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 that had to have preexisted 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 re-dating of Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer caused an earthquake in the archaeological world. 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 passé (a reality perhaps even 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 al-Ra’i (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, one of Finkelstein’s strongest opponents has been American scholar Prof. William Dever. Dever excavated Gezer from the 1960s to ’90s, and he dated the Gezer gatehouse to the 10th century B.C.E.

In a 2021 research piece titled “Solomon, Scripture and Science: The Rise of the Judahite State in the 10th Century B.C.E.,” Dever revealed new carbon-dating results that corroborate the identification of “Solomon’s gates” solidly with the 10th century. “[T]he vaunted C-14 dates that were promised have actually dealt the ‘low chronology’ a death blow,” he wrote, 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 noted 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.” (Note that Dever’s article was published *before* the new radiocarbon dataset for Gezer was released late last year, affirming the same results; see page 74.)

Dever also highlighted new analysis of prevalent red-wash ware in the Gezer-gate stratum; at other sites, this pottery is conclusively dated as belonging exclusively to the 11th–10th century B.C.E.—*not* the ninth century. With these “relatively new observations on ceramic typology ... plus new and better C-14 dates,” Dever wrote, “we now have at our disposal a securely dated ceramic corpus of the late 11th–10th centuries 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, using 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 Professor 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, Prof. William Dever has excavated Gezer extensively and concluded that the Gezer gatehouse dates to the 10th century. Third, archaeologist Prof. 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., positing that the other cities should be redated likewise. (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.E., 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

Yadin’s three gatehouses can be connected with another important gatehouse, the one uncovered by Dr. Eilat Mazar on the Ophel in *Jerusalem*.

As the walls of the Jerusalem gatehouse 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 lightbulb 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 [Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer] .... The realization that we had just discovered an ancient city gate from the First Temple Period 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



## SOLOMONIC CUBITS

**I**N HIS DETAILED ANALYSES OF THE GEZER, MEGIDDO and Hazor gatehouses (published 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” (0.524/0.525 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 best fitting with the biblical chronology for the Exodus.

For more information on Egypt’s dynasty at the time of the Exodus, visit [ArmstrongInstitute.org/882](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org/882).

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 (533.3 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 a future 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, 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 (1 Kings 6-7), no specification is given in these earlier accounts for the cubit length (in contrast to the later texts). This must have been because the long cubit was the standard already in use at that 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. ■



View of the Solomon's Ophel gate, with overlaid gatehouse outline, looking out to the east

CONTINUED  
FROM PAGE 76

surrounding particulars, this gatehouse was most likely the one referenced as the “water gate” in the book of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 8:1, 3, 16).

David Milson was later 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 also much more fragmentary than the other three, visible in its lowest foundational courses, with only one chamber still preserved at a significant height.

And while it appears from the remains that this gatehouse had at least four standard chambers, there is some evidence to suggest the presence of somewhat more elongated, fifth and sixth chambers (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).

Still, several direct parallels, particularly in measurements, *do* exist between the Megiddo gate and the Jerusalem gatehouse—and by way of association, the gates at Hazor and Gezer. Can this be mere 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



# SIAMUN: DESTROYER OF GEZER, FATHER-IN-LAW OF SOLOMON

THE BIBLE DESCRIBES SOLOMON'S EARLY MARRIAGE to a daughter of an unnamed Egyptian pharaoh. "And Solomon became allied to Pharaoh king of Egypt by marriage, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the Lord, and the wall of Jerusalem round about" (1 Kings 3:1). Given that these construction projects began in the first years of Solomon's reign (the temple beginning in the fourth year; 1 Kings 6:1), it is evident that Solomon's marriage to this Egyptian princess likewise occurred early on in his reign.

According to the biblical account, Egypt's pharaoh gave Israel's king a surprising "wedding gift"—the entire city of Gezer! The full context is documented in 1 Kings 9: "Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up, and taken Gezer, and burnt it with fire, and slain the Canaanites that dwelt in the city, and given it for a portion unto his daughter, Solomon's wife. And Solomon built Gezer ..." (verses 16-17).

Is there extrabiblical evidence for this chain of events—possibly even the identity of the pharaoh in question?

The pharaoh most commonly associated with these scriptures is the early 10th-century B.C.E. Siamun, the sixth pharaoh of Egypt's 21st Dynasty. Depending on the chronology followed, his 19-year reign is typically dated somewhere within the years 990 and 950 B.C.E. This reign overlaps with the early part of Solomon's, explaining the logical chronological association.

Egyptologist Prof. Kenneth Kitchen identifies King Solomon's Gezer-destroying father-in-law pharaoh as Siamun, writing on the identification and geopolitical fit in some detail in his 2003 book *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*. He notes of this pharaoh a truly "unusual triumph scene" at Tanis depicting Siamun defeating enemies brandishing weaponry of a unique type best associated with this Philistine/Canaanite region—"evidence for contact in the Levant" that exists for no other pharaoh of that dynasty (spanning around

1077–943 B.C.E.—note that this 21st Dynasty was one of stagnation and decline).

According to Kitchen, "Siamun is, and remains thus far, the sole serious candidate for the roles of conqueror of Gezer and would-be father-in-law to Solomon on purely chronological grounds." But what of the destruction of Gezer itself?

As discussed in the sidebar on page 74, Gezer's Stratum 8 (and its monumental gate) is linked—indelibly, now, through carbon-dating—to the time period of Solomon, in the first half of the 10th century B.C.E. This level later experienced a "major destructive event" in the latter part of the 10th century (as described in the recent radiocarbon study of the site), fitting with the campaign of a newly resurgent Egyptian 22nd Dynasty, led by Shishak.

Arguably less well known, however, is the destruction layer preceding the monumental Solomonic one.

Stratum 9 was described by Gezer's most recent researchers as an "ephemeral phase" of construction that best develops into Stratum 8 as part of an overall redevelopment scheme of the site. The stratum just prior, however—Stratum 10A—was one of *fiery destruction*. "Stratum 10A was violently destroyed, with evidence found in almost all rooms," writes Dr. Lyndelle Webster, et al. "Amongst the burnt debris ... Room 3 of Stratum 10A yielded several mushroom-shaped clay stoppers, one of which bore a stamp seal

impression that has been tentatively associated with the reigns of *Siamun* and Sheshonq I [Shishak] in the 10th century B.C.E."

Clearly, this earlier destruction layer long predates Shishak. But the discovery of a seal impression associated dually with the reign of *Siamun* was another remarkable synchronism at the site with this Egyptian ruler.

In his book *Has Archaeology Buried the Bible?*, Prof. William Dever stated unequivocally who he believes this pharaoh was: "The pharaoh (not named, as was the custom then) is undoubtedly *Siamun* of the 21st Dynasty." ■



# SOLOMON'S BLU

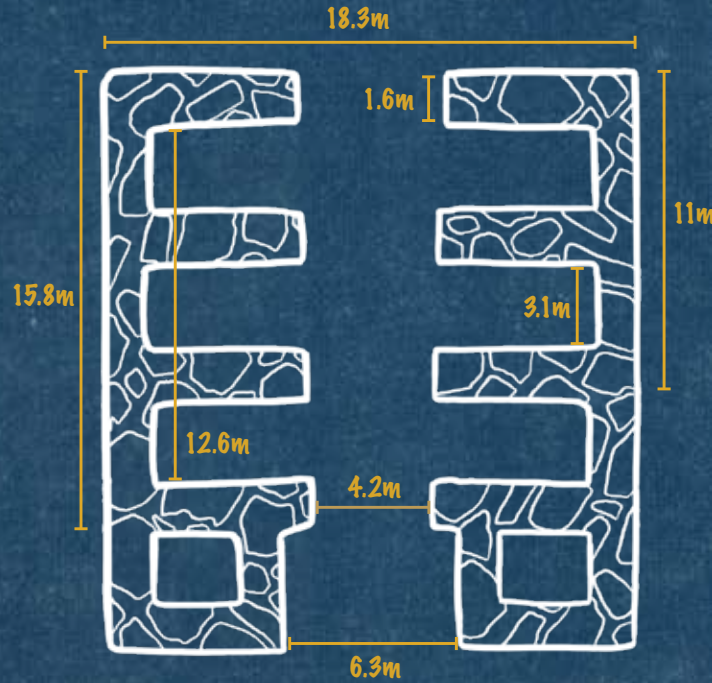
Pictured are overhead-view diagram layouts of the Solomonic gatehouses at Megiddo, Hazor, Gezer and Jerusalem, with select measurements. These gatehouses are oriented here with their entryway at the top.

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.

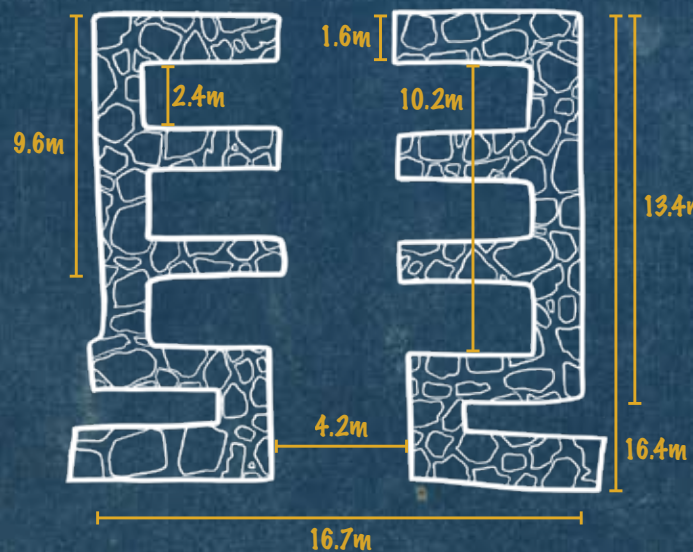
In other words, a united monarchy—as ruled by the 10th-century King Solomon. “And this is the account of the levy which king Solomon raised; to build ... *Jerusalem*, and *Hazor*, and *Megiddo*, and *Gezer*” (1 Kings 9:15).



## HAZOR ●

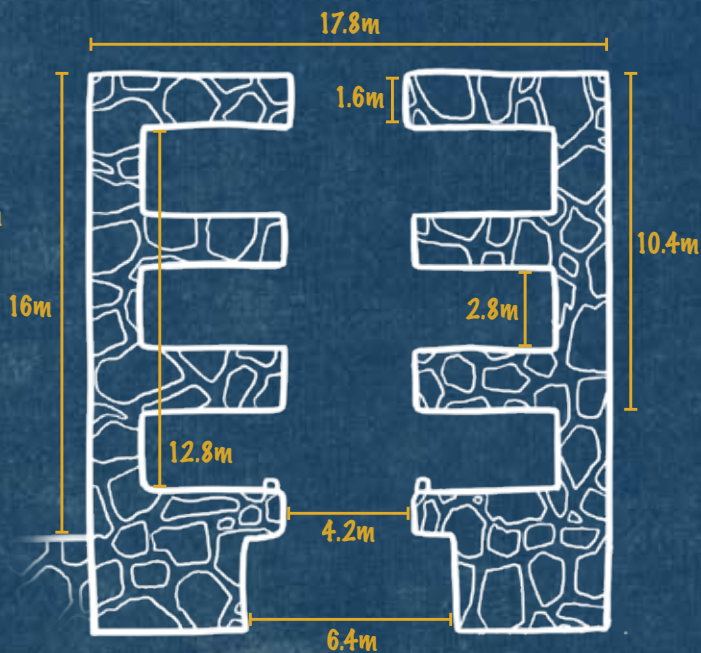


## GEZER ●

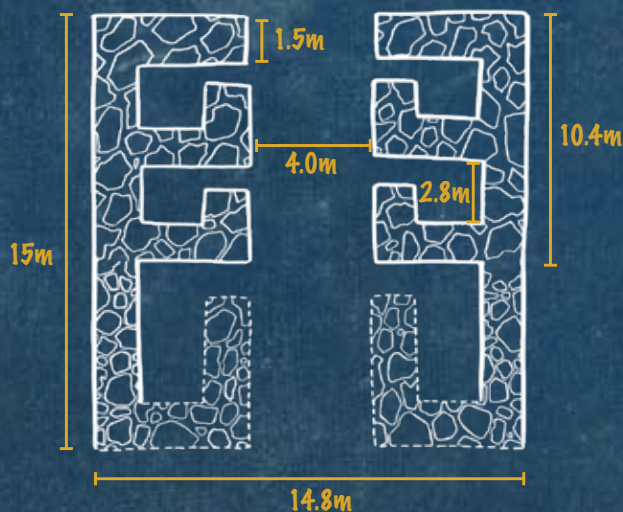


# EPRINT

## MEGIDDO ●



## JERUSALEM ●



built *three* particular cities—Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer. It adds an often-overlooked fourth: “And this is the account of the levy which king Solomon raised; to build ... *JERUSALEM*, and Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer.”

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### 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 (as outlined in the Bible, the tribal territories of Naphtali, Manasseh and Ephraim, respectively). Purely 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—though this view is now starting to significantly change; see sidebar page 74). Thus, even in the case of incontestably early structures like the securely dated Khirbet Qeiyafa (circa 1000 B.C.E.), they reassign them not to the biblical Judahite-centric monarchy but 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.*, Judahite Jerusalem was the administrative capital over *all* Israel.

The discovery of a monumental 10th-century gatehouse in *Jerusalem*, then—one with parallels 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 over an entire, united territory.

Finally, we need to put the archaeological record alongside Bible passages like 1 Kings 9:15 and put aside the overtly unscientific proposition to simply reject this verse. This scripture states explicitly that King Solomon engaged in significant construction projects in exactly the same four cities. When we do this, considering *all* available evidence in the round, the most obvious and logical conclusion is that these monumental cities were built by King Solomon. ■



# KING SOLOMON'S MONUMENTAL JERUSALEM

**T**HE PSALMS REPEATEDLY REFER TO THE GATES OF Jerusalem, some of the most prominent symbols of the holy city. Reading these passages, it is easy to picture the Jaffa Gate or the Damascus Gate in the Old City. But these are not the gates the psalmists referenced. They were speaking of the gates of the original city conquered by King David and significantly developed by Solomon, Hezekiah and Josiah.

We actually know the precise location of one of these ancient gates, as well as its associated straight wall and projecting tower. Analyzing the archaeology of all three features provides an impressive snapshot of King Solomon's monumental building program in Jerusalem.

## The Wall

"The Lord loveth the gates of Zion More than all the dwellings of Jacob" (Psalm 87:2). The psalmist believed God took special interest in the gates of ancient Jerusalem, which were located on Zion. *Zion* in the Bible refers to a long, crescent-shaped north-south ridge bordered on the east by the Kidron Valley and on the west by the Tyropaeon Valley.

During the time of Abraham, when Jerusalem (then called Salem) was first established, settlement was located at the southern end of this ridge, centered around the Gihon Spring. This settlement still existed in the same location six centuries later when Israel conquered the Promised Land under Joshua. It was then inhabited by Jebusites and called Jebus.

About 400 years later, around

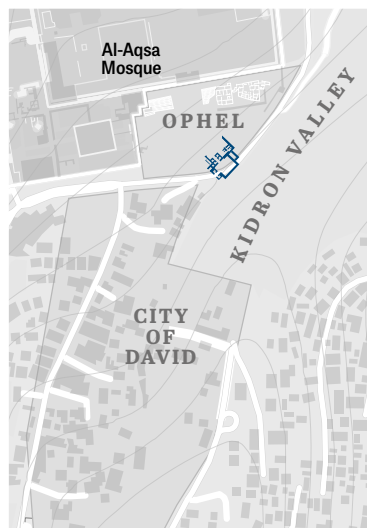
1000 B.C.E., King David and his army laid siege on Jebus and took the city. "Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion; the same is the city of David" (2 Samuel 5:7). From this time on, the Bible generally refers to the most southern, most ancient part of Jerusalem as the City of David.

Both archaeology and the biblical record show that David fortified the existing, relatively small city of Jerusalem on the Zion ridge. His greatest building project was the new royal quarters north of this city, as evidenced by excavations undertaken by Dr. Eilat Mazar (see page 26).

When King David died, the kingdom of Israel was powerful, secure and prosperous. This allowed his successor, Solomon, to undertake massive construction projects in Jerusalem and across the kingdom.

"And Solomon became allied to Pharaoh king of Egypt by marriage, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the Lord, and the wall of Jerusalem round about. ... 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 3:1; 9:15).

"The house of the Lord," the spectacular temple at Jerusalem, became world famous. But notice that in addition to building the temple, his own palace and numerous fortified cities, Solomon built "the wall of Jerusalem." If it







Excavations at the gate  
of the Iron Age fortress  
at Khirbet en-Nahas

## KHIRBET EN-NAHAS

**G**IVEN THE FRAGMENTARY NATURE OF THE OPHEL gatehouse, the conclusion that it was a gate stirred some controversy. 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. 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). ■

was anything like the palace and the temple, it would have been an impressive structure.

The palace, the temple and the wall were part of Jerusalem and therefore built on the Zion ridge. Where? The geography of Jerusalem reveals the answer. Deep valleys to the south, east and west of the city would have logically forced new development further north.

The Bible refers to this part of Jerusalem’s topography as the Ophel. The meaning of this word is somewhat obscure, but it can be defined as a swelling or raised mound. The Bible and geography indicate that this northward expansion is where Solomon built the temple, his palace and “the wall of Jerusalem.”

What does archaeology tell us?

In 2010, excavations performed by Dr. Mazar on the Ophel, sponsored by Daniel Mintz and Meredith Berkman, uncovered a 34-meter-long (112 feet), 2.5-meter-wide (8 feet) portion of a massive wall. This wall was dated to the 10th century B.C.E. Up until this excavation, it was believed that this extra length of city wall, also known as the “straight wall,” was built *after* Solomon (by possibly 200 years). However, by excavating the stratified layers against the base of the wall, Dr. Mazar’s team learned that this city wall was built during the 10th century.

### The Jerusalem Gatehouse

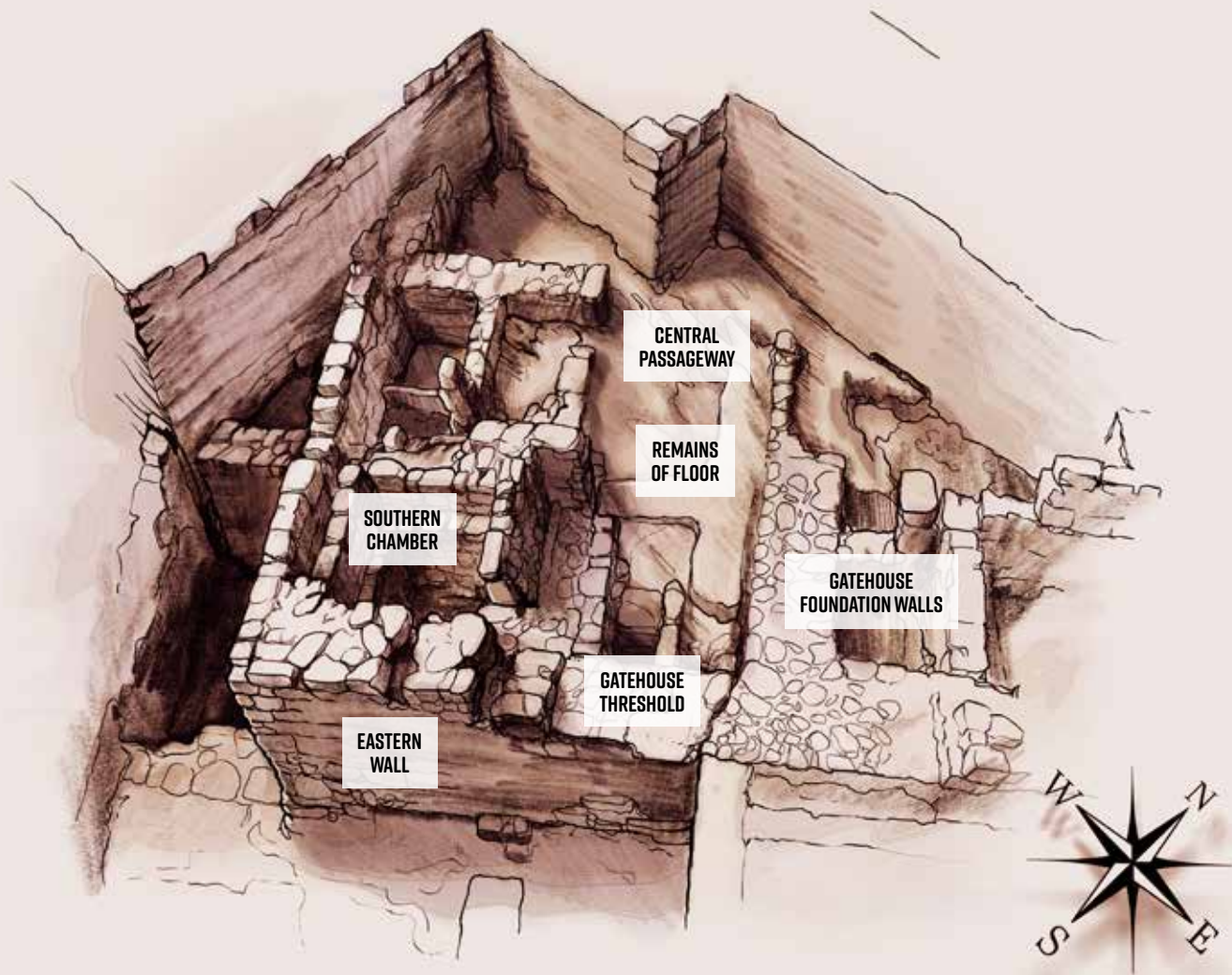
The relatively recent discovery of Solomon’s large wall complements another massive structure, one that began to be excavated decades earlier: the Ophel City Gate. While the Bible records that Jerusalem had many gates, the Ophel City Gate is the only thus far discovered and securely dated to the First Temple Period.

Several gates from the biblical period have been found in Israel. As previously mentioned, gatehouses have been excavated in Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer—cities listed as part of Solomon’s building program (1 Kings 9:15). The gatehouses in these cities are massive, with six chambers each. Others discovered have four.

When comparing the Ophel Gate in Jerusalem with the Palace Gate at Megiddo, Dr. Mazar noted that the lengths, width of the central passages, thicknesses of the walls, and sizes of the chambers are virtually identical. This “seem[s] to indicate that the two gatehouses were built according to an identical blueprint, most likely originating from the same architectural office,” she wrote (*Discovering the Solomonic Wall in Jerusalem*).

The dating of the Ophel gatehouse, however, has come under debate by other scholars, especially since Dr. Mazar’s death in 2021.

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, “The Iron Age Complex in the Ophel, Jerusalem: A Critical Analysis,” was written by Prof. Israel Finkelstein. It 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 does belong 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 to the 10th century B.C.E. 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 pottery in all three areas. The Bible relates that King Solomon reigned in Jerusalem for 40 years, during which Jerusalem experienced development and significant population growth. This means that the 10th-century pottery Dr. Mazar found is *most likely* associated with Solomon.

Any attempt to redate the Ophel gatehouse out of the 10th century must explain the presence of 10th-century pottery in a gatehouse they claim was built much later.

Let’s examine each of the three sections of the Ophel gatehouse.

### **The Eastern Wall**

The full extent of the huge eastern wall was uncovered in the 2009–10 excavation. Though there are some slight variations in the wall’s construction style—for example, a correctional course of stones about halfway

up the wall—its look and design are generally consistent from top to bottom. Like all First Temple Period walls in the Ophel, the eastern wall is built directly on bedrock.

After the construction of the eastern wall, a massive 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 to the same period.

A separate 4-meter-high (13 feet) 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.

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 that pottery sherds 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. Winderbaum also believes the correctional course halfway up the wall is another indication it is a later addition.

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 as Finkelstein believes, 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?

## The Gatehouse Passageway

Excavation of the central passageway of the gatehouse has a long history. In the final two days of excavation in 1986, Dr. Mazar examined a cross-section of the passageway 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, fully exposing the lime floor. The limestone passageway floor was preserved to a length of 10 meters (33 feet) and a width of 1.3 meters (4 feet).

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 (3 feet) above bedrock. This meant that there was a large volume of datable material below the floor. In the 1987 phase, Dr. Mazar removed all 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, she found 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 anything she found; it was simply good archaeological practice and a decision made in advance.

Dr. Mazar 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 preserved the oldest, and arguably the most important, material. And 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.

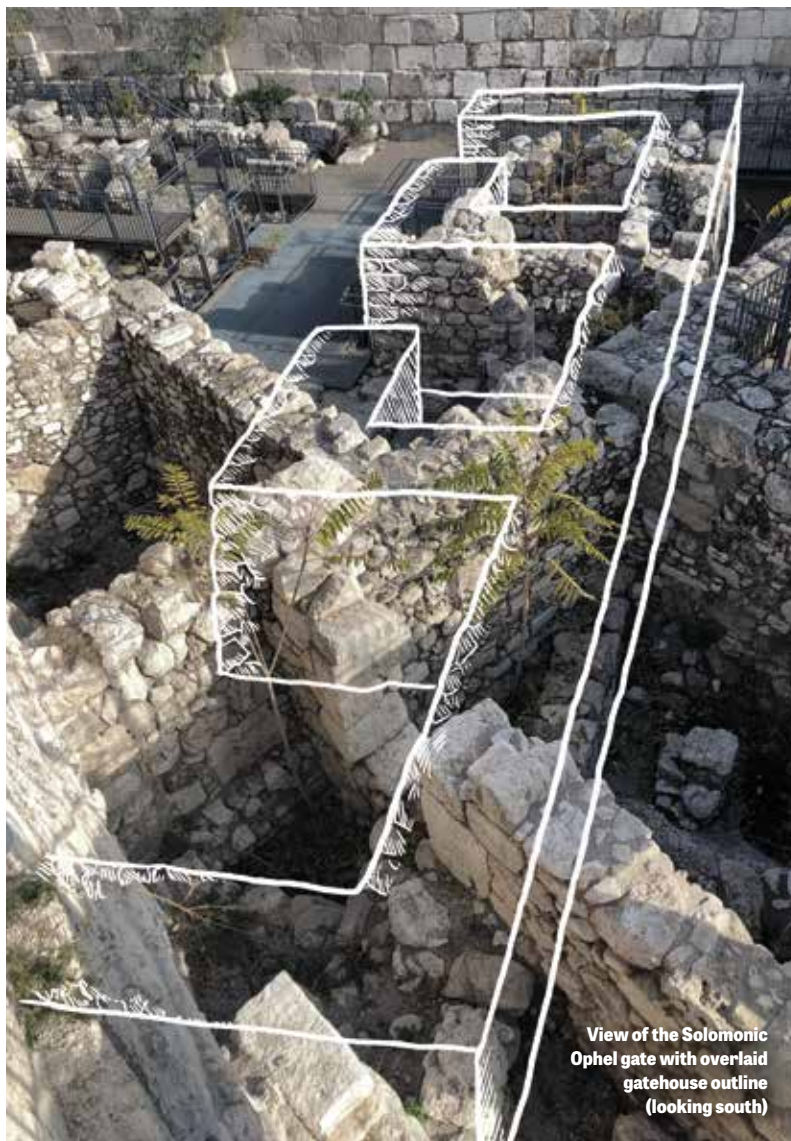
To date this material, Dr. Mazar compared the pottery she found in the passageway fill with pottery found in other 10th-century sites, most notably Khirbet Qeiyafa (a site irrefutably dated to the early 10th century). Based on the lack of red slip and wheel burnishing, as well as other similarities to 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 II A.”

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 that 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 II A? How does Finkelstein explain its presence? He doesn’t—he ignores the clear 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, then again in



View of the Solomonic Ophel gate with overlaid gatehouse outline (looking south)

1986. In this room, Mazar found a white chalk floor 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 “makeup”) 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?

Even still, the Mazars’ excavation of the fill under the chamber floor produced some dramatic results. According to Dr. Mazar’s 1989 report, she initially

dated the pottery to the ninth century B.C.E., after the Solomonic period. However, in this same report she 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.

Dr. Mazar's reexamination and redating of an earlier excavation is not unusual in archaeology. In fact, it is good science 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 II B (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 did not address Dr. Mazar's redating of the uniform fill to the Solomonic period.

### **Is This Solomon's Gatehouse?**

The fact that three professional and respected field archaeologists have three differing opinions on the dating of the Ophel gatehouse is unsurprising—especially when you consider how much construction (and demolition) has occurred on the Ophel over the past 3,000 years. Archaeologically, the Ophel is one of the most challenging places on Earth to understand.

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

Winderbaum briefly excavated at the Ophel, under Dr. Mazar. Finkelstein hasn't excavated at the Ophel at all.

What does the historical text say?

The book of Kings, believed to be compiled by Jeremiah in the late seventh and early sixth centuries B.C.E.—when the Ophel gatehouse was still in use—documents an impressive 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 enormous 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 construction of Jerusalem and its walls, which include gates, was carried out by King Solomon!

Every reader will have to weigh the evidence and decide for himself. It would be 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, Dr. Mazar's view is best. 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."

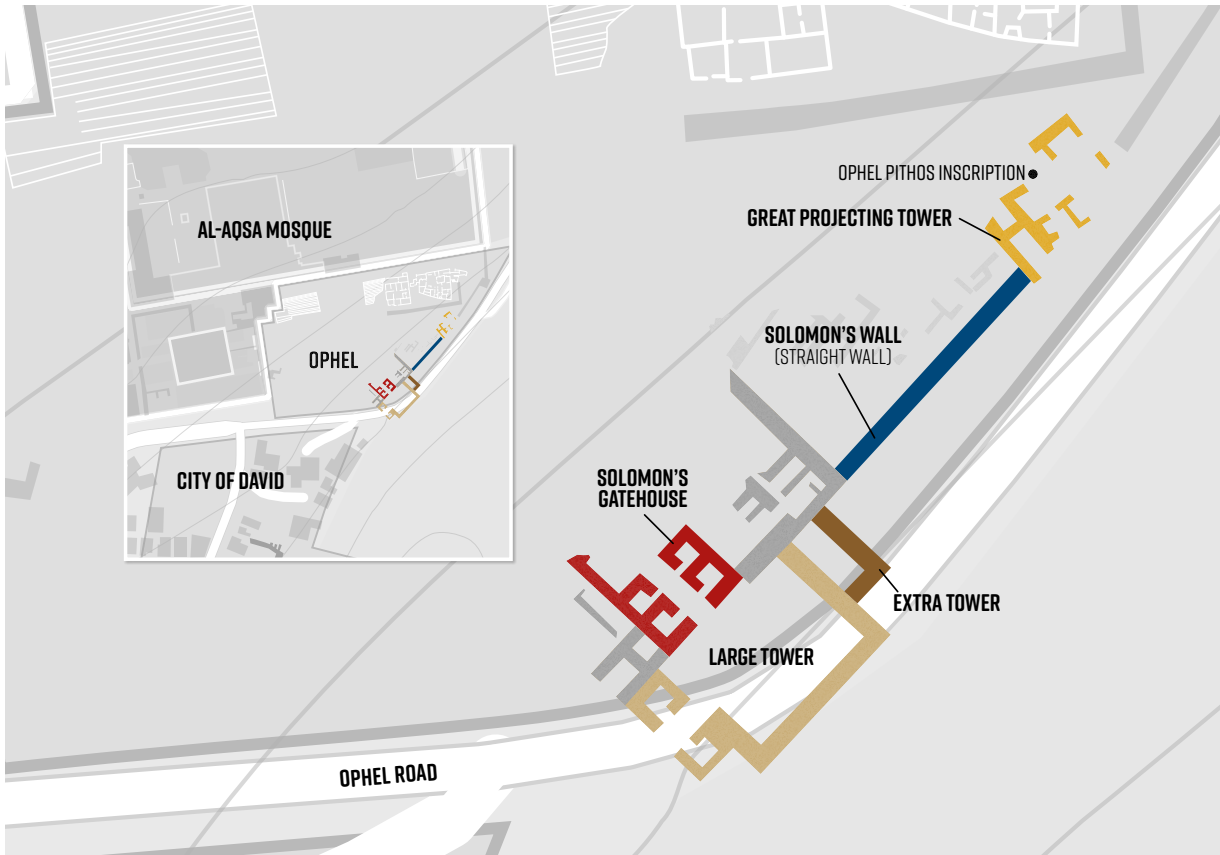
### **The Large Tower**

In addition to Solomon's wall and this Solomonic gatehouse, there is still one more impressive structure just waiting to be uncovered.

The British government sent Capt. Charles Warren to conduct excavations in Jerusalem from 1867 to 1870. Warren wanted to excavate the Temple Mount, but this was impossible. Instead, he worked on the Ophel and dug a network of shafts and tunnels toward the southern part of the Temple Mount.

During these excavations, Warren discovered and mapped the dimensions of what is called the Large Tower. This structure, which is adjacent to and connected to the Solomonic gatehouse, is essentially a secondary wall of protection. Archaeologists have uncovered similar gatehouse towers, such as at Megiddo and Lachish.

A projecting tower defends the gate and forces those who approach to make a right-angled turn. Invading



troops would then be on a narrow path, alongside the city wall, giving defenders a favorable vantage point for targeting invading troops.

Today the projecting tower that protects the gatehouse cannot be seen. Not only is it underground, but it is also under the Ophel Road, Jerusalem's busy thoroughfare bordering the eastern side of the Old City. The engineers who built the Ophel Road can thank King Solomon; the Large Tower actually ballasts a roughly 50-meter-long section of the road, preventing it from slipping into the Kidron Valley.

"At the southeast angle of this extra tower we have found another wall going down towards the Kidron: It is 19 feet [6 meters] long, and then takes a turn to the southwest," Warren wrote in a report on Oct. 2, 1868. "We have not followed it farther. It has been examined to a depth of nearly 40 feet (12 meters), the stones are well-dressed ashlar; in size about 1.6 to 2 feet high, and 2 to 3 feet long. An isometric projection from the extra tower and the projecting wall is enclosed. *It can be seen that, if the debris were to be shoveled into the valley, there would still be a scarped wall for Ophel of from 40-60 feet in height—which is only dwarfed by the stupendous height of the [Temple Mount] wall alongside.*"

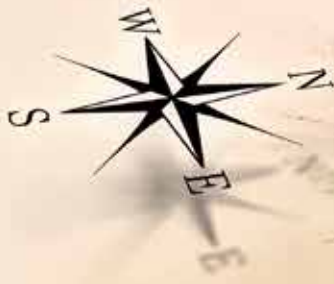
Warren later dug a shaft to the base of the wall,

revealing that the wall stood at a height of 20 meters (66 feet) and a length of 24 meters (80 feet). The dimensions he took revealed that this structure was as tall as the aboveground portion of the Western Wall!

### The Significance

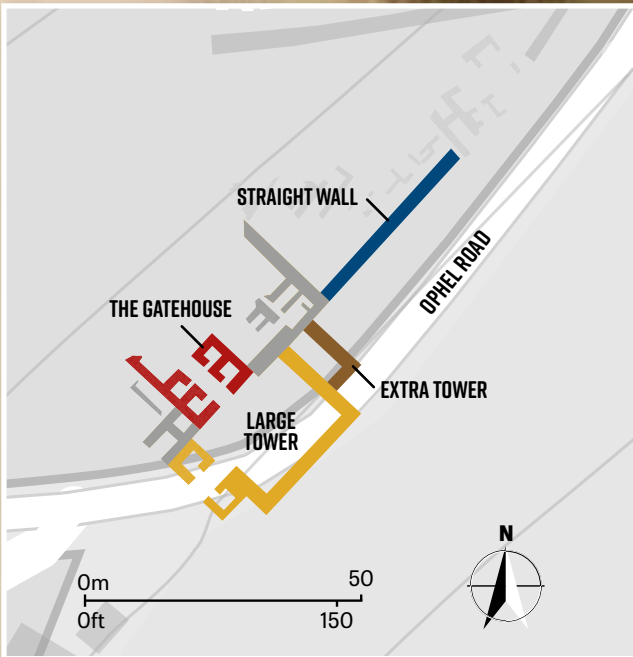
Compared to other fortified walls, the Large Tower on the Ophel is extraordinary. It is 6 meters (20 feet) taller than the tallest part of the Great Wall of China. It is 4 meters (13 feet) higher than the walls of Nineveh, the capital of ancient Assyria. The preserved portion of the projecting tower in Jerusalem is 6 meters (20 feet) higher than the visible portion of the Ishtar Gate, the gigantic gate of King Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon and perhaps the most famous ancient gate in the world.

By all accounts, the Solomonic gate and its projecting tower is *immense*, almost beyond belief. The colossal size of the projecting tower dwarfs any other discovery from the biblical world found in Israel. Details about King Solomon's wall and the large gatehouse are well established. Solomon's monumental Jerusalem exists. But perhaps, only by future excavation of the third feature—the most monumental of all—the Large Tower, will the true grandeur of Solomon's Jerusalem be unavoidably obvious. ■



# JERUSALEM'S SOLOMONIC GATE COMPLEX

Most of this massive structure is still preserved and lies hidden just south of the Temple Mount. Once uncovered, it would be the largest structure from biblical Israel ever discovered.



GATEHOUSE

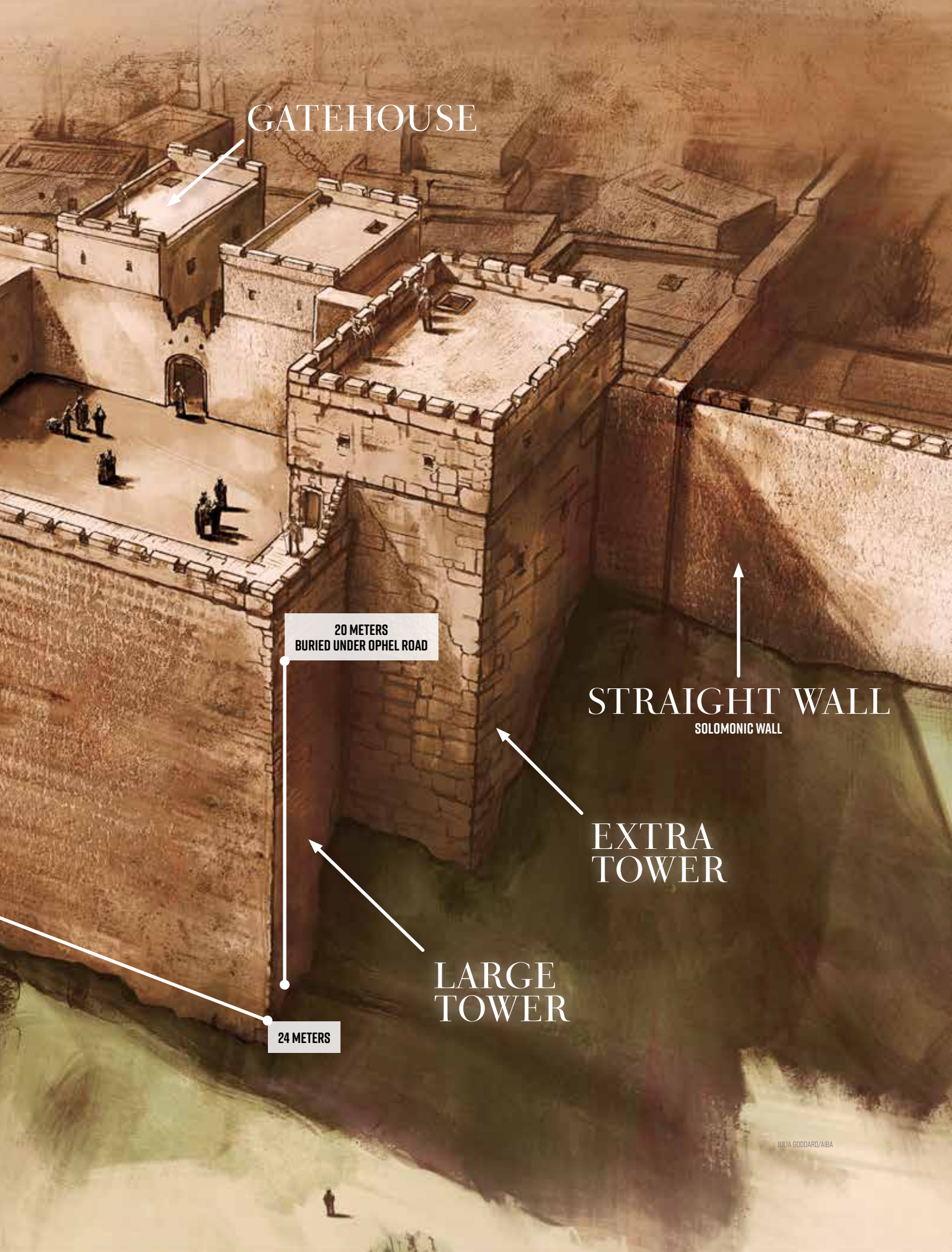
20 METERS  
BURIED UNDER OPHEL ROAD

STRAIGHT WALL  
SOLOMONIC WALL

EXTRA  
TOWER

LARGE  
TOWER

24 METERS



# KING SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

The temple built by King Solomon is widely referred to as the “first temple.” Construction on the “house of the Lord” began in the spring of 967 B.C.E. (1 Kings 6:1; 2 Chronicles 3:1-2). It took seven years to build and was completed in the fall of 960 B.C.E. (1 Kings 6:38). The temple was situated adjacent north of the City of David on Mount Moriah, in the same area that Abraham built the altar to sacrifice Isaac. King David purchased the land from Ornan the Jebusite at the end of his reign (1 Chronicles 21).

The temple was a large and impressive structure, especially compared to the palace and surrounding buildings, but it was not colossal or ostentatious. It was 31.5 meters (103 feet) long, 10.5 meters (34.4 feet) wide and 15.8 meters (51.8 feet) high. The quality of its construction was exceptional. It was built from the highest-quality stone, metals and timber, which were fashioned, largely off-site, by expert Phoenician and Israelite craftsman.

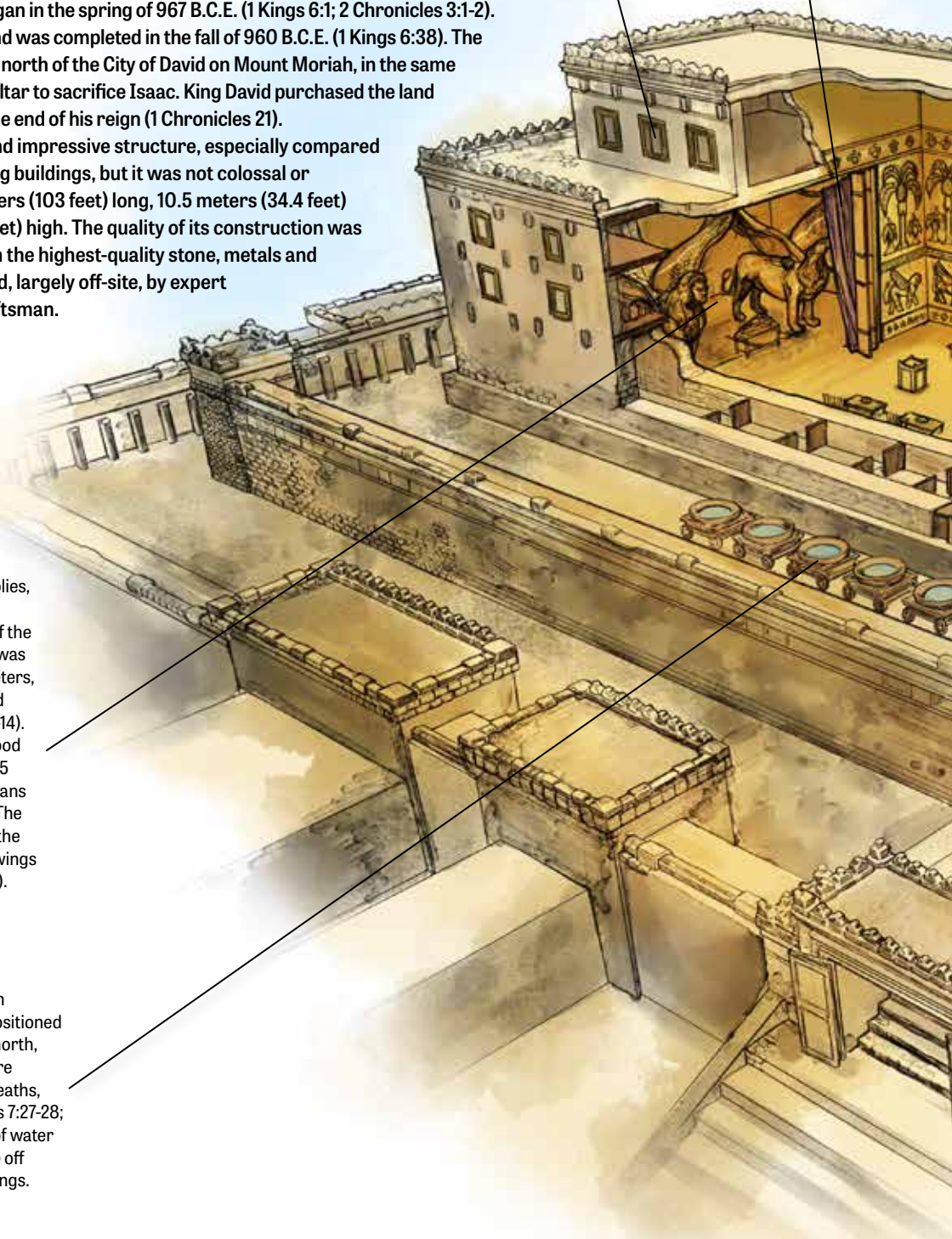
The inner sanctuary, or holy of holies, was the most sacred part of the temple. This was where the ark of the covenant was placed. This room was 10.5 meters (34.4 feet) by 10.5 meters, and its walls were covered in gold (1 Kings 6:15-29; 2 Chronicles 3:8-14).

Two large golden cherubim stood on either side of the ark, each 5.25 meters (17.2 feet) tall with wingspans of 5.25 meters (1 Kings 6:23-28). The ark of the covenant sat between the two cherubim underneath their wings (1 Kings 8:1-11; 2 Chronicles 5:2-14).

Ten bronze wheeled stands, each holding a basin of water, were positioned around the temple—five on the north, five on the south. The stands were decorated with hand-carved wreaths, lions, oxen and cherubim (1 Kings 7:27-28; 2 Chronicles 4:6). These basins of water were used by the priests to rinse off animal parts used in burnt offerings.

The holy place had clerestory windows with recessed frames (1 Kings 6:4).

The holy place was separated from the holy of holies by a large, finely embroidered purple, blue and crimson linen “vail,” or curtain (2 Chronicles 3:14).



The holy place was the largest room in the temple and contained the golden incense altar, the table for the showbread, and 10 golden lampstands with 10 tables (1 Kings 7:48-49). The holy place was 21 meters (68.8 feet) long and 10.5 meters (34.4 feet) wide. The gold-overlaid walls, built from cedar imported from Lebanon, were carved with images of palm trees, "knops" and flowers (1 Kings 6:17-18; 2 Chronicles 3:5-7).

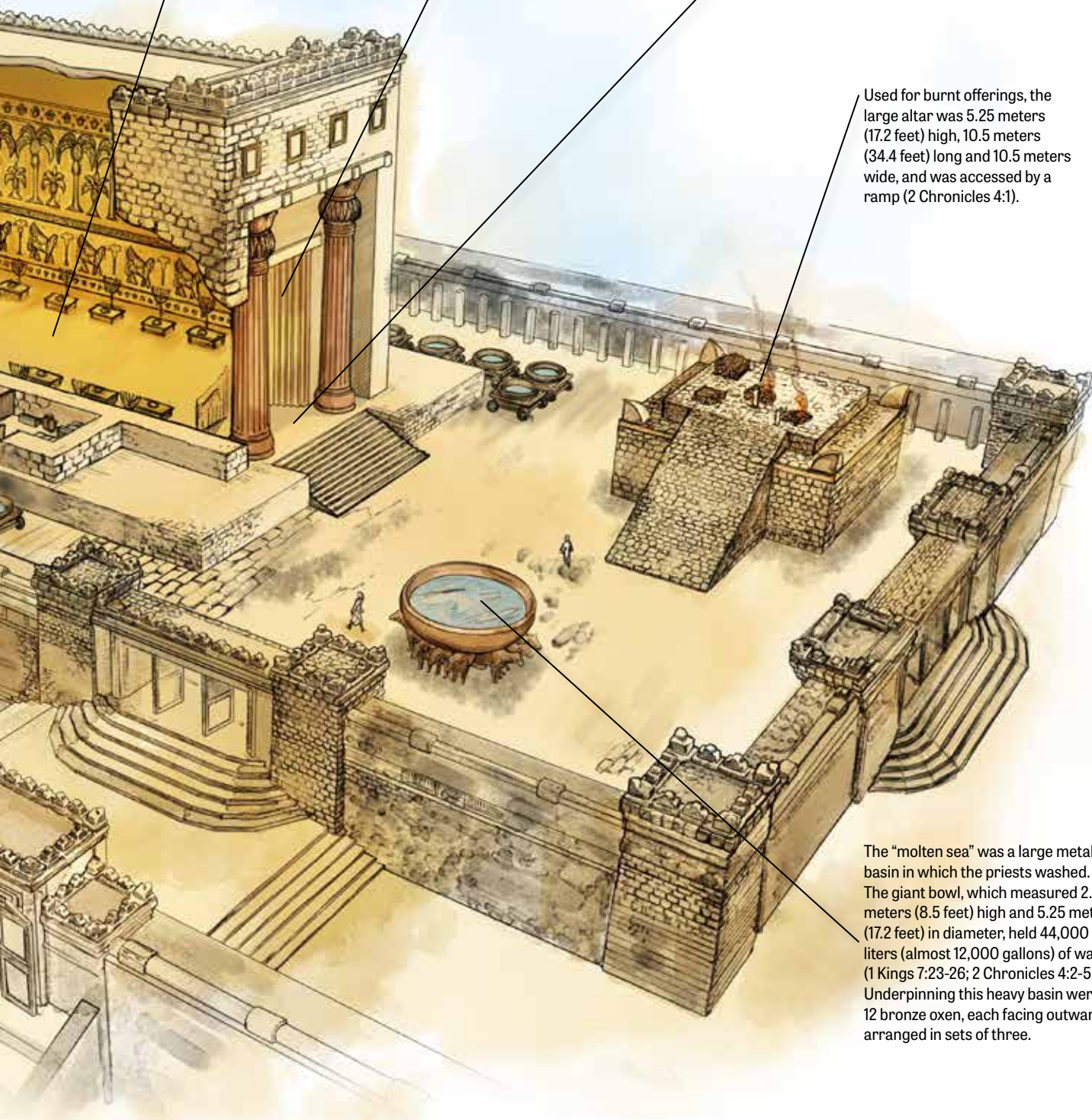
Two gold-overlaid, wooden folding doors with carved images of cherubim, palm trees and flowers separated the holy place from the porch (1 Kings 6:33-35).

The "porch" (vestibule) was 10.5 meters (34.4 feet) wide and 5.25 meters (17.2 feet) deep (1 Kings 6:3; 2 Chronicles 3:4).

Two large bronze pillars framed the entrance. The pillar on the right was called "Jachin," meaning "he will establish"; the one on the left was called "Boaz," meaning "quickness" and "in strength" (1 Kings 7:21; 2 Chronicles 3:17).

Used for burnt offerings, the large altar was 5.25 meters (17.2 feet) high, 10.5 meters (34.4 feet) long and 10.5 meters wide, and was accessed by a ramp (2 Chronicles 4:1).

The "molten sea" was a large metal basin in which the priests washed. The giant bowl, which measured 2.62 meters (8.5 feet) high and 5.25 meters (17.2 feet) in diameter, held 44,000 liters (almost 12,000 gallons) of water (1 Kings 7:23-26; 2 Chronicles 4:2-5). Underpinning this heavy basin were 12 bronze oxen, each facing outward, arranged in sets of three.





# THE OPHEL PITHOS INSCRIPTION





**T**HE QUEEN OF SHEBA'S VISIT with King Solomon in Jerusalem is one of the most vivid scenes in the Bible. The Bible says that when Sheba heard about Solomon's wealth and wisdom, she was skeptical and traveled to Jerusalem to "prove him with hard questions."

The queen and her entourage carried many gifts with them, including gold, precious stones and "camels that bare spices" (1 Kings 10:2). The queen was so impacted by her time with Israel's king and was so moved by Solomon's unrivaled wealth, culture and education, that she felt compelled to pay tribute to him. Verse 10 indicates that Sheba's main item of trade was spices, and that "there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon."

Prior to 2023, there was no archaeological evidence attesting to the biblical Queen of Sheba's visit to Jerusalem or to a spice trade between Arabia and the kingdom of Israel. But this changed with the reanalysis of the enigmatic Ophel Pithos Inscription, conducted by expert epigrapher Dr. Daniel Vainstub.

The Ophel Pithos Inscription was first discovered by Dr. Eilat Mazar in late 2012. The clay artifact was found in the southeast corner of the Ophel. It was discovered among a number of large, broken pithoi (storage vessels) pieces embedded in a void in the bedrock. Dr. Mazar and her team were stunned to discover that one of the sherds—part of the rim of one of the vessels—contained a comparatively large inscription, one that was easily noticeable to the human eye.

Given the dating to the 10th century B.C.E.—a dating corroborated in 2020 in a meticulous stratigraphic and ceramic analysis published by Dr. Ariel Winderbaum—the discovery was hailed as the earliest alphabetical inscription ever found in Jerusalem and among the earliest found in Israel.

But what did the inscription say? What language was it written in? These questions remained unanswered.

Scientists accepted that it represented a Semitic language. The prevailing view was that it was



a proto-Canaanite inscription, with some arguing for its identification more specifically as a Hebrew inscription. But given the fragmentary nature of the inscription, there was no consensus as to what it *said* (theories were floated that it may contain the word for "wine").

In April 2023, in an article published in Hebrew University's *Jerusalem Journal of Archaeology*, Dr. Vainstub presented an entirely different conclusion: that the inscription is actually Ancient South Arabian (ASA). Furthermore,

Dr. Vainstub concluded that the inscription refers particularly to the trade of incense known as ladanum (*Cistus ladaniferus*) from the southern Arabian Peninsula.

This conclusion brings together a remarkable convergence of biblical information. The territory of Sheba is widely identified by scholars with the southwestern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, in the area of modern-day Yemen. The 10th-century dating fits with the biblical chronology of the time period for the Queen of Sheba's visit to King Solomon's Jerusalem and its temple (not far, we might add, from the findspot location). The biblical account describes her bringing a "very great train, with camels that bore *spices*."

The Ophel inscription provides archaeological and textual evidence of the trade of spices between the Arabian Peninsula and Jerusalem!

A press release issued by Hebrew University stated: "According to the new interpretation, the inscription on the jar reads, '[ ]shy l'dn 5,' meaning five 'šḥēlet,' referring to one of the four ingredients mentioned in the Bible (Exodus 30:34) required for the incense mixture. The 'šḥēlet' was an essential ingredient in the incense that was burnt in the first and second temples .... This indicates a clear connection between Jerusalem of the 10th century B.C.E. (the days of the kingdom of Solomon) and the kingdom of Sheba."

"Apart from the š, which has a minor anomaly, all the surviving letters of the inscription display the stance and characteristic features of Phase A of ASA script," Dr. Vainstub wrote. This is in contrast to the problematic letters in identifying the script as proto-Canaanite or Hebrew.



Dr. Daniel Vainstub

Intriguingly, one enigmatic letter on the inscription that posed a real difficulty in interpretation—“its remains do not fit the shape of any Canaanite letter”—is nicely paralleled in the Ancient South Arabian script. He believes that this pithos inscription represents evidence of this kind of biblically attested 10th-century trade between southern Arabia and Jerusalem (a distance of over 2,000 kilometers, or 1,240 miles).

Even the interpretation of the letter representing a quantity of “five” in South Arabian form would be a good fit. Pithoi of this type had a capacity of roughly 110-120 liters (26-32 gallons). The *ephah*, a common measure in the Bible, equates to about 20-24 liters (5-6 gallons). Therefore, the storage vessel would have logically been able to contain precisely this numeric quantity of product—*five* ephahs.

As summarized in the press release, during the

## LEGENDARY ‘GOLD OF OPHIR’—NOT JUST LEGEND

The Bible records that kings Solomon and Hiram collaborated on establishing Israel’s navy. 1 Kings 9:26-28 state that Solomon enlisted Hiram to set up a navy at Ezion-geber, an ancient port on the Red Sea (near the modern city of Eilat). From that port, the Israelite-Phoenician navy undertook missions sailing to the land of Ophir, famed for its gold reserves.

The Bible says that Solomon acquired 420 talents of gold from Ophir—some estimates put that at \$1.6 billion in today’s value. The incredible amount of gold that Solomon acquired from this site led many to consider it just legend.

Yet evidence points to the fact that this location—and its abundance of gold—existed.

An ostrakon found during the 1946 archaeological excavations of Tell Qasile (a site in Tel Aviv) validates the existence of Ophir and its connection to gold. The inscription reads: “Ophir gold to Bet Horon: 30 shekels.”

While this ostrakon and the settlement it was discovered in date to the eighth century B.C.E., this discovery confirms the veracity of the Bible in its reference to Ophir as a source of gold in the ancient world.



10th century B.C.E., the kingdom of Sheba “thrived as a result of the cultivation and marketing of perfume and incense plants, with Ma’rib as its capital. They developed advanced irrigation methods for the fields growing the plants used to make perfumes and incense. Their language was a South Semitic one. King Solomon is described in the Bible as controlling the trade routes in the Negev, which Sabaean camel caravans carrying perfumes and incense plants passed through on their way to Mediterranean ports for export.”

“It appears that the pottery jar was produced around Jerusalem and the inscription on it was engraved before it was sent for firing by a speaker of Sabaean who was involved in supplying the incense spices,” the press release continued. Dr. Vainstub believes that the inscription was engraved by a native speaker of the southern Arabian language stationed in Jerusalem and involved in supplying the incense spices.

He summarized: “Deciphering the inscription on this jar teaches us not only about the presence of a speaker of Sabaean in Israel during the time of King Solomon, but also about the geopolitical relations ... in our region at that time—especially in light of the place where the jar was discovered, an area known for also being the administrative center during the days of King Solomon. This is another testament to the extensive trade and cultural ties that existed between Israel under King Solomon and the kingdom of Sheba.”

He further noted the until-recently limited amount of research into the Ancient South Arabian script—a field that has “expanded enormously in recent decades,” thus allowing for the identification of this inscription as an example of such.

Dr. Vainstub concluded his research article: “The discovery of the Ophel inscription marks a turning point in many fields. Not only is this the first time an ASA inscription dated to the 10th century B.C.E. has been found in such a northern location, but it is also a locally engraved inscription, attesting to the presence of a Sabaean functionary entrusted with incense aromatics in Jerusalem.

“The Ophel inscription makes an important contribution to the age-old question of the likelihood of a visit by a delegation from the South Arabian Peninsula to King Solomon in the 10th century B.C.E. as related in 1 Kings 10 and 2 Chronicles 9 .... Our inscription marks the starting point of what was to be a lengthy supply line of aromatics from Sheba to the temple of Jerusalem, as expressed by two prophets [Isaiah and Jeremiah]. Thus, in Isaiah (60:6; Alter) it is said that ‘a tide of camels shall cover you, dromedaries from Midian and Ephah, they shall come from Sheba. Gold and frankincense they shall bear and the Lord’s praise they shall proclaim.’” ■

THE KHIRBET  
QEIYafa OSTRACON



# ISRAELITE LITERACY IN THE 10TH CENTURY B.C.E.

ONE OF THE PRIMARY MARKERS OF A COMPETENT, large and impressive kingdom is evidence of *writing*—a degree of literacy, at least on an administrative level. When it comes to literacy in 10th-century Israel, most scholars are skeptical.

Prof. Israel Finkelstein writes in *The Bible Unearthed*: “Despite the long-standing contention that the opulent Solomonic court was the scene of a flourishing of belles lettres, religious thought and history writing, evidence for widespread literacy is utterly lacking .... Not a single trace of supposed 10th-century Judahite literary activity has been found. Indeed, monumental inscriptions and personal seals—essential signs of a fully developed state—appear in Judah only 200 years after Solomon, in the late eighth century B.C.E.”

This conclusion was highly debatable when it was first published (2001). In the two decades since, it has been entirely disproved. Archaeological

evidence—*especially* from Jerusalem—*does* point to a renaissance of written activity in the Iron IIA period, specifically during the 10th century B.C.E.

## Khirbet Qeiyafa Ostracon

Consider some key examples from peripheral areas. The previously mentioned Khirbet Qeiyafa ostracon is an inked potsherd inscription from around 1000 B.C.E., discovered by Prof. Yosef Garfinkel’s team in 2008, in a clear stratigraphic context at the Judahite site. Its

early alphabetic text contains 70 preserved letters. According to the researchers, it is the “longest extant inscription from the 12th to ninth centuries B.C.E. in the region” (*Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa: A Fortified City in Judah from the Time of David*).

The weathered, 3,000-year-old ostracon is incomplete and difficult to properly translate. French epigrapher Émile Puech proposes the following reconstruction:



*Do not oppress, and serve God ... despoiled him/her  
The judge and the widow wept; he had the power  
Over the resident alien and the child, he eliminated  
them together  
The men and chiefs have established a king  
He marked 60 [?] servants among the communities/  
habitations/generation.*

This reading is strikingly similar to the biblical record of King Saul's appointment (1 Samuel 8:11-19). A thorough study of the language of the inscription published in *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa* led scholars to believe the "most probable identification of the language of the inscription is still Hebrew" (2016).

## Gezer Calendar

Another example comes from 30 kilometers (20 miles) west of Jerusalem, from the Solomonic site of Gezer. Known as the "Gezer Calendar," this item was discovered in 1908 during the excavations of R. A. S. Macalister. This small engraved limestone inscription, dated to the 10th century B.C.E., reads:

*Two months harvesting [September, October]  
Two months sowing [November, December]  
Two months late planting [January, February]  
One month cutting flax [March]  
One month reaping barley [April]  
One month reaping and measuring [May]  
Two months pruning [June, July]  
One month summer (fruit) [August]  
Abijah [name of the scribe]*



THE GEZER CALENDAR

This calendar clearly records the seasons for sowing and harvesting various crops. It is notable for several reasons beyond its 10th-century dating.

It starts from the *seventh* month in the sacred calendar (Leviticus 23). This seventh month (Ethanim/Tishri) was actually reckoned as the first month in the *civil* calendar (as it continues to be to this day in Israel). The fact that this agricultural calendar begins here makes further sense, because the Bible reveals that the agricultural, land sabbath and jubilee years were anchored to this seventh month in the religious calendar (i.e. Exodus 23:16; 34:22; Leviticus 25; Deuteronomy 15). From the two months of gathering beginning the agricultural year, the calendar continues through all 12 months.

One of the most interesting features on the Gezer calendar is the signature at the bottom: Abijah. The name "Abijah" is mentioned 20 times in the Bible; of these, the vast majority (16) refer to individuals who lived in the 10th century. Evidently, this was a common name for the period.

One prevailing theory about the nature of this inscription is that it may have constituted a child's writing exercise—hence the repetitive, mundane nature of the text and the use of a soft, easily erasable limestone.

## Jerusalem Inscriptions

Inscriptions from surrounding locations are one thing. Most crucial, however, are inscriptions from the capital—in this case, the united monarchy's *Jerusalem*.

The aforementioned 10th-century Ophel Pithos Inscription is a key example of the presence of writing in Jerusalem. This fragmentary Ancient South Arabian text points to not only the presence of writing in Jerusalem, but also long-distance trade and the use of foreign language/writing systems—necessitating the presence of, not only a literate Jerusalem administration, but also one able to facilitate such international and foreign communication.

Another example of early writing in Jerusalem is a bronze *pym* weight, discovered in the topsoil of the Temple Mount and published in 1903 by George Barton. The weight contains a three-register, 13-letter inscription: "Pym belonging to Zachariah, [son of] Yair." It was dated paleographically by Dr. Gabriel Barkay to somewhere within the 10th to ninth century B.C.E.

There are several such inscribed items from Jerusalem that date to the 10th and ninth centuries B.C.E.—a significant amount when compared to other sites (as highlighted by Prof. Christopher Rollston in his 2017 article "Epigraphic Evidence From Jerusalem and Its Environs at the Dawn of Biblical History: Methodologies and a Long Durée Perspective"). But what about the above charge in *The Bible Unearthed*—that



**Seals and bullae  
from Jerusalem's Ophel**

the key “missing” administrative item in the Jerusalem inventory, not seen until 200 years after Solomon, is personal seals?

Papyrus—a primary writing medium in the ancient world—do not survive the moist Levantine climate (outside of caves in the Dead Sea region). But what about the mainly *clay* seals that stamped such documents?

It is true that from the eighth century, in Jerusalem and elsewhere, a flush of epigraphic seals and seal stamps begin to emerge—personal seals, and their clay bullae impressions, used to seal papyrus documents. (These seals generally bear something akin to the formula, “Belonging to ... son of ...”) We *do* have a small handful of epigraphic seals dated to the ninth century from Jerusalem. But what about the 10th century?

Centering the debate about literacy and administration on epigraphic seals and seal impressions is at best deeply disingenuous. Why? *Because we have an ABUNDANCE of seals—dating to the 10th century B.C.E.—that are primarily ICONOGRAPHIC in nature.*

### **Bring Out the Iconographic Seals!**

While an iconographic seal is one bearing *images* and an epigraphic seal is one bearing *text*, they still serve the same function. Although the use of epigraphic seals only really came into practice during the eighth century B.C.E., this does not mean the practice of sealing documents was nonexistent, or even diminished, during prior centuries. Quite the contrary. Prior to the eighth century, administrative documents were circulating within Jerusalem to a significant degree—but during the Iron IIA period, they were stamped with *iconographic* seals.

This is aptly demonstrated in Othmar Keel’s *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel, Katalog Band V* (2017). His corpus contains 65 such “glyptic” seals that have been found in Jerusalem over the decades, dated between the mid-11th and eighth

centuries B.C.E. The *majority* of these are attributed to the 10th and ninth centuries. Actually, for this *earlier* period of First Temple Period Jerusalem, we have a significantly higher quantity of *iconographic* seals than we do *epigraphic* seals from the latter.

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

Even more consequential are the reverse impressions on these early bullae. It is unfortunate that in much of Keel’s corpus, impressions on the reverse side are either unidentifiable (due to damage) or otherwise not stated. Yet for those that are, the *majority* of these early bullae contain *papyrus impressions* (47 in total). This shows that a significant quantity of *written documents* were circulated among a literate Jerusalemite administration during the very earliest period of the capital city.

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

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

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



# COPPER MINES OF THE UNITED MONARCHY




**T**HE BIBLE SAYS KING SOLOMON POSSESSED SUCH quantities of bronze (an alloy of copper and tin) that it became a common material, not worthy of being enumerated: “And Solomon did not weigh all the articles, because there were so many; the weight of the bronze was not determined” (1 Kings 7:47; NKJV).

Matthew Henry elaborated on this verse, stating: “The bronze vessels were *unnumbered ... because they were exceedingly numerous*, and it would have been an endless thing to keep the account of them; neither was the weight of the brass, when it was delivered to the workmen, searched or inquired into; so honest were

the workmen, and such great plenty of brass they had, that there was no danger of wanting.”

From where did Solomon acquire such vast supplies of copper?

This question first began to be answered almost 100 years ago by archaeologist Nelson Glueck as he ventured through the Wadi Arabah, an area comprising over 2,000 square kilometers (over 1,200 square miles) south of the Dead Sea. In this lowest place on Earth, the sunbaked arid climate has ensured that the landscape has remained largely unchanged through the millennia.



**Scenic columnar rock formations along the mesa's north wall show traces of the cupriferous slag.**



Arabah Valley



Horizontal mine entrance, Wadi Faynan



12-meter-deep vertical mine shaft, Wadi Faynan

Using his knowledge of pottery typology, along with his knowledge of the biblical text, Glueck dated two vast copper mining enterprises in the north and south of the valley to the 10th century B.C.E. In 1959, he wrote, “The mineral deposits of the Wadi Arabah had also been worked in previous ages, in fact as early as the time of Abraham and before that in the Chalcolithic period, too. *Never, however, were they worked as intensively and in as coordinated fashion as from Solomon’s time on*” (*Rivers of the Desert*).

In the late 20th century, skeptics began to criticize Glueck’s conclusion that the mines reached their peak during the time of David and Solomon. Criticism of his work grew so strong, Glueck even began to question his conclusion. Now, thanks to more than two decades of intense, well-documented archaeological and scientific work employing sophisticated technology, Glueck’s dating can be conclusively put to the test. And it turns out that he was right: The Arabah Valley mines reached their zenith during the time of the united monarchy in the 10th century B.C.E.

### First Faynan

Situated in the north Arabah Valley, Faynan is part of a complex that incorporated 100 structures including mines, smelters and a large fortress to protect the valuable industrial operation. Situated 50 kilometers (30 miles) south of the Dead Sea and 25 kilometers north of the famed ruins of Petra in modern-day Jordan, Faynan is believed to be the largest Iron Age copper factory in the Middle East. The site furnished a seemingly unlimited supply of copper and has been the site of mining operations for thousands of years.

When Glueck passed by Khirbet en-Nahas, the largest smelting site in Faynan, he was able to date the site “by pottery fragments on the surface of the ground to the time of Solomon ...” (ibid). Pottery



chronology was less developed at the time, so Glueck was probably offering his best educated guess.

In the 1970s, owing to what they claimed was a dearth of large 10th-century structures, a team of British researchers pushed Glueck's dating of major production to the eighth century B.C.E., about 200 years after Solomon's reign. This new date fit neatly with the prevailing belief at the time that there were no complex societies in Israel or Jordan (biblical Edom) capable of operating such a large mining operation. Researchers believed such a significant operation could only be operated by a massive and sophisticated empire, and suggested the mines belonged to the Neo-Assyrian Empire of the late eighth century B.C.E.

Beginning in the early 2000s, a team led by Dr. Thomas Levy of the University of California–San Diego began a thorough reinvestigation of the site. Much to the surprise of many, Dr. Levy's research, which included the use of new sophisticated technology and produced new data, pushed the dating of Faynan's peak production back to the 10th century. "The Iron Age (circa 1200–500 B.C.E.) represents the emergence of the first historical local state-level societies and ... is when the first industrial revolution in the southern Levant took place," writes Levy (*New Insights Into the Iron Age Archaeology of Edom, Southern Jordan*).

Among the most important evidence unearthed were numerous samples of charcoal, which is produced by wood burned to create heat for the smelting of copper. Levy and his team carbon-dated multiple deposits of charcoal. In 2007, Levy published the results of the radiocarbon dating, which revealed that the most intense mining at the site took place in the 10th century B.C.E. His findings ignited criticism from several Bible skeptics, including Prof. Israel Finkelstein, who claimed it was impossible for the early dates to be correct because no nearby habitations dating to that time period had been found. How can you have a massive factory with no homes or city for workers to dwell?

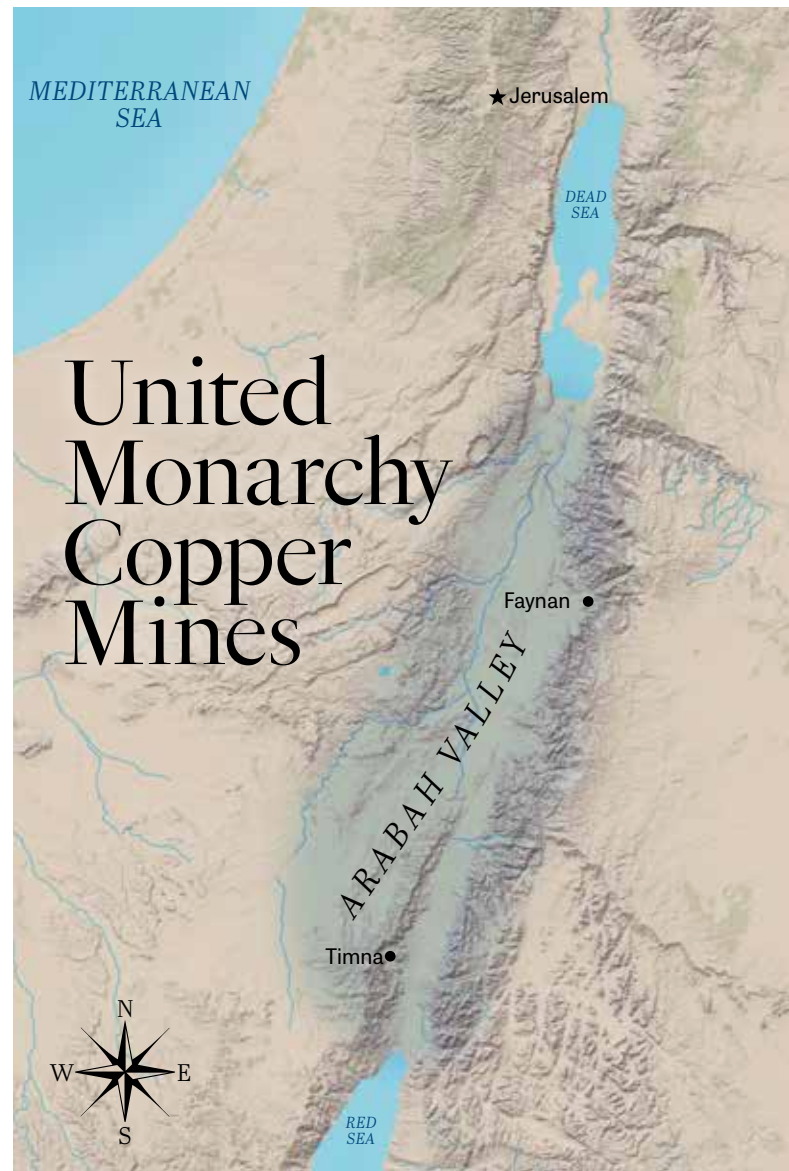
Dr. Levy set out to collect more data. His team excavated through a 6-meter (20-foot) layer of slag (a by-product of the copper smelting process) near the center of the site, carefully documenting the locations of each piece of charcoal, as well as other artifacts. The charcoal was dated by an Oxford University physicist. Once again, radiocarbon dating revealed that a full 2.7 meters (9 feet) of the slag pile was produced in the 10th century B.C.E, giving additional evidence to the conclusion that the site reached peak production at this time.

Importantly, Levy also found that above this giant column of slag was evidence of a major disruption at the site. In the layers associated with the disruption, Levy's team found an Egyptian scarab from the Eastern

Nile region and an amulet linked to the Egyptian goddess Mut. The time period of the layers and finds associated with the mining disruption correlated with the late 10th century.

This is the period in which the Bible says Israel and Judah were invaded by Pharaoh Shishak (1 Kings 14:25). Around 925 B.C.E., after Solomon's death, Shishak began raiding and conquering much of the southern Levant. This is documented in Egyptian records, which suggest Shishak's troops occupied the city of Hatseva, about 13 kilometers (8 miles) from the mining complex.

Levy's extensive excavations at Faynan presented skeptics with a challenge. He had uncovered an advanced mining operation, one that included massive charcoal-layered mining slag piles and artifacts that



confirmed the biblically recorded invasion of Israel by Egypt. All of the evidence pointed toward the mine peaking during the 10th century B.C.E. Yet the post-Glueck theory was that it didn't exist at this time.

But Faynan was only one piece of the puzzle.

## Second Timna

Erez Ben-Yosef was a doctoral student when he excavated Faynan with Dr. Levy. In 2009, after earning a Ph.D. for his work on the Faynan mines and with experience excavating ancient mining operations, Dr. Ben-Yosef set off to investigate the massive mining complex at Timna. This site is situated about 100 kilometers (62 miles) further south along the western edge of the Arabah Valley and part of biblical Edom.

As with Faynan, Nelson Glueck had dated Timna to the 10th century B.C.E. But this site was also redated by skeptics out of the time period of the united monarchy.

In 1959, Beno Rothenberg, Glueck's excavation photographer, started his own systematic excavation in Timna. At first, Rothenberg accepted the 10th-century dating for peak copper production at the site. However, in 1969, his team made a major discovery at the site: a large Egyptian temple from the 13th to 12th century B.C.E., 200 hundred years before David.

Rothenberg immediately concluded that the operation of the mine peaked under Egypt in the 13th century. As Ben-Yosef told the *Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology* in September 2023, in Rothenberg's view, the only conclusion to make was that "the Egyptians were responsible for the big peak in production."

So Faynan and Timna, which were considered by Glueck to be a single operation related to the time of King Solomon, were now separated by roughly 500 years.

In 2009, when Ben-Yosef began examining Timna,

the first thing he did was probe one of the large smelting sites, one that Rothenberg had dated to the time when Timna fell under Egyptian control. Ben-Yosef sent his own carbon samples for dating from this period of peak production. Much to his surprise, "not a single date we got back related to the Egyptian period. This was when we knew that there was an issue here." He knew he had to investigate further.

Ben-Yosef's comprehensive excavation of Timna began in 2013 and is ongoing. With each passing season, his team confirms not only the 10th-century date of the site but its connection with Faynan in the north.

Ben-Yosef's research also revealed that the technology used at Timna to process the copper ore steadily improved over time. The scientists were able to make this conclusion by measuring the copper content of the slag. They found that the copper content in slag from the later time period was lower. This showed that improved technology had made the smelting process more efficient. The same was true at Faynan. In fact, the timing of the improved technological advancements at both sites corresponded perfectly with each other. Based on carbon-14 dating of organic remains in the slag heaps, the archaeologists were able to date the significant advancements to around the time of kings David and Solomon.

This shows that during the 10th century, the two mines were sharing knowledge and expertise, which suggests the presence of a centralized administration running the entire industrial enterprise. "This is sophisticated



Timna Valley



Textile fabrics from Timna



Investigating a pile of industrial waste mixed with charcoal on Slaves' Hill, Timna Valley



technology, and there are a lot of variables that went into it, from the preparation of charcoal to the mining of ore,” Ben-Yosef said. “Today, we have our research and development team. Anciently, they also had such people that were devoting their time to understanding and improving their technology. Every little step forward in both regions took place at the same time. This tells us that there was some kind of coordinating system which is another evidence that a kingdom was there at that time period.”

### Further Evidence

In addition to carbon dating the charcoal inside the slag heaps at Timna, several other finds demonstrate that Timna reached peak operation in the 10th century and reveal the complexity of the larger operation and accompanying urban settlement. Many of these artifacts are relatively well preserved, thanks to the arid climate of the Arabah Valley (organic materials survive better in low humidity).

Among these discoveries are several textile and food remnants. Much to the surprise of Dr. Ben-Yosef and his team, both the textile and food remains show that local workers were clothed with expensive fabrics and consumed exotic food imported from across the Levant.

For decades, Timna was assumed to be a dirty, dilapidated mining town where slaves lived a simple life on a simple diet. Glueck himself even named part of the site “Slaves’ Hill.” The discoveries in the Timna dumps revealed a different picture.

First, the dress of this period was not the plain, minimalist style known to be worn by Egyptian

workmen. In fact, it was more along the lines of Joseph’s “coat of many colors.” Archaeologists discovered several beautiful, colorful fragments of woven wool fabric, some variously striped with orange, black, blue and red weaves. (The Bible often describes the use of such blue and red dyes, and even mentions a personal request by King Solomon for a skilled man who can work in “crimson and blue yarn”—2 Chronicles 2:7; New International Version.) Analysis of the samples revealed that these fabric colors were achieved by employing a complex dyeing practice that required plants from the Mediterranean region.

One especially noteworthy discovery were pieces of 10th-century royal purple (argaman) textiles. This type of dye was manufactured by the Phoenicians (see page 66). The royal purple fabric found at Timna was the first of its kind discovered in Iron Age Israel (it predated existing specimens by 1,000 years). Remarkably, it was uncovered in an ancient refuse dump in the middle of the desert in a 10th-century industrial mine.

In addition to the hundreds of textile fragments, Dr. Ben-Yosef’s team found evidence of foods that could not have been easily grown in the desert climate and had to have been imported from across the region. The researchers found evidence of figs, grapes, olives, pomegranates, wheat and almonds. They even found the bones of fish sourced, not from the nearby Gulf of Aqaba, but from the much more distant Mediterranean Sea.

Studying this evidence, Ben-Yosef realized that all roads led north, into Israel’s much wealthier and more fertile heartland. Analysis of donkey manure revealed the beasts were fed a diet more consistent with Jerusalem and the Judean highlands than the desert.

What kind of wealthy, well-funded, well-dressed, well-fed people were on the scene at this time? And what kind of central government and trade enterprise existed to facilitate such a high standard of living?



While archaeology reveals a lot about the people who worked the mines at Timna and Faynan, it does not show dogmatically that there was a strong, central government in Israel. To answer this question and fill in some gaps, one must consider the historical source—one that archaeology proves to be complementary. We must consult the biblical text.

This is what Nelson Glueck did almost a century ago, and the most recent scientific work is proving him correct. Consider this remark by Ben-Yosef: “Above all, however, the demonstration of the existence of these ores in large quantities in the Wadi Arabah underscores once again the amazing accuracy of the historical memory of the Bible. Every syllable of the hitherto enigmatic description in the Bible of the Promised Land as being, among other things, a land ‘whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper’ (Deuteronomy 8:9), has now been proven to be literally correct.”

This isn’t a religious or spiritual remark. It’s a statement of fact: When it comes to the Arabah Valley mines of the united monarchy, both the archaeology and the biblical text tell the same message. As Glueck wrote, they provide “an explanation of one of the chief sources of Solomon’s fabulous wealth. ... It is revealed now that not only was he a great ruler of legendary wisdom, and a highly successful merchant

prince and shipping magnate, but that he was a copper king of first rank, who transformed Israel into an industrial power.”

### Finally, the Edomites

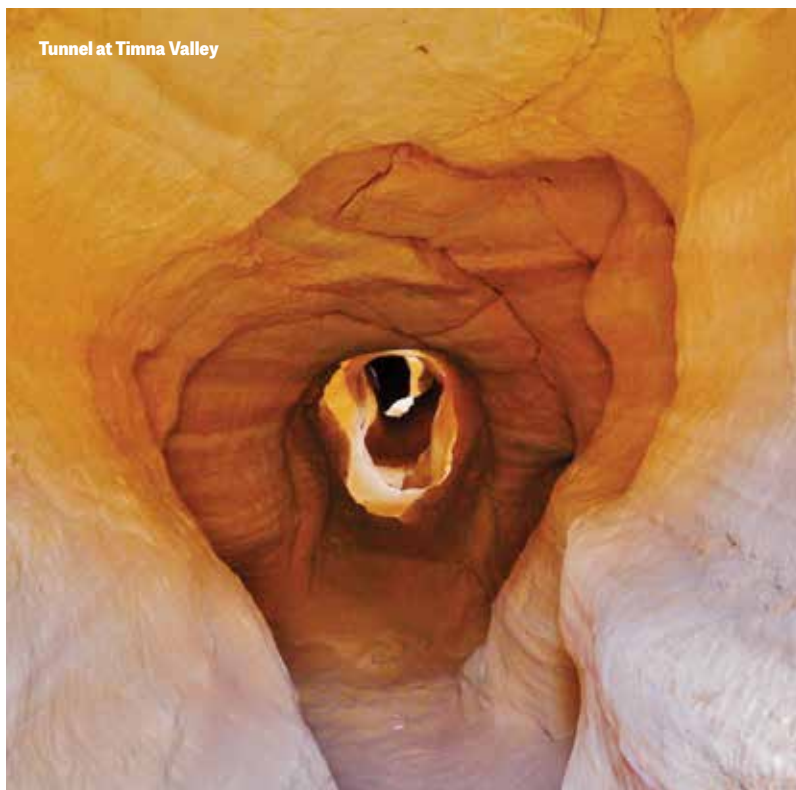
The Arabah Valley is located in the ancient territory of Edom, which was settled by the descendants of Esau, Abraham’s grandson.

Although they were cousins, the Edomites denied the Israelites passage through their territory when they were en route to the Promised Land (Numbers 20:14-21). Israel was forced to travel south to the Red Sea and circumnavigate Edomite land instead of taking the King’s Highway, a more efficient path through the heart of Edomite territory.

There is a lot of debate about the timing of Edom’s transition from a group of nomadic tribes to a united nation with a centralized government. The Bible discusses the existence of an organized and centralized Edomite state *prior* to Israel’s migration: “And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, *before there reigned any king over the children of Israel*” (Genesis 36:31). Saul was crowned king of Israel around 1040 B.C.E. The finds from the Arabah Valley mines, which are separated by more than 100 kilometers (62 miles), indicate that Edom had a central authority dating back to at least 1100 B.C.E., over 50 years before Saul became king.

It was during this period of early Edomite statehood in the 11th century that the copper mines in the Arabah Valley started to move toward their peak production. The Bible records that when David became king of Israel, he led a campaign into the Arabah Valley to subjugate the Edomites. 2 Samuel 8:14 says, “And he [David] put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all the Edomites became servants to David.” (See page 56 for evidence of these garrisons.)

Logically, this is when the Edomite mining operations most likely fell under David and Israel’s control. While archaeology is limited in what it can tell us about the exact nature of the Israel-Edom relationship, Ben-Yosef said: “The Bible tells us about David going south of the Dead Sea and the valley of salt and conquering the region and putting garrisons all over the land. And



since then, Edom was subjugated to Jerusalem. But even during this time of subjugation, you should imagine a pact or agreement where the Edomites pay tax to Jerusalem ....”

While Ben-Yosef cannot say whether or not King David or Solomon were in charge of the Arabah Valley mines, he is certain that “the industry was flourishing during the 10th century—during the days of David and Solomon.” He also believes the relationship “could not have been so successful without some kind of pact. There had to be some kind of an organization of the power relations, and subjugation of the Edomites to Jerusalem can definitely be part of it.”

Ben-Yosef also believes that the mines reveal part of David’s motivation to expand the kingdom further to the south. While the Edomites worked the mines, King David would want “control of the most lucrative and important resource of the region, and so we have the best reason for David to go to the south,” Ben-Yosef said. Controlling such a vast supply of copper might have even become the chief revenue stream for the kingdom of Israel during the time of the united monarchy.

For Dr. Ben-Yosef, it is obvious that the Arabah Valley mines were the main “source of copper to the temple that Solomon built.”

By Ben-Yosef’s calculations, the amount of copper produced at the Arabah Valley mines during the 10th century far exceeded what could be consumed locally by the Edomites and Israelites combined. This means the copper was exported, especially since Cyprus, one of the primary copper producers in the Mediterranean, was relatively weak at the time.

During the early years of his research, Dr. Ben-Yosef and his team had difficulty convincing some scholars that Timna’s mines were prodigious copper producers. More recently, however, several studies have demonstrated that copper from the Arabah Valley was used throughout the Mediterranean region in the 10th century B.C.E. For example, copper sourced from the mines in southern Israel has been found in Egypt, Lebanon, northern Israel, Greece and perhaps as far away as Sardinia. “There was no other option in that particular time, in the 10th century, rather than Edomite copper [under the control of Israel],” stated Dr. Ben-Yosef.

Going one step further, Ben-Yosef also believes the copper enterprises in the south underpinned



the kingdom’s larger economy. Minimalist scholars have long argued that it would have been impossible for Jerusalem, with a limited agrarian economy, to have been a major economic and trade power. Trade based on goats, sheep, olive oil and wine, among other goods, could only go so far in building the wealth of the kingdom. But when you factor in Israel’s industrial mines in the Arabah Valley, this “can very much explain the wealth of the city in this time period.”

### Just Getting Started

While archaeological excavations in Faynan and Timna have been underway for many years and have furnished some significant finds, including evidence of a sophisticated and productive mining industry that peaked in the 10th century B.C.E., only a small sampling of the region’s mines and mine-related sites have been explored. The Timna region, for example, is dotted with massive slag heaps, some more than 6 meters (20 feet) high and is peppered with 10,000 mine shafts, some more than 40 meters (131 feet) deep. This shows just how vast the mining operations were.

There is still plenty of territory and ancient sites yet to be explored.

The biblical text’s claim that Israel at the time of King Solomon possessed so much bronze it was impossible to measure is bold. If there wasn’t evidence to support it, it would be hard to believe. But there is historical evidence that proves that the kingdom of Israel in the 10th century B.C.E. not only controlled copper mines and industrial operations, but that these mines were truly massive and sophisticated. ■



# SEEKING SOLOMON: UNITED MONARCHY ON THE HIGH SEAS

BY DR. SEAN KINGSLEY

Divers examine finds  
from King Solomon's  
harbor at Dor, Israel.



**W**HEN I STARTED DIVING OFF ANCIENT DOR, I found myself immersed in one of King Solomon's legendary havens. What could be more historic, more romantic than exploring waters where the wise king's ships once docked? On land the city had a four-chambered "Solomonic" gateway. Surely many of the stone anchors we lifted from the southern harbor were boat breaks used in the iconic 10th-century too? Decades later I've found Solomon, not in Israel but on the ancient equivalent of the far side of the moon, Tartessos in Spanish Andalusia.

Solomon was a judge, soldier, scholar, composer and shipping magnate. His words and wisdom are legendary. The king handed down new case laws from Jerusalem's palace and is credited with 3,000 proverbs. His sayings live on today: Love is sweeter than wine, there is nothing new under the sun, and pride goes before a fall. Jewish folklore insists Solomon invented chess. Arab chroniclers honor him as the inventor of coffee.

In the 21st century, Solomon is still a household name. More people are married to the "Arrival of the Queen of Sheba" from Handel's 1748 Solomon oratorio than to Bruno Mars' "Marry You" or "Over the Rainbow." In medicine, twin-to-twin transfusion syndrome treats the placenta using the Solomon technique. Solomon the magician weaves heroic spells in Japanese manga cartoons. Streets, hotels, banks, casinos and kebab shops the world over carry into the future Solomon's name and the ideal of wisdom, wealth and luck.

Just how much of Solomon's stellar biography can be tracked back to a monarch who ruled Jerusalem in the

10th century B.C.E.? King Solomon's true identity laughs at us behind the great firewall of biblical archaeology.

## Bible, Pick and Spade

As the starting blocks for exploring the bricks and mortar of the Bible in the mid-19th century, archaeology ushered in a new scientific dawn. By way of just one example, in the deep south of the Bible lands the American rabbi, archaeologist and president of the Hebrew Union College, Nelson Glueck, started picking



A diver examines a stone anchor at Dor, Israel.



King Solomon's natural harbor



The island of Jezirat Fara'un—a contender for Solomon's port of Ezion-geber

back the soils of Tell el-Kheleifeh in Eilat on the northern shore of the Red Sea in 1937. What appeared beneath the surface seemed a perfect fit for Ezion-geber where Solomon built a fleet of ships to set off and trade with the lands of Ophir and Tarshish for gold, silver and exotic riches. Despite lying in the middle of nowhere, the ancient site was surrounded by a serious piece of security with 8-meter-high (26 feet) walls fronted by an imposing four-chambered gate and dry moat facing the sea. The defensive circuit was more suited to a city 10 times as big. What were its defenders protecting?

The settlement at el-Kheleifeh was built on a hill rich in iron and copper, ideal for smelting and refining metal. A state-of-the-art smelter refinery, designed with flues and air channels to harvest the sea winds—hence the site's hostile coastal location—were found stained green from 3,000 year-old copper sulphide fumes.

Nelson Glueck was convinced he'd unearthed the "Pittsburgh of Palestine," a city strengthened near the end of the 10th century B.C.E. after being attacked, probably by the Egyptian Pharaoh Shishak. The new Ezion-geber continued casting copper and iron into the reign of Jehoshaphat of Judah in 873–849 B.C.E. To Glueck, the ancient forensics fitted just one identikit ruler:



Dr. Sean Kingsley is the editor in chief of *Wreckwatch* magazine and wreckwatchmag.com. In his more than 30 years as a marine archaeologist and historian, he has authored 15 books and explored more than 350 shipwrecks. In addition to *Wreckwatch*, he also writes for *Smithsonian* magazine.

Some of his deep sea explorations have been concentrated on the waters of the east Mediterranean off the coast of Israel. His maritime activities have given him a unique understanding of ancient civilizations, as evidenced in this article.

“There was, so far as we know, only one man who possessed the strength, wealth and wisdom capable of initiating and carrying out the construction of such a highly complex and specialized site as this Ezion-geber. He was King Solomon. He alone in his day in Palestine had the ability, the vision and the power to build an important industrial center and sea-port so comparatively far from Jerusalem. ... The wise ruler of Israel was a copper king, a shipping magnate, a merchant prince and a great builder.”

## Over the Horizon

Where archaeologists have fought themselves to a standstill with few ruins left to test time in Israel, nobody has peered over the horizon and into the ocean deep. The Bible immortalizes Solomon as the nation’s first shipping magnate. Building cities, palaces, stables and a flagship temple didn’t come cheap. If true, the king must have controlled and taxed far-flung agricultural lands to cover the costs of his maritime schemes. Long-distance voyages to the land of Ophir and Tarshish, shoulder to shoulder with his joint venture partner, the Phoenician king Hiram of Tyre, brought a river of gold, silver, copper, peacocks, ivory, monkeys, precious stones and marble to the royal court until “King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom” (1 Kings 10:23).

The Phoenicians were a sea people with a big reputation, famously roaming the high seas in search of profit. Their artistry played a key role in landscaping a sparkling Jerusalem. Solomon and King Hiram, who ruled over Tyre in modern Lebanon from around 971–939 B.C.E., and whose people were “the bestower of crowns, whose merchants are princes, whose traders are renowned in the earth” (Isaiah 23:8; NIV), enjoyed history’s

first special relationship. They exchanged luxuries as tribute and through a bond of trust made their cities run with rivers of silver and gold.

Neither Israel nor Lebanon could tap into local gold and silver mines to secure their ultimate status symbols. So how did Solomon make “silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore-fig trees in the foothills,” as the book of 1 Kings put it? For the source of gold and silver lining the temple’s walls, inner sanctuary and altar that made Jerusalem shine under eastern skies as a reflection of God’s glory, the biblical entrepreneurs were forced to look over the horizon.

The land of Tarshish was a vital source for Solomon’s silver. As the book of Ezekiel recorded, “Tarshish did business with you because of your great wealth of goods; they exchanged silver, iron, tin and lead for your merchandise. ... Judah and Israel traded with you; they exchanged wheat from Minnith and confections, honey, olive oil and balm for your wares. ... The ships of Tarshish serve as carriers for your wares. You are filled with heavy cargo as you sail the sea” (Ezekiel 27:12, 17, 25; NIV).

Solomon and Hiram’s trade needed a safety network of well-run ships, coastal havens, warehouses and workshops. By exploring the maritime trail beyond the Bible lands and beneath the ocean’s incorruptible waves, the shouts of angry academics fall silent and a rare resource rises—truth.

The lost mining frontier of Tarshish has been signposted wildly from southern Israel to the Red Sea, Ethiopia, India, Africa and Carthage in Tunisia. A fusion of texts and ruins points to a far more conclusive candidate, however. Tarshish was a destination far from Israel. It was to this distant shore that Jonah fled from Joppa in Israel to escape God’s all-seeing eye. The Assyrians also understood Tarshish to lie at the ends of the world.

This was no epic myth-making. A meter-tall limestone inscription dug up in the ruins of Nora on Sardinia proves that Tarshish was grounded in geographic reality. An eight-line Phoenician dedication commemorates how, after defeat in battle, a military force commanded by an officer called Milkûtôn escaped by ship to Sardinia from Tarshish, where his soldiers lived out a peaceful life. Tarshish, then, lay close to Sardinia in the early ninth century B.C.E. when this calling card was committed to stone.

Tarshish must also correspond to a land where Near Eastern cultural remains and extensive signs of ancient mining overlap. Just such a unique combination converges on the southern Iberian Peninsula in an area known in antiquity as Tartessos, a Greek derivation of Tarshish. Diodorus of Sicily linked



LEFT A Phoenician amphora from Cyprus, possibly Kition Metropolitan  
RIGHT Phoenician script on the ninth-century B.C.E. Nora stele found in Sardinia, which refers to the land of Tarshish, proving its historical reality



Solomon's Tarshish to Iberia in his universal history, the *Bibliotheca Historica*, where "[t]he country has the most numerous and excellent silver mines .... The natives do not know how to use the metal. But the Phoenicians, experts in commerce, would buy this silver in exchange for other small goods. Consequently, taking the silver to Greece, Asia and all other peoples, the Phoenicians made good earnings."

## Rivers of Silver

Tarshish was a frontier with bottomless precious metal. Solomon and Hiram's joint ventures involved a grand blue-water vision risking life and limb a world away from the bustling Orient. Wind power and sailing prowess had to navigate over what for the early Iron Age was a challenging 5,200 kilometers (3,200 miles) of water from the safety of Jerusalem. To these pioneering sailors, Tarshish was the far side of the moon.

After reaching Spain and sailing a further 75 kilometers (47 miles) upriver from Cadiz, the intrepid ancient explorer reached King Solomon's own El Dorado. Undulating volcanic hills rise 530 meters (1,700 feet) across the Sierra Morena above one of Europe's richest olive and wheat belts. Beneath the pine-perfumed slopes, a swathe of pyritic minerals stretches 150 kilometers (90 miles) in length and 30 kilometers (20 miles) in width between Seville and Lisbon. The epicenter of these divinely blessed ores is the Colored River, or *Rio Tinto* in Spanish. It was what was buried under these mountains that inspired Solomon and Hiram to hedge their bets crossing the stormy Mediterranean.

Rio Tinto is the largest mine exploited in antiquity. Down the centuries its deposits yielded 6 million tons of precious metal. Ores contained in a 6-meter-deep (20 feet) layer of argentiferous clay contained every heavy metal a king could wish for: gold, silver, lead, copper and zinc. The extraordinary deposits yielded up to 3.1 kilograms (6.8 pounds) of silver per ton. Israel and Phoenicia, Rome and Colonial Spain left behind their tell-tale signs of industrial exploitation in 18 million tons of sprawling slag heaps.

Ancient texts, inscriptions and abandoned wooden waterwheels leave no doubt that Rio Tinto was a star attraction that inspired Rome to seize the province of Felix Baetica, Happy Baetica. Seeking Solomon and his partners a thousand years earlier, in an age that left behind no official paperwork, requires a leap of faith though—at first glance.



The bloodred waters of the Rio Tinto mines in Andalusia, Spain, the source of King Solomon and Hiram's silver in the land of Tarshish



Remains of a 2,800-year-old mine on Solomon's Hill in the Rio Tinto mines of Andalusia in Spain

Local legend bridges the divide between myth and reality. In the year 1629, Signor A. Carranza was struck by impressive signs of very early ancient mining:

"[W]ithin sight of the Rio Tinto (with its wondrous waters, which feed no fish nor living thing but on the other hand are greatly salutiferous) there is an isolated stretch of high land of circumference of four leagues. Halfway up its flanks, a third or quarter of its height, there are many openings and mining tunnels like a rabbit warren. On the lowest level of these there are almost countless numbers of shafts that still remain today ... with many tunnels and deep caves, which are driven deeply in from the high land."

On his map, Carranza inscribed the local name of this rich mine—Solomon's Hill—and noted that even earlier the landmark was called Solomon's Castle. The memory of Solomon and ancient mining was alive and well in 1634 when Rodrigo Caro's *Antiguedades y Principado de la Ilustrisima Ciudad de Sevilla* described how "[t]he inhabitants of those parts have a tradition (so they say) that the people sent there by King Solomon for gold and silver built it [Zalamea la Vieja] and gave it the name Salamea. As proof of this they pointed out that a very old castle that is nearby has been called ever since that time the Old Castle of Solomon."

Today, not just the castle but the entire hill of Cerro Salomon has been razed to the ground, layer after layer pulverized by modern industry. The scarred stub of Solomon and Hiram's journey's end are isolated in a barren industrial landscape criss-crossed by abandoned wooden railway beams. Sulphur chokes the air. Pools of mineralized river water the color of curdling blood lick the hill's slopes. The scene is less seeped in great antiquity than resembling a surreal film set for a dystopian blockbuster, more *Mad Max* than King Solomon's mines. With Solomon's Hill ground to dust by the bulldozers, how can science sieve truth from legend?

Before leveling Solomon's Hill, Spanish, Israeli and English archaeologists had a chance to check what lay below. As the soils were peeled back, an ancient frontier mining village came to light. A settlement straddled the top of the 515-meter (1,700 feet) hill, while ore was dug out from mining galleries opened in the lower slopes using stone hammers and picks.



**The Phoenician town of Dona Blanca, a satellite harbor of Cadiz in Andalusia**

Fresh spring water at the bottom of the hill gave refreshing relief for the miners and villagers and was essential for refining the metal.

The village once covered 900 meters (3,000 feet) of hilltops. Its rectangular houses were divided into small rooms with slate floors and built from undressed dry stones covered with light thatched roofs. The foundations were found stuffed with abandoned mining equipment: granite pestles and stone mortars used to crush minerals, slag, charcoal, droplets of lead and casting pipes. The miners lived cheek by jowl with silver-refining workshops. The lead slag excavated from Solomon's Hill held a high proportion of silver, 575 grams (1.3 pounds) per ton. But what of the ruins' date and origins?

## Costa del Phoenike

Far from Tyre and Solomon's Jerusalem, familiar Phoenician pottery abounded in the frontier village on Solomon's Hill: globular amphoras, saucer-shaped oil-lamps, oil jugs and tripod-shaped containers. The link between the Near East and Solomon's Hill is certain from Phoenician amphora sherds fused to grey lead and silver slag. As much as 30 percent of the mining village's pottery turned out to be Near Eastern imports. Cerro Salomon—the Hill of Solomon—was a Phoenician village in Tarshish occupied seasonally to coincide with regular voyages from the Near East. The earliest houses were built in the late eighth-century B.C.E.: early but still later than the traditional 10th-century date of King Solomon's reign.

The Andalusian port of Huelva commands the end of a riverine drain where the Rio Tinto discharges its blooded waters into the sea. In an ironic twist of Spanish history, all the while Columbus circumnavigated dangerous lands beyond the rim of the known world, Spain's first great El Dorado could have been tapped only a couple of days' journey upriver under Solomon's Hill. Huelva and Spain's very own "Golden One" were also physically linked by water.

Ancient ruins dug up across 2,145 square meters (23,088 square feet) of the heart of Huelva's city center in the last decade have confirmed a widespread Near Eastern mercantile presence in Iberia and are pushing the date of contact with these silver lands ever deeper back into biblical times. The Plaza de las Monjas looks like an improbable Ground Zero for the land of Tarshish. The Bank of Spain and Deutsche Bank rub shoulders

with schools of English and the Good Burger Bar. Down the road, the Hotel Eurostars Tartessos tips its hat at the founders of the town's ancient fame. The first-story offices of Detectives Privados help distressed clients uncover unwanted truths. A life-size bronze statue of Christopher Columbus guards the entrance to the plaza, pointing his finger west, far off toward the Americas.

Some 3,000 years ago, Huelva's central square was a cosmopolitan coastal souk. Deep deposits of pottery imported from across the Mediterranean lie entombed beneath modern paving stones, including the finest ceramics of Sardinia, Italy, Greece and Cyprus. Most of Huelva's ceramics, however, came from the Phoenician homeland: No less than 40 percent of the pots and

pans resemble products from Tyre. Signature Phoenician culture was found scattered alongside: an elephant tusk, ivory waste and finished art, murex seashells harvested to make purple-dye, weaving equipment, parts of ship hulls and half-shekel, one-shekel and three-shekel merchants weights relied on to buy, sell and ensure Near Eastern and Tartessians didn't rip off one another.

To complete the scene of bustling maritime commerce, signs of metalworking litter the ancient ruins—bricks from furnace walls, crucibles for copper founding, slag and sandstone molds for casting. Huelva's rich ruins make this city the best fit for the capital of Tartessos and the biblical Tarshish. The refuse of the ages beneath the statue of Columbus in the Plaza de las Monjas places the appearance

of the Israelite and Phoenician maritime venture at Huelva close to the year 900 B.C.E. and perhaps as early as 930 B.C.E., the end of the reign of Solomon. Just as the ancient sources claimed, Tarshish lay on the far side of the Mediterranean, close to the Pillars of Hercules in the Straits of Gibraltar that marked the end of the civilized Mediterranean and start of the cruel Atlantic.

The new maritime trail changes everything. The ambivalence that came close to giving up on the Bible and tarring the Old Testament narrative of Solomon and Hiram of Tyre as a fabulous invention has been turned on its head. Solomon, Hiram of Tyre and Tarshish have shifted from a Dark Age fantasy to a brave new credible world. Archaeology has revealed a Phoenician coast stretching from Huelva in the west to Alicante in the east, with the Tyrian colonies at Morro de Mezquitilla, Almuñécar, Chorreras, Toscanos, Adra and Cerro del Villar at Malaga rivaling the Costa del Sol 28 centuries earlier. The Near Eastern merchant venturers planted and hoisted their flag over a "Costa del Phoenike" at least by the second half of the ninth century B.C.E.

The Old Testament was right in its broad-brush strokes. There's every reason to believe that a King Solomon existed, arm in arm with his Phoenician friends. The archaeological evidence points to Solomon and his court leaning on Hiram's Tyrian masters of the seas to manage the seafaring voyages. And Jerusalem put up the cash.

The one glitch in this new grand vision of Solomon and



**TOP** A colossal pierced stone found in the south harbor of Dor, Israel. Underneath lay 10th-century B.C.E. wood. **BOTTOM** Ninth-century B.C.E. silver hoard, Ein Hofez, Israel. **RIGHT** 11th-century B.C.E. amphoras found in Dor harbor, Israel. **Sarepta in Lebanon produced similar jars for exporting purple dye.**


his Phoenician allies are the missing wrecks. Were Tyrian sailors so good that they managed to avoid being wrecked? This is unlikely. Lost ships with Phoenician cargoes have turned up at Mazarron and Bajo de la Campana off Spain, Gozo in Malta, Kekova Adasi in Turkey and in deep waters off Asheklon, Akko and Atlit in Israel. All cluster no earlier than between 750 and 600 B.C.E., though.

Back where diving for Solomon all started for me at Dor in Israel, there's a twist in the tale—literally. Kurt Raveh, a marine archaeological expert, was walking his dog along the southern shores, opposite an islet long named after Taphath, the princess daughter of King Solomon, when Petal stopped swimming and suddenly walked on water. A miracle! When Kurt checked what his dog was standing on, he found what looked like a gigantic stone anchor, 2.5 meters (8 feet) long and 50 centimeters (20 inches) thick.

An even bigger surprise turned up under the anchor. Buried in the sand, Kurt discovered large wooden beams, possibly part of a ship's keel. Most of the dozens of wrecks in this ancient harbor are Byzantine and Ottoman. Astonishingly and unexpectedly, the radiocarbon results from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich came back with a reading of 997-806 B.C.E. The anchor and wood overlapped with the reign of King Solomon.

Now Kurt wants to know if the timbers are random beams or if the first shipwreck from the time of King Solomon is waiting to be dug up off Dor. And so does the rest of the world. Long live the king. ■

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# THE MAZAR TOUCH

BY GERALD FLURRY

**W**HEN JERUSALEM ARCHAEOLOGIST DR. EILAT Mazar died on May 25, 2021, at age 64, the world lost a truly extraordinary person. Eilat was one of the best friends I ever had, and her infectious passion for Jerusalem archaeology was deeply inspiring. Through her archaeology, Dr. Mazar was a tremendous source of education and hope.

We could not produce this special issue of *Let the Stones Speak*, one centered on 10th-century B.C.E. Israel and kings David and Solomon, without remembering the incredible life and legacy of Dr. Mazar, our friend and partner, and a scientist whose work, as I wrote back in 2013, I believe, will ultimately cause an earthquake in the world of archaeology. There are some very talented archaeologists in the world, especially in Jerusalem. But I believe Dr. Mazar will be remembered as one of the greatest archaeologists of all time.

When you think of some of the Bible's most famous kings, priests and prophets, David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Nehemiah flash to mind. These men were involved in some great events and accomplishments recorded in the Bible. Through her archaeology, Dr. Mazar revealed evidence of all these individuals and some of the Bible's most famous stories—and she shared these sensational discoveries with you and me.

What made Dr. Eilat Mazar such a spectacular success?

### **A Biblical Scientist**

Dr. Mazar was a brilliant scientist who placed tremendous importance in the scientific method. I heard her say on multiple occasions that “WE MUST LET THE STONES SPEAK.” This was one of her mottoes.

Our college, Herbert W. Armstrong College, partnered with Dr. Mazar on all of her excavations since 2006. Our students are young and energetic, and they would dig year-round if they could. When we weren't excavating, students would often ask Eilat when we would be back in the field digging again. She was so patient. She would explain that the work she was doing in the office and laboratory—studying and cataloging the finds and documenting them in scientific reports—was just as important as digging, if not *more* important.

In a 2007 article in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, the late Hershel Shanks highlighted Dr. Mazar's credentials. “No one would question her professional competence as an archaeologist,” he wrote.

Dr. Mazar was what we could call a biblical scientist. Unlike the vast majority of scientists today, she had no problem bringing the Bible into her science and no problem *believing* biblical history. In fact, she was EAGER to do so. *I believe this is the reason she was such an outstanding archaeologist.*

A lot of scientists and academics today see religion and science as being in competition. Many consider the Bible and science to be mutually exclusive: that you can't believe in one without disbelieving the other. Most scientists view Bible history as incompatible with their profession.

This simply isn't true, and it's certainly not what the Bible teaches.

So often, the Bible and science complement one another beautifully. This truth is proved powerfully in the archaeology of Dr. Mazar.

The truth is, it was Dr. Mazar's *fidelity to science* that led her to *use* the Bible! This is how Dr. Mazar explained it to us many years ago. *When an archaeologist excavates ancient Greece, she said, he consults the famous Greek authors and texts, such as Herodotus or the History of the Peloponnesian War, by Thucydides. If he were excavating ancient Rome, he would study ancient Roman texts. It's exactly the same with Jerusalem and Israel. To excavate in the Holy Land and in Jerusalem especially, you must study and consult Bible history.*

Who can argue with this reasoning? It is so simple and rational. Yet surprisingly, it was also somewhat revolutionary in the world of modern archaeology and science.

Many scholars and academics would consider it an embarrassment to use the Bible as a reputable historical document. Some even specifically study archaeology in an effort to *disprove* the biblical narrative. But for Dr. Mazar, the Bible was a crucial tool when digging in Israel and trying to understand Jerusalem archaeology.

To know which approach is more accurate, ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS LOOK AT THE FRUITS, some of which we have explored in this issue.

Dr. Mazar learned about the important role the Bible must play in archaeology from her grandfather Prof. Benjamin Mazar. Born and raised in Poland, Benjamin Maisler (as he was formerly named) earned his doctorate in Berlin before moving to Israel around 1927. Professor Mazar quickly became one of the fledgling nation's most influential scholars and academics. He knew and worked closely with Israel's founding fathers: figures like David Ben Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, and Zalman Shazar, Israel's third president.

Professor Mazar had a Bible with him everywhere he went. In discussions about Israel's history or a potential new development, he would consult the Bible. When he traveled across Israel, visiting a dig or starting his own, he would open his Bible and study the biblical history of the site.

For Professor Mazar and his granddaughter, the Bible was a companion in their science rather than a



Prof. Benjamin Mazar



Prof. Benjamin Mazar with Ambassador College students



Herbert W. Armstrong visits with Benjamin Mazar at dig site



competitor. Many scholars today reject the Bible as irrelevant and unimportant. But to Eilat and her grandfather, biblical history was just as important as the spade and field journal.

The fruits of this method, as we have seen, are incontrovertible—and inspiring. When archaeology is informed by the Bible, it becomes one of the most rewarding and important occupations there is.

### **A Dear Friend**

I first met Dr. Mazar in 2006, but our history together goes all the way back to 1967. That was the year I enrolled in Ambassador College—and the year the Six-Day War broke out in Israel. I believe God intervened and gave Israel a miraculous victory that awarded the Jews control of East Jerusalem. The following year, Israel began what was called the “big dig,” a massive archaeological excavation at the southern part of the Temple Mount. This dig was directed by Prof. Benjamin Mazar.

The Temple Mount dig attracted the attention of Ambassador College and its founder, Herbert W. Armstrong. Mr. Armstrong met with Professor Mazar, Tourism Minister Moshe Kol and other leaders at the Knesset at the end of 1968. He formed a partnership with Professor Mazar and Hebrew University of Jerusalem to supply half the funding for the excavations and hundreds of enthusiastic Ambassador College student workers until the conclusion of the

dig in 1978. I remember fellow Ambassador students being excited to travel to Israel for that project. Professor Mazar and Mr. Armstrong developed a deep friendship that lasted until Mr. Armstrong’s death in 1986.

While I was at college in Pasadena learning how to excavate the Bible under Herbert Armstrong, Eilat, my future friend, was spending her time on the “big dig,” being taught how to conduct archaeological excavations by her grandfather. Even as a girl, Eilat was fascinated by archaeology. She was also well acquainted and deeply impressed with Mr. Armstrong and the Ambassador College students.

Our connection with Eilat deepened in 2006 following her discovery of King David’s palace in the City of David. Between 2006 and her last excavation in 2018, we supplied Dr. Mazar with more than 50 laborers and supervisors over seven excavations. For over 15 years, our employees and students assisted Dr. Mazar with myriad endeavors: excavating; cataloging and photographing artifacts; researching, writing and editing reports; producing artwork; and publishing and publicizing her work, as well as that of her grandfather.

I visited Eilat in Jerusalem many times and have

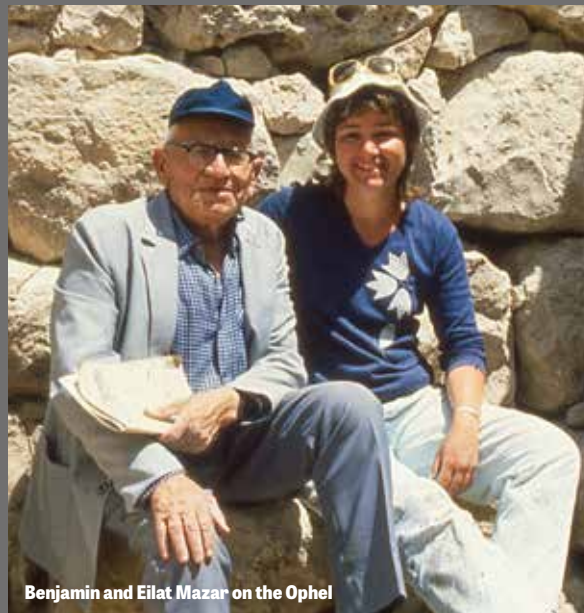




Young Eilat Mazar and her husband Yair Shoham



Eilat Mazar in the 1980s  
City of David excavation



Benjamin and Eilat Mazar on the Ophel

fond memories of our meetings on the portico at the YMCA in Jerusalem. One of my favorite memories was the meeting in which Dr. Mazar pulled her chair closer and then removed a handkerchief from her pocket. Leaning in, Eilat unfolded the handkerchief to reveal a tiny clay seal. Speaking in a whisper, but with great

emotion and excitement, she read the seal's inscription: "Belonging to Hezekiah, [son of] Ahaz, King of Judah." I was so proud and happy: My friend had discovered the only seal impression belonging to a Judean king ever found in controlled scientific excavations!

This is what Dr. Eilat Mazar did *over and over* again: She used the Bible and impeccable archaeological practices TO BRING TO LIFE SOME OF THE BIBLE'S GREATEST PERSONALITIES AND HISTORICAL EVENTS!

Today, thanks to Dr. Mazar extending the legacy of her grandfather, people visiting the City of David can walk within the same walls that King David did. Thanks to Dr. Mazar, we can touch the walls of King Solomon's palace and examine the signature of King Hezekiah!

In 2007, our workers were able to assist Dr. Mazar in excavating a tower where they found Persian-period pottery and artifacts. Dr. Mazar identified the tower as having been built during the time described in the biblical book of Nehemiah. The next year, she and a handful of our workers returned to the City of David, where she discovered the Gedaliah bulla. This clay seal

impression was originally owned by one of the princes who persecuted the Prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 38). We later had the honor of featuring this bulla and the bulla of Jehucal, an associate of Gedaliah, at an exhibit in Armstrong Auditorium on our home campus, visited by thousands of people.

Between 2009 and 2018, Dr. Mazar conducted four seasons of excavation on the Ophel, locating a royal complex built by King Solomon, a proto-Aeolic capital, the first Bes figure found in Jerusalem, many scarabs and seal impressions, coins minted during the final year of the Great Revolt, a cave with shafts and tunnels, and the bullae of King Hezekiah and Isaiah the prophet.

For years, archaeologists used the lack of physical evidence from David's time and Nehemiah's day to justify their lack of faith in the Bible. But as you have read in this issue, Dr. Mazar and a handful of other biblical archaeologists have discovered piles of evidence DIRECTLY RELATED to the First Temple Period. These discoveries alone should put those doubts to rest—if the critics and scholars would only accept the truth.

### Exalting Dr. Mazar's Work

In our final conversations together, Dr. Mazar shared some of her concerns about the state of biblical archaeology in Israel. She was bothered that too few were willing to seriously bring the Bible into their science and to highlight the crucial connection between Jerusalem archaeology and the Bible.

"You really need to have vision to do a dig in Jerusalem. YOU NEED TO SEE THE BIG PICTURE OF HOW



Armstrong volunteers on the 2012 Ophel excavation



Armstrong volunteers on Dr. Mazar's final excavation in 2018



Eilat Mazar reveals the Menorah Medallion.



Dr. Mazar stands beside massive First Temple Period wall on the Ophel.

THINGS FIT IN THE BIBLICAL PICTURE,” she told us. Eilat was troubled that some of Israel’s archaeologists and leaders lacked vision because they were unwilling to use the Bible.

However, she also said that “MANY OF THE EVERYDAY PEOPLE STILL HOLD IT FIRMLY IN MIND.”

Eilat’s remark lodged in my mind. It reminded me of a statement made by the Prophet Isaiah nearly 2,700 years ago. Isaiah 40:9 says, “O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, Get thee up into the high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, Lift up thy voice with strength; Lift it up, be not afraid; Say unto the cities of Judah: ‘Behold your God!’”

I’m not sure if Dr. Mazar was familiar with this verse; if she was, she never mentioned it to me. But I believe Isaiah 40:9 summarizes Dr. Mazar’s life and work. In a way, this verse even encapsulates the best parts of her personality.

Dr. Mazar spent most of her career working in the City of David, on the Ophel and in her grandfather’s office at Hebrew University—all three of which are situated on a “high mountain.” From these “high mountains,” Dr. Mazar made some dramatic discoveries, then wrote articles and scientific reports—which were routinely reported on in the international media—that declared “good tidings to Jerusalem” and the “cities of Judah.”

For 40 years, Dr. Mazar lifted up her voice with

strength! She was not afraid to talk about the Bible or to happily admit when the Bible intersected with her archaeology. Dr. Mazar had many critics and faced a lot of opposition, especially from other archaeologists (mainly the biblical minimalists). But she never let the antagonism bully her into silence. When it came to her archaeology and the Bible, she courageously lifted up her voice.

And what is the essential message bound up in the discoveries of King David’s palace, King Solomon’s royal complex, the seals of King Hezekiah and Isaiah the prophet, the seals of Gedaliah and Jehucal, and Nehemiah’s wall? What message is bound up in all of the pieces of the archaeological puzzle we’ve put together in this issue? The message broadcast to Judah by these sensational discoveries is, “BEHOLD YOUR GOD!”

Whether she knew it or not, Dr. Eilat Mazar declared, “Behold your God!” to the people of Israel. The more I think about Dr. Mazar and her archaeology, and her courage, work ethic and love for Jerusalem, the more inspired I am by it.

When Eilat died in May 2021, some wondered if it might slow down our work in Jerusalem. To the contrary, I am more inspired than ever to follow Dr. Mazar’s example. With the world’s greatest biblical archaeologist gone, there was a massive vacuum. It



Dr. Mazar reveals the Hezekiah bulla.



Stephen Flurry and Dr. Mazar at the King David Hotel



Gerald Flurry and Dr. Mazar in 2019

has NEVER BEEN MORE IMPORTANT for *someone* to teach about the symbiotic relationship between archaeology and the Bible, to show how crucial the Bible is to understanding Israel's past.

It is my goal to exalt the mantle of Dr. Eilat Mazar in Jerusalem, and I passionately want to help continue her work.

With Dr. Mazar's support and guidance over the past 15 years, the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology and Herbert W. Armstrong College have undertaken some wonderful and important ventures in Jerusalem. We have participated in eight separate excavations on the Ophel and in the City of David. We have curated three top-quality archaeological exhibits in America. We have worked with Eilat in the office, processing finds and documenting digs. And through this magazine (and our website), we spotlight the crucial role the Bible plays in archaeology.

The way I see it, although Dr. Mazar is no longer with us, *we are now in a new chapter*. Personally, I am MORE MOTIVATED THAN EVER to uphold and build upon my friend Eilat Mazar's legacy. Even now, we are working with Hebrew University and Dr. Mazar's family to help finish some of Eilat's projects. We are grateful to Hebrew University, the City of David and the Israel Antiquities

Authority for their support over the years, and we look forward to collaborating with these great institutions in the future. We are also exploring some exciting and important new ventures.

Whenever I think about our work in Israel, and even globally, Dr. Mazar's statement rings in my mind: "MANY OF THE EVERYDAY PEOPLE STILL HOLD IT [THE BIBLE] FIRMLY IN MIND." *These are the people we aim to reach!* We are working to exploit every possible tool to do that. The "everyday people" are a tremendous audience!

The archaeology taking place in Jerusalem—and across Israel—can be and should be *teeming* with vision! We want to emulate Dr. Mazar in this way, and surely there are archaeologists out there who feel the same. If you are one of them, we would love to hear from you. Dr. Mazar did all she could to exercise *vision* in her work. We hope we can continue to reach the everyday people of Israel with that vision and simply "LET THE STONES SPEAK."

Through her work in the City of David and on the Ophel, the name Eilat Mazar will forever be attached to Jerusalem's greatest personalities, including its greatest king. I believe that, together with her grandfather, Eilat Mazar conducted the most important archaeology ever undertaken in Jerusalem. We will forever cherish the 15 years we had working with Dr. Mazar, and we will sorely miss her profound passion for Jerusalem archaeology.

In the coming years, we will endeavor to preserve Dr. Mazar's archaeological legacy and keep it alive by working with the same passion, urgency and love. ■

# CONTINUING THE LEGACY

BY BRAD MACDONALD



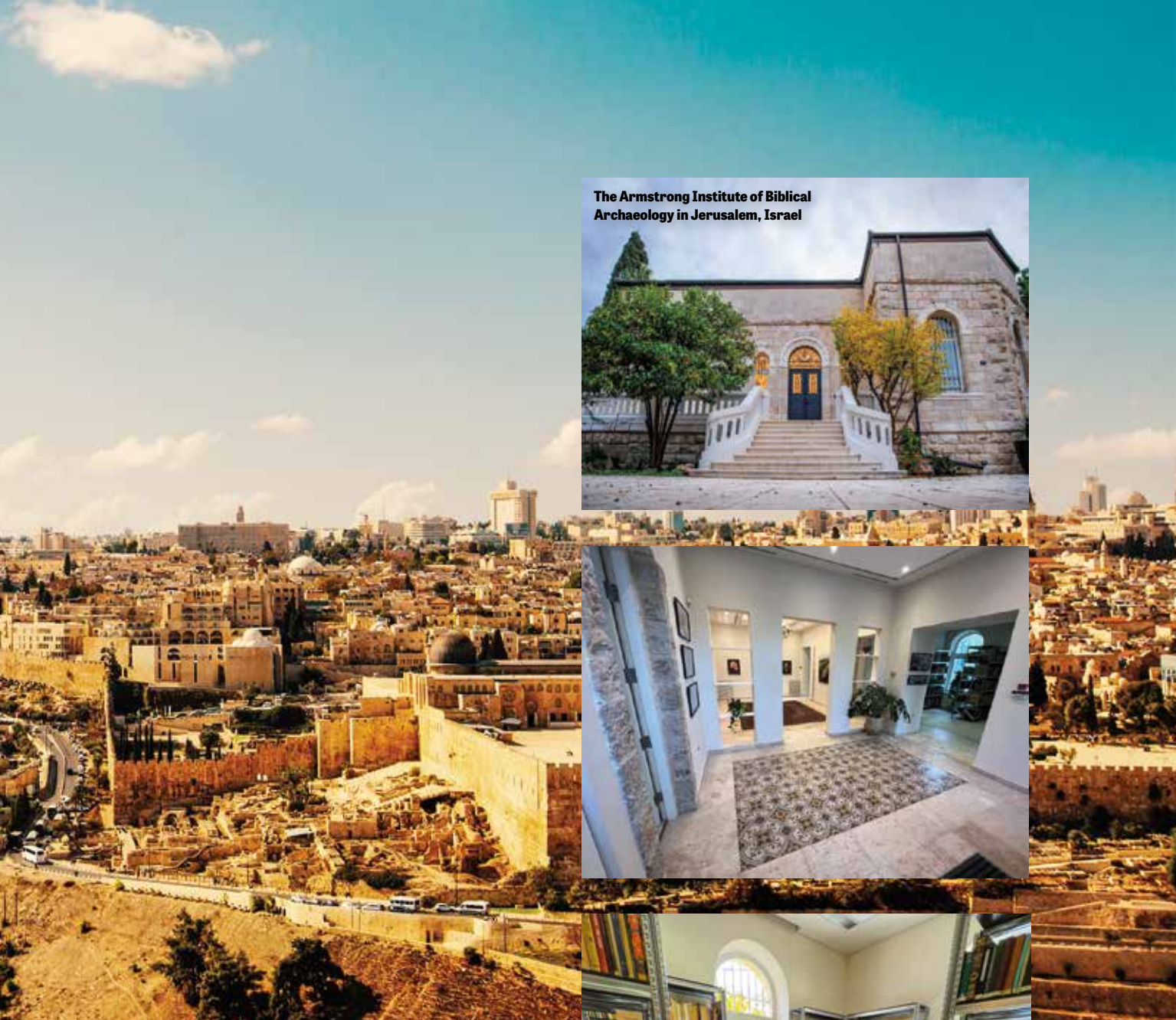
**S**ITUATED IN THE BEAUTIFUL JERUSALEM NEIGHBORHOOD of Talbiyeh, not far from the residences of both the prime minister and the president, the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology continues the archaeological legacy of Dr. Eilat Mazar and her grandfather Prof. Benjamin Mazar.

When Dr. Mazar died, she left behind a superb library of about 4,000 books and research materials. Eilat inherited many of the books and other belongings, including furniture, from her grandfather. Professor Mazar was one of the first to practice archaeology in the newly formed State of Israel. He was an esteemed biblical historian who was affectionately called the “dean” of biblical archaeology. He was also president of Hebrew University and a man who, thanks to his

pioneering role in many of Israel’s institutions, could be considered one of Israel’s founding fathers.

When a scholar dies, it is common for his or her research library to be consolidated and sold at auction. Many institutions and wealthy collectors are prepared to pay good money to own the personal library of an honored scholar. Following Eilat’s death, we asked Dr. Mazar’s family about their plans for her library. After a few short discussions, Dr. Mazar’s family agreed to sell us the library. In November 2021, thanks to the tireless efforts of Avital Mazar (Eilat’s sister) to catalog and process the books, we began taking possession of the library.

In addition to the libraries of Prof. Benjamin and Dr. Eilat Mazar, we acquired another 4,000 archaeological- and history-related books and research materials



**The Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology in Jerusalem, Israel**

from Hebrew University in Jerusalem. We are grateful to Hebrew University for these books and for their encouragement and support generally.

Today the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology has a research library of about 8,000 books. Roughly half of the books are in English; the rest are mostly Hebrew, with a selection in other languages. The library and institute are open to the public and we welcome visitors. To arrange a visit, please e-mail [letters@ArmstrongInstitute.org](mailto:letters@ArmstrongInstitute.org).

Along with the books, we also acquired much of the living room furniture of Benjamin and Eilat Mazar. If this furniture could talk, it would tell some incredible stories. For decades during the mid-20th century, when Israel was still a fledgling nation, Professor Mazar's

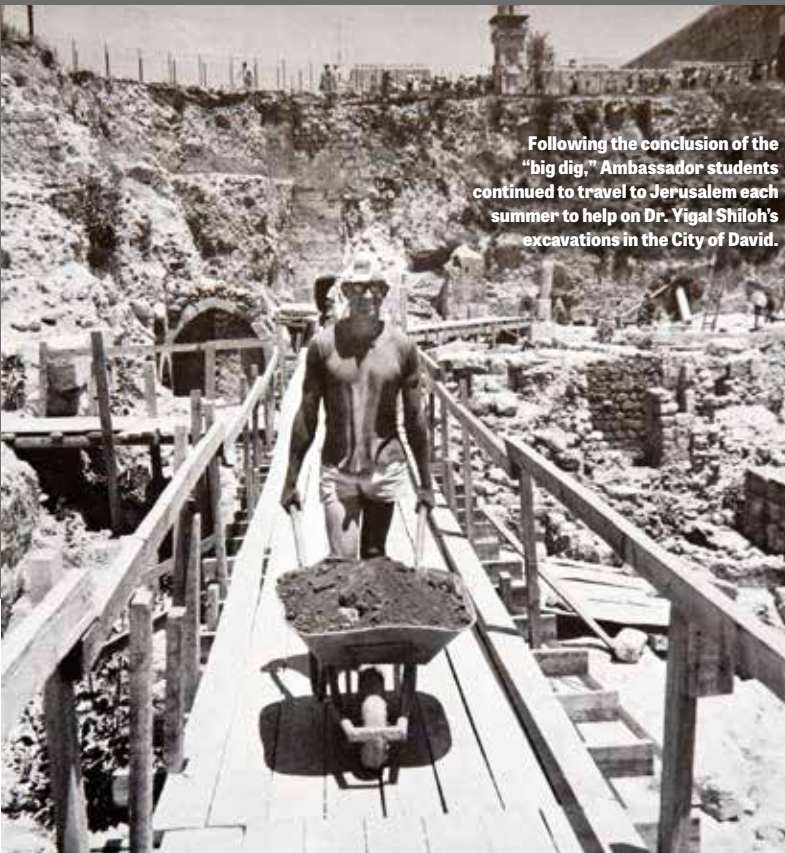
home was a gathering place for many of Israel's "greats," including many of its top politicians, generals and scholars. Huddled in Professor Mazar's living room (served coffee by young Eilat and Avital), these great figures discussed the issues of the day and mapped out the future of the burgeoning nation.



Ambassador College students participate in the "big dig" south of the Temple Mount in the 1970s. The archaeological excavation covered more than eight acres.



Longtime Israeli Minister of Tourism Moshe Kol and Herbert Armstrong share a warm embrace.



Following the conclusion of the "big dig," Ambassador students continued to travel to Jerusalem each summer to help on Dr. Yigal Shiloh's excavations in the City of David.



Children gather around Mr. Armstrong at Liberty Bell Park in Jerusalem, which the Ambassador Foundation helped build.

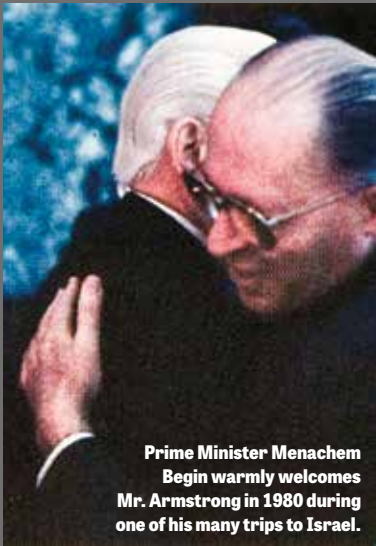
AIBA is a nonprofit, academic and educational institute named after our predecessor Herbert W. Armstrong, a popular 20th-century humanitarian and educator, known as an unofficial ambassador for world peace. Mr. Armstrong was close friends with Professor Mazar and an avid supporter of his archaeology efforts. These men first met in 1968, just

as Professor Mazar and Hebrew University were preparing to begin archaeological excavations at the foot of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Their meeting quickly resulted in a formalized "iron bridge" archaeology partnership between Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Ambassador College (the college founded by Mr. Armstrong).

Between 1968 and his death in January 1986, Mr. Armstrong and Ambassador College supported numerous archaeological digs across Israel, as well as other humanitarian projects. Mr. Armstrong traveled the globe visiting with world leaders and dignitaries, but he



Prime Minister Golda Meir was one of the first to send Mr. Armstrong an official request for a visit in the 1960s. Here, they visit in her office at the Knesset in 1971.



Prime Minister Menachem Begin warmly welcomes Mr. Armstrong in 1980 during one of his many trips to Israel.



Mr. Armstrong and longtime friend Mayor Teddy Kollek stroll through the ancient streets of Jerusalem discussing the problems facing the “city of peace.”

had a special affection for Israel. (He flew to Israel more frequently than anywhere else; during one four-year period, he returned about 50 times. Prof. Yigael Yadin referred to these as Mr. Armstrong’s “monthly visits.”) As a devoted student and teacher of the Bible, he was keenly interested in the past, present and future of Jerusalem.

During his many visits, Mr. Armstrong met with (and in several instances grew close to) most of Israel’s top leaders and officials. These included President Zalman Shazar, Prime Minister Golda Meir, President Ephraim Katzir, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Prime Minister Menachem Begin, President Yitzhak Navon,

President Chaim Herzog, Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Tourism Minister Moshe Kol. He formed an especially strong bond with Teddy Kollek, the longtime mayor of Jerusalem who was often called “the greatest builder of Jerusalem since Herod.” Mr. Armstrong and Teddy Kollek would occasionally be seen walking arm-in-arm through the streets of Jerusalem.



2006 City of David excavation



2013 Ophel excavation



2009 Ophel excavation



Gerald Flurry and Dr. Eilat Mazar



Stephen Flurry and Dr. Eilat Mazar



2022 Ophel excavation

When Mr. Armstrong died in 1986, his work and legacy were continued by Gerald Flurry, founder of the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology and Herbert W. Armstrong College. Like his predecessor, Mr. Flurry is a passionate and longtime student of the Bible and biblical history. He has authored more than 50 books on biblical figures and biblical history, and he is the chancellor of Herbert W. Armstrong College.

More than 50 years have passed since Herbert Armstrong and Professor Mazar first began practicing biblical archaeology together. Today our goal is the same as it was in 1968: to promote and share Israel's biblical archaeology and history! Operating from our new building in Jerusalem, AIBA hosts the library of Dr. Mazar, publishes *Let the Stones Speak*, and hosts

[ArmstrongInstitute.org](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org), an engaging website that features articles, videos, visuals and podcasts showcasing Israel's biblical archaeology. We also sponsor public seminars, create archaeological exhibits, and give private tours of ancient Jerusalem, primarily the Ophel and the City of David.

AIBA also continues to work with Dr. Eilat Mazar's staff and her sister, Avital, in continuing to publish the several remaining academic volumes that Dr. Mazar was unable to finish during her lifetime. In addition to the ongoing projects and work, one of our longer-term goals is to see the dig sites of Dr. Mazar and her grandfather on the Ophel continue to be developed, renewed and revitalized for tourists.

Finally, we don't just talk and write about Israel's

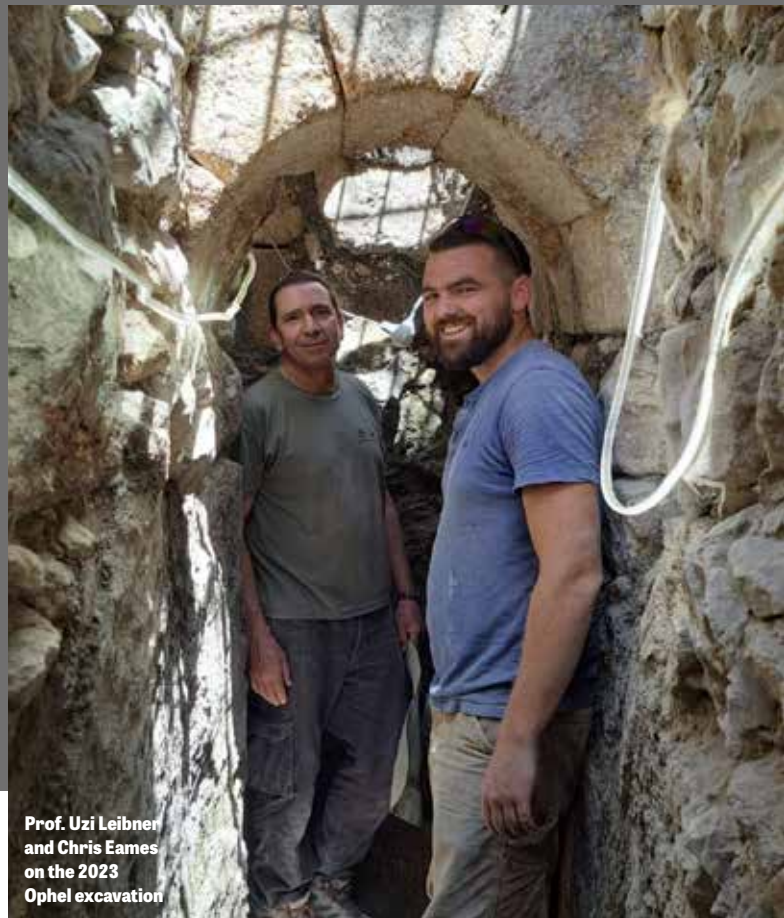




2023 Ophel excavation crew



2023 Ophel excavation



Prof. Uzi Leibner  
and Chris Eames  
on the 2023  
Ophel excavation

archaeology; we practice it too. Following our first excavations on the “big dig” Temple Mount excavations in the 1960s and '70s (and then later excavations with Prof. Yigal Shiloh), our institute has for more than 15 years continued joint participation with Dr. Eilat Mazar in her several City of David and Ophel excavations. Most recently, since the death of Dr. Mazar, we continued where she left off on the Ophel in the summer of 2022, resuming excavations under the direction of Hebrew University’s head of the archaeology department, Prof. Uzi Leibner.

AIBA could not function without the friendship and support of numerous individuals and organizations, both in Israel and beyond. These include Hebrew University, with whom the “iron bridge” partnership continues, the Israel Antiquities Authority, the City of

David Foundation and the Israel Exploration Society, to name a few. We are also deeply grateful to the Mazar family—particularly Eilat’s sister Avital, Eilat’s children, and her cousin, esteemed archaeologist Prof. Amihai Mazar—for their warmth and hospitality in inviting us, in many ways, to be part of their family. We look forward to what the future brings.

The Mazar name is one of the most important in biblical archaeology, and the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology is honored to play a role in continuing that legacy. ■



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INSTITUTE OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

**The Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology works closely with several organizations in Israel and is grateful for their ongoing support. These include:**



האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים  
THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

מוזיאון ארצות המקרא ירושלים  
Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem  
متحف بلدان الكتاب القدس



מוזיאון ישראל, ירושלים  
the israel museum, jerusalem  
متحف إسرائيل, اورشليم القدس



CITY OF DAVID  
ANCIENT JERUSALEM



עיר דוד  
ירושלים הקדומה



**Timna Valley  
Archaeological  
Expedition**

**LET THE  
STONES  
SPEAK**

*Let the Stones Speak* is also a podcast, bringing you archaeology from a biblical perspective. On location in Jerusalem, we give you the most important developments happening on the ground—and emerging from beneath it.

**ArmstrongInstitute.org**

# TOUR BIBLICAL JERUSALEM

Imagine being able to glide your hand over stone walls built by King Solomon, or walk through an ancient gatehouse used as a pulpit by Isaiah and other biblical prophets. Imagine being able to visit King David's palace, or walk through the 1,740-foot tunnel carved from stone by King Hezekiah, or peer into the pit Jeremiah the prophet was cast into.

Thanks to the work of Dr. Mazar and colleagues, as well as the efforts of the Israel Antiquities Authority and the City of David Foundation, visitors to ancient Jerusalem can now experience all this biblical history and much, much more!

As part of its goal to share ancient Jerusalem's biblical history, the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology provides personal tours of the City of David and the Ophel. The standard tour takes roughly three hours. However, the tour can be tailored to meet specific needs, interests or time constraints.



**BOOK YOUR TOUR NOW!**

[tours@ArmstrongInstitute.org](mailto:tours@ArmstrongInstitute.org)

## DONATIONS

The Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology is a nonprofit academic and educational institution headquartered in Jerusalem, Israel. AIBA does not solicit financial donations and there is no pressure or obligation to pay for our products or services. However, some have asked how they can donate to our various archaeological activities. Here's how you can make a contribution. (If you would like to talk to someone about making a donation, e-mail [letters@ArmstrongInstitute.org](mailto:letters@ArmstrongInstitute.org).)

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