



A Landscape Comes to Life: The Iron Age I

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A Landscape Comes to Life

By Elizabeth Bloch-Smith and Beth Alpert Nakhai

THE IRON I IS A FASCINATING YET FRUSTRATING PERIOD in the history of the territory now covered by the modern states of Israel and Jordan. This period is fascinating because over the course of its two hundred years (ca. 1200–1000 BCE), the Iron I landscape witnessed the formation of the social, economic, and political foundations of Israel, Judah, Philistia, Ammon, Moab, and Edom. Frustration results from ambiguous archaeological evidence and from difficulties in dating and interpreting biblical texts as they pertain to national origins.¹

The story of the Iron I is, in part, the biblical story of the transition from the city-states of Canaan to the United Monarchy of Israel. A major element in this transition was the founding of hundreds of small villages, renewing a landscape that had been uninhabited or sparsely inhabited in the Late Bronze Age (LBA). As noted by many, the stages in this transition are difficult to date and define with precision (Dever 1992a:18).

The story of the Iron I is also the story of the emergence of distinct groups on the borders of what would become Israel. The peoples of Iron I Transjordan would develop into the Iron II nations of Ammon, Moab, and Edom, as Aram would develop in the north. In contrast, neither the Philistines to Israel's west nor the Phoenicians on the northern Mediterranean coast ever formed nations with political structures similar to that of Israel. For them, the Bronze Age city-state model prevailed over the new concept of nationhood under a single king. Perhaps, then, what characterized the Iron I is that it was the era in which the peoples of the southern Levant begin to develop their own individual identities, identities that would provide the basis for nationhood in subsequent centuries.²



The Shechem plain, looking northeast, with Tell Balātah at the lower left. Most of the numerous sites that ring this valley—the nexus of communications in and through the highlands—manifest continuity of settlement from LBA II into Iron I. *Courtesy of the Joint Expedition to Shechem; photograph by Lee. C. Ellenberger.*

The third major element in the story of the Iron I is that of new relationships among the peoples of southern Canaan—between indigenous and non-native populations, urban and rural dwellers, and pastoralists and agriculturalists. From the interplay among these various groups would develop the interesting mix of people who would become the nation of Israel and its many neighbors. The dynamics of the Iron I would color the later United and Divided Monarchies in many ways, as the strongly regional character of its two hundred years would provide the background for later fragmentation in Israel and Judah.³

The background for developments in the Iron I can be found in the LBA (1550–1150 BCE). This period began with a century of Eighteenth Dynasty military campaigns designed



The Iron I Period

to bring South Canaan to its knees and ended with the virtual demise of the Egyptian empire in Western Asia. Egypt had stationed garrisons at strategic locations throughout Canaan, and the indigenous peoples paid tribute to Egypt, including victuals for their agriculturally stressed overlord. In the late thirteenth through early eleventh centuries, as drought and famine devastated parts of Western Asia, as Aegean and Anatolian peoples moved south, as international trade dwindled, and as Egypt was increasingly challenged by problems in Canaan, Egyptian hegemony ended. The reign of Rameses VI (1141–1134) offered the last significant evidence of Egyptian presence in the region (Weinstein 1981:23). The power vacuum created by the collapse of LBA empires contributed to the shifts in demographics and settlement patterns that would typify the Iron I landscape (Dever 1992c).

International trade during the LBA II is well-attested. Material culture remains and burials both highlight the presence of many foreigners in Canaan during this period of time. Among these were people from Hittite country as well as

from Cyprus, Crete, and elsewhere in the Aegean and Mycenaean worlds. At the end of the LBA II, the destruction of Ugarit on the Syrian coast underscored the massive human dislocation which set the background for the Iron I.

Surveys, excavations, and serendipitous finds yield a variegated picture of settlement. Once domestic, cultic, and monumental structures—situated in isolation and in hamlets, villages, towns, and cities—have been mapped, it still remains to people the structures. Who lived at the sites? Where did they come from? Why did they settle in these locations? What were their social, economic, political, and religious institutions? What were their ethnic affiliations?⁴

Without written evidence indicating a group's affiliation or clarifying how, for example, others regarded it, it is very difficult to establish ethnic identity. Utilizing archaeological remains, one might try to compare a highland, rural "Israelite" assemblage to a lowland, urban "Canaanite" assemblage. Twelfth century Ta'anach material culture demonstrates the difficulty of such a comparison: it is similar to that of contemporary highland villages, while the contemporary material culture of nearby Meggido preserves LBA traditions. Ethnicity is also difficult to determine at sites that according to the Bible passed between Israelite and Philistine control and produced mixed material culture assemblages. For example, Tell el-Batashi Str. V was a densely built, fortified Philistine town. Nearby Beth Shemesh III yielded material culture identical to Tell Batashi, with abundant Philistine bichrome pots. However, according to 1 Sam 6:9–15, Beth Shemesh was an Israelite town. While the Hebrew Bible is an unabashedly theological document that must be used with great caution for historical purposes, it remains a valuable—but not infallible—resource for documenting Israelite perceptions of ethnic affiliation.



Many peoples of different ethnic affiliations were among those inhabiting the Southern Levant. The identification of ethnic identity from material culture continues to prove one of archaeology's stiffest challenges. Little is as clear as (from left to right) the Canaanite bust from Ugarit (ca. 14th–13th c.), the Sea Peoples warrior from Medinet Habu (ca. 12th c.), or the Hittite in low relief from Kerkamis (ca. 9th c.).

Textual Evidence for the Iron I

Extra-biblical Evidence

No extra-biblical texts originating during the Iron I illuminate our understanding of this period. However, documents from the years leading up to the twelfth century help clarify the varied nature of the population of Canaan at the end of the LBA II. Several of the Amarna Letters, a corpus of fourteenth century Canaanite texts found in Egypt, mention a people called *ʿapiru*, who caused trouble for the Canaanite princes writing the letters and for their Egyptian overlords. These *ʿapiru* have been related to the biblical Hebrews (Leonard 1989:19; Miller and Hayes 1986:65–67 and references there). The *shasu*, apparently a pastoralist group, were also singled out for creating problems for Canaanite city-dwellers and for the Egyptians on both sides of the Jordan River. The Papyrus Anastasi I, dated to the second half of the thirteenth century, noted bands of *shasu* in the “mountains of Shechem” (Weinstein 1981:17–21; B. Mazar 1981:75; and see below).

The Merneptah Stele (ca. 1207 BCE) presents the earliest written mention of Israel. Among those conquered by the pharaoh Merneptah, it listed a people called “Israel,” located within the land of Canaan (Naʿaman 1994:247–49). Rameses III’s battles against the Sea Peoples, including the Peleset, Tjeker, Shekelesh, Denye[n], and Weshesh are depicted on the walls of the Temple of Amon in Medinet Habu (B. Mazar 1981:79). Some among these Aegean peoples soon settled along the Canaanite coast. Taken together, these LBA II references tell us about some of the rural and roving peoples who were part of the social fabric of Canaan. Though they may be difficult to trace archaeologically, they were important constituents of the Iron I population of the southern Levant.

Biblical Texts: The Era of Conquest and Settlement

The Hebrew Bible is a theological document that attained its final form long after the events it reported. Regional settlement and control were described in the context of Israel’s providential history and often reflect the situation later in Israel’s monarchical history. The vision of Israelite conquest and settlement comes from the late seventh to sixth centuries BCE Deuteronomists, and, therefore, all specific references must be scrutinized within the context of their perspective.

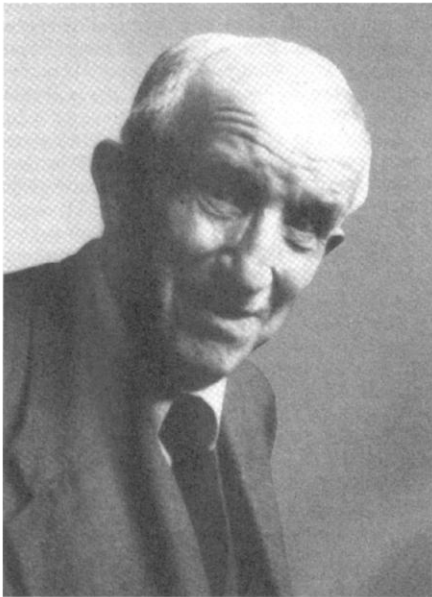
Who Was There?

Despite its temporal remove, the Hebrew Bible is useful in suggesting ethnic groups who lived in Canaan during the LBA or who entered it late in that period. To the extent that the text is descriptive of the Iron I, these groups may be counted among the peoples of the southern Levant.

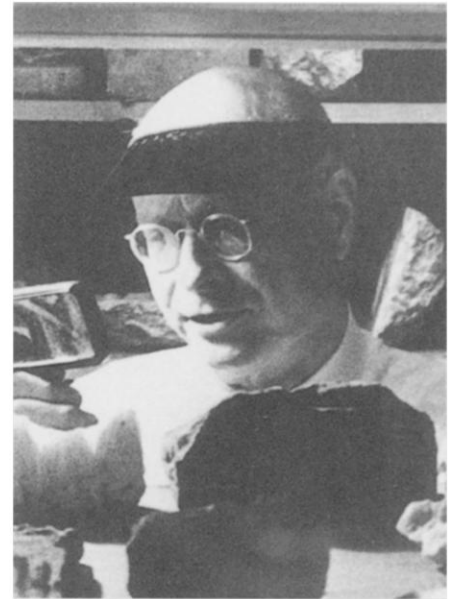
First among them were the Canaanites and Amorites (Num 21:21–26), by all accounts the original inhabitants of the land (B. Mazar 1981:76). Gen 10:15–20 describes Canaan as Noah’s grandson, the patriarch of many of the peoples the Israelites are later said to encounter as they settled down in the land of Canaan. Their territory included land from Sidon to Gaza and east to the Dead Sea.

Other indigenous peoples whom the Bible portrays as Israel’s adversaries were Edomites (Gen 36), Moabites (Num 21:10–15), Ammonites (Num 20:14–21), Amalekites (Exod 17:8–16; Deut 25:17–19), and Midianites (Exod 2:15–16; 3:1; Num 31:1–12). Each group had a territory of its own, and the Bible viewed all as Israel’s antagonists. The main issues were Israel’s safe passage through the respective territories while travelling to the Promised Land, and Israel’s religious integrity, or loss thereof (Judg 10:6–16).

Other passages mention recent arrivals, the Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Gergashites, and Jebusites, among the



Albrecht Alt and William F. Albright founded and represented the two most prominent “camps” of scholarly opinion with respect to the roots of Israelite society during the early decades of the twentieth century. Albright hewed his model more closely in line with the biblical story, while Alt denied that the Israelites were military invaders from outside of Canaan.



peoples to be eradicated from Canaan as Joshua and his tribal forces conquered the land (Gen 13:7; 15:18–21; Num 21:1; Deut 7:1–6; 20:17; Josh 3:10; 9:1–2; Judg 1:4; 11:21–23). These non-native groups, each of which settled in the relatively unoccupied central hill country (and perhaps in Transjordan as well), arrived in southern Canaan as a result of the enormous turmoil at the end of the LBA (B. Mazar 1981:76–79; see Naʿaman 1994:240–41 for further documentation). Archaeological data would extend this list to include the Philistines, described in the books of Judges and Samuel, who arrived at the same time from the Aegean and Mycenaean worlds (Judg 13–16; 1 Sam 5; and others). That the “conquest” goals were not efficiently met is made clear by Judg 3:1–6, which condemns relationships between the Israelites and members of these groups.

The Bible also numbers the Sidonians (Josh 11:8) and Egyptians (Exod 1–15), both located beyond the bounds of later Israel, among Israel’s enemies. Egypt, of course, was the greatest oppressor of all. Interestingly, the biblical story places that oppression within the borders of Egypt, although Egypt’s record as an exploiter of the population of LBA Canaan has become increasingly apparent in recent years (Ahituv 1978; Weinstein 1981; Singer 1994:284 and references there).

How Did It Happen?

The books of Joshua and Judges record varying versions of the Israelite conquest of Canaan. After the death of Moses at Mt. Nebo, his successor Joshua is said to have led the Israelite tribes in a well-planned and complete conquest of Canaan. Joshua carried out three major military campaigns. The first included the crossing of the Jordan River, the miraculous fall of the city of Jericho to Yahweh’s holy warriors, the capture of Ai and Gibeon, and finally, the invasion of the hill country around Jerusalem (Josh 1:1–10:29). The second campaign, presented more tersely, ended with the conquest of the southern cities of Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, and Debir (Josh 10:28–43). The final, northern

campaign resulted in the conquest of Hazor (Josh 11:1–13:7). As a result, the Canaanite inhabitants were allegedly decimated and their land divided among the twelve Israelite tribes (Josh 13–22).

The presentation in the book of Judges differs significantly from that in Joshua. In describing the situation in Canaan following the death of Joshua, Judges evokes an era in which Israelites and Canaanites lived side by side, sometimes amicably and at other times antagonistically (Judg 2:11–23). In times of crisis, judges led the Israelites in attacks against their enemies (Judg 3:7–8; 4:1–2; 6:1, and others), but many years seem to have passed peacefully (Judg 3:11, 30; 5:31, and others).

Recently, scholars studying the question of the Israelite settlement have suggested that Judges represents a more accurate account of the relationship between Israelites and Canaanites in the hill country than does Joshua (Miller and Hayes 1986:90–91; Dever 1990:79). This is curious since both Judges and Joshua are the work of the Deuteronomistic historians (see Cross 1973:274–89 and references there). Opinions are divided about the amount of original material available to the Deuteronomistic historians, but most scholars support the idea of a core of early material. Even a proponent of a “minimalist” point of view such as Van Seters (Van Seters 1983; see Naʿaman 1994:222 and fn. 11) concedes pre-Deuteronomistic materials. Just how early that material might be continues to be debated (see below). Still, the period described in Judges preceded history writing by centuries. The absence of first-hand documentation frustrates its historical investigation (Naʿaman 1994:227–30). Many conquest stories in Joshua were modeled on monarchical era military episodes (Naʿaman 1994:259), the same might also be true for certain of the Judges passages, such as Judges 6–8 (Payne 1983:169). In general, the Judges material demands exhaustive critical analysis on a par with that of the Joshua material.



This aerial view of 'Ai shows Early Bronze Age and Iron I architectural remains at the site. 'Ai produced no evidence of a military conquest and helped lead to a reticence to take the biblical description in the Book of Joshua at face value. However, 'Ai's Iron I remains at the site have fed scholarly reconstructions of the newly emergent village life.

Models for Understanding Israelite Settlement The "Big Three"

Over the past fifty years and more, most significant efforts made to understand the Iron I have focused upon elucidating the process of Israelite settlement in Canaan. This has created a skewed perspective. As we shall see, the Iron I was a period which saw the settlement of diverse peoples, but often other cultures have not been examined as fully as have the Israelites.

In the past, three models for understanding Israelite origins and the process of the Israelite occupation of Canaan have prevailed. Each utilized—or rejected—various biblical texts and to some degree incorporated archaeological evidence. Since numerous easily accessible sources summarize the main points of each model and draw attention to the original publications (see, for example, Finkelstein 1988b:295–314; Dever 1990:37–84; 1992; 1997), the presentation here will be brief.

In 1923, biblical scholar Albrecht Alt presented a view of the roots of Israelite society that differed radically from the

biblical perspective. In his opinion, Israelites were not military invaders from outside of Canaan, but rather pastoral nomads in the process of immigrating and settling down throughout the Iron I. That Israelite ancestors were pastoralists was, according to Alt, supported by the patriarchal stories in Genesis. Alt also cited evidence for an early settlement in the hill country, followed by a later expansion into the Canaanite lowlands (Alt 1966:135–69). Critics of this peaceful infiltration theory have noted the impossibility of proving an infiltration of outsiders into the hill country in this period (Finkelstein 1988b:304).

Other scholars, including Martin Noth, followed Alt's lead, but their ideas met with great opposition by William F. Albright and his followers, in part because they did not account for the archaeologically documented destructions of numerous sites. The Conquest Model, first formulated by Albright in the 1930s, was based upon a growing number of archaeological excavations at major tell sites in Palestine. In this model, Joshua, as it describes an all-out Israelite



Pastoralist encampment from the early twentieth century. Many of the current models of Iron Age settlement in the Southern Levant resort to some model of pastoral sedentarization to explain the burst of highland settlement. *Photograph from the Matson Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.*

military campaign against the cities of Canaan subsequent to the Exodus from Egypt and the desert wanderings, provides an accurate description of the process of the Israelite settlement in Canaan. Adherents cited the archaeologically attested destruction of Hazor, *inter alia*, as support for this hypothesis (Wright 1960:49–50). However, data from other alleged conquest sites, such as Jericho and ‘Ai, have not provided collaborative evidence for Israelite destructions. Additionally, some sites not mentioned as having been destroyed by the Israelites have revealed evidence for Iron I destructions (Dever 1990:56–60). In consequence, it has become clear that the biblical description of the Joshua conquest cannot be taken at face value.

Another of Albright’s contributions to the discussion of Israelite settlement was his development of the concept of “fossil types” which could be used to identify Israelites at settlements throughout the hill country. Among these identifiers were the collared-rim storejar, the plaster-lined cistern, agricultural terracing, and the four-room house (Albright 1960:112–18; Shiloh 1970:180; Esse 1991). Researchers accepted the idea that settlements could be classified as Israelite through the presence of some configuration of these fossil types for many years. More recently, however, researchers have noted these features in pre-Israelite and non-Israelite sites. They are now better understood not as indicative of

ethnic identification but rather as reflective of subsistence strategies (Hopkins 1987:182–84; London 1989). For example, the construction of terraces was not the reason that people were initially able to inhabit the hill country; rather, it was one way in which they were able to make long-term adaptations to their environment (Dever 1990:80).

In the 1960s, George E. Mendenhall presented a third hypothesis. He suggested that Israelites were in fact Canaanites who left their native city-states in the last centuries of the LBA and became dissident elements within the Canaanite countryside. He identified these “outlaws” with the *‘apiru* of the Amarna Letters. Ultimately, in Mendenhall’s opinion, these dissidents, fueled by passionate loyalty to their god Yahweh, came to form a new ethnic group known as the Israelites (Mendenhall 1962). Norman K. Gottwald further developed this model, describing the withdrawal of Canaanites from their native city-states as a “Peasants’ Revolt” against socio-economic inequities (Gottwald 1979). Some later scholars disputed the notion that the hill country settlers came directly out of the Canaanite urban world, and noted the theory’s limited utilization of archaeological data (Finkelstein 1988b:307–8). In addition, others argued that the model’s sociological interpretation of Israelite origins draws upon ideas of class conflict that can be neither substantiated nor repudiated.

Continuing Developments in the Theory of Iron I Settlement

More recent archaeologically-based reconstructions of the Iron I make little attempt to reconcile the biblical account with the archaeological record. While the Bible contends the Israelite tribes battled with, and in many cases defeated, the indigenous populations of Canaan to settle in the highlands, archaeologists equivocate. They attribute the increased highland population to waves of Israelite tribes (Aharoni 1970), the settling of indigenous pastoralists or nomads (Bunimovitz 1994; Finkelstein 1988b; Fritz 1987; Rainey 1994), or the relocation of Canaanite farmers (Dever 1990). Historians are admonished not to accept the biblical attribution of the destruction of Canaanite cities to Israelites, but rather to consider Philistines, Egyptians, Transjordanian peoples, and even other Canaanites as the vanquishers. Scholars variously interpret the renewed highland settlement as arising in a void resulting from the dissolution of the LBA urban civilization (Finkelstein, Na‘aman, Dever) or in a renewed stability under the aggressive Egyptian Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties (Bunimovitz).

The new theories attempt to explain the results of recent surveys and circumscribed excavations. In the last three decades, hundreds of Iron I farmsteads, hamlets, and villages have been identified through excavation and survey in the Beersheba Valley, the length of the central highlands, the Galilee, and Transjordan. As a result of this work, it has become clear that in the last centuries of the second millennium BCE, this region’s inhabitants founded many small, rural settlements. They were generally unwalled and incorporated those features necessary for self-sufficient, small-scale farmers and herders engaged in limited cottage industry.

Drawing on his northern highlands survey results, archaeologist Israel Finkelstein suggested that this region provided the core of early Israelite settlement. In his opinion, the settlers at these new sites were Canaanite pastoralists who had been in the region since the end of the Middle Bronze Age, but who, due to changed circumstances at the end of the LBA, began to settle down in the hill country. In debunking the theory of a “demographic socio-economic, and cultural revolution” and arguing that the settlers were not refugees from the LBA Canaanite city-states, Finkelstein (1988b:352–53) at first embraced Alt’s view of a peaceful nomadic infiltration from the east. In his later works, he has abandoned this idea, while still suggesting that the hill country settlement was part of a cyclical pattern of sedentarization and abandonment (1994; 1995).

As a result of his excavation at Tel Masos, an Iron I town in the northern Negev, archaeologist Volkmar Fritz developed the Symbiosis Hypothesis. He described the Iron I settlers as semi-nomadic tribes who came from a culture interdependent with Canaanite city-dwellers. Their earlier close relations with LBA Canaanites were typical of the symbiotic relationship between semi-nomads and urbanites known as enclosed nomadism (Rowton 1974). The fact that semi-nomads cyclically settle down would account for their ability to adapt quickly to village life in previously unoccupied territory. Their historic proximity to Canaanite city-dwellers would explain their adoption of the cultural markers of Canaanite city life (Fritz 1981:70–71; 1987:98).

This “Symbiosis” model attracted the attention of archaeologist William G. Dever, according to whom it offers the best explanation for the Iron I evidence. The Iron I was a period of great and sudden demographic shifts, as the central hill country, lower Galilee, and northern Negev became populated by Canaanites living in new, small, unwallled villages. In Dever’s opinion, the archaeological material, particularly those ceramic assemblages retrieved from highland villages, shows continuity with LBA urban Canaanite traditions. In addition, the agricultural sophistication with which the newcomers farmed such sites as ‘Izbet Šarṭah and Tel Masos suggests agrarian rather than pastoralist roots. The settlers of the hill country are best understood as “proto-Israelites:” that is, as Canaanites in the process of becoming Israelites. The Israelite settlement “...was a gradual, exceedingly complex process, involving social, economic, and political—as well as religious—change, with many regional variations” (Dever 1990:78–79; 1992c:103–4; 1997:25–26).

Others agree that the Iron I settlers shared a semi-nomadic origin. Archaeologist Shlomo Bunimovitz contends that, inasmuch as the nomads and city dwellers had a symbiotic relationship, pastoralists would have continued to raise animals and pursue other trades as long as the cities were functioning. At some sites, particularly those under Egyptian control, Canaanite urban life extended well into the twelfth century BCE. Thus, Bunimovitz puts a different spin on the movement of semi-nomads from the lowlands to the hill country and their establishment of villages there in the decades

before the collapse of the Egyptian empire in Canaan. It paradoxically underscores the increasing strength of imperial Egypt in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties. The Egyptians may even have had a part in forcing the sedentarization of previously pastoral peoples (Bunimovitz 1994).

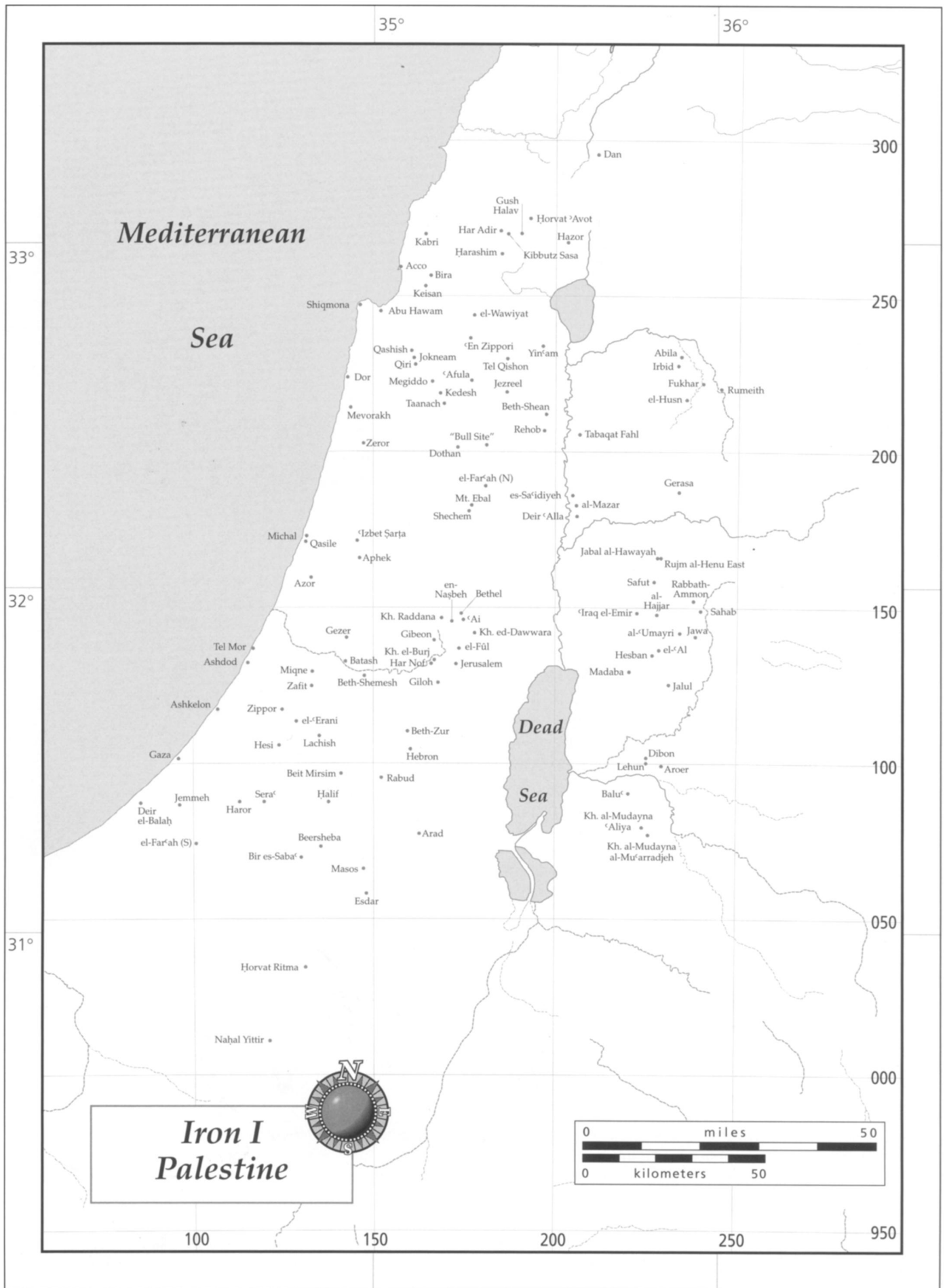
Both Øystein LaBianca and Anson Rainey cite food procurement as the factor that precipitated Iron I settlement. According to LaBianca, the critical need to procure food drove the lifestyle and social organization of the LBA and IA peoples of Transjordan. The institutions of their society were structured so as to facilitate efficient access to adequate food resources. The process of settlement intensification and abatement reflects the ways in which people exploit their environment. The more intensively land is farmed, the more people adopt sedentary lifestyles. The converse is also true; as people move toward livestock production, they migrate seasonally and resume a nomadic way of life (LaBianca 1990; LaBianca and Younker 1995). In the IA, changes in the availability of food promoted more intense land use and, thus, help to explain why the highlands experienced such a surge of settlement.

Noting a decline in annual rainfall in the eastern Mediterranean, historian Rainey posited a concomitant decline in food production that led to a reduced Canaanite urban population. Markets for pastoralists’ goods dwindled significantly. In consequence, pastoralists were drawn to the relatively unoccupied hill country, where they could settle down and produce their own grain (Rainey 1994:84).

Nadav Na‘aman’s recent work focusses upon textual analysis, examining Joshua-Judges 1 in light of what is known about IA historiographic writing. In his opinion, a combination of factors, including migrations, demographic change and the sedentarization of nomads, best explain the Iron I settlement (Na‘aman 1994). Ilan Sharon analyzes demographic theories, looking at the variables of population growth, resources, social organization, and technology in his discussion of LBA Canaanite collapse and Iron I Israelite consolidation. He sees Canaanite demographic decrease and Israelite demographic increase as causal factors for the great changes of the era (Sharon 1994).

Critique of Settlement Models

The various theories either fail to address or propose contradictory explanations for fundamental features of early Israel. Where did the new highland settlers come from? Were they immigrant or indigenous nomads, urban refugees or the multitude fleeing Egypt? If immigrants, did they enter Canaan from the east or the west? Was their relationship with the autochthonous population hostile, amicable, or both? What factors promoted Israelite cohesion leading them to distinguish themselves from their non-Israelite neighbors? What was the genesis of “Israel” of the Bible and the Merneptah stele? None of the models tackle the theological formation of early Israel, which was likely a catalyst toward nationhood as indicated by the theophoric name Isra-el. The archaeological models provide descriptive but not explanatory frameworks. While the Symbiosis Model may best describe our current understanding of the physical relationship of the



new Israelite to the extant indigenous settlements, it fails to explain how and why early Israel emerged. The following discussion attempts to account for and harmonize the biblical and archaeological evidence of settlement and conquest. Texts continue to provide the only witness to the adoption of Yahweh by El worshippers in a Canaanite milieu.

Archaeological Data

Having reviewed the most influential theories designed to explain the process of Iron I settlement, let us turn to the archaeological data. It will help resolve the question of the origins of Israel and its neighbors in the Iron I.

Regional development was one of the major characteristics of the Iron I. Occupation at some Bronze Age cities continued into the Iron I, allowing for the perpetuation of age-old indigenous traditions alongside somewhat more recent Egyptian and Aegean cultural and religious contributions. New settlements also sprang up: hundreds of small agricultural villages and hamlets founded in the hill country of biblical Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin, and Judah, as well as in the Negev and the Galilee. Aegean peoples, newcomers to the region, settled along the Mediterranean coast; Israelite and Egyptian sources name the Philistines in the south, and Tjekker, Sikila, and Sherdani farther north.

Regional variation is apparent in Transjordan as well. In the land that would be called Ammon in the Iron II, many people lived in small villages in the Iron I, and social complexity is evident at some sites. The same is true for northern Moab. The future lands of southern Moab and Edom, on the other hand, remained the territory of pastoralists.

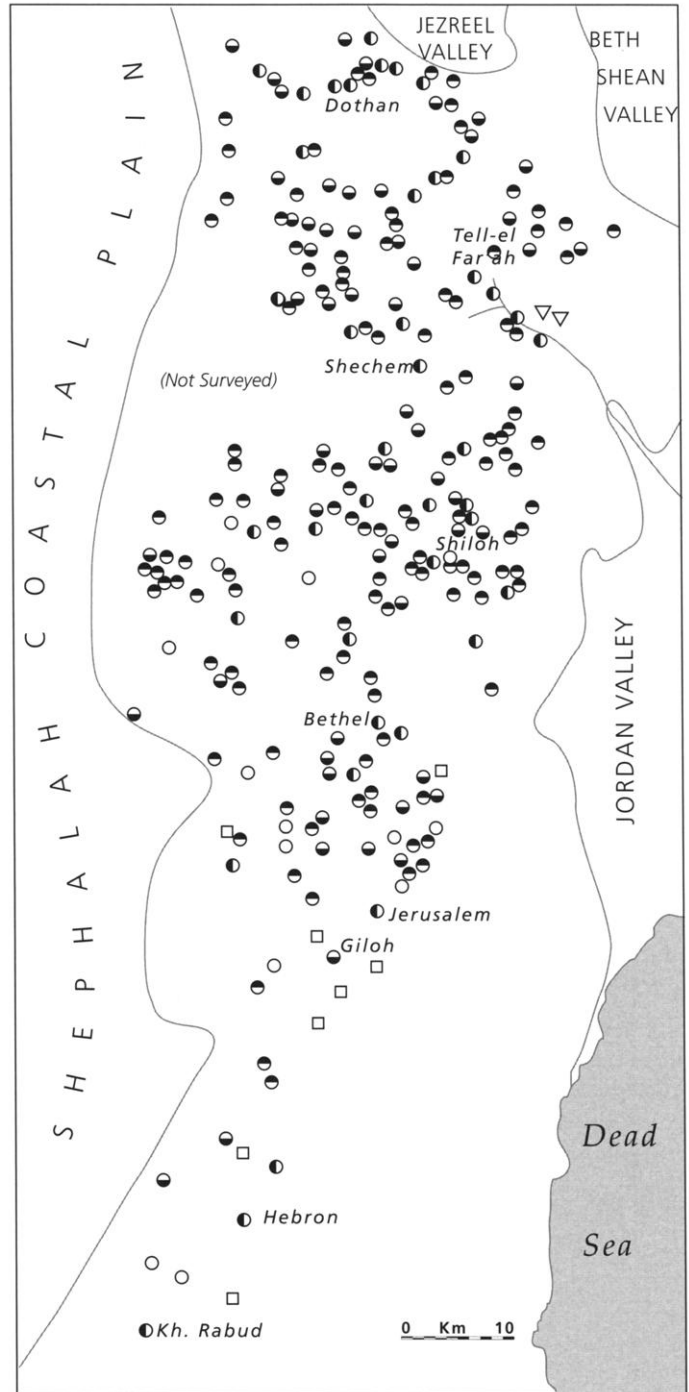
By examining sites in geographical regions that seem to coincide with biblical tribal territories and with the boundaries of non-Israelite nations of the Iron II, a picture emerges of localized socio-economic adaptations. Topography, subsistence resources and constraints, social and political organization as reflected in architecture, and material culture all help us define the various territories and peoples of the Iron I. What follows is a study by geographic region of these territories and peoples.

The Central Highlands

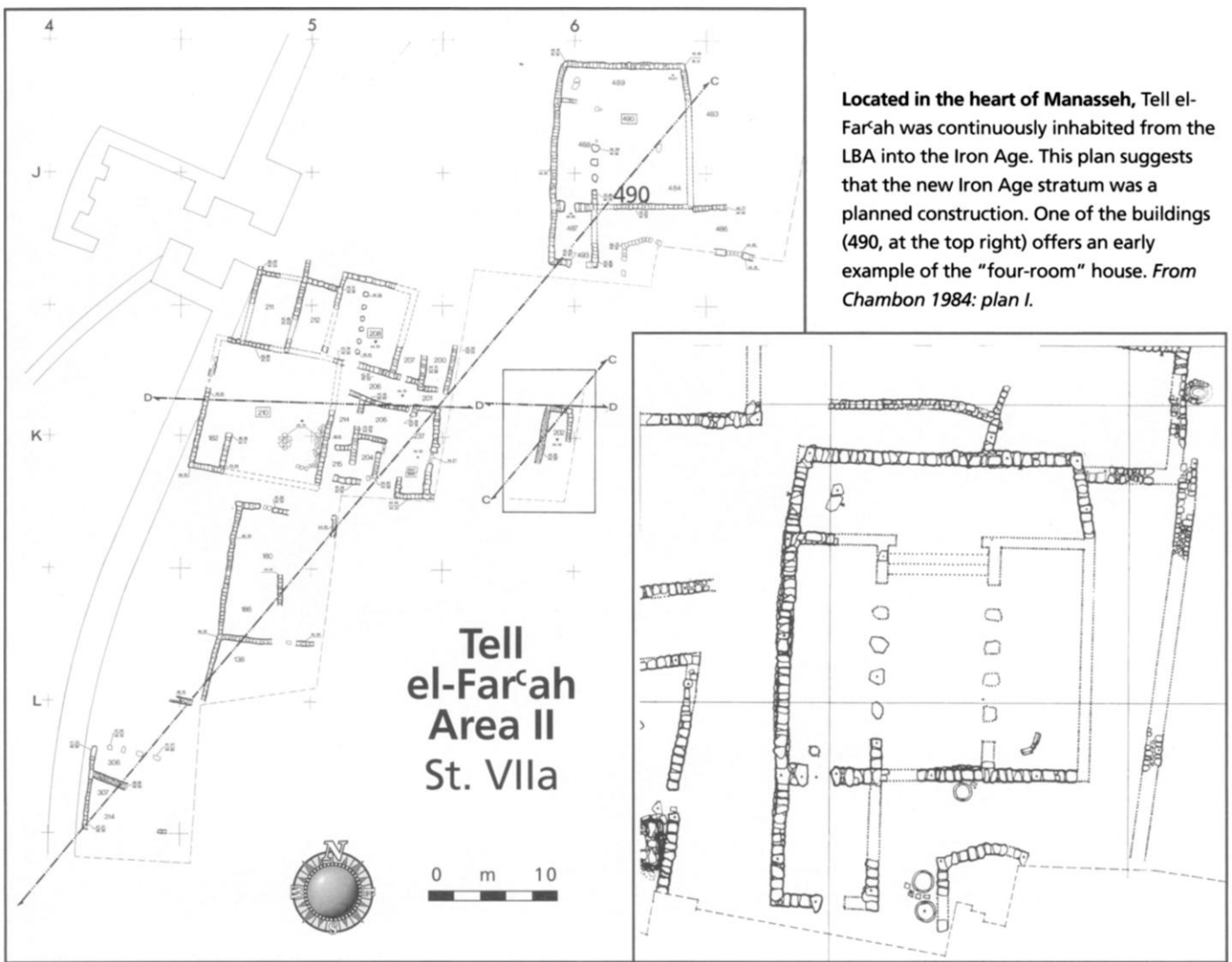
Manasseh

Territory ascribed to Manasseh (Josh 15–16) encompassed wide, fertile valleys such as the Dothan and the Sanur. Convenient transportation routes also facilitated settlement; east-west movement through the region was possible through Wadi Far'ah and the Brook of Shechem. With ca. 350–1000 mm of rainfall per year, the soils supported dense forests of evergreen oak and terebinth.

Manasseh was the most densely settled hilly zone in LB II. Continuity of settlement from LB II into Iron I is demonstrated by the Shechem regional survey in southern Manasseh. Of the 22 LB II sites, 17 continued into Iron I. In addition, 8 new sites were founded in Iron IA. Iron Age pottery from the tell and surveyed sites, including those newly founded, continued the LBA traditions. All the identified sites were abandoned from ca. 1125 BCE until 975 BCE (Campbell 1991:93–96).



Map depicting the settlement pattern of the highlands centered on the tribal territory of Manasseh. The distribution shows a clear clustering of sites along the roads, suggesting a degree of economic interdependence, and a range of site size, frustrating simple generalizations about social structure. Site symbols indicate type (cemetery, settlement, unclassified) and size: Category A: 0.1–0.3 ha; Category B: 0.4–1.0 ha; Category C: 1.1–5.0 ha; Category D: 5.1–9.9 ha. *Map courtesy I. Finkelstein.*



Located in the heart of Manasseh, Tell el-Far'ah was continuously inhabited from the LBA into the Iron Age. This plan suggests that the new Iron Age stratum was a planned construction. One of the buildings (490, at the top right) offers an early example of the "four-room" house. From Chambon 1984: plan I.

Finkelstein's Manasseh survey revealed a total of 96 Iron I sites: 22 large sites (greater than 1.5 ha), 59 medium-sized sites (.5–1.5 ha), 13 small sites (.1–.2 ha), and two cultic sites. Most were located along the perimeter of the Dothan, Far'ah, and Malih valleys (Finkelstein 1988b:89). In the northern and central parts of the surveyed region, Iron I settlements were founded along roads at the perimeters of or at junctions leading into those valleys best-suited to grain agriculture. In the Dothan Valley, for example, new Iron I sites were located within one and a half kilometers of large LB II/Iron I transitional sites. This clustering of sites along the road suggests economic relations among the traditional "Canaanite" and the newly founded Iron I "Israelite" settlements. The range of site size (.8–3.5 ha for those on the northern side of the Dothan Valley) precludes simplistic generalizing about social structure.

Excavators have published in detail very few Iron I sites from Manasseh. Tell el-Far'ah North (Tirzah) exemplifies an unfortified "Canaanite" town that was continuously settled from the LBA into the Iron Age. Iron Age inhabitants of the twelfth-eleventh century (Str. VIIa) founded their buildings on LBA walls, but with new orientations. This was a planned town, with housing units and a possible domestic

shrine or temple fronting a street (Chambon 1984:Plan I). Each excavated house measured approximately 100 m² (buildings 208, 210, 490). Building 490 is an early example of the "pillared" or "four-room" house, with two longitudinal rows of pillars dividing the front room into thirds and an elevated rear broadroom (Chambon 1984:19–21, fig. 1).

Excavations at Mt. Ebal yielded a 1.4 ha Iron I site with a commanding view. The site's controversial altar (Joshua 8:30–32) has been published in detail (see below), but the settlement to the east of the *temenos* remains unexcavated. This site is atypical for Manasseh in its isolated hilltop location and distance from extensive agricultural land, suggesting that cultic reasons played a role in its selection.

Both surveyors of this region have made biblically-inspired claims for initial settlement in the east with a westward expansion, but neither Zertal's nor Finkelstein's published surveys substantiate this scenario, as both lack reliable chronological indicators for dating sites (Finkelstein 1988b:349; 1994:160). The putative accompanying shift from dry farming and herding to horticulture is similarly unproven; no patterned archaeological data undergird their reconstructions of a pastoral economy or horticulture.



Ephraim and Benjamin

South of Manasseh, in the territories of Ephraim and Benjamin, the mountains are steep, and few valleys are suitable for cultivation, although limited farming is possible on natural mountain terraces. The mountain watershed allowed north-south movement through the region as far south as Hebron, but blocked east-west travel.

In the territory surveyed by Finkelstein, only five sites had been settled in the LBA, while Iron I witnessed some 120 new settlements, at relatively high elevations with good views of the surrounding region. Given their elevation, it is not surprising that terracing accompanied approximately one-quarter of the sites in antiquity, although it is difficult to determine which were terraced in Iron I.

In the northern and eastern highlands, large villages outnumbered small ones. Settlement was most dense in the north where rainfall was the greatest. In the western foothills and far eastern desert fringe, small villages outnumbered large ones. Approximately half the surveyed sites in Ephraim were hamlets measuring less than .3 ha and consisting of a "few houses." Most were situated approximately one kilometer from a larger village, on which they were likely economically dependent. Other hamlets existed in isolation, seemingly self-sufficient.

The border towns of 'Ai and Khirbet Raddana typify southern Ephraim's "large villages" founded in Iron I. Each

A "pillared" or "four-room" house at Kh. Raddana. The size of this house and the quality of its construction suggest a more or less complex village social structure. *Photograph courtesy of W. Dever.*

of these 1 ha villages, one built on a ridge and the other on a hilltop, housed approximately 150 people. Each contained compounds of two or more houses, evocative of "the household of Micah," a compound consisting of multiple houses for family members and guests (Judg 17:5–18:31). Houses from both 'Ai and Radanna ranged in size from 43–80 m², with walls sufficiently wide to carry a second story (Braemer 1982:166–69). Khirbet Radanna Sites S and T produced structures with a single, longitudinal pillared partition in the front room, a rear broadroom, and enclosures against exterior house walls (Callaway 1965, 1993; Callaway and Cooley 1971).

Villagers at both sites dug cisterns to store water, kept sheep and goats, and used stone saddles and querns to process grain grown on the terraced hillsides. Few objects were preserved in the 'Ai houses. At Radanna, however, house size, quality of construction, and small finds attest to occupational specialization, literacy, and a social and economic hierarchy among residents. The Site S compound was bigger, better built, and equipped with more installations and ancillary structures than the other compounds at the site. Bronze slag-encrusted crucibles, tuyeres, and numerous bronze objects

demonstrate that it functioned as a bronze workshop. Two offering stands found on a stone-paved platform in a Site T house have been taken as evidence for a domestic shrine (Callaway 1993:1253). Iron implements and an Old Hittite-style multi-handled krater decorated with bovine-headed spouts (Callaway and Cooley 1971; Cooley 1975) suggest short and long distance trade respectively. A jar handle incised with three letters in proto-Canaanite script, dated to around 1200 BCE, raises the possibility of literate settlers (Cross and Freedman 1971). Villagers abandoned both sites in the mid-eleventh century.

According to the account in Joshua, Bethel was originally assigned to the tribe of Benjamin (Josh 18:22), but shortly thereafter Ephraim claimed the city for its southern border (Judg 1:22–26). The wealthy LBA town gave way to its “Israelite” successor, built on a new plan and lacking fortifications. The twelfth century (Phase 2) House 38, built reusing



△ The Ahilud jar handle, unearthed at Kh. Raddana, with its proto-Canaanite script, points to the literacy of some of the settlers at this site.

▽ Kh. Ghuraba, ca. 5 km west of Shiloh, represents a typical newly-founded Iron Age site in the highlands, small in size and lacking fortifications. About 10 km to the east, Kh. ed-Dawwara varies from the typical by virtue of its encircling wall. *Photograph courtesy of I. Finkelstein.*

the walls of a LBA mansion, took the shape of a rectangle with a rear broad-room and a square front room subdivided by a partition wall (Albright 1943:21–22; Braemer 1982:202). At 180 m², this house—with its walls of large field stones, stone-paved floors, and lack of a pillared partition—more closely resembles the buildings at Tell Beit Mirsim and Beth Shemesh, farther south, than the pillared houses of the central highlands.

Khirbet ed-Dawwara, a .5 ha fort, was situated on a hilltop 10 km north-east of Jerusalem with a commanding view of the desert. The single-period settlement, interpreted as an Israelite outpost, functioned from the second half of the eleventh through the end of the tenth century BCE. A wall two to three meters wide encircled, and in some cases abutted, four three or four-room pillared houses, each measuring roughly 120 m². Several rooms preserved hearths associated with cooking pots and colored-rim storejars, but excavators found no evidence for grain processing or additional storage (Finkelstein 1988a).

Judah

“Judah” is used here as a regional designation rather than the biblical Greater Judah (Judg 15:1–12, 21–62). It refers to territory stretching from just north of Jerusalem, east to the Dead Sea, south to Beersheba (including the territory of Simeon), and, periodically, west to encompass the Shephelah (discussed below). The steep, forest-covered Hebron hills, like those of Ephraim to the north, provided neither easily cultivable valleys nor east-west transit through the region. Only Jerusalem was strategically located, at the juncture of the north-south highland route from Shechem to Hebron and the east-west pass which provided access from the coast to the Transjordanian plateau.

Renewed settlement in the twelfth to mid-eleventh century produced 24 sites; 17 were tells or situated at high elevations, often clustered, and most were medium or large in size. These sizable sites contrast with the predominantly small sites of the region in the LBA as well as with contemporary Iron Age sites in the highlands north of Jerusalem. Population concentrated between the



large sites of Jerusalem and Hebron, with the number of sites gradually decreasing towards the south. While many new settlements were founded beginning in the mid-eleventh through the tenth centuries, with a continued preference for large sites (Ofer 1994:104, fig. 5; his Iron IIA), a number of sites were abandoned. Some, including Tell en-Naşbeh, Tell Beit Mirsim, Beth-Zur, and Hebron were later resettled in Iron II (Mazar 1990:338).

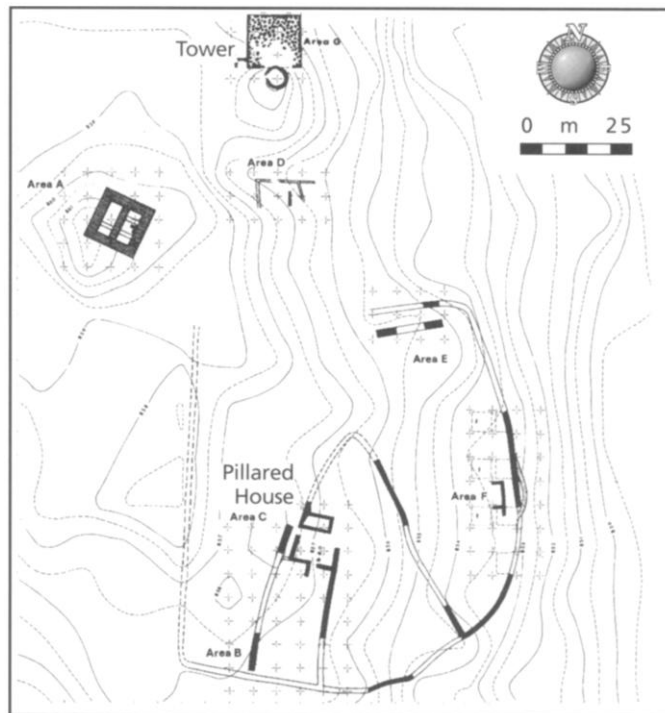
Settlers founded Giloh in the early twelfth century BCE on a ridge-top southwest of Jerusalem. The reconstructed site, interpreted as a “fortified herdsmen’s village,” included a defensive tower. Fifty meters to the south, a perimeter wall enclosed an area of .6 ha with a pillared house and adjacent animal pen. While lacking a convenient water source, the site was located near arable land with easy access to roadways. Giloh’s excavator considers the fragmentary remains of Building 8—restored with a pillared front room and rear broadroom—a prototype for later Israelite pillared houses. The limited and homogeneous pottery assemblage, consisting primarily of collared-rim pithoi and cooking pots, demonstrates continuity with LBA traditions. Sites elsewhere in the central highlands (Shiloh, Bethel, Tell el-Ful, Beth Zur) and in the Jezreel Valley (Megiddo, Taanach) yielded roughly contemporary ceramic parallels (A. Mazar 1981;1990:339–40).

General Discussion: The Central Highlands

What precipitated settlement in the central highlands? Archaeology provides no direct evidence of the impetus for settlement in the more remote and inhospitable highland regions, and the Bible alludes to the difficulties inherent in turning the hills into viable farmland (Josh 17:17–18). However, factors known to promote sedentarization among modern pastoralists likely applied to early Iron Age settlers as well. They include the need for improved security, the influence of adjacent cultures, and regional economic alternatives to pastorally-based subsistence (Finkelstein 1988b:345). For the central highlands, the continued vigor of Canaanite sites ringing the Dothan and other northern valleys may have provided the impetus, political stability, and economic viability for the earliest Iron I sites in northern Manasseh.

The central hill country consisted of discrete topographic units roughly corresponding to the tribal territories. These units varied in their characteristic settlement patterns and economic adaptations. In northern Manasseh, cereal crops flourished in the valleys, so new Iron I settlements founded adjacent to LBA sites along valley perimeters exploited the fertile valleys. In Ephraim, the northernmost settlements likewise occupied valley edges, but at higher elevations. Farther south in Judah, settlements were less numerous, larger, and increasingly isolated. Similarly, settlements diminished in number east of the Jordan River from Ammon in the north through Moab in the south.

In northern and central Manasseh, several sites located along valley edges or at access points leading into valleys were fortified in the LBA and into the Iron I (Zertal sites 23, 26, 95, 97, 137). Only two settlements in southern



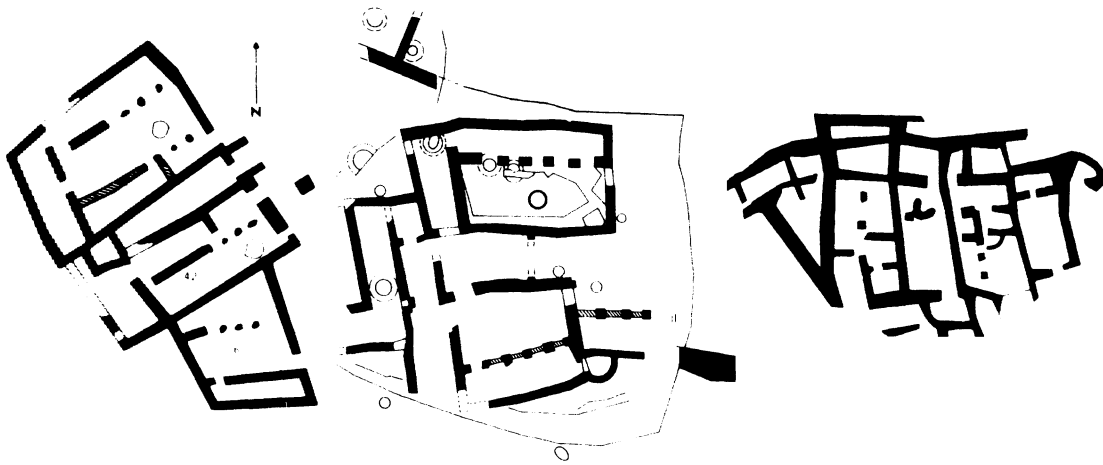
Site plan of Giloh shows a tower at its northern edge as well as a perimeter wall which encircled an area of approximately .6 ha. A pillared house stands within this enclosed area. *Plan courtesy of A. Mazar.*

Manasseh may have been fortified in the Iron I. They are the strategically located 3.0 ha site of Jaba^c (Zertal no. 125) and the 2.2 ha site of Khirbet Qumy (Zertal no. 193), situated along a valley margin on the road leading to Shechem.

Further south, the hilltop or ridge location of most sites in Ephraim and northern Judah provided the natural strategic advantage of a commanding height and view. Giloh provides the single example of a site with a defensive wall and tower (cf. Judg 8:17; 9:46–49, 50–52). While Khirbet ed-Dawwara preserves a hint of fortifications with some domestic structures abutting a wall, ^cAi and Tell en-Naşbeh were both planned with an outer ring of contiguous houses forming a border, perhaps designed to keep animals in as much as invaders out. The inhabitants of Tell en-Naşbeh inexplicably built silos outside the settlement perimeter.

Twelfth to tenth century fortifications were limited in number and scope. Reigning peace would have precluded the need for defensive walls, but Judges 5 describes a somewhat unstable situation with bandits roaming the roads. Settlements built along valley perimeters, particularly at access points into the valleys, were particularly vulnerable and so were more likely to be fortified. Hilltop and ridge locations precluded the need for fortifications as the terrain provided natural defenses.

The typical hill country residence at newly-founded Iron I sites was the “pillared” or “four-room” house, a square to rectangular house with a rear broadroom and a front courtyard divided by one or two rows of pillars (1.1–1.8 m high) to demarcate side rooms (see Holladay 1992 and references therein). Small arched doorways or troughs between pillars, plus flagstone paving and the lack of hearths, ovens,



Well-developed domestic architecture from Kh. el-Meshash, Area A., Stratum 2b; Kh. Raddana, Site S; and 'Ai, Area 2. A rectilinear house with a rear broadroom and a front courtyard divided by one or two rows of pillars, this structure represents an adaptation to farm life. It is an ideal home for a family practicing mixed farming and pastoralism. *Plans courtesy of L. Stager.*

or cisterns in the side rooms suggest the side rooms sheltered animals. The animals were secure at night, and radiated heat to warm the house during the cold winter months. Iron II literary and archaeological evidence suggest at least a partial second story for living and sleeping space. The width of the stone foundation walls, the diameter and regular spacing of the pillars, and the stone stairs preserved in some Iron II houses (Beersheba, Tell Beit Mirsim, Tell en-Naşbeh) support such a reconstruction.

Stager has described the utility of these domestic buildings. "The pillared house..." he writes,

...was first and foremost a successful adaptation to farm life: the ground floor had space allocated for food processing, small craft production, stabling, and storage; the second floor (*'aliyah*) was suitable for dining, sleeping, and other activities... Its longevity attests to its continuing suitability not only to the environment, especially where timber was available, but also to the socioeconomic unity housed in it—for the most part, rural families who farmed and raised livestock (1985:17).

Pillared buildings, constructed both individually and in compounds, served as dwellings for nuclear and extended families. The interior ground floor space of pillared houses at 'Ai and Raddana ranged from 42–80 m². Estimating 10 m² of roofed space per person, the structures would have housed 4–8 people, though more people are possible with additional second storey space. These low estimates are corroborated by modern-period censi of hill country Arab villages which found households averaged 3.6 (1871) and 4.4 (1920s) family members (Finkelstein 1988b:268–69 fn. 22). Some housing units were configured to create shared central courtyards for extended family social and subsistence purposes. Such units may be the archaeological expression of the *bêt 'ab* (Stager 1985), a socially and economically integrated extended family, consisting of three to four generations (cf. the incest taboos and the punishment of future generations [Lev 18–20; Exod 20:5].)

Structures at sites with LBA to Iron I continuity contrasted sharply with the new Iron I highland pillared houses. Wall foundations of buildings at Tell Beit Mirsim, Beth Shemesh, Bethel, and Tell el-Far'ah (N) delineated structures ranging in size from 100–200 m², more than double the size of the 'Ai and Raddana dwellings. The Tell el-Far'ah (N), Beth-Shemesh, and Tell Beit Mirsim structures were square and lacked pillars. Monumental buildings, such as the one from Beth-Shemesh, were unparalleled in the central highlands.

In general, the newly founded Iron I hamlets appear to have been self-sustaining, dispersed settlements subsisting on a mixed economy of small-scale farming, herding, and stock breeding. As a result of variations in topography and geology, the subsistence base and economy of settlements varied from north to south. In Manasseh and northern Ephraim, where towns and villages clustered along valley perimeter roads and access points, a redistributive economy may have functioned with large, strategically placed sites moving crop surpluses out of the valleys. 'Izbet Šarṭah is one example of a site with a silo capacity greater than estimated settlement needs. Accordingly, it has been interpreted as a collection point for highland grain to be sold or bartered to lowland populations (Finkelstein 1988b:76–77).

Further south, terracing at 'Ai and Raddana in conjunction with valley dry farming indicates Iron I highland horticulture and cereal cultivation as part of a mixed subsistence base. Wheat and barley predominated. The primacy of cereals is indicated by the numbers of storage silos, carbonized seeds, flint sickle segments, querns, and grinding stones. In addition, residents cultivated olive, grape, almond, pomegranate, fig, and wild-pear. Trees probably occupied a marginal place in the subsistence economy given the limited number of installations used for converting their yield into secondary products such as wine and oil (Rosen 1994). In fact, surveys identified only two sites with olive presses in Ephraim, and both may date to Iron II (Finkelstein 1988b:165, 171). While rocky, sloping terrain is not well-suited to grain cultivation, the large number of rock-cut and stone-

lined pits and silos in conjunction with reaping and processing implements testify to self-sufficient, highland settlers who processed and stored grain.

In addition to their agricultural work, Iron I highland settlers raised sheep, goats, and cattle. Animals spent the night in stables on the ground floor of pillared houses and in adjacent pens (Giloh, ‘Ai?). Sheep and goat were attested in the greatest numbers, followed by cattle. Since sheep and goats better convert cereals into meat, milk, fiber, and leather, settlers probably kept cattle primarily as draught animals (Rosen 1994).

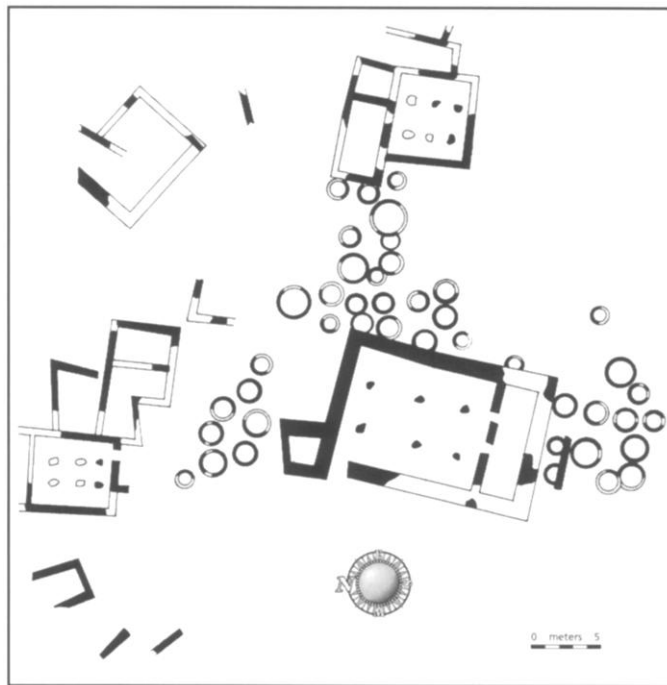
Iron I highland settlements produced little evidence of craft specialization, with the exception of the bronze workshops at ‘Ai and Beth Shemesh. The Bible describes men engaged in construction, metallurgy, and heavy farming tasks, while light farming, food preparation, cooking, spinning, and weaving were the women’s domain (Exod 35:25–26; 1 Sam 8:11–13; Meyers 1988:139–49). Excavations have identified no reciprocal trade items and few ceramic imports or luxury items. Pottery was largely utilitarian, limited primarily to storage jars and cooking pots. This restricted repertoire, with minor variations in vessel shape and rim profiles, a virtual lack of decoration, and an absence of import imitations probably indicates local production.

Overall, numerous factors including isolation, rugged terrain, and few indications of domestic comforts create the impression of Iron I settlers as subsistence farmers and herders on the rocky hillsides. However, rare imported vessels, metallurgical specialization at select sites, twenty-three inscribed arrowheads,⁵ and seven inscriptions testify to the presence of some relatively wealthy and literate individuals and families.

Prior to the establishment of the United Monarchy, the Bible describes a period of shifting alliances among tribes administered by “judges.” While judges conducted military campaigns, literary traditions mention no construction projects, standing armies, or large-scale undertakings in conjunction with their position. This picture of regional affiliations within borders corresponding to topographic regions, along with the lack of monumental constructions, correlates well with the archaeological evidence. However, “tribal” affiliation remains archaeologically elusive.

The only archaeologically identified cult sites are two mountaintop shrines in the northern territory of Manasseh: Mt. Ebal, north of Shechem, and the Bull Site in the hills near Dothan. Both are presumed to be Israelite, based on their location in biblical Israelite territory.

Later biblical tradition identifies Mt. Ebal as the site where Joshua built an altar (Deut. 11:29; 27:4–8; Josh 8:30–32). On an extension of the northeast slope of Mt. Ebal, a stone wall enclosed a circular altar approximately two meters in diameter. It was later covered by an 8 × 9 m rectangular altar with massive outer walls and two adjacent, rectangular, stone-paved rooms. The fill of the rectangular structure—presumably taken from the earlier circular altar—contained ashes from trees and burned bones of bulls, sheep, goats and young male

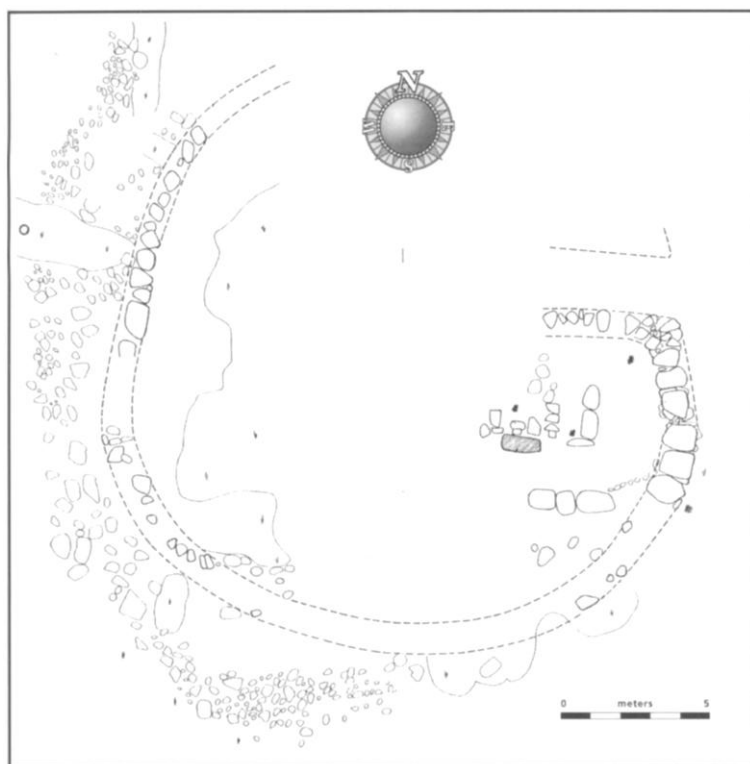


The late eleventh-early tenth century plan of ‘Izbet Šarṭah reflects its inhabitants’ shift to more intensive cultivation. Given the silos’ grain storage capacity far in excess of the needs of the site’s inhabitants, ‘Izbet Šarṭah may have served as a collection point for grain that was subsequently exchanged with lowland populations. *Site plan* courtesy of I. Finkelstein.

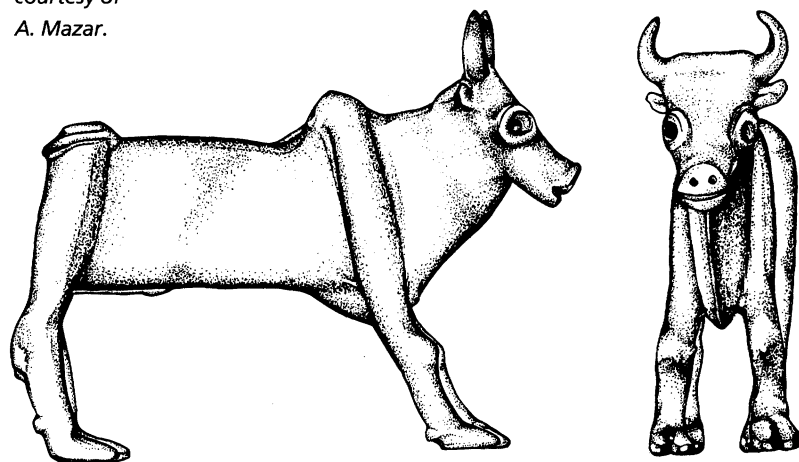
fallow deer (Zertal 1986). While unique, the stone structures with ash and burned bones are likely two superimposed altars. This superimposition may indicate an earlier “Canaanite” altar superseded by an “Israelite” altar. There is no archaeological evidence that the altar functioned as a supra-tribal Israelite cult center despite the biblical attestation (Zertal 1986; cf. Kempinski 1986 for the suggestion that this structure was a defensive tower similar to one from Giloh).

The early to mid-twelfth century open-air “Bull Site” situated on the summit of a high ridge, may exemplify a biblical “high place” (1 Kgs 14:23). A stone circle approximately 20 m in diameter enclosed a sacred area containing a “standing stone” with “offerings” on an associated stone pavement, an 18 cm long bronze statuette of a bull, a fragment of a ceramic incense burner or model shrine, cooking pots and bowls, animal bones, and flints. As an emblem animal, the bull may represent Baal, El, or Yahweh. The story of Gideon in Judges 6 describes the worship of Baal by Canaanites and Israelites living in the vicinity of the Bull Shrine. However, given the site location within biblically defined Israelite territory and the bull calves erected by Jeroboam I in the temples at Dan and Bethel (1 Kgs 12:28), this bull may well have represented Yahweh (Mazar 1982:26–37; 1990:350–52; see Coogan 1987 and Ahlström 1990 for alternative interpretations).

Rather than presenting a dramatic break with earlier “Canaanite” cultic practices, the earliest “Israelite” cult sites demonstrate continuity with indigenous practices. The Israelite



◁ **The Bull Site** is one of the two archaeologically identified cult places in the northern territory of Manasseh. An early to mid-twelfth century open-air summit site, the Bull Site takes its name from a diminutive bronze statuette of a bull unearthed on a pavement enclosed within a circle of stones and sporting a “standing stone.” Whatever the ethnic identity of the worshippers at this site, their religious material culture does not represent a break with “Canaanite” cultic practices. *Top plan courtesy of A. Mazar.*



△ **This 18-cm-long bronze bull statuette** possesses obvious continuities with both MBA and LBA religious practices. The bull could equally be the emblem of Canaanite Baal or Israelite Yahweh. Archaeology has not yet discerned for the Iron I any differentiation of cultic material culture in the highlands. *Drawing courtesy of A. Mazar.*

era Mt. Ebal altar incorporated earlier sacrificial remains into the construction of the new altar built directly on top of the previous one. “Standing stones” and bull figurines such as those found at the Bull Site were features of the indigenous MBA and LBA cult. Refraining from pig consumption is a possible Israelite ethnic marker and cultic taboo (Lev 11:7; Deut 14:8; Isa 65:4, 66:3, 17; Hesse 1990). The absence of pig bones distinguishes the Iron I highland population from its coastal, Shephelah, and Transjordanian neighbors.

The Late Bronze-Iron Age I Canaanite Fortress Temple 1 at Shechem has been identified with the Temple of Baal-berith/El-berith destroyed by Abimelech and his supporters (Judg 9:4, 27, 46–49; Toombs and Wright 1963:29; Stager n.d.). This large Canaanite sanctuary was originally constructed in the LBA and destroyed around 1100 BCE (Toombs 1979:73). Its impressive scale stands in contrast to contemporary and rather modest Israelite places of worship.

Cave and bench tombs, both utilized in LBII Canaan, were the exclusive Iron I burial types in the highlands from Dothan south to Hebron and in the Shephelah (Bloch-Smith 1992:167–77, fig. 16). The tomb was the eternal residence for nuclear and, sometimes, extended family members. As such, each tomb’s architectural plan, its attired bodies, and its many mortuary goods (including ceramic vessels, food, jewelry, and personal items such as seals, tools, and figurines) preserve a microcosm of daily life (see Bloch-Smith 1992 for an extended treatment).

Population estimates for the central highlands vary

considerably. Given the difficulty of estimating built and roofed living space necessary to calculate an ethnographic-derived estimate of one person per every 10 m² (Naroll 1962), Broshi and Gophna (1984) proposed 25 persons per 100 m² settlement area. Estimates range from 40,650–60,000 for the settled population west of the Jordan River by late Iron I (Finkelstein 1988b:332–34; Mazar 1990:337).

Epigraphic Evidence of Early “Israel”

Pharaoh Merneptah’s “Hymn of Victory” provides the first extra-biblical mention of Israel. This poem attests to the existence of a people “Israel” by the end of the thirteenth century. Israel is mentioned along with the cities of Ashkelon, Gezer, and Yanoam, but its geographic location is uncertain (Na’aman 1994:247–49). Perhaps Merneptah’s Israelites were the El worshippers mentioned in the Jacob/Israel stories near the Jabbok River (Wadi Zerqa) in Transjordan and in the highlands of southern Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen 32:23–29; 33:18–20; 35:6–10), i.e., the Iron I settlers identified in archaeological surveys and excavations in the central highlands and the Jordan Valley/central Transjordan (see below).

The extent and the political and religious structures of Merneptah’s “Israel” remain uncertain. Yet, from the beginning of the Iron I, the northern part of the central highlands underwent a dramatic increase in settlement. In many ways, these highland settlements resembled those of the lowlands (see below), but were distinguished by the absence of pig, reliance on collared-rim pithoi, and relatively small

pillared houses. As suddenly as they appeared, highland sites disappeared. Settlers abandoned numerous settlements and entire regions in Manasseh, Ephraim, Ammon, Judah, and the Shephelah during the late twelfth and eleventh centuries, including in the Shechem region, 'Ai, Raddanna, Tell en-Naşbeh, and Tell Beit Mirsim. Neither the Bible nor archaeology describe or explain the demise of the highland settlements, although incipient urbanism may have been a factor. This widespread abandonment throws into question the relationship of Iron I early Israel and Iron II monarchic Israel.

The Galilee

The mountainous Galilee is the northernmost geographic region in Israel. Geological divisions between its northern and southern regions have led to differences in settlement patterns. The rugged and heavily forested Upper Galilee is a high plateau ranging from 1000 m in the south to 500m in the north, where it reaches the Lebanese Litani River Valley. The Lower Galilee is transected by four east-west mountain ranges, their peaks reaching no higher than 600 m. Three wide intermontane valleys separate these ranges, providing fertile farmland and facilitating communication. The Jezreel Valley marks the southern extent of the Galilee. This broad valley, open to the east and west, allows for easy passage from the coastal plain to the Beth-Shean and Jordan River Valleys, and onward into Jordan and Syria.

Upper Galilee

Biblical passages which refer to the Upper Galilee in the Iron I include the stories of the battle of the waters of Merom and the destruction of Hazor (Josh 11), the tribe of Dan's migration north to the city of Laish (Josh 19:40–48; Judg 1:34; 18), the story of Deborah (Judg 4–5), and the list of unconquered Canaanite cities in Judg 1:27–34. Descriptions of tribal allotments (Josh 13–19) suggest traditional demarcations to Naphtali and Asher following the lines of the Galilean intermontane valleys (Frankel 1994:21–22). However, the list of unconquered cities in Judg 1:21, 27–35—borrowed from the tribal allotments noted in Joshua—probably reflects the later reality of the tenth century BCE (Na'aman 1994:268).

Contemporary understanding of the occupation of the Upper Galilee began in the 1950s, with Aharoni's groundbreaking survey. Since that time, excavations at major sites such as Hazor (Y. Yadin; A. Ben-Tor), Dan (A. Biran), Acco (M. Dothan), Tel Keisan (J. Briand and J.B. Humbert), and Kabri (A. Kempinski, et al.), and a series of regional surveys and small-scale excavations (R. Frankel; Z. Gal; M. Aviam noted in Frankel 1994:fn. 34) have vastly expanded our understanding of that region in the Iron I.

Iron I settlement in the Upper Galilee reflected LBA settlement patterns. The eastern Galilee boasted 40 mostly new Iron I sites. These small (.2 to 2.0 ha) sites clustered in regional pockets rather than spreading out evenly across the landscape. In this way, they retained the regionalism of the LBA. Their ceramic assemblages were commonly limited to pithoi, cooking pots, and small kraters (Frankel 1994:25–26). They were founded at the very end of the twelfth century or, more

Pharaoh Merneptah's victory stele

contains the first extra-biblical mention of the people "Israel," but the location and structure of this "Israel" remain uncertain. Nevertheless, the poem demonstrates the existence of a people "Israel" by the end of the thirteenth century.

Photograph by Maryl Levine.



likely, in the eleventh century (Finkelstein 1988b:97). Surveyors found no sites between this region and that of Aharoni's survey in the eastern sector of the Upper Galilee.

Tyre of the Iron I remains unknown (Ward 1994:75). However, a string of settlements close to the modern Lebanese border, all containing Tyrian ceramic vessels, may reflect the southern borders of that Iron I city-state. These sites included the large city of Tel Rosh, perhaps to be identified with Beth-Anath (Josh 19:38), as well as the fortress at Har Adir and the sites of Horvat 'Avot and Kibbutz Sasa (Frankel 1994:32–33).

Somewhat farther south, the fortresses at Har Meron and Har Canaan may be linked to new Iron I settlement in the Upper Galilee. Not far from Hazor, they and their neighboring sites belonged to the territory of the tribe of Naphtali (Josh 20:7). The pithoi found at these sites were typically of the Galilean type (Frankel 1994:32–33). Tel Kabri, possibly ancient Rehob (Josh 19:28), had been an important city within the territory of LBA Acco, to its southwest. Its Iron Age I occupation is not well known (Gal 1992:61; 1994:38; Kempinski 1993a). Both Kabri and nearby Har Hagamal, overlooking the Acco Plain, ultimately fell within the purview of the tribe of Asher.

Among the Bronze Age city-states of the Upper Galilee, Hazor had been the most significant. Its disproportionately large size (80 ha) underscores its importance and its title, "head of all those kingdoms" (Josh 11:10), yet, its authority



The Iron I village of Hazor, Str. XII, was limited to the acropolis area of the site and consisted of an impoverished, and perhaps transient, settlement. A small, unwallled village emerged later in Iron I, but nothing in its material culture indicates that it was an Israelite village. *Photograph courtesy of R. Cleave.*

was limited by powerful neighbors. Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasty Egyptian military campaigns reached for its territory from the south (Frankel 1994:20–21), while Acco, on the Mediterranean coast, stood as a foil on Hazor’s western border, and coastal Tyre checked the northernmost extent of its power (Gal 1994:38).

In archaeological scholarship, the thirteenth-century destruction of LB IIB Hazor (Str. XIII=1A) ordinarily marks the transition from Canaanite to Israelite culture in the Upper Galilee. Originally dated by Yadin to the mid-thirteenth century, a more recent investigation has shown that the Str. XIII destruction may have taken place in the first third of that century (Beck and Kochavi 1985). The Hazor destruction has been linked to Israelite tribes (Josh 11:10; so Yadin 1979), or, along with Acco, to the Egyptian army that wished to eliminate a potentially troublesome competitor in the north (Kochavi cited in Singer 1994:309, fn. 2), or even to competing Canaanite city-states (Frankel 1994:32–34). According to the current excavator of the site, Amnon Ben-Tor (1997a:4) the precise date and cause of the destruction remain uncertain.

In consequence, the question of whether the founding of other Galilean villages pre- (Aharoni 1957a:150) or post- (Yadin 1972:131–32) dated the Iron I settlement that followed Hazor’s thirteenth-century demise is problematic. It is likely that Canaanites fleeing the destruction of their long-time urban homes settled at least some of these villages regardless of who put the torch to Hazor (Frankel 1994:32). The limited number of excavated sites in the region exacerbates the difficulty of establishing a precise chronological sequence for the founding of the Iron I villages of the Upper Galilee.

The village of Hazor Str. XII (limited to the acropolis) consisted of a small, impoverished settlement typified by silos, hearths, and the foundations of simple huts. Its pottery

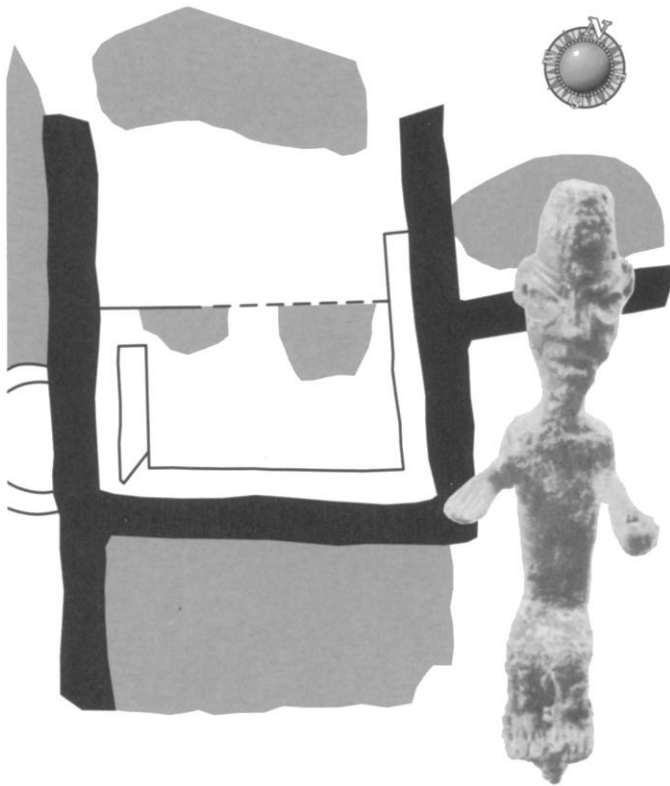
resembles that at other twelfth century sites in the Upper Galilee and includes Galilean and Tyrian pithoi. Alternately, pastoralists—rather than villagers in a settled community—may have made use of the rounded enclosures and storage facilities at Iron I Hazor (Hopkins 1993:210). Here, as at Dan, the many silos at the site may indicate the capacity for agricultural surplus (Meyers 1983:52).

Later in the Iron I, an unwallled village appeared (Str. XI). Nothing found in Str. XII–XI indicates that Hazor’s inhabitants were now Israelite, but because of the detailed conquest story in Joshua 11 and the scale of the LB IIB destruction, LB IIB historians commonly assume this. They find support in the lengthy gap following Str. XIII, the complete change in settlement strategy in Str. XII, and the occupational continuity between Str. XII and Str. XI (Yadin 1972:134; Beck 1989:361). In the mid-tenth century (Str. X), Hazor became a strategically important Israelite city, as Solomon made it one of his administrative centers and reshaped it with massive construction projects (1 Kgs 9:15). It may have been at this point that its earlier, memorable destruction came to be attributed to the more recent Israelite inhabitants.

The simple mid-eleventh century Israelite village at Hazor (Str. XI) contained a small sanctuary, Room 3283. It was a 5 x 4 m room with benches along its southern end. An offering deposit filled with bronze votive objects buried under the floor highlighted its sacred function. The deposit contained a bronze figure of a seated male wearing a cone-like helmet and holding a weapon in his left hand. This figurine likely originated in one of Hazor’s magnificent LBA temples and was reused in this eleventh century village. Room 3283 and environs also produced incense stands, votive arrowheads, metal weapons, and other precious objects, while a row of four stone pillars border a paved area to its west (Beck 1989:358–62; Yadin 1972:132–33, fig. 29; Yadin 1975:257). Given our limited archaeological evidence for religious observance in the Iron I, it is not possible to characterize this cultic center as either Israelite or “other.”

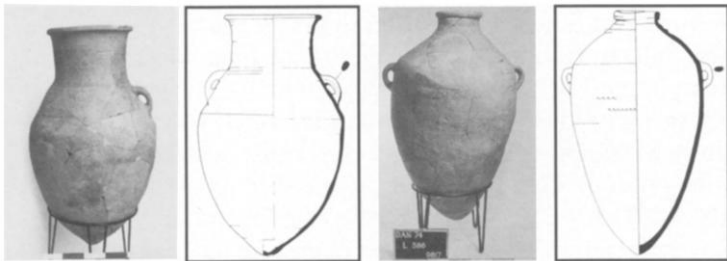
LBA Tel Dan (Tell el-Qadi), home to the thriving Canaanite city of Laish, met its end late in the thirteenth century (Str. VIIIB). Its subsequent occupation has been attributed to the tribe of Dan, whose wanderings, victory over the Canaanite inhabitants of Laish, and occupation of the renamed site of Dan are described in the books of Joshua (19:40–48) and Judges (1:34; 18). The length of the gap between LB IIB Dan Str. VIIIB and Iron I Dan Str. VI is unclear. Given the 100–150 year gap between LB IIB Hazor (Str. XIII) and Iron I Hazor (Str. XII), and the similarity between Hazor (XII–XI) and Dan (VI–V) in the Iron I, a similar gap between Dan’s LB IIB and Iron I makes sense (Na^caman 1994:272).

Traces of walls and floors and the many deep storage pits found in clusters throughout the site characterized Iron I Dan (Str. VI). Excavations found pithoi of the Galilean and collared-rim types, as well as many large kraters and cooking pots. Foreign imports, common in LB Laish, disappeared. The absence of significant architecture, the prevalence of sheep and goat bones, and the many silos and large storage vessels



△ **Aerial view of Dan (Tell el-Qadi).** The LBA Canaanite city at this site was known as Laish, and it suffered destruction in the late thirteenth century. The next occupants of the site have been identified as the tribespeople of Dan. However, there may have been a 150 year-long gap between the final strata of the city of Laish and the initial settlement of the Iron I period. *Photograph courtesy of R. Cleave.*

◁ **The mid-eleventh century village at Hazor (Str. XI)** boasted a small sanctuary. The 5 x 4 m room (Room 3283) had benches along its southern end. The sacred status of the space was revealed by the discovery of a deposit of bronze objects under its floor. Incense stands and votive arrowheads joined a bronze figurine of a deity among the artifacts unearthed in the room and the surrounding area. *Photograph and plan from Yadin 1975.*



◁ **Photographs and line drawings of Galilean and collared-rim types of pithoi** (H: ca. 1 m). Both characterize the ceramic assemblage of Iron I Dan (Str. VI). The Galilean pithoi have clear antecedents at LBA sites such as Tyre and manifest the continuity of pottery-making traditions in Upper Galilee. Collared-rim store jars are much more commonly found in the highlands to the south. Some scholars have connected the presence of these "southern" pithoi at the northern site of Dan with the biblical story of the migration of the tribe. *Photographs and line drawings courtesy of Tell Dan Excavations, Hebrew Union College, Jerusalem.*

led the excavator to conclude that the population of Dan Str. VI was transhumant (Biran 1994:126–35). The fact that Dan's collared-rim jars are far north of their normal range—fabricated (for the most part) in the south—suggests to scholars that the residents of Dan Str. VI were southerners, just as posited by the narrative in Judges 18 (Biran 1994:129–32).

The biblical story of Micah's idol and the tribe of Dan culminates with the Danite conquest of Laish and the establishment of a cultic center there (Judg 18:27–31). While no remains of that cultic center, said to include an idol (*pesel*) and a Mosaic priest, have been found in Dan's sacred precinct, it is not impossible that Dan did contain an Iron I sanctuary, one which Jeroboam capitalized upon several centuries later (1 Kgs 12:28–29). This notwithstanding, given the polemical and satirical nature of the Judg 17–18 narrative, it is unlikely that the story should be construed as descriptive of an actual historical episode (so Na'aman 1994:270–71).

Later in the Iron I, settlers built a village of stone houses (Str. V). While some elements in the abundant ceramic assemblage indicate continuity from Str. VI to Str. V, the

Tyrian pithoi and Philistine bichrome ware suggest increasingly wide-ranging contacts for the local inhabitants. Fire destroyed Str. V in the mid-eleventh century (Biran 1993:326–67; Biran 1994:135–42).

The Storejars of the Upper Galilee

The storejars of the Iron I have been the subject of a great deal of scholarly discussion. The collared-rim jars of the north, especially at Dan, have been identified as those used by the first Israelites to occupy the Galilee. These early settlers brought at least some of the storejars with them from the south (Biran 1989). Albright considered the collared-rim storejars an indicator of Israelite presence at any number of sites (1960), and others have identified the storejars of the north, especially those at Dan, as part of the equipment brought from the south by some of the earlier Israelite settlers. More recently,

scholars have seen the storejars as testimony to agricultural subsistence and unique storage needs (Finkelstein 1988b; London 1989).

The Galilean and Tyrian pitthoi typical of the Iron Age I in the Upper Galilee differ from the collared-rim storejars more commonly found in the hill country to the south. Their antecedents, and those of the cooking pots, can be found at LBA sites such as Hazor and Tyre, underscoring the continuity of ceramic traditions in the Upper Galilee and reflecting the enduring importance of regional cultural differences (Frankel 1994:27–29; Esse 1991).

The Upper Galilee: Summary

The Upper Galilee of the Iron I can be characterized by the presence of small newly-founded highland villages clustered into regional components that reflect the earlier influence of important LBA city-states (Tyre, Acco, and Hazor) and the later configuration of the Israelite tribes (Frankel 1994). At those large cities of the LBA which underwent massive destruction sometime during the thirteenth century (Dan and Hazor), the initial Iron I settlement was significantly more tentative than its later Iron I successor. Due to the breakdown of the LBA trade networks, the loss of foreign suppliers, and the simplicity of life in these agricultural villages, economic self-sufficiency prevailed. Exceptions to this include imported collared-rim storejars (Biran 1994:132) and some Philistine pottery at Dan. Overall, contacts were regional, reflecting residual LBA territorial patterns (Frankel 1994:29).

In later biblical tradition, the Upper Galilee became the tribal allotment of the originally southern tribe of Dan (Josh 19:40–48; Judg 18), of Asher (Josh 19:24–31), and of Naphtali (Josh 19:32–39). However, the continuity of Tyrian and Galilean ceramic traditions from LBA II to Iron I demonstrates the enduring presence of indigenous northerners in the Upper Galilee and contradicts the notion that the inhabitants of this region moved here from southern homes. The destructions of major cities such as Hazor and Dan indicate turmoil in the region, but there are many possible sources for that turmoil. Pastoralists (*shasu*, *ʿapiru* and others), long noted as troublesome to the citydwellers, may have created problems, although they were probably incapable of razing a heavily defended walled city. Pressures created by the settlement of the Sea Peoples along the coast may have caused shifts in the political stability of life further inland. Various groups from Anatolia and Syria moved south at this time as well. Urban Canaanites may have been on the move, attempting to expand territory or destroy enemies. Perceived threats to Egyptian stability may have met with military responses.

Where precisely the southern groups biblically identified as Dan, Asher, and Naphtali fit in remains unclear. The presence of a southern pottery form, the collared-rim storejar, at Dan indicates that the Danites did indeed move from the south to this most northern of Galilee sites. The Bible suggests that members of the other two tribes also settled in the Upper Galilee, but that cannot be substantiated archaeologically. The majority of residents in the region were old-time

Galileans who were either shifting from pastoralism to farming or fleeing the destruction of the major cities of the region. Dan aside, the Iron I settlement pattern of the Upper Galilee, and the biblical tribal demarcations noted in Joshua 19, reflect traditional LBA settlement patterns and populations (Frankel 1994:29–34).

Lower Galilee

The Bible recounts epic battles between Israelites and Canaanites in the Galilee. The historicity of Joshua's victories at the Waters of Merom (Josh 11:1–9) and at Hazor (Josh 11:10–15), and Deborah and Barak's victory at Mt. Tabor (Judg 4–5) is much-debated (Na'aman 1994:257–58). Nonetheless, this militant epoch may belong to the first half of the eleventh century, suggesting that Philistines joined Canaanites in an ultimately unsuccessful effort to prevent an Israelite takeover of the northern valleys (Singer 1994:318–22). However, given the uncertainty about the historicity of the Galilean battle(s), efforts to match the Joshua 11 and Judges 4–5 narratives with archaeological data are misplaced.

A mix of urban sites (Hannaton, Tel Rekhesh), towns or villages (Tel Yin'am, Tell el-Wawiyat, Tell 'Ein Zippori), and a fortress (Tel Qarnei Hittin) represent the limited settlement of the LBA Lower Galilee. These settlements, all located in the southern part of the Lower Galilee, likely relate to the flourishing LBA occupation of the Jezreel Valley and the Plain of Acco (Gal 1988). Thirteenth-century destructions or abandonments ended the Canaanite occupation at some (Tel Qarnei Hittin, Hannaton; Gal 1994:36–39), while others (Tell 'Ein Zippori, Tell el-Wawiyat) were inhabited throughout the twelfth century and even later (Dessel 1999).

Surveys of the Lower Galilee indicate some two dozen Iron I settlements, either with prior inhabitation or founded anew, primarily in the twelfth century. Most were located in its southwestern part, i.e., the Beth Netofah Valley and the Nazareth Hills. Iron I occupation in the northern and eastern Lower Galilee was more limited. The contours of the settlement pattern relate to the fate of Lower Galilee's major LBA sites. In areas near sites destroyed late in the thirteenth-century, small-scale settlement resumed a half-century or so later. Closer to the Jezreel and Beth–Shean Valleys, where Egypto-Canaanite sites experienced continuous occupation from the LBA into the eleventh century, new sites were not established in the Iron I (Gal 1994).

With few exceptions, then, settlement in the eastern Lower Galilee did not resume until the period of the Israelite monarchy. The strategically located fortress of Tel Qarnei Hittin was destroyed in the mid-thirteenth century; excavators found only a single pit dating to the Iron I. The major LBA site in this region was at Tel Rekhesh. Its destruction may have taken place in the twelfth century (Gal 1992:87–91), in conjunction with the Egyptian loss of control over the Jezreel and Beth–Shean Valleys. Tel Yin'am in the Yavne'el Valley was destroyed late in the thirteenth century. Occupation there soon resumed. A series of architectural phases demonstrating continuity from the twelfth through the tenth centuries characterize its Iron I settlement (Liebowitz 1981; 1993).

▷ **Tell ‘Ein-Zippori** in lower Galilee was a continuously occupied village from the LBA II into the Iron I period. The remains on the tell included this noteworthy large building complex (Building A, Field I). *Photograph by J. Dessel, courtesy of the Sepphoris Regional Project.*



▽ **The Jezreel Valley** offered the only east-west passage through the highland backbone of the Southern Levant. The valley's copious level land and strategic significance attracted extensive Egyptian-sponsored settlement during the LBA. Numerous prominent sites ring the valley. *Photograph by R. Cleave.*

Tell el-Wawiyat is located in the Beth Netofah Valley. In the LBA, several substantial buildings dominated this well-to-do settlement. The buildings and pottery of the twelfth century indicate close continuity with their LBA predecessors. Throughout the twelfth century, Wawiyat may have continued to serve an elite function, evidently redistributive rather than agricultural. The absence of a destruction layer suggests that the site was abandoned rather than destroyed. Its inhabitants likely left in response to the weakened socio-economic state of nearby sites, including (presumably) Tel Hannaton and sites along the Mediterranean coast and in the Jezreel Valley. Later in the Iron I (eleventh century), a group of squatters reoccupied the earlier settlement, constructing simple homes within the still extant larger structures (Dessel, Nakhai, and Wisthoff 1993:1500–01).



The village of Tell ‘Ein-Zippori, located along the Nahal Zippori, contained a large building complex. Like Tell el-Wawiyat, pottery included imported and local wares, and Zippori was continuously settled from the LBA II into the Iron I (Dessel 1997:227–28). Its destruction in the mid-tenth century may be related to the growth of the Israelite monarchy, as its traditional and well-functioning elite may have posed a threat to the government in Jerusalem (Dessel 1999).

The Storejars of the Lower Galilee

Storejars from northern Lower Galilean sites, the biblical territory of Naphtali (Josh 19:32–39), include only Galilean pitthoi. Those from southern sites, the territory later allocated

to the tribes of Zebulun (Josh 19:10–16) and Issachar (Josh 19:17–23), reveal a mix of Galilean and collared-rim storejars (Gal 1992:79, 84; 1994:41). As in the Upper Galilee, the mix (or lack thereof) of storejars in the Lower Galilee may indicate different regional or social ties, ties apparent to later Israelite administrators and biblical writers.

Subsistence in the Lower Galilee

Most Iron I sites in the Lower Galilee were villages located near springs or along the Nahal Zippori. Farming was possible, once settlers cleared the land of forests. However, the rocky nature of the northern Lower Galilee precluded an economy based solely upon agriculture. Thus, residents combined animal husbandry with small-scale dry farming (Gal 1992:86; 1994:42).

At some sites, the isolation of the villages and the lack of imported ceramics or other goods indicate local self-sufficiency. At others, in particular those sites with occupational continuity from the LBA II into the Iron I (Tel ʿEin Zippori, Tell el-Wawiyat), social complexity and more wide-ranging contacts are apparent (Dessel 1999).

The Lower Galilee: Summary

Varied occupational strategies characterize the Lower Galilee during the Iron I. As in the Upper Galilee, the number of occupied sites was limited. Some continued from the LBA and demonstrate that the complex culture of Bronze Age Canaan, as supported and encouraged by Egyptian leadership, persisted well into the Iron I. The presence of these multi-period sites suggests as well the ways in which village life, as apart from the urban experience, was critical to cultural continuity (Dessel 1999).

New sites were founded in the Lower Galilee, most commonly in the twelfth century, a half-century and more after the destructions of the major Galilean cities of Hazor and Hannaton and the fortress at Tel Qarnei Hittin. These new sites were villages in which the inhabitants supported themselves by farming and raising livestock. They existed predominantly in the southern and southwestern part of the region. In the eastern Lower Galilee, closer to the still-thriving world of the Egypto-Canaanite Jezreel and Beth-Shean Valleys, the Iron I welcomed no new settlements. Rather, their inception waited until the tenth century and the growth of the Israelite monarchy (Gal 1994:42).

The chronological gap at many sites between LBA II destruction and Iron I resettlement, the addition of new ceramic forms, and the changes between the LBA and Iron I settlement patterns suggest that the Iron I settlers were not directly related to their Canaanite predecessors. The biblical narrative claims that the Zebulun clans settled in the south and the Naphtali clans in the north. Both Zebulun and Naphtali played critical roles in the battle between Israelites and Canaanites for the Galilee (Judg 4–5). In the Mt. Tabor narrative, we catch a glimpse of the dynamics between the Canaanites of the Jezreel and Beth-Shean Valleys and the Israelites of the Lower Galilee, early in the Iron I. One result of this conflict was that Israelite settlement in the eastern Lower Galilee did not commence until the tenth century. Early in the United Monarchy, the tribe of Issachar settled the region, according to the Bible (Gal 1994:43–45).

The Jezreel Valley and the Beth-Shean Valley

The Jezreel and Beth-Shean Valleys were critically important in antiquity because together they provided the only east-west passage across the north of Israel, connecting the coastal highway with the Jordan River Valley, the major inland route for north-south travel.⁶ The Jezreel Valley, some nineteen miles long, lies between the mountains of the Lower Galilee and those of the central highlands. The rich alluvial soil of the Jezreel Valley and its plentiful annual rainfall made it ideal for farming, and it was one of the most fertile agricultural regions in southern Canaan. The Beth-Shean Valley, to which the Jezreel connects at its eastern end, is geographically

part of the Jordan River Valley; in antiquity, however, its settlement was related to that of the Jezreel. Many Bronze Age Canaanite sites, both large and small, found homes in both these valleys.

To control both routes and resources, Egyptian authorities asserted their strength in this region early in the LBA and retained control well into the twelfth century BCE. An Egyptian presence is especially evident at the Egypto-Canaanite administrative centers of Megiddo and Beth-Shean. As the cities and towns of the Jezreel and Beth-Shean Valleys experienced the cultural transition into the Iron I, those sites allied with Egypt generally survived intact longer than did others (Gal 1994:38–39). While Rameses III (1184–1153 BCE) was the last of the pharaohs to dominate Canaan, Egyptian control lingered in some areas, including the site of Megiddo, as late as the reign of Rameses VI or even a few more decades (Singer 1994:293–94).

With the collapse of Egyptian authority near the end of the twelfth century BCE, there was a general decline in the quality of life in the northern valleys. Economic weakness, the loss of trade, and the absence of a viable political infrastructure all contributed. A new population took control of once-Canaanite cities and Egypto-Canaanite strategic strongholds. The new demographic blend may have included Canaanites, Philistines, and other Sea Peoples, as well as some Hittites, Hivites, Jebusites, Girgashites, and Perrizites. Lasting until late in the eleventh century BCE, the settlement of these newcomers was facilitated by the Jordan River Valley's importance as a route for people seeking relief from famine and other hardships at the end of the LBA. Although difficult to document archaeologically, the intensity of the twelfth century migrations suggests an Anatolian or Syrian presence at many sites (Naʿaman 1994:241–46; Beck 1994). Collared-rim jar burials at a number of sites, in the Jezreel Valley and elsewhere, (Sahab, Kfar Yehoshua, Megiddo, Azor, Tel Zeror, and Tell es-Saʿidiyeh) may likewise be linked to cultural precedents in Anatolia (Ji 1995:137).

In general, the material culture in these post-Egyptian settlements was poor, especially compared to its richness during the era of Egyptian control. The impoverished Megiddo VIB, founded on the ruins of the rich city of Egypto-Canaanite VIIA, exemplifies this decline. Due to their strategic importance, however, they often quickly regained some degree of affluence, as their newly mixed populations asserted their own strength (Singer 1994:309, 318–22).

While the biblical understanding of the process by which Israelites came to control the Jezreel and Beth-Shean Valleys is confused (cf. Judg 6:33–7:23 with Josh 17:11–12 and Judg 1:27), archaeologists agree that the shift in settlement did not happen until the beginning of the tenth century, founded on David's eleventh century conquest of Megiddo VIA (Finkelstein 1988b:93).

Jezreel Valley and Beth-Shean Valley Sites

Jokneam guarded the major westernmost pass into the Jezreel Valley as well as the north-south coastal road. Its LBA settlement ended with a major destruction in the

late thirteenth-early twelfth century. Despite a gap in settlement between the LBA II and Iron I, inhabitants constructed the buildings of the first two phases (Str. XVIII A–B) of the unfortified Iron I settlement in alignment with the LBA plan. The pottery of the Iron I showed continuity with LBA forms, but also included Phoenecian imports and Philistine pottery typical of the coastal plain and inland areas.

The rejuvenation of Jokneam in the eleventh century may be attributed to the positive relationship between Philistines and Canaanites as together they strove to prevent Israelite access to the Via Maris (Ben-Tor cited in Singer 1994:319, fn. 207). During this third Iron I phase (Str. XVII), residents used one building at Jokneam for olive oil production. Olive oil installations were also found at the nearby villages of Tel Qiri and Tel Qashish. The final destruction of Iron I Jokneam has been attributed to David's conquest of the Jezreel Valley (Ben-Tor 1993a:808–09; 1993b:1203; 1997b:388; 1997c:382).

Tel Qiri (Hazorea), a small, unfortified village 2 km south of Tel Yokneam, was a satellite of the larger site. It contained two relatively similar Iron I strata (Str. IX–VIII). In Str. IX, at the beginning of the Iron I, the ceramic assemblage included Philistine wares and collared-rim storejars. A cultic structure—found in Str. VIII and dated to the eleventh century BCE—contained cultic pottery, including an incense burner, a libation vessel, a chalice, a cup-and-saucer, and a votive bowl. It also contained evidence for animal sacrifice, including the right forelegs of sheep and goat (cf. Lev 7:32–33).

The only significant shift in construction at Iron Age Tel Qiri occurred between its Iron I and Iron II settlements, when the alignment of its buildings shifted. At this same time, nearby Jokneam and Megiddo, slightly farther away, were destroyed and reoccupied, presumably by the Israelites. The absence at Tel Qiri of any signs of destruction between the Iron I and the Iron II has led excavators to suggest continuity in population in this well-to-do farming village (Ben-Tor 1993c:1228–29; 1997b:387–89).

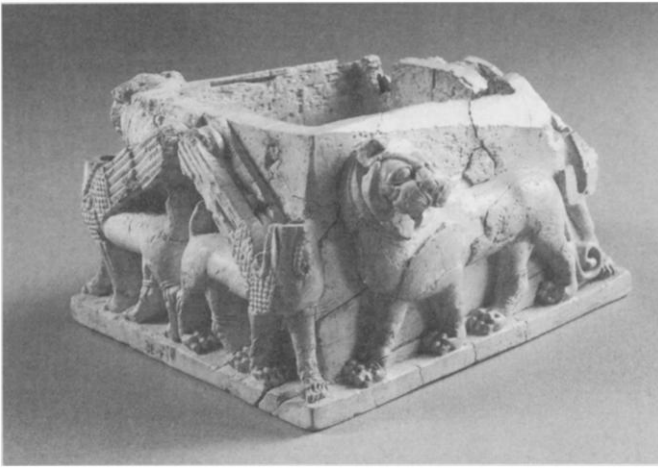
Due to its strategic location, the city of Megiddo controlled the Damascus branch of the Via Maris as well as access to the Jezreel Valley. It was unquestionably the most important of the Jezreel Valley cities; indeed, it was among the most important in all of southern Canaan. The wealth of Egyptian materials found at the site—materials that date from Thutmosis III's conquest of the site in the early fifteenth century BCE into the twelfth century—demonstrate its importance to New Kingdom Egypt. Increasingly, Megiddo housed Egyptian administrators and military personnel and served Egypt's imperial agenda; by the end of the LBA, Egypt exercised full control over the city (Singer 1988–1989:110–11).



Tel Jokneam guarded a pass through the Jezreel Valley as well as the north-south coastal road. It suffered a major destruction at the end of the LBA II. Its reconstruction in Iron I followed the alignment of the previous strata and its ceramic repertoire was in continuity with LBA forms and included Phoenecian and Philistine pottery in keeping with its strategic location on a commercial thoroughfare.

The beginnings of the Iron Age at Megiddo are uncertain. Str. VIIA is tentatively dated to the twelfth century. Given the presence of imported Cypriote and Mycenaean wares, limited Philistine wares and local pottery, however, the stratum may have begun as early as the late thirteenth century (Singer 1988–1989:109–10 and references there). In either case, there is demonstrably little continuity between this occupation and its LBA predecessor (Str. VIIB). For example, the new plan of the reconstructed palace in Area AA retained similarities to the previous one but was laid some two meters above it. An extraordinary hoard of LBA ivories, both locally made and imported, turned up in a newly constructed section of its northern wing. Included among the more than 350 carved pieces was an ivory pen box inscribed with the cartouche of Rameses III (1184–1153). Elsewhere on the site, the population reused the LBA temple (Area BB), as well as some nearby buildings. Residential construction also took place (Ussishkin 1997b:463–64; Yadin 1993:1012–13). The pedestal base of a bronze statue of Rameses VI (1143–1136) suggests the latest extent of Egyptian rule in the region and provides a date of ca. 1130 BCE for the total destruction of Str. VIA (Singer 1994:293–94). At this point, the sequence of occupation at Megiddo that began in the Middle Bronze Age (Str. X) finally came to an end (Gonen 1987:96).

Later twelfth century occupation (Str. VIB) on the now-unfortified site was of poor quality. Without its thriving Egyptian infrastructure, the population of Megiddo dwindled into economic decline. The city's long-used Temple 2048



◁ **Lions and winged sphinxes** circle around this ivory box (H: 7.5 cm). The wealth of ivory unearthed at Megiddo manifests the rich LBA urban world and the wide trade network into which it was knit. *Photograph © The Israel Museum.*

▽ **The destruction of Stratum VI** at Megiddo left this skeleton and adjacent smashed collared-rim jar. Recent analyses of the distribution of this pithos have turned away from its ethnic associations and looked instead at its role in the economic realities of the Iron Age I to understand its distribution. *Photograph courtesy of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago.*

in this stratum. Finds of Philistine bichrome ware make it possible that a Philistine presence was responsible for Megiddo's rejuvenation. In this reconstruction—like that of Jokneam—Philistines joined together with Canaanites to prevent Israelite access to the Via Maris (Singer 1994:319). Megiddo's current excavator disagrees, denying a significant Philistine presence in Str. VIA (Ussishkin 1997b:464). A major conflagration destroyed the stratum. Archaeologists have suggested that it may have been the result of an attack by David and his forces, who then founded Megiddo VA (Shiloh 1993:1016; Ussishkin 1997b:464).

Tell Ta'annek (biblical Taanach) is located in the Jezreel Valley southeast of Megiddo. Unoccupied for most of the LBA II, the site was settled throughout much of the twelfth century BCE. Iron I pottery manifests continuity with regional LBA precedents (Rast 1978:55).

Excavators uncovered substantial houses in the fortified Iron I town. In the twelfth century (Period IA), a courtyard house was constructed, remodeled, and finally abandoned. In Period IB, inhabitants constructed a second home on the same site. This traditionally designated "Drainpipe Structure" consisted of a courtyard with a cistern, trough, and basin. Rooms were found on its three sides, and a pillared wall and flagstone paving were also associated with it. Evidently, this building served both domestic and livestock functions. In the public part of the town, one building preserved an alphabetic cuneiform tablet acknowledging receipt of a grain shipment (Rast 1978:3–8).

Two important ceramic stands used for cultic activities came to light in the context of the later Iron II "Cultic Structure" (Rast 1978:23 and references therein). Ornately decorated with relief and incised decoration, they are both typical of the Iron I (inasmuch as it is an era in which cult

fell into disrepair (Singer 1994:309). Some archaeologists have used the presence of collared-rim storejars at Megiddo to support the suggestion that Str. VIIA was destroyed by Israelites who then settled the subsequent Str. VIB (Aharoni 1972). However, collared-rim jars cannot be used to substantiate an Israelite presence (Rast 1978:55; Finkelstein 1988b:285; London 1989). This is worth stressing, since Judges 1:27–28 notes that the Canaanites held their ground at Megiddo and other Jezreel Valley sites. Although compelled to serve Israel as forced laborers, they were never driven out of the region.

The extensive construction of the next stratum (VIA), dated to the first half of the eleventh century, followed a completely new plan and included a new gateway, domestic neighborhoods, and a single public building. Excavations unearthed luxurious artifacts, including many metal objects,





◁ **The well-known ceramic cult stand** from Taanach emerged from the context of a later Iron II “cultic structure,” but its iconography places it within Taanach’s Iron I cultic paraphernalia. Its constellation of motifs is highly eclectic. *Photograph © The Israel Museum.*

▷ **A ground-level view of Tell Beth-Shean**, looking northeast from the Roman-Byzantine city. Beth-Shean dominated the intersection of the Jezreel Valley with the Jordan Valley and was

an Egyptian stronghold throughout the LBA. Excavations have produced a rich material culture, including a significant number of stele and statues. *Photograph courtesy of A. Mazar.*



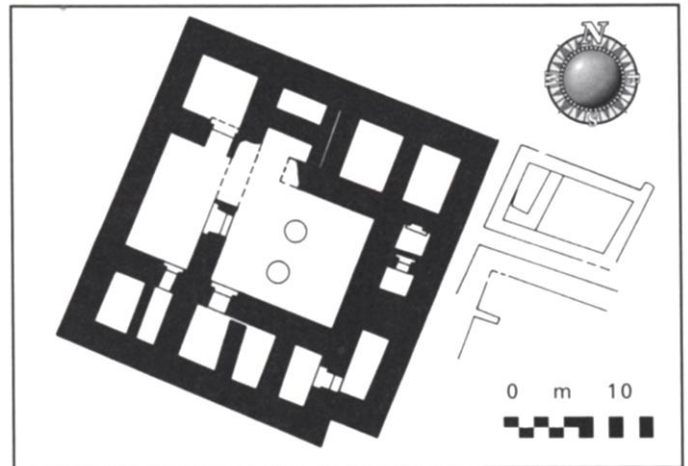
▷ **Plan of the governor’s residency** at Beth-Shean during the time of the twentieth dynasty (twelfth century BCE). These administrative quarters were used by the Egyptian commander of Beth-Shean in the final stage of Egypt’s long-tenured administration of the site. *Plan courtesy of A. Mazar.*

stands were abundant) and atypical (inasmuch as the scenes depicted on them are unique). A recent study of their iconography—lions, winged sphinxes, trees with goats, figures holding serpents, and a goddess—concludes that these unique ceramic stands may indeed have been part of Taanach’s Iron I cultic paraphernalia. They were made locally, but combined Anatolian and north Syrian traditions with those of the Canaanites and Phoenicians.⁷

Iron I Taanach was substantial in scale and evidenced the presence of an elite group of inhabitants. It was important as a center for trade in agricultural products and contained substantial houses and public buildings. These data suggest that the reinvigoration of Taanach resulted from new investment poured into the Jezreel Valley early in the twelfth century. Given continuing importance in this region, Egypt was surely a partner in this economic boom. The iconographic connections of the ceramic stands suggest the continuation of northern interests.

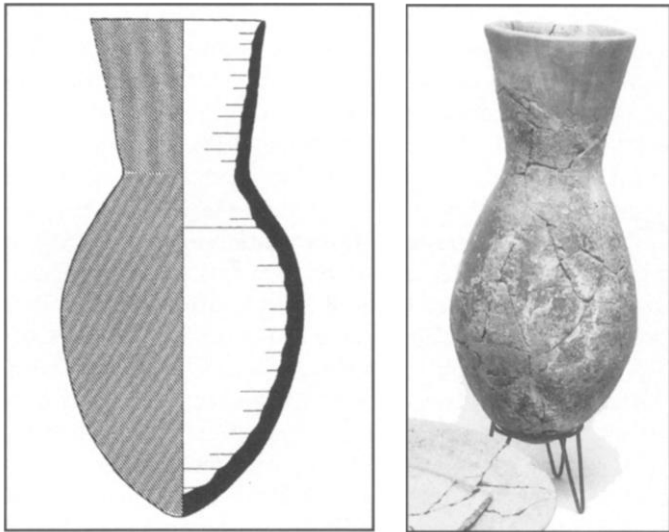
Taanach IB was destroyed ca. 1125 BCE and not resettled for a century. The new Iron II town was likely to have been formed under the impetus of the developing Israelite monarchy (Glock 1993:1432; Rast 1978:55, Table 2).

ʿAfula, east of Megiddo, contained two late twelfth–eleventh century construction phases. In Str. IIIB, the site included a large building consisting of four broadrooms surrounding a courtyard, as well as granaries, a kiln, and a cemetery on the



eastern edge of the mound. The pottery continued LBA traditions and contained some Cypriote imports. In Str. IIIA, Philistine ware was found alongside Canaanite pottery. ʿAfula was destroyed in the second half of the eleventh century and was not reoccupied until the mid-ninth century (M. Dothan 1993a:37–39).

Beth-Shean, dominating the easternmost end of the Jezreel Valley as it meets the Jordan Valley, was an Egyptian stronghold throughout much of the LBA. In the thirteenth century, as Egypt tightened its rule over Canaan, new construction took place at Beth-Shean (Str. VIII–VII). Excavations early this century produced stelae attributed to Nineteenth Dynasty pharaohs Seti I (1294–1279) and Rameses II (1279–1213). The destruction at the end of Str. VII may have taken place during or shortly after the reign of Merneptah (1213–1203; Mazar 1997:69).



Line drawing and photograph of a distinctively Egyptian pottery form of the twelfth century BCE at Beth-Shean. Most of the Egyptian-style vessels were produced locally. *Photograph and drawing courtesy of A. Mazar.*

The early Iron I city (Lower VI), dated to the twelfth century BCE, rebuilt the preceding stratum (VII), with the basic elements of both town and temple remaining unaltered. The final (Twentieth Dynasty) stage of a long-lived Egyptian administration shows up in this stratum, with its many Egyptian architectural elements (James 1966:4). Among these are a temple, the “Governor’s House” used by Ramses Weser Khepesh, commander of Beth-Shean, and materials documenting the reign of the Egyptian pharaoh Rameses III. The Lower VI ceramic assemblage included local Canaanite vessels and Egyptian-style vessels that were, for the most part, produced locally. Mediterranean wares were limited to a few Mycenaean IIIC vessels (Mazar 1997:71). They, and the anthropoid coffins in the local cemetery, may be attributed to Philistine or other Sea People mercenaries in the employ of the Egyptian overlords; however, Egyptian officials were also buried in the ceramic coffins.

The reinforcement of Egyptian construction during this period underscores Egypt’s effort to consolidate power during the waning years of its control over southern Canaan. The high standard of living enjoyed by the residents of Beth-Shean demonstrates its success, brought about in part by its control of agricultural estates in the Jezreel Valley. One of Rameses-Weser-Khepesh’s responsibilities was the administration of these estates, as is seen in his title “Overseer of the Great House” (Mazar 1997:72; Singer 1994:292–93).

Beth-Shean Lower VI was destroyed in a violent conflagration during the reign of Rameses VI (1143–1136) or Rameses VIII (1129–1126). This destruction, and the approximately contemporary destruction of Megiddo VIIA, mark the end of Egyptian domination in the Jezreel and Beth-Shean Valleys (Yadin and Geva 1986:89; Mazar 1993:217–18).

Beth-Shean Upper VI, the late-twelfth/early-eleventh century settlement, is more difficult to assess. Despite efforts



The Stele of Ashtaroth belonged to one of two temples excavated at Beth-Shean by the University of Pennsylvania. This Canaanite cult object (H: .37 m) was joined by stele and statues of Twentieth Dynasty Egyptian pharaohs, a circumstance that indicates continued allegiance of some parts of the site’s population to its former overlords. *Photograph courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania.*

to renovate some of the earlier structures, the material culture of post-Egyptian Beth-Shean, Canaanite rather than Egyptian in nature, showed an overall decline. Even so, this occupational phase incorporated monumental architecture, including Building 1700 and the “Twin” or Northern and Southern Temples originally attributed to Level V (Mazar 1997:72–73).

Excavators have identified these two temples, unique in plan and rich in cultic objects, with the Temples of Dagon and Ashtaroth (cf. 1 Sam 31:10). Oddly, given the recent routing of Egyptian administrators from the site, stelae, and statues of Seti I, Rameses II, and Rameses III, all of whom predated the eleventh century by a hundred years and more, stood in the temples’ courtyards. This would suggest that among Beth-Shean’s population in the later Iron I were persons with Egyptian ancestry, or who had been employed by the Egyptians and continued to revere their former leaders. Alternately, perhaps the mixed population of Beth-Shean, including old-time Canaanites and Egyptians, and newcomers including Philistines and others, invoked the great rulers of olden days, in the hope that they might receive their beneficence and be restored to the comfort of earlier times. A conflagration, possibly attributable to David’s conquest of the site, marks the end of Upper VI (Mazar 1993:219–22).

Little is known about the Iron I occupation (Str. VII) at Tel Kedesh, midway between Megiddo and Taanach (Stern 1993b:860). At Tel Jezreel, south of ‘Afula, Iron I pottery was found in later construction fills (Ussishkin 1997a:246–47). Rehob (Tell es-Sarem) in the Beth-Shean Valley was annexed to the Egyptian stronghold at Beth-Shean and may have been occupied in the Iron I as well (Singer 1994:310; Vito 1993:1272). Tirat Sebi, in the southern Beth-Shean Valley, was inhabited briefly in the late twelfth-eleventh centuries (Gal 1979). As more is learned about these sites, the dynamics between the

cities, towns, and villages of the Iron I Jezreel and Beth–Shean Valleys will become clearer.

Jezreel and Beth–Shean Valleys: Summary

The Jezreel Valley in antiquity enjoyed great strategic importance as the major northern passage between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River Valley. In addition, its rich and well-watered soil made it ideal for farming and raising animals. The cities and towns of the Iron I Jezreel were generally affluent, containing well-constructed buildings in both private and public areas and ample storage vessels and facilities. The Jezreel offered access to the Beth–Shean Valley. Less advantageous climatic conditions there may have made the Beth–Shean sites dependent to some degree upon agricultural products and livestock from the Jezreel while forging a link between the cultural history of the two regions.

The strategic northern valleys of Canaan underwent a series of transitions throughout the Iron I. After centuries, in some cases, of Egyptian control, the sites of the Jezreel and Beth–Shean Valleys passed through a brief and undistinguished stage of autonomy before once again rallying. The Philistines may have been among the leaders of the rejuvenated Canaanite culture in this critical region.

The Israelites gained control of the valleys during the reign of David. The process by which Israel achieved control is uncertain, as the biblical tradition ascribes their settlement alternately to the tribes of Issachar and Asher (Josh 19:17–31) and to the tribe of Manasseh (Josh 17:11). Attempts to integrate biblical and archaeological data (Gal 1994) fail by virtue of the limited archaeological data and the late and tendentious nature of the Joshua narrative (Na^caman 1994). It may be that the creation of an Israelite self-identity in this region actually derived from the later experience of this mixed northern population, once the Jezreel and Beth–Shean Valleys fell under David's control.

The Coast and the Shephelah

Although the straight Mediterranean coastline generally lacks natural bays with ports, boats were able to anchor in river mouths along the coast from Acre in the north to near Ashdod in the south. Maritime traders plying the coastline loaded products from the foothills and highlands in exchange for imported items. Overland transport between Egypt and Syria also hugged the coast, utilizing the Via Maris/Way of the Sea or “The Way to the Land of the Philistines” (Exod 13:17; Isa 8:23).

Egypt attempted to control maritime and overland transport. In the thirteenth century, Ramesses II annexed the region, and Merneptah tightened Egyptian control. By early in the twelfth century, during the reign of Rameses III, domestic political problems resulted in diminished Egyptian presence (Singer 1994:282–95). In the eighth year of his reign, on land, and at sea, Ramses III battled a confederation of Aegean peoples, collectively referred to as the Sea Peoples. These peoples subsequently settled and prospered along the southern Levantine coast. The Bible, Ramses III's reliefs, and the Onomasticon of Amenem-Opet identify the Philistines/*plst*, the Sekel/*skl*, and the Sherden

as the peoples settling along the coast from south to north.

Settlement in the north, on the Sharon Plain, was hindered by vast marshes created by *kurkar* ridges blocking mountain streams flowing down to the sea. While few sites have been excavated, continued LBA settlement, combined with a new Aegean population, created a stable and prosperous settlement occupation into Iron I. Surveys have identified many settlements on the hills east of the Sharon Plain (Kh. Baslut, Kh. Nesor, Tel Ze'evim). Settlements were also renewed or founded in the river basins: in the middle and lower basin of Nahal Hadera, in the lower basin of Nahal Alexander, and in the lower basin of Nahal ha-Tanninim near Tel Mevorakh. Collared-rim jar sherds characteristically comprise part of the ceramic assemblage at the new settlements (Gophna and Kochavi 1966). New architectural and technological features reflect the peaceful incorporation of the new population, presumably Sea Peoples. In contrast to the Jezreel and Beth Shan Valleys, evidence for an Egyptian presence in the Sharon is conspicuously absent.

Compared to the marshy Sharon Plain, the Southern Coastal Plain invited settlement, with its easily cultivated, fertile *hamra* and *rendzina* soils. Later biblical tradition identifies the new population settled in the region as the Philistines. Like their northern neighbors in the Sharon Plain, the Philistines prospered throughout the Iron I. Philistia did not suffer from widespread abandonment, economic vicissitudes, destruction by human agency, or changes in political control.

Though positioned between the coast and the highlands, the Shephelah's fortunes were tied to the coast. In the late twelfth and eleventh century, as Egyptian activity and highland settlement waned, Philistia, the northern coast, and the Shephelah prospered. As was the case at coastal sites, LBA culture continued, now with the addition of Philistine features.

Sharon Plain and Haifa Bay

Late in the thirteenth century, new populations bearing northern and Aegean pottery transformed Acco, Tell Abu Hawam, and Dor into maritime entrepôts. At Acco, Cypriot and Mycenaean III B pottery found in the previous settlement, workshops, silos, and granaries illustrate maritime contacts and a possible Aegean presence before the arrival of the new population. A peaceful transition ensued, with the newcomers reusing existing installations. They constructed homes over the ramparts, produced Myc III C1b pottery, smelted copper to make vessels, and produced dye from murex shells. The Onomasticon of Amenem-Opet (ca. 1000 BCE; M. Dothan 1993b:21) identifies these newcomers as the Sherden.

Tell Abu Hawam was also a thriving maritime town in the LBA. Destroyed in ca. 1200 BCE, the town was immediately rebuilt (Str. IVA–B, eleventh and tenth centuries). Structures included the reused Temple 30 and parallel rows of three-room houses with nonaxial doorways and occasional monolithic pillars, similar to those at Tell Keisan (Str. 9). Associated pottery included Phoenician Bichrome sherds, a few Philistine sherds, and a variant of Ashdod Ware like that found at Tel Qasile X and Miqne IV. This rebuilt town was, in turn, also destroyed (Balensi, Herrera, and Artzy 1993:10–11).



△ **Aerial view of the port city of Dor** prior to its extensive excavation by E. Stern. In the late thirteenth century, newcomers brought ashlar masonry to build harbor facilities at the site. Within a century, remains at Dor portray its inhabitants as a group of the Sea Peoples. *Photograph courtesy of R. Cleave.*

▽ **Decorated Cypriot pottery** from the end of the eleventh century at Dor. White painted I and Bichrome I pottery manifest ties between Dor and sites along the Mediterranean coast and in Cyprus. *Photograph courtesy of E. Stern.*



The new population at Dor employed ashlar masonry to construct non-religious structures, including harbor and quay walls, and wells. The wells drew fresh water from the upper part of an aquifer, above the interface between ground water and the heavier salt water below. While first utilized in the late Neolithic-Chalcolithic period, this technology was forgotten until its reintroduction by the new thirteenth-twelfth century settlers (Raban 1988).

From the second half of the twelfth century through the first half of the eleventh century, a massive mudbrick wall built on stone foundation and reinforced by a sand rampart protected the port town of Dor. The new orientation of the settlement, the introduction of Phoenician Bichrome Ware, the first appearance of Baltic amber, and gilded Syro-Egyptian statuettes portray the settlement as a group of the Sea Peoples with ties east toward Beth-Shean (Balensi, Herrera, and Artzy 1993:13). Several settlement phases spanned the eleventh century. Finds include a fragment of a rhyton modelled in the likeness of a lioness, pithoi decorated with wavy bands in relief, Cypriot White-Painted I and Bichrome I pottery, and an ivory plaque incised with a bull butting a lotus flower. These objects demonstrate continued ties between Dor and sites along the Mediterranean littoral and in Cyprus (Stern 1993a:358–59).

Early eleventh century construction at sites including Tel Zeror, Tel Mevora, and Shiqmona signalled the revitalization of the Sharon Plain. At Tel Zeror, residents built a citadel protected by a casemate wall. Nine cist graves dating from the mid-eleventh through the mid-tenth century BCE contained adolescent and adult family members, with Philistine and local vessels and numerous metal objects. Infants and children were buried separately in storejars and pithoi (Kochavi 1993b:1525). At Tel Mevora, two preserved podiums presumably served as bases for superstructures, the sole remnants of which are pillars similar to those used in the Iron Age “pillared-house.” Cooking pots demonstrate continuity with LBA traditions and indicate a material culture



Stratum III of ʿIzbet Šarṭah in the foothills of western Samaria, overlooking the coastal plain. The site boasts a non-continuous wall with adjoining rooms on its exterior side. The wall “enclosed” a village courtyard. *Photograph courtesy of I. Finkelstein.*

shared with such northern sites as Hazor, Megiddo, Afula, and Beth-Shean (Stern 1978:66–68).

At Tel Zeror and Tell Burgata, twelfth century pits and silos cut into LBA settlement remains have been attributed to the Israelites, based solely on the biblical record. Associated pottery clearly continued the Canaanite coastal tradition.

The fortunes of Aphek and ʿIzbet Šarṭah may be more closely tied to Philistia than to the Sharon Plain. Following destruction and possible abandonment, inhabitants rebuilt Aphek’s acropolis in the twelfth century. Two residential quarters demonstrated socio-economic stratification at the site. Well-built square buildings, similar to examples from Tell Abu Hawam, attest to an elite. Three such houses, identical in size and plan, each possessed a back room contributing one-third of the floor space, and a front paved room, perhaps a courtyard. In contrast, haphazardly built structures containing fishhooks, lead net weights, and tortoise shells belonged to fishermen. Stone-lined silos and large quantities of Philistine pottery characterized the ensuing strata. By the eleventh century, Philistines lived in Aphek. Their remains included quantities of Philistine pottery, several heads from the Philistine female figurine dubbed Ashdoda, and an inscribed, but indecipherable, clay tablet (Kochavi 1993c:68–69; 1997:150–51).

Iron I settlement at ʿIzbet Šarṭah (Str. III) lasted from the late thirteenth or early twelfth century through the beginning of the eleventh century, when the site was abandoned. ʿIzbet Šarṭah sits on a spur bordering the alluvial plain and overlooking the coastal plain. A non-continuous wall with adjoining rooms on its exterior side “enclosed” the village courtyard, into which settlers cut stone-lined silos. Archaeologists have brought to light similar “enclosed settlements,” frequently with structures on the interior of the wall, from the Galilee to the Negev. Pottery including an imitation Mycenaean stirrup jar, kraters painted with palm trees, and local

jars, cooking pots, and bowls continued LBA coastal ceramic traditions. Briefly reoccupied late in the eleventh century, only to be abandoned, the site boasted a large, four-room structure (16 x 12 m) and several smaller buildings in place of the earlier oval-shaped enclosed settlement. Forty-three stone-lined silos, with an average capacity of 1.3 cu. m, surrounded the large, central structure (Finkelstein 1986; 1993:652–53).

Philistia and the Shephelah

Early in the twelfth century, Rameses III repelled a coalition of Sea Peoples that included the people termed “Philistines” in the Bible. According to later biblical tradition, the Philistines settled the territory from Shihor in the south to Ekron, in the north (Josh 13:2–5). Settlement centered around five independently ruled cities, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, Ekron, and Gaza, collectively

known as the Philistine Pentapolis. These orderly, urban settlements prospered from industrial activities, agriculture, animal husbandry, and, in the case of the coastal cities, maritime trade.

Along with the large cities of the Pentapolis, archaeologists have pinpointed a number of smaller sites. Excavations and surveys have revealed towns such as Ziklag (Tel Sera[?]; 1 Sam 27:5–6), Timnah (Tell Batash), and Tel Qasile, and rural settlements or “country villages” (1 Sam 6:18) such as Qubur el-Walaidah in Nahal Besor and those in Nahal Shiqmah. Seventeen farmsteads (*ḥaṣerim*) dating to the first half of the eleventh-tenth centuries peppered the region from Gaza south to Tell el-Farḥ (S) and Beersheba. All these farmsteads were located in the upper and middle reaches of the Nahals Besor and Shiqma, at least ten kilometers from a major site (with the exception of those in the vicinity of Tell el Farah [S]) yet their pottery connected them clearly with the coast (Gophna 1966; Gophna and Singer-Avitz 1984).

In the twelfth century, Philistines moved into the western Negev settlements of Tel Haror and Tel Sera^c. They initially settled at Tel Haror, as indicated by its Monochrome pottery; later Philistine Bichrome ware at both sites illuminates their subsequent dispersal.

Concentrations of the distinctive Mycenaean IIIc:1b (Myc IIIc) or Philistine Monochrome pottery characterize the initial Philistine settlement. Derived from Mycenaean Greek ceramics, this pottery assumed a limited repertoire of Mycenaean forms: vessels for preparing and drinking wine (strainer jugs, large, and small bell-shaped kraters with horizontal handles); for storing precious liquids (stirrup jars, pyxides); and for cooking (one-handled cooking pots). Decoration copied Mycenaean prototypes, with Aegean motifs executed in a reddish-black paint with fine, neat brush strokes. Beyond these specialized vessels, most utilitarian



△ **Aerial view of Tell Batash** at the beginning of excavations. While Philistine settlement centered around the so-called “Pentapolis,” these urban settlements were joined by smaller sites such as this town, known biblically as Timnah. *Photograph courtesy of R. Cleave.*

▽ **A Philistine pyramidal-shaped stamp seal** found at Timnah. The characteristically shaped seal depicts a lyre player. *Photograph by George L. Kelm courtesy of A. Mazar.*



pottery, including storage jars and cooking pots, continued local forms.

In addition to the specialized vessels, the Philistines reproduced a range of objects, installations, and architectural features from their Aegean homeland. These included cultic clay figurines such as Ashdoda and mourning women with their hands on their heads, ceramic forms including rhyta, kernoi, craters, pyxides, and bird-shaped vessels, ceramic decorative motifs, and unperforated “waisted” and “un-waisted” cylindrical loom weights fashioned from unbaked clay. The Philistines dined on pork and mixed their wine with water. They constructed their buildings of mudbrick walls with or without stone foundations, lining the walls with mudbrick benches, and installing round hearths. The wide distribution of such features in the late thirteenth and early twelfth centuries shows that the Philistines were part of the same wave of immigrants from the Mycenaean

world that settled Cyprus and the Levantine coast.

Philistine Monochrome soon evolved into Bichrome pottery. While retaining Aegean features, the new assemblage incorporated regional forms and decorative motifs and adopted the local two-color tradition of red and black painted decoration. Concentrations of this Bichrome pottery from Tel Qasile in the north through the Shephelah and south to Tell el-Far‘ah (S) attest to Philistine expansion beyond the initial enclave. The distinctive decoration is easily recognizable, and so Philistine pottery has been identified from sites along the coast, in the Jezreel and Beth-Shean Valleys, and east into the Jordan Valley. While the large concentrations of Bichrome pottery from Shephelah sites indicate

Philistine settlements, examples from the more distant sites are better explained as trade items or a limited Philistine presence.

Subsequent generations of Philistines integrated local folkways with Aegean traits to produce a new distinctive cultural expression (Stone 1995). At Ekron, as at Ashkelon, Myc III C pottery and the earliest Bichrome ware appeared together until Monochrome was replaced by Bichrome in the mid-twelfth century. This acculturation process, seen reflected in utilitarian pottery, was paralleled in ceramic ritual vessels. The Tel Qasile ornamented cylindrical stands, a cup in the form of a lion’s head, and a libation vessel in the shape of a female figure, reflect the melding of indigenous Levantine traditions with those brought from the Aegean.

The Southern Coastal Plain

The earliest Philistine settlement concentrated in the Pentapolis: Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath, and Gaza. Limited archaeological exposure of the homesteading generation limits our knowledge of the newcomers. Homeland, language, and religion may only be surmised. For the twelfth and eleventh centuries, Ashdod and Ekron are the most extensively excavated and published Pentapolis sites. Both began as unfortified urban centers which produced Canaanite and Myc III C pottery. Each site demonstrated increased reliance on pig and cattle, with a concomitant decrease in the consumption of sheep and goat. Increasing numbers of pigs in Philistia stand in sharp contrast to their absence from highland sites (Hesse 1990:214–18).

Twelfth century Ashdod measured about 8 ha, but grew to 40 ha by the end of the eleventh century. The earliest settlers erected a city over the partially destroyed Late Bronze city. Though planned and densely built, it lacked fortification walls. Occupational remains include courtyards, residential rooms, and the continued use of a massive “fortified” building erected in the twelfth century.

The most extensive remains of Iron I Ashdod belong to

the eleventh century when city builders reused walls of a massive LBA building to construct a casemate wall. This singular segment of casemate wall joined other expanses of city walls of solid construction. Residences, courtyards, and pottery workshops for local and Myc III C wares abutted the walls. In the western quarter of the city, two building complexes stood on either side of a street. The northern complex consisted of a small apsidal "shrine," to the north of which stood a row of rooms and a columned hall. Across the street stood a large public building measuring 17 x 13 m. Excavators unearthed the well-known, nearly complete Mycenaean-style figurine of a seated female goddess whose body forms a throne—nicknamed "Ashdoda"—in this quarter of the city. From Ashkelon, Ekron, and Tell Qasile, archaeologists have since added to the Philistine terra cotta collection fragments of similar figurines, with long necks, flat-topped coiffures, occasionally with breasts, and in one case (Qasile) perhaps nursing a baby.

In the mid-eleventh century, settlement at Ashdod spread beyond the acropolis. The earliest settlement in the lower city, where digging unearthed pottery workshops, was subsequently fortified with a four-chambered mudbrick gate and solid wall (Dothan and Porath 1982:7–13; 1993:50–83; M. Dothan 1993c:96–98).

Ekron/Tel Miqne was an important urban center throughout the twelfth and eleventh centuries. From the initial Philistine settlement, Ekron was a large, well-planned, fortified city. Strong mudbrick fortification walls encircled an area of ca. 20 ha with square and horseshoe-shaped kilns inside the perimeter, administrative buildings at its center, and elite residences located between the two. The best-preserved kiln, square in shape, was associated with Myc III C pottery and Aegean-type figurines. Inhabitants constructed Building 350 (a palace or shrine) on top of the large public building 351. Cultic and elaborate metal objects, platforms, and benches found in its side rooms and main hall all confirm the cultic nature of the structure. A circular hearth flanked by pillars in the main hall ties the building to palaces of the Mycenaean world. Incised bovine scapulae and kernoi from a shrine near the city wall (Str. VI–V) also link Ekron to Sea Peoples' settlements at Ashkelon and in Cyprus (T. Dothan 1990; Dothan and Gitin 1993).

The Egyptians may have occupied sites in contraposition to the Pentapolis strongholds in order to monitor and contain Philistine settlement. The fortress erected at Tel Mor faced Ashdod, Gezer was rebuilt to challenge Ekron, Lachish was paired with Ashkelon some 30 km to the east, and Tell esh-Shariah countered Gath. Abundant Egyptian pottery and the presence of objects with the name of Rameses III identify and date these strategically situated sites. According to this reconstruction, the breakdown of Egyptian hegemony permitted the Philistines to expand beyond their original territory. This phase of Philistine expansion left concentrations of Philistine Bichrome pottery at sites from Tel Qasile in the north, through Gezer, Timnah, and Tell Beit Mirsim, to Tell el-Far'ah (S) in the south (Stager 1995:342–43, fig. 2).



Iron I remains at Ashdod included the famous Mycenaean-style figurine known as Ashdoda. Its seated female goddess forms her throne with her own body. Similar figurines have emerged from Ashkelon, Ekron, and Tell Qasile. Drawing from M. Dothan, *Ashdod: II–III*, fig. 91:1.

Tel Qasile, the most informative site from this second phase of Philistine occupation, displayed Philistine continuity in material culture, secular architecture, and cult. Newcomers arriving from further south settled around the sacred area and eventually spread across the site. They erected houses in blocks defined by an orthogonal street network. These residences measured approximately 100 m² each, with mudbrick walls (often with no stone foundation), benches, and a hearth. Ovens, loom weights, and installations for grinding and crushing cereals, olives, and grapes indicate courtyard activities. The mud-brick plastered hearth in the center of a large hall lined with mudbrick benches, paralleled at Enkomi, Cyprus, evokes Aegean secular public buildings (Mazar 1985:104; 1986:3–15).

In strata of the second half of the twelfth through the early tenth century, distinctive, locally produced Philistine pottery constituted roughly twenty percent of the ceramic repertoire. Red-slipped wares painted with black decoration first appeared in this time-frame. At its end, Philistine pottery remained plentiful in the residences and temples of the sacred area, but not in the southern residences (Mazar 1985:122–23).

Over the course of 150 years, the Tell Qasile temple was enlarged and remodelled but the orientation and location of its altar room remained unchanged. The original temple was a squarish (6.4 x 6.6 m) mudbrick hall with benches and a raised platform opposite the doorway. Renovations turned it into a larger (5.7 x 8.5 m) stone structure with benches lining the walls and a partition blocking its far rear corner. A small adjoining chamber, Shrine 300, abutted the rear wall. Favissae in the courtyard preserved ritual objects, pottery, and animal bones. The third phase of the temple added a bent-axis entrance and a raised platform with a "treasury