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ABSTRACT

THE EXPANSION OF JUDAH UNDER UZZIAH INTO PHILISTIA:  
THE HISTORICAL CREDIBILITY OF 2 CHRONICLES 26:6-7a  
IN LIGHT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

by

Jeffrey P. Hudon

Adviser: Randall W. Younker

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: THE EXPANSION OF JUDAH UNDER UZZIAH INTO PHILISTIA:  
THE HISTORICAL CREDIBILITY OF 2 CHRONICLES 26:6-7a  
IN LIGHT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

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Date completed: November 2016

The Problem

Since the eighteenth century, many biblical scholars and historians have seriously questioned the historical reliability of the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles for two important reasons. First, these books were clearly composed no earlier than the late sixth and most likely during the fifth century B.C. Consequently, the question arises as to whether the author, writing during the Persian Period, was able to access annalistic sources from the Iron Age II. Secondly, the author seems to display a strong theological tendentious view that often appears to influence his portrayal of the kings and people of Judah and hence casts serious doubts on the historical credibility of his work. In his treatment of the kings of Judah, the author regularly provides information missing from parallel biblical texts.

Accordingly, whether the author of Chronicles penned his narrative directly from annals and records from the period of the monarchy, or deliberately created and composed his own theological history of ancient Israel and Judah remains a contested issue.

### The Method

This study selected Judah's war against the Philistines during the reign of Uzziah, as recorded in 2 Chronicles 26:6-7a, as an ideal "test case" for determining the historical credibility of information preserved only in Chronicles. The careful, exhaustive study of published archaeological data from the numerous surveys and excavations conducted in the Shephelah and the Philistine Plain provide a crucial, independent witness to eighth century B.C. constructive and destructive events in this region. All aspects of material culture were examined, notably architecture, epigraphic material and other key ethnic indicators in order to help determine the predominant ethnicity of each site. Special attention was given to the sites specifically mentioned in the text of Chronicles; Gath (assumably Tell es-Safi), (Tel) Ashdod and (Tel) Yavneh.

### The Results

The archaeological evidence portrays a strong, resurgent Judah during the reign of Uzziah and confirms a strong Judahite material cultural presence at several sites in the Philistine Plain, including Tell es-Safi. However, earlier claims that ascribe destructive layers to Uzziah, notably at the site of Ashdod, have been called into questions, while recent excavations at an extramural suburb of this Philistine city unearthed a destruction layer that may correlate with his actions.

## Conclusions

The study has demonstrated, utilizing various lines of archaeological evidence gleaned from numerous sites relevant to the historical issue at hand, that the weight of probability supports the historical credibility of 2 Chronicles 26:6-7a and provides a reasonably persuasive case that this biblical text preserves archival data dating from the period of the monarchy (Iron Age II), but falls short of offering definitive proof.

Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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A Dissertation  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

by  
Jeffrey P. Hudon

2016

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ANEP</i>	<i>The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament</i> , by J. B. Pritchard. Princeton: Princeton University, 1954.
<i>ANET</i>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , ed. J. B. Pritchard. Third ed. with Supplement. Princeton: Princeton University, 1969.
<i>BDB</i>	<i>The New Brown—Driver—Briggs—Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon with an Appendix containing the Biblical Aramaic</i> , by F. Brown; S. R. Driver; and C. A. Briggs. Updated from the Oxford 1907 edition. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1979.
Chr	The Chronicler, the author of Chronicles / The Book of Chronicles
DtrH	The Deuteronomistic Historian, or Deuteronomist
IAA	Israel Antiquities Authority
LAP	Lateral-Access Podium structure
LXX	The Septuagint, the Greek Text of the Old Testament
MT	The Masoretic Text, the Hebrew Text of the Old Testament
YHWH	The Hebrew divine name for God

## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I greatly appreciate the willingness, care, and inordinate dedication shown by my dissertation committee members in their advisory role for this project. The debt owed to my wife Leslie for her love and steadfast support during the many years of graduate school can never be repaid and I dedicate this work as a token of appreciation to her investment and selflessness. My interest in Old Testament history was introduced during my reading of a series of books by Ethel Barrett given to me by Betty Reeves, the most memorable of my early Bible teachers, and later developed by Glenn E. Schaefer, my undergraduate Old Testament professor. My fascination with the Chronicler and his historical work was greatly kindled during a lecture given by the late Raymond B. Dillard at the American Institute of Holy Land Studies in the fall of 1988 and during subsequent conversations with him. His masterful commentary on 2 Chronicles, now nearly 30 years old, no longer offers the most comprehensive treatment of this work, but nevertheless continues to deeply resonate within me, providing numerous insights and interpretive viewpoints that I have largely adopted. While not a field archaeologist, Dillard was a distinguished biblical scholar and extensively toured and studied the Holy Land, keeping himself archaeologically informed from reading the relevant literature. As a gifted pedagogue, he encouraged my interest and patiently answered my sophomoric questions about the Chronicler's history. Accordingly, neither his publications nor his instruction have strayed far from my side and memory during the extended period of writing of this dissertation. I wish to thank four of my teachers during my two years in Jerusalem,

Gabriel Barkay, James Monson, Robert Mullins and Anson F. Rainey (ל"י); the latter two served as my thesis advisors and all were influential in my continued development and understanding of biblical history and of Chronicles as a historical source. Rainey in particular listened with interest as I briefly shared ideas relating to my dissertation and surprisingly agreed with my dating of the initial *lmlk* stamps to Uzziah's reign, readily admitting that he had shared the same view for years, but, in his words, lacked the courage to publish it! I still remember well his final charge given with a sweep of his clenched fist: "Go to it!"

CHAPTER 1  
HISTORY OF RESEARCH

**Introduction**

The biblical writers presented the mid-eighth century B.C. reign of Uzziah / Azariah (792/91-740/39 B.C.; Thiele 1965: 76-117, 205; 1977: 75) as one of Judah's most politically successful and economically prosperous. It can be reasonably assumed that the material culture would reflect such prosperity and therefore be present in the archaeological record. However, the apparent paucity of archaeological evidence for Judah during the mid-eighth century B.C. has left the biblical claim of a flourishing of culture and military might under Uzziah largely unsubstantiated.

While earlier archaeological research occasionally associated Iron Age sites and remains with Uzziah's reign (e.g., Aharoni 1961a; 1967b; Cross and Milik 1956a; 1956b; Dothan 1971a), this trend was largely abandoned when archaeological strata at several prominent eighth century BC sites were instead linked with Hezekiah and consequently dated to 701 B.C., the presumed date of Sennacherib's conquest of Judah (e.g., Aharoni and Aharoni 1976; Aharoni and Amiran 1958; Tufnell 1950; Ussishkin 1977). As a result, a growing archaeological consensus has associated nearly all eighth century B.C. Judahite material remains with events during the reign of Hezekiah, implying that his rule, not that of Uzziah, marked the true apex of Judah's power and material cultural achievement. The current status of archaeological interpretation for this tumultuous

period of history presents a fascinating challenge to discover the Judah of the mid-eighth century B.C. and to interpret Uzziah's reign in the light of the archaeological record.

### **Background Statement**

The text of 2 Chr 26:6-15 provides a detailed description of Uzziah's 52-year long reign over Judah. In contrast to the surprisingly brief account of this ruler found in 2 Kgs 15, the Chronicler (henceforth Chr) portrays Uzziah as one of Judah's most energetic and successful kings, describing military engagements against the Philistines, Me'unites and Arabs; territorial conquests of Gath, Yavneh, Ashdod and Elath; in addition to diplomatic triumphs with Israel, the Ammonites and polities to the north, as well as monumental projects to buttress Jerusalem's defenses (e.g., Avigad 1983; Avi-Yonah 1954; Bahat and Hurvitz 1996; Barkay 2001; E. Mazar 2011; Wightman 1993). Uzziah's military strength and innovative weaponry are also recorded (Sukerik 1947; Yadin 1963). Uzziah seems to have managed an array of royal estates (e.g.: Graham 1984; Rainey 1982), biblically attested elsewhere as Davidic ancestral and crown lands (e.g., Ruth 4:12, 18; 1 Sam 23:19-24; 25:2, 36-42; 26:1; 2 Sam 5:1-5); as well as royal agricultural projects, such as fortified farmsteads, settlements and paramilitary outposts established by Uzziah throughout Judah and all along her arid eastern and southern border areas (e.g., Aharoni 1961b; Bar Adon 1989; Cohen 1979; 1994; Cohen and Yisrael 1995a, 1995b; Cross and Milik 1956a; Finkelstein 1995; Haiman 1994; Meshel and Ofer 2008; Pratico 1993; Stager 1976). Perhaps these royal initiatives are best exemplified by the eighth century B.C. Judahite site of Ramat Rahel (Aharoni 1955; 1961a; 1967b; 1967d; Barkay 2006), where excavations have exposed an elaborate palace complex in the midst of a region well known for viticulture since biblical times. For Judah, the early-to mid-eighth

century B.C. was markedly characterized as a period of prosperity, but this affluence carried with it the crimes of social injustice. Elements from Judah's royal court and Jerusalem's aristocracy confiscated land owned by generations of families and clans from Judah's rural hinterland (e.g.: Isaiah 5:1-7; Weinfeld 1995). It was also during this period that the city of Jerusalem expanded onto the Western Hill, an area which seems to have already become a walled suburb by the early eighth century B.C. (Barkay 2001; Faust 2005a; 2014a).

Focusing on one aspect of the accomplishments listed above, 2 Chr 26:6-7a preserves an account of one of Uzziah's most significant achievements; his conquest and occupation of northern Philistia and the cities of Gath, Yavneh and Ashdod. Uzziah's destruction of at least part of the fortifications of these Philistine cities and his subsequent building of Judahite settlement enclaves and military outposts in their vicinity provides an inviting prospect for historians and archaeologists alike to attempt to correlate known archaeological data in the surrounding region with this biblical account.

### **Problem Statement**

While details of Chr's account potentially invite archaeological confirmation, the corpus of archaeological literature has ascribed a disappointingly small amount of material evidence to Uzziah's reign. This paucity of data does not reflect the scope of his accomplishments nor longevity as recorded in the biblical texts, notably in 2 Chr 26. The lack of a clearly identifiable mid-eighth century B.C. ceramic corpus or destruction layer that would date to the time of Uzziah is a contributing factor in this dilemma. Nearly all of the excavated eighth-century B.C. occupational levels and related finds have been ascribed to Hezekiah instead, primarily upon the basis of widespread destruction levels

evidently datable to Sennacherib's 701 B.C. campaign against Judah (e.g.: Barkay and Ussishkin 2004b; A. Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001a; 2001b; Ussishkin 1976; 1977; 1985). Consequently, while an accurate knowledge of Judahite material culture of the late-eighth century B.C. exists, an understanding of corresponding pottery forms and artifacts from the early-to mid-eighth century B.C. is not as secure. Similarly, the list of published research that addresses historical aspects of Uzziah's reign, specifically studies placing his rule within a clear historical context, is surprisingly short. Scholarship has tended to focus on the theological aspects of Uzziah, notably his prideful downfall and physical affliction in the face of God's judgment and, accordingly, has largely neglected the historical data in Chr's account.

Looming large behind these historical questions is the crucial issue regarding the reliability of Chronicles as a historical source. The Chr's work has traditionally been badly maligned or simply dismissed by critical scholars as merely a vary late *midrash* of Samuel-Kings with little, if any, historical value. However, the last few decades have witnessed a marked rise of scholarly interest in Chronicles with many studies devoted to answering whether Chr accessed and utilized earlier sources from the period of the monarchy in order to write his history of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Scholars such as Albright, Rudolph, Williamson, Dillard, Japhet, Rainey and Vaughn provide evidence, contending for at least a limited use of archival data by Chr. These positive evaluations have stood in striking contrast to the much more critical assessments given Chronicles by such scholars as Torrey, Welten, North, Ben Zvi, Klein and Kalimi. The book of Chronicles indeed provides several excellent "test cases" for the historiographer, where comparisons between the text and other historical and, in the case of this study,

archaeological sources are utilized to either confirm or contradict the historical value of Chr's work. While some of these have produced mixed results, mainly due to a lack of evidence—such as the list of Rehoboam's fortresses (2 Chr 11) and Asa's victory over Zerah's Cushite army (2 Chr 14)—events from the reigns of Jehoshaphat (Rainey 2000a), Hezekiah (Vaughn 1999a) and Manasseh (Rainey 1993a) have been convincingly validated on the basis of their corroboration with other source materials as well as archaeological data. Yet, no systematic effort has been attempted to correlate Chr's account of Uzziah with other sources, historical or archaeological.

### **Purpose Statement**

Utilizing available historical sources and archaeological data, this dissertation examines Judah's eighth century B.C. archaeological record in the light of 2 Chr 26:6-7a in order to establish how archaeological data corresponds or differs with Chr's account of Uzziah's war against the Philistines.

### **Methodology Statement**

My study commences with a survey of the scientific literature pertinent to the debate over the historical reliability of Chronicles. A historical overview of Judah during the mid-eighth century B.C. follows, including discussions about its material culture, and geo-political status. My ensuing analysis focuses upon 2 Chr 26:6-7a, which affords the archaeological data perhaps its best opportunity at making a contribution to the historicity of Chr's account. Particular attention is given to the cities of Ashdod (Ben-Shlomo 2003; Dothan 1971a; 1971b; Dothan and Porath 1982; Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz 2001; 2004), Yavneh (Fischer and Taxel 2007; Kletter and Ziffer 2008); and Gath (Bliss and



Macalister 1902; Maeir 2012a; 2012b; Rainey 1975; 2004), as well as sites along the coast or on the Coastal Plain, for example at Tel Mor and Tel Harassim (e.g., Barako 2007; Rainey 1998a), and the Shephelah (A. Mazar 1994; Rainey 1983a), notably focusing on data culled from publications on Gezer and Lachish (e.g., Ortiz 2009; Ussishkin 2014). In my concluding chapter, I summarize and assess the evidence and provide my conclusions.

### **The Historical Reliability of Chronicles: An Overview**

An anonymous Jewish historian, named the Chronicler (Chr) by historians and theologians, compiled and wrote a theologically laced history of Israel to his initial audience, who lived in a Persian period (Post Exilic or Restoration) historical context (539-333 B.C.).<sup>1</sup> Chr penned his work no earlier than the late sixth century, but most likely during the fifth century B.C.<sup>2</sup> Primarily two main factors have led most scholars and students to give pause, advance doubts or even summarily dismiss Chr's work as historically suspect, generally unreliable or, in some cases, wholly fictitious and deemed merely as a late *midrash* of Samuel-Kings with little, if any, historical value apart from glimpses into Chr's own day. The first issue concerns what, if any, historical sources were available to Chr pertaining to the period of the monarchy in addition to the

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<sup>1</sup> Long believed by most scholars to have been Ezra due to the textual overlap between the two books, equating the writer of Chronicles with Ezra is far from certain, due largely to the groundbreaking studies of Japhet (1997a; 2006a). For a clear assessment of the evidence and arguments against Ezra, see the explanation of Japhet (2006a: 1-37) with additional observations noted by Klein (2006: 16-17) and Williamson (1982: 5-11) and the literature cited in these discussions.

<sup>2</sup> Due to the dramatic rise in attention given to the Persian Period by biblical scholars over the past three decades, the literature on the historical *milieu* of the Chr is vast. For a progression of views of particular relevance to this study, see the following selected treatments by Ackroyd (1968; 1979: 328-49; 1985; 1991); Ahlström (1991: 129-41; 1993: 812-906); Albertz (2006); Albright (1950: 61-74); Amit (1981); Avi-Yonah (1954; 2002); Bright (1960); Bruce (1963: 97-119); Burrows (1955); Cross (1998); Davis (1908); Edelman (2005); Myers (1965c); Renan (1895); Rendtorff (1992); Talmon (2001); Weinberg (1992); and Williamson (2004).

Deuteronomistic History. The validity of this query is easily demonstrated by noting the span of time separating Chr from the events he records. While orally transmitted stories may have survived down to Chr's day, writing a reputable history naturally demands access to archival sources more or less contemporary with the period of the monarchy (Iron Age II). Secondly, Chr's language and style has been viewed by most readers as tendentious with clearly perceived theological biases. The historical validity of Chronicles has therefore been questioned, in turn defended and vigorously debated over the past two centuries by many biblical scholars.<sup>3</sup> While nothing approaching a consensus will likely ever be reached, most historians now recognize at least limited use of older sources by Chr, but differ on their placement and presentation in Chr's narrative.

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<sup>3</sup> For discussions about the composition and the historical reliability of Chronicles as a historical source, see Ackroyd (1973; 1976; 1985; 1987); Albright (1921; 1924a: 147 and n. 1; 1950: 61-74); Allen (1974a; 1974b; 1987); Amit (1981); Ball (1883); Banks (2006); Barnes (1896; 1899); Beentjes (1996; 2001; 2003; 2006; 2008); Begg (1982; 1987; 1988; 1995; 1996; 2000); Bennett (1908); Benzinger (1901); Ben Zvi (1997a; 1997b; 2006; 2007; 2011); Bertheau (1857; 1873); Birch (1964); Bourne (1901); Braun (1986: xvii-xlv); Bräumer (2002); Brooke (2007); Bruce (1972); Brunet (1953; 1954); Cazelles (1999); Cheyne (1893; 1913); Clements (1976a; 1976b; 1985); Cogan (1999); Coppens (1942); Cornill (1907); Curtis (1910: 1-54); Davis (1908); de Spinoza (1883; 1989); de Wette (1806: 1843; 1859; 1867); Dijkstra (1975; 2005); Dillard (1984; 1987: 76-81); Duke (1990; 2009); Eissfeldt (1938); Elmslie (1916; 1954); Freedman (1961; 1997: 88-93); Gerleman (1946; 1948); Graf (1866: 160-88); Graham (1983; 1990; 1993); Graham, Högglund, and McKenzie (1997); Graham and McKenzie (1999); Graham, McKenzie and Knoppers (2003); Halpren (1981; 1983; 1987); Hänel (1937); Haran (1999); Harvey-Jellie (1906); Hayes (1982; 1999); Hendel (2010); Hill (2003: 21-56); Howard (2000); Jahn (1827a; 1828); Japhet (1993: 1-49; 1997a; 1997b; 2006a); Johnstone (1986; 1997: 9-20); Jones (1993); Kalimi (1990; 1998; 2004; 2005a; 2005b; 2009a; 2009b); Kallai (1978; 1998; 2004; 2009; 2010); Kegler and Augustin (1984); Keil (1833; 1869 2: 47-101; 1878: 9-45); Kelly (1996; 2003); Kittel (1895a; 1895b; 1-8; 1910); Klein (1992; 1995; 2006: 1-48; 2010); Kleinig (1994); Knoppers (1999b; 2003b: 47-239; 2003c; 2012); Knoppers and Harvey (2002); Knoppers and McConville (2000); Langton (1978); Lemke (1965); Liver (1971); Long (1994; 1999; 2002); Lusseau (1968); Macy (1975); McKenzie (1984; 2004: 17-58); McKenzie and Graham (1994); McKenzie and Römer (2000); Meyer (1921); Millard (1977; 1994); Monson (2008); Montgomery (1931; 1934a); Myers (1965a: XV-XCIV; 1966); Newman (1847); North (1963; 1968a; 1974); Payne (1988); Peltonen (1996; 1999; 2001); Persons (2002; 2010); Pfeiffer (1934; 1948: 782-812; 1962); Podechard (1915); Rainey (1993a; 1997; 2000a); Raney (2003); Raurell (2006); Rendtorff (1999); Rezetko; Lim; and Aucker (2007); Richardson (1958); Rogerson (1984; 1989; 1992a; 1992b; 2007); Rudolph (1954; 1955: III-XXVI, 282-85); Schniedewind (1996: 249-52); Smend (1983; 2007); Stade (1886); Steins (1995); Talmon (1987); Torrey (1908; 1909); Vaughn (2004); von Rad (1962: 85-92; 347-54; 2005: 125-73, 232-42, 256-60, 265); Weinberg (1996); Wellhausen (1885: 171-227; 1891: 477-79); Welten (1973); Westermann (1985); de Wette (1806: 1843; 1859; 1867); Willi (1972); Williamson (1977a; 1979; 1982: 2-36; 1987; 1999); Winckler (1892); Wright (1992; 1997); and Zöckler (1877).

These sources probably comprised the annalistic, but now lost work: ספר דברי הימים למלכי יהודה (*The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah*), a prophetic work penned in part by Isaiah, the son of Amoz, who, as the biblical records clearly attest, undoubtedly was a prominent court prophet during the second half of the eighth century B.C. (2 Kgs 15:6; 2 Chr 26:22; e.g., Anderson 1960; Emerton 1992; Gray 1952b; Høgenhaven 1990; Holladay 1970; Milgrom 1964; Olley 2003; Roberts 2005; Sayce 1896). Moreover, some scholars suggest that Chr and other biblical writers utilized selectivity in their accounts. In other words, Chr *selectively choose to include* archival material that the writer of Samuel-Kings (DtrH) *selectively choose to omit* (and vice versa), in order to emphasize or enhance specific theological messages he wished to promote and convey to his audience (e.g., Cross 1998: 175-79; Rainey 1997: 43-44; Rosenbaum 1979; Vaughn 2004: 379-80).<sup>4</sup> This assessment has been used to explain the divergences between Chr's account of Uzziah to that of DtrH, who may have chose to highlight Hezekiah's accomplishments at the expense of those carried out by Uzziah, which he only briefly described (Ortiz 2009: 365). Even Ahlström (1993: 626-27) viewed Chr's account of Uzziah as historically probable and saw the omission of these events in Kings as a deliberate exclusion. However, an astute observation by Rainey (1997: 62-63) is especially crucial: "This passage is missing in Kings, but there is nothing about its geographic and ethnographic details to suggest that it is a pure invention by Chr... All of this (additional information given in Chronicles) provides the necessary background for understanding how Uzziah

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<sup>4</sup> For discussions of these sources, see Anderson (1960); Cogan (1999; 2001: 88-95); Cross (1973: 274-89); Dijkstra (2005); Emerton (1992); Gray (1952b; 1970: 1-43); Halpern (1983); Haran (1999); Høgenhaven (1990); Knoppers (2012); Leclerc (1998); Machinist (1983); McKenzie (1984); Milgrom (1964); Montgomery (1931; 1934a; 1938; 1951: 24-45); Na'aman (1998; 1999b; 2006b); Noth (1987; 1991); Olley (2003); Raney (2003); Roberts (2005; 2006); Sayce (1896); Smit (1966); and Wolff (1975).

could eventually establish a new fortified presence at Elath (2 Kgs 14:22 // 2 Chr 26:2).” This assessment is, in my view, especially compelling and demonstrates that Chr easily could have inserted archival data missing from the parallel account in the Book of Kings to highlight theological points while maintaining the essential historicity of his account.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, in some cases scholars argue that Chr transferred events from one king to another in order to buttress his well known theology of immediate retribution (e.g., Dillard 1984; 1987: 76-81), such as reassigning actions from Hezekiah’s reign and ascribing them to other Judahite kings, such as Rehoboam (Na’aman 1986b), or more notably, Uzziah (Lipiński 2006: 78). While future research and discoveries may provide support either for or against these arguments, the Book of Chronicles provides us with several excellent “test cases” to investigate and to make comparisons between the text and other historical and / or archaeological sources to either ultimately confirm or reject the historical value of Chr’s work.<sup>6</sup> The ensuing study comprises a careful examination of one of these “test cases” and attempts to correlate archaeological data with Chr’s report of Uzziah’s expansion to the west and his military achievements against the Philistines (2 Chr 26:6-7a).

### **Uzziah in Historical Sources: An Overview**

The text of 2 Chr 26:6-15 provides a detailed description of Uzziah’s 52-year long reign over Judah. In contrast to the surprisingly brief account of this ruler found in 2 Kgs

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<sup>5</sup> The possibility that Uzziah incorporated vast territories in the north into the orbit of Judah later in his reign greatly reinforces Rainey’s observations. See the discussion of this hypothesis below.

<sup>6</sup> The numerous studies correlating biblical data with archaeological evidence comprises a fascinating overview of the history of Old Testament research and one of the most extensive and successful of these attempted correlations is Vaughn’s (1999a) archaeologically based study of Hezekiah’s reign in Chronicles largely focused upon the presence and distribution pattern of the *lmk* seal impressions and jars at various sites.

15, Chr portrays Uzziah as one of Judah's most energetic and successful kings, describing military engagements against the Philistines, Arabs and Me'unites; territorial conquests of Gath, Yavneh, Ashdod and Elath; in addition to his diplomatic triumphs and monumental projects relating to Jerusalem's defenses. Uzziah's military strength and innovative weaponry are also recorded. One enigmatic statement (2 Chr 26:10) is especially interesting: "He (Uzziah) also built towers in the desert and dug many cisterns, because he had much livestock in the foothills and in the plain. He had people working his fields and vineyards in the hills and in the fertile lands, for he loved the soil (NIV)." This account appears to describe Uzziah's oversight of a vast array of royal estates (e.g., de Vaux 1961: 124-26; Fritz 1995: 167-68; Graham 1984; Rainey 1982; Rainey and Notley 2006: 218-19; Zevit 2001: 514), biblically attested elsewhere as Davidic ancestral and crown lands (e.g., Ruth 4:12, 18; 1 Sam 23:19-24; 25:2, 36-42; 26:1; 2 Sam 5:1-5; Is 1:29); as well as royal agricultural projects, such as fortified farmsteads, settlements and paramilitary outposts established by Uzziah throughout Judah and along her arid eastern and southern border areas. A number of texts refer to these Davidic royal land holdings (e.g., 1 Sam 27:6; 1 Chr 27:25-31), including parks (Neh 2:8; Eccl 2:4-9) and gardens (2 Sam 18:18; 1 Kgs 1:9, 45; 2 Kgs 23:4; 25:4; Is 1:29; Jer 29:4; 31;40; 52:7; Neh 2:14; 3:15; Ps 110:7; Zech 14:10). Royal terraced gardens and parks are widely attested in both Mesopotamia and Egypt and offer excellent parallels, both stylistically and purposefully, for those developed within and just outside the confines of Jerusalem, notably along the floor and slopes of the Kidron (King's) Valley (e.g., Gleason 1997; Oppenheim 1965; Stager 1982; 1999; Stronach 1990; Wilkinson 1998; Wiseman 1983; 1984). Perhaps these royal estates are best exemplified by the eighth century B.C.

Judahite sites of Ramat Rahel (e.g., Barkay 2006) and Moza (Greenhut and De Groot 2002; 2008; 2009). Excavations at Ramat Rahel have exposed an elaborate palace complex in the midst of a region well known for viticulture since biblical times (Rainey 1982). For Judah, the early- to mid-eighth century B.C. was markedly characterized as a period of prosperity, but this affluence carried with it the crimes of social injustice. Elements from Judah's royal court and Jerusalem's aristocracy confiscated land owned by generations of families and clans from Judah's rural hinterland (e.g., Isaiah 5:1-7; Emerton 1992; LaBianca and Geraty 1987; Leclerc 1998; Lewis 1989; 1991; Roberts 2005; 2006; Weinfeld 1995; Yeivin 1953). It was also during this period that the city of Jerusalem expanded onto the Western Hill, an area that was already a walled suburb by the end of the ninth century B.C., as recent arguments suggest (e.g., Barkay 2001; Faust 2005a; 2014a).<sup>7</sup>

The name Uzziah is attested on two unprovenanced Hebrew seals that appeared during the nineteenth century. These seals probably belonged to Judahite royal ministers or court officials during Uzziah's reign. The name Azariah, Uzziah's alternate throne name, appears on another seal unearthed at En Gedi (Avigad 1997: 50-51, 80; Barkay 1977: 104; Mykytiuk 2004). It is the appearance of a certain *Azriyau* (Azariah), the name given Uzziah in the parallel account in 2 Kgs 15, in the royal inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria that has caused nearly 150 years of scholarly debate. First read by

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<sup>7</sup> Ussishkin (2003a: 534; 2004a: 82) also accepts that the expansion of Jerusalem occurred during the ninth century B.C. due to the significance of Jerusalem at least matching "the unusual strength and monumentality of the Level IV fortress city (of Lachish)." A decade later, Ussishkin (2014: 213; 2015: 144-45) fails to reconcile his view that Jerusalem was a small town during the ninth century B.C. with the evidence at Lachish: "Assuming that in the ninth century the settlement in Jerusalem, the capital city, was fairly small and unfortified, the question then is how an outlying city like Lachish could have been much greater. I have no certain answer to this question; it is possible, of course, that Jerusalem had already begun to grow and expand in the ninth century."

George Smith (1869; 1873: 328; 1875a; 1875b; 1876: 82-87), Tiglath-pileser III twice mentioned *Azriyau* as a leader of a coalition of rebellious vassal states in northern Syria. While the name is clearly an Assyrian rendering of the Hebrew Azariah, many scholars dismissed any consideration that the Kingdom of Judah could orchestrate such political influence so far to the north. Yet, attempts to place this ruler in one of the kingdoms of Northern Syria or eastern Anatolia remain conjectural and problematic.<sup>8</sup> It seems that once the geopolitical situation in the Levant during the mid-eighth century B.C. is fully grasped, the identity of *Azriyau* must refer to no one other than Azariah/Uzziah of Judah (Rainey 1996: 547; Rainey and Notley 2006: 219-20; Thiele 1965: 90-117; 1983: 139-62). Thiele (1983: 142) provides the following assessment: “The present writer believes that the evidence is entirely convincing for the identification of the “Azriyau” and the “Yaudi” of this Assyrian inscription with the biblical Azariah (Uzziah) and Judah. It is extremely unlikely that at the very time Judah had such an outstanding king, possessing

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<sup>8</sup> The debate over the identity of this historical figure continues, despite the influential paper by Na’aman (1974), which claimed one of these texts probably dated to Sennacherib’s reign rather than Tiglath-pileser III and thus referred to Hezekiah, although the validity of this join has been questioned as well (e.g., Cazelles 1978: 74-75; 1979: 309; Provan 2009: 168-69). Regrettably, subsequent scholarship has all but ignored Tadmor’s (1961) seminal study of the issue (e.g., Kletter 1996: 43, but now see Hudon 2012a), which includes an observation recognizing the significance of “the border of Egypt” (2 Chr 26:8) and “Lebo Hamath” (2 Kgs 14:25) as a contracted form of the boundaries of Canaan in the historical context of the reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam II (Glueck 1959b: 13-14, 148-49; Tadmor 1961: 233 n. 6). For representative arguments and relevant evidence, see *ANET*: 282-83; Anspacher (1912); Cogan (2008: 48-51); Cogan and Tadmor (1988: 165-68); Dalley (1985; 1990; 2000; 2004); Dubovský (2006); Fitzmyer (1971); Garelli (1991); Haydn (1909); Ikeda (2003); Kaplan (2008); Lipiński (1971); Luckenbill (1925; 1926-1927); Machinist (1983; 2009); Parker (1996); Parpola (2003); Radine (2010: 49-50); Tadmor (1960b; 1961; 1966: 87; 1975; 1976; 1986-1989; 1994: 273-74; 2011: 785-91); Tadmor and Yamada (2011: 40-43, 75-76); Winckler (1893; 1907); and Wiseman (1951; 1955; 1958: 53-56). Those scholars that support the *Azriyau* / Azariah identification include Bierling (1992: 196-97); Bright (1981: 270); Cazelles (1979: 309); Haran (1967: 281); Herzog and Gichon (1997: 243); McCurdy (1891: 390); Myers (1965b: 153); Oded (1979b: 269); Roberts (1985: 163-64 n. 16); Saggs (1973: 160-61); Wellhausen (1891: 474-75); Wiseman (1958: 56); Wright (1966: 86); and Yadin (1963: 325). Japhet (1993: 880-81) prudently observes that Chr’s word choice of Uzziah’s “fame” (זָמַר) is unique and hints at “the king’s involvement in international politics.” It is entirely possible that Chr’s reference to “the border of Egypt” is an indirect reference to the site of Kuntillet Ajrud or perhaps to Tell Abu Salima and other border posts where trading and diplomatic exchanges took place.

such marked abilities as a warrior and statesman (2 Chron. 26:6-15), another state of a similar name should possess a king with an almost identical name and with the same outstanding characteristics.” Likewise, the biblical account seems to hint at the development of a “greater Judah” (2 Kgs 14:28), which probably occurred in the rather chaotic power vacuum that developed following Jeroboam II’s death (Rainey and Notley 2006: 219-20; Yeivin 1968: 11-14; 1971b; 1974: 25; 1979a: 161-72).<sup>9</sup> If and when a definitive link is made between the *Azriyau* in Assyrian sources and the Azariah (Uzziah) recorded in the Hebrew Bible, the ensuing study would be largely unnecessary as it focuses upon the much more modest, parochial territorial gains along Judah’s western border that Uzziah accomplished earlier in his reign.

### **Uzziah in Archaeological Sources: An Overview**

The issue of whether archaeological evidence generally supports or challenges the historical validity of the biblical accounts of the monarchy remains a sharply debated topic with many fronts,<sup>10</sup> and the archaeological assessment for the reign of Uzziah is no exception.<sup>11</sup> The principal problems regarding the biblical accounts for Uzziah involve

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<sup>9</sup> Noth (1968: 34) overlooks any Israelite-Judahite alliance based upon 2 Kgs 14:25.

<sup>10</sup> For examples of the use and abuse of archaeology to support and weaken the biblical depiction of the monarchy, see Albright (1932: 78; 1938b; 1940); Bartlett (1997: 1-19); Bennett (1986); Ben-Shem (1972); Benzinger (1894; 1903; 1927); Biran (2006); Bloch-Smith and Nakhai (1999); Bunimovitz and Faust (2010); Dever (1994; 2001; 2005b; 2007; 2008; 2010; 2012); Driver (1909); Edelman (1991); Elliott (2002); Exum (1997); Finkelstein and Mazar (2007); Hallote (2006); Jahn (1827b); Jeremias (1911); Keil (1888); King (1983); Kyle (1912; 1924); Machinist (2009); McCurdy (1894; 1896); Millard (2008); Miller (1988; 1992); Na’aman (1985; 1986a; 1986b; 1987; 1991; 1996; 2002; 2003; 2005; 2006a; 2013); North (1968b); Noth (1960b; 1987; 1991); Rainey (1984b; 2001b; 2002b); Richardson (1957; 1959); Rogerson (1989); Sayce (1888; 1895; 1907; 1915); and Sellin (1925).

<sup>11</sup> For representative treatments of Uzziah in the archaeological record, see Ahlström (1991; 1993); Avigad (1997: 80 and references); Barkay (1977: 104); Bolen (1994); de Vries (1989: 358-59); Dever (2010); Dillard (1987: 204-12); Duncan (1930: 55; 1931); Feuillet (1961); Garbini (1982; 1985; 1988); Gray (1979); Kittel (1896: 295-96; 329-32); Klein (2012: 367-83); Lilley (1975); Lipiński (1971; 2006: 70-83); McCurdy (1891); Myers 1965b: 147-54); Mykytiuk (2004); Na’aman (1993; 2003); Richardson (1958); Rinaldi (1963); Selman (1994: 465-72); and Yeivin (1955: 14-16).



the following issues. First, the lack of widespread destruction layers dateable to his reign hinder efforts to clearly identify a Judahite ceramic horizon for the mid eighth century B.C. Secondly, site identification issues for Elath and, until recently (Philistine) Gath, persist. Thirdly, the excavation results thus far from Tell es-Safi, Ashdod, and Yavneh, which comprise the key elements of this study, sadly provide only fragmentary pictures of these sites during the eighth century B.C., which have naturally fostered differing, often contradictory interpretations. Likewise, other historical sources, both biblical and Assyrian, often give tantalizing, but inexact contextual historical information. Nevertheless, the enormous amount of archaeological data retrieved from the region under study does indeed provide strong circumstantial evidence supporting, but not verifying Chr's account of Uzziah.

Ironcially, the most dramatic archaeological find directly relating to Uzziah was the 1931 published discovery of a memorial tombstone bearing an Aramaic epitath: "Hither were brought the bones of Uzziah, king of Judah; not to be opened." The likely date of this inscribed funerary plaque is approximately the turn of the era.<sup>12</sup> Apparently, new construction or development work in the vicinity of Jerusalem, possibly by Herod the Great, required the transfer of Uzziah's remains to a new location. The tombstone is particularly significant because it provides clear historical support for Chr's account of Uzziah. Only Chr notes that Uzziah was buried apart from the royal necropolis on account of his skin disease (2 Chr 26:23). The parallel text in 2 Kgs 15:7 does not

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<sup>12</sup> For details relating to the tombstone of Uzziah, see Albright (1931); Sukenik (1931; 1932); and Wright (1938). The inscribed funerary plaque was discovered by E. L. Sukenik among an antiquities collection housed at the Russian Church on the Mount of Olives. Its original find spot remains unknown. Further studies of the royal necropolis of Judah are found in Barkay (1977); Barkay and Kloner (1986); Caillou (2008); Kloner (1986); Rahmani (1981a; 1981b); Shea (1987); Ussishkin (1993b; 2003a); Yeivin (1948); and Zorn (2006).

provide this crucial information. If indeed, Uzziah was interred with the other kings of Judah in the royal tombs, any removal of remains from the complex would entail transferring the entire necropolis, which would likely be duly recorded. Consequently, Uzziah's initial interment clearly seems to have been separate from the other kings of Judah and also a well known landmark of Jerusalem that was probably known by Chr. Additional monumental evidence from Jerusalem, notably the "extra" tower from the royal gateway complex recently excavated on the *ophel* and published by E. Mazar (2011: 115-27; E. and B. Mazar 1989: 3-8, 58-59) also exists that seem to support Chr's description of Uzziah's fortification efforts in his capital (2 Chr 26:9). However, while certain biblical historians and archaeologists have often ascribed various material remains to Uzziah's reign over the years, finding correlations based upon solid evidence has proven to be more elusive. Consequently, the focused purpose of this dissertation is an examination of all published archaeological evidence relating to Uzziah's conquest of northern Philistia (2 Chr 26:6-7a) in order to determine, if possible, the historicity of Chr's account.

CHAPTER 2  
THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF WESTERN JUDAH AND PHILISTIA DURING  
THE FIRST HALF OF THE EIGHTH CENTURY B.C.

**Introduction**

As discussed in the previous chapter, numerous correlations linking the biblical accounts of Uzziah's reign with archaeological data have found their way into the body of archaeological literature throughout the history of research in the southern Levant, especially during the 1950's and 1960's. Unfortunately, many of these supposed connections were based at least partially on simplistic readings of the biblical text coupled with unscientific excavation methodologies and interpretations of the archaeological data. However, other conclusions were reached using more carefully drawn lines of evidence. Still yet, aside from a few reports on Negeb Highlands and Aravah sites, these archaeological links all but disappeared from the scholarly literature by the mid 1970's. Two influential studies prompted a major shift in the archaeological interpretation of eighth century B.C. Judah. First, Nadav Na'aman redated an Assyrian inscription mentioning (*Azri*)*yau of Yaudi* from Tiglath-pileser III to Sennacherib, and thus seemed to eliminate the bulk of evidence equating Uzziah with an anti-Assyrian coalition leader operating north of Hamath (Na'aman 1974). Secondly, Ussishkin (1977) demonstrated that Sennacherib destroyed Lachish Stratum III in 701 B.C. Na'aman's and Ussishkin's studies gained nearly immediate acceptance from scholars and, whether

consciously or unconsciously, shifted the focus from Uzziah's reign to that of Hezekiah. While Israeli archaeologists made occasional links between archaeological evidence and Uzziah, a recent statement by the respected archaeologist William G. Dever (2012: 303) on the historicity of Chr's account of Uzziah's wars against the Philistines concluded that: "(t)here is...no archaeological evidence of such conflicts." However, new associations between Uzziah's reign and archaeological data have lately begun to appear as fresh data emerges and old data is reassessed (yet again).

A recently published summary report by Ortiz (2009: 365-67, 378) notes that a current trend in Levantine archaeology involves a reexamination of the early eighth century B.C. as well as a reassessment of the heavy emphasis previously placed upon the late eighth century B.C. reign of Hezekiah and his defensive related projects, which have dominated the study of the Iron Age IIB in Judah for the last forty years. Recently excavated evidence from Gezer, Beth Shemesh, Tell es-Safi and now at Lachish has initiated a shifting of focus away from Hezekiah. Furthermore, this new data appears to point towards a geopolitical shift in the Shephelah and seems to indicate a resurgent Judah expanding west into Philistia earlier in the eighth century B.C. Judahite material culture and extensive building activity at border sites seems to represent this process. Ortiz (2009: 378) adds that "(w)e are now able to place the biblical text in a wider historical context. It appears that under the kingship of Uzziah (t)here was more extensive political and economic growth than during the reign of Hezekiah." However, interpreting the finds and associating the development of these sites to Uzziah remains conjectural to a certain degree. Twenty-six years ago, Holladay (1990: 24) stated: "(T)he lack of good ninth and early eighth century (B.C.) deposits in the south (Judah) is

arguably not due to deficiencies in the archaeological record, but to the archaeologists' inability to deal with materials other than destruction deposits." Holladay described the solution for this oversight as a careful study of "minor stratigraphic successions" sandwiched between the destruction layers of major disasters, frequently (but not always) recorded in historical sources. Referring to Beth Shemesh Level III (10<sup>th</sup> - early 8<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.), Bunimovitz and Lederman (2006: 419-20) noted one of the crucial issues related to this study: "Usually, the typological and chronological discussions of pottery related to this (Iron Age II) period are based on assemblages from destruction levels. These assemblages, however, apparently reflect the end of an occupation phase and inform us very little regarding the earlier pottery assemblages that were in use during the lifespan of that occupation. This problem is further exacerbated in cases of undisturbed long-lasting occupational phases. In fact, pottery representing the "mid-life" (post-construction/pre-destruction) phases of an archaeological stratum is usually found in a variety of secondary contexts, such as middens, construction fills, and so on. The study of such deposits demands, therefore, meticulous analysis of mainly sherd material, very different from the so-often spectacular destruction assemblages of complete vessels."

While Chr does not specifically mention Uzziah burning Ashdod, Gath and Yavneh, at least a partial destruction by fire should reasonably be expected in the contemporary strata at these sites. Still, Uzziah's actions may have paralleled those of Jehoash against Jerusalem and likely other Judahite cities like Lachish, where widescale destructive burning seem to be absent. The Chr does include extremely valuable information about certain building projects of Uzziah including specific locations along and sections of Jerusalem's walls; towers and fortifications at the Corner Gate, Valley

Gate and the rather enigmatic ‘Angle’ (המקצויע)<sup>13</sup> as well as towers and cisterns in the Wilderness of Judah (2 Chr 26:9-10).<sup>14</sup> The latter two projects possibly represented para-military agricultural settlements and redoubts. Contrary to the claims from numerous commentators and historians over the years, the Hebrew Bible does not specifically mention any efforts by Uzziah to settle or fortify the Negeb or the Negeb Highlands

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<sup>13</sup> The literature for Jerusalem during the Iron Age II is vast. For the growth of the city, its fortifications and other topographical features during the ninth and eighth centuries B.C, see in particular; Avi-Yonah 1954; 1971; Avigad 1952; 1983: 23-63; 1985; Bahat 1981; 1989; 1990: 12-33; 1993; 2013: 303-28; Barkay 1977; 1985; 1985-1986; 1988; 1992: 364-72; 2001; Ben-Dov 2002: 43-74; Broshi 1974; 1977; 2001: 110-20; 174-80; Burrows 1934; 1935; 1936; 1958; Crowfoot 1945; 1947; De Groot and Fadida 2011; Faust 1997; 2005a; 2007; 2014a; Finkelstein 2003; 2008; Geva 1979; 2006a; 2006b; 2007; 2014; Grafman 1974; Guillaume 2008; Guthe 1885; 1895; Herr 2007; Hutzli 2011; Japhet 2006b; Kalimi 2003; Kloner 1985; 1986; 2000; 2001; 2001-2002; 2003a; Knoppers 1999a; 2003a; Laperrousaz 1993; Magness 1995; B. Mazar 1975a: 183-89; E. Mazar 2011: 29, 119, 127; E. Mazar and B. Mazar 1989: IX-XI, 58-60; Mitchell 1903; Na’aman 2007a; 2012; 2014; North 1957; Noth 1968; Pixner 1989; 1997; Pixner, Chen, and Margalit 1989; 1994; Prag 1998; Reich and Shukron 2000; 2003; 2009; 2011; Reich, Shukron, and Lernau 2007; Schick 1885; 1890; Schniedewind 2003; Shiloh 1984; 1985; 1989; Simons 1950a; 1950b; 1952; Smith 1907 1: 206-7, 2: 117-24; Stager 1982; Steiner 1994; 2001a; 2001b; 2003; Tushingham 1978; 1979; 1985; 1987; Ussishkin 1995a; 2003a; 2003b; 2004b; 2005b; 2006; 2009a; Uziel and Shai 2007; Vriezen 1994; Weinfeld 1983; 1996; Weksler-Bdolah, Onn, Ouahnouna, and Kisilevitz 2009; 2011; Wightman 1993; 1994; Williamson 1984; 2004: 64-73; Yamauchi 1980; Yeivin 1953; Zorn 2005. For the towers and other fortifications surrounding Jerusalem, see Arubas and Goldfus 2005; 2007; 2008: 1828; Barkay, Fantalkin, and Tal 2002; Burke 2007; Eisenberg and De Groot 2006, Faust 2012: 183-89; Har-el 1981; A. Kletter 1991; Mazar 1982a; 1982b; 1990b: 96-101; Rapuano 2004; Shanks 1983. For more general overviews and other relevant aspects, see Avi-Yonah 1974: 8-10; Bahat and Hurvitz 1996; de Vaux 1965; 1969; King 1985; B. Mazar 1956; 1976; 1982b; 1992b; Talmon 1974. See also Goldschmidt-Lehmann 1982; Purvis 1988; 1991; Vogel 1982: 44-49; 1987: 31-34; and Vogel and Holtzclaw 1982: 42-47 for further bibliography. Josephus attributes the first wall, which surrounded the Western Hill, to “ancient kings” (*Wars* IV § 399); meaning Solomon and the later kings of Judah (B. Mazar 1982a).

<sup>14</sup> The Hebrew term here specifically refers to the Wilderness (Steppe) of Judah (מדבר) a north-south strip that extends from Jerusalem east to the shore of the Dead Sea rather than the Negeb and Negeb Highlands. For the term, see Talmon (1966; 1993: 216-54). For the archaeology of the various Iron Age II sites, see Aharoni 1958c: 27-32, V; 1961b: 15-16; 1964a; Avigad 1962: 174; Bar-Adon 1972; 1975; 1977; 1980: 1-13; 1989; Bar-Nathan 2006; Ben-Tor 2009: 7; Cross 1973: 109-10, n. 57; Eshel 1995; Faust 2012: 148-59; Fischer, Gichon and Tal 2000; Gichon 1993; Graf 1997; 2003; Greenhut 1993; Har-el 1967; 2007; Mazar, Amit, and Ilan 1996; Meshel and Ofer 2008: 51-59; Noth 1953: 99-100; Ofer 1998; Peleg 2004; Porath 2002b; 2005; Stern 1994; 2007; Stutchbury and Nicholl 1962; Yadin 1965b: 17-18, 115; 1966: 204-5. For Qumran and its vicinity, including Ein Feshkah and the Buqe’ah, see Bar-Adon 1981; Broshi 1992; 1999; Cross 1956; 1993; Cross and Milik 1956a; 1956b; Davies 1982: 30-40; 1988; de Vaux 1954; 1956; 1960; 1973: 1-3, 58-94; 2003; Donceel 1996; Donceel and Donceel-Voute 1994; Galor, Humbert and Zangenberg 2006; Gibson and Taylor 2008; Gray 1979: 71, n. 34; Hirschfeld 1998; 2004a: 49-59; 2004b: 66-71; King 1983: 228-29; Lönnqvist and Lönnqvist 2002: 199-203; Magen and Peleg 2006; Magness 2002: 19-25; 2004; Master 2009; Mébarki 2000: 134; Milik 1959; North 1962; Petersen 1998; Schiffman 1990; Schulz 1960; Shanks 1977; 2007: 74-88; Stager 1972; 1975; 1976; 1981; Taylor 2002; 2008; Trever 1985; van der Ploeg 1958; Vogt 1955, 1956. A comprehensive archaeologically based history of the Wilderness of Judah during the Iron Age is currently being prepared by Uri Davidovich of Hebrew University.

during his long reign. Notwithstanding his conquest of Elath (2 Kgs 14:22 Chr 26: 2), the only references to this region are his wars against the Arabs and the Me'unites, and that his fame and notoriety reached as far as the border of Egypt due to his success against these groups (2 Chr 26:7). Merely by their annalistic nature, these building texts by Chr demonstrate that such activity certainly took place (Rainey 1997: 48-55).<sup>15</sup> Uzziah's defeat of the Arabs and Me'unites, the mention of Elath<sup>16</sup> and his name extending to Egypt's border clearly indicate that vigorous activity took place in the south, which certainly included Judahite garrisons at Kadesh Barnea,<sup>17</sup> Kuntillet 'Ajrud,<sup>18</sup> En

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<sup>15</sup> See Ben Zvi (1997: 132-49; 2006: 100-16) for a critical, but well argued alternative viewpoint. As with so many historical issues relating to the Hebrew Bible, one may choose to either view the evidence as a glass half-full or half empty.

<sup>16</sup> For studies regarding the location of Elath and its relation to Ezion Geber, both of which are disputed, see Bartlett (1989-1990; 1990); Dever (1995b); Glueck (1938a; 1938b; 1939; 1940; 1965; 1969); Glueck and Pratico (1993); Gold (1966); A. Mazar (1990a: 450-51, 513); B. Mazar (1975b); Meshel (1975: 52-53, 120\*); Pratico (1985; 1993: 17-22); Rothenberg, Aharoni, and Hashimshoni (1961: 112-13; 183-89, and Plates 40-48); and Sellin (1936).

<sup>17</sup> See Aharoni (1967a: 3-5, 14-15); Bruins (1986); Cohen (1979: 72-74, 78; 1981a: 97, 103; 1983: XI-XII, XIX-XX; 1993b: 844-45; 1995a); Cohen and Bernick-Greenberg (2007: 9-13); Dothan (1965: 136-39, 142); Finkelstein (2010: 119-23); Kletter (1999: 41-42); A. Mazar (1990a: 444-46, 513); Meyers (1976); Olmstead (1931: 417-20); Rothenberg, Aharoni, and Hashimshoni (1961: 46-55, 122-25); Ussishkin (1995b: 125-26); Woolley and Lawrence (1914-1915: 78-93, Plates XIII-XV); and Yadin (1963: 325). Nearly all of these scholars either associate the fort with Uzziah, relate them to his attempt to revive trade or at least attribute the sites to some eighth century B.C. polity. Woolley and Lawrence were the first scholars to identify the site of Tell el-Qudeirat as Kadesh Barnea, observing that: "It was occupied for a comparatively brief period, in the later part of the second or the beginning of the first millennium before our era. Various tempting theories lie obvious to hand, but only thorough excavation can profitably solve the character of what is beyond question an interesting and important site" (Woolley and Lawrence 1914-1915: 88). Much more recently, Ussishkin's suggestion that the middle and upper fortress represents the foundation and superstructure of a single contemporaneous structure seems persuasive. His dating of the fortress to the second half of the eighth century B.C. probably reflects his own conclusions (at the time of his publication in 1995) regarding the chronological range of Lachish Level III, which we now suggest (as does Ussishkin) began early in Uzziah's reign. On the other hand, Finkelstein's fanciful theory that Kadesh Barnea was constructed under Assyrian directives and garrisoned by soldiers from Judah and other vassal states (following an earlier suggestion by Na'aman 1991: 48-49; 2001: 268) is entirely without foundation.

<sup>18</sup> The secondary literature is extensive, but for studies that focus at least partly upon historically based and archaeological issues, rather than upon overly emphasized cultic interpretations, see Ahlström (1993: 627 and n. 1); Ayalon (1995); Fantalkin and Finkelstein (2006: 24); Finkelstein and Piasezky (2008); Freud (2008); Gunneweg, Perlman, and Meshel (1985); Hadley (1987; 1993); A. Mazar (1990a: 446-50); Mazar and Panitz-Cohen (2001a: 275); Meshel (1978a; 1978b; 1993a; 1994b; 1997; 2012); Rainey (2002b: 547; Rainey and Notley 2006: 223-24); Shai and Maeir (2012: 355); and Singer-Avitz

Hazeva,<sup>19</sup> near Yotvata<sup>20</sup> and the many sites located in the biblical Negeb. Perhaps additional, as yet undiscovered, sites were garrisoned or settled in the Negeb Highlands. After the death of Jeroboam II, Uzziah may have established hegemony over the Ammonites as well as the Transjordanian tableland (2 Kgs 14:25; 1 Chr 5:17; 2 Chr 26:7-10). While Uzziah's building projects and expansion to the east and to the south lie outside the scope of this study, Judah's resurgency along her western border and expansion into Philistia do, and Uzziah's conquest, building and settlement efforts in the Shephelah and Philistia, specifically in the vicinity of Ashdod (2 Chr 26:6), indisputably align quite well, from a textual standpoint, with his other accomplishments and activities reported by DtrH and Chr.<sup>21</sup>

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(2006; 2009). Rainey's two concise summaries present, in my opinion, the preferred historical (and religious) interpretation of the site.

<sup>19</sup> This site has been identified as biblical Tamar-Tadmor-Tammor (1 Kgs 9:18; 2 Chr 8:4). See Aharoni (1963a: 31; 1967a: 12, 14); Bowman (2010); Cohen (1993a: 594; 1994: 208-12; 1995a; 1995b); Cohen and Yisrael 1995a: 17-22; 1995b: 228-31; 1996: 112-16; 1997); Na'aman (1997d; 2001: 267-68); Schultz (2010); Ussishkin (2009c; 2010b); and Williams (1997). The exact date that the very large Stratum 5 fortress and administrative center was constructed, as well as the identity of its builder is uncertain and perhaps should be ascribed to an earlier king of Judah such as Amaziah. However, Uzziah undoubtedly utilized this strategic logistical base to guard the route to Elath. While Ussishkin's suggestion that the Stratum 5 fortress gate had a mud brick superstructure and that the exposed stone walls are foundational and sleeper walls is reasonable, Na'aman's attribution of this occupational level to the Assyrians, once again, lacks any supporting evidence.

<sup>20</sup> See Aharoni (1967a: 8); Avner (2008: 1707-8); Glueck (1957: 23-25; 1959b: 36); Meshel (1990: 21-23, 37-39; 1993b: 1518-19); and Meshel and Sass (1974; 1977). The Iron Age fort on the summit of the butte is poorly published with an unclear chronological range of Iron Age occupation. However, the strategic location of Yotvata in relation to Elath, Kadesh Barnea, Kuntillet 'Ajrud, Tamar and the Negeb forts and towns, not to mention its value as a source of fresh water, makes Judahite occupation of the Yotvata oasis during Uzziah's reign nearly certain.

<sup>21</sup> Chr reports "and he (Uzziah) built cities in the territory of Ashdod and elsewhere among the Philistines" (2 Chr 26:6). This statement will be examined in detail below.



## **The “Pots and Peoples” Paradigm and Uzziah: On Identifying Judahite Material Cultural Remains in the Shephelah and Philistine Plain**

The (initial) theoretical task before us attempts to determine the degree of probability for identifying a characteristic early to mid-eighth century B.C. Judahite material culture fingerprint from the archaeological record of distinctly Judahite sites, such as Lachish. Comparisons of all relevant data excavated at border sites in the western Shephelah and, more significantly, at sites in the Coastal Plain (Philistia) would then be made in order to determine the controlling polity and the ethnicity of the inhabitants. Pride of place would naturally be given to Yavneh, Ashdod and Gath, as well as surrounding sites exhibiting contemporary eighth century B.C. occupational and destruction layers. Finally, a search would be carried out for newly established sites or previously occupied Philistine sites superimposed with a Judahite material cultural assemblage. While the question of destruction is addressed in the site reports below, the material cultural assemblage analysis raises other queries and responses that have been a focus of recent scholarly debate. At issue is producing a reliable definition for what comprises a collection of data needed to identify the ethnicity and controlling polity at any given site. Attempting to define such a specific set of data, however, is highly problematical. For example, Faust (2012: 230-31) states that: “(t)he attempt to identify ethnic groups in the archaeological record raises many complex problems” and points out that the term “archaeological cultures,” used by earlier researchers to define the material reflections of ethnic groups or peoples, is now widely considered to be a “simplistic and incorrect” approach.

## General Concerns

Identifying the ethnicity of the inhabitants and the polity with hegemony over a site requires a careful examination of all available historical and archaeological evidence. The theoretical and methodological difficulties related to identifying and interpreting the archaeological data in particular is a complicated and problematic process. Faust (2012: 231) emphasizes this difficulty in asserting that: “(m)any factors shape and influence material cultures, and ethnicity is only one of them, along with social status, wealth, gender, occupations, ecology, and more. Following the anthropologists and sociologists, archaeologists began to understand that ethnic groups are not uniform. Ethnic identity (or “ethnicity”) is subjective and flexible and is in a constant process of change... In light of this realization, some scholars have doubted the ability of archaeology to identify ethnic groups... However, it appears that in most cases, complex as they may have been, some relation did exist between ethnicity and the material culture...” These include the existence of ethnic boundaries and distinctive behavioral or material symbols, but also how the material objects were used. Although a material cultural assemblage, at a minimum, consists of pottery, cultic objects, domestic and cultic architecture, and burial customs, the fragmentary nature of excavated data often invites erroneous conclusions regarding ethnicity and hegemony. Food and refuse, the two other important ethnic indicators, are not always stratigraphically preserved to the extent that reasonably accurate conclusions can be made from the available quantitative data.

Scholars have long recognized the emergent Philistine culture as one of the most conspicuous cases of providing indicators of ethnicity with its pottery and related material culture (Brug 1985: 51-57, 202; Bunimovitz 1990: 210; Dothan and Dothan

1992: 29-42; M. Dothan 1993c; Stone 1995), yet even early pottery and other material cultural aspects of coastal sites reveal local and foreign (non-Aegean) influences. These factors have led to several reassessments and calls for caution before linking material cultural assemblages with specific ethnic groups (Bunimovitz and Yasur-Landau 1996: 88). By the eighth century B.C., in the distant wake of their political and cultural dominance during Iron Age I, this cultural clarity further diminished and a more heterogeneous material culture, one significantly influenced by neighboring polities, emerged.

On the other hand, Judahite sites have, thus far, displayed a much more homogeneous material cultural horizon, which is probably due to the near total assimilation of the probable small percentage of ethnic minorities into the dominant (Judahite) culture (Faust 2012: 252). Yet Faust looks towards rural settlements as providing the best data for defining ethnic groups; a particular research design that is far less applicable for the many peripheral border sites and posts that dot the western Shephelah and Philistine Coastal Plain, than it is for other regions.

While Bunimovitz and Yasur-Landau (1996: 89-90, 93-94) affirm the need to emphasize the fluidity of ethnic affiliation and boundaries, they also recognize several factors that assist in identifying ethnic “subcultures” present in the archaeological record. These include: An introduction of a new and distinctly different material culture into the recipient culture. Both cultures adapt, blend and evolve over time forming a new hybrid culture, which diminishes the distinctiveness of the immigrant culture as acculturation and assimilation proceeds.

## Artifacts as an Ethnic Indicator

Kletter (1996: 45-46; 1999: 19, 28, 40) argues that determining ethnicity and political boundaries during the Iron Age IIB-C (eighth-sixth century B.C.) is made much easier and more reliable by first utilizing the available historical sources and then define the distribution pattern of particular artifacts with clear Judahite origin to determine the extent of Judahite hegemony. The objects Kletter utilizes that best represent distinctively Judahite material culture are Hebrew inscribed weights, pillar figurines, horse and rider figurines and royal stamped jar handles. The pillar figurines are rare in the coastal plain, but more prevalent in the western Shephelah, Notably, a handful of pillar figurines come from Philistia,<sup>22</sup> eight from Tel Erani and seven from Gezer, which at the least, suggests a mixed population, but cannot be used to prove Judahite hegemony over the site or region (Kletter 1999: 31, Fig. 4).<sup>23</sup> Sixteen inscribed weights originate from Philistia proper and 24 from the western Shephelah, but may reflect private trade relations rather than political hegemony (Kletter 1999: 34). The *lmlk* stamped jar handles recovered at Tell es-Safi (Gath) and the large amount at Gezer certainly imply Judahite hegemony. Yet the single *lmlk* handle found at Ashdod, while significant, may just as easily be deposited as a result of a jar broken in secondary use after migrating to the site through trade.

While Kletter recognizes that the western border of Judah was the most unstable of her

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<sup>22</sup> One each from Ashdod, Ekron and Tell es-Safi (the latter site may have produced additional, as yet unpublished, examples as it is currently under excavation).

<sup>23</sup> Kletter's (1999) suggestion of utilizing figurines and other characteristic material objects as a device for establishing ethnicity of sites and political borders is an ingenious and meritorious, but perhaps overly simplistic as a definitive solution. The actual ethnic makeup of these border and coastal cities was probably much more complex and, consequently, determining the geopolitical status in the western Shephelah and Philistia during the eighth century B.C. on this data alone is problematic. From an archaeological standpoint, epigraphic evidence provides a more reliable ethnic and political marker. For example, see the comments of Huster (2015: 33-34) and below.

boundaries, he argues that it generally followed along a line stretching from Beth Shemesh, Azekah, and Lachish from the early ninth century B.C. until Hezekiah's revolt in 705 B.C. Ekron and Gath were Philistine cities, while Gezer fell under Israelite control. Kletter also recognizes a strip of "marginal zone" sites with uncertain affiliation, such as Tel Erani and Tel Burna (Kletter 1996: 43-44; 1999: 22, 26-28 and Fig. 1).

While not useless, the limitations of this study for our purposes are readily apparent. Providing precise dates for the various inscribed weights and pillar figurines are currently not possible and Kletter (1999: 33-34) believes most of the inscribed weights date from the seventh century B.C., although their introduction was earlier. While *lmlk* stamped jars are attributed to the eighth century B.C. and perhaps initiated by Uzziah, their introductory date is disputed (Hudon 2010a) and their production and use peaked later, during the reign of Hezekiah. The horse and rider figurines, many of which may date to the eighth century B.C., are usually recovered only in fragmentary form, making any quantitative determinations nearly impossible (Kletter 1999: 38-40). Moreover, Kletter (1999: 40, 42) admits that: "Various explanations are possible for the appearance of Judaeans finds outside Judah. At most sites, they appear as isolated objects, one or two among local assemblages (different from the Judaeans assemblages). Such isolated finds do not imply a conquest by Judah or even close political or economic relations with Judah. At the most, they can indicate trade relations, or small-scale immigration by individuals or families." Finally, Kletter (1999: 42-43) recognizes that pinpointing Judah's borders on the basis of where these artifacts were deposited is perilous at best. Furthermore, small numbers of these artifacts alone do not determine Judahite expansion or hegemony at a given site outside of Judah. Nevertheless, while Kletter (1999: 42)

does raise the possibility of Judahite hegemony at Gezer, Ekron and Tel Batash, he believes this territorial expansion only relates to Hezekiah's revolt.

For Philistia, Machinist (2000: 57) correctly notes that the Hebrew Bible provides "fairly well defined horizons for Philistine settlement... The heartland is the southern coast of Palestine, with the adjacent western Negeb and western Shephelah." Yet determining a specific border line that existed during the eighth century B.C. between these two polities remains to a certain degree conjectural (e.g., Eissfeldt 1943) even with the inclusion of data collected from excavations and surveys. Stone (1995: 17) summarizes the evidence this way: "Ethnic boundaries—cultural and geographic—are permeable, and ethnic boundaries do not necessarily correspond to the boundaries of archaeological cultures. Still, assemblages from within the artifactually and textually defined heartland of Philistia can be used to make inferences about Philistine culture because Philistine material culture was produced and consumed by people in Philistia for specific reasons. Archaeologists must try to reconstruct these reasons to determine the relationship between Philistine society and the material culture Philistines produced and used. Once the roles of styles of material culture in Philistine society are clarified, archaeological data can be used to evaluate whether or not the Philistines continued to be an ethnic group during the Iron Age II."

The approach of Bunimovitz and Faust (2001: 6-7 and n. 3) to this issue is somewhat similar. They assert that: "(e)thnicity can also be manifested in other items, or in broad complexes of material culture reflecting ways of daily practices... This includes, for example, architecture, personal ornaments, administrative technology, chipped stone industry, food preferences and food preparation procedures, as well as pottery." They

also argue that certain key material cultural artifacts, such as pottery and other indicative objects that define a specific ethnicity and perhaps a national identity, remain nearly exclusively within the political and / or ethnic boundaries of that group, despite widespread interaction with neighboring groups and polities. Hence, unless Judahite settlement was established at a site or sites in Philistia following Uzziah's expansion, this anthropological model provides little assistance in providing evidence for a Judahite presence in a Philistine enclave, whether limited or more extensive.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, according to Gitin (1998b: 162-65; 2003a: 55\*; 2010: 320-25), the Philistines maintained their ethnic identity during the Iron Age II, but at the same time imported most of the cultural manifestations of neighboring peoples. This included language, architecture, ceramics, industrial technology and cultic practices.

#### Pottery as an Ethnic Indicator

While ceramics play an important role in determining the ethnicity of a site's inhabitants and, to a lesser degree, the polity exercising hegemony over a site, they do not provide the decisive evidence on this issue (Bunimovitz and Yasur-Landau 1996; Faust 2012: 246-48; 2014c; Kletter 1996: 43-48; 1999; 2006: 582-85; Lehmann and Niemann 2014: 78-79; Niemann 2013; Zimhoni 2004b: 1805). Indeed, Kletter, Ziffer and Zwickel (2006: 157) write that: "Archaeological remains *alone* cannot prove the existence of ethnic communities (italics mine)." Compounding this issue are the many sites in the Shephelah and coastal plain located in border areas as well as others on or near trade

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<sup>24</sup> See also the discussion by Lehmann and Niemann (2014: 80-85), which raise several valid points that seem to expose weaknesses in the "pots and people" model. However, I strongly disagree with their historical conclusions, which follow that of Herzog and Singer-Avitz (2004) and, among other methodological shortcomings, largely ignore the historical testimony of the biblical accounts aside from selected passages utilized to support their theory.

routes. This rather cosmopolitan, multicultural environment is clearly reflected by the mixed ceramic assemblages and diverse material cultures they produce when excavated.

There does not seem to be a consensus regarding the evolution of Iron Age IIB-C pottery at these sites either. Blakely, Hardin and Master (2014: 36) observe that, by the seventh century B.C., “a great deal of ceramic similarity” existed between Philistine Ashkelon and Judahite Lachish (e.g., Stager, Master and Schloen 2011: 72-96; Zimhoni 1997: 211-62; 2004b: 1805-6). Others also see a gradual disappearance of distinctively Philistine culture and the adoption of an increasingly-homogeneous material culture throughout the region, especially by the eighth century B.C. (Stone 1995: 7-10, 19), but later, during the late eighth and seventh century B.C., they argue that the Philistine material culture becomes clearly distinct again from surrounding kingdoms, particularly Judah (Gitin 1998b: 2003: 61-73; Master and Stager 2011; Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001a: 158; Panitz-Cohen 2010: 129; Singer-Avitz 1999: 21-30; 2002: 161; Stone 1995: 19-20). This material cultural shift begins after the mid-eighth century B.C., and therefore fails to assist efforts in determining hegemony of sites during Uzziah’s reign.

Determining the chronology of pottery is a critical factor in assigning material evidence to the reign of Uzziah. On one hand, his fifty-two-year reign would seem to simplify this task. Some, but not all, Iron Age pottery assemblages can reasonably be dated to within a fifty-year span. In this case, dating ceramic assemblages from the early to mid-eighth century B.C. is somewhat problematic. First, comparatively few of the relevant Judahite and Philistine sites have Iron Age II destruction layers predating the Assyrian campaigns of the late eighth century B.C.; the notable exceptions being Tell es-Safi, which Hazael of Aram Damascus probably destroyed, and Beth Shemesh, attributed



to Jehoash of Israel after defeating Amaziah of Judah. Therefore, these two sites, along with Lachish, are critical for recognizing the ceramic repertoire of Judah during Uzziah's reign.

As discussed below, the pottery horizon of eighth century B.C. Judah is best represented by the Lachish Level III ceramic repertoire. Widely recognized as the ceramic "type site" for Iron Age II Judah (e.g., Zimhoni 1997: 198-209), Lachish served as an important administrative city in the southern Shephelah, second in size only to Jerusalem. Moreover, Lachish has been well excavated and extensively recorded (Aharoni 1975; Tufnell 1953; Ussishkin 2004a). Therefore, the Lachish Level III ceramics and material cultural assemblages provide the ideal benchmark for associating Judahite occupation and/or hegemony over a site.

Regarding Lachish, a key question for this study concerns the transition date from Lachish IV to Lachish III, which marks a similar demarcation line for Iron Age IIA–IIB (ca. 850-750 B.C.). While Sennacherib's violent destruction of Lachish III is confidently dated to 701 B.C.,<sup>25</sup> the founding date of this stratum is debated, as are the founding and ending dates of Lachish IV. The full significance of this chronological question is much broader than those relating to our early eighth century B.C. context. Establishing the founding date of Lachish IV would, in turn, provide a much clearer picture of the tenth and ninth century B.C. (Iron Age IIA) and shed much light on the high-low chronology debate. For the critical Iron Age IIA-IIB and Lachish IV-III transition date, two main positions are held. First, a date at or near 800 B.C., as suggested by Bunimovitz and

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<sup>25</sup> Lipiński (2006: 415-16) represents perhaps the lone exception among current scholars. He assigns Lachish III to the seventh century B.C.

Lederman (2011: 45), following an assessment of the Beth Shemesh material, and by Maeir (2012a: 38-39), based upon the late Iron Age IIA pottery found in the destruction of Safi Stratum A3. Ussishkin (2014: 16, 214-15) also accepted this date as a possibility. The other suggested date falls at or near 760 B.C., in relation to the upheaval caused by the earthquake mentioned in Amos 1:1 and Zechariah 14:5, as suggested by Herzog and Singer-Avitz (2004: 229-31; Singer-Avitz 2002: 163) as well as others. Essentially, the first date coincides with the beginning of Uzziah's reign while the other falls much closer to the end of his rule.

In conclusion, while the style and provenance of pottery provides important clues to the ethnicity and polity of a site, other factors, such as material culture, inscriptions and, most importantly, historical sources must all be considered before making anything approaching definitive historical conclusions.

#### Architectural Remains as an Ethnic Indicator

While comparisons of architecture, building materials, construction techniques and structure plans would seem to be a useful tool, Faust (2012: 252, n. 19) points out that Lachish apparently lacks even one example of a four-room house, possibly due to the limited exposure of the Iron Age II city, or the location of Lachish, which sat fairly close to the periphery of Judah at various times during the monarchy. Consequently, caution must be taken before conclusions are made on the basis of architectural similarities alone. Nevertheless, architectural features at a few of the sites listed below play a key role, not only in the interpretation of their purpose, but also for their date and to the identification of the polity that built them.

## Tomb Architecture and Burial Practices as an Ethnic Indicator

Numerous studies have appeared regarding the distinctiveness of Iron Age II funerary and burial customs and tomb architecture in Judah (e.g.: Barkay 1986; 1992: 369-71; Ben-Arieh 2004: 3-122; Bloch-Smith 1992; 2002a; 2002b; 2003; Borowski 2007; Dadon 1997; Fantalkin 2008; Faust and Bunimovitz 2008; Kloner 2001-2002; Kloner and Zelinger 2007; Lehmann and Niemann 2014: 79; Maier 2004b; Rahmani 1981a; 1981b; Ussishkin 1993b; and Yezerski 2013). However, while Kletter (1999: 43) notes that a study of Judahite burial forms holds promise to determine the borders and hegemony of Judah, he also recognizes that other inexorable variables may distort the picture. The variety of burial styles used within Judah and, most notably, the geological differences between the Hill Country and Shephelah of Judah, with its characteristic exposed limestone formations and vertical rock faces ideal for hewing rock cut tombs, cannot be compared to the coastal plain of Philistia, where exposed bedrock or limestone outcroppings suitable for this purpose are lacking. Thus, marked differences in soil and topography, not necessarily ethnicity, regulate burial styles and tomb architecture in Philistia.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, determining the chronological range of tomb styles solely on the basis of burial goods may be problematic since family tombs remained in use for several generations or more. Consequently, the datable pottery from a tomb may not include representative examples dating to the time the tomb was originally hewn and prepared. According to Yezerski (2013: 63-64, 69-72, and now see Katz and Faust 2014), the Tel 'Eton necropolis is exceptional in that it shows continuity in burials from the Late Bronze

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<sup>26</sup> See Yezerski (2013: 53-66), who demonstrates the wide variety of attested plans and styles used solely for rock cut tombs.

Age (assumed Canaanite) until the eighth century B.C. (Judahite). While its publication provides valuable information regarding the chronology of the Iron Age IIA, the use of these tombs for burials over such a lengthy time span shows the wide diversity of eighth century B.C. Judahite burials.

### Settlement Patterns

Studies by Bunimovitz and Lederman (2006) and Uziel, Shai and Cassuto (2014: 301-302) show a major shift in the settlement pattern of the Shephelah from Iron Age IIA through IIB which likely reflect or indicate “augmented support by the central governing force in Judah,” particularly during the Iron Age IIB, when Philistine settlement seems to be pushed back toward the coast; the likely result of a resurgent Judah.

### Bones as an Ethnic Indicator

One potential ethnic marker may be revealed from zooarchaeological data, specifically the absence of pork bones at an Iron Age II site, which likely points to a Judahite settlement. Indeed, sites recognized as Israelite or Judahite always yield a very low percentage (under 1%) of pig bones (Faust 2012: 245-46). However, Hesse and Wapnish (1997: 238-39, 260-64) note that an absence of pork bones is known in other parts of the ancient Near East. Thus, while the widespread presence of pork bones, which are attested (especially at early Iron Age levels) at most Philistine sites (Hesse and Wapnish 1997: 248) likely mark the inhabitants as non-Judahite, they do not necessarily imply the absence of either Judahite influence or at least temporary control over the site. Similarly, the absence of pork bones does not automatically reflect Judahite occupation of sites outside of Judah’s borders (Bunimovitz and Lederman 1997: 48-49; 2009: 123-

24; Faust 2012: 231, 245-46; Sapir-Hen, Bar-Oz, Gadot, and Finkelstein 2013; Lehmann and Niemann 2014: 79 and literature cited therein).

### Destruction Layers

Naturally, the agents of destruction rarely leave clear evidence of their identity at the sites they sack and destroy, yet sealed destruction levels provide archaeologists with an abundance of material cultural objects that both preserve and represent a snapshot in time as well as demonstrate the contemporaneous nature of the recovered assemblage of finds. Historical sources are invaluable for understanding the historical and political background of these destructions, but it must be stressed that these records are extremely fragmentary. Isolated raids, campaigns and even protracted wars may well have gone unrecorded or the relevant records later lost. Yet, if the chronology, the identification, or proximity of the site closely parallels information from a historical source, a correlation between the two should be considered, if not adopted. The relevant destruction layers observed at selected sites will be assessed separately below.

### Epigraphy

Epigraphic material provides a unique window into the history of a site, as well as the identity of its inhabitants. Cross (2003: 164-65; 2008: 338-39) recognized that Philistine orthography and script from seventh century B.C. Ashkelon originates not from Phoenician, but rather from Hebrew and therefore “points to a period of strong Israelite cultural influence on—and most likely political domination of—the Philistines.” However, Kletter (1999: 43) warns that Hebrew script must be distinguishable from the

scripts of Philistia before inscriptions from the coast can be utilized as indicators of Judahite ethnicity and hegemony.

The few Hebrew inscriptions found at Philistine sites are noted below, but their significance is limited due to various factors, including their usually non-stratified provenance or their probable migration due to trading and commerce, rather than from Judahite control. The most important Hebrew inscription from this region is the well-known Meşad Ḥashavyahu ostrakon dated to the last quarter of the seventh century B.C. Its relevance for our study is discussed below.

In summary, the dominant material culture attested at a site may not necessarily reflect the ethnicity of its inhabitants or the identity of the polity controlling it. The solution to the issue of pots and people thus must be sought in a holistic, comprehensive manner, which considers all available data, both historical and archaeological, in order to reach a probable conclusion.

### **The Geopolitical Status of the Shephelah and the Philistine Plain During the Early Eighth Century B.C.: Evidence for Judahite Expansion**

וַיֵּצֵא וַיִּלְחֶם בַּפְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיִּפְרֹץ אֶת-חֹמַת גַּת וְאֶת חֹמַת יַבְנֵה וְאֶת חֹמַת אֲשְׁדֹד וַיִּבְנֶה עָרִים בְּאֲשְׁדֹד  
וּבְפְלִשְׁתִּים: וַיַּעֲזְרֵהוּ הָאֱלֹהִים עַל-פְּלִשְׁתִּים

2 Chronicles 26:6-7a: *He (Uzziah) went to war against the Philistines and broke down the walls of Gath, Jabneh and Ashdod. He then rebuilt towns near Ashdod and elsewhere among the Philistines. God helped him against the Philistines...*

Aside from the references to defensive fortification projects Uzziah oversaw in Jerusalem, 2 Chr 26:6 arguably provides the best opportunity to archeologically examine the veracity of Chr's historical sources for Uzziah's reign. If reasonable evidence of an early to mid-eighth century B.C. destruction exists at the three sites Chr mentions (Gath, Yavneh and Ashdod), followed by indications of Judahite control from the material

culture as well as additional evidence of eighth century B.C. towns and villages in the Philistine hinterland with unmistakable material cultural links to Judah, then Chr's veracity would be strongly reinforced if not confirmed. However, in the field of archaeology, evidence is often not so clear cut as to provide a basis for such claims. As I have demonstrated, sweeping conclusions regarding ethnicity based solely upon ceramic comparisons between Philistia and Judah are notoriously problematic. Bunimovitz and Lederman (2008: 24) as well as Lehmann and Niemann (2014: 79) state that "typological differences can be explained through functional and socio-economic distinctions... (and) not necessarily caused by ethnic distinctions." Indeed, many sites in our study area contain mixed assemblages of both Judahite and coastal forms. Other ethnic indicators, most notably material cultural objects, distinctive architectural styles, dietary habits revealed from faunal remains, burial customs, and sometimes even epigraphic material are, by themselves, inconclusive as well.

The lesson here demonstrates that, while archaeology is a valuable tool for the recreation of ancient societies and cultures, caution must be taken before making historical conclusions based solely upon interpreting archaeological data. Historical sources such as the Hebrew Bible must not only be taken into account, but given a prominent role in the "pots and peoples" process of determining ethnicity and hegemony. Predictably, this dialogue between text and artifact often leads to tension between textual scholars and field archaeologists. Ehrlich (1996: 20) explains this tension as well as possible discrepancies that sometimes exist between the biblical text and archaeological data in this manner: "On the one hand, this underlines the difficulty of relying on the witness of the biblical text. On the other hand, this tension also evidences the problems

associated with the ethnic identification of pots and other isolated aspects of material culture.” Both sources of information must be carefully considered and their respective lines of evidence taken seriously.<sup>27</sup>

### Geopolitical Motivations and Opportunities for Expansion

The geo-political underpinnings of Levantine trade during the eighth century B.C. is very well documented<sup>28</sup> and provides numerous examples of trade networks in operation and their importance in the geo-politics of the region. One such case is the three-sided commerce network that apparently developed between Assyria, Egypt and the Arabs after Sargon II’s clash with the Arabs near Raphia in 720 B.C., which validates Arabian involvement in caravan trade and the geographical importance of northern Sinai and southern Philistia to controlling trade between the great powers and their clients (Rainey and Notley 2006: 236-37). Perhaps Sargon’s action against the Arabs and his opening of a trading port or harbor (Tadmor 1958: 34-36, 77-78; 2011: 275-78) south of Gaza actually describes a caravan terminus reflecting a converging of trade routes to and from Egypt, the Levant and Arabia. Nevertheless, these events give rather dramatic historical confirmation for and demonstrate why Uzziah subdued the Arabs a generation earlier (2 Chr 26:7), providing a window into Judahite foreign policy strategies during Uzziah’s reign.

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<sup>27</sup> On the relationship between these two disciplines and the value of archaeology in historical writing, see the varied responses of Biran (2006), Bunimovitz and Faust (2010), Hendel (2010), Kitchen (1993), Maeir (2010), Miller (1992), North (1968b), Tadmor (1985), Vaughn (2004), and Younker (2004).

<sup>28</sup> See in particular the following studies: Bienkowski and van der Steen (2001); Dever (1995a); Elat (1979); Faust and Weiss (2005); Finkelstein (1992); Gitin (1995); Holladay (1995; 2006; 2009); Jasmin (2006); Katz (2004; 2008); Marfoe (1987); Niemann (2013); Oppenheim (1967); Sasson (2008; 2010); and Singer-Avitz (1999).



In simplistic terms, Uzziah had at his disposal, if not earlier, certainly later during his reign, the means, motives and opportunity to launch military campaigns to expand Judahite hegemony along several fronts, notably to create and expand her military presence and economic influence on the Red Sea, the Egyptian border and along the Mediterranean coast.<sup>29</sup> Uzziah exploited the very favorable geopolitical circumstances provided him to enlarge and strengthen Judah and to establish her role as a regional geopolitical and economic leader. The early to mid-eighth century B.C. comprised Judah's optimum window of opportunity for such action (Rainey and Notley 2006: 214-24). This regional "power vacuum" was due, in particular, to the fact that Assyria, Aram-Damasus, and Egypt were politically unstable and / or militarily too weak to be effectual in foreign policy matters during Uzziah's reign. Moreover, Uzziah's expansion west through the western Shephelah and onto the Coastal Plain simply exemplified the ebb and flow of hegemony in the Shephelah during the Iron Age and draws parallels with other strategically contested regions in the southern Levant, such as the Jezreel Valley to the north and the Madaba Plains in Transjordan.

### Uzziah's Quest for Trade Outlets and Revenue

Uzziah's expansion into Philistia was only one aspect of a larger plan to control Elath-Ezion Geber and exploit the caravan routes crossing the Negeb and Negeb Highlands as well as their terminal hubs; the ports in Philistia that formerly enriched them (2 Chr 26:7; Rainey 1983a: 14). Access and control over trade routes and ports,

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<sup>29</sup> The mention of Ammonite tribute (2 Chr 26:8) and the *mishor* (2 Chr 26:10) seems to reflect Judahite domination over central Transjordan as well, a status that Chr also recounts for the reign of Uzziah's son Jotham (1 Chr 5:17; 2 Chr 27:5), but a textual question raised by the LXX reading of Me'unites (המעונים) rather than the MT Ammonites (העמונים) in 2 Chr 26:8 has led some scholars to give the LXX reading priority (e.g., Rainey 1997: 62-63; Rainey and Notley 2006: 217-18 and see further below).

especially the opportunity to dominate the fabled Arabian spice trade that originated in south west Arabia, but had a northern trajectory beginning in the Hejaz, crossing over the Aravah and traversing both the Negeb Highlands and the Negeb of Judah before terminating at ports in Philistia, was the unmistakable aim of Uzziah. Moreover, control over a section of the international coastal road linking Egypt, Mesopotamia and Anatolia provided an extremely attractive geo-political proposition. Judah had long coveted direct access to Mediterranean ports for trade outlets and lucrative income from tolls.

Consequently, it comes as no surprise that Ashdod was one of the cities Uzziah focused his attention upon, as it was the closest Mediterranean port to Judah (Niemann 2013: 250). In fact, Gray (1979: 76, n. 59) writes that: “the limitation of this activity to that part of the coastal plain most accessible to Judah is an argument for the genuineness of the passage.” Uzziah was not the only king of Judah that desired a presence in Philistia and his actions provided a precedent for his successors. Hezekiah’s later efforts to dominate the Philistines “as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city” (2 Kgs 18:8) tied with his settlement of the Sons of Simeon (1 Chr 4:39-43) undoubtedly had similar purposes. A century and a half later, Josiah exploited a similar opportunity farther north, as demonstrated by a Hebrew ostrakon and other clues unearthed at the small seaside fort of Meşad Ḥashavyahu, which probably represents a brief period of Judahite hegemony over a stretch of the Mediterranean coast (e.g.: Tadmor 1966: 102). While Rainey raised the possibility that the mixed Greek and Judahite garrison of Meşad Ḥashavyahu may have been subservient either to Necho or Nebuchadnezzar or perhaps stationed there during Zedekiah’s reign (Rainey and Notley 2006: 261), the Hebrew script and message of the ostrakon makes this scenario unlikely, as discussed below.

Based upon the brief, but revealing note in Amos 1:6: “*Because she (Gaza) took captive whole communities and sold them to Edom*”, Bartlett (1989: 37-39, 126-30), Ben David (2009: 727); M. Dothan (1993: 98-100); Ehrlich (1996: 156, n. 311); Gitin (1998a: 281-82; 1998b: 281); Gordis (1979); Haak (1998: 40); Hagedorn (2011) and other scholars point to an economic partnership that existed between Edom and Philistia, specifically Edom and Gaza, and the complimentary roles they played in controlling trade. Ashdod (e.g.; Dothan 1971a: 88-92), Ekron (e.g.: Gitin 1989; 1998b: 167) and Gath (Tell es-Safi; e.g.: Maeir 2012a) all had eighth century B.C. occupational layers, but only Ashdod’s size and industrial capacity provided the potential to forge a trading partnership with Edom (Dothan 1993: 98-100; Gitin 1998a: 281-82). Ashkelon, where only scant remains from the eighth century B.C. have thus far been unearthed, nevertheless possessed a historically powerful trading network with its hinterland and far beyond. This network crossed a number of political boundaries and, regarding Judah, likely included such cities as Beer Sheba, Lachish and Tel Zayit (Tappy 2009: 451). Uzziah’s actions against Edom, notably the recapture of the contested Red Sea port of Elath-Ezion Geber (2 Kgs 14:22; 2 Chr 26:2) and similar actions against the Arabs (2 Chr 26:7-8) as well as relevant archaeological evidence, demonstrate that Uzziah’s purpose behind these military actions was largely economically based, as evidenced by similar actions by Sargon II later during the same century (Tadmor 1958; 1966: 90-95; 2011: 239-319). The struggle over these trade hubs and the routes that connected them is a reoccurring theme throughout the monarchy and the basis for many of Judah’s wars.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> There can be no doubt that Edom was a strong polity during the early eighth century B.C., based upon the testimony of Assyrian inscriptions (the Nimrud Slab of Adad-nirari III from ca. 796 B.C.; *ANET*: 281-2); the biblical text (2 Kings 3:4-27) as well as recent archaeological discoveries in the Faynan region, which have pushed state formation in Edom back to the tenth century B.C. (see Hudon 2015b for a

The primary trading commodity Judah offered during this period was agricultural products and other commodities relating to animal husbandry (e.g.: Borowski 1987; 1998), and the most productive agricultural land in Judah was the foothills and valleys of the Shephelah along her western border. Using the stable carbon isotope signatures recovered from Iron Age II plant remains at Tel Burna, a Judahite border town in the Shephelah, Riehl and Shai (2015: 525-32) recently demonstrated clear indications of favorable growing conditions, despite the relatively dry climate during this period. Archaeobotanical evidence for olive, grape, fig, wheat, barley, pulses and linseed are all well attested. Large amounts of grape pips and complete olive stones, as well as agricultural installations, including five wine and oil presses that covered the lower slopes of the town, indicate local production and consumption of these products (Riehl and Shai 2015: 526, 529). Yet the high yields and organization of the site also supports the existence of supra-regional trade networks during the eighth and seventh centuries B.C., heavily based upon agricultural production. Dagan (2004: 2688) explains: “Trade connections with neighbouring countries were an important factor in the development of settlement in the Shephelah. Agricultural products such as oil, wine and wheat (as demonstrated at Tel Burna) were produced locally. When the Shephelah was ruled by a strong political entity (such as Judah during the eighth century B.C.), agricultural

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summary review). For Judahite-Edomite relations, see Bartlett 1989: 115-86; Beit-Arieh 1989; 1995; 2009; and Zucconi 2007. For Edomite material culture contrasted with that of Judah, see Beit-Arieh 1993; 1996; 1999; 2007; Bienkowski 1995; Cohen and Yisrael 1995a; 1995b; 1996; Naveh 2001; Thareani-Sussely 2010; Whiting 2007. For the Arabs and Me'unites during Uzziah's reign, see Ackroyd 1973: 147-52; Ahlström 1993: 626-27; Bartlett 1989: 144-45; Byrne 2003; Eph'al 1984: 60-91, 219-20; Hoyland 2001: 58-63; Irvine 1973; Kallai 1986: 94, n. 167; Kitchen 2007; 2010b; Knauf 1985; 1992; Montgomery 1934b: 27-36, 175-84; Na'aman 1987; 1997b; 2013: 255-58; Polley 1989: 206, n. 65; Rainey 1971: 24-25, 28; 1997: 58-63; Rainey and Notley 2006: 229, 236-37; Sass 1990; Sweet 1970; Tadmor 1966: 89; 1972; 1994: 176-79; 2011: 636, 793-804; Williamson 1982: 335; and Winckler 1898a: 42-51; 1898b). Chr reports that the Me'unites were later soundly defeated by Hezekiah (1 Chr 4:41).

cultivation increased, producing surpluses which could be exported.” Therefore, by gaining control over at least part of the Philistine (Coastal) Plain as well as Elath, the Negeb trade routes (2 Kgs 14:22; 2 Chr 26:2, 6-7) and dismantling the trade alliance between the Philistines, Edom and the Arabs, Uzziah’s aim was to monopolize Judahite control over the extremely lucrative communication and trade routes that stretched from Edom and the Red Sea across the Negeb and Negeb Highlands to the Mediterranean coastline (2 Chr 26:7; Jasmin 2006; Oded 1979a: 240; Rinaldi 1963: 225-35).

### Acquisition of Agricultural Land and Royal Properties

By expanding Judah’s agricultural base and exploiting the rich agricultural hinterland of the western Shephelah and Coastal Plain (Philistia), Uzziah would greatly enhance Judah’s already extensive agricultural base. In fact, Rinaldi (1963: 227-29) based Uzziah’s conquest of Philistia upon this desire to access the rich and fertile coastal plain and thus provide an additional venue for his royal agricultural projects (2 Chr 26:10). Moreover, Cazelles (1967: 90), Craigie (1982; 1983: 71-74, 108), and Soggin (1987: 11) argued for the probability that the prophet Amos, who held an apparently high position of sheep breeder (*nōqēd*), was employed in the royal service of Uzziah (Amos 1:1) and placed over the extensive flocks and herds at one of his expansive royal estates (2 Chr 26:10 and see below).<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> For the topic of Royal Estates in Judah and later incarnations, see de Vaux 1961: 124-26; Fritz 1995: 167-68; Hirschfeld and Birger-Calderon 1991; Jepsen 1958; Katz 2008; Katz and Faust 2011; Lahav 1968; Lewis 1989; 1991; Lipschits 2000; Magen 2008b; B. Mazar 1992b: 91; Moyal and Faust 2015; Noth 1927; Rainey 1989; Rofe 1988; and Sellin 1943. Archaeological evidence for eighth century B.C. royal estates appear at several sites, notably Ramat Rahel, including Beit Safafa and the Rephaim Valley sites (notably Ein Mor 2013), and at Moza, a site west of Jerusalem (Greenhut and De Groot 2002; 2008; 2009), but also in the Wilderness of Judah and the Shephelah. Ceramic finds from these Royal Estates are best represented by the royal stamps used on storage jars (e.g.: Hudon 2010a: 28-30).

## Tribal and Other Ancestral Land Claims

Both Jeroboam II and Uzziah were possibly encouraged and abetted by nationalistic men of God and took full advantage of these favorable circumstances to subdue and annex territories that bordered their respective kingdoms and could be traditionally claimed for Israel or Judah (Josh 15:45-47; Andersen and Freedman 1989: 599-600; Lewis 1989; 1991).

## The Geopolitical Expediency of Neutralizing Philistia

The direct result of Uzziah's subjugation of Gath, Ashdod and Yavneh was to neutralize any Philistine threat, whether merely perceived or real. While Philistia always posed an attraction for Judah, she often represented a threat as well, so there were good reasons to recover or at least to neutralize the military capability of this region, especially as attacks against Judah often came from the west, as Andersen and Freedman (1989: 599-600) observed. Indeed, Uzziah's actions represented a response to a century of "border friction" between the two polities (Zukerman and Shai 2006: 738 and references there).

The means of carrying out such a bold plan was based upon two important factors. The first was Uzziah's formidable army (2 Chr 26:11-15).<sup>32</sup> The other was the

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<sup>32</sup> Chr devotes a considerable portion of his account of Uzziah's reign to describing Judah's army. The information Chr gives here comprises our best historical sources for the military organization, weaponry and numerical rosters of the Kingdom of Judah. Surprisingly, the literature devoted to this topic is limited. Besides the commentaries (e.g.: Dillard 1987: 209-10; Japhet 1993: 882-84; Klein 2012: 374-77; Myers 1965b: 153; Rudolph 1955: 285-86; Selman 1994: 469-70; and Williamson 1982: 336-38), see the following (Galling 1937c: 416-17; Noth 1987 [1943]: 59; Welten 1973: 88-89, 113, 153-56; and Yadin 1963: 326-27). Bianchi and Rossoni (1997) argue that the passage is anachronistic, originating from Chr's own work (which they date to either the late fourth or the early third century B.C.). Their conclusion is based primarily on the enigmatic "devices/inventions/engines" of 2 Chr 26:15. See my discussion of this issue below. For an excellent treatment of the military practices during the monarchy in light of both biblical and other ancient Near Eastern sources, see Hasel (2005).

opportunity he enjoyed to launch military campaigns without fear of escalating the war beyond a local-regional conflict. Zukerman and Shai (2006: 734) concur, writing that “during the reign of one of Hezekiah’s predecessors... (Uzziah) exploited the weakened position of eastern Philistia and the lack of intervention from Aram-Damascus, Assyria and Egypt, in order to extend the territory of his kingdom to the inner Coastal Plain.”

### Ideological and Nationalistic Motivations

Uzziah’s subjugation of Philistia, a traditional enemy of Judah, as a means to embellish his reputation and status, both within and outside Judah, should be considered as part of his strategy. Indeed, this is exactly what Chr later emphasized. Launching his successful offensive operations against the Philistine epicenters of Gath and Ashdod, as well as Yavneh, and carrying out such acts of domination and humiliation against the now “impotent” Philistines would naturally invite admirable comparisons between Uzziah and his more illustrious ancestor, David, while at the same time diminishing, if not reversing the humiliation suffered by his father Amaziah. However, the extent of Uzziah’s conquest of Philistia is uncertain, as demonstrated below. Likewise, while David subjugated<sup>33</sup> Philistia and annexed Gath and its hinterland (2 Sam 8:1; 1 Chr 18:1),<sup>34</sup> he did not exercise direct control over, nor occupy all of Philistia proper. David’s decision was possibly based upon a fear of encroaching upon a region

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<sup>33</sup> Ehrlich (1996: 25) utilizes the terms “neutralize or defeat” regarding David’s required actions against Philistia during his reign.

<sup>34</sup> For a discussion regarding the status of Gath during the tenth century B.C. and the meaning of “Metheg-Amma” (2 Sam 8:1) as well as suggested solutions, see Ehrlich (1996: 30-58) and Levin (2012: 145 with references there). B. Mazar (1992a: 40) and Rainey (1975b: 71\*), among others, viewed Gath as the leading epicenter of the Philistine pentapolis during the early tenth century B.C. (2 Sam 1:20). Wright (1966: 81) viewed Achish as “simply the client king of Gath” (1 Sam 29:3). B. Mazar (1992a: 41) argued that Gath, while possibly subservient to Israel as a vassal state, remained a Philistine royal center throughout the period of the united monarchy (1 Kings 2:39).

symbolically claimed by Egypt (Bright 1976: 197). Conversely, the probable absence of such a threat from the weak twenty-second and twenty-third dynasty pharaohs during the early to mid-eighth century B.C. enabled Uzziah to carry out his expansionist policies without any tangible challenge from that quarter.<sup>35</sup>

### The Shephelah During Iron Age IIB

The Shephelah, or “lowland” (as viewed from the perspective of the Hill Country of Judah; Smith 1931: 197) is a homogeneous geographical and geological unit as well as a transition zone of gentle foothills and east-west wadis and valleys linking the coastal plain to the Hill Country.<sup>36</sup> The valleys, from north to south, are the Ayalon, Sorek, Elah, Naḥal Guvrin (identified with the biblical Zephathah), Naḥal Lakish, and the Naḥal Adoraim.<sup>37</sup> The hills are characteristically low and round with level summits that average 150-500 meters in height. Aided by its naturally fertile *terra rosa* soil, the construction of terraces along the moderate slopes of these hills enable a variety of agricultural activities (Dagan 2006a: 10\*-13\*). Most of the ancient settlements and cities were located along these important arteries linking the Hill Country with the Coastal Plain and the seacoast itself. The region is further demarcated into the eastern (higher) Shephelah and the western (lower) Shephelah. As such, it served as a border region

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<sup>35</sup> For the status of Egypt during this period, see the brief treatments in Ahituv (1998); Kitchen (1986: 334-61; 1988; 2003: 121-27; 2009; 2010a: 376-78); Petrie (1912: 64-77); Redford (1973; 1992: 312-51); Roberts (2003); and see Broekman; Demarée; and Kaper (2009), as well as Ritner (2009) for recent discussions of the eighth century B.C. Egyptian political landscape and translations of relevant Egyptian inscriptions.

<sup>36</sup> The Shephelah covers about 305 square miles or 790 square km (Dagan 2013: 357).

<sup>37</sup> See Dagan (2004: 2672-75 and Figures 38.2 and 38.3) and Rainey (1983a) for detailed descriptions and a map displaying Iron Age IIB sites. For an excellent description of the Shephelah utilizing the timeless observations of Smith (1931), but from an Iron Age II geopolitical and economic perspective, see further Dagan (2013); Faust (2013a; 2014c); and Niemann (2002: 72-82; 2013: 246-57).



where, in times of Judahite weakness, eastward penetrations by Philistine polities would wrest partial control of the western Shephelah from her (e.g., 2 Chr 28:18). Conversely, when Judah was politically strong, such as during the reigns of Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, and Hezekiah, the Shephelah served as a staging area for westward expansion throughout the outer (western) Shephelah and onto the Coastal Plain (Dagan 2006a: 36\*; Kletter 1996: 43; Rainey 1980: 194; 1983a: 1-2, 14). While Israelites settled along the eastern fringes of the Shephelah and at selected sites further west, the first attested Israelite military presence in the Shephelah was unearthed at the early tenth century B.C. fortress city of Khirbet Qeiyafa, overlooking the Elah Valley.<sup>38</sup> During this period and continuing through the ninth and eighth centuries B.C., large numbers of sites were established or resettled by Judahites (Faust 2013a: 210). By the eighth century B.C., the Shephelah experienced a peak in settlement with numerous sites all exhibiting a clearly Judahite material culture. Population estimates ranging from 50,000 to 108,000 (Broshi 1993b; 2001: 80-85; Broshi and Finkelstein 1990; 1992: 52; Faust 2013a: 203-10).<sup>39</sup> Faust (2013a: 211-12) observes that virtually no rural farmsteads or small settlements exist during the Iron Age II in the Shephelah, which is not the product of natural population growth. Rather, it seems to suggest either a lack of regional security or more likely, indicative of a new population entering the region and (re)settling in centralized cities and towns, from whence they farmed the surrounding fields. This influx of Judahite

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<sup>38</sup> See Garfinkel and Ganor 2009; Garfinkel; Hasel; and Klingbeil 2013; Kang and Garfinkel 2009.

<sup>39</sup> Faust (2013a: 204-7) lists 14 major excavated sites: Beth Shemesh, Batash, Azekah, Safi, Goded, Burna, Zayit, Maresha, Lachish, Khirbet el Qom, 'Eton, and Beit Mirsim. While he omits Halif (to the south), Hesi and Nagila (to the west) as they fall outside of the boundaries of the Shephelah, Faust includes Erani and Harasim, located just to the west in the Coastal Plain in his treatment. As of 2004, the ongoing survey of the Shephelah has identified 719 or 731 Iron Age IIB sites covering a total area of 4165 dunams (Dagan 2004: 2680-81 and Table 38.8).

settlers into the Shephelah during Iron Age II and the relevant survey data from both the Hill Country and Shephelah have led Faust (2013a: 212-13) to suggest that the Iron Age population in the Hill Country was much larger than surface surveys indicate, in part due to the part this region played as a departure point for immigration westward into the Shephelah.

### Philistia During Iron Age IIB-C

According to biblical and archaeological sources,<sup>40</sup> the powerful, loosely confederated group of Philistine city states, suffered rather severe political and military setbacks during the tenth century B.C. and began a gradual decline in military and political strength, while simultaneously remaining a recognizable and growing economic power in the region. Sometimes referred as the Philistine “Dark Ages” due to the paucity of biblical and other historical sources for them during the tenth-sixth centuries B.C., the Philistine culture not only survived, but continued to develop during Iron Age II, and retained its individuality in certain aspects.<sup>41</sup> Their economic strength, by virtue of their

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<sup>40</sup> For excellent historical sketches of the Philistines as viewed through the lens of the biblical writers, see the essays by Dothan and Cohn (1994) and Machinist (2000). For the relevant biblical texts and discussion covering David’s initial steps to eliminate the Philistine threat to Israel, see the varied treatments by Barrois (1962); Bierling (1992: 151-78); Brug (1985: 7); Edelstein (1992); Ehrlich (1996: 23-56); Faust (2013b); Garsiel (2000; 2002; 2004; 2009); Gitin (1998b: 162-65); Kitchen (1973: 64-65); Macalister (1914: 52-62); B. Mazar (1986: 74-75; 1992a: 41); Niemann (2002; 2013); Oded (1979a: 236-39); and Tidwell (1979). For Philistia during the Iron IIB-C periods, see further Brug (1985: 29-39); Ehrlich (1996: 57-104); Eph’al (1979a: 236-46); Faust and Weiss (2011); Finkelstein (1996; 2002); Gitin (1998a; 1998b: 163; 2010); Hudon (2011b); Maeir (2013a); Master (2010); Stager (2006); Stager and Master (2014); Stone (1995); and Tadmor (1966; 2011: 633-51).

<sup>41</sup> Using primarily biblical data on which to base his conclusions, the statements by Macalister (1914: 62-67) are typical of this erroneous view. His treatment of Philistine history during the Iron Age II, entitled “Their Decline and Disappearance” covers a scant six pages. He writes that “(t)he contrast between the pre-Davidic and the post-Davidic Philistines is one of the most extraordinary in human history” (Macalister 1914: 61, which is also cited by Ehrlich 1996: 57) and, while Macalister cites known Assyrian sources that mention Philistia, he mistakenly relies on the number of occurrences of the Philistines in biblical sources to “show the comparative insignificance into which the Philistines fell after their wars with David” (Macalister 1914: 62).

economically strategic and advantageous geographical position near or directly on the Mediterranean coast, which was also the terminus of the Arabian incense route, as well as astride the major trunk route linking Egypt with Mesopotamia and Anatolia, was their greatest asset.<sup>42</sup>

As Stone (1995) demonstrated, the Philistines did not assimilate (e.g.: Dever 1995a: 115; Oded 1979a: 236-38) into Canaanite culture, but underwent acculturation or “Levantization” by absorbing many outside influences and modifying those influences to suit their own purposes. While their material culture became increasingly similar to that of their inland neighbors, Israel and Judah, the Philistines did not lose their “cultural core” after their migration and settlement along the Levantine coastline, but rather retained an independent political and cultural existence and distinctive material culture until at least the end of the seventh century B.C., as expressed from outsider’s accounts and dramatically displayed by archaeological finds at Ashdod, Tel Miqne-Ekron, Tel Batash-Timnah, Ashkelon and Tell es-Safi (Ehrlich 1996: 12-13 and n. 66; Gitin 1995; 1998a: 274; 1998b; Maier 2013a; Stager 1995: 348; and Stone 1995: 7-11; 17-22;).<sup>43</sup> This continuation of Philistine culture has been labeled “Neo-Philistine” or “Southern Phoenician,” if one includes the northern Sea People culture (Dever 1995a: 115). Gitin (1998b: 162-63) identifies three major political and cultural transitions in this 250-year

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<sup>42</sup> Many scholars (e.g.: Oded 1979a: 236) have suggested that, after Philistia lost their position as a maritime power to Phoenicia, they developed their influence over land trade. Indeed, the mere existence of a Philistine maritime industry and fleet has been questioned (Brug 1985: 13).

<sup>43</sup> Dever (1995: 115) describes Philistine culture during the Iron Age II period as an “afterglow” following its 12<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C. *floruit* and continuing to the Babylonian destruction at the end of the seventh century B.C. He defines late Philistine culture as a unique amalgam of older, largely assimilated Philistine features with Phoenician, Israelite and Judahite influences mixed with Assyrian and Greek elements. It was this “Neo-Philistine” culture that faced Judah’s western border in the eighth century B.C.

period. First, Philistia was overwhelmed by its neighbors during the tenth century B.C. and became influenced by Phoenicia and Israel/Judah. Secondly, Philistia regained its economic power while under Assyrian domination at the end of the eighth century B.C., but accelerated acculturation under Assyria and Egypt during the seventh century B.C. diluted Philistine core cultural identity and when Babylonia destroyed her cities and deported their populations, Philistine cultural identity had largely vanished. Yet throughout Iron Age II, even to the end of the seventh century B.C., Judah, as recorded in biblical texts, recognized Philistia as a distinct political and cultural unit (B. Mazar 1992: 34-41; Gitin 1998b: 163).<sup>44</sup> The Philistine interaction with the indigenous culture of the southern Levant continued, at least for the balance of the Iron Age, as both the historical sources and material evidence indicate.

Eph'al (1997b: 31\*-32\*, 316) notes that, while a political entity known as Philistia had ceased to exist by the eighth century B.C., at least four separate Philistine city-states of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod and Ekron and their respective hinterlands survived and maintained an identifiable ethnic and cultural distinctiveness at least until the end of the seventh century B.C. During this time, Assyrian and biblical prophetic texts label the inhabitants of these cities, along with other individuals and groups as Philistines. Moreover, inscriptions unearthed in Iron Age II contexts in Philistia include names with no known Semitic etymology. Taken together, all this evidence clearly reflects an historical awareness of a common origin, but also hints that a Philistine ethnic identity persisted despite the various geopolitical shifts throughout the coastal region.

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<sup>44</sup> Gitin (1998b: 163 n. 2 and n. 4) calculates that of the 423 biblical references to Philistines, Philistia and its cities, 103 (24%) refer to the Iron Age II period. Moreover, of the 919 biblical references to Israel's foes, 423 (46%) relate to Philistia, clearly making the Philistines Israel's (here Judah's) most notorious foe.

Hence, while the Philistines had disappeared long before Chr wrote his account of Judah's monarchy and of Uzziah in particular, they were an unquestionably identifiable group during the preceding centuries covered in his history (Stager 2006).

### The Philistines in Eighth Century B.C. Prophetic Texts

Aside from several texts in Isaiah (2:6; 9:8-12; 14:28-31), Hosea (4-14),<sup>45</sup> and one passage each in Micah (1:10) and in Joel (3:4-8),<sup>46</sup> most of which appear to date from the reign of Ahaz or later, the prophecies of Amos provide our only contemporary prophetic witness to Philistia in the eighth century B.C. Philistia is included in the oracles against the nations (Amos 1:6-8), omitting Gath, but Gath is specifically mentioned in 6:2. The significance of both of these texts will be discussed in detail below. In Amos 3:9, the prophet calls upon the "fortresses of Ashdod" to witness the injustices of Samaria.<sup>47</sup> The use of the plural tense here is significant, and may plausibly support Chr's account that Uzziah rebuilt *towns in the vicinity of* (or territory of) *Ashdod* (2 Chr 26:6). Perhaps this verse refers to fortresses, fortified towers or settlements located in Ashdod's hinterland, or possibly represent a poetic description of the towers along Ashdod's walls.<sup>48</sup> The implication here is that a recognizably wicked city is summoned to witness the even more

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<sup>45</sup> Tadmor (1960b; 2011: 785-91) argued that Judah, led by Uzziah, dominated Israel during the decline and political turmoil within the Northern Kingdom following the death of Jeroboam II and during the reign of Menahem. This political upheaval is reflected in the prophecies in Hosea 4-14. See also Yeivin (1971a; 1974: 24-26) and now Rainey (Rainey and Notley 2006: 219-20) for the probable historical context, which is only alluded to in 2 Kgs 14:28.

<sup>46</sup> The date of Joel is uncertain, but its reference to the Philistines is nevertheless noted here.

<sup>47</sup> The reading of Ashdod here is disputed. Some scholars (Ehrlich 1996: 159-60) read Assyria, in part as a poetic parallel to Egypt, as well as orthographic similarities.

<sup>48</sup> The same terminology is used in the oracles against the nations (Amos 1:3-2:5) for other polities, such as Damascus (1:4); Gaza (1:7); Tyre (1:10); Bozrah (1:12); Rabbah (1:14); Kerioth (2:2); and Jerusalem (2:5).

wicked acts of Israel. In Amos 9:7-8, Philistia is mentioned as a nation brought by God to the Levant, along with, the Cushites, Israel and the Arameans, and like these others, Philistia is marked for destruction. Amos 6:2, which implies that Gath was destroyed, may refer to the same destruction prophesied in 9:8.<sup>49</sup> While Gitin (1998a: 284) concludes that the archaeological record generally “supports the historical connections reflected in the prophetic oracles,” multiple late ninth and eighth century B.C. historical scenarios and military engagements are possible contenders.<sup>50</sup>

### Flavius Josephus

The first century A.D. Jewish historian Flavius Josephus largely paraphrases Chr’s account of Uzziah, but adds that an open field battle took place: “He also fought against the Philistines, and after he had prevailed in battle, he took by storm Gitta and Jamnia and razed their walls to the ground (*Antiquities* IX:x:3§217). The credibility of Josephus is suspect, notably concerning his record of events much earlier in Jewish history. Yet Josephus had access to archival material and other sources, so variances between his account and that of the biblical narrative should not be summarily dismissed. It is entirely plausible that Uzziah fought a Philistine army in the open field before capturing Gath, Yavneh and Ashdod. In fact, a similar scenario took place between Amaziah and Jehoash before Jerusalem’s walls were broken down. On the other hand, Josephus’ claim that the devastating earthquake during Uzziah’s reign (Amos 1:1;

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<sup>49</sup> See the discussion of Gath in Amos 6:2 below.

<sup>50</sup> Aside from the commentaries, see especially Barton (1980); Campbell (1994); Cohen (1965); Gitin (1998a); Gordis (1979); Haak 1998); Hagedorn (2011); Haran (1968; 2008); Maeir (2004a); Muntingh (1965); Polley (1989); Roberts (1985); and van Selms (1965b).

Zechariah 14:5) coincided at the exact moment that he usurped the priestly responsibility of offering incense may reflect hagiographic embellishment.<sup>51</sup>

### **Excursus One: Historical Issues Related to 2 Chronicles 26:6**

#### The Extent of Uzziah's Expansion into Philistia

Given the selective nature of Chr's report and perhaps the incomplete or fragmentary nature of his sources, it is plausible that a wider ranging campaign took place with thrusts to the north toward Joppa and to the south towards Gaza and beyond. However, without firm evidence, the possibility of more extensive military operations must remain conjectural. Our only hints are the summary reports of Philistine incursions into Judah (2 Chr 28:18), followed by Hezekiah's systematic conquest and domination of Philistia a generation later, which may have followed the route(s) of Uzziah's military campaigns (2 Kings 18:8; 1 Chr 4:39-43; Klein 2006: 151-53 and references there).

#### Determining Uzziah's Route of Conquest

Aharoni (1979a: 91-92) identified 2 Chr 26:6 as one of the very few examples of a biblical expedition or conquest list. These have many external parallels from the corpus of Ancient Near Eastern writings. B. Mazar (1954: 231) and Aharoni (1979a: 49) further observed that Uzziah's itinerary and objectives largely paralleled the route and sites taken during Sargon II's campaign later in the same century (*ANET*: 286a; Rainey and Notley 2006: 156) and, once he entered the Philistine Coastal Plain, followed a logical geographical route consisting of the eastern branch of the coastal highway, which passed

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<sup>51</sup> See the commentary on the relevant passage and context in Josephus. See further: Begg (1995; 1996; 2000); Broshi (1982); Feldman (1984: 121-91); B. Mazar (1982a); Smit (1977); and Williamson (1977b).

by Gath-Gittaim, Gibbethon (1 Kgs 15:27, 16:15), Ekron and Gath/Tell es-Safi (Dorsey 1991: 57-61). Based in part on these similarities, Aharoni (1979a: 49, 92) held no reservations regarding the archival origin or the essential historicity of 2 Chr 26:6.

Since Aharoni (1959a: 241; 1979a: 352) posits that Uzziah's conquests are reflected in the town lists of Judah, Aijalon should be part of the territory of Judah during his reign, according to 2 Chr 28:18. Indeed, a northwestern push following the Aijalon Valley past Gezer at least as far as Gimzo, with Aijalon as the staging area, is clearly inferred by the list of cities Ahaz lost to the Philistines (2 Chr 28:18; Kallai 1958: 151; 1960: 66-67 and map 6; 1986: 92-93 and n. 163, 345, 373-74 n. 91, 490) and is particularly likely if Gath (2 Chr 26:6) is identified with Gath-Gittaim.

Other probable routes taken by Uzziah and his army were westward thrusts towards Yavneh from the Sorek Valley, using Beth Shemesh as a staging area or towards Gath from the Elah Valley, using Azekah as a staging area, then either a two-pronged thrust to Yavneh and Ashdod or a sweeping attack against one of these cities, then against the other (Aharoni 1979a: 49; Aharoni, Avi-Yonah, Rainey, and Safrai 2002: 106-7, map 141; Rainey and Notley 2006: 217-19). In summary, advancements down the Aijalon, Sorek or Elah Valleys into Philistia are quite certain. These are key entryways to the Hill Country of Judah used previously by the Philistines and thus Uzziah's actions were, in part, proactively defensive in nature. The strategic value of these valleys is perhaps illustrated by the distribution of Rehoboam's fortification efforts at the following cities in the Shephelah: Aijalon, Zorah, Azekah, Socoh, Gath (see below) and Lachish (2 Chr



11:5-12; Aharoni 1979: 330-32; Hobbs 1994; Kallai 1971; Miller 1987; Rainey and Notley 2006: 169-71).<sup>52</sup>

### The Location of the *mishor* (Plain or Tableland)

The biblical term *mishor* (מישור; 2 Chr 26:10; *BDB*: 449b), in my opinion, clearly represents a particular, essentially unique, geographical name denoting a specific region, in the same manner as other geographic names found in the Hebrew Bible, such as the Shephelah (שפלה), the Carmel (פרמל), the Hill Country (of Judah; הררים), the Steppe or Wilderness (of Judah; מדבר),<sup>53</sup> the Negeb (נגב), the Negeb Highlands (רמת נגב), and the Arabah (ערבה).<sup>54</sup> The *mishor* refers to the Trans-Jordanian tableland (the modern Madaba Plains) and does not designate the Coastal (Philistine) Plain (e.g., Aharoni 1979a: 23, 25,

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<sup>52</sup> The comparisons drawn here between Uzziah's actions and the list of fortified and garrisoned cities in 2 Chr 11: 5-12 have no bearing upon the ingenious and persuasive textually based suggestion of Hobbs (1994), which states that these cities of restraint (not defense) were more to control domestic unrest in the wake of the Great Schism (and perhaps Shishak's raid) than for protection against outside threats. This reconstruction also supports the veracity of a tenth-ninth century B.C. archival source behind Chr's account.

<sup>53</sup> As discussed above, the term in this context (2 Chr 26:10) specifically refers to the Wilderness or Steppe of Judah, the rugged and arid steppe land between the water line ridge and the Jordan Valley, Dead Sea, and Arabah rift. Nevertheless, many scholars have erroneously equated this passage with the Negeb and Negeb Highlands (e.g.: Glueck 1959b: 172-74, 222; 1965: 85). This does not discount the probability of intensive activity in these regions during Uzziah's reign, however.

<sup>54</sup> For helpful studies of these demarcated, if not clearly defined geographical regions each with distinctive natural features and characteristics and often with discussions relating to the eighth century B.C. settlement in these areas, see Aharoni (1979a: 21-42) for a general survey; for the Shephelah, see Dagan (2013); Faust (2013a); A. Mazar (1994); and Rainey (1980; 1983a); for the Carmel, see Jepsen (1959) and Rainey (1982); for the Negeb, see Aharoni (1958a; 1967c; 1979c); Borowski (1989); Glueck (1957b; 1959a; 1959b; 1961); Lewis (1948); Oren (1993b); Rainey (1984c); and Thareani-Sussely (2008); for the Negeb Highlands, see Aharoni (1967a; 1979b; 1979c); Aharoni, Evenari, Shanan, and Tadmor (1960); Axelsson (1987); Beit-Arieh (2003); Bienkowski (2000b); Bienkowski and van der Steen (2001: 24-39); Bruins (1986; 2007); Bruins and van der Plicht (2005); Cohen (1979; 1980; 1981b; 1982; 1985; 1995a); Cohen and Cohen-Amin (2004); Erickson-Gini (2006); Evenari, Aharoni, Shanan, and Tadmor (1958); Evenari and Koller (1956); Evenari, Shanan, and Tadmor (1971); Faust (2006); Finkelstein (1995); Finkelstein and Perevolotsky (1990); Haiman (1993; 1994; 2003; 2007); Har-el (1979); Kedar (1957a; 1957b; 1964); Kloner (1998); Mayerson (1959; 1965; 1996); Meshel (1979a; 1979b; 1994a; 2000; 2002); Morris (1961); Negev (1979); Reifenberg (1955); Rothenberg, Aharoni, and Hashimshoni (1961); Schiffer (1960); Shahack-Gross, Boaretto, Cabanes, Katz, and Finkelstein (2014); Shanan and Tadmor (1979); Zimmerli (1959: 148-51); and Zohari (1954); for the Arabah, see Aharoni (1963a); Avner (2006); Bartlett (2006); Beit-Arieh (2009); Bienkowski (2006); Meshel (2007); Younker (1992c); and Zucconi (2007).

39, Map 2; Curtis and Madsen 1910: 450; Rudolph 1955: 285; van Zyl 1960: 147-48, n. 4).<sup>55</sup> To the people of Israel and Judah, the landscape of Philistia was largely *terra incognita* and was accordingly named, not after its topographic features, but rather after its polity and inhabitants. This term *mishor* was probably adopted fairly early by the local inhabitants because of its desirable elevated, flat topography and arable soil, a combination that is rather unique in the region (e.g., Deut 3:10; 4:43). Therefore, the appearance of this term in 2 Chr 26:10 should not imply that Uzziah seized areas of Philistia to utilize as his personal crown property or to establish royal estates on the Philistine (Coastal) Plain, but rather that he pursued similar activity east of the Jordan River on the vast, fertile and strategic plain stretching south from the Ammonite Hill Country to the Arnon Gorge that, from very ancient times, has been a fiercely contested landscape for both regional kingdoms and empires, most notably during the two centuries preceding Uzziah's reign.<sup>56</sup> While some scholars equate the *mishor* with the Madaba Plains,<sup>57</sup> most of them interpret *mishor* here to the Coastal (Philistine) Plain. Philistia and the Coastal (Philistine) Plain south of Joppa were synonymous to the people of Judah and, based on 2 Chr 26:2-6, Uzziah's realm seems to be described using the "points of the

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<sup>55</sup> The word derives from the Hebrew root *יָשַׁר*, from which comes another geographical name, the Sharon Plain, which comprises a continuation of the Coastal Plain north of Joppa and the Yarkon basin (Faust 2011a; Rainey 1989).

<sup>56</sup> Many biblical commentators and other scholars, notably Galling (1954: 147); Klein (2012: 374); Niemann (2013: 246-47); Oded (1979a: 240); Rainey (1982: 58; 1983a: 2, 14; 1997: 50-51, 62-63; 1998a: 29\*; Rainey and Notley 2006: 218-19; and personal communication); Smith (1931: 197-98, n.4); and Williamson (1982: 337) interpret the *mishor* in 2 Chr 26:10 as referring to the Philistine (Coastal) Plain, rather than the Madaba Plains in Trans-Jordan. Rainey bases his conclusion in part on his emendation of 2 Chr 26:8 reading the Ammonites (העמוןיים) as the Me'unites (המעונייים; following the LXX), thus effectively removing the only other biblical record of Uzziah in central Trans-Jordan. He does recognize that Jotham's war with the Ammonites raises the likelihood of reading Ammonites over Me'unites if this conflict occurred during his co-regency with Uzziah from 750-740 B.C. (Rainey 1997: 62-63; Thiele 1977: 26, 46-47; 1983: 118-23, 131-32).

<sup>57</sup> For example, van Zyl (1960: 147-48).

compass” method: the restoration of Elath to Judah, the establishment of settlements and towns around Ashdod, followed by building and other activities in Jerusalem, the Hill Country of Judah, the Carmel and the Wilderness of Judah (2 Chr 26:9-10) serve to fill out Chr’s narrative describing Uzziah’s successes.

### The Meaning of the Verb פָּרַץ in 2 Chr 26:6

The Hebrew verb פָּרַץ, rendered in English in a variety of ways; such as to break, break through, break down, breach, burst (through) or dismantle. All of these have been employed to describe Chr’s account of Uzziah’s conquest of Philistia, which is not only noteworthy in light of the laws pertaining to siege warfare, but historically instructive when considering Chr’s accounts of Uzziah and predecessor Amaziah together. A brief survey for the use of פָּרַץ in contemporary contexts is therefore relevant. As a verb, פָּרַץ appears numerous times in contexts relating to both divine and human agents (*BDB*: 829). For example: *I (God) will break down its (the vineyard’s) wall, and it will be trampled* (Isaiah 5:5); *they (the Israelites of Samaria) break all bounds and bloodshed follows bloodshed* (Hosea 4:2); and *He who opens the breach will go up before them; they will break through and pass the gate, going out by it* (Micah 2:13), which all relate to eighth century B.C. historical contexts.<sup>58</sup>

The verb occurs various times in Chronicles, most notably the following: 2 Chr 24:7 (the sons of Athaliah had broken into the house of God); 2 Chr 25:23 (Jehoash broke down the walls of Jerusalem); 2 Chr 26:6 (Uzziah broke down the walls of Gath, Yavneh and Ashdod); 2 Chr 32:5 (Hezekiah built up the broken down wall). Events during

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<sup>58</sup> See also Psalm 80:12 [Hebrew 10:13]; Psalm 89:40 [Hebrew 10:41]; Proverbs 25:28, which is most revealing; and Qohelet 10:8 for additional examples of פָּרַץ in the context of breaking through or down a wall.

David's reign, recorded by DtrH and Chr (2 Sam 6:8 // 1 Chr 13:11; 2 Sam 5:20 // 1 Chr 14:11; 1 Chr 15:13) describe YHWH's wrath as "breaking out" against His enemies as well as careless or disrespectful cultic behavior. Hence, פָּרַץ may refer to an act of divine retribution against an evil, whether an injustice, a threat from an enemy or indifference in the face of God.

The root is also attested as a noun, most significantly in an eighth century B.C. prophetic text: *You (the corpulent women of Samaria) will each go straight out through breaks in the wall, and you will be cast out toward Harmon (Amos 4:3)*. The meaning and /or identification of Harmon (הַרמוֹן) is debated. This clearly negative implication may refer to an unattested inhospitable place name or, with various textual emendations, to a specific building, such as fortifications or a royal estate outside of Samaria; a locale or region, such as Mount Rimmon or Mount Hermon, or as a word originally understood as (at least partially) metaphorical in meaning, and thus descriptive of exile and death (Andersen and Freedman 1970; 1989: 424-25; *BDB*: 248; Stuart 1987: 328, 333; cf. Amos 5:27). Rudolph (1971: 161) and Wolff (1977: 204, 207) emend the word to read "in the direction of Hermon" or on the road to Assyria. Harper (1905: 85-88) and Soggin (1987: 69) suggest a place or region that serves as the destination of a deportation, but also argue that this text appears beyond recovery. Paul (1991: 135-36) lists numerous textual emendations by others, but concedes that no satisfactory explanation has been made. King (1988: 73) interprets "breaks in the wall" as breaches or gaps created by Assyrian battering rams, not by the residents of the city. Yet the key observation here is each woman will leave the city by going "straight out" through the breach in the wall. Using the gate is unnecessary as the wall is broken down in many places. The recent

treatment of פָּרַץ by Eph'al (2009: 55-57) is the most exhaustive, but fails to observe the special circumstances of both the actions of Jehoash and, I believe, Uzziah.

Later contexts use פָּרַץ to describe the breaching and destruction of Jerusalem's walls by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. (Neh 1:3; 2:13) and their later rebuilding by returning exiles under the leadership of Nehemiah during the fifth century B.C. (Neh 4:3 [Hebrew 3:35]; Neh 4:7 [Hebrew 4:1]).<sup>59</sup> Conversely, in Qoh 3:3, פָּרַץ is denoted in contrast to בָּנָה (to build), perhaps suggesting to *completely* raze or demolish a wall. However, Japhet (1993: 879) and other scholars posit that "breaking into" is preferable to "breaking down" as a translation for the Hebrew, suggesting that the language of the latter description is too strong.

The most relevant texts describing this action are found in the parallel accounts of the reign of Uzziah's father, Amaziah; and more pointedly, in Jehoash's actions against Jerusalem's walls (2 Kgs 14:13 // 2 Chr 25:23). The symbolic significance of פָּרַץ in Chr's accounts of both Amaziah and Uzziah has been largely unnoted in recent scholarship.<sup>60</sup> Several commentators (Ehrlich 1996: 76; Japhet 1993: 879; Klein 2012: 371; Levin 2012: 147) translate and interpret Uzziah's breaking down the walls of Gath, Yavneh and Ashdod, not as systematic destructions, but rather merely 'breaching' or 'breaking into' these three cities and suggest that the RSV translation of "breaking down" for פָּרַץ is too strong. Indeed, when observed contextually, this approach seems correct. Accordingly,

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<sup>59</sup> For Nehemiah's description of Jerusalem's walls as a source for the topography of Jerusalem during the Iron Age IIB-C, the literature is extensive, but among the more important studies, see Albertz 2006; Avi-Yonah 1954; Burrows 1934; 1935; 1936; Grafman 1974; Mitchell 1903; Myers 1965c: 97-192; Na'aman 2010; Simons 1952: 437-58; Ussishkin 2005b; 2006; Williamson 1984; 1985: 176-262; 2004: 64-73; Yamauchi 1980; 1988.

<sup>60</sup> For discussion on siege warfare in contemporary ninth and eighth century B.C. contexts, see Eph'al (1983: 91-95; 1997a: 49-53; 2009: 68-113); Maeir, Ackerman, and Bruins (2006); and Yadin (1963: 16-24, 313-28).

we must reevaluate the motivations behind Uzziah actions against these population centers. While the implication of plundering may be implied, Chr does not explicitly state this in his account, in contrast to the plundering of Jerusalem (specifically the Temple and palace treasuries) by Jehoash (2 Kgs 14:14 // 2 Chr 25:24). Neither is any additional destructive language used by Chr. I suggest that Uzziah's actions were carried out to chasten and humiliate these cities as well as to demonstrate Judah's supremacy over them. This corresponds to what Jehoash accomplished against Judah and Jerusalem and the memory of that disgrace undoubtedly lingered in many Judahites in the early decades of Uzziah's reign. A partial destruction of the city walls is essentially a symbolic act of dominance; exposing the vulnerability of the cities and rendering them impotent against attack. An extreme example of this polemical warfare are the prophetic command to cut down the trees of Moab (2 Kgs 3:19, 25), which stands outside earlier directives against such action in Canaan (Deut 20:19-20; Hasel 2005: 129-37; Maeir, Ackerman, and Bruins 2006).<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, aside from the testimony of written sources, which we have for the scorched earth campaign against Moab, but lack here, recovering decisive archaeological evidence confirming this mainly conjectural interpretation is indeed remote.

#### Uzziah's "Inventions"

Based upon the biblical accounts that describe his reign, Uzziah has been recognized as "an extraordinarily resourceful" military leader and "perhaps the greatest military organizer among the kings of Judah" (Kern 1999: 39-40). Nevertheless, the

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<sup>61</sup> This policy found its full realization under the Assyrians, in which their besieging army would ruin the economic base and potential of a rebellious kingdom or city by the systematic destruction of unwallled settlements, orchards and crops in the hinterland Eph'al 1983: 97 and n. 25; 1997a: 50-51).

description of Uzziah's military engines, more accurately "devices" or, better still, "inventions" in 2 Chr 26:15 (השבנות; *BDB*: 363) seems to represent a form of catapult, which makes the veracity of the verse consequently difficult to defend.<sup>62</sup> The historicity of this verse has been largely rejected as an anachronism that, in fact, describes state of the art military technology existing in Chr's own day (Bianchi and Rossoni 1997: 31-35; Campbell 2006: 28; Curtis and Madsen 1910: 451; Kern 1999: 39; Welten 1973: 111-14).<sup>63</sup> Moreover, since only marginal evidence exists for the use of catapults before the classical period, Welten in particular utilized this passage as a proof text to date Chronicles to the early Hellenistic period.<sup>64</sup> Other scholars, wary of basing conclusions solely upon negative evidence and aware of the dangers associated with over reliance upon the silence, rather than the voices of historical sources, accept at least the possibility that the report is factual (Herzog and Gichon 1997: 249-51; Sukenik 1947; Yadin 1963: 325-27).<sup>65</sup> Hints for earlier use of these machines comes from a variety of sources. Along with Chr's report of Uzziah in Chr 26:15, his account of Hezekiah's preparations against the Assyrians includes manufacturing and amassing large numbers of weapons (perhaps understood here as shooting darts or missiles; שלח) and shields (2 Chr 32:5;

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<sup>62</sup> There are other renderings aside from the RSV's "engines invented by skillful men." Included are those of Myers (1965b: 150): "skillfully contrived devices." Japhet (1993: 883) prefers the literal "devices, the devising of devisers." For a discussion of the word *hishabon* (השבון) and its range of meaning in the Hebrew Bible, see the instructive note by Machinist (1995: 171 n. 31).

<sup>63</sup> Some historians and commentators, while viewing 2 Chr 26:15 with caution, do allow for the possibility of historical elements copied from ancient sources (e.g., Klein 2012: 376-77; Noth 1987: 58-59).

<sup>64</sup> Welten's assertion was refuted by Williamson (1982: 337-38).

<sup>65</sup> Regarding those who dismiss Chr's account of Uzziah and of 2 Chr 26:6-15 in particular as fictional, the following comment by Herzog and Gichon (1997: 23) deserves to be quoted: "This is to be lamented, especially in many cases where scholars have taken unwarranted liberties with textual correction, 'explaining away' 'unsuitable' factual evidence, as well as disregarding geopolitical realities. However, whatever the verdict of future balanced research will be as to the historical framework and happenings, against the backdrop of which we have to view the battles of the Bible, it cannot invalidate their intrinsic truthfulness and authenticity."

*BDB*: 1019). Herzog and Gichon (1997: 251) argue that this intriguing biblical footnote accords well with Yadin's theory (discussed below) and thus seems to support the historicity of the account. The LXX version of Ezekiel 4:2 and 21:22 mentions *belostaseis* (artillery positions) in contrast to the Hebrew *karim* (כרִים) "battering ram" (*BDB*: 503) when describing the siege of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. While the MT reading is preferred due to the likelihood of updating on the part of later translator(s), the use of artillery here is nevertheless notable. George Rawlinson believed that a pair of tall upright structures depicted on an Assyrian relief from the northwest palace of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud represented stone throwing devices, but his observation was not generally accepted (see Bianchi and Rossoni 1997: 32-34; Campbell 2006: 25). The invention of the catapult has been generally attributed to an engineer under the command of Dionysius at Syracuse around 400 B.C. (Diodorus 14.41-42.1; Kern 1999: 176-77, 190). However, this ancient claim has not gone unchallenged. Some scholars attribute the invention of the catapult, based upon Roman tradition, to the Syro-Phoenician region (Herzog and Gichon 1997: 250). This technology conceivably had, at the very least, been anticipated by the Assyrians<sup>66</sup> and subsequently was transferred to Sicily by Carthaginians (Kern 1999: 381 n. 90).<sup>67</sup> Worked stone missiles, weighing as much as 48

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<sup>66</sup> Some scholars (e.g., Curtis and Madsen 1910: 451; Galling 1937a; Myers 1965b: 150 and cited references there) suggest an Assyrian origin for Uzziah's invention, which was thereafter adopted by the Judahite king for use in Jerusalem's defenses. While an Assyrian origin for a catapult device remains plausible, its apparent absence upon the (admittedly partially preserved) Lachish reliefs as well as the remaining corpus of Assyrian reliefs and written sources limits the viability this conjectural position. Assyrian engineers undoubtedly adopted any useful technology they encountered along the periphery of the empire and from this category Uzziah's achievement is a representative example. It must be noted that evidence conveniently collected and presented by Dalley (2013: 33-34; 54-59; 85-87 with references) demonstrate that hydraulic engineering and other innovations attributed to the Persians, such as the *qanat* or to later Greeks, such as the (so-called) Archimedean screw, actually have more ancient, indeed probably significantly more ancient origins in the Ancient Near East.

<sup>67</sup> For a detailed discussion of this initial recorded use of the catapult, see Marsden (1969: 5-12; 1971).



lbs have been unearthed outside the city walls from two Persian siege sites; Phocaea and Palaepaphos on Cyprus, suggesting that catapults were utilized as early as 498 B.C. (Campbell 2006: 28-29; Erdmann 1977: 80-82; Williamson 1982: 338; and references there). These discoveries may seem to vindicate the suspect account of Polyaeus. His *Stratēgēmata* (7.9) records the use of “catapults for sharp missiles, stones and fire” by the Egyptian defenders of Pelusium in 525 B.C. against the Persians under the command of Cambyses.

Many years ago in one of his earliest published papers, Yadin (Sukenik 1947; Yadin 1963: 325-27) offered an ingenious interpretation of 2 Chr 26:15, based upon his understanding of the text as well as upon details of the defenses of Lachish depicted on Sennacherib’s palace reliefs. Yadin suggested that Uzziah’s devices (חֲשִׁבֹנֹת) referred to wooden platforms, balconies or scaffolds, based in part upon his recognition of the Semitic root for ‘wood’ present in the word. These structures, supported by beams layed in crisscross fashion atop the towers of city walls, projected outwards. Since they were apparently installed solely upon towers and corners of city walls, Yadin recognized the defensive nature of these inventions.<sup>68</sup> From these platforms, protected from fire by additional shields, bucklers and targets, defenders would enjoy the advantage of additional height and a wider, virtually unobstructed field of fire against enemy attackers as well as enable more accurate launching of ballista projectiles (Herzog and Gichon 1997: 251). Yadin supported his argument by enlisting Assyrian reliefs depicting such structures in use by Judahite defenders at Lachish a generation and a half later,

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<sup>68</sup> In regard to these devices, the text only associates them with Jerusalem and, more specifically to the gate towers and perhaps the “angle” mentioned in 26:10. No mention is made of Uzziah using this technology for siege or other offensive operations. Note also the comments of Japhet (1993: 883) that show that the text seems to refer, not to catapults but rather to another military-focused invention.

exemplified by the platform depicted on Segments III and IV of the Lachish reliefs (e.g., *ANEP*: 130-31; Ussishkin 1982: 82-85, 99-106, 126 and figs. 9 and 94) and now by the 6 meter high tower boasting a thick parapet at the southwest corner of the city, which was covered and preserved, ironically, by the Assyrians when they constructed the second stage of their assault ramp.<sup>69</sup> Those scholars supporting Yadin's view include Bright (1981: 258 n. 74); Dillard (1987: 209-10); Japhet (1993: 883); Myers (1965b: 150); and Williamson (1982: 337-38). Yadin's persuasive theory provides an attractive explanation for those supporting the historicity of Chronicles, since it utilizes contemporary Assyrian reliefs for irrefutably supporting evidence. On the other hand, at the current state of research, it still falls short of providing the definitive solution. Similarly, evidence exists for the use of catapult like devices in pre classical times, but no substantial indicator of such an invention seems to predate 500 B.C. Yet to deny earlier use of machines that hurl projectiles is essentially an argument from silence and it remains at least plausible that new evidence for their use during the Iron Age will eventually surface.

An Akkadian term utilized by Assyrian and Babylonian kings, notably Tiglath-pileser III, for a military machine or device, coupled with a slightly later (fifth century B.C.) Greek word with a similar meaning, referring to both offensive and defensive war machines, may be reflected in the Hebrew term devices (חֲשִׁבְנוֹת), as recently suggested by Eph'al (2009: 100-102). He proposes that Chr roughly translated the parallel terms used in his own day into a Hebrew word he essentially created. However, this does not indicate that Chr invented the account. All three words rather imply a general term used

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<sup>69</sup> Ussishkin (Ibid; 1996: 14-18) designates these platforms as balconies, galleries, parapets and balustrades, but does not associate them with 2 Chr 26:15.

for a variety of siege and war machines, rather than a specific weapon. Moreover, the explicit meaning of these terms changed along with the development of weaponry as well as in the techniques and circumstances of warfare. Indeed, the plausibility exists that Uzziah's "breaking down" the walls of the cities of Gath, Yavneh and Ashdod included the use of a newly introduced war (siege) machine.

Another connection may possibly exist between Chr's description of Uzziah's invention and Lachish. Ussishkin found sixteen large perforated stones, twelve at the base of the walls and four more near the gate during his excavations and believes that these stones, attached to a wooden beam projecting from the city wall and controlled by ropes from a platform or balcony on the wall, were probably swung like a pendulum and utilized as a wrecking ball to damage and unbalance the Assyrian battering rams and siege machines (Ussishkin 1997a: 321; 2004a: 734-36; 2014: 306-8). Perhaps the platforms, scaffolds or balconies identified by Yadin, coupled with Ussishkin's large stones may provide provide at least part of the answer to this historical riddle.

#### A Possible Emendation for "and he built cities" (2 Chr 26:6b)

Commentators, most notably Williamson (1982: 334-35), have recognized the possibility of a confused dittography in the second part of 2 Chr 26:6, based upon a syntactical issue; the lack of any word relating to territory or hinterland, and the occurrence of Ashdod and Philistines in both sections as well as a similar situation regarding *ויבנה* "and he built" as well as "and Yavneh," which have identical spelling. Following earlier proposals by Rudolph (1955: 282) and others, Barako (2007: 248, n. 3) and Klein (2012: 367) suggest emending *ויבנה ערים* (and he built cities) to *ויבז הערים* (and he plundered the cities) based upon the influence of *יבנה* (Yavneh) earlier in the verse

upon the imperfect ויבנה and noting that “a reference to building in a paragraph devoted to military battles seems inappropriate.” B. Mazar (1954: 231 n. 13) also sees the presence of an editorial addition, noting that these words are missing in the Syriac text. While all of these emendations have a certain degree of merit, especially in light of the similar language employed by Chr elsewhere, especially noting his account of Asa’s victory over Zerah (2 Chr 14:13-15), there is presently no compelling reason to change the rather straight forward MT reading here.<sup>70</sup>

Interestingly, an earlier context (1 Chr 18:1) mentions David subduing Gath and its daughter (satellite) settlements and villages. The parallel text in 2 Sam 8:1 makes no logical sense and either provides a variant, but unknown toponym, or reflects a scribal error (Rainey and Notley 2006: 160). The identity of Gath in these passages suggests a location farther north than Gath of the Philistines and therefore may refer to Gath-Gittaim (Aharoni, Avi-Yonah, Rainey, and Safrai 2002: 77, map 100; Rainey and Notley 2006: 160).

Regarding the location of these settlements or outposts, Japhet (1993: 874) reads (באשדוד) as “in the territory of Ashdod, while Klein (2012: 372) translates it as “in the vicinity of Ashdod.” Both are accurate renderings given the information we possess about Ashdod during the eighth century B.C., especially so if the territorial hegemony of the city-state of Ashdod covered a large area of northern Philistia. Another possibility is

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<sup>70</sup> While the act of plundering is the natural outcome of a forced entry into a fortified city and seems to support Klein’s (2012: 367) emendation, any correction to the MT should venture no further than that suggested by Welten (1973: 158): “Darin allerdings ist K. Galling (1954) recht zu geben, daß V. 6b insgesamt zum Kontext in Spannung steht und so in einer noch näher zu beschreibenden Weise sekundär gegenüber V. 6a und 7 ist.” Thus, while the phrase “and he built cities” may not stand on the same textual ground (in a critical sense) as the earlier part of the verse, which strongly hints at an annalistic source, the information it provides should not be summarily emended or dismissed.

equating these Judahite onclaves as fortified districts or quarters within Ashdod itself or immediately outside her walls.<sup>71</sup>

It is worthy to note the similarity between 2 Chr 26:6 and 28:18, where the Philistines settle in cities of Judah and their villages, which Niemann (2013: 261, n. 68) observes as a reversal of the situation during Uzziah's reign. Yet he also erroneously interprets the historical background for this text as a group of border cities and inhabitants that belong neither to Judah or Philistia, but are coveted for economic reasons by both polities (see Welten 1973: 174-75).

#### Joshua 15:45-47 and Uzziah's Expansion into Philistia

*Joshua 15:45-47: Ekron, with its towns and its villages; from Ekron to the sea, all that were by the side of Ashdod, with their villages. Ashdod, its towns and its villages; Gaza, its towns and its villages; to the Brook of Egypt, and the Great Sea with its coast-line.*

The province and town list of Judah (Joshua 15: 20-62) preserves an extremely important Judahite administrative document that was updated and revised, possibly several times, during the period of the monarchy. The date for the original composition of this document ranges from pre-monarchic times, the period of the united monarchy (Albright 1925: 20; 1938a) or at various periods of Judah's later history.<sup>72</sup> The rather abrupt inclusion of three Philistine cities, Ekron, Ashdod and Gaza, following after the three Shephelah districts (Joshua 15:33-44) in this list has long been recognized as

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<sup>71</sup> This reading, based in part on Ugaritic parallels, seems to find support from the recent IAA excavations at an extramural area of Ashdod, as discussed in detail below. I wish to thank Richard Davidson for bringing this important alternative reading and interpretation to my attention.

<sup>72</sup> It is worthy to note that, while some of their arguments are no longer tenable, Aharoni (1959: 239-46; 1979a: 347-52) and Rainey (1980; 1983) dated this document to the reign of Uzziah. Others have dated it to the reigns of Jehoshaphat (Cross and Wright 1956); Hezekiah (Kallai-Kleinmann 1958; 1961) or Josiah (Alt 1925; Na'aman 1991; Noth 1953: 14, 92-94).

deriving from a different document by students of Historical Geography (Aharoni 1979a: 83, 348).<sup>73</sup> Most scholars view these three verses as a literary creation that was inserted into the text later during the editing process for theological or ideological purposes.<sup>74</sup> Others suggest that this text has a historical basis, perhaps as a separate archival document, and attribute this list of three cities either to the reign of David, the ninth century B.C. (Na'aman 1986c: 82-88) or to Judah's expansion either during Uzziah's (Wright 1982: 70; 2 Chr 26:6), Hezekiah's (Kallai 1986: 374-75; 2 Kgs 18:8; 1 Chr 4:39-43) or Josiah's (Alt 1925; Na'aman 1986c: 229) reign.<sup>75</sup> While recognizing the possible historical link between this list and the military activity of Uzziah or Hezekiah, Rainey (1980: 195) interprets this text as the transfer of certain Philistine lands and daughter villages around the Philistine capitals to Judahite control, but not the cities themselves, while Tappy (2000: 24; 2008a: 388-97, 402-3) regards this list as reflecting the transfer of towns from Judah to Philistia during Assyrian activity in the region, notably Sargon II and Sennacherib, which was later presented as "a literary foil designed to cover the fact that Judah itself had lost a number of towns to these three coastal centers" (Tappy 2008a: 402). The departure from the standard form of the list (Joshua 15:20-62) indeed suggests that these verses were a later insertion or addendum to update the document to represent

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<sup>73</sup> For a recent discussion of this list, see Tappy (2008a: 382-83). The latest discussion by Rainey (Rainey and Notley 2006: 12) inexplicably does not treat the town list of Judah in detail, nor deal with verses 45-47.

<sup>74</sup> Rainey (1980: 195; 1983: 1, 7) notes that even though the conquest of Philistia was only theoretical (Judges 1:18-19 LXX), the editor wanted to include it in Judah's tribal inheritance and thus added Philistia as an "extension to the Shephelah." Similarly, Na'aman (1986c: 64-66; 71, 91) assumes that a redactor "completed" an idealized or theoretical conquest of Canaan by including the full subjugation of the Philistine plain. See Tappy (2008a: 381-83) for further discussion and references.

<sup>75</sup> In 2 Kings 18:8 we read: "He (Hezekiah) smote the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city." This brief report indicates military action along the southwestern border of Judah during Hezekiah's preparations for revolt (Cogan and Tadmor 1988: 217-22; Fritz 2003: 359-60; Gray 1970: 671; Hobbs 1985: 253; Provan 1995: 253; Rainey and Notley 2006: 239-40).

the (then) present geopolitical situation. However, Hess (1994) has convincingly demonstrated that the district and town list of Judah was a very early document, but underwent updates at various stages during the monarchy to represent the current status of the kingdom. If this reconstruction has merit, then these three verses at least plausibly represent the status quo during the reign of Uzziah. While the inclusion of Ashdod and its surrounding villages matches Chr's account, the mention of Ekron and Gaza, as well as their respective hinterlands go unmentioned in his narrative. Conversely, Gath and Yavneh are missing from the list in Joshua. This may imply selectivity on the part of each writer, or it may point to a different historical milieu, and thus date to Hezekiah, perhaps Josiah or even possibly David. The reference to the Brook of Egypt may hint at a possible link with 2 Chr 26:8, which states that Uzziah's "fame spread even to the border of Egypt." While Ekron provides evidence of Judahite occupation during the first half of the eighth century B.C. (see below), the record of Hezekiah's subjugation of all of Philistia, including Gaza and its hinterland (2 Kgs 18:8; 1 Chr 4:39-43), may provide the preferred historical context for Joshua 15:45-47. The noteworthy study by Hardin, Rollston and Blakely (2012: 30, Figure 12) includes a Map of District 3 of Judah, which shows a pronounced westerward bulge with Khirbet Summeily at its western edge. Uzziah's expansion in the north perhaps sought to duplicate and / or exceed Judah's established western border to the south.

Gophna (1970) surveyed five Iron Age II sites in this region. Two of the sites, Ruweibi and Sheik Sulaiyib, are located farther south in the western Negeb, along the course of the Naḥal Besor, while the third site, Horvat Hasif, lies slightly to the east. However, the other two sites; Horvat Hoga and Mefalsim A, are located between Gaza

and Tell el Hesi and consequently fall in our area of study. Artifacts with Judahite “traits” were unearthed at both sites, including a pinched face figurine, a Hebrew stone weight and an inscribed sherd, leading Gophna (1970: 3\*) to argue that the inhabitants seem to be Judahites settlers. While he dates the material finds to the late seventh century B.C. reign of Josiah, the pottery includes earlier forms that point to an eighth century B.C. date.



## CHAPTER 3

### AN ASSESSMENT OF SITES IN WESTERN JUDAH AND PHILISTIA EXHIBITING IRON AGE IIB OCCUPATIONAL EVIDENCE

#### **Delimitations of the Study**

While an untold number of sites in the Shephelah and along the southern coastal plain exhibit Iron Age IIB occupational evidence, only a very small percentage of these sites, primarily cities, towns and fortresses, will be discussed below. While all published excavation and survey data relevant to the historical period is referenced and incorporated into the study, the information presented below is naturally not exhaustive. An unknown, but sizable corpus of unpublished data remains. Happily, the hinterland surrounding Gath (Tell es-Safi) and Ashdod have been surveyed and relatively well published. Regrettably, Yavneh and its hinterland lacks adequate survey data and, consequently, one is forced to conclude that much important information has already been destroyed by the rapid urban development of this area over the past several decades.

The overall study region has been divided into three corridors or “strips” running roughly NE to SW: the Shephelah proper, The Coastal Plain and finally sites adjacent to the Mediterranean coastline. Sites are generally listed in each category from north to south. The major exception is the site of Lachish, which is discussed first due to its importance as the leading “type” site for Iron Age II Judah ceramics and material culture and was clearly inhabited by Judahites from the tenth through the eighth centuries B.C.,

following the standard “high” chronology. As noted above, Lachish is a key site (e.g., Ussishkin 2007b: 135) for determining the eighth century B.C. pottery horizon of Judah, especially when comparing pottery from sites such as Beth Shemesh, Timnah and Safi/Gath for chronological purposes and ceramics from Ashdod and other coastal sites for determining ethnicity. The Arabic names for each site are given, followed by their assigned Modern Hebrew equivalent and finally the likely ancient (biblical) name is included in parenthesis if known.

## **The Shephelah (שפלה)**

### Introduction

The Iron Age IIB sites discussed below, with two exceptions, comprise three roughly NE to SW lines of cities and towns that generally correspond to three geographical regions. The first line demarcates the eastern or inner Shephelah from the outer or western Shephelah and closely charts Judahite sites located close to traditional border between Judah and the cities of Philistia. The second line, a rather wide NE-SW band dotted with scattered major and minor Philistine sites, stretches from the fringes of the outer or western Shephelah (the location of Tell es-Safi) to the central Philistine (Coastal) Plain (the location of Yavneh). The third line includes Philistine sites located near (as with Ashdod) or directly on the Mediterranean coastline. While not by any means a comprehensive gazetteer, this list includes all major sites and selected smaller locations providing evidence, not only for eighth century B.C. Judahite occupation, but also, in certain cases, for a resurgent expansion of Judah during that eventful century. The first site, Lachish, is given pride of place in this list due to its historical importance, its great significance as an Iron Age II chronological cornerstone (Ussishkin 2004a: 92-

93), and for its position as the premier Judahite ceramic “type site” for the Iron Age II (Ussishkin 2007b: 135), as explained above and in further detail below. The city of Gezer is included, even though it lies, strictly speaking, outside the Shephelah boundaries as well as the northern border of Judah proper. Nevertheless, Gezer not only provides evidence of eighth century B.C. Judahite occupation, but also dominates the Aijalon Valley and a major route from Jerusalem to northern Philistia, Tel Ḥamid (Gath-Gittaim), Yavneh, Joppa and the coastline.

#### Tell ed-Duweir; Tel Lachish; (Lachish)

The relatively few references to Lachish (map reference 13572.10820) in the Hebrew Bible seem to belie its importance to the Kingdom of Judah.<sup>76</sup> Second only to Jerusalem in size and prominence from the late tenth century B.C. until its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in 587-86 B.C., Lachish served as a strategic southwest anchor to Judah’s defensive network and boasted impressive fortifications in order to counter threats from those directions. Any study of Judah in the Iron Age II must give priority of consideration to Lachish for several reasons. First, Lachish was a major Judahite population and administrative center (e.g., 2 Chr 11:9; 2 Kgs 14:19) during this period and may have served, along with Ramat Rahel,<sup>77</sup> as Judah’s second capital, based upon

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<sup>76</sup> See, for example, the comments of Dever (2001: 168-69). A careful reading of the biblical references to Lachish actually reveal its importance, such as the choice of Lachish as a refuge for King Amaziah on his flight from Jerusalem (2 Kgs 14:19; 2 Chr 25:27; Ussishkin 1997: 320), the mention of chariots associated with the city by Micah (1:13) and the notice by Jeremiah (34:7) that only two cities of Judah besides Jerusalem, namely Lachish and Azekah, were still holding out against the Babylonian onslaught. See also 2 Chr 11:9; 2 Kgs 18:14 // 2 Chr 32:9; 2 Kgs 18:17, 19:8 // Isaiah 36:2 and a listing with each reference and context cited provided by Tufnell (1953: 40-41). For the military importance of Lachish to the Assyrians as revealed by the biblical texts above, see the comments of Ussishkin (1993a: 907).

<sup>77</sup> Ramat Rahel is located on a prominent hilltop overlooking the Rephaim Valley about 4 km south of Jerusalem. This important site and its vicinity have been excavated numerous times. The literature on Ramat Rahel is justifiably extensive, but also problematic due to several factors. These issues

the palace-fort and Amaziah's attempt to find refuge there. The city undoubtedly served as the capital of the Shephelah district and probably ranked second only to Jerusalem in size and importance (Barkay 1992: 344; Ussishkin 2014: 9). Secondly, Lachish had a largely homogenous Judahite material culture. Intrusive foreign elements are minimal. While Jerusalem was the primate city and epicenter for Judah (Barkay 1988), exposing Iron Age II stratigraphy over a reasonably broad area in a city that has witnessed scores of destructions and intensive occupation by a host of peoples for the 2700 years since the eighth century B.C. is an exceedingly difficult, complex and most often impossible task. Conversely, Lachish was virtually abandoned after the Persian period (Level I), which allowed generally well preserved Iron Age II levels (Barkay 1992: 344). Similarly, in many cases the occupational levels are well stratified, including a royal acropolis, known

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include rather crude excavation and recording methodologies as well as the lack of a final publication by Aharoni (1962; 1964). Most recently, a clearly perceived ideological bias has influenced Lipschits to interpret the site as an Assyrian, not Judahite administrative center. The latter issues will need to be reviewed, addressed and corrected when the final reports appear (see also Na'aman 2001; Reich 2003). Until then, see the brief, but devastating critic of this erroneous view by Kletter and Zwickel (2006: 178). In 1931, B. Maisler [Mazar] and M. Stekelis cleared a burial cave at the site (Maisler: 1934; Stekelis 1934; Slousch 1934; see also Fast 1924; Noth 1937). From 1954-1962, Y. Aharoni conducted five seasons of extensive excavations (Aharoni 1955; 1956; 1959b; 1960; 1961a; 1961c; 1967b; 1967d; 1976; Senès 1955). G. Barkay conducted limited, but important stratigraphic work in 1984 (Barkay 1999; 2006a; Franz 1984; Younker 1992a; 1992b; and the unsigned editorial comment in Aharoni 1993: 1267; see also Billing 2012; Eisenberg and De Groot 2006; Shanks 2006; and Singer 2003). From 2005-2010, Ramat Rahel was once again extensively excavated; this time by O. Lipschits, Y. Gadot, B. Arubas and M. Oeming (2009; 2011; and Lipschits and Gadot 2008). The identification of the site in antiquity is debated. Most scholars follow Aharoni (1967b; 1976) and Rainey (1963; 1966a; 1966b; 2009) and identify Ramat Rahel with Beth Hakerem (Joshua 15:59 LXX; Jeremiah 6:1; Neh 3:14). Barkay (2006a: 42-43) suggests Ramat Rahel is *mmsht* as attested on the *lmlk* jars. Perhaps the site was linked to both toponyms, since it probably served as the administrative center of a royal estate (Hudon 2010a: 30-31 and see now Ein Mor 2013). Other scholars locate Beth Hakerem at or near 'Ein Karim west of Jerusalem (Avi-Yonah 2002: 20-23; Barkay 2006a: 42-43). Eighth century B.C. pottery, including large numbers of *lmlk* stamped jars, testifies to occupation of the site during the reign of Hezekiah and most probably earlier (stratum VB). Apparently most of the architectural remains were obliterated during the construction of the elaborate late seventh-early sixth century B.C. Judahite palace (stratum VA). Yadin (1963: 325; 1978; 1979: 211-13) argued that Ramat Rahel was established as a royal residence as early as the late ninth century B.C. and most scholars rightly view Ramat Rahel as a summer palace for Judah's later kings. It has long been the contention of various scholars, as well as myself, that Uzziah constructed a palace with a tower at the site. Likewise, it is very tempting to identify the site as Uzziah's "House of Freedom" or his "Separate House" (2 Kgs 15:5; 2 Chr 26:21; Cogan and Tadmor 1988: 166-67; Kalimi 2005b: 113; Rudolph 1955: 284; 1977).

as the Palace-Fort, which provides our closest surviving architectural parallel for Jerusalem's royal quarter, the biblical 'ophel and offers the strongest evidence that a royal podium existed in Jerusalem on the summit of biblical Zion / Moriah that supported the Temple and other monumental and royal structures beginning during the tenth century B.C. It is quite probable that the later second and first century B.C. Hasmonean and Herodian extensions were additions to a much earlier Iron Age IIA rectangular platform that may itself have undergone further development during the period of the monarchy before its destruction in 586 B.C. (e.g., Laperrousaz 1993; Ussishkin 2009a: 473-74, 480). Finally, Lachish admirably fulfills the role of a ceramic and historical "type site" for the Iron Age based upon its pottery assemblages and multiple destructions; two of which are clearly linked to historical events that are documented in biblical and other written sources. The stratigraphy of Lachish provided the key to unlocking Iron Age II stratigraphy for Judah, specifically the crucial dates of 701 and 587/6 B.C. and their corresponding destruction levels by Sennacherib's Assyrian army and the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar (Barkay 1992: 344; Ussishkin 2004a: 92-93; 2007b: 135-39; 2014: 389-90). However, our purpose in determining a pottery horizon dating to the first half of the eighth century B.C., so as to isolate and therefore identify the reign of Uzziah in the archaeological record, cannot fully rely on Lachish Level III pottery, even though this occupational stratum spanned nearly a century and covered nearly all of Uzziah's kingship (e.g., Ussishkin 2004a: 93; 2014: 212-15). Pottery evolves and develops over time and without a historically-attested destruction level dated to this period, we lack a clear "snapshot" of Judahite pottery from Uzziah's reign. Related questions consider

whether Uzziah built the Level III city or if this was the work of his father Amaziah as well as identifying the agent behind the destruction of Lachish Level IV.

Rare indeed is a city from antiquity that is preserved in any contemporary artistic format. Yet, Austen Henry Layard's monumental discovery of the Lachish reliefs, in actuality engraved wall murals from the throne room of Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh, provide an extraordinarily rare opportunity to view this major Judahite city in detail as it apparently appeared at the time of Sennacherib's invasion in 701 B.C., including extensive depictions of the defenses: the walls, gate and the palace-fort, and also of individuals, soldiers and civilians alike, in distinctive Judahite garb as well as various accoutrements. Meticulous studies of these murals clearly demonstrate that the Assyrian artisans responsible for creating this wall relief were actually eye witnesses to this great battle as their murals closely match the archaeological remains unearthed at the site and its topographical details. Moreover, the pride of place given these reliefs in the actual throne room of Sennacherib demonstrates the significance of Lachish and the importance Sennacherib gave to his conquest of the city, which was probably his greatest military achievement (*ANET*: 287-88; Barnett 1958; Ussishkin 1977: 28-30; 1982; 2014: 327-53). Finally, all three excavations at Lachish have been fully published (Aharoni 1975; Tufnell 1953; Ussishkin 2004a), a somewhat uncommon achievement in Levantine archaeology, and one that provides scholars reasonably complete sets of excavation records to reference and study.

## **Location and Identification**

The lack of any site with an Arabic toponym that both preserves the ancient name of Lachish and demonstrates occupational evidence in the appropriate historical periods, led to a long debate regarding the location of ancient Lachish during the early years of Historical-Geographical research. Ultimately, the location of the city was determined based upon conclusive, yet indirect evidence (Rainey 1984a: 172).<sup>78</sup> However, at least three factors favor indentifying the imposing mound of Tell ed-Duweir, located on the edge of the Naḥal Lachish (Wadi Ghafr) in the south central Shephelah as the site of Lachish: the location of Lachish in relation to Eleutheropolis according to Eusebius' *Onomasticon*, the similarities between the Lachish reliefs from Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh and Tell ed-Duweir, as well as occupational and other material evidence matching that known from the historical sources. Virtually all scholars now identify Tell ed-Duweir with Lachish (Dagan 1992: 21\*-22\* with additional references; Rainey 1980: 196; 1983: 9 and references; 1984a: 172-74; Tufnell 1950: 68-72; 1953: 38-41; 1971b: 76-80; Ussishkin 1982: 19; 1993a: 897; 2004a: 50-51; 2014: 25-28; Wright 1971a: 437-41).

## **History of Excavation**

A British expedition led by James Leslie Starkey, assisted by G. Lankester Harding, Charles H. Inge and Olga Tufnell, excavated at Lachish as well as selected areas surrounding the site from 1932 until 1938, when Starkey was murdered. The writing of the final reports largely fell to Tufnell, who did an exemplary job extracting and

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<sup>78</sup> The most notable example was Petrie's identification of Lachish with Tell el-Hesi (Petrie 1891: 18-20).

integrating data from the dig records while presenting stratigraphic and historical conclusions that opposed the scholarly consensus of the day, but were, in due course, proven correct. Starkey's methodology utilized in excavating and recording, along with Tufnell's work in synthesizing the records and publication of the finds were exceptional, especially if one considers the characteristically rudimentary excavation and publication standards of the period and Tufnell's lack of formal archaeological training prior to writing the reports (e.g., Tufnell 1950; 1953; Ussishkin 1993a: 898; 2004a: 26-30; 2014: 58). Yohanan Aharoni (Hebrew University and Tel Aviv University) led a small excavation team that dug for two seasons (1966, 1968) at Lachish, concentrating their efforts on the "Solar Shrine" on the summit of the mound (Aharoni 1975; Ussishkin 2004a: 30; 2014: 60-64). A long term project of Tel Aviv University, directed by David Ussishkin, undertook extensive excavations at Lachish from 1973-1987. Reconstruction work focusing on the approach road and outer gate complex continued until 1994. A monumental and justifiably highly acclaimed five-volume final report written by Ussishkin and numerous colleagues appeared ten years later (Ussishkin 2004a).<sup>79</sup>

Ussishkin limited his excavation efforts to five major areas; Area G—the Iron Age approach road and gate complex; Area P—the palace-fort area; Area D—the annexes and the courtyard enclosure; Area R—a trench at the southwest corner of the mound to study the Assyrian siege ramp and Judahite counter ramp, collecting evidence from the desperate battle fought there, which pitted the efforts by the Assyrian army to breach the walls against those of the Judahite defenders, whose efforts to prevent it were in vain, and Area S—a deep trench excavated from the western corner of podium B of the

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<sup>79</sup> See the glowing reviews by Dever (2005a), James (2007), King (2005), and Prag (2007).



palace-fort to the central part of the western edge of the mound in order to, in theory, expose the entire stratigraphic sequence of the site (Ussishkin 2004a: 39-40; 2014: 82-83).

### **Site Description and Discoveries**

Lachish is a nearly square shaped mound of impressive size and height, covering 72 dunams (18 acres) or 124 dunams (31 acres) including the slopes (Dagan 1992: 57\*-58\*; Tufnell 1953: 34-38; Ussishkin 1993a: 897; 2004a: 23-25; 2014: 19-25). The stratification of Lachish in the Iron Age II, when the site was initially under Israelite control during the united monarchy, then fell under the hegemony of Judah, corresponds to Levels V, IV, III and II. The destruction dates of the last two levels are secure; the others are disputed with a wide range of suggestions regarding dates and historical settings. While the chronology of Levels V and IV are critical issues for the early history of the monarchy, the proposed dates of the demise of Level IV as well as the dates for the founding of Level III are, as noted, especially significant to our study of Lachish during the early to mid-eighth century B.C. and will be discussed in detail below.<sup>80</sup>

### **Level IV**

The first Iron Age II stratum, Level V, probably ended during the last half of the tenth century B.C.; possibly destroyed at the hands of Shishak in about 925 B.C. (1 Kgs 14: 25-26; 2 Chr 12:4; Aharoni 1975: 14; Barkay 1992: 344; Barkay and Ussishkin 2004b: 411-16; Dever 2005a: 83-84; King 2005: 36-47; A. Mazar 1990a: 401 n. 20;

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<sup>80</sup> For a discussion of the development of Lachish throughout its history, see Ussishkin (2004a: 100-102).

Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001a: 275; Tappy 2009: 456-57; Ussishkin 1993a: 905; 1997: 319; 2004a: 76-78; 2014: 204-5;).<sup>81</sup> The following stratum, Level IV exhibits similar pottery (Zimhoni 2004a: 1707) and was a large fortified city, very probably constructed by Judah as a result of “new strategic considerations that arose from the division of the kingdom following the death of Solomon” and may be dated either to the reign of Rehoboam (2 Chr 11:9), Asa (2 Chr 14:6-7) or Jehoshaphat (2 Chr 17:12-13), according to Ussishkin (1993a: 905; 1997: 319; 2004a: 78; 2014: 207-8). This broad 75-year time period from 925-848 B.C. clearly demonstrates both a lack of hard data as well as assumptions on the part of the excavator. The implications of determining the exact dates of this stratum are far reaching for the history of Judah as well as Lachish. However, with the current data at hand, proposing an absolute date for the construction of Level IV, even when incorporating Chr’s account, remains elusive (e.g., Zimhoni 1997: 57-59; 2004a: 1707).

Ussishkin (2014: 205-10, Figure 11:2) has suggested that the Level IV city was designed according to a comprehensive plan and constructed as a fortress city; primarily as a government center and military base, rather than a residential settlement.<sup>82</sup> The strategic location of Lachish, which guarded the approaches to Judah from the west

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<sup>81</sup> Ussishkin (2004a: 78; 2014: 16, 204-5) and Zimhoni (2004a: 1707) subsequently lowered the dates of Level V to 900-850 B.C. Nevertheless, Dever (2005a: 83-84) notes that the 41 vessels from clear Level V contexts all “fit comfortably in the mid-late tenth century B.C.E. ceramic repertoire...” Barkay (1992: 344; Barkay and Ussishkin 2004b: 411-12) argues for a Solomonic date for Level V and interprets an ashy deposit found in the Level V houses (Area S) as a violent conflagration.

<sup>82</sup> The results from his later excavations at Tel Jezreel, a ninth century B.C. site that apparently served a dual role as an auxiliary capital of Israel and a military base, probably lie behind Ussishkin’s interpretation of Lachish IV. For the most relevant discussions regarding the status of Jezreel, see the following: (Alt 1954; Aster 2012; Franklin 2008; Na’aman 1997c; Olivier 1983; 1987; Ussishkin 1997b; 2000; 2007a; 2010a; Ussishkin and Woodhead 1992; 1994; 1997; Williamson 1991; 1996; Wright 1956; Zorn 1997b).

(Philistia) and the south (Egypt), undoubtedly led Judah's kings to select Lachish and Jerusalem as the two most important fortified centers of the kingdom.<sup>83</sup> Strong fortifications surrounded Lachish, including a revetment wall, glacis and a 6.2 meter thick mud brick main city wall erected upon stone foundations along the upper edge of the slope, essentially creating two fortification lines (e.g., Isaiah 22:11; 2 Kgs 25:4) with the revetment wall largely utilized to discourage the approach of siege engines to the main wall. A paved approach road ascended to a massive six-chamber gate complex, the largest (25 x 25 meters) Iron Age II gate known thus far in the entire region, with unquestionable parallels to the famous gates at Gezer, Megiddo, Hazor and Ashdod (Barkay 1992: 345; Ussishkin 2004a: 80-81, 504-689; 2014: 205-8).

A monumental rectangular platform or podium on the summit of the site served as the royal acropolis and administrative center. The palace or residency that stood on this podium no longer exists; its remains are essentially limited to some patches of floors.<sup>84</sup> Known as the palace-fort, this multistory structure probably housed not only the Judahite governor and his staff, but also the king and other royalty during inspection tours or other visits, as well as a garrison. The Level V-IV podium was constructed in two or perhaps three phases, labeled podium A and podium B by the excavators. A straight "seam" joining the two phases is clearly visible. Opinions vary as to whether podium B

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<sup>83</sup> The lack of domestic dwellings relating to this stratum, which Ussishkin regards as an indication for his government center / military base theory, is in fact based on negative evidence and may simply be due to the lack of broad exposure of this level. Indeed he writes: "The (Level IV domestic) remains uncovered are too few to present a clear picture of the dwellings and the character of the inhabitants of the fortified city" (Ussishkin 2014: 209).

<sup>84</sup> See Ussishkin (2004a: 807-12). He (Ussishkin 2004a: 812 and Fig. 14.49) also notes that "two square features, each built of relatively large, hammer-dressed stones and which appear to constitute a portion of the (palace C) superstructure's first course, were preserved on top of foundation Walls 222 and 223..."

represents two phases itself and / or was a later addition or phase of podium A of the palace-fort or if both were constructed at the same time. The use of different stone (*mizzi* limestone for podium A and *nari* limestone for podium B), differing construction styles, the lack of bonding and the use of different cubits (the royal cubit for podium A and the standard cubit for podium B) in their respective building seems to provide persuasive evidence for construction at different times (Ussishkin 1996: 35 n. 4; 2004a: 771-74, 840; Zimhoni 1997: 64; 2004a: 1648-49). While it is tempting to assign podium A and coresponding palace A to Rehoboam and podium B, itself built either as one or two phases, as well as its coresponding palace B (which incorporated an expanded palace A) to a later king, such as Asa or Jehoshaphat, any solution is conjectural at present.<sup>85</sup> Ussishkin (1977: 36-38; 1978a: 27-28; 1983) initially agreed with Tufnell (1953: 78-86) and interpreted podium A and B as representing two distinct stages of construction and either two sequential palaces (A and B) or palace B as simply an additional wing of palace A, but later (Ussishkin 1993a: 906; 1996: 35 n. 4; 1997: 319; 2004a: 77, 771-74; 2014: 248; Zimhoni 1997: 62-64; 2004a: 1648) suggested that the two podium phases were constructed at the same time and thus allows for only palace B.

As part of their important study on monumental Iron Age II buildings in the southern Levant, Sharon and Zarzecki-Peleg (2006: 147-48, 156-58) identify the Lachish palace-fort structure as an example of a “Lateral-Access Podium” (LAP) structure. Their definition of a LAP as “a high, tower-like structure, typically 15-20 m x 15-20 m in size” of monumental construction with thick walls and consequently impressive height,

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<sup>85</sup> Even Ussishkin’s staff members view podiums A and B as representing two different phases (Ussishkin 2004a: 771). Now see the discussions of Sharon and Zarzecki-Peleg (2006: 156-58) and Tappy (2009: 456) that both critique Ussishkin’s view and offer additional support for podium A and B being separate construction phases.

constructed of large stones, often including ashlar, with deep foundations that rest on a podium constructed either of fill or walled cellars. Access to LAP structures was via a long ramp or stairway running alongside and abutting the podium. Turning at the top of the ramp or stairway onto a porch, as at Lachish, gains entrance into the building itself either through the back corner or a side room. Internal stairwells provide access to upper storeys and either the roof or tower. The floorplan of an LAP consisted of a central space, which was either a courtyard or a clerestory lighted hall, surrounded by smaller rooms with no other outside access. The foundational walls of podium A at Lachish is a classic example of this floorplan. Most LAP structures are square or nearly square and are designed to not only be the focal point of their town or city but to dominate the surrounding hinterland as well as demonstrate what Sharon and Zarzecki-Peleg (2006: 160-64) describe as other “Authority Ploys.” Lateral-Access Podium structures were used as elite / administrative symbols of social space division and distance, as well as overlooking the main artery inside the city, while secluding itself by only providing restricted indirect access. Their study greatly clarifies and deepens our understanding of the Lachish palace-fort and its various phases. For example, approximately one third of the city of Lachish was appropriated for the palace-fort complex, including its annexes and courtyard / parade ground. Secondly, Sharon and Zarzecki-Peleg (2006:157) recognize that podium B consists of two phases. The first phase consisted of a square LAP very similar to podium A. A southern extension was apparently added later, before the addition of podium C. The direct line of the street leading from the gate into the city and directly towards the gatehouse for the palace-fort complex exemplifies an “Authority Ploy” of Sharon and Zarzecki-Peleg (e.g., Ussishkin 2004a: 84, 828). Finally, the

support podiums usually survived destructions and were often utilized in later rebuildings. Again, this practice is attested at Lachish. While the Lachish podium utilized nicely worked stones, some laid in header and stretcher fashion, no evidence of ashlar was found.<sup>86</sup> The lack of decorative fragments from the site also raises the question as to whether volute capitals were used at Lachish. Nevertheless, the rectangular Lachish podium (actually podia A-C), which measures 32 m x 76 m, remains the largest Iron Age structure yet excavated in the southern Levant (Ussishkin 2004a: 81, 834; 2014: 205-6).

Two auxiliary structures include a five bay northern extension of podium A that may have served as a storehouse and called the northern annex. Another rectangular structure mating the SE corner of podium B with a tripartite design and named the southern annex, may have served as a storehouse or royal stables. While no evidence of a courtyard wall was found for Level IV, the plan of podium A and B, as well as the annexes, strongly suggest that a form of demarcation was utilized in Level IV, either a wall or another type of barrier, as well as in Level III, despite the apparent absence of pavement and partitions and the resulting conclusions of the excavator (Ussishkin 1996: 35). A massive wall connected podium B to the city wall on the west, north of the gate complex. This “Enclosure Wall,” as named by the excavators, may have partitioned off

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<sup>86</sup> Ussishkin (2004a: 81-82) notes the existence of “nearly rectangular blocks” at the south west corner of podium A, the two southern corners of podium B, the edges of the piers of the Level IV-III inner gatehouse and the eastern jamb of the Level III entrance to the gate’s outer courtyard. However, all of these architectural remains fail to fully match the exquisite ashlar present at other Iron Age II royal sites, notably at Samaria and Ramat Rahel and, in particular cases, may represent earlier blocks in secondary use. Tappy (2009: 459) interprets the use of roughly dressed blocks rather than fine ashlar and olive wood beams instead of cedar as indicators that ninth century B.C. Judah had only limited exposure to foreign trade and influences, which he describes as “cross-cultural contact(s)” and proposes that the construction of Lachish IV reflects a regional project of Judah that, while directed from the capital at Jerusalem, utilized local resources in order to assure its completion without excessive expenditure.

part of the city for a specific, yet unclear purpose (Ussishkin 2014: 262-63). Near the eastern edge of the mound, Starkey excavated a large square shaft cut from bedrock approximately 22.5 meters in depth. This shaft may have been planned as a water system and also as a quarry (Tufnell 1953: 158-63; Ussishkin 2014: 263-66). At the northeastern corner of the site, a 44-meter-deep well was found near the outer revetment wall and undoubtedly served as the water source for Lachish. Aharoni's excavation uncovered a very rich cache of cultic vessels, an altar and pottery that Aharoni (1975: 26-32) interpreted as a "cult room" dating to Level V. Ussishkin (2014: 210-11) studied Aharoni's published findings and reinterpreted the assemblage as deriving from a (as yet undiscovered) Level IV temple, that was subsequently buried in a pit, but this suggestion is by no means conclusive.

The only dwellings from Level IV were excavated in Area S and no signs of destruction were evident (Ussishkin 2014: 208-10). Consequently, domestic occupational evidence is not well represented and data is sorely lacking regarding the population density and the extent of the residential areas at the site during Level IV.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless at least four distinct phases of Level IV were discerned in Area S, and this factor has led a number of scholars to question Ussishkin's conclusions regarding the duration of this stratum (e.g.: Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001a: 273-76; Tappy 2009: 457). The ceramic assemblage was characteristic of Iron Age IIA, exemplified by red slip and hand burnishing on the surfaces. While the circumstances surrounding the end of Level IV and the founding of Level III remain uncertain, including the extent of

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<sup>87</sup> The paucity of evidence regarding Level IV domestic structures has led some scholars to identify Lachish as a royal and military center rather than a population center during the ninth century B.C. (e.g., Barkay 1992: 345; Ussishkin 2014: 207), an interpretation that, in my opinion, is premature and, as Ussishkin (2014: 209) concedes, is based solely upon the limited exposure of Level IV.

disruption and destruction, there is clear continuity in the material culture (Barkay: personal communication; Barkay and Ussishkin 2004b: 447; Ussishkin 2014: 214-15; Zimhoni 1997: 171), demonstrating that the Judahite population either remained in place, or quickly returned and resettled Lachish after its reconstruction.

### **The Founding Date of Level IV**

Determining the date that Level IV was established plays a rather critical role in the on-going debate over the “low chronology” and some proponents possibly hedged their suggested dates in order to adapt the stratigraphic history of Lachish into this alternative chronology.<sup>88</sup> A critical issue among scholars focuses on the dating of the six-chamber gate, based upon whether the extant piers were foundational stone courses surrounded by constructional fill, or the lower part of the superstructure with the floor at the base. Dever (1986: 26-28, 32-33, notes 34-35; 1990: 124-25; 2005a: 83-84) dates the six-chamber gate and podium A (following Tufnell 1953: 53) to Level V and the tenth century B.C., probably to the reign of Rehoboam, but possibly to Solomon. However, Dever explains that he bases his dating firmly upon stratigraphy and ceramic evidence rather than similarities in the gate plan with the Iron Age IIA gates at Gezer, Megiddo, Ashdod and Hazor, arguing that, among the 41 published vessels from Level V, “(t)here is not one that does not fit comfortably in the mid-late tenth century B.C.E. ceramic repertoire...” Yet Zimhoni (2004a: 1645, 1707) concludes that “it is impossible to

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<sup>88</sup> While beyond the scope of this study, the low chronology model creates many more problems than it solves and has been, in my opinion, soundly refuted on several fronts. Note, for example, the devastating critique given by A. Mazar (2007) and further references there. For Lachish in particular, note Tappy’s (2009: 456) prudent assessment of Level V, which raises the possibility of multiple phases, and Dever’s (2005a: 84) pointed remarks regarding Ussishkin’s and Zimhoni’s conclusions in the Lachish final report.



propose absolute dates for Levels V and IV at Tel Lachish and the vessels found in them and at other sites in the region...”

On the basis of 2 Chr 11: 5-12, 23, the reign of Rehoboam was suggested by several scholars (Aharoni 1975: 41; 1982: 196, 241; Dever 1986: 26-28, 32-33, notes 34-35; 1990: 124-25; 2005a: 83-84; A. Mazar 1990a: 429; Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001a: 275; Ray 1993: 46; Yadin 1979: 215; 1980: 22-23). Ussishkin (1983: 173) initially dated the beginning of Lachish IV to the division of the United Monarchy (ca. 930 B.C.), but later cast doubt upon the historical validity of the biblical source (Tappy 2009: 459; Ussishkin 1997: 319; 2004a: 77-78; 2014: 208).

A date sometime after 925 B.C. and attributed to one or more of the first four kings of Judah, notably during the reigns of Rehoboam (2 Chr 11:9, 23), Asa (2 Chr 14:5-6) and / or Jehoshaphat has also been suggested (2 Chr 17:12; Barkay 1992: 344; A. Mazar 1990a: 401 n. 20; Tufnell 1953: 53-54; 1959: 93-94; Ussishkin 1978a: 93; 1982: 28; 1983: 171-73; 1993a: 898, 905; 1997: 319; 2004a: 79; 2014: 207-8). Tufnell (1953: 53-54) attributed the construction of Palace A to Rehoboam, the city walls to Asa and Palace B to Jehoshaphat, during their respective reigns.

A date around 900 B.C., during the reign of Asa was proposed by others (Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2004: 229; Rainey 2001b: 142; Tufnell 1953: 53-55; 1959: 94).

Finally, a date between 850-830 B.C. has been considered (Na’aman 2013: 247, 253-54, 264, 267; Ussishkin 2004a: 79; 2014: 16; Zimhoni 1997: 173; 2004a: 1707). Bunimovitz and Lederman (2011: 43) state that “While the early withdrawal of Ekron from the geopolitical scene enabled the establishment of a Judahite governmental center at Beth-Shemesh already in the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E., in the southern

Shephelah almost a century had to go by until the destruction of Gath allowed the Judahite kingdom to establish a bigger fortified center at Lachish.” Others support a date closer to ca. 830 B.C. (Barkay and Ussishkin 2004a: 361; Fantalkin and Finkelstein 2006: 24).

### **Dating the Demise of Level IV**

The circumstances and reason(s) behind the demise of Level IV are not clear. Palace B was destroyed, but its foundations were reused and enlarged when Palace C was constructed in Level III. The southern annex was also replaced with a similar building, but twice as large. The enclosure wall was rebuilt along the same course and the city walls continued to be used without change, but the city gate received significant modifications. The Level IV domestic structures were demolished, but rebuilt with a similar plan. In sum, apparently most of the structures of Level IV, aside from the city walls were at least partially demolished or destroyed suddenly, but then either rebuilt or entirely replaced. Most importantly, no signs of fire or intentional destruction were found in Area S or elsewhere at the site (Ussishkin 2014: 214-15; Zimhoni 1997: 200). Ussishkin (2014: 215) considers possible agents, but admits that drawing a conclusion among the various possibilities is difficult. Zimhoni (1997: 173, 207-8) argues that a transitional assemblage that contains some earlier (Level IV) and some later (Level III) forms were found at Tel ‘Eton. She provides a very broad provisional date of 850-750 B.C. Tufnell (1953: 53-55) chose to leave the question open.

Zimhoni (1997: 171, 200; 2004a: 1643-45, 1706-7) noted that the date and circumstances of Lachish Level IV’s demise was not completely certain, but nevertheless concluded: “that the city of Level IV flourished and came to an end sometime during the

9th century. In spite of the lack of precise dating of this level, its well-stratified assemblages (*which differ substantially from those of Level III*) are useful for comparisons with material at Lachish itself (Level V) and other sites” (italics mine). Mazar and Panitz-Cohen (2001a: 274-75) suggest a date during the second half of the ninth century B.C. for the termination of Lachish IV.

The campaign of Hazael provides a possible historical context. Based upon a fairly close resemblance between the Tell es-Safi A3 pottery to the Lachish Level IV assemblage, Ussishkin (2009b: 140; 2014: 16, 212) admits that Lachish Level IV pottery closely parallels that of Tell es-Safi Stratum A3, which is late ninth-early eighth century B.C. However, Ussishkin believes that Lachish IV continued to exist for a short time after Hazael destroyed Gath, apparently basing this view on comparisons between the Lachish V-IV pottery with that from Tell es-Safi A3 in their respective historical contexts.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, a date near or at 800 B.C. was proposed by Aharoni (1975: 14-15, 45), who suggested that Lachish IV terminated around the end of the ninth or early in the eighth century B.C. and recognized parallels from Arad Stratum X and Beth-Shemesh Stratum IIb (Haverford excavations; Stratum 3 of the new excavations), and later by Fantalkin and Finkelstein (2006: 24).

Events related to the defeat of Amaziah at Beth Shemesh; specifically, an unrecorded Israelite sack of Lachish by order of Jehoash provides an attractive scenario for the demise of Level IV (Hudon 2015a). The date, which falls at the beginning of the eighth century B.C., is compatible with the pottery evidence and Ussishkin’s belief that

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<sup>89</sup> See the important observations by Shai and Maeir (2012: 345) noting the differences between Lachish IV-III pottery and the rich Gath A3 assemblage).

Lachish IV continued for a short time after Tell es-Safi A3. Moreover, Jehoash broke down long stretches of the wall of Jerusalem, yet the biblical account makes no mention of burning the Judahite capital (2 Kgs 14:14-15; 2 Chr 25:23-24). Since Lachish was the next largest city in Judah, it is not an unreasonable assumption that Jehoash carried out arbitrary destructive acts there as well in order to further humiliate Amaziah and demean his Judahite kinsmen. Naturally, the key evidence should rest upon an extensive comparison between the pottery from Lachish IV and the ceramic assemblage of Beth Shemesh stratum 3 when the latter is fully published.<sup>90</sup> According to its excavators, Beth Shemesh stratum 3 was destroyed early in the eighth century B.C. most likely by Jehoash (see provisionally Bunimovitz and Lederman 2009: 136; 2011: 44-45 and my discussion below).

Events surrounding the murder of Amaziah (2 Kgs 14:19; 2 Chr 25:27), proposed by Aharoni (1975: 41) and also advocated earlier by me (Hudon 2010a: 33-34) and Na'aman (2013: 253), who dates this event to 788 B.C., provides another historical background for the fall of Lachish IV. However, the date of Amaziah's death was 767 B.C., according to Thiele's (1965: 77-117, 205; 1977: 40-45, 75; 1983: 113-23, 217) chronology, which ended his twenty-four-year co-regency with Uzziah. While Ussishkin (1993a: 907; 1997: 320; 2004a: 83) demonstrates uncertainty as to whether Amaziah's death occurred during Level IV or Level III, he does postulate that Amaziah took refuge inside the palace-fort and was probably murdered there (Ussishkin 1978b: 22-23).

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<sup>90</sup> As noted earlier, Aharoni (1975: 14-15) recognized similarities in the ceramics from Lachish IV and Beth Shemesh (Stratum 3) forty years ago.

Nevertheless, this late date is difficult to maintain in light of ceramic evidence discussed above.

The earthquake during Uzziah's reign (Amos 1:1; Zech. 14:5) which may have occurred anywhere between 782-753 B.C., but is usually dated to ca. 760 B.C.,<sup>91</sup> was first suggested by M. Kochavi on a visit to the site in 1976 and cautiously accepted by Ussishkin and others (1977: 52; 1993a: 907; 1997: 320; 2004a: 83; 2014: 212-15, 223; Barkay 1992: 345; Barkay and Ussishkin 2004b: 447; Herzog 2002: 96-98; Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2004: 229-31; Singer-Avitz 2002: 162-80; Zimhoni 1997: 172-73; 2004a: 1707).<sup>92</sup> Zimhoni (1997: 173) states that: "Acceptance or rejection of this date is most significant in determining the beginning of the development of the vessel assemblage, which was found, broken and burnt, upon the floors of destroyed Level III structures. In this developed and unified assemblage, there are no remains of any vessels which were in use during Level IV. Therefore, the logical period of its development would be during the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century." This statement stands in marked contrast to her observation that Lachish IV ended during the ninth century B.C. This earthquake hypothesis, while a novel proposal, is disputed by many scholars (e.g., Fantalkin and Finkelstein 2006: 22-24; Faust 2005: 106-7 and n. 13; Hudon 2010: 33; Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001a: 274-75; Na'aman 2013: 252-55; Rainey 2001b: 142).<sup>93</sup> The

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<sup>91</sup> See now the paper by Migowski, Agnon, Bookman, Negendank, and Stein (2004: 307, Table 2, no. 34), which determines that a 7.3 magnitude earthquake occurred in 759 B.C.

<sup>92</sup> The literature devoted to this earthquake and its place in the archaeological and historical record has grown dramatically in recent years. See the following representative publications: (Austin, Franz, and Frost 2000; Dell 2011; Dever 1992; Edelman 2012; Fantalkin and Finkelstein 2006; Franz 1990; Freedman and Welch 1994; Hasel 1992; Hudon 2010a: 36; Maeir 2012c; Nur and Burgess 2008: 192-94; Ogden 1992).

<sup>93</sup> Bunimovitz and Lederman (2011: 43-45) discuss the ideological reasons for the popularity of this position, notably for "scholars seeking a historical datum line for the transition from Iron Age IIA to

substantial differences from the Level IV pottery to that of Level III, coupled with the complete absence of any telltale signs of seismic activity at the site, further weakens this view.

### **Level III**

The Level III city has much better archaeological documentation. A very formidable ring of fortifications surrounded Lachish in the eighth century B.C., including a 3.5 to 4-meter-thick revetment wall at least several meters in height, located halfway up the steep slope or glacis. The six-meter-wide main wall had a stone foundation with a plastered brick superstructure with towers at critical areas. The robust gate complex included a massive outer gatehouse or bastion, including two large solid outer towers, a piazza and the 24.5 x 25 meter six-chamber inner gatehouse flanked by two solid towers. Like the city wall, the inner gatehouse had deeply set stone foundations with a mud brick superstructure (Ussishkin 2014: 223-37). The gate complex, palace-fort and enclosure wall were all rebuilt using the Level IV foundations and many domestic structures were found in the excavated areas, notably between the Enclosure Wall and the gate complex, the southwest corner of the site and near the Solar Shrine. The palace-fort podium (A and B) was enlarged along the east side with an addition (podium C), upon which an entirely new palace (palace C) was constructed (Tufnell 1953: 79-86 and figure 5; Ussishkin 2004a: 83-84). Measuring ca. 36 x 76 meters, palace C is the largest building known in the region from the Iron Age II. As with the earlier palace-fort building(s), only patches of floor remain of the superstructures. A partially-preserved monumental

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Iron Age IIB in Judah... and seems to be a factoid constructed by current archaeological research rather than past reality.”

stone stairway and entrance porch accessed the palace along its eastern side (Ussishkin 2014: 243-62). A large walled courtyard and / or parade ground extended from the east side of the palace-fort. This plaster paved courtyard was accessed through a six-chamber gate centered along the southern wall and separating the enlarged southern annex into two wings. The southern annex was expanded to four tripartite-style structures, two on either side of the gate and may have either functioned as storehouses or stables for a chariot unit. Comparing these structures with those at Megiddo, Ussishkin estimated that the garrison of Lachish Level IV had 50 horses, possibly for a cavalry unit, while the Level III contingent doubled that amount to 100, which corresponds to a unit of 50 chariots (Micah 1:13; Ussishkin 1993a: 907; 1996: 36-37; 1997: 320; 2004a: 81-87; 2014: 261). The large courtyard / parade ground that was ideally suited for military maneuvers, coupled with what appears to be chariot wheels being thrown from the city wall in the Lachish reliefs seem to favor the latter possibility (Ussishkin 1982: 84-85, 102-109; 2004a: 87; 2014: 308-9). A massive tower was added to the outside corner of the outer gate house, the six-chamber inner gate was rebuilt on the foundations of the Level IV gate and its floors, as well as those of the piazza, were raised. Large quantities of restorable pottery were recovered, many with the characteristic wheel-burnishing common with Iron Age IIB Judahite forms. While continuity in ceramic culture continues, the pottery of Level III represents drastic changes as well. The transition from hand-burnishing apparently occurred during the transition from Level IV to III. Differences in these two pottery assemblages include color (a characteristic red shade to a lighter tone matching the clay), as mentioned above, the decline of burnished ware and the disappearance of hand-burnishing, which is replaced by wheel-burnishing, added

largely for style and beauty rather than for treating permeable material, and finally changes in forms and a smaller variety of forms with more uniformity of design in Level III. This development reflects the existence of specialized workshops producing high volumes of ceramic wares with a wide distribution network (Mazar 1990a: 509; Zimhoni 1997: 169-72). The eighth century B.C. also witnessed the rapid rise of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic statuettes and figurines amongst Judahite pottery assemblages (Kletter 1996), which were also represented at Lachish.

Tufnell (1953: 54, 118 and figure 10) attributes much of the Level III defenses to Hezekiah, but interestingly adds that: “The strip (of podium) C, along most of the east side, was apparently in existence by the earlier half of the eighth century.” Tufnell cites a late ninth-early eighth century B.C. paleographic dating of an inscription of the first five Hebrew letters scratched on a stairway (Diringer 1953: 357-58; Tufnell 1950: 77; 1953: 118) to support her conclusion. Partly based upon its stratigraphic context, Lemaire (2004: 2115) suggested an early to mid-eighth century B.C. date for the inscription. Graffiti surround these letters, which include two concentric circles that parallel those incised on some *lmlk* jars, as well as a crude drawing of a roaring lion. A facsimile of the graffiti is reproduced with a brief summary in Ussishkin (2014: 218-19). The provenance of this graffiti, on the monumental stairway of the Judahite palace-fort, is very significant and raises the possibility that the artist, perhaps a soldier guarding the palace entrance, was attempting his hand at duplicating what may be royal symbols of Judah visibly displayed on the palace walls and / or elsewhere in the surrounding royal compound.



### **The Founding Date of Level III**

Evidence indicates that Lachish was resettled by Judahites, based upon close similarities in pottery, domestic architecture and other aspects of material culture. Zimhoni (1997: 65, 171) states that: “(t)he basic plan of the Level III houses closely resembles that of Level IV. Some of the earlier walls remained unchanged, while strengthening walls were added to others. In some cases, internal spaces were divided differently. Level III floors were extremely close—about 10-20 cm.—to those of Level IV, and in the course of the excavation, it was frequently difficult to differentiate between them.” Moreover, no evidence of wholesale burning has been recognized. Consequently, it may be assumed that the city was reoccupied and rebuilt shortly, if not directly following the end of Level IV, by its residents.

Rebuilding and construction probably began during the reign of Amaziah, in ca. 800 B.C. Bunimovitz and Lederman (2011: 45) conclude that Level III at Lachish should be considered to represent a long lasting settlement, which stood for nearly a century, since its typical pottery assemblage seems to appear already at Beth-Shemesh in the early eighth century B.C. In his popular summary treatment of Lachish, Ussishkin (2014: 16, 215) recently acknowledged that 800 B.C. is a preferable date for the establishment of Level III. It is also quite possible that initial efforts to rebuild Lachish began early in the reign of Uzziah, during his co-regency with Amaziah (Rainey 2001b: 142). If the city was violated and extensively damaged after the Judahite debacle at Beth Shemesh, Judah’s greatly weakened geopolitical status would have demanded the repair and restoration of Lachish, as well as Jerusalem, as quickly as possible.

### **The Demise of Level III**

From 1953 to 1977, the date of the destruction of Lachish Level III was a hotly debated topic among archaeologists and biblical historians (Ussishkin 1977: 32-33; 2004a: 88-89 and references there). A misreading of the now famous “*Eliakim servant of Yokan*” seal impression discovered at Tell Beit Mirsim, led Albright (1932; 1943: 66, 182) to associate *Yokan* with the Jehoiachin, king of Judah. The corresponding destruction level and the associated pottery were then erroneously dated to 598 B.C., which in turn led to the creation of a fictional widespread military campaign by Nebuchadnezzar against Judahite cities and towns. Consequently, in his desire to associate a seal impression with a biblical personality, Albright was unfortunately responsible for over 40 years of historical confusion and stratigraphic chaos at Iron Age II sites throughout the southern Levant (Aharoni 1982: 261-66; Garfinkel 1990; Rainey 1975a; 1991; Ussishkin 1976: 6-11). Albright’s stature as an orientalist without peer and his position as dean of biblical archaeology quickly led to the adoption of this view as historical and archaeological fact by virtually every archaeologist and biblical historian. Only after the publication of the *Lachish III* report by Tufnell (1953) did a small minority of scholars begin to question Albright’s interpretation of the Iron Age II strata. Tufnell observed two ash layers in the Level II city gate, but recognized that the pottery assemblage from Lachish Level II, which reflected the 586 B.C. destruction by Nebuchadnezzar, was considerably different from that of Lachish Level III. Her conclusion revealed a much larger time span between the two strata than that proposed by Albright, who dated the destruction of Level III a mere ten years earlier. Moreover, Dinger dated his class I and II *lmlk* seal impressions, which were confined to Level III,

to the eighth century B.C., based upon their paleography (Diringer 1953: 344). Accordingly, Tufnell proposed that Level III corresponds with the 701 B.C. destruction of Sennacherib. For a number of years, Tufnell (1950: 75-79; 1953: 45-56; 1959: 96-100, 102-5) stood nearly alone against the scholarly consensus. Nevertheless, her view eventually received support from Barnett (1958: 161-62); Aharoni (1973: 5-6; 1975: 15-16; 1979a: 393-95; 1982: 261-66; Aharoni and Aharoni 1976; Aharoni and Amiran 1958: 182 n. 42), Rainey (1975a), but few others. Eventually, Tufnell's minority position was fully exonerated by the seminal study of the stratification of Area S by Ussishkin (1977: 50-54), which demonstrated that Level III had to be related to Sennacherib on the basis that neither Levels V or IV showed ample signs of violent destruction and virtually all scholars now associate the destruction of Level III to the Assyrian campaign against Judah in 701 B.C. (e.g.: Aharoni 1975: 15-16; Aharoni and Aharoni 1976; Barnett 1958: 161-62; Barkay and Ussishkin 2004b: 447-57; A. Mazar 1990a: 434; Rainey 1975a; 2002b: 547; Shiloh 1989: 102-4; Tufnell 1953: 45-58; Ussishkin 1976: 11; 1977: 52; 1978a: 93; 1985; 1993a: 898, 907; 2004a: 88-89, 535-768; 2007b: 136-38; 2014: 16, 215-21, 389-90; Zimhoni 1997: 179-262; 2004b).<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> See also these additional papers and summaries by Ussishkin (1976; 1985; 2007b: 138; 2014: 220-21, 267-326) and Dever's (2005a: 84-85) endorsement. While Lipinski (2006: 415-16) is a recent, and most likely lone, dissenter, who dates Level III to the seventh century B.C., the sage comments of James (2007: 214-15) nevertheless stress caution regarding the dates of Levels IV and III. Even though he does not dispute equating the destruction of Level III with the events in 701 B.C., James correctly notes that Ussishkin (2004a: 89) bases his conclusion here on negative (in James' words "indirect") evidence. While the limited exposure of Level IV failed to reveal a burn layer, additional excavation may unearth evidence pointing to a violent destruction. Moreover, the lack of a burn layer does not rule out a human agent. On the other hand, ascribing Level IV to Sennacherib would demand adding another Assyrian campaign, such as a more comprehensive and wider destructive swath of Tiglath-pileser III in 734 B.C., as proposed by Blakely and Hardin (2002), or resurrecting the 597 B.C. Babylonian campaign hypothesis. Both theories would introduce an enormous amount of stratigraphic and chronological chaos into the archaeology of the southern Levant.

The destructive campaign of Sennacherib to the Levant in 701 B.C. has become one of the best documented events in the history of Judah in the Iron Age II, both in the historical sources (2 Kgs 18:17, 19:8; 2 Chr 32:9; *ANET*: 287-88) and from the archaeological record. Assyrian and biblical sources provide multiple accounts of this horrific series of events and to these can be added the later references from Herodotus and Flavius Josephus. Sennacherib boasts of destroying 46 walled cities of Judah and deporting 200,150 Judahite prisoners. From an archaeological standpoint, the Iron Age IIB destruction layers found at many Judahite sites in the Shephelah and the Negeb have been assigned to Sennacherib. The various late eighth century B.C. destruction layers at sites throughout Judah associated with this campaign have become a cornerstone in the archaeology of Iron Age II Judah for chronology and ceramics (Ussishkin 2014: 389-90). The most famous and important of these is Level III at Lachish, which was completely destroyed and burned. The excavators found debris heaps, collapsed walls, smashed vessels, burned wood, reddened bricks and heavy ash layers (Ussishkin 2014: 219).

### **Hinterland**

The Survey of Israel Map of Lachish (98) directly corresponds to the agricultural hinterland of the city of Lachish. This archaeological survey was conducted and published by Yehuda Dagan (1992). Dagan later revised and summarized the findings of the Lachish survey in light of the wider context of settlement patterns in the entire Shephelah (Dagan 2004). A few of the sites were investigated earlier, notably by the Survey of Western Palestine and the Lachish Expedition (Tufnell 1953: 34-38, 169-254). Due to the still largely rural landscape surrounding and to the east of Lachish, these surveys offer an important window into the hinterland settlement density of Judah's

second largest population center during the eighth century B.C. Moreover, the hinterland surrounding Lachish, including vineyards, fig, olive, sycamore and fruit trees was apparently accurately depicted by Assyrian artists on the Lachish reliefs (Amar 1999). During the Iron Age II, the survey findings concluded that the population surrounding Lachish “largely inhabited unwallled villages located in close proximity to agricultural land. Settlement therein was dependant on the rulers’ ability (based at Lachish) to provide adequate defense for the population” (Dagan 1992: 14\*). Occupational evidence for Iron Age IIB (eighth century B.C.) was discovered at numerous sites. However, the site (and presumably the population) density during Iron Age II was greater to the east in the survey area of Amazya, suggesting that a larger proportion of agricultural activities close to Lachish were conducted by residents living in or adjacent to that city. On the other hand, the hinterland of Lachish may have served as a royal estate, as discussed further below. The survey revealed the existence of five tells in addition to Lachish and 31 settlements and other sites with Iron Age II remains (Dagan 1992: 17\*, 169, Map 5).<sup>95</sup> The survey indicated that viticulture seemed to be the dominant agricultural product of the area, based on the ratio between one to ten to one to fifteen oil presses to wine presses identified in both surveys, as well as depictions of vineyards on Sennacherib’s reliefs,

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<sup>95</sup> Unfortunately, Dagan did not differentiate between ceramic finds dated either to Iron Age IIA, B, or C for his surveyed sites in the Map of Lachish (Dagan 1992: 169, Map 5). Nevertheless, it is reasonably safe to assume that most, if not all of these were active during the eighth century B.C. (Dagan 2004: 2680) and Dagan does indeed specify finding Lachish III type pottery in numerous site descriptions: 16, 22, 25, 30 (Tel Rasm el Aqra’), 31 (Tell El Mudawwara), 34, 45, 47, 92 (Tel Lachish), 112, 157, 202, 211, 233, 241, 249 (Khirbet Umm el Baqar), 280 (Tel Haraqim), 301 (Lachish II-I pottery reported only, but Site 301 is not listed as an Iron Age IIC site elsewhere in the report; for example Dagan 1992: 17\*, perhaps suggesting an editing error), and 334; while reporting only Iron Age II at others: 69, 99, 101, 102, 105, 109, 134, 152, 153, 165, 203, 267, 291, 302, 303, 328 (Tel Agra), 329 (listed as Iron Age II on Map 5 only) and 348; probably based upon the lack of clear diagnostic sherds from the samples collected (Dagan 2004: 2680-81). Several of these sites, as well as their corresponding structures, terraces and installations may have been incorporated into one or more royal estates, such as sites 25, 30, 31, 34, 45, 47, 109, 112, 134, 211 and notably site 291 (Dagan 1992: 99\*, 132-33).

where grape vines, fig and possibly olive trees are represented in most of the reliefs (Slabs 1, 4-12). In his magisterial treatment of these reliefs, Ussishkin (1982: 76-126, especially 94, 126; see further Zimhoni 2004c: 2701) raised the possibility that the inclusion of such rich agricultural produce was not meant to be an artistic feature to fill space in the wall mural, but rather was an actual representation of the surrounding hinterland of Lachish, which provides circumstantial support for the account of Judahite royal viticulture sponsored by Uzziah in 2 Chr 26:10 (Dagan 1992: 19\*-20\*, 20-21) and also seems to support an initial, non-military use for the *lmlk* storage jars in royal lands surrounding Lachish and thus may account for the large number of *lmlk* jars and handles unearthed in Level III of that city. More importantly, Dagan (2004: 2681, 2688 and Tables 38.5 and 38.8) found that during “(t)he Iron Age IIa-b settlement map includes many ‘dispersed’ and ‘isolated’ structures throughout most of the agricultural lands. This phenomenon is unknown in earlier periods, and forms evidence for a period of stability and security under the Judean Monarchy... It appears that the period of prosperity in the Shephelah during the Iron Age II reached its zenith in the eighth century B.C.E, as is evident from the survey and the excavations.”

## **Conclusions**

The city of Lachish was an important administrative, military and population center for the Kingdom of Judah during the reign of Uzziah with a strategic status second only to Jerusalem. Similarly, the study of Lachish using historical and archaeological sources is vitally important today for our understanding of ninth and eighth century B.C. Judah for several reasons, but most notably for the stratigraphic complexities and various other issues associated with excavating in Jerusalem itself. Apart from the death of

Amaziah, neither DtrH nor Chr mentions Lachish in their respective accounts of Uzziah's reign. Yet the excavated site of Lachish provides one of our most sweeping views into the political and economic status of Judah during the eighth century B.C. At the same time, there are very few definitive facts that link specific actions by Uzziah to Lachish. The conclusions presented here are not without strong supporting material and textual evidence, yet remain, to some degree, conjectural and should be viewed as provisional. Using Thiele's chronology, coupled with archaeological and biblical evidence, the following historical interpretation is thus presented.

Due to the similarity of pottery between Levels V and IV, Level IV originated no later than the reign of Rehoboam and may actually represent a continuation of Level V. Successive building phases that are clearly recognized at the site, for example the additions to the palace-fort podium (podium B and its possible southern extension), may be attributed to the later reigns of Asa and Jehoshaphat. The four distinct phases of Level IV (Barkay and Ussishkin 2004b: 416-47; Ussishkin 2014: 208-9), provide strong evidence for a duration of Level IV longer than the fifty years Ussishkin (2014: 16, 207-8) assigns to it. Indeed, others recognize this attempt to compress the possible two phases of Level V and the four phases of Level IV into less than a century as very problematic (e.g.: Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001a: 275; Na'aman 2013: 254-55).

While dating the demise of Lachish Level IV remains a disputed issue, the relative chronology of this event seems to have been recently narrowed in light of the excavations at Tell es-Safi and Beth Shemesh. Both Ussishkin (2014: 212-15; 2015: 138) and Maeir (2012a: 38-39; Shai and Maeir 2012: 354-55) recognize the close similarities between the pottery of Lachish Level IV with that from Tell es-Safi A3. Similarly, the

pottery of Lachish IV and Beth Shemesh 3 is a mixture of Iron Age IIA and early Iron Age IIB types, which correspond to the late ninth-early eighth century B.C. (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2011: 43-45; Fantalkin and Finkelstein 2006: 22-24; Faust 2005: 107 n. 13; Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001a: 275-75; Na'aman 2013: 253). Based upon these rather recent observations and comparisons of these two ceramic assemblages from Lachish and Tell es-Safi, the data seems to point to a destruction date close to 800 B.C., as Ussishkin (2014: 16, 212-15) now acknowledges. The resultant task for the historian is identifying possible correlations with recorded events dating to approximately the same time, noting that the current lack of broad exposure of this level outside of Area S severely limits our understanding of the circumstances surrounding the demise of Lachish Level IV.<sup>96</sup>

The present absence of evidence for a deliberate destruction, specifically the lack of a burn layer, is also intriguing and seems to correlate well with actions relating to the defeat of Amaziah of Judah by Jehoash of Israel, as recorded in two accounts preserved in the Hebrew Bible. While many scholars may ridicule this link, viewing it as an overly simplistic, if not naïve correlation between biblical records and archaeological data, they must also recognize, as Dever (1990: 121-22) reminds us, that text-based chronologies are inevitable in historical archaeology. Sequential ceramic typologies provide a relative chronology, but absolute chronologies must come from fixed dates recorded in literary and historical sources. Critics must also acknowledge that many established Iron Age absolute dates derive from biblical history and chronology. Consequently, while the fiery

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<sup>96</sup> Note the observation by Bunimovitz and Lederman (2011: 43 n. 5) regarding Zimhoni's (1997: 69; 2004a: 1652) assessment of the Level V and IV pottery, which seems to contradict the conclusions of the excavators (Barkay and Ussishkin 2004b: 445; Ussishkin 2004a: 83).



destruction of Beth Shemesh stratum 3 probably occurred immediately after Amaziah's rout, it is entirely possible that the victorious Israelite soldiers successively sacked Lachish and other, more vulnerable cities after defeating Judah's army. The destructive activity at Lachish seems to resemble what Jehoash oversaw his army carry out at Jerusalem (2 Kgs 14:13-14; 2 Chr 25:23-34). Chr also mentions an earlier swath of destruction and violence committed by the Israelite mercenaries dismissed by Amaziah. "But the men of the army whom Amaziah sent back, not letting them go with him to battle, fell upon the cities of Judah, from Samaria to Beth-horon, and killed three thousand people in them, and took much spoil" (2 Chr 25:13). While Lachish is not specifically mentioned in these texts, the date and circumstances seem to match with the material evidence unearthed at Lachish. When news of the rout of Judah's army and capture of Amaziah reached Lachish, any attempt at organized resistance inside the city likely evaporated and Lachish capitulated after minimal resistance. In his review of Ussishkin's final report, James (2007: 214-15) correctly notes that the lack of a burn layer does not rule out a destruction by a human agent. If Jehoash indeed was responsible for Level IV's destruction, he probably singled out all defensive, royal and administrative structures as priority targets for demolition by his soldiers, which seems to align with the archaeological evidence at Lachish as well as his recorded actions at Jerusalem.

The biblical chronology for this period has long been problematic until Thiele (1965: 77-89, 205; 1977: 39-45; 1983: 111-23) proposed a solution utilizing co-regencies and a non-accession year system in both Israel (Jehoash and Jeroboam II) and Judah (Amaziah and Azariah/Uzziah) that not only brought chronological harmony to the

apparent 24-year discrepancy present in the biblical text, but also provided an exact chronology for the events surrounding Amaziah's defeat. Thiele (1965: 83-86; 1977: 42-43) reconstructs the chronology in the following manner. Before facing Judah in battle, Jehoash installed Jeroboam II as co-regent. When Amaziah was captured at Beth Shemesh and taken to Israel as a prisoner, the people of Judah placed Azariah / Uzziah on the throne. After the death of Jehoash, Amaziah returned to Jerusalem, where he lived for fifteen more years. While the biblical writers include all of these years in his total reign, Azariah / Uzziah, in effect, was the sole ruler. Following Thiele's system, the destructive acts of the Israelite mercenaries can be dated to the spring or summer of 792/91 B.C. The battle at and destruction of Beth Shemesh as well as the destruction and plundering of Jerusalem and Lachish (Level IV) took place during the spring or summer of 791/90 B.C. Likewise, the installation of Azariah / Uzziah as king also took place during late spring or summer of the same year. While the evidence is not conclusive, this view successfully correlates the current archaeological evidence, the biblical accounts and Thiele's chronology, which was proposed without reference to, much less correlation with any archaeological data available at the time.<sup>97</sup> More importantly, if the Beth Shemesh Stratum 3 pottery closely resembles that of Lachish IV, this interpretation would be greatly strengthened and an important new chronological date could possibly be added to the archaeology of the Iron Age II in Judah.

If the destruction of Lachish Level IV occurred in 791/90 B.C., the construction of Level III therefore commenced, following Thiele's chronology, very early in the co-

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<sup>97</sup> The novel suggestion put forth by Yeivin (1979a: 161) that Jehoash died shortly after the Beth Shemesh debacle from combat wounds does not correlate with the 768/67 B.C. date for his death given in Thiele's (1965: 79-82, 205; 1977: 39-45, 75; 1983: 111-23, 217) chronology, but it does perhaps provide an explanation behind the vengeful actions of his troops at Jerusalem and, in our opinion, Lachish.

regency of Amaziah and Uzziah, shortly after 792 B.C. Uzziah, it would seem, initiated this rebuilding project in the wake of his father's defeat and temporary exile to Israel. Paleographic evidence from the palace C stairway seems to indicate that Uzziah erected podium C during this time or slightly later during his reign (Diringer 1953: 357-58 and Plate 48B:3; Lemaire 2004: 2115). This date also seems to fit the current majority view concerning the chronology of Level III. For example, Fantalkin and Finkelstein (2006: 23) argue that the close similarities of the Iron Age IIB pottery from Arad stratum X, IX and VIII with that from Lachish Level III demonstrate that the latter must have been founded very early in the eighth century B.C. Furthermore, the strength of the new Level III (not Level IV as argued by Ussishkin 2004a: 83) defences and possibly a new palace from which to exercise his power were probably among the features that enticed Amaziah to Lachish when he fled from Jerusalem.

The observation of an intermediate or transition pottery assemblage (Locus 4421 from Area GW) at Lachish that falls between Levels IV and III by Zimhoni (1997: 67, 141-56; 2004a: 1650, 1689-94; noted also by Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001a: 274), as well as an additional mid-eighth century B.C. "transitional" ceramic group at Tel 'Eton (Raine 2001b: 142; Zimhoni 1997: 173, 208) provides evidence that, while certain forms continued to evolve during the eighth century B.C., the reign of Uzziah, notably his later years, can now be securely identified archaeologically with the Lachish Level III ceramic horizon. As the data now stands, other mid-eighth century B.C. Judahite pottery assemblages must be sought only at the border sites of Gezer (dated to 734- 32 B.C.), Arad (Stratum X is perhaps associated with Uzziah; Mazar 1990a: 439) and Ḥorvat Teman (Kuntillet 'Ajrud) far to the south (dated to the late ninth or early eighth century

B.C.), where hegemony is debated. The presence of northern and coastal forms may further confuse the data at the latter site.

Despite the ongoing debate regarding the transition date of level IV to level III at Lachish, it, along with Beth Shemesh, are key sites (e.g., Ussishkin 2007b: 135) for determining the early to mid-eighth century B.C. Judahite pottery horizon. The evidence presented above strongly indicates that Lachish III was established very early in the coregency between Amaziah and Uzziah. The pottery from Tell es-Safi A3 closely parallels that of Lachish IV, but the exact date of the Safi destruction date and material is debated, with proposed destruction dates ranging from ca. 825-797 B.C. However, the forthcoming ceramic plates from Beth Shemesh 3 will provide an important window into a Judahite assemblage datable to ca. 800 B.C., during the reign of Amaziah. Equally important would be a clear destruction layer datable and clearly attributed to the Philistine incursions into Judah during the reign of Ahaz. The unearthing of such a collection would provide at least two chronological “bookends” to Uzziah’s reign. The relevant sites are Beth Shemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, Socoh (with its villages), Timnah (with its villages), and Gimzo (with its villages).

The above historical interpretation and chronological proposal contends that Uzziah built Lachish Level III shortly after 792 B.C. and subsequently ruled for the first 50 years of its existence. While conjectural, Uzziah in all probability rebuilt Judah’s destroyed towns and cities as well as his army before commencing Judah’s expansion into Philistia, which, accordingly, would have taken place considerably later in his reign. Consequently, pottery assemblages with close similarities to Lachish Level III, but containing a few transitional Level IV forms, along with typical Judahite artifacts such as

pillar figurines, currently provide our best cultural-ethnic indicators for eighth century B.C. Judahite settlement of coastal plain sites, barring of course the discovery of inscriptional evidence. The joint Hebrew University and Southern Adventist University excavations at Lachish, recently initiated by Y. Garfinkel, M. Hasel and G. Klingbeil (2013), will hopefully provide additional information regarding the status of Lachish during the tenth and ninth, as well as the eighth century B.C.; specifically, the dates and agents responsible for the construction and the collapse of Levels V and IV, as well as a date for the initial building of Level III.<sup>98</sup>

Tell Jezer; Tell el-Jazari; Tel Gezer; (Gezer)

### **Location and Identification**

The northern boundary of the Shephelah is marked by the foothills around Gezer (map reference 142500.140700) and Gimzo, which is the northernmost town of the Shephelah mentioned in the Hebrew Bible (Aharoni 1979a: 25-26, 99, 109; Rainey 1983a: 2; 1984a: 148; 2 Chr 28:18). The site of Gezer itself is not actually located in the Shephelah, but rather in the Ayalon Valley just north of the demarcation line running between the Sorek and Ayalon Valleys marking the Shephelah's northern extent, both topographically and politically.<sup>99</sup> The Ayalon Valley has its own regional and political history that is distinct from the Shephelah (Faust 2013a: 203-204). In fact, Gezer was assigned as a Levitical city and sits on the boundary of the tribal allotment for Ephraim (Aharoni 1979a: 300-304; Na'aman 1986b: 6-7; Joshua 16:3, 21:21). Yet, we have

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<sup>98</sup> See provisionally, Garfinkel, Hasel and Klingbeil (2013). David Ussishkin serves as a scientific advisor for this new field project, which should provide valuable continuity as well as informed insights.

<sup>99</sup> For a different view that includes Gezer in the Shephelah, see Na'aman (1986c: 11), Shavit (2000: 192) and references there.

chosen to present this important border site within the above geographical subheading because both archaeological and biblical evidence seems to link Gezer with the Shephelah and, more significantly, with Judah during the eighth century B.C. Viticulture probably dominated the economy of the area throughout antiquity as well as during more recent periods (Lance 1967: 36; Shavit 2000: 218). The large number of Iron Age II winepresses in the vicinity of Gezer may also explain the surprisingly high number of as many as 52 *lmlk* jars found at the site (Gilmour 2014: 56-58; Gitin 1990: 17-18 and n. 16; Vaughn 1999a: 191 and n. 31), as well as provide evidence for the possibility of their presence and utilization in a distinctly non-military role *before* Hezekiah's rebellion against Assyria.

Gezer is one of the few biblical cities that have been conclusively identified by inscriptions, found either on site or, as with Gezer, in the general vicinity. Over a dozen inscribed stones that read "boundary of Gezer" have been discovered in various locations surrounding the site. Additionally, the Semitic place name Gezer is clearly preserved in the Arabic toponym and the archaeological evidence largely fits the historical sources that mention the site. Accordingly, the identification of Tell Jezer with Gezer has never been seriously questioned since the nineteenth century (Aharoni 1979a: 115,123, 435; Macalister 1912 1: 45-46; Ortiz 2013: 469; Rainey 1984a: 148).

### **History of Excavation**

Gezer has been excavated by several expeditions.<sup>100</sup> From 1902-1905 and then from 1907-1909, R. A. S. Macalister conducted extensive excavations at the site that

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<sup>100</sup> For brief summaries of the history of archaeological research at Gezer, see Dever (1967: 47-54; 1973: 61-62; 1984: 206-7; 1993a: 497-98); Dever, Lance, and Wright (1970: 1-2); Maeir (2004b: 1-2); Ortiz (2009: 363-64; 2013: 469); and Ortiz and Wolff (2012: 6).

moved an enormous amount of material, but utilized extremely crude and primitive methodology, even for his own day (e.g.: Dever 1967: 50-52; 1973: 61; 1984: 206-7; 1993a: 497; Ortiz and Wolff 2012: 6). Macalister published his excavation in three large volumes (Macalister 1912) as well as a rather eccentric “popular” volume (Macalister 1906). Both of these sources have limited value apart from a register of (out of context) finds and often incorrectly measured and drawn architectural plates that frequently consist of unintentional stratigraphic palimpsests. His large workforce excavated a series of 10 m wide strip trenches down to bedrock; with the debris from each trench backfilling the former. This eliminated the need to move the enormous amount of excavated material any distance. Without any trained assistants, Macalister was simply unable to properly observe, measure and accurately record stratigraphy, walls and installations, levels of features or *in situ* finds. R-C. Weill conducted excavations at various tombs in the vicinity of Gezer in 1914 and again in 1924.<sup>101</sup> His field records were lost during World War II, but A. Maeir (2004b) published the finds after an exhaustive search of museums and collections. Most of the artifacts dated from the Bronze Age, but a few Iron Age IIB Judahite vessels were also included in the corpus (e.g., Maeir 2004b: 62). A. Rowe excavated at Gezer briefly in 1934 for the Palestine Exploration Fund, uncovering little of significance to the Iron Age II. Hebrew Union College (HUC), with the assistance of the Smithsonian Institution and Harvard University, launched another major excavation of the site from 1964-1974. Initially under the direction of G. Ernest Wright (1964-65), W. G. Dever (1966-71) soon assumed the position of director while

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<sup>101</sup> Maeir (2004b: 3) dates Weill’s two seasons of tomb clearances (apparently a total of nine tombs were excavated) to 1914 and 1924. The 1924 date for the final season differs from the 1921 date given in the title of his report but seems to represent the correct year that Weill returned to Gezer.

Wright moved into an advisory role. For the final campaigns, J. D. Seger (1972-74) became the third director of the project. Dever returned to Gezer to conduct two additional seasons of excavations in 1984 and 1990.<sup>102</sup> Finally, the joint Tandy expedition led by S. M. Ortiz from Southwest Baptist Theological Seminary and S. Wolff of the Israel Antiquities Authority, reactivated field and survey work at Gezer in 2006. This field project is ongoing as of 2016.<sup>103</sup>

### **Site Description and Discoveries**

Gezer is a 33 acre rectangular-shaped mound that occupies a strategic location guarding an important road linking the coast to the Hill Country of Benjamin and Jerusalem. The site can be described as two hills separated by a north-south saddle (Macalister 1912 1: 1; Ortiz 2013: 468; Ortiz and Wolff 2012: 4, 10). In actuality, the ancient topography of the site is difficult to discern due to the extensive Hellenistic leveling and disturbance of earlier strata and more so by Macalister's massive trenching and backfilling operations. Gezer's location, on an isolated hill along the western flank of the slopes leading to the Hill Country and on the northernmost ridge of the Shephelah, offers not only a superb view to the east and north, but a commanding view of the Coastal (Philistine and Sharon) Plain to the west, from Ashdod to beyond Dor (Lance 1967: 34-

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<sup>102</sup> Initially, the HUC staff aggressively projected a final report series of ten or eleven volumes (Dever, Lance, Bullard, Cole, Furshpan, Holladay, Seger and Wright 1971: 95), which was later (incorrectly) adjusted to seven volumes (Dever 1984: 208; 1985: 230 n. 29). While the project has not yet reached full publication, to date (2015) seven volumes have appeared (as well as final reports published in journals), along with substantial preliminary reports and focused studies covering the 1984 and 1990 seasons. Detailed reports relating to excavated fields from the 1964-1974 seasons that lack a final report (specifically Field III and the eastern part of Field VII, according to Ortiz and Wolff 2012: 6, 18 n. 1) have also been published (e.g., Dever 1984; 1985; 1986; 1993c; Holladay 1990; Younker 1991d).

<sup>103</sup> For preliminary reports of the current Tandy expedition, see Ortiz (2009; 2013) and Ortiz and Wolff (2012) with further references there.



35; Macalister 1912 1: 3-4; Maeir 2004b: 1). Similarly, Gezer is an important site at an ethnic, national and economic crossroads in the southern Levant; for its role as a border city as well as for its strategic location overlooking an equally significant road junction and regional hub commanding the entrance to the Ayalon Valley (Aharoni 1979a: 25-26, 30; Dever 1985: 217; 1993a: 496; Dorsey 1991: 181-89 and map 13).

Occupational evidence at Gezer extends from the Chalcolithic to the Mamluk periods with its *flourit* during the Bronze and Iron Ages and surveys of the surrounding vicinity demonstrate continuous settlement throughout the Iron Age (Ortiz 2013: 468; Ortiz and Wolff 2012: 4-5; Shavit 2000: 215-19). Befitting a city of considerable size and influence, Gezer boasts extensive remains dating to the late ninth and eighth centuries B.C. uncovered by every major expedition that worked at the site (e.g.: Dever 1985: 217; Dever, Lance, Bullard, Cole, and Seger 1974: 64-83; Dever, Lance and Wright 1970: 6, 32, 62, 64; Gitin 1990: 1-5, 13-18, 27-31; Ortiz 2009: 370-79). The Iron Age II is represented, in the nomenclature of the HUC expedition, by strata VIII, VII, VI and V (Dever 1985: 229, Table 1; 1986: 29, Table 1; Gitin 1990: 16-18, 38; updated by Ortiz and Wolff 2012: 8). Iron Age II fortifications were unearthed in Fields II, III, IV, VIII and XI (Dever 1993c: 38-50; Dever, Lance, Bullard, Cole, Furshpan, Holladay, Seger and Wright 1971: 108-12), while Fields VI and VII exposed domestic structures.

Stratum VIII (Tandy stratum 9), dating to the early tenth century B.C. is mainly represented by a destruction layer related to Siamun (1 Kgs 9:16; Dever 1993a: 504; 1993c: 35; Ortiz 2013: 470; Younker 1991d: 21, 32). Stratum VIIB-A (Tandy stratum 8) is highlighted by finds attributed to Solomon in Field III and comprises a number of monumental architectural remains. The most impressive of these is a six-chamber gate

house built in part of ashlar masonry and connected to a casemate wall buttressed by a glacis (Ortiz 2009: 374; 2013: 470-72; Ortiz and Wolff 2012: 10-12; Ortiz, Wolff and Arbino 2011).<sup>104</sup> The association of this gate complex, as well as the entire site of Gezer, with 1 Kgs 9:15-17 is justifiably frequently cited in the literature (e.g., Aharoni 1979a: 128, 306-7; Dever 1967: 60-61; 1984: 207; 1985: 217; 1986: 9, 26; 1990: 129, n. 17; 1992: 33\*; 1993a: 497; 1993c: 34-35; 2003: 268-72; Dever, Lance, Bullard, Cole, Furshpan, Holladay, Seger and Wright 1971: 112, 130; Dever, Lance, and Wright 1970: 5; Gitin 1990: 16; Holladay 1990: 24; Lance 1967: 39-40; Macalister 1912 1: 19-20; Ortiz 2009: 362, 378; 2013: 474; Ortiz and Wolff 2012: 4-5, 18; Ray 1993: 45, 48; Stern 1990: 12; Younker 1991d: 21, 32). Three phases of an adjacent public building, constructed just west of this gateway, were excavated by Macalister, then partially reexcavated and excavated further by Dever (1984: 213-17; 1985; 1986: 25-28; 1993a: 504-5; 1993c: 35; Younker 1991d: 22) and recently by Ortiz and Wolff (2012: 13-15; Ortiz 2009: 375-77; 2013: 472; Ortiz, Wolff, and Arbino 2011). The earliest phase (labeled Stratum VIIB by the excavators) of this structure, labeled Palace 10,000, probably functioned as an administrative center and barracks. This structure was built, along with an outer, two-chamber gatehouse down slope from the six-chamber gate complex, a short time after the latter was erected in the tenth century B.C. Dever (1990: 126) and Ortiz

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<sup>104</sup> This gatehouse was interpreted by Macalister (1912 1: 209-23) as a part of his "Maccabean Castle." The 1990 excavations at Gezer seemed to confirm Ussishkin's (1980: 10-17) position on the construction techniques and stratigraphy of the Iron Age IIA six-chamber gates (Dever 1990: 124-26; 1993c: 35-37; Holladay 1990: 25, 58; Ray 1993: 43-44, 47-48; Ussishkin 1990: 88 n. 3; Younker 1991d: 21 and see now Ortiz 2009: 374; Ortiz and Wolff 2012: 6-8) and thus also invalidate Yadin's (1980) rejoinder and Dever's (1986: 26-28, 32-33 n. 34) earlier objections. Nevertheless, A. Mazar (2007: 156, n. 2) argues against the built up and filled foundations espoused by Ussishkin, specifically at Megiddo (Level VA-IVB), due to the use of wooden beams and two courses of ashlar stones. Indeed, it does not seem likely that both of these elements would be incorporated into a substructure of a city gateway. The adjoining casemate wall runs both west and east for an undetermined distance from the gateway. Its relationship to the outer wall is still unclear.

(2013: 472) propose that the outer wall was (re)built at this specific time as well and remained in use until it was destroyed by Tiglath-pileser III in 734 B.C. Field II revealed part of a city wall and large ashlar found in a later (seventh century B.C.) context in Field VI may point to an earlier, albeit hypothetical, Iron Age IIA palace on the summit of the mound as well. A 14-17 m hewn oval shaped water system and reservoir was also identified and explored north of the Iron Age II gateway (Macalister 1912 1: 265-68; Ortiz 2013: 471). However, domestic remains for this level are not impressive, which either suggests that Gezer served primarily as an administrative center, like Lachish, or the exposure of this stratum was not broad enough to reasonably calculate the number of inhabitants of the city. The objects attributed to this stratum include the famous Gezer agricultural calendar and the pottery is characterized by red slipped and hand burnished ware. A heavy destruction layer was noted in Field III and attributed to Shishak in ca. 924 B.C. (Dever 1986: 18-20; 1990: 125, 128, n. 12; 1993a: 505; 1993c: 35; Gitin 1990: 38; Ortiz 2013: 472).

Stratum VIB (Tandy stratum 7) represents the ninth century B.C. The six-chamber gate was rebuilt as a smaller; four-chamber structure virtually identical to the Megiddo stratum IVA gate (Dever 1985: 223; 1993a: 505; Dever, Lance, Bullard, Cole, Furshpan, Holladay, Seger and Wright 1971: 118; Ortiz 2013: 472; Ortiz and Wolff 2012: 8, 18; Stern 1990: 21-22 and n. 29). Palace 8,000, which consisted of guardrooms and domestic units, replaced Palace 10,000 west of the six-chamber gate (Dever 1985: 229, Table 1; 1986: 29, Table 1; 1993a: 505). This city was possibly destroyed by Hazael late in the century (Ortiz 2013: 472; Ortiz and Wolff 2012: 18), but this level has also been interpreted as only an ephemeral phase (Ortiz and Wolff 2012: 6, 13-14).

Stratum VIA (Tandy stratum 6) represents the early to mid-eighth century B.C. and is characterized by the continued use of the four-chamber gate complex.<sup>105</sup> Renewed excavation by the Tandy expedition revised the floorplan of the former Palace 8000, which now comprises part of two large tripartite administrative buildings, named buildings A and B.<sup>106</sup> Measuring 15 x 15 and 20 x 20 meters respectively, these structures replaced the earlier domestic units of Stratum VIB. Building C, also exposed west of the four-chamber gateway and buildings A and B, was an industrial complex with an olive oil processing installation. A stone-lined bin set into a cobbled floor and an olive press identified its purpose and a complete Iron Age II juglet found in an area undisturbed by Macalister dated the structure to the eighth century B.C. This cluster of buildings, constructed along the rebuilt casemate wall, has been attributed to Uzziah as part of his expansion and development of border and foreign towns located in the direction of the Coastal Plain (Ortiz 2009: 372-77; 2013: 472; Ortiz and Wolff 2012: 14-15, 18).<sup>107</sup> The 18 x 36m administrative residence and barracks complex that Dever previously exposed in 1984 and 1990 dates to the late ninth-early eighth century B.C. Since Macalister excavated the western part of the building in its entirety, Dever was

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<sup>105</sup> Dever (1985: 229, Table 1; 1986: 29, Table 1, 31 n. 19) suggested that a four-chamber gate was in use during Stratum VI and the lower gatehouse probably remained in use during the eighth century B.C. as well as other architectural features in the vicinity. Conversely, the excavator of the gate complex in Field III lowered the date of the two-chamber Gezer gateway to the seventh century B.C. (Holladay 1990: 25). Holladay's interpretation was supported by Stern (1990: 12, 14 and n. 10, 20-22, and n. 29), on the basis of evidence at Dor; and by Ray (1993: 44), on the basis of similar evidence at Tel Batash. The Iron Age IIB gateway at Bethsaida provides an additional example of a four-chamber gatehouse. This interpretation was ultimately accepted by Dever (1993a: 505; 1993c: 35-37; 2012: 112-15) and is now also maintained by Ortiz and Wolff (2012: 6-8).

<sup>106</sup> Again, the nomenclature has changed from Field III (HUC and Dever excavations) first to Area A and now to Field E (Tandy expedition).

<sup>107</sup> The casemate wall extends west from the gate about 30 meters, and then continues as a rebuilt eighth century B.C. single wall for at least 17 meters with abutting single row retention walls and a massive revetment wall or glacis (Ortiz 2009: 372-74; Ortiz and Wolff 2012: 11; Ortiz, Wolff, and Arbino 2011).

only able to excavate the eastern third of the structure. Consequently, while the western part of the building was reexcavated, checked and redrawn, Dever's published plan remained to a certain extent conjectural (Dever 1985: 223, Fig. 4) until the Tandy excavations completed the exposure of this building and others to the west (Ortiz 2009: 375-77; Ortiz, Wolff, and Arbino 2011). The structure had two entrances along its northern wall, but closely resembles an Israelite four room house. Four pillars from the wall of the central court were preserved, as were the two fairly symmetrical side rooms and a 1 m diameter stone silo. An adjacent casemate room incorporated into the building produced over a dozen restorable late eighth century B.C. vessels, two ostraca, over 100 burned clay loomweights, inkwells, and several iron arrowheads with destruction layer debris that was securely attributed to Tiglath-pileser III in 734 B.C. (Dever 1984: 213-18 and n. 3; 1985: 223-26; 1986: 25-26, 31 n. 17; 1993a: 505; 1993c: 37; 2003: 269-70; Gitin 1990: 17; Younker 1991d: 23).<sup>108</sup> The data uncovered by the Tandy expedition has confirmed the 734 B.C. destruction date (Ortiz 2009: 365-67, 378; 2013: 472; Ortiz and Wolff 2012: 12, 16; Ortiz, Wolff, and Arbino 2011). The outer wall was also rebuilt during this time, along with a T-buttress against the wall overlaying a tenth century B.C. tower near the outer gate (Dever 1984: 212-13; 1986: 17-18). Recent excavation of an extensive eighth century B.C. domestic quarter (Fields VI and VII and Area B / Field W north of the western sector of Area A / Field E) exposed a very large (135 sq m) four-

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<sup>108</sup> The initial construction of Dever's (1984: 214-17; 1985: 226-27 and Fig. 6: 1-2) Palace 8,000 (phase 1) was dated by a few cooking pot rims from a sealed context beneath a wall stub to the late ninth or early eighth century B.C. This structure, while incorporating certain architectural details of two earlier buildings; a ninth century B.C. phase 2 structure (Dever 1985: 223) and a tenth century B.C. (Solomonic) Palace 10,000 (phase 3) residence and barracks (Dever 1985: 219-23 and Fig. 3; 1986: 26-27), has almost an entirely new floor plan. Nevertheless, aspects of the earlier buildings, repeatedly repaired and remodeled, continued to be used for over a two-hundred-year period before their final destruction in the late eighth century B.C. Dates for the Tiglath-pileser III destruction range from 734-32 B.C. See Cogan (2015) for the latest discussion. He dates the attack to 732 B.C.

room style elite building that may have parallels with the recently excavated “governor’s residency” at Tel ‘Eton (e.g., Faust and Katz 2015: 91-95 and figures 5-8). The structure had a rich assemblage of finds dated by the excavators to Tiglath-pileser III’s destruction of the site in 734 B.C. The differing sized four room houses revealed variations in prosperity at Gezer (Gitin 1990: 13-15; Ortiz 2013: 472; Ortiz and Wolff 2012: 6, 15-16; Ortiz, Wolff, and Arbino 2011, Figures 4-6). Finally, the pottery of this level reflects a mixture of Judahite and coastal forms, demonstrating the geopolitical status of the city as a border site (Gitin 1990; Ortiz 2009: 377-78; 2013: 472; Ortiz and Wolff 2012: 6). The attribution of the destruction of this stratum to Tiglath-pileser III in 734 B.C. partially rests on the basis of an Assyrian relief from Nimrud depicting his assault and capture of *Ga-az-ru* (Gezer; see conveniently Lance 1967: 43-44, fig. 5; *ANEP*: 129, 293 and Fig. 369; Dever 1984: 214; Tadmor 1994: 210-11, fig. 11 and references there). Field II domestic structures were also destroyed in the conflagration (Dever 1993a: 505).

Stratum V represents another largely transient phase dating to the late eighth and seventh centuries B.C. that includes some Assyrian elements. Gezer was subsequently destroyed in all probability by the Babylonians in 587/86 B.C.

### **The “Outer Wall” Controversy**

In antiquity, two roughly-parallel defensive walls surrounded Gezer. These two walls are commonly referred to in scholarly literature as the “Inner Wall” and the “Outer Wall.” There is general agreement that the inner wall dates to the Middle Bronze Age. Yet, the initial building date of the outer wall (labeled Wall 9011 in the HUC publications), as well as later phasing and rebuilding in various sections along its course in particular has been a topic of a considerable amount of scholarly debate and

controversy over the last 40 years. The HUC excavation team and their successors assign the outer wall to the Late Bronze Age II, with later rebuilding phases dating to the Iron Age IIA-B and the Hellenistic Period.<sup>109</sup> The line of the Outer Wall, which extends for approximately 1200 m and averages about 4 m in width, is preserved as high as 6.4 meters. Founded upon bedrock, this rampart encircles the city and runs along its upper slope. The Outer Wall undoubtedly had a long and complex history. Multiple soundings along its line reveal differing dates and phasing with rather frustrating regularity. Part of this stems from the fact that the lower courses of the outer wall cut into the Middle Bronze Age glacis of the inner wall, effectively eliminating any evidence of datable floors and walls adjoining the outer wall's inner face (Dever 1984: 210; 1986: 13-14, 24-25; 1990: 124). Moreover, Gezer's topography and the site's multiple (yet not comprehensive) destructions have conspired to further complicate the outer wall's historical development. Younker (1991d: 33) provides a summary explanation: "While the line of the wall was maintained from the time of its original construction, it appears that various sections were destroyed and rebuilt at different times. The destruction in some cases may have been the result of attacks from foes; in other cases, it was probably the result of a remodeling project. The wall at times was dismantled down to bedrock; on other occasions only the upper courses were affected. The net result was a complex architectural history. This complexity has undoubtedly led to the difficulties scholars

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<sup>109</sup> For the the dating and interpretation of this wall by the HUC staff, which amazingly cooresponds, for the most part, to the dating and phasing given by Macalister (1912.1: 236-56; Dever 1986: 9), see Dever, Lance, Bullard, Cole, Furshpan, Holladay, Seger and Wright (1971: 100-101), followed by several papers by Dever and others all defending this interpretation (e.g., Dever 1973: 62-63, 67-68; 1982: 24-27; 1984: 207-13, 217; 1985: 218-19; 1986; 1990: 123-27; 1993a: 505; 1993c: 47-50 and Figures 13, 16; Dever, Lance, Bullard, Cole, and Seger 1974: 35-43; Dever, Lance, and Wright 1970: 43-45; Ray 1993: 49-50; Younker 1991d: 30-33).

have had in interpreting a few isolated findings in their attempts to date the whole wall.”<sup>110</sup> Dever resolutely defends his interpretation of the outer wall in a series of publications dating back to 1973, after the first challenges to this dating were voiced. Since that time, much ink has been spilt on this subject; some of the more recent exchanges have regrettably been sprinkled with an inordinate amount of vitriolic language that need not concern us here.<sup>111</sup>

Critical assessments of Dever’s position derive primarily from scholars associated with Tel Aviv University. They dispute Dever’s conclusions, arguing rather for a late Iron Age IIA-B construction date (e.g., Barkay 1992: 308; Finkelstein 1981: 143-44; 1990: 111-14; 1994; Mazar 1990a: 243, 292, n. 12, 400, n. 17; Ussishkin 1990: 74-77) for the outer wall.<sup>112</sup> Dever responded to his critics in an article specifically addressed to this issue (Dever 1982) and returned to Gezer for an additional two seasons of excavation to resolve the dispute. While he and his colleagues working with him were convinced, his Israeli critics were not. Nevertheless, the important point here to note is that virtually all scholars involved in this dialogue recognize that this wall was either (re)built or

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<sup>110</sup> See also the comments of Dever (1993c: 43).

<sup>111</sup> Initially, the primary issue was a comparison and critique of two field methodologies; the architectural and the stratigraphic, which are summarized by Dever (1982: 33-34 with references). More recently, the underlying issue(s) have shifted, taking a more ideological and personal tone. Finkelstein in particular has published several papers that are very critical of Dever’s methodology and interpretations (e.g.: Finkelstein 1981; 1990; 1994). At the same time, Finkelstein also lowered the date of the outer wall and the six-chamber gate house in order to better align with his now widely discredited and increasingly marginalized “Low Chronology” perspective. For brief summaries of the debate, see the explanations by Dever (1993: 33), Ray (1993: 39-45), and Ortiz and Wolff (2012: 7).

<sup>112</sup> Finkelstein (1981: 144; 1990: 113), on the basis of similarities between the outer gatehouse and outer wall with Tell en-Nasbeh, suggested that both may have been constructed by Asa of Judah (1 Kgs 15:22; 2 Chr 14:5-6, 16:6).



(re)constructed during the Iron Age II, specifically the ninth-eighth century B.C. before the destruction of Stratum VI in 734-32 B.C.<sup>113</sup>

In 1984, Dever (1984: 212-13; 1986: 17-18) excavated a monumental T-shaped buttress wall belonging to his phase 2 of the outer wall and dated to the ninth century B.C. This massive wall reinforcement exhibited evidence of burning, which Dever related to Tiglath-pileser III in 734 B.C.

The 1990 excavations unearthed a stretch of the outer wall just west of the six-chamber gate house first discovered in 1984 (Dever 1986: 20-24), which filled the long assumed 200 m. long “breach” along the southern course of the outer wall (Dever 1993c: 38; Macalister 1912 1: 209; Younker 1991d: 23). The 1990 project also opened a new field (Field XI) and reexcavated Macalister’s “Tower VII” along the outer wall, and discovered that it was merely an offset in the wall. Eighth century B.C. pottery was recovered when bedrock was reached at just over a meter deep, dating an occupational and destruction phase, as well as possibly a reconstruction phase of this section of the outer wall to the Iron Age IIB. Destruction debris along the outer face of this wall probably reflect the Tiglath-pileser III destruction (Dever 1993c: 40-43; 2003: 269-70; Younker 1991d: 25-26, 32). As Younker (1991d: 28-32 and n. 21) and Dever (1993c: 41-49 and fig. 16) suggest, at some time during the ninth or eighth century B.C., the upper courses of the Outer Wall were rebuilt with large ashlar to create offsets and these were incorporated into the earlier wall line with depths of more than a meter (labeled as Wall 21000 by the excavators). However, the evidence from Square 22, specifically

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<sup>113</sup> For example, Ortiz and Wolff (2012: 7) note that: “Most (scholars challenging Dever’s interpretation) proposed that the outer wall dated to the Iron Age IIB...”

shows signs of replastering along the outer face during the ninth or early eighth century B.C., also indicating the earlier tenth century B.C. wall continued into the eighth century B.C., when new upper courses were added prior to the earthquake (Younker 1991d: 30-32 and n. 21). Therefore, one of four kings (Jehoash or Jeroboam II of Israel and Amaziah or Uzziah of Judah) emerges as the most likely candidate for the eighth century B.C. rebuilding, repairing, remodeling or the (re)construction of the outer wall.

### **The Earthquake Damaged Outer Wall**

During the 1990 excavation of the outer wall in Field XI, evidence of destruction caused by seismic activity was observed along a stretch of a phase of the Outer Wall (Wall 21000) possibly dating to the ninth-eighth century B.C. on the basis of the few sherds collected.<sup>114</sup> The excavators discovered a section of wall displaced and bowed 50 cm or more outward along its inner face with the tops of some wall stones tilting downslope at about a 10-20 degree angle. While Dever (1992; 1993c: 43-48), Hasel (1992), Ray (1993: 48), and Younker (1991d: 28-29) attribute this destruction to the earthquake recorded during Uzziah's reign (Amos 1:1; Zech 14:5), Fantalkin and Finkelstein (2006) dispute this evidence and suggest the shifting of walls was caused by long term pressure from the adjacent fill material. Seismic activity along the Rift leaves telltale signs. In Cisjordan, walls lean or fall to the north as the African plate moves to the south during an earthquake. On the other hand, in Transjordan, the Arabian plate moves to the north, causing walls to lean or fall to the south. Consequently, this great earthquake must be considered when shifting walls or collapsing structures associated

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<sup>114</sup> Ironically, Macalister (1912 1: 117) also noted evidence of later earthquake fall damage inside of an excavated Bronze Age tomb (Cave 28 II).

with eighth century B.C. levels devoid of any sign of violent conflagration are revealed at sites in the southern Levant.

## **Hinterland**

The Archaeological Survey Map of Gezer (82) has not yet been published, but a summary of the main findings of the project has appeared, which incorporates earlier surveys (Shavit 2000).<sup>115</sup> For our purposes, the survey area in the immediate vicinity of Gezer and to the south is the most relevant to our study. However, Shavit (2000: 191-95) designated precisely this southern sector, labeled here as his Unit III; the “southern hills” as a “low density” survey, preferring to focus his work to the north.<sup>116</sup> Nevertheless, the Ayalon Valley and the settlements along its northwest course are also significant as they comprise an important artery linking Jerusalem to Tel Ḥamid, Lod and the Mediterranean coast. During the Iron Age II, the Ayalon Valley and the hills to the south boasted, aside from Gezer, 14 settlements and was a period of “unprecedented settlement prosperity in the region” (Shavit 2000: 217-19) that totaled 51 sites, 42 of which yielded eighth century B.C. pottery. In Unit III, Shavit (2000: 219) suggests that the number of surveyed sites should probably be doubled in order to more accurately reflect the total number of Iron Age II settlements, netting a total of approximately 84 eighth century

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<sup>115</sup> The fully understandable reasons behind the lack of a comprehensive HUC survey for the Gezer region are explained by Dever (2003: 276-77). Survey work of the Tandy expedition is published only in preliminary form (Mitchell, Zan, Coyle and Dodd 2012), but Ortiz (2013: 468) has noted that the vicinity of Gezer was continuously occupied throughout the Iron Age II. Unfortunately, Shavit’s summarized presentation of his survey, which comprises an English translation of his Hebrew MA thesis, is poorly edited and his bibliography lacks many of the books and articles cited in the text. Consequently, extra caution must be taken when citing or drawing sweeping conclusions based upon data presented in this study.

<sup>116</sup> Shavit (2000: 191) defines a “low density” survey as selective rather than comprehensive with survey documentation limited to settlement sites.

B.C. sites south of an east-west line running just north of Gezer. Indeed, the settlement conditions at Gezer not only influenced, but directly affected the situation in the southern hills, which experienced a 30% increase in settlement density during the Iron Age II and was one of the most intensively settled areas in the region (Shavit 2000: 220-25).

In 1992, a brief excavation was carried out on architectural remains uncovered by rains in the fields of Kibbutz Gezer about 1 km north of Gezer (Hardin 1993). A 2.25 m wide wall with five courses of fieldstones was exposed for less than two meters before ending. This apparent outer wall, along with a flagstone floor and a poorly-preserved circular wall of one or two courses apparently comprise a wedge-shaped section of a circular building or tower with an approximate diameter of 7-11 m. Due to the lack of clear stratigraphy and a wide mixture of ceramic material at the site, the excavators cautiously date this structure to ninth-eighth century B.C., based upon a cooking pot and a *mlk* stamped jar handle found in a reasonably safe context. Hardin (1993: 65) interprets the structure as an agricultural tower and rules out a military function due to the thin walls and the minimal strategic value of the location. Similarly, an apparently isolated Iron Age II tower that was recently unearthed just east of Ramat Rahel also yielded a *mlk* stamped jar handle (Eisenberg and De Groot 2006). Perhaps both of these towers served multiple functions as agricultural watch towers for the royal vineyards that surrounded both sites as well as two of the many military observation towers erected and garrisoned by Judah during the monarchy.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> For Judah, see especially the studies by A. Mazar (1982a; 1982b; 1990b) and Faust (2012: 178-89). For Jerusalem, see the reports by Arubas and Goldfus (2005: 14-24; 2007: 14-17, 9\*; 2008: 1828) and Barkay, Fantalkin and Tal (2002). For parallels from central Transjordan, see Kletter (1991) and the survey results of Younker (1989; 1991a; 1991b) and cited references therein.

## Historical Questions

Much of the debate over Gezer concerns the initial construction of the “Outer Wall,” which Macalister (1912 1: 244-52) dated to his “Third Semitic” (1400-1000 B.C.), with subsequent rebuilding activities during the “Fourth Semitic” (1400-550 B.C.) and Hellenistic periods. This wall was reinvestigated at several points by both the HUC excavations and later by Dever (1984 and 1990). Dever’s (1973: 62-63, 67-68; 1984: 207-8; 1985; 1986: 32, n. 25; 1990; 1993a; 1993c) interpretation of the “Outer Wall” as a fortification line initially erected during the Late Bronze Age, followed by two or perhaps three rebuilding phases dating to the Iron Age IIA-B and Hellenistic periods. The fact that Dever’s chronological conclusions generally correspond with Macalister’s much more arbitrary dating contributed to the rejection of his conclusion by several Israeli colleagues (e.g., Finkelstein 1981; 1990; 1994; Ussishkin 1990).

However, for our purposes, the key question posed by Gezer is identifying the polity that controlled the site during the early and mid-eighth century B.C. The Hebrew Bible is silent, but provides important clues and aside from the inscribed mural of Tiglath-pileser III, Assyrian sources have nothing to add aside from placing Tiglath-pileser III in the general vicinity of Gezer in 734 B.C. Determining which polities held hegemony over Gezer during the eighth century B.C. has long been debated by scholars (e.g.: Rainey 1984a: 151); a problem that is compounded by Gezer’s status as a border site.

## Conclusions

The presence of a large number of *lmlk* jar handles at Gezer is significant.<sup>118</sup> Most scholars, notably Dever (1990: 125-26) and Gitin (1990: 17-18), interpret these seal impressed handles as evidence linking Gezer with Judah *after* the 734 B.C. destruction. Yet the historical sources are silent regarding any Judahite control over Gezer during Hezekiah's reign. Furthermore, Stratum VI (734 B.C.) is the only mid to late-eighth century B.C. destruction layer recognized at the site. I have discussed this issue elsewhere (Hudon 2010a: 34), observing that the six *lmlk* stamped handles found by HUC excavators were in unstratified fill above other unstamped *lmlk* style jars unearthed in the Stratum VI destruction layer. Nevertheless, the current consensus relating the *lmlk* stamps to the reign of Hezekiah led Gitin (1990: 17-18; 2006: 506-9) and others to assume that the stamped jars were deposited later at the site and not connected to the Tiglath-pileser III destruction. Regarding the introduction date of the *lmlk* stamped jars in Judah, I suggest that, at present, the evidence at Gezer leaves the question open. On the contrary, Gezer remains an ideal site, with a historically documented eighth century B.C. destruction layer dating over 30 years before Sennacherib, to determine whether *lmlk* stamped jars were first produced during the reign of Uzziah.

As noted above, the primary question to consider regarding Gezer during Uzziah's reign is whether evidence at the site that points to Judahite control at some point during the first three quarters of the eighth century B.C. The comments of Maeir (2004b:

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<sup>118</sup> On the basis of Dever, Lance, Bullard, Cole and Seger (1974: 86 and Plate 41.8), Gitin (1990: 17, n. 16) and Vaughn (1999a: 191 n. 31), supplemented by Gilmour (2014: 56-58), at least 39 *lmlk* stamped jar handles have been found at Gezer; 31 by Macalister and 8 by the HUC excavations. The total number could be as high as 52, which seems to represent Judahite hegemony over Gezer, rather than merely trade as an explanation for so many royal stamped jars at the site.

62-63) exemplifies the position of scholars that deny Judahite hegemony over Gezer during the reign of Uzziah or even Hezekiah. In his summary of the Iron Age IIB-C pottery from the Weill excavations, Maeir dates the small ceramic corpus to the time of Josiah on the basis that, in his view, Gezer was under Israelite control prior to 734 B.C. and subsequently under Assyrian hegemony until the third quarter of the seventh century B.C. Yet he recognizes that the pottery is typical of eighth and seventh century B.C. Judahite ware and exhibits neither northern nor Assyrian influence. Ussishkin (1990: 77) argues that Gezer was Israelite due to the extensive use of ashlar at the site during the Iron Age II period, while similar, carefully hewn stones are nearly absent from the important Judahite city of Lachish.<sup>119</sup> Dever (1990: 125-26) counters by noting the presence of a large number of *mlk* stamped jar handles at Gezer, which are clearly evidence of Judahite control during the eighth century B.C. It should be added that the abundance of ashlar in Iron Age (or later) contexts at Gezer almost certainly derive from Iron Age IIA (tenth century B.C.) levels and thus would originate from Solomonic or slightly later northern Israelite construction projects. In actuality, contrary to the position of Maeir and others, strong evidence exists to demonstrate that Gezer was Judahite during the mid-eighth century B.C. Despite his argument that associates the *mlk* jar handles to Hezekiah's control over Gezer, Gitin (1990: 17 and n. 9) posits that "Gezer may have come under the influence of Judah during Uzziah's expansion to the west."<sup>120</sup> Ortiz

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<sup>119</sup> Ussishkin's argument does not take into account the fine ashlar uncovered by Aharoni at Ramat Rahel nor by Kenyon in the City of David.

<sup>120</sup> Gitin (1990: 17, n. 9), following Aharoni (1979a: 347-52), bases his conclusion, in part, upon "an understanding of the boundaries of Judah, which excluded Gezer, and on the results of Uzziah's reign." Rainey (1984a: 151) reports the discovery of a shekel weight inscribed with *mlk* "for the king" along with the *mlk* stamped jars at Gezer. However, I was unsuccessful in my search for this weight in the various Gezer reports. A rim and shoulder of a storage jar from Level III with the incised inscription *bt mlk* "royal bath" was found at Lachish (Diringer 1953: 356-57; Tufnell 1953: Plate 49:1; Ussishkin 2014: 217-18).

(2009: 378; 2013: 472) suggests that Gezer Stratum VIA was not only under Judahite hegemony during Uzziah's reign, but functioned as one of Judah's secondary administrative cities, holding a status beneath Jerusalem and Lachish, during the mid-eighth century B.C. He argues that his exposure of an administrative and industrial building complex along the southern wall of Gezer reveals evidence of a resurgent Judah under Uzziah and correlates well with archaeological evidence from Beth Shemesh and Tell es-Safi (Ortiz 2009: 364-67). While he recognizes that Gezer is not specifically attested in biblical sources during the eighth century B.C., and the large lacunae in our knowledge regarding the changing geopolitical situation in this border region during the eighth century B.C. must be acknowledged, Ortiz (2009: 362) nevertheless, identifies several pieces of historical-geographical evidence that seem to indicate Judahite control over at least part of the Aijalon Valley during the reign of Uzziah. Actually, the omission of a place name in a biblical text, especially at a place where one expects it to appear, is often just as significant to the historian as when the toponym is attested. The case of Gezer vis-à-vis 2 Chr 26:6 and 28:18 is a case in point. These two texts in Chronicles give every indication of deriving from authentic annalistic sources that Chr had at his disposal and, to a certain degree, testify to Judahite control over Gezer *because* the city is not mentioned in either text. Uzziah's westward thrust into the northern Philistine plain to conquer Yavneh would be nearly unthinkable without first controlling Gezer and the lower Aijalon Valley with its strategic road to Jerusalem (Aharoni 1979a: 30, 59). The proximity of Gezer to the junction of the coastal highway that passes near Yavneh as well as the road east towards Jerusalem demands that it be subdued before advancing west onto the coastal plain (Rainey 1984a: 148). Similarly, the Philistine incursion into Judah



during the days of Ahaz overran the cities of Beth Shemesh, Aijalon, Socoh and Gimzo and their villages. These cities, listed along with Gederoth and Timnah,<sup>121</sup> represent the eastern extent of this expansion into Judahite territory. Gimzo is well north of the Aijalon Valley, while Aijalon is on the eastern edge of the valley itself, some 10 km east of Gezer. Beth Shemesh represents the extent of land lost by Judah in the Sorek Valley, while Socoh marks the newly-established border in the Elah Valley. In order for the Philistines to capture Aijalon, Gezer also had to capitulate, just as Timnah had to fall to secure the road to Beth Shemesh. The veracity of this text is greatly strengthened by the fact that each of these listed sites were occupied during the Iron Age IIB, but virtually abandoned during Chr's own (late sixth or fifth century B.C.) day. While this evidence has been recognized by both Aharoni (1979a: 326; Aharoni, Avi-Yonah, Rainey and Safrai 2002: 110-11, maps 145-46) and Rainey (1984a: 151; Rainey and Notley 2006: 228-29) as well as by many textual scholars; others, such as Na'aman (2003) reject its historicity. The absence of Gezer in Chr's report here is extremely significant because it reflects the likely geopolitical scenario that Gezer was *already* neutralized and under foreign control, either as an Assyrian military garrison (Aharoni 1979a: 368-79, 385, n. 136; Gitin 1990: 17-18; 1996: 81) or perhaps falling under Philistine control *after* the Assyrian army withdrew from the region.

Indeed, the fact that Gezer is missing from the list of cities that fell to the Philistine thrust into Judah via the western Negeb and the northern Shephelah (2 Chr 28:18), while other towns to the east of Gezer along the Ayalon Valley are recorded,

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<sup>121</sup> According to Rainey (Rainey and Notley 2006: 228), the Timnah mentioned in this text may refer to a village near Socoh (Horvat Tivna), but this site is located on the western slopes of the Hill Country and not in the Shephelah. His earlier view echoed that of Aharoni, who identified Timnah in this passage with Tel Batash (Aharoni, Avi-Yonah, Rainey and Safrai 2002: 110 and map 145).

seems to indicate that Gezer was already under Philistine control. Therefore, since the Philistine forces safely bypassed Gezer, the famous Assyrian relief depicting Tiglath-pileser III's conquest of Gezer may actually portray the city under Judahite control. The soldiers represented defending Gezer's walls both share similarities as well as differences to the Judahites of Lachish depicted some thirty years later (*ANEP*: 129, 293 and Fig. 369; Dever 1984: 214; Lance 1967: 43-44, fig. 5; Tadmor 1994: 210-11, fig. 11 and references there).<sup>122</sup> A rather cryptic text (2 Chr 28:20) may possibly allude to the sack of Gezer by Tiglath-pileser III as an act *directly* affecting Judah. Chr reports that Tiglath-pileser III came against him (Ahaz) and *afflicted him* instead of strengthened him. It is rather significant that Chr writes this statement in the same context as his report about the Philistine incursion into Judah, which included the capture of Aijalon east of Gezer. While remaining to a certain extent conjectural, it is entirely possible that the vulnerability of Judah *after* the fall of Gezer to the Assyrians in 734 B.C., coupled with the weakness of the kingdom in the immediate wake of the Syro-Ephraimite War, presented the Philistines cities with an opportunity not only to recover territory previously lost to Uzziah, but also to take over areas of the eastern Shephelah and Negeb as well (Aharoni 1979a: 371-76). However, commentators have conflicting views of this text (see for example Dillard 1987: 223; Japhet 1993: 905-907; Klein 2012: 394-95, 402-

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<sup>122</sup> The fact that the successful subjugation of Gezer warranted inclusion among the wall murals of Tiglath-pileser III, king of Assyria, yet was passed over in silence by Chr demonstrates his selectivity in choosing historical material from his sources that best exemplify and support his theological message. Thus, Chr did not invent, but rather selectively preserved specific historical information from the annalistic sources at his disposal for inclusion into his account. Details from the Gezer mural, such as the longer hairstyles and clothing similar to those worn by Assyrians, as well as the rather generic depiction of a fortified city, seem to indicate that the Assyrian artist drew his inspiration from accounts of the battle rather than from personal, on site observations as was most likely the case at Lachish some thirty years later.

404; Myers 1965b: 163; Na'aman 2003; Williamson 1982: 348-49; Isaiah 14: 28-29).<sup>123</sup>

Thus, Chr provides a summary statement regarding the actions of the Philistines against Judah not as preceding, but in response to or in the wake of the assault of Tiglath-pileser III on Gezer. The predominately Judahite material culture of the site during the eighth century B.C. (Stratum VI) recovered by the HUC, Dever, and Tandy excavations provide vital historical information only alluded to by Chr (2 Chr 28:20) regarding Tiglath-pileser III's destruction of Gezer and, more importantly, Judah's prior control over the city.

Tell er-Rumeillah; 'Ain Shems; Tel Beth-Shemesh; (Beth Shemesh)

### **Location and Identification**

Tel Beth Shemesh (map reference 147680.128680) is located in the Sorek Valley 20 km (12.5 miles) west of Jerusalem near the modern town of Beth-Shemesh. A nearby Arab village named 'Ain Shems preserves the ancient Semitic toponym for Beth Shemesh or "House (Temple) of the Sun." In Joshua 19:41, the the town was called 'Ir-Shemesh or "City of the Sun." Various biblical references locate the city near Zorah, Eshtaol and Ekron and later sources also place the ancient town in that vicinity. Accordingly, the location of ancient Beth-Shemesh with Tell Rumeileh has never been seriously challenged (Bunimovitz and Lederman 1993: 249; 1997: 43; Rainey 1984a: 108).

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<sup>123</sup> I must emphasize that this text does not imply that Tiglath-pileser III conducted an extensive campaign against western Judah, as argued by Blakely and Hardin (2002), especially in the light of Ahaz's earlier submission, offer of tribute and meeting with the Assyrian king (2 Kgs 16:7-9; 2 Chr 28:16).

## **History of Excavation**

Beth Shemesh and its vicinity was initially excavated by Duncan Mackenzie for the Palestine Exploration Fund from 1911-1912. A second expedition with a methodology inferior to that of Duncan was led by Elihu Grant of Haverford College from 1928-1933. Grant exposed large areas of the site and G. Ernest Wright assisted in writing part of the final publication. Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman of Tel Aviv University resumed excavations at Beth Shemesh in 1990 and this work is ongoing, although the final report for the Iron Age (1990-2000) has been published (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2016). The hinterland of Beth Shemesh was surveyed and partially published by a team led by Y. Dagan (2010; 2011b), partly in response to encroaching urban development.

## **Site Description and Discoveries**

Beth Shemesh is located at the strategic junction of the Sorek Valley and the north-south transversal road linking the valleys of the Shephelah together (Dagan 2011b: 258). The account of the five Amorite kings defeated by Joshua (10:9-11) describes their flight along this very route. Equally notable is the role of Beth Shemesh as a fortified border town; a “symbol of power” and a “marker of sovereignty” (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2009: 127), situated at the boundary between the inner coastal plain (Philistia) and the Shephelah (Judah) and guarding the approach to the Hill Country of Judah (1 Sam 6:12). During the ninth and early eighth century B.C., the city was also situated near Judah’s border with Israel to the north (Joshua 15:10); a fact illustrated in the biblical accounts (2 Kgs 14:7-14; 2 Chr 25:17-24) that describe a battle between Amaziah of Judah and Jehoash of Israel that occurred at Beth Shemesh in Judah (2 Kgs 14:11; 2 Chr

25:21). Beth Shemesh, along with the neighboring sites of Migne and Batash comprise what Bunimovitz and Lederman (2006: 420-24; 2011: 35, 48-49) refer to as the “Sorek Valley seesaw.” This term represents the various cultural and political changes that characterized this border region throughout the Iron Age. For our purposes, Beth Shemesh is of particular interest in two aspects: The destruction date and agent of the Iron Age IIA city (Level III), which Bunimovitz and Lederman (2009: 136) date to ca. 790 B.C. and the polity and circumstances behind the establishment and development of the Iron Age IIB city (Level II). Utilizing data from all three excavations at the site, Bunimovitz and Lederman (1997: 75; 2003: 7-20; 2006; 2011: 40; 2008: 1645-48) show that the Iron Age IIA city included impressive fortification walls,<sup>124</sup> a monumental cruciform-shaped subterranean water reservoir with an entrance passageway constructed of large, dressed stones placed in header and stretcher style, at least three public buildings, including a tripartite storehouse, and a group of eleven *lmlk* style (pre *lmlk*) storage jars unearthed in an adjacent multi-room storage building. While constructed during the period of the United Monarchy, Bunimovitz and Lederman (2001: 145-47; 2006: 420-24; 2009: 127-36) argue that the emergence of Beth Shemesh into a fortified border city and administrative center during this time occurred under a more complex set of circumstances than the biblical text implies. Several agents and corresponding dates have been suggested regarding the destruction of this city, including Hazael, the campaigns of an eighth century B.C. Assyrian king, the Philistine incursions during the

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<sup>124</sup> Wightman’s (1990: 113) interpretation of the field notes of Mackenzie, Grant and Wright, as well as the biblical account of Rehoboam’s fortification of nearby Zorah (2 Chr 11:10) led him to suggest that ninth century B.C. Beth Shemesh was unfortified, while during the eighth century B.C., new defenses were constructed. His conclusions have been seriously challenged by the renewed excavations.

reign of Ahaz (2 Chr 28:18),<sup>125</sup> or the earthquake during Uzziah's reign (Amos 1:1; Zech 14:5). Bunimovitz and Lederman (2006: 419-20; 2009: 128, 136; 2011: 43-45) dismiss seismic activity as the agent, in part, by the tell tale evidence of human instigated looting and destruction. Based chiefly on the transitional (Lachish IV-III) pottery recovered from this destruction layer, the date this event occurred was narrowed to ca. 790 B.C., which seems to link this event to the battle between Amaziah of Judah and Jehoash of Israel (2 Kgs 14:11; 2 Chr 25:21; Bunimovitz and Lederman 2016: 50, 382). It is worthy to note that these biblical accounts do not specifically state that Beth Shemesh was sacked and burned at this time, only that Judah was defeated and that Amaziah was captured at the site.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, that Beth Shemesh was pillaged and burned by the victorious Israelite army, much in the same manner as the looting and destruction inflicted by Amaziah's slighted Israelite mercenaries upon some of Judah's towns before the battle and subsequently by Jehoash on Jerusalem (2 Kgs 14:13-14; 2 Chr 25:13, 23-24) and possibly Lachish (see below) is a reasonable assumption. On the other hand, an unattested ninth century B.C. assault by Hazael is also a plausible explanation for the Level III destruction (2 Kgs 12:17-18) and actually may provide a better chronological fit to the Iron Age IIA-B transition period suggested by Katz and Faust (2014). However, Bunimovitz and Lederman (2011: 44-45) argue that the Beth Shemesh Level III assemblage "is somewhat later than the destruction assemblage from Stratum A3" at Tell

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<sup>125</sup> Many scholars doubt the historicity of this account. See, for example Zukerman and Shai (2006: 732 and n.15 with references). The suggestion by Na'aman (2003) that this account is nothing more than ideological fiction without historical value is purely conjectural. Isaiah (9:12) seems to provide a contemporary collaborative witness to this very action against Judah's western border. See further the comments of Niemann (2013: 261, n. 68).

<sup>126</sup> Wightman (1990: 113) suggests that Amaziah used Beth Shemesh as his field headquarters before his military confrontation with Jehoash of Israel, which took place near the city.

es-Safi-Gath based upon typological and chronological similarities with the transition between Lachish Levels IV and III and the early days of Level III.

Bunimovitz and Lederman do not pointedly discuss evidence as to when the Level II city was constructed. They state that the settlement dates to the second half of the eighth century B.C. (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2003: 5; 2008: 1645), but date the founding of the same stratum to ca. 790 B.C. or, more cautiously, during the first half of the eighth century B.C. (implying that reoccupation and rebuilding efforts began shortly after the Level III city was destroyed with no occupational gap; Bunimovitz and Lederman 2009: 116; 2016: 454). While poorly preserved due to post-depositional processes, which included squatter occupations during the seventh and/or the sixth centuries B.C., the Byzantine and the Islamic periods, the Level II city boasts extensive olive oil installations that are not confined to an “industrial zone” but rather located throughout the residential areas (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2008: 1648). Intriguingly, no city wall can be ascribed to this level<sup>127</sup> nor do the public buildings seem to exhibit clear signs of being rebuilt (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2008: 1648; 2009: 136-37; 2011: 46-47). In their concluding comments about the eighth century B.C. city, Bunimovitz and Lederman (2006: 424; 2008: 1648; 2009: 136-39) argue that “(t)he absence of a city wall at Level 2 at Beth-Shemesh, if not the result of post-depositional processes, may reflect expansionist trends of the kings of Judah in the eighth century B.C.E.

Reconstitution of a fortified Judean-oriented town at the long-abandoned neighboring site

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<sup>127</sup> See the comments by Bunimovitz and Lederman (2001: 121-22) with earlier references. A poorly-preserved two-chamber structure named the ‘North Gate’ and an adjacent plaza has been dated to Level II, but the excavators suggest an association with the water reservoir complex rather than to perimeter fortifications. No walls were found attached to or in the vicinity of this structure (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2001: 134-44), which perhaps served as a ceremonial entryway.

of Tel Batash-Timnah (Stratum III) renders it conceivable that Judah's border with Philistia shifted west, leaving Beth-Shemesh well within Judean territory." In other words, during the eighth century B.C., Timnah (Tel Batash) assumed the previous administrative and economic role that Beth Shemesh had previously held for Judah. The destruction of Level II has been attributed to the campaign of Sennacherib in 701 B.C. (Bunimovitz and Lederman 1997: 76-77; 2003; 2006: 116, 139; 2008: 1648; 2011: 48; Dagan 2011b: 258) and the ceramic horizon associated with this destruction level apparently corresponds to that of Lachish level III.<sup>128</sup> Also worthy of note are the more than 60 *mlk* stamped jar handles and fifteen private seal impressions from royal officials recovered from Level II, which lends support to an initial non-military purpose for these jars. Like Lachish Level III, the identity of the builder of Beth Shemesh Level II seems to point to Uzziah for several reasons.<sup>129</sup> First, to leave such an important border city in ruins for any length of time would be unthinkable for a king of Judah. Secondly, the subsequent loss of status for Beth Shemesh as a strategic border town seems to be reflected in the lack of fortifications and in the lack of desire to reuse the old public structures. These factors appear to correspond well with Judah's westward expansion

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<sup>128</sup> On this subject, see Wightman (1990) and especially the extended discussion of Bunimovitz and Lederman (2003: 4-7) with references cited therein. For the larger chronological and historical issues behind the contested date of the final destruction of Beth Shemesh, see the discussion above which cite Aharoni and Aharoni (1976); Albright (1932); Faust (2005a; 2013); Garfinkel (1990); Katz and Faust (2014); Ussishkin (1976; 1977); and Zimhoni (1997: 200-202). Beth Shemesh Level I represents a brief seventh or sixth century B.C. attempted reoccupation by returning Judahites. The date and circumstances which brought this squatter settlement to an end is debated (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2003; Fantalkin 2004).

<sup>129</sup> In their earlier summary report, Bunimovitz and Lederman (1997: 48-50, 76) surmised that either Amaziah or Uzziah constructed the two-chambered gate-like structure and that the city remained fortified until its destruction in 701 B.C. by Sennacherib. They subsequently abandoned the latter position (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2006: 424; 2009: 137-39). See Bunimovitz and Lederman (2016: 50-53) for their view on the historicity of 2 Chr 26:6 and the alternative scenario that Hezekiah, not Uzziah, fortified the cities of the Sorek Valley, which they now believe seems more tenable.



into Philistia under Uzziah, which, while diminishing Beth Shemesh's importance as an administrative center and border city, also maintained its economic value as a royal olive oil production center under Judahite (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2011: 47), not Assyrian (as suggested by Finkelstein and Na'aman 2004: 74), governmental organization and control.

### **Hinterland**

The Ramat Beth Shemesh Regional Project, an intensive survey of an area east and south of Tel Beth Shemesh, was initiated in 1990 in anticipation of large scale urban development of the locale and was recently published in two comprehensive volumes (Dagan 2010; 2011b).<sup>130</sup> The survey area falls into the as yet unpublished Survey of Israel, map of Bet Shemesh (103), and also encroaches along a roughly 1 km strip of the adjacent Map of Nes Harim (104), to the east (Weiss, Zissu and Solimany 2004). Altogether, the survey yielded 404 ancient sites (Dagan 2010: 4). During the eighth century B.C., the area was intensively settled with six cities and towns (Beth Shemesh, Ḥorvat Zanoah 1 and 2, Khirbat el-'Alya, and Beit Nattif), and forty five villages and farmsteads as well as scores of other sites. Dagan (2011b: 258) notes that data for the area immediately surrounding the tel and to the east is fragmentary due to the development of the modern city of Beth-Shemesh after 1948. However, despite this formidable methodological limitation, Dagan (2011b: 258-63) notes: "In summary, our study of the Ramat Bet Shemesh region has revealed that it was densely populated during

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<sup>130</sup> The survey team excavated 205 sites within the survey area, but only 100 of these were published in the survey report (Dagan 2010: 3-4).

the ninth to eighth centuries B.C.E.”<sup>131</sup> He also remarks that: “Analysis of the data suggests that the westward expansion of settlement from the Shephelah to the coastal plain was a result of the strengthened geopolitical position of the rulers of Judah, which began in the middle of the ninth century B.C.E. and peaked during King Hezekiah’s reign in the last quarter of the eighth century B.C.E. The consolidation of central government and the increase in population obliged the Kingdom of Judah to seek further living space and gain control of fertile lands to the west of the Shephelah.” This conclusion echoes that of Kletter (1996: 43). Dagan (2011b: 258-59, Table 14.10 and Fig. 14.11) reports that the survey found Iron Age IIB pottery at 272 sites.<sup>132</sup>

Another survey, to the east of Beth Shemesh, was conducted and published by Dani Weiss, Boaz Zissu and Gideon Solimany (2004: 13\*-14\*, 20\*, 117, Map 2). Most of the area surveyed comprises the western slopes of the Judean Hill Country with steep slopes and narrow valleys. The survey area covers only a narrow strip of the Shephelah on its western edge and this 1 km wide margin was also incorporated into the Ramat Beth Shemesh Project discussed above, but the survey results published here (Weiss, Zissu and Solimany (2004: 8\*-11\*; Dagan 2011b: 5, 10) did not distinguish pottery from Iron Age IIA-B pottery and finds at some sites are simply labeled as “Iron Age.” However, the authors noted the complete absence of clearly-datable Iron Age I pottery. Iron Age material was recorded at 43 sites and eight additional sites were “tentatively attributed to

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<sup>131</sup> For example, Dagan (2011b: 260; 319-40) notes the intensive settlement surrounding Ḥorvat Zanoah and further demonstrates that the large number of agricultural installations and other surface finds relating to grain, wine and olive production in the Shephelah clearly indicates its importance as a breadbasket for Judah.

<sup>132</sup> Dagan (2011b: 258) defines Iron Age IIB pottery as paralleling that from Lachish IV-III. Consequently, the data he provides represents both ninth and eighth century B.C. settlement sites. On the other hand, there is no reason to doubt that occupation at the earlier sites continued throughout the eighth century B.C. as well.

this period.” Fourteen Iron Age II sites were noted as well as over 20 Iron Age III sites (Weiss, Zissu and Solimany 2004: 13\*-14\*). The survey area included settlements, farmsteads, forts, watchtowers and other isolated structures. Of special interest are Ḥorvat Zanoah (sites 85 and 86), a large Iron Age II site on the western edge of the survey and eastern edge of the Shephelah. A *lmk* jar handle was found at Site 21, which included a winepress, circular structures (possibly watchtowers and terracing, and the well preserved building remains at Ḥorvat Darban (site 103), where a cave probe by Aharoni (1963b) uncovered a *lmk* handle. Two Iron Age II fortresses were surveyed. At Site II, a 30 x 30-meter rectangular casemate fort, surveyed earlier by Kochavi (1972: 41, Site 28) was restudied. A larger (55 x 100 m) casemate fort was surveyed nearby at Site III. Both sites are located in the southeast sector of the survey area on prominent hilltops along the slopes of the Judean Hill Country and may have been included in the communication network set up by the Kingdom of Judah at least as early as the ninth century B.C. and remained in use until the end of the monarchy (A. Mazar 1982a). Locations with Iron Age II remains (here spanning the tenth-eighth century B.C.), include Sites 21, 31, 75, 84, 85, 86, 103, 116 (a large Iron Age II agricultural center with many installations and terracing over an extensive area), 141, 152, 153, 170, II, III. The following sites are only designated as Iron Age: 13, 25(?), 30, 43, 52(?), 55, 114(?), 133, 155(?), 165, 174(?), 190, 200(?), 202(?), 208(?), and 231. While not directly tied to evidence for or against an expansion of Judah to the west, comparing the density of sites here with Iron Age IIB sites farther west, in the Shephelah and beyond, is significant.

## Conclusions

The importance of Beth Shemesh is the *terminus post quem* of the pottery horizon near the beginning of Uzziah's reign as well as what the material evidence found in Level II implies about Judah's territory and strength during the eighth century B.C. The rather intensive "cottage" olive oil industry of the city and the lack of a city wall seem to indicate a resurgent Judah that expanded her geopolitical periphery to Timnah, Ekron and sites farther west, which, in turn, diminished the strategic and military importance of Beth Shemesh and temporarily rendered the fortification of the city unnecessary. Likewise, the apparent lack of public buildings datable to this stratum seem to provide evidence that the city possibly lost its administrative status during the eighth century B.C. and was relegated to a more agriculturally-focused population center among Judah's network of cities. Furthermore, the apparent absence of any evidence of violence wrought by Philistine incursions may be due in part to Level II's lack of fortifications, suggesting a relatively bloodless capitulation to Philistine forces as well as later Judahite reoccupation under Hezekiah. Nevertheless, the unfortified city that presented itself to Sennacherib did not prevent his forces from destroying Beth Shemesh again (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2003; 2009: 136-39; 2011: 48; Fantalkin 2004; Wightman 1990: 96, 110-13). The intensive survey and excavations conducted by the Beth Shemesh Regional Project south and east of Beth Shemesh proper are important as they exemplify the intensive settlement of the area during the eighth century B.C. and support the position that Judah launched her expansionist policies during the reigns of Uzziah and Hezekiah in order to provide additional *Lebensraum* for her population in addition to controlling the excellent farmland of Philistia's hinterland as well as her strategic trade outlets.

## Tell el-Batashi; Tel Batash; (Timnah)

### **Location and Identification**

The biblical description of the northern border of Judah (Joshua 15:10-11) places the city of Timnah in the vicinity of Tel Batash (map reference 141500.132500), a 200 x 200 m square mound located on the southern bank of the Sorek Brook. After some earlier topographical confusion regarding the ancient sites along the Sorek Valley, Naveh's (1958) identification of Ekron with Tel Migne eventually led nearly all scholars to equate Timnah with Tel Batash (Aharoni 1958b: 28-29; 1979a: 49, 124, 256, 270, 274, 312, 389, 442; Kallai 1958: 145-46; 1986: 123; Kelm and A. Mazar 1995: 4-7; A. Mazar 1994: 247-49; 1997a: 3-6; Rainey 1984a: 237) and, especially after the discovery of the Ekron Inscription at Tel Migne, the identification seems secure. The Semitic root of the name Timnah derives from (תִּנָּה) "allotted" or "portion" (Shai 2009: 17).

### **History of Excavation**

Tel Batash was excavated for 12 seasons (1977-1989) by an expedition directed by Amihai Mazar (Hebrew University) and George L. Kelm (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary). The excavation has been fully published (e.g., for the Iron Age: A. Mazar 1997a; 1997b; A. Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001a; 2001b).

### **Site Description and Discoveries**

Tel Batash is a ten-acre site at its base, which narrows to 5.6 acres at its summit (A. Mazar 1997a: 3). The excavators suggest that the tenth century B.C. city (Stratum IV) came to an end, possibly at the hands of Shishak (A. Mazar 1994: 256; 1997a: 8; A. Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001a: 278-79) and existed only in ruins for an extended period

until a new city was established. This new city (Stratum III) was established early in the eighth century B.C. (A. Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001a: 277, 279-81) and introduced major changes in the urban planning of the site (A. Mazar 1997a: 258-59). The pottery horizon of Timnah Stratum III seems to parallel Level III at Lachish, suggesting that the two cities were rebuilt and occupied at roughly the same time (A. Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001a: 157-60). The excavators have assigned the founding of the Stratum III city to Uzziah (A. Mazar 1994: 256-57; 1997a: 255-56; A. Mazar and Kelm 1995: 118; A. Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001a: 279-80). It is important to add that in some areas, the excavators discerned two phases of Stratum III (phases B and A). The transition between these two phases has been attributed either to the eighth century B.C. earthquake (Amos 1:1; Zech 14:5) or the Philistine conquest during the reign of Ahaz (Kelm and A. Mazar 1995: 131; A. Mazar 1997a: 150). When Stratum III was established, a large gate complex was erected, and a massive stone wall was built to protect the city. The construction of such monumental fortifications was clearly the result of royal initiative (Kelm and A. Mazar 1995: 118-19; A. Mazar 1997a: 256-57). The Stratum III town was well planned and fortified with a revetment wall near the base of the tell connected to a massive 3 m wide main defensive wall by an earthen glacis (A. Mazar 1997a: 186-87). The stretch of wall south of the gate consisted of two parallel walls creating a 7 m wide defensive system. The equally massive Stratum III outer gate and six-chamber inner gateway was rather poorly preserved, but its general plan, which included a large piazza, was clear (A. Mazar 1997a: 111-28) and comparable to the Stratum IV-III gate complex and the Palace-Fort gate at Lachish (A. Mazar 1997a: 256-57; Tufnell 1953: plates 114-15; Ussishkin 1983: 147-51; 2004a: 504-689; 768-870), which strongly associates the site

with Judah. More importantly, architectural similarities with contemporary Judahite sites, specifically a massive outer gate with two towers protecting the approach to the main gateway into the city, also exist with Lachish IV-III and with the “Large Tower” and “Extra Tower” along the eastern edge of Jerusalem’s Ophel. The Large and Extra Towers were discovered and later named after Sir Charles Warren, who first explored the complex through a series of underground shafts and tunnels or “galleries” during the years 1867-1870. E. Mazar notes that Warren opened more than 50 of these shafts and corresponding tunnels in the Ophel area in order to establish ancient architectural remains and the topography (E. Mazar 2011: 31-35). The Chr recounts that Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, the Valley Gate ועל-המקצוע (and at the *angle of the wall*; *BDB*: 893a) and fortified them (2 Chr 26:9; Neh 3:19-20, 24-25).<sup>133</sup> Indeed, Eilat Mazar recently equated the “Extra Tower” as one of Uzziah’s building projects (E. Mazar 2011: 29, 119-27, and Figures on 145-46; E. Mazar and B. Mazar 1989: 58-59 and plans 2 and 7). At this location, the eastern wall of Jerusalem followed the topography of the Ophel along a distinctive NE-SW course angle from the City of David to the Temple Mount, making her identification quite plausible.

During the eighth century B.C., Tel Batash exhibited excellent town planning, complete with impressive public buildings, residential areas and a barracks (Kelm and A. Mazar 1995: 127; 136). An administrative complex of at least 1200 square meters was architecturally integrated into the gate and fortification system in Area H and may have served as the administrative center or governor’s residence and shares some features with

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<sup>133</sup> Both Benjamin and Eilat Mazar identify the Ophel towers as “the tower projecting out from the upper house (palace) of the king at the court of the guard” and equate the associated gateway with the “Water Gate” (Neh 3: 25-26; E. Mazar and B. Mazar 1989: IX-X; E. Mazar 2011: 89-90).

Palace 10000 at Gezer (Kelm and A. Mazar 1995: 129-31; A. Mazar 1997a: 142-50, 260). Another large building in Area D had a tripartite division of rooms, one subdivided into four smaller rooms with thick plastered floors littered with at least 30-40 smashed *lmlk* storage jars with 12 *lmlk* seal impressions, used in the defensive preparations at the site (Kelm and A. Mazar 1995: 131-35; A. Mazar 1997a: 187-93, 260; A. Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001a: 191-97). The end of Stratum III, as evidenced by the widespread, but not total destruction of the town and of the buildings discussed above has been attributed to Sennacherib's campaign in 701 B.C. (*ANET*: 288; Kelm and A. Mazar 1995: 131-38; A. Mazar 1994: 258-59; A. Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001a: 280-81).

## **Conclusions**

Timnah (Tel Batash) is an important site to assess the historical credibility of 2 Chr 26-28 and provides archaeological evidence that seems to strongly corroborate Chr's account of a Judahite city captured by the Philistines during the reign of Ahaz. A. Mazar (1990a: 535; 1994: 256-58; 1997a: 8, 255-57; Kelm and A. Mazar 1995: 5, 118-19; A. Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001a: 279-80; see also Bierling 1992: 196) suggests that Batash was rebuilt as a Judahite fortified town under royal initiative by Uzziah after Judah's conquest of the surrounding area in part due to the archaeological evidence, but also due to Chr's account that the Philistines reclaimed Timnah during the reign of Ahaz (2 Chr 28:18; Aharoni, Avi-Yonah, Rainey, and Safrai 2002: 110, maps 142 and 145; Rainey and Notley 2006: 217-29). Noting that Chr's account of Uzziah's expansion into Philistia "appears to be exaggerated," A. Mazar nevertheless concludes that the account "may provide evidence of some territorial expansion of Judah during Uzziah's reign. Such an expansion probably enabled Judah to annex the region of the lower Sorek



Valley, and permitted the building of Timnah as a fortified city on the western border of Judah. This action may have been possible thanks to the weakness of Ekron during this period (A. Mazar 1994: 257; A. Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001a: 279-80). Since A. Mazar recognizes, yet doubts the plausibility that Migne was under the control of Judah during Uzziah's reign, he suggests that Judah's newly established border ran just west of Timnah, which he concludes functioned as a fortified border town. However, A. Mazar provides important evidence that supports the historical reliability of 2 Chr 28:18, which purports that Philistines gained control of Timnah and five other towns in Judah during the reign of Ahaz. The only archaeological evidence currently available to validate this report comes from this site. Aside from the clearly Judahite *lmlk* jars, which may have been brought by Hezekiah's troops when he occupied Timnah just prior to 701 B.C., the pottery and other finds from the destruction layer of Stratum III, according to A. Mazar, is a mixed coastal (Philistine) and Judahite assemblage (A. Mazar 1994: 257-59; A. Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001a: 156-60). A. Mazar cautiously accepts Chr's account of Uzziah as far as the indicative finds from Timnah reveal, but doubts the plausibility of fully accepting the historicity of the account.<sup>134</sup> Nevertheless, Timnah is a critical site for two reasons: First, the city was clearly rebuilt by Judahite settlers in the early eighth century B.C., but transitioned into a town that exhibited an equally present Philistine

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<sup>134</sup> In his discussion of the Timnah material, Niemann (2013: 254-55) recognizes the difficulties involved in identifying the ruling polity of Timnah Stratum III, and his observations are worth repeating here: "It is not surprising that Timnah displays a mixture of cultural and material influences; archaeology simply reflects Timnah's geographical position in the hilly Shephelah between the coastal plain and the hill country, where influences come from two opposite directions, and where cultural and material developments require some time for dissemination and implantation. The result is that the intermediate area has its own mixed profile and that not every material or cultural change indicates a political integration or change of borders."

material culture later in the same century. Consequently, Timnah provides critical support for Chr's accounts regarding Uzziah (2 Chr 26:6) and Ahaz (2 Chr 28:18).

Tell Zakariya; Tel Azekah; (Azekah)

### **Location and Identification**

While Bliss (Bliss and Macalister 1902: 66-67) guardedly linked Tell Zakariya (map reference 143900.123100) with either Azekah or Socoh, an overwhelming consensus of scholars connect this impressive site with Azekah (e.g., Aharoni 1979a: 214, 353, 410, 431; Dagan 2011a: 72 n. 2 and references there; Rainey 1984a: 89; Stern 1993a: 123). Azekah dominates the surrounding area, towering 117 m. above the Elah Valley and rising from a ridge running north to south that serves as a well defined border separating the inner or upper Shephelah to the east from the outer or lower Shephelah to the west. Consequently, the site overlooks the strategic border area between Judah and Philistia that existed for most of the biblical period. Azekah also commanded an important intersection of roads, both east to west and north to south. The strategic importance of this city for Judah's defense and as an economic center for the Shephelah was perhaps second only to that of Lachish (Dagan 2011a: 74).

### **History of Excavation**

Bliss and Macalister (1902: 12-27) excavated the site during 1898-1899, opening sixteen shafts along three parallel lines across the lower city and exposing a fortress with towers on the acropolis. Bliss attributed the acropolis fortress to Rehoboam (2 Chr 11:9), yet recognized that it was rebuilt later during the Hellenistic Period (Bliss and Macalister 1902: 18-19). Stern (1993a: 124) dates the erection of the fort to the reign of Hezekiah.

Dagan surveyed and restudied the site and fortress, dating it to the late Hellenistic Period (Dagan 2011a: 80-84). Azekah has recently been resurveyed and renewed excavations were initiated in 2012 (Lipshits, Gadot and Oeming 2012).

### **Site Discoveries and Conclusions**

An eighth century B.C. Assyrian text presents Azekah as a powerful and nearly impregnable Judahite city that nevertheless fell after a protracted and difficult siege (Cogan 2008: 107-9; Na'aman 1974; 2005: 136; Tadmor 1958: 80-84; 2011: 281-89).<sup>135</sup> The discovery of *lmk* stamped jar handles (Bliss and Macalister 1902: 20 and Plate 56) corroborates historical records linking the site with Judah. Moreover, a surface survey conducted by the current excavation team concluded, not surprisingly, that the Iron Age II period was one of two “settlement peaks” at the site (Lipshits, Gadot and Oeming 2012: 200). Yet, as Dagan (2011a: 81) observes, no significant Iron Age II remains were exposed during Bliss and Macalister’s excavations. While this deficiency will hopefully be resolved by the current project and extensive Iron Age II occupational remains will be exposed, the evidence thus far may suggest poor preservation. However, historical geographical evidence clearly demonstrates the importance of Azekah during this period. Azekah undoubtedly played an important role as a Judahite border city during the eighth century B.C., including the reign of Uzziah. Tell es-Safi lies directly to the west of Azekah and any western thrust towards Gath and the coast required Azekah as a strong logistical base.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> The date of this text, known as the “Azekah Inscription” or the “Letter to God” is disputed. Most scholars attribute it to either Sargon II or Sennacherib (see Dagan 2011: 74, n. 4 and references there).

<sup>136</sup> For a brief discussion of Assyrian military strategy relating to Azekah and perhaps Tell es-Safi (Gath) during Sennacherib’s campaign, see the editorial note by Rainey (Aharoni 1979a: 392).

## Khirbet er-Rasm (North)

### **Location and Identification**

Khirbet er-Rasm (map reference 1435.1219) is a small rural site located about 1 km south-southwest of Azekah and has not yet been identified with any name known from historical sources. The site is located on a salient hill that affords excellent views in all directions.

### **History of Excavation**

The site of Khirbet er-Rasm was discovered during survey work by Dagan and subsequently excavated from 1997-2003 and fully published by Faust and Erlich (2011: 1, 5).

### **Site Description and Discoveries**

An intensive survey of the site and its subsequent excavation revealed scanty occupational evidence from late Iron I and IIA, but substantial remains dating to the late Iron Age II were unearthed.<sup>137</sup> A large, nearly square courtyard building, measuring approximately 31 x 31 m with an undetermined amount of inner connecting walls and rooms lining the outer walls in casemate fashion with several monolithic pillars (some found still standing), were excavated on the summit of the site and is its main architectural feature. The excavator's suggestion that the building at Khirbet Abu et-Twein (A. Mazar 1982a; 1982b) provides a reasonable parallel to Khirbet er-Rasm structure is persuasive. Like er-Rasm, the Abu et-Twein building is nearly square in

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<sup>137</sup> The site was intensively settled during the Hellenistic Period, from which most datable finds derive. For a chronology of the site, see Faust and Erlich (2011: 2-3, Table 0.1.1)

shape with approximately the same dimensions and has a center courtyard and pillar supported roofed rooms that line the outer walls.<sup>138</sup> The entrance to the Khirbet er-Rasm building is a gap in the wall near the south east corner, approached from either the east or west by a right angle ramp, which served as the entryway, and two flanking rooms may have served as guard chambers (Faust and Erlich 2011: 9-17). The entryway seems to parallel, to some extent, the Stratum XI gateway of the Arad fortress (Herzog 2002: 21-26). Iron Age II ceramic finds were numerous, but unstratified. They include a bowl with a folded rim and a carinated bowl with a flat rim. These and other sherds have eighth century B.C. parallels from Lachish and Tel Batash levels III, as reported by Shai (in Faust and Erlich 2011: 103-105). Apparently the building had been thoroughly cleaned of earlier occupational evidence when it was reoccupied, probably in the Hellenistic Period (Faust and Erlich 2011: 204-5 and note 10).

### **Historical Questions and Conclusions**

While the excavators note that significant activity took place at the site in Iron Age IIB, no clean loci dating to that period were discovered. With some reservations, the excavators date the initial construction of the structure to Iron Age II and suggest the site served as a royal estate during the Iron Age IIB, either as a lightly-fortified rural crown residence or perhaps as living quarters for corvee laborers (Faust 2012: 184; Faust and Erlich 2011: 202-7, 221, 256). While admittedly speculative, it is possible that this site provides archaeological evidence for one of Uzziah's royal estates (2 Chr 26:9-10) as its architectural features and date point to an eighth century B.C. Judahite estate or manor

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<sup>138</sup> Abu et-Twein and other similar structures discussed by Mazar and Faust all have strikingly common features (Faust and Erlich 2011: 202-8, and see also Faust 2012: 183-89).

house, constructed and occupied at the behest of one of Judah's nobility, if not the crown itself.

#### Khirbet er-Rasm

A survey at Khirbet er-Rasm (map reference 15020.11580) by Kochavi (1972: 46) only reported Persian and later sherds. Likewise, Stern (1982: 40; 2001: 442) and more recently, Lipschits (2005: 222) have identified the ruins as a Persian Period site. However, Faust (2012: 183) notes the plan and dimensions of the structure (27 x 29 meters) closely parallel many Iron Age II forts and their corresponding networks (Faust and Erlich 2011: 202-7; A. Mazar 1982a; 1982b). This factor, coupled with the site's strategic hilltop location, may indicate that its initial construction was during the Iron Age II; either as a royal estate or a paramilitary rural fort for Judah.

#### Khirbet Rasm ed-Daba (South); Ḥorvat Ahban

In his survey of the Adullam area, L. Y. Rahmani (1964: 209-14) surveyed another Iron Age site named Khirbet Rasm (ed-Daba; *ה' רסם א-דבע דרום*; map reference 14315.11600), located south of Azekah near Tel Goded, and discovered a rectangular fortress with projecting towers similar in plan to the Iron Age II fortresses at Kadesh Barnea, Ḥorvat 'Uza and most notably Azekah.<sup>139</sup> Rahmani (1964: 213-14) ascribed this fort to either Asa or Uzziah, while Aharoni (1979a: 58, 63 n. 35; 345, 382 n. 72)

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<sup>139</sup> For a plan of the fortress, see Rahmani (1964: 211, Figure 2). For a survey plan of an Iron Age II site, Rahmani's drawing is surprisingly detailed and possibly includes features from later periods of occupation. A large walled open area with no discernable buildings protrudes to the north of the fortress, while the gateway is along the southern (south-southeast) wall. Eight projecting towers are shown on the plan.

attributed it specifically to Uzziah.<sup>140</sup> Stern (1982: 40; 2001: 442) identified the site as a Persian Period settlement and, following Rahmani, interpreted Rasm ed-Daba, and other similarly-named sites nearby, as *hazerim*; walled villages or “daughter towns” of Azekah or Adullam. Survey data collected by Dagan (2011: 82-83 and references), as well as architectural comparisons, seem to suggest a Hellenistic date for the fortress. However, Faust (2012: 184) follows Rahmani’s and Aharoni’s Iron Age II dating and interprets the structure as a large fortress.<sup>141</sup> The ancient name for this site, as well as the other nearby Khirbet er-Rasm sites, is presently unknown.

Tell Judeideh; Tel Goded; (Moresbeth-gath)

### **Location and Identification**

Tel Goded (map reference 141500.115660) is located about 2 km north of Beth Guvrin. While the biblical identity of Goded is uncertain and Bliss and Macalister (1902: 70) failed to offer any suggestion, most scholars now identify the site with Moresbeth-gath, based upon several ancient sources. Tel Goded is possibly the Gath listed in the fortifications of Rehoboam (2 Chr 11:8; Micah 1:14; Jer 26:18; Aharoni 1979a: 58, 330, 392, 439, Broshi 1993a, and references there).

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<sup>140</sup> While Rahmani’s survey is included in the bibliography of Cohen’s (1979: 79) study of Iron Age fortresses in the Negev, undoubtedly as a parallel for the fortresses at Kadesh Barnea and ‘Uza as also noted earlier by Aharoni (1967a: 3 n. 5), Cohen does not specifically cite nor interpret any of Rahmani’s findings in the text. Moreover, Faust and Erlich (2011) also include Rahmani’s report, but once again, I could not locate any mention of it in the text. Another possible parallel is the Iron Age structure at Tirat Yehuda (Yeivin and Edelstein 1970: 57).

<sup>141</sup> Dagan’s Ph.D. dissertation lists the site type as a royal building and the site structure and character as an isolated fort. He collected many Iron Age IIB sherds, but apparently recovered little or no Iron Age I, IIA or IIC pottery at the site. While Rahmani and Aharoni seem to base their conclusions partially upon biblical correlations, and also noting that survey data is not always an accurate reflection of occupational history, the evidence for dating the construction of this fort to the eighth century B.C. still seems very persuasive. I gratefully acknowledge the kind assistance given by Avraham Faust for carefully checking and providing me with the survey data from both the MA thesis and Ph.D. dissertation of Yehuda Dagan regarding this site.

## History of Excavation

Bliss and Macalister (1902: 7-8, 44-51) excavated Goded from 1899-1900. Despite their rather crude methodology, the two correctly noted that Goded was “re-occupied by Jews during the later days of the monarchy” (i.e., Iron Age II; Bliss and Macalister 1902: 51). Using archival material including field notes and drawings stored at the Palestine Exploration Fund, Gibson (1994) has reassessed the results of Bliss and Macalister’s work.

## Site Discoveries

Iron Age II material was found in all six of the “clearance pits” that Bliss and Macalister excavated. Pits four and five preserved two phases of Iron Age IIB and numerous *mlk* and private stamped storage jars were recovered from pits four, five and six (Gibson 1994: 199-204, 230).<sup>142</sup> Despite their selectivity in keeping only whole vessels, Iron Age IIB pottery is very well represented at the site (Gibson 1994: 219-29). Based upon the construction techniques and associated pottery, the wall surrounding the site is probably Hellenistic in date. It is uncertain whether the Iron Age II city was fortified (Gibson 1994: 213, 230). Moreover, Gibson’s (1994: 230-31) admittedly arbitrary division point of ca. 760 B.C. for the two Iron Age IIB phases is attributed to the

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<sup>142</sup> The fact that a total of at least 54 jar handles exhibiting either *mlk* or private seal impressions have been found at the site cannot be ignored. Perhaps Goded was a collection or distribution center for Judahite royal estates during the eighth century B.C. and/or the site functioned as one of Judah’s fortified cities during the same period. Moreover, Aharoni’s (1979a: 330) suggestion to amend Gath to Moresheth-gath in the list of Rehoboam’s cities of defense / restraint (2 Chr 11:8) is strengthened by the presence of these storage jars, which possibly reflect a long standing royal center of Judah. See also the comments by Zukerman and Shai (2006: 739 and additional references there). Undoubtedly, the site had an important role for the Kingdom of Judah.



eighth century B.C. earthquake (Amos 1:1 and Zechariah 14:5).<sup>143</sup> The earlier phase apparently shows signs of destruction, but no evidence exists to determine whether the agent is natural or human.

## **Conclusions**

The two Iron Age IIB phases and the abundant *lmlk* stamped jar handles clearly demonstrate that Goded was an important Judahite town during the reign of Uzziah and later. While the lack of an Iron Age wall is puzzling, one should note that Beth Shemesh was also unfortified during this period and therefore, the lack of fortifications may actually reflect the security afforded by a powerful, resurgent Judahite kingdom.

Tell Bornat; Tel Burna; (Libnah?)

## **Location and Identification**

The site of Tel Burna (map reference 138.115 / 188050.615320) lies on the northern bank of the Naḥal Guvrin in the lower or western Shephelah. It also sits astride an east-west road connecting the coastal highway to the southern Hill Country of Judah (Tappy 2000: 9-11, 23). Burna's summit offers visibility all the way to the Coastal Plain, making the site an important strategic "outpost" for Lachish and towns to the east. Surveys and excavations have determined that the site was occupied from the Early Bronze Age until the end of the Iron Age, with the Iron Age II representing the largest area of surface scatter of sherds, which possibly including the necropolis of the city (Uziel and Shai 2010: 237-38 and Figure 14). The surrounding region is recognized for

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<sup>143</sup> Here Gibson follows the Lachish staff and links the two Iron Age IIB phases at Goded with Lachish IV and III. However, late ninth or early eighth century B.C. destruction layers have been noted at other Shephelah sites and thus cannot be ruled out either.

its unfortunate paucity of preserved toponymical information for identifying ancient sites (Rainey 1980: 196; 1983: 7). However, most scholars identify Burna with the important Levitical (and border) city of Libnah (Aharoni 1979a: 219; 332; 353; 403; 439; McKinny and Dagan 2013: 294, 300; Rainey 1980: 198-99; 1983: 10-11; Rainey and Notley 2006: 127; Shai, Cassuto, Dagan, and Uziel 2012: 143; Uziel and Shai 2010: 242), while others locate Libnah elsewhere and assign another biblical toponym to Burna, such as Makkedah (Kallai 1986: 380-81) or Ether (Tappy 2009: 452, 461 n. 36). Another excellent candidate for biblical Libnah is Tel Zayit (Tappy 2008 and see further below). While the Arabic name for the site, Tell Bornat, seems to share rather close similarities with the Hebrew *biranioth* or fortified towers mentioned in association with the construction projects of Jehoshaphat and Jotham (2 Chr 17:12; 27:4), the name probably derives from the remains of a rectangular hat-shaped enclosure on its summit (McKinny and Dagan 2013: 304 n. 9; Uziel and Shai 2010: 242).<sup>144</sup>

### **History of Excavation and Discoveries**

The intensive survey by Uziel and Shai (2010: 237-38, 240-41; Shai and Uziel 2014: 176-80) encompassing 16 hectares revealed that the Iron Age II period produced a surface scattering of pottery covering about 10 hectares. Iron Age IIA-B forms (late tenth-eighth centuries B.C.) with parallels to Lachish IV and III, Batash IV and III, and Safi A3 and A2 were recovered, including *mlk*-style jars and an unstratified two-winged *mlk* stamped handle. During the first two seasons of excavations, an impressive 5.5-meter-thick casemate fortification system was excavated along the eastern edge of the

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<sup>144</sup> For a historical survey discussing the explorers, archaeologists and other early visitors to Tel Burna, as well as their comments and views, see the excellent paper by McKinny and Dagan (2013).

summit and traced as a rectangular-shaped enclosure wall following the perimeter of Burna's acropolis. This fortification system dates to the ninth century B.C. and is preserved to a height of about 2 m (McKinny, Cassuto, and Shai 2015; Riehl and Shai 2015: 526; Shai, Cassuto, Dagan and Uziel 2012: 143-47, 153-54). Two candidates for its construction are either Jehoshaphat (2 Chr 17:12) or perhaps the rebels that revolted against Jehoram (2 Kgs 8:22; 2 Chr 21:10). Topographical observations suggest a total area of about 70 x 70 meters for this enclosure, which remained in use throughout the eighth century B.C. (Shai, Cassuto, Dagan and Uziel 2012: 143-51). Additional excavation seasons uncovered a large public complex with a paved courtyard connected to a large four room house, additional *lmlk* stamped jar handles and another with an official's seal. The complex seems to have been an elite structure and perhaps parallels the Tel 'Eton building in function. A rich assemblage of complete vessels including over 30 loomweights sealed by a seventh century B.C. level was also discovered as were several Judahite pillar figurines. The pottery closely resembles that of Lachish Level III, so the eighth century B.C. destruction is rather cautiously attributed to Sennacherib (McKinny, Cassuto, and Shai 2015; Riehl and Shai 2015: 526). Excavations are ongoing and below the acropolis, the lower city continues to be explored as well.

## **Conclusions**

McKinny, Cassuto, and Shai (2015) interpret the eighth century B.C. data from Tel Burna, like many Judahite sites in the Shephelah, as reflecting "a period of prosperity due to favorable geopolitical conditions caused by the collapse of Philistine Gath and the presumed western expansion of Judah during the reigns of such monarchs as Uzziah and Hezekiah..." The eighth century B.C. has shown to be the dominant sub-period of the

Iron Age II as revealed throughout the site. Therefore, during the reign of Uzziah, Burna was a well-fortified Judahite town near the Philistine border guarding the road to the Hill Country; a symbol of power, both to external threats as well as to the local population for administrative purposes and possibly serving as a military logistical center as well.<sup>145</sup> Recently unearthed evidence from the sites of Tel Burna and Tel ‘Eton require continued attention from biblical historians as their respective excavations continue.

Tell Sandahanna; Marisa; (Mareshah)

### **Identification and Discoveries**

Tell Sandahanna (map reference 140500.111500) is securely identified with Mareshah (e.g., Aharoni 1979a: 353, 439; Avi-Yonah 1993: 948 and references there; Bliss and Macalister 1902: 67-70; Rainey 1980: 197; 1983: 10). The site was extensively excavated during 1900 by Bliss and Macalister (1902: 52-61), who recognized a Jewish (Iron Age II) stratum beneath two Hellenistic levels after digging a large 50 x 30-foot exploratory shaft an average of 18 ½ feet deep (Bliss and Macalister 1902: 58). Iron Age II architectural remains and pottery were exposed, but the extensive Hellenistic city covers most of the earlier remains. More recent excavations by Kloner have uncovered part of the city wall, several structures and additional Iron Age II pottery in various areas of the site, including four distinct Iron Age II occupational phases (eighth-sixth centuries B.C.) uncovered in Subterranean Complex 75 in the lower city (Avi-Yonah and Kloner 1993: 952; Kloner 2003b: 11-16; 2010a: 1, 8-13, 24, 30; 2010b: 205, 223). At least 19

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<sup>145</sup> The best treatment of the site during the eighth century B.C. is found in the Hebrew paper of Shai, Ben-Shlomo, Uziel and Cassuto (2015: 29-31). See also the shorter English treatment by McKinny, Cassuto and Shai (2015). A forthcoming study of the site by Suriano, Shai and Uziel is due to appear in the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* in 2016.

*mlk*-impressed jar handles, clearly demonstrating eighth century B.C. Judahite occupation, were recovered (Avi-Yonah and Kloner 1993: 950-52; Bliss and Macalister 1902: 106-7).<sup>146</sup> The site is mentioned in relation to Rehoboam's fortification efforts and the invasion of Zerah the Cushite (2 Chr 11:8; 14:10), but not in any known eighth century B.C. context.<sup>147</sup> Nevertheless, Mareshah probably served as an important Judahite city during the reign of Uzziah and at least partially recovered during the seventh century B.C. following Sennacherib's campaign.

Khirbet el Qom; (Makkedah)

### **Location, Identification and History of Excavation**

Khirbet el Qom (map reference 146500.104500) is located at the eastern edge of the Shephelah, 20 km west of Hebron and 10 km southeast of Lachish. The site has been identified with biblical Makkedah by most scholars (Dorsey 1980; Rainey 1980:194-96; 1983: 9). Khirbet el Qom was first surveyed by Kohavi (1972: 60). After investigating a group of inscriptions and other burial goods that appeared on the Jerusalem antiquities market and then tracing them back to the site, Dever and Holladay also conducted a survey and limited salvage excavations at the site and its cemeteries (Dever 1969-1970; Holladay 1971). While the site is poorly published, excavations in two fields by Holladay (1971) revealed a double entry way gate constructed with roughly-shaped ashlar laid in header and stretcher fashion (see also Dever 1969-1970: 188; 1993b:

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<sup>146</sup> Vaughn (1999a: 191 and n. 34) states that a total of 19 *mlk*-impressed handles have been retrieved from the site, including two from Kloner's excavations. However, Kloner (2010a: 24) now reports finding four *mlk* stamped handles from Subterranean Complex 75, raising the total to at least 21.

<sup>147</sup> For the invasion of Zerah the Cushite in its historical context, aside from the commentaries, see: Ben-Shem (1972); Na'aman (1987); Oren (1982: 163); Rainey (1997: 56-57); and Wapnish (1981).

1234). Two (ninth and seventh century B.C.) phases of the gate were discerned. An inset offset cyclopean wall was traced for its entire circuit and a cistern was cleared, revealing some hand burnished red jugs. “Ashdod” ware was unearthed as were several late Iron Age II structures (Holladay 1971). The town seems to have been settled from the tenth through the seventh centuries B.C. The recovery of a *lmlk*-stamped jar handle as well as abundant pottery from the ninth and eighth century B.C. attests to the town’s existence during the reign of Uzziah (Dever 1969-1970: 188; 1993b: 1233).

Tell ‘Eton; Khirbet ‘Aitun; Tel ‘Eton; (‘Eglon)

### **Location and Identification**

Tel ‘Eton (map reference 1430.0990) is a 15-acre (6.6 hectare) mound positioned at the edge of the trough valley of the southeastern sector of the Shephelah about 4 km northeast of Tell Beit Mirsim and some 11 km southeast of Lachish. The site is also located near an important junction of roads, one of which follows the route of the trough valley, which separates the Shephelah from the Hill Country. The abundance of rich alluvial soil in the vicinity, along the Naḥal Adoraim and other nearby valleys, was likely a major factor in the establishment and continued settlement of the site. Tell ‘Eton is generally identified with biblical ‘Eglon (Josh 10: 34-36; 15:39; Dagan 2006a: 28\*; Faust 2011: 198; 2014b: 586; Faust and Katz 2012: 158; 2015: 97; Katz and Faust 2012: 22; Noth 1953: 95; Rainey 1980: 197; 1983: 9-10; 1984a: 121).

### **History of Excavation**

Important salvage excavations were carried out in the extensive necropolis surrounding the site in 1968 (see Faust and Katz 2015: 97; Katz and Faust 2012: 23; 2014

all with further references). A small scale excavation was carried out at the site in 1977 (Ayalon 1985; Katz and Faust 2012: 23; Zimhoni 1985; 1997: 179-210) and a new large scale project led by Avraham Faust (Bar-Ilan University) and Hayah Katz (Open University of Israel) began in 2006 and is ongoing (Faust 2011b; 2014b; Faust and Katz 2012; 2015). On the basis of survey and excavation data, the eighth century B.C. (Iron Age IIB) clearly represent the *flourit* of the site's occupational history and finds from this period come from nearly every area and most squares. 'Eton appears to have reached its maximum size of about 60 dunams during the eighth century B.C. and was consequently one of the larger sites in Judah (Faust 2014b: 589; Faust and Katz 2012: 167-73; 2015: 89, 93-95; Katz and Faust 2012: 23; Faust, Katz, Ben-Shlomo, Sapir, and Eyal 2014: 61-62).

### **Site Discoveries**

The eighth century B.C. occupational layer at 'Eton (Stratum II)<sup>148</sup> is extensive and rich with important architectural and small finds. Recent excavations have almost completely exposed a large, rectangular two story structure (Building 101), measuring approximately 240 square meters and labeled "the Governor's Residency" due to its size and high quality of construction, such as the use of ashlar stones for corners and most doorways. The building is well preserved with walls standing up to 1.5 m. It is also strategically placed at the highest point of the mound (Area A), and its rich assortment of

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<sup>148</sup> Since the current excavations have not yet adopted an overall site stratigraphy, we follow Ayalon's (1985) stratigraphic nomenclature, noting that a later Persian and early Hellenistic occupational level (fourth-third century B.C.) existed at the site, including a fort and village (Faust 2014b: 591; Faust, Katz, Ben-Shlomo, Sapir, and Eyal 2014: 67-69). Faust and his staff established a temporary strata nomenclature for the eighth century B.C. level in the respective areas of the site: Area A (Stratum A4); Area B (Stratum B3); Area C (Stratum C2). The temporary strata designations for Areas D and E have not yet been assigned (Faust, Katz, Ben-Shlomo, Sapir, and Eyal 2014: 46-50).

finds include administrative items, such as bullae and seals. The structure apparently had an open central courtyard and an intermittently-unearthed white layer, probably representing the collapsed floor of the second storey. Similarities with the West Tower at Beit Mirsim in plan and function were also noted (Faust 2011: 204-10; Faust and Katz 2015: 91, Figures 5-7, 93-94; Katz and Faust 2012: 26). Area B revealed parts of several structures with rich finds and segments of three buildings parallel to the city wall were unearthed in Area D. Area C also produced walls, pits and a clay installation. Massive fortifications were exposed in Areas B, C, and D, with city walls at least 4 m wide. Evidence of a heavy destruction layer that signaled the end of Stratum II was found throughout the site. While the excavators conclude that Sennacherib probably destroyed the city in 701 B.C. (Faust 2014b: 590; Faust and Katz 2015: 94-95; Katz and Faust 2012: 39-50), some questions remain. First, the site has not yet produced even one *lmk* seal impressed jar handle. Secondly, despite close similarities and strong resemblance between 'Eton Stratum II and Lachish Level III, some differences between the two ceramic assemblages have been observed as well (Faust, Katz, Ben-Shlomo, Sapir, and Eyall 2014: 62-64; Katz and Faust 2012: 45-47).

The following level, Stratum I, was a short-lived reoccupation, displaying a decline in building standards. The city was not rebuilt (Ayalon 1985: 61; Faust 2014b: 591; Faust and Katz 2015: 95). The similarity of pottery for the two levels strongly suggests a very short time span between the two settlements (Ayalon 1985: 59; Faust 2011: 203; Faust, Katz, Ben-Shlomo, Sapir, and Eyall 2014: 66-67; Zimhoni 1985: 87; 1997: 207). While future seasons will provide additional information, 'Eton provides an excellent example of a thriving Judahite town during the early eighth century B.C.



## Hinterland

The area directly north of 'Eton comprises the Survey of Israel Map of Amazyza (109) and a comprehensive archaeological survey of this area was conducted and published by Yehuda Dagan (2006a; 2006b). The survey revealed particularly intensive settlement patterns in this area during Iron Age II, when towers, farmsteads and other occupational sites covered the landscape. Similar to the hinterland surrounding Lachish to the west, viticulture apparently also dominated this area. Over 1275 rock-hewn winepresses from various historical periods were recorded in the survey; (Dagan 2006a: 22\*, 300 Map 11). Dagan (2006a: 59\*-60\*, 293 Map 4) lists a total of 266 sites with Iron Age II remains.<sup>149</sup> While nearly 100 of the surveyed sites yielded recognizable Lachish III (Iron Age IIB) material, the actual number of eighth century B.C. sites in the Amazyza survey area was undoubtedly much higher). Moreover, Sites 122.2 (a structure with a winepress, cistern and basins), 391, 444.2 (four buildings with winepresses and other agricultural installations nearby), 466 (a farmstead with three winepresses and other

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<sup>149</sup> Regrettably, Dagan (2006a: 59\*-60\*; 293 Map 4) does not list Iron Age IIB sites. He only differentiates between sites with Iron Age IIA, B, and C material on his map and in some of the site descriptions. The following site descriptions mention Iron Age IIB pottery and other remains: 5, 22, 24.1, 26.1, 27, 29, 39, 48.1, 53, 56, 57.1, 57.2, 89.1, 103, 122.2, 123, 138, 142, 195, 209, 210.1 (Khirbet er Ras), 217.1, 220.1 and 220.8 (Tel Idna), 224.2, 276.1, 285.1, 288, 294.1, 295.3, 303.1, 305.1, 306.1, 318.1, 343.1, 343.2, 344, 353.1, 360.1, 364, 365.1, 387, 388, 389, 391, 394, 396.1, 398.1, 399.1, 405.1, 444.1, 444.2, 466, 467, 470, 475, 485, 493, 500.1, 501, 502, 509, 558, 563, 572, 575, 576, 577, 583, 588, 589, 629, 630.1, 631, 641.1, 648, 663.2, 678, 698, 704, 706, 721, 729.1, 730, 731, 735, 740, 741, 743 (Tel 'Eton), 744.1, 750, 755, 761, 763, 766, 770, and 796. Sites where only Iron Age II pottery is specified include: 7, 14.3, 20.1, 24.2, 24.4, 30, 42, 43.2, 44.1, 45.1, 50, 64, 65.1, 65.2, 66.1, 79, 80, 101.1, 101.3, 110.1, 117.1, 117.2, 124.2, 125.1, 125.2, 131, 133, 135.1, 151, 153.1, 153.2, 162.2, 178.3, 204.2, 210.2, 211.2, 219, 220.3, 220.4, 220.7, 221.1, 221.2, 228, 254, 271.1, 280, 290.2, 295.1, 295.2, 306.3, 310, 316.1, 327, 341.1, 353.2, 353.3?, 355, 356.1, 363, 365.5, 380, 390, 392, 396.6, 398.2, 399.2, 400, 402, 409, 410, 412, 414?, 416.1, 423.3, 436, 459, 462, 464, 469, 476, 482.1, 484, 488, 489, 494, 496, 510, 521.1, 521.2, 523.2, 524, 526.1, 537, 538, 541, 543, 547, 548.1, 549, 550, 552.1, 553, 554, 556, 571, 578, 579.1, 579.2, 587, 595, 597, 605, 609, 615, 623, 636, 642, 645, 646.2, 647, 657, 662, 664.1, 665.3, 666, 667, 668.2, 669.1, 671, 673, 675.1, 686, 689, 692, 701, 703, 707, 711, 712, 716, 717, 718, 719, 722, 723, 727, 728, 734, 738, 739, 744.2, 745.1, 745.2, 746, 747, 749, 754, 756, 757, 762, 764, 765, 769, 781, 782, 784, 789, 793, and 813. See now Faust, Katz, Ben-Shlomo, Sapir, and Eyall (2014: 64-66 and fig. 7) for additional sites, recent estimates of settlement patterns and population figures for the hinterland of 'Eton and areas to the south during the Iron Age IIB.

instillations) and 763 (a building with a winepress, basins and other installations) included *lmlk*-stamped jar handles in their Iron Age IIB pottery assemblages. These five sites, as well as numerous others in this survey area, may have been linked to or served as royal estates during the eighth century B.C.

## **Conclusions**

Tel 'Eton was an important Judahite administrative city on the eastern edge of the Shephelah that borders the Hill Country of Judah. As a town straddling these two regions, 'Eton provides potentially important material cultural data revealing the relationship existing between Judah's highlands and lowlands during the eighth century B.C. (Faust 2014c). 'Eton is also significant for two neighboring sites. On the one hand, 'Eton offers the probable parallels thus far lacking at the poorly published site of Khirbet el-Qom to the north, while also providing historical and material cultural comparative data for Tell Beit Mirsim to the south, providing an opportunity to reassess the conclusions of Albright as well as other scholars that restudied and redated the Tell Beit Mirsim material. Finally, 'Eton should provide, at least theoretically, a purer and more distinctive Judahite ceramic corpus for which to compare with material remains found at other Judahite sites located to the west.

The excavation of Building 101 provides an important window into Judah during the eighth century B.C. This elite structure, located on the acropolis of the site, is especially noteworthy for its size and fine architecture, as well as its large assemblage of complete or restorable vessels and artifacts from the destruction layer. The small collection of bullae and sealings recovered in this building is quite unique among eighth century B.C. Judahite sites (Faust 2014b: 590). Moreover, Building 101 demonstrates

that 'Eton was a significant administrative center for Judah during that century (Faust and Katz 2015: 94).

Because Zimhoni (1985: 88; 1997: 207-8; Katz and Faust 2012: 46) believed that 'Eton may prove significant in the search for the early eighth century B.C. in the pottery corpus of Judah, 'Eton's stratigraphy and pottery may yet provide a ceramic fingerprint for information regarding Judah during Uzziah's reign. Zimhoni suggested that, based upon the presence of vessels from both the Lachish IV and Lachish III assemblages (notably a mixture of hand and wheel burnished ware), the 'Eton Stratum II pottery may represent the missing Iron Age IIB pottery phase just after the transition from Lachish IV to III (early eighth century B.C. horizon). Despite this chronological assessment of 'Eton's Iron Age IIB stratum, which was destroyed by fire, most scholars still attribute the end of this stratum to Sennacherib's 701 B.C. campaign (Faust 2011b: 203, 221; Faust and Katz 2015: 94-95; Finkelstein and Na'aman 2004: 66; Katz and Faust 2012: 41-50).

Tell Beit Mirsim; (Ancient Name Unknown)

### **Location, Identification and History of Excavation**

Tell Beit Mirsim (map reference 141430.096000) is a well known 7.5-acre site located on the border between the hill country and Shephelah and was excavated by Albright over four seasons from 1926-1932. The final report of the Iron Age strata (Albright 1943) became the benchmark for Iron Age ceramic studies for at least two generations of scholars. Albright (1943: 39, 40, 65) dated strata A<sub>1</sub> and A<sub>2</sub> to the Iron Age IIB-C and subdivided A<sub>2</sub> into four phases. Over the last forty years, Albright's

conclusions have been reassessed and revised by various scholars.<sup>150</sup> Aharoni and Aharoni (1976: 73) reassessed Stratum A, suggesting that the main Iron Age II settlement at Beit Mirsim was destroyed in 701 B.C. (A<sub>2</sub>), with limited resettlement later in the seventh century (labeled A<sub>3</sub> in Aharoni's nomenclature), most notably the erection of the famous "West Tower" (Aharoni 1982: 261-62, 266). Zimhoni (1997: 202-3) argued that Stratum A existed only until 701 B.C., including the "West Tower." For a summary description of the site during the Iron Age IIB-C, see Beit Arieh (2004: 208-10); and Finkelstein and Na'aman (2004: 61-64). Both studies conclude that the town was destroyed at the end of the eighth century B.C. and briefly resettled in the early seventh century B.C. and then abandoned, based upon the existence of similar Lachish III pottery forms found above Stratum A<sub>2</sub> in a few areas of the mound. Seventh century B.C. pottery found in two nearby tombs may give additional credence to a seventh century B.C. settlement at the site (Ben-Arieh 2004: 210). Pottery recovered from Tomb 101, excavated by D. Alon (Ben-Arieh 2004: 20-24, 78-80) and from Tombs 4, 5, and 6, excavated by E. Braun (Ben-Arieh 2004: 29-32, 109-15), exhibit red-slipped bowls and a mixture of hand and wheel burnishing, characteristic of the ninth to mid-eighth centuries B.C. Moreover, similar ninth-eighth century B.C. pottery was found in reused Late Bronze Age tombs 1 and 500 (Ben-Arieh 2004: 21-28, 86, 105, 210), all of which clearly indicates a thriving Judahite town during the eighth century B.C. While the well known "West Tower" seems to postdate the casemate wall, its construction date remains unclear. The tower may still be attributed to Stratum A<sub>2</sub>, which parallels Lachish III and thus

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<sup>150</sup> The most notable of these reassessments include studies by Aharoni and Aharoni (1976); Aharoni and Amiran (1958); Rainey (1975a); Tufnell (1950: 76-79; 1953: 47-48; 53-58); Ussishkin (1976; 1977; 1985); and Zimhoni (1985; 1997: 179-210).

perhaps to the eighth century B.C. reigns of Uzziah or Jotham, supported by the Lachish III vessel assemblage unearthed from a silo in Room 15 (Albright 1943: 45, 66; Blakely and Hardin 2002: figures 4-5; Finkelstein and Na'aman 2004: 62-63). Interestingly, the name Uzziah or Azariah, incised on a pot sherd, was discovered in a cistern at the site and published by Albright (1943: 63, 73, Plate 60: 3), providing clear testimony to the use of this name during the Iron Age II.

### **The Philistine (Coastal) Plain (ארץ פלשתין)**

Lod; Lud; Lydda; Darom; Diospolis

#### **Identification and Site Description**

Lod (map reference 140800.151225) has retained its ancient name. The first mention of Lod in ancient sources is from the 15<sup>th</sup> century B.C. records of Thutmose III. However, some scholars argue that Lod may have appeared in the earlier Egyptian Execration texts as well (*ANET*: 243; Rainey and Notley 2006: 52-58, 73; Schwartz 1991: 15-17, 39-42 and references there). The ancient tel is totally obscured by the modern city, but Bronze and Iron Age remains have been found from surveys and a few very limited excavations (Arbel 2004; Gophna and Beit-Arieh 1997: 66\*-68\*).

Because the site lies in a built up area, only small scale (salvage) excavations and surveys have been carried out (Kaplan 1993b: 917; Yannai and Avissar 2008: 1913-16 and references there).

#### **Historical Questions**

During the monarchy, Lod was clearly in Ephraimite territory and geographically to the north of the likely route of advance that Uzziah would have taken to the coast.

However, 1 Chr 8:8-12 preserves a brief historical background note of the migration of the sons of Elpaal-Eber, Misham and Shemed “who built Ono and Lod.” Since this enigmatic text (1 Chr 8:8-12) may possibly relate to eighth century B.C. events that led to the occupation<sup>151</sup> of Lod by Judahites from Benjamin, a closer examination is appropriate. The presence of Judahites at Lod and Ono is supported by the fact that some 725 of their descendents later resettled the area after returning from exile (Ezra 2:33; Nehemiah 7:37; 11:35), and despite the segmented form of the genealogy as a whole, the apparent unity of the immediate passage is recognized by several commentators (Demsky 1971; Japhet 1993: 192; Knoppers 2003b: 489-90; Williamson 1982: 85). Nevertheless, opinions are sharply divided among scholars attempting to date the historical information given in this text.<sup>152</sup> As Knoppers (2003b: 488) fittingly states: “Like many other genealogies, the Benjaminite genealogies contain anecdotes about particular incidents, tribal movements, and persons. But tantalizing hints about shifts in population and deportations are undeveloped and go unexplained (vv. 6, 7, 8, 12, 13). Some of the difficulties are text critical in nature, but others are not. Obscure features remain.” While any proposal is largely conjectural, the plausibility that the historical anecdotes regarding

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<sup>151</sup> Here Williamson (1982: 84) is absolutely correct in understanding בנה (built) as “rebuilt” or “fortified.”

<sup>152</sup> For an excellent overview of the historical and textual issues present in 1 Chr 8, see the comments of Knoppers (2003b: 488-92). Curtis and Madsen (1910: 160-61) date the event to the time of the Maccabean leader Jonathan in ca. 145 B.C. Myers (1965a: 59-61) suggested that Lod was settled during the reign of Rehoboam, but also mentions Uzziah as possibly responsible. Aaron Demsky (cited by Schwartz 1991: 41-42, n. 12) connected this passage with the raiding, looting and violence carried out by Israelite mercenaries during the reign of Amaziah (2 Chr 25: 13), based upon the variant reading of the Israelite name Shemer for Shemed (as preserved in LXX, Syriac and Targums). Maisler (1941: 106), Rudolph (1955: 77-79), Kallai (1958: 152); Kaplan (1993: 917), Na’aman (2005: 378) and Schwartz (1991: 41-42 n. 12) accept a date during the reign of Josiah, either due to the *pax Assyriaca* or to Josiah’s later territorial expansion and colonization efforts. Knoppers (2003b: 483, 491) suggests Benjaminite clans migrated to the area only during the Persian Period as apparently does Klein (2006: 252). Williamson (1982: 82-85) implies that an Iron Age II *Sitz im Leben* stands behind this text. Japhet (1993: 194-95) however, explicitly dates the record to the period of the monarchy.

the rebuilding of Lod and Ono, as well as the capture of Gath that are preserved in this passage were originally based in an early eighth century B.C. *milieu* is suggested by the following observations:

While the area is assumed to be part of the territory of Ephraim, the tribal territory lists are silent on the issue and some scholars (Kallai 1986: 306-307; Knoppers 2003b: 484) argue that the area was disputed and indeed claimed both by Ephraim for Israel and Benjamin for Judah. This would provide a reasonable background for migrations from the Hill country of Benjamin to the area when Judah was resurgent and Israel weak and it is precisely this geopolitical power shift that occurred during the last years of Uzziah, when Israel plunged into political turmoil following the deaths of Jeroboam II and his heir, Zachariah.

The Persian province of Yehud may or may not have included Lod and Ono,<sup>153</sup> yet the various biblical texts that clearly document the repatriation of Judahites-Jews returning from exile to their ancestral homes and to the sizable Jewish population in the Modein area during the second century B.C. (Knoppers 2003b: 483) seem to assign a long term settlement history extending back to pre-exilic times for this text (Demsky 1971; Kallai 1986; Yeivin 1971b) that was copied from monarchic period records available to Chr. Moreover, the Benjaminite migration and rebuilding operation nicely complements Chr's description of Uzziah's advance into Philistia: "He then rebuilt towns in Ashdod and elsewhere among the Philistines" (2 Chr 26: 6). Information from the reign of Rehoboam (2 Chr 11:10) may hint at an initial Benjaminite settlement of this

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<sup>153</sup> Scholars who argue for Lod and Ono within the Yehud province include Stern (1982: 245-49) and Williamson (1985: 34, 253-55). Those who view these towns outside the border of Yehud, partly on the basis of Nehemiah 6:2-3 description of the Plain of Ono include Rainey (Aharoni, Avi-Yonah, Rainey, and Safrai 2002: 129-30; Rainey and Notley 2006: 295-96) and Knoppers (2003b: 483).

area shortly after the Schism (Myers 1965a: 61) that preceded a similar attempt (hence the “rebuild” of Lod and Ono) during Uzziah’s reign.

The driving out of the inhabitants of Gath in the following verse (1 Chr 8:13) may possibly be associated with a closely related, but different segment of the Benjaminite family genealogy, or it may be a direct link to and continuation of vv. 8:8-12, that was severed by a (now) lost genealogical piece that joined the two texts (Japhet 1993: 193-95 and note the reoccurrence of Elpaal in 1 Chr 8:18). It is significant nonetheless if a link to the reign of Uzziah is advanced (2 Chr 26:6). Even Curtis and Madsen (1910: 160) admit that this brief anecdote gives the impression of a pre-exilic memory. Some scholars suggest that the Gath mentioned in 1 Chr 8:13 refers to nearby Gath-Gittaim (Tel Hamid; Japhet 1993: 194; Kallai 1986: 24-25; Knoppers 2003b: 484) and not Philistine Gath (Tell es-Safi). Moreover, the mention of Moab in 1 Chr 8:8 may reveal eighth century B.C. Judahite expansion to the east, supporting hints that Uzziah administered territory in Transjordan (2 Chr 26:8, 10).

## **Hinterland**

The Survey of Israel Map of Lod (80) comprises the area to the north and east of the city. Ram Gophna and Itzhaq Beit-Arieh (1997: 11\*, 19\*, 106, Map 3) supervised and published the archaeological survey of this region. A total of 46 sites, including towns, towers and strongholds, agricultural settlements and farmsteads with installations, yielded Iron Age II pottery.<sup>154</sup> Unfortunately, no precise dating of the Iron Age II pottery is provided by the authors, aside from the two sites with late Iron Age II forms.

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<sup>154</sup> The sites are as follows: 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 25, 27, 29, 30, 33 (late Iron Age II), 35, 36, 42, 48, 56, 60, 65, 66, 71, 80, 84, 88, 109, 120, 125 (late Iron Age II), 144, 145, 146, 147, 158, 166, 168, 170 (Tel Hadid), 173, 176, 179, 184 (Tel Lod), 186, 188, 204, 206, and 214.



Furthermore, no parallels to Judahite Lachish Level III forms are mentioned, if they do indeed exist.

## **Conclusions**

Lod and especially the accompanying survey may be regarded as out of the area of our focus. However, textual evidence, albeit slight, has led us to present the evidence at hand and to suggest a possible chronological link with Judahite (Benjaminite) settlement of the area as recorded in 1 Chr 8:12 and the eighth century B.C. expansion of Judah under Uzziah.

Tell el-Hadita; Tel Ḥadid; (Ḥadid)

## **Location and Identification**

Tel Ḥadid (map reference 145580.152284) is located at the eastern edge of the Lod Valley due east of Lod itself. The tell is 10 acres (40 dumans) and is confidently identified with biblical Ḥadid (Ezra 2:33). Strategically located with a commanding view, Ḥadid controlled the road to Jerusalem.

## **History of Excavation**

A salvage excavation was conducted at the site by I. Beit-Arieh from 1995-1997 along the northern and western edges of the site and over large extramural areas to the east and west (Beit-Arieh 2008: 1757-58).

## **Site Description and Discoveries**

Three Iron Age II building complexes were excavated, but only seventh century B.C. (Iron Age IIC) pottery was recovered. Northwest of the tell, twenty-five rock-cut

olive presses were documented as probably Iron Age II in date. A group of rock-cut wine presses with fermentation pits were also discovered, as well as three additional olive presses. A large number of cultic materials, such as incense stands, zoomorphic vessels and associated pottery dating from the tenth-ninth centuries B.C. were also recovered from a quarried pit. The excavator identifies this assemblage as the remains of a *favissa* associated with a cultic structure on the tel (Beit-Arieh 2008: 1758), plausibly inviting comparisons to the Tel Yavneh *favissa*.

Due to its important location guarding the road linking Jerusalem to the coast, Ḥadid may have come into the orbit of Judah during Uzziah's reign, despite its northern location.

Tell Ras Abu Ḥamid; Tel Ḥamid;  
(Gath-Gittaim, Gibbethon; Gath-Rimmon)

### **Location, Identification and History of Excavation**

Tel Ḥamid (Ras Abu Ḥamid; map reference 139760.145530) is approximately 10 acres in size, located in the inner coastal plain near the western fringe of the Shephelah about 6 km northwest of Gezer and three km southeast of Ramle. The site has been identified as Gath/Gittaim (Lance 1967: 37; B. Mazar 1954; Rainey 1975b: 69\*; 1984a: 150), Gath-Rimmon (Schmitt 1980: 115-31), and more recently with Gibbethon (Na'aman 1986c: 107-8, n. 49, 114, n. 62; Schmitt 1980: 107-9; Wolff and Shavit 2008: 1762). The site was the focus of salvage excavations from 1996-2002 by Wolff and Shavit (2008), as well as a trial excavation on the lower terrace of the mound by O. Tal (Tal and Blockman 1998), where Iron Age II pottery was recovered during the survey, but not from the subsequent excavation (Tal and Blockman 1998: 142, n. 2). Stratum VII

is dated by <sup>14</sup>C (Carbon 14 testing) to the ninth century B.C. and consists of walls, floors, a double wine press and other installations with characteristic dark red-slipped and horizontal hand burnished bowls and kraters that are nearly identical to tenth century B.C. pottery groups, and thus demonstrates continuity in material culture (Wolff and Shavit 2008: 1763). This level apparently represents the earliest occupation on the mound as it sits either upon virgin soil or directly upon bedrock and, according to the excavators, may have been destroyed by Hazael. Another plausible candidate was destructive action during the warfare between Omri and the Philistines at Gibbethon (1 Kings 16:15). Stratum VI represents the late ninth and early eighth century B.C. Remains of a large 200 square meter well constructed building was found, including three pillar bases. Thick walls and other evidence may suggest that the structure included a second story and perhaps served as a watchtower facing to the northwest. The finds included a very large number of hole-mouthed jars. A massive wall overlooking a paved surface and evidence of a large mud brick structure may represent a double-wall fortification system and a roadway accessing the city gate, which is similar in plan to those at eighth century B.C. levels at Batash, Lachish and Halif. The first appearance of wheel burnishing on selected bowls is associated with this stratum. The excavators attribute the commercial character of this stratum to Uzziah's expansion into Philistia (Wolff and Shavit 2008: 1763). Stratum V, dating to the late eighth century B.C. was poorly preserved due to later intrusions, but included several architectural units and evidence of iron smithing. While no *lmk*-impressed jars were unearthed, similarities with Judahite sites in fortification plans as well as evidence of a robust early eighth century B.C. town built upon ninth century B.C. remains may indeed correlate with the

expansion of Judah under Uzziah (2 Chr 26:6-10). If so, Uzziah must have overran and occupied this area fairly late in his reign, when Israel was weakened after the death of Jeroboam II.

B. Mazar (1954: 231) suggested that Gittaim, not Philistine Gath was conquered by Uzziah. He argued that 2 Chr 26:6 places Yavneh between Gath and Ashdod, thus requiring a “northern” Gath (Gittaim) located in the vicinity of Tel Ḥamid. Mazar’s view was adopted by numerous scholars, notably Kaplan (1959: 66-71); Rinaldi (1963: 227) and Tadmor (1958: 81-83; 1961: 233, n. 3; 1966: 94-95; 2011: 287, 641-42). A later reassessment of the evidence by Rainey (1975b: 73\*; Rainey and Notley 2006: 156; Schniedewind 1998: 76, n. 8) disputed Mazar’s position. Rainey (1975b: 73\*, 76\*) noted that the geographical triangle formed by Tell es-Safi, Yavneh and Ashdod suits the order of Uzziah’s conquest just as well. Moreover, this “northern” Gath *should have* fallen under Israelite hegemony for most of the first half of the eighth century B.C.<sup>155</sup>

Tel Yavneh; Yibna (Yavneh; Jabneel)

### **Location and Identification**

Tel Yavneh (map reference 126200.141800) is a slightly oval-shaped mound covering about 12 ha (including its slopes) and is located on the Coastal Plain about 25 km south of Tel-Aviv and 7.5 km east of the Mediterranean Sea. The tell rises 30 m above the the surrounding terrain, which includes the southeastern edge of the modern city of Yavneh. The fact that the Naḥal Sorek flows near its base is significant because traveling east up the Sorek and Rephaim Valleys, passing such towns as Ekron, Timnah

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<sup>155</sup> For the ancient name of Tel Ḥamid, see the discussions of Schmitt (1980) and Na’aman (1986c: 112-14 and notes 60-62) with further references cited there.

and Beth Shemesh, provides a fairly direct route to Jerusalem from the coast, which was already exploited by the Philistines in early conflicts (2 Sam 5; Aharoni, Avi-Yonah, Rainey and Safrai 2002: 77, map 100; Rainey and Notley 2006: 160) and, in modern times, chosen by British railroad civil engineers as the preferred route to lay tracks for the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem line. The coastal highway linked Yavneh with Jaffa, Lod and Tel Ḥamid to the north, as well as Ashdod, Ashkelon and Gaza to the south. The ports of Tel Mor, Yavneh Yam and Meṣad Ḥashavyahu were probably all utilized as trade outlets for Yavneh at various times during the Iron Age II. The results of various surveys and salvage excavations on the vicinity of the tell seem to indicate that the settlement area of ancient Yavneh encompassed a much larger area, notably several hills to the north and west of the site. No serious disputes or objections have been raised to contest the consensus view that Tel Yavneh is the actual site for the Old Testament toponyms of Jabneel, mentioned only in town list of Judah in Joshua 15:11, and Yavneh, which appears only in 2 Chr 26:6 (Aharoni 1958b: 28; 1979a: 122, 312, 256, 437; Fischer and Taxel 2007: 207; Kletter 2012: 85-86; Kletter and Ziffer 2008: 2071; Kletter, Ziffer, and Zwickel 2010: 2; Shai 2009: 17, and additional literature cited therein).<sup>156</sup>

### **History of Excavation**

Despite its easy accessibility and rich history, Tel Yavneh has not yet been extensively excavated. However, the large number of surveys, minor probes and salvage

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<sup>156</sup> The reference to a Jabneel in the tribal territory of Naphtali (Josh 19:33) should not be confused with the southern Jabneel (Yavneh) under discussion here. The root of the toponym (בנה) is “to build” or “to create” (Shai 2009: 17) and is the same root used by Chr in the same verse: “and he built cities in the territory of Ashdod...” (2 Chr 26:6). The shared root and nearly identical spelling of Yavneh to “and he built” provides the basis for scholars to emendate (emend) the text.

excavations have touched the site and the surrounding vicinity.<sup>157</sup> One likely explanation for this lack of interest from archaeologists are the extensive and thick Crusader and Islamic Period ruins on the summit of the site (e.g., Kletter and Ziffer 2008: 2071; Kletter, Ziffer, and Zwickel 2010: 6), which also undoubtedly erased a significant amount of the earlier occupational layers and accordingly discourages many would be excavators more concerned with the site's classical and pre-classical history.<sup>158</sup> Consequently, the third city breached by Uzziah essentially still awaits the spade.

### **Site Description and Discoveries**

Most of the Iron Age II finds were unearthed along northern slope and at the base of the northern and eastern slopes (Fischer and Taxel 2007: 209). Others have recently been found in fills on the southwestern slope (Feldstein and 'Ad 2014). In 2009, Zissu, Baruch and Levy-Reifer (2015) conducted a comprehensive survey of the tell, coupled with an excavation of 15 shallow test pits, all of which failed to contain pottery any earlier than Byzantine. While the partially published data from these surveys and probes do not, by any means, present a comprehensive picture of Yavneh's history, important information has been collected. Despite the limited exposure, the Iron Age II finds from Tel Yavneh reveal intensive activity at the site and clear evidence that a settlement

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<sup>157</sup> See Fischer and Taxel (2007: 208-12, Map 2 and Table 1) for a complete list of archaeological surveys and excavations conducted in the vicinity of Tel Yavneh up until 2007 and Kletter, Ziffer, and Zwickel (2010: 6-10 and Fig. 1.5). The relevant surveys and excavations published since that time are cited in the text and notes below.

<sup>158</sup> The results of the recent (2009) survey of the entire mound demonstrated that the Arab village of Yibna and a later Israeli immigrant camp densely covered and disturbed most of the tell. Extensive occupational remains from the Islamic and Ottoman periods also cover the site. Furthermore, Bahat (2008: 115) recognizes Yavneh as a "...important site, the excavation of which is hindered by the presence of a Crusader castle at the top of the mound." Yavneh's medieval castle and its Ottoman-British Mandate Period Palestinian village provide additional historical parallels (albeit from periods later than the Iron Age II) with Tell es-Safi and Ashdod-Ashdod-Yam.

covered the entire mound as well as substantial extra-mural areas. Notably, numerous pottery sherds characteristic of the eighth century B.C. (Iron Age IIB) have been recovered. Based upon this evidence, Taxel (2005: 144, XIV) and Fischer and Taxel (2007: 214-17, 274 and Fig. 3:8-12) and others propose that Yavneh experienced its first “zenith” or *flourit* during the Iron Age II. Moreover, several satellite settlements existed in the vicinity; the most interesting of these “suburbs” are Tell esh-Shallāf (perhaps biblical Eltekeh; Aharoni 1979a: 49, 299, 389, 434; B. Mazar 1986: 110-12) and ed-Deir (Temple Hill) to the north. However, no remnants of Iron Age IIB fortifications have yet been excavated to confirm Chr’s account that Yavneh was a walled city (Fischer and Taxel 2007: 214-17). Conversely, Kletter, Ziffer, and Zwickel (2010: 8, 192) remain more skeptical regarding drawing such conclusions without extensive excavation on the tell itself and propose that the city was confined to the tell during the Iron Age II and served as a “daughter” city to one of the Philistine epicenters, most likely Ashdod.<sup>159</sup>

## Hinterland

An area to the north and west of Yavneh was surveyed by M. Dothan as part of his MA thesis project (Dothan 1952). Over a period of fifteen years, J. Kaplan (1953;

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<sup>159</sup> “A word of caution is in place about the ability to identify the size of the settlement in various periods. As long as the tell has not been excavated, the evidence from small surveys and excavations outside the tell remains limited. Taxel (2005: 166; cf. Fischer and Taxel 2007: 274) suggests that Yavneh reached “its first zenith” of settlement during the Iron Age II period, and that although the general size of the site is unknown, it occupied “fairly large areas outside the tell limits.” The spread of pottery fragments hardly justifies such a conclusion. On the contrary, the excavations immediately north of the tell in 2000-2001 show that the Iron Age II remains are limited to graves (that is, only the dead occupied this area). The excavation in 2009 by Ad west of the tell has not found any significant Iron Age layer. Similarly, the ‘Temple Hill’ remains can be explained as an extramural repository site, not part of the living area of the city. Like many places in Palestine, it is safe to suggest that Iron Age II Yavneh was larger than the same site in the Late Bronze Age; but evidence of an extensive, large Iron Age II city is still wanting. It is reasonable to assume that Yavneh was during this period a rather minor Philistine ‘daughter’ city. It was probably much smaller in comparison to the region’s main cities, such as Ekron, Ashkelon and Ashdod. This explains why (at least so far) it is not mentioned in Neo-Assyrian sources...” (Kletter, Ziffer, and Zwickel 2010: 6).

1957: 201, II) conducted several surveys near Yavneh. To the south east of Yavneh, near the Naḥal Soreq, Kaplan retrieved Iron Age II sherds from two sites, Tell Qatra and el Mughar. Kaplan also surveyed another area, close to the city of Yavneh and recovered similar pottery from Tell esh-Shallāf as well as a site near Maqam Abu Hureira. In part due to the evidence found at these sites, both Dothan and Kaplan believed that Uzziah's conquest of Yavneh rested on a historical basis (Dothan 1952: 111-12; Kaplan 1953: 143; 1957: 202-5). Fischer and Taxel began survey work in 2001 in order to produce the Archaeological Survey of Israel Map 75, which remains in preparation (Fischer and Taxel 2006). However, these two scholars recently published an extensive historical and archaeological study of Tel Yavneh and its hinterland (Fischer and Taxel 2007).<sup>160</sup> Numerous Iron Age IIB sherds including bowls, kraters, holemouth jars and jars were also retrieved from salvage excavations at the base of the southwestern slope of the tell in 1993 (Fischer and Taxel 2007: 212, 218; Feldstein and Shmueli 2011 and Fig. 6:1-11). Iron Age II sherds were also recovered at a site approximately 100 m. northeast of the tell (Velednizki 2004: 62, 47\*), from tombs on the plain to the north in 2000-2001 (Kletter 2004; Kletter and Nagar 2015; Kletter, Ziffer, and Zwickel 2010: 1, 8) and at another site (TP 49) located to the south of the tell (Fischer and Taxel 2007: 217-18). Yannai (2014) found Iron Age IIA and B sherds during a large salvage excavation at a site located approximately 500 m. southeast of the tell in 2010-11.

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<sup>160</sup> Fischer and Taxel's (2007) valuable study is a revised version of a chapter from an edited book on the history and archaeology of Yavneh, which was published in Hebrew along with English summaries (Fischer 2005; Taxel 2005).



### **The ed-Deir (Temple Hill) *Favissa***

Over the years, a substantial amount of antiquities has been found on a hillock located about 200m north of Tel Yavneh, including cult stands, chalices and figurines. The local population began calling the mound “Temple Hill” as it was thought to be an ancient cult site (Kletter, Ziffer and Zwickel 2006: 148; 2010: IX). In 1978, a salvage excavation unearthed large amounts of Iron Age II pottery, including a fragmentary cult stand, a figurine and chalices (Kletter and Ziffer 2008: 2072; Kletter, Ziffer, and Zwickel 2010: 9; 2015). Additional potsherds, figurine fragments and chalices were recovered during other work at the site, most notably during the survey of Fischer and Taxel in 2001, when a trench exposed dozens of fragments of chalices and stands (Fischer and Taxel 2006; 2007: 218). The retrieval of these important cultic objects, coupled with damage to the site done by developers and looters, led to full scale excavations at ed-Deir (Temple Hill) the following year (Kletter, Ziffer, and Zwickel 2006: 148-49; 2010: 14-19; 2015: X-XI). This salvage excavation, led by Kletter, resulted in the spectacular discovery of a round *favissa* (repository) pit<sup>161</sup> filled with cultic objects and other finds. The 1.5 m deep and 2 m in diameter *favissa* apparently was related to a Philistine temple or shrine located either adjacent to the pit or upon Tel Yavneh nearby (Kletter, Ziffer, and Zwickel 2006: 158; 2010: 198). Despite damage from a bulldozer and trenching by looters, swift and determined efforts by Raz Kletter and his Israel Antiquities Authority colleagues saved the contents of the pit, which were fully published recently (Kletter, Ziffer, and Zwickel 2006: 148-49; 2010; 2015; see also Kletter 2012). Most notable

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<sup>161</sup> For a discussion that defines the terminology used to describe this cache of objects (*favissa*, *genizah* or repository), see Kletter, Ziffer and Zwickel (2006: 148) and Kletter (2012: 88).

among the finds were over 120 cult stands, most with figurative art, fire pans, several stone and one horned clay altar as well as thousands of bowls and chalices; many exhibiting burn patterns and plant residue that suggest use as incense burners (Kletter and Ziffer 2008: 2072; Kletter, Ziffer, and Zwickel 2006: 155-57). Kletter (2012: 92-94) and others (Kletter, Ziffer, and Zwickel 2006: 158; 2010: 184-88, 197) interpret the entire assemblage as votive objects, which find parallels with the *favissa* at En Hazeva. They also believe that the deposit(s) of these objects was not related to a conquest or other violent events. Furthermore, these scholars (Kletter 2012: 88; Kletter, Ziffer and Zwickel 2006: 148) claim that the Yavneh assemblage represents the richest Iron Age repository pit found in the region.

While the contents of the *favissa* provides important information about cultic practices during the Iron Age II in Philistia, of particular significance to this study is the date of ca. 850-750 B.C. Panitz-Cohen (2010; 2015) assigned to the associated pottery in her extremely detailed and thorough reports. Panitz-Cohen identified the pottery as Philistine, which in this context is a hybrid mixture of coastal and Judahite forms (e.g.: Bunimovitz 1990: 210-13) and has close affinities with Ashdod (locus 5117) and Tell es-Safi/Gath Stratum A3. While noting the broad (150-200 year) chronological range for this assemblage, Panitz-Cohen (2010: 130-31; 2015: 112-15) narrowed the date of the assemblage to the late ninth or early eighth century B.C. on the basis of overlap between the chronological series of selected forms. Some of these distinctive forms have parallels to Batash level III, Miqne III-II, Beer Sheba II, Beth Shemesh IIb, Lachish IV and Kutillet 'Ajrud, which lowers the horizon into the eighth century B.C. (Panitz-Cohen 2010: 130-31, Table 7.8). Moreover, the lack of typological development and diversity

led the excavators to suggest that all of the elements in the pit are contemporary and the deposition occurred during one event (Kletter, Ziffer, and Zwickel 2010: 58-59, 194; Panitz-Cohen 2010: 129-31). Taken as a whole, the assemblage is best associated with other Philistine sites. The detailed, but clear explanation of Panitz-Cohen's methodology illustrates the complexities and limitations of dating the chronological horizon of pottery from contexts such as this *favissa* and is a valuable contribution towards establishing a more precise chronology for the Iron Age IIA-B transition period (Hudon 2011a: 47).

### **Conclusions**

As Fischer and Taxel (2007: 204) correctly note, Yavneh and its surroundings have suffered “from a paucity of solid archaeological data that can either substantiate or refute the historical evidence associated with it. Aside from a few surveys and limited salvage excavations, it has remained at the margins for archaeological research.” While this picture has changed to a small extent with the excavation and publication of the Iron Age II *favissa*, available archaeological data, especially for Tel Yavneh, is woefully inadequate. As discussed above, no Iron Age II city wall was found along the northern slope of the site. However, due to the small areas exposed, no wide-ranging conclusions should be made regarding the absence of Iron Age fortifications.

The survey of Tel Yavneh by Fischer and Taxel (2007: 214-18 and Fig. 3:8-12) has yielded “...a large variety of ceramic finds spanning the Iron Age II...” including eighth century B.C. forms with Lachish level III parallels (Fischer and Taxel 2007: 217). The biblical text (2 Chr 26:6) clearly states that Yavneh was a Philistine city and indeed the pottery assemblage and some of the cultic objects from the “Temple Hill” *favissa* clearly exhibit Philistine motifs and colors known from earlier bichrome decorations as

well as Aegean and Cypriot influences evident in the cult stands, fire pans and figurines (Kletter, Ziffer, and Zwickel 2006: 157-58; 2010: 24-45).

It may be significant that the pottery from the ed-Deir Hill *favissa* seems to indicate a cessation of use sometime during the first half of the eighth century B.C. In a published review of the Yavneh *favissa* final report, I argued that evidence from this excavation may suggest that an outside agent was responsible for violently throwing the pottery and objects into the pit and that a Judahite force under Uzziah provides an excellent, biblically-attested candidate (Hudon 2011a: 46). Yet this scenario, while possible, is largely conjectural. The immense number of pottery and objects strongly supports the view that the assemblage represents votive objects, not permanent furnishings of the temple or cult site from whence they came. However, there *is* a strong possibility that this hoard was deposited or dumped in the repository pit at some time during Uzziah's reign. Whether or not such a large scale destruction of cultic vessels was part of an exclusively Philistine religious ritual or the work of another (hostile) agent remains uncertain.

Interestingly, the excavators of the *favissa* accept the historicity of Uzziah's conquest of Yavneh, but suggest that Judah's control over the area was probably short-lived (Kletter, Ziffer, and Zwickel 2010: 2, 192). Nevertheless, aside from the fact that Yavneh was a Philistine city at the beginning of the eighth century B.C., very little additional evidence can presently be offered to link the actions of Uzziah with the site. However, that Chr mentioned Yavneh in his account of Uzziah's actions against Philistia is significant. Persian-period pottery at Tel Yavneh provides evidence for an existing settlement during Chr's day (e.g.: Fischer and Taxel 2007: 218-19), but hardly provides

an ideally impressive Philistine city for him to choose if he invented his account. During the Persian period, the area was Phoenician, not Philistine and therefore hardly provides a good *Sitz im Leben* for the eighth century B.C. geopolitical situation in the vicinity. Conversely, the appearance of Yavneh in 2 Chr 26:6 arguably supports the historical veracity of Chr, since this toponym is otherwise absent from biblical and other known historical sources before the mid-second century B.C. (e.g., Judith 3:1; 2 Macc 5:55-62; Williamson 1982: 334-35).<sup>162</sup>

Khirbet el-Muqanna‘; Tel Mique; (Ekron)

### **Location and Identification**

While initially identified with Eltekeh, a survey of Tel Mique (map reference 136000.132000) in 1957 led J. Naveh to identify the site as Ekron, based in part to the large size of the lower tel (Naveh 1958). His identification gained the support of other scholars (e.g., Aharoni 1958b: 29-30; 1979a: 270-73, 434; Kitchen 1973: 62; Rainey 1984a: 124-26; Wright 1966: 76) and has subsequently never been seriously questioned (Gitin 1989: 24). While extrabiblical-historical sources do not mention Ekron until the eighth century B.C., the name Ekron derives from the root (עקר) and clearly has a Semitic origin. Moreover, the discovery of a monumental inscription during the final (1996) excavation season at Mique has decisively confirmed this view (Dothan and Gitin 2008: 1957). Mique is located along the eastern edge of the coastal plain and thus is a border site facing the Shephelah of Judah. As Gitin (1989: 23-24) rightly notes, Mique potentially provides an excellent site to examine “the permeability of the Philistine /

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<sup>162</sup> Suggestions and attempts to textually amend 2 Chr 26:6 based upon the similarities between “and he built” (ויבנה) with Yavneh (יבנה) persist, however. See again my discussion above.

Israelite border zone” and “the extent of interregional connections between Judah and Philistia in the Iron Age.”

### **History of Excavation**

Large scale excavations took place over 14 seasons from 1981-1996 by a joint expedition led by Trude Dothan (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) and Seymour Gitin (American Schools of Oriental Research; W. F. Albright Institute, Jerusalem).

### **Site Description and Discoveries**

Ekron was partially destroyed early in the tenth century B.C. and drastically shrank in size from a fifty-acre site to the ten-acre upper city (Fields I and VII) and remained this size for 250 years, spanning nearly all of Iron Age IIA-B (Gitin 1997: 86-87; 1998b: 167). The excavators ascribed most of the tenth century and the entire ninth century B.C. to Stratum III, but divided the eighth century into two levels, Stratum IIB represented the first half and Stratum IIA represented the second half (Dothan and Gitin 2008: 1953; Gitin 1989: 20). At the end of the eighth century B.C., after Assyria recovered the region from Hezekiah in 701 B.C., Ekron expanded to an immensely large 85-acre city, far surpassing the size of the Iron Age I town and experienced its *floruit* as a major olive oil production center during the seventh century B.C. *Pax Assyriaca* (Dothan and Gitin 1993: 1056; 2008: 1955-57; Gitin 1989: 26-50; 1995: 62; 1997: 85-98; 1998b: 167-79; 2003). Nevertheless, during the entire eighth century B.C. (Strata IIB-IIA), Ekron was still confined to the NE upper city.<sup>163</sup> A section of a mud brick city wall with

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<sup>163</sup> Ussishkin (2005a) proposed that Iron Age II Ekron was not fortified until the second half of the eighth century B.C., which does not affect our thesis. Gitin (1998b: 167 n. 7) states that a partial resettlement of the lower city already began at the end of Stratum IIA, which was associated with

a 7 m wide tower faced with ashlar laid in header and stretcher fashion was excavated along the bottom of the east slope (Gitin 1989: 25-26). This wall, initially erected during the tenth century, probably encircled the entire upper city and is likely the very one portrayed on a relief from Sargon II's palace at Khorsabad that depicts the Assyrian assault on Ekron in 712 B.C. (Tadmor 1958: 83; 2011: 287-88). During the eighth century B.C., the upper city featured three north-south streets lined with shops. Part of this acropolis was also supported by a series of monumental stone terraces and platforms initially constructed in Stratum III (Gitin 1998b: 167). Recovered pottery was predominately from coastal traditions, but included Judahite forms as well (Dothan and Gitin 1993: 1056; 2008: 1955-56; Gitin 1998b: 167). Three *lmlk*-stamped handles, attributed to stratum IIA were also recovered (Vaughn 1999a: 193).

## **Conclusions**

It is rather difficult to envision any Judahite expansion into Philistia that would not include the compliance of Ekron simply based upon its geographical location in relation to Gath, Yavneh and Ashdod. Nor was the city necessarily on friendly terms with Judah either (Amos 1:8). If indeed Judah gained control over Ekron during Uzziah's reign, it was apparently superficial and fleeting, probably lasting no longer than the reign of Jotham and apparently leaving little or no material evidence. Nevertheless, Gitin (1989: 41-43) allows for this scenario to have taken place and notes that "the archaeological evidence for Ekron Strata III-II is consonant with the textual evidence and the dating of these strata to the tenth to eighth centuries B.C." Other scholars either agree

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Hezekiah's control of Ekron in ca. 705 B.C. This occupational activity is represented in Field IV's "elite zone."

or accept this possibility (Aharoni 1979a: 345; Bierling 1992: 196; A. Mazar 1994: 257; Yeivin 1979a: 165). However, according to 2 Chr 28:18, Ekron had already regained its independence during the reign of Ahaz<sup>164</sup> and, like Ashdod, was conquered by Sargon II (and possibly by Tiglath-pileser III earlier). Furthermore, Ekron remained too powerful of an entity for Hezekiah and Judah to ignore when preparations for revolt against Assyria began and control of the city was wrenched away from its pro-Assyrian king in order to create a reliable ally and to bolster defenses on Judah's western flank. The three *lmk* jar handles were most likely related to food supplies sent by Judah to the city on the eve of Sennacherib's campaign, which apparently capitulated and was not destroyed. It is entirely possible that Ekron and Judah reached an agreement that allowed Ekron to remain a semi-independent city-state (Gitin 1989: 47) during Uzziah's conquest of Philistia.<sup>165</sup> The presence of numerous Israelite style four horned Israelite incense altars, discovered in seventh century B.C. contexts but typologically dated earlier,<sup>166</sup> coupled with King Ahaziah of Israel's recorded visit to the city (2 Kgs 1:2-16) seem to imply a close political and religious relationship between the two polities during the ninth century B.C. Uzziah and Judah may have inherited this rather cozy political alliance with Ekron

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<sup>164</sup> For excellent maps that portray Uzziah's expansion into Philistia (yet bypassing Ekron) and the later Philistine incursions against Judah during the reign of Ahaz, see Aharoni, Avi-Yonah, Rainey, and Safrai (2002: 110, maps 142 and 145) and Rainey and Notley (2006: 217-29).

<sup>165</sup> This political and possibly economic relationship that may have existed between Judah and Ekron during Uzziah's reign earlier in the eighth century B.C. seems to be reflected in the later actions taken by Ekron's population in handing Padi, their pro-Assyrian king over to Hezekiah, as reported by Sennacherib (*ANET*: 287b).

<sup>166</sup> Gitin's (1989: 49; 2009: 131, and n. 8) assertion of deported Israelite craftsmen settling in seventh century B.C. Ekron as an explanation for the existence of so many Israelite four horned altars seems unlikely and goes against Assyrian policy that generally deported people far from their homeland. Rather, the altars were either imported earlier or were later copies of earlier altars. As revered religious installations, stone altars would enjoy a lengthy service life and would not necessarily be contemporary with their find context and may have actually been collected from other ruined cities and shrines. For a recent summary of incense altars and their supposed origin in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, see Gitin (2009: 130-31 and further bibliography cited there).



from Israel, especially after Israel's decline following Jeroboam II's death in 753 B.C. Consequently, Chr may have intentionally excluded these historical details from his account of Uzziah since they failed to support Chr's preferred depictive roles of Uzziah as a Davidic warrior king in a way that Uzziah's actions against Gath, Ashdod and Yavneh fulfilled them.<sup>167</sup>

Tell es-Safi; Tel Zafit; (Gath of the Philistines)

## **Introduction**

For much of its history, Gath (Tell es-Safi; map reference 135500.123500) marked the western edge of Judah's influence (Micah 1:10; 1 Kgs 2:39-41; Niemann 2013: 260). The mention of (Philistine) Gath in 2 Chr 26:6, as well as in an oracle from the contemporary eighth century B.C. prophet Amos (6:2) demonstrates that this famous biblical city serves both as an excellent test site for our investigation and is a critical component for determining the historicity of Chr's account of Uzziah. However, as explained below, the hoped for conclusive solutions to a host of topographical and historical questions presented by this site remain elusive despite the careful examination of the somewhat ambiguous details present in the historical and archaeological sources at our disposal. Consequently, the evidence from Gath that offers new light on Chr's account of Uzziah remains, for now, disappointingly meager. While evidence clearly indicates that Judah occupied Gath for some duration in the course of the eighth century B.C., from a solely archaeological standpoint, the setting and the means behind this

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<sup>167</sup> It is interesting to note that Uzziah's demand to burn incense himself on the Temple altar in Jerusalem (2 Chr 26:16), usurping a role reserved for a priest and culminating with YHWH's retribution in the form of his skin affliction, seems to admirably illustrate the link between incense altars and the exercise of power.

change of hegemony remains obscure. No evidence has yet been unearthed to confirm Chr's report (Maier 2013b: 443). Nevertheless, the data marshalled by this study argues for the essential historicity of Judahite occupation of the site during the reign of Uzziah. As the ensuing discussion demonstrates, unraveling the history of Gath during this period is a complex venture. Yet, our efforts are not in vain. As Zukerman and Shai (2006: 741) explain: "...at least as far as the Biblical sources are concerned, eighth century Gath is a subject worthy of further study on its own right, and is not a mere post-script to the past glories of a major Philistine city."

The major questions relating to Gath vis-à-vis 2 Chr 26:6 may be summarized as follows.

#### **The Location of Gath in 2 Kgs 12:17, 2 Chr 26:6 and in Assyrian Sources**

Before any determination can be made regarding Gath and Uzziah's expansion, the location of Philistine Gath must first be satisfactorily solved and a site selected with a high probability of certainty. Secondly, an attempt must be made to establish if 2 Chr 26:6 refers to Philistine Gath, which is implied, but unspecified in the text, or to another city named Gath, particularly Gath-Gittaim. Likewise, the location of Gath captured by Hazael (2 Kgs 12:17) must be determined, either at Philistine Gath or elsewhere.<sup>168</sup> The location of Gath (*gitmu*) mentioned in an Assyrian source relating to the campaign of Sargon II also needs to be considered. Once conclusions are drawn regarding the most probable site(s), Chr's account of Uzziah will be correlated with the evidence at hand.

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<sup>168</sup> The difficulties of unraveling the identity and location of the various "Gaths" is a formidable issue for historical geographers and the location of certain towns named Gath attested in ancient historical sources is still disputed (e.g., Oded 1979a: 237).

## **The Historical Context of Amos 1:6-8 and 6:2**

The oracle against Philistia in Amos 1:6-8 and a woe referring to Philistine Gath in Amos 6:2 are reviewed in an excursus with the expressed purpose of providing a historical window into the geopolitical status of Philistine Gath during the early to mid-eighth century B.C. Their bearing on the historicity of Uzziah's conquest of Gath are discussed in an excursus below.

## **The Geopolitical Status of (Philistine) Gath During the first Half of the Eighth Century B.C. Based Upon Historical and Archaeological Sources**

This is the summation and interpretation of archaeological evidence from (Philistine) Gath and its comparison with and bearing upon the historical sources for the site. Specific evidence is sought for the existence of fortifications, subsequent evidence of destruction or a destruction layer and finally evidence pointing to a specific ethnicity of Gath's residents, based upon the material culture and thus determining the polity that controlled Gath during the eighth century B.C. and the duration of their settlement and hegemony.

## **Identification**

A host of questions surrounding the identification of (Philistine) Gath mentioned in 2 Chr 26:6 and other biblical texts have been the focus of an extended and rather complex scholarly discussion since the beginning of modern historical-geographic research. A variety of theories and suggestions have been raised over the years pointing

to a rather diverse assortment of sites and identifications.<sup>169</sup> To complicate matters further, the large number of place names exist with the appellative Gath (גַּת), which denotes either a wine (or olive) press (*BDB*: 178; Rainey 1966c: 36 n. 2; Schniedewind 1998: 71-72; Shai 2009: 15), or a processing center for agricultural goods; specifically a fortified building or complex for agricultural processing and storage (Schniedewind 1998: 71-72 and references there), as part of the toponym in the historical sources (e.g., Aharoni 1979a: 109; Levin 2012: 141-43; Rainey 1968; 1978a: 6; 1984a: 17; 2004). Indeed, Gath was a very common place name for sites with historic links to wine or olive oil production (e.g.: Aharoni 1979a: 109, 330; B. Mazar 1954; Paul 1991: 203; Rainey 1966c: 36-37; Schniedewind 1998: 71-72; Wright 1966: 80).<sup>170</sup>

Confusion over interpreting the historical sources led to repeated attempts to locate Gath in the southern, lower Shephelah or along the inner coastal plain, thus creating an erroneous need for two or more cities named Gath. This theory of a “southern” Gath has persisted until quite recently.<sup>171</sup> One example, as shown above,

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<sup>169</sup> Tell es-Safi has been identified with a number of biblical sites. For example, while noting that Safi appeared to be a very large Philistine city, Wright (1966: 76, 80 n. 23), followed by Kitchen (1973: 62) suggested that Safi be identified with ancient Libnah, at least partly on the basis of the white chalky appearance of portions of the site. However, Rainey (1975b: 66\*, 74\*-75\*; Rainey and Notley 2006: 156) demonstrated that no linguistic link exists between Libnah and the color white nor did the identification make any logistical military sense regarding the route of Sennacherib in 701 B.C. A list of alternative identifications for Safi is provided by Maeir (2012b: 102).

Similarly, many sites have been identified as Philistine Gath. For example, over the past 60 years, locations such as Tell el-‘Areini or Tel Nagila (Bülow and Mitchell 1961: 107-10; Kassis 1965; Kitchen 1973: 62-63; Myers 1965b: 149 n. 6), Tel Sera‘ (Wright 1966: 78-86) or Tel Haror (Stager 1995: 332, 343; Stone 1995: 22), as well as Tell es-Safi have been suggested as candidates. Maeir (2012b: 100-101) has compiled a list of seventeen proposed locations for Gath, along with the first scholar to make each respective suggestion. Some scholars (e.g., Oded 1979a: 237) prefer to leave the question open.

<sup>170</sup> Levin (2012: 141) notes that the place name Gath in its absolute form, appears 33 times in MT, while compound names with Gath occur nine times.

<sup>171</sup> Notably by Stager and his students (e.g.: Stager 1995: 332, 342; 2006: 379 n. 12; Stone 1995: 22), who argued placing Gath at Tel Haror, commonly identified by most scholars with biblical Gerar or Sharuhen (Aharoni 1979a: 27, 161, 201, 291, 435; Rainey 1984a: 145-47; Rainey 1993c: 184\*-85\*); Rainey

concerns the Gath in Chr's list of cities fortified and garrisoned by Rehoboam (2 Chr 11:8). Scholars have debated whether or not this Gath refers to Philistine Gath or another site with the same name. Aharoni (1979a: 330-32), based upon the topographical, defensive and textual considerations raised by Chr's list, proposed that the site referred to here was Moresheth-gath (Tell el-Judeideh). According to Aharoni, fortifying Tell es-Safi (the site commonly associated with Gath, as discussed below), would have resulted in a rather vulnerable westward "bulge" in Rehoboam's defense line, which already included Azekah to the east. This interpretive approach works rather well as long as the original intention of these cities was to defend Judah from outside threats to the west is maintained. However, as Miller (1987: 279-84) and especially Hobbs (1994) have argued (see above, note 4), these cities served to consolidate Rehoboam's power by countering any internal threat to his rule while encouraging loyalty from the populace. The placement of Rehoboam's sons or relatives as commanders over these cities seems to support this view. Therefore, the Gath fortified by Rehoboam may not have necessarily conformed strictly to strategic military planning against external military threats, but rather the ability to provide a show of force and power at strategically located (but potentially disloyal) Judahite population centers. Consequently, it appears that continued archaeological excavations may provide the best means to resolve this topographical and historical question.<sup>172</sup>

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and Notley 2006: 114). However, according to Maier (Maier 2012a: 6 n. 3; Maier and Ehrlich 2001: 27), Stager has since changed his view.

<sup>172</sup> The view that this list dates to Hezekiah, as held by several scholars (Maier 2012a: 55, 65; Na'aman 1986b; Zukerman and Shai 2006: 739-41), cannot be accepted for a variety of reasons that cannot be explained in detail here. Most notably, the lack of any discernable motive by Chr to move this archival list to another king and the pressing need for Rehoboam to stabilize his kingdom both before and after Shishak's raid, which provides an excellent geopolitical setting for him to establish "cities of restraint" at Gath (possibly Moresheth-gath, but see the evidence and conflicting views given by Na'aman 2005: 154; Zukerman and Shai 2006: 739-41) and at other strategic sites.

Similarly, a northern Gath (Gittaim) and a southern (Philistine) Gath was proposed by B. Mazar (1954: especially 231-32). This hypothesis argued that Uzziah's advance into northern Philistia (2 Chr 26:6) captured Yavneh, Ashdod and Gittaim (Gath in the dual form; literally "two presses" or simply a variant spelling), rather than the well-known Philistine Gath, which was then widely believed to be located much farther south.<sup>173</sup> Mazar (1954: 233 and n. 20) cites an early Jewish tradition that placed Gath near Ramle as well as the northern placement of Gath on the Madaba Map. Mazar's innovative observation was initially accepted (e.g.: Kallai 1960: 37-41; 1961: 233, n. 3; 1966: 94-95; 2011: 287, 641-42; Kaplan 1959: 66-71; Rinaldi 1963: 227; Tadmor 1958: 81-83), but, as a consequence of several subsequent studies, has since been largely abandoned (Kassis 1965: 259-64; Rainey 1975b: 75\*-76\* n. 109; Rainey and Notley 2006: 156; Schniedewind 1998: 76 n. 8); in part because the identification of Safi as Gath removes any need for a "northern" Gath; secondly, because Tel Ḥamid (possibly Gittaim) may have been part of Israel during the eighth century B.C. (Rainey and Notley 2006: 156); thirdly, because confusion regarding the site of Gath was already widespread as early as the Byzantine period, which led to spurious traditions associating Gath with Ramle; and fourthly, because the Bible does not portray Gittaim as a major site (2 Sam 4:3; Neh 11:33; Schniedewind 1998: 76 n. 8). The seminal study by Rainey (1975b; revised in Rainey and Notley 2006: 154-56) and supplementary evidence supplied by Schniedewind (1998) provide all of the relevant historical, geographical and archaeological evidence to convincingly argue that Tell es-Safi should be identified as

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<sup>173</sup> Rainey (1975b: 73\*) and Maeir and Ehrlich (2001: 29) note that Tell es-Safi also fulfills this requirement as Yavneh and Ashdod are located within the same general region. Moreover, Ashdod seemingly made Gath one of her satellite cities later during the eighth century B.C. (*ANET*: 286b).

Gath of the Philistines. This view has now been widely, if not universally accepted by scholars.<sup>174</sup>

One argument put forward points to the rather close (9 km) proximity of Ekron (Tel Miqne) to Safi as evidence against equating Safi with Gath. How could two major Philistine epicenters be in such close proximity, which seems to go against the accepted understanding of urban inter-site spatial geography (Maeir and Uziel 2007: 35 and references there)? However, Schniedewind (1998: 70-74), Zukerman and Shai (2006: 733-34); Uziel and Maeir (2005: 65-67); Maeir and Uziel (2007: 35-38), Shavit (2008: 160), and Maeir (2012a: 40) all argued that, while the rich agricultural potential of this region attracted the settlement of both Gath and Ekron, each city assumed a different strategic role, based on their respective locations and features.<sup>175</sup> The biblical account also hints at the close proximity of the two cities (1 Sam 17:52).<sup>176</sup> More importantly, throughout the Iron Age, inter-related vacillations, or a “see-saw” relationship regarding the size and status of these two cities was in effect; one city was large and dominant while the other city was small and insignificant. Prior to the eighth century B.C., Gath, Ashdod and Tel Mor were dominant, while during the seventh century B.C., Ekron and

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<sup>174</sup> See, for example Aharoni (1979a: 25, 49, 161, 174, 188-89 n. 112, 271, 330, 382 n. 68, 385-86 n. 154, 392, 434), Bliss (Bliss and Macalister 1902: 28-43, 62-66); Ehrlich (1996: 3, 75-76; 2002); Macalister (1914: 72); Maeir and Ehrlich (2001: 23-31); B. Mazar (1992a: 31), Noth (1960a: 238 n. 3); Rainey (1975b); Rainey and Notley (2006: 154-56), Schniedewind (1998: 75), and Stern (1993b: 1522); as well as the excellent summary discussions of Levin (2012) and Maeir (2004a: 321-22; 2008: 2081; 2012a: 5-7; 2012b; 2013b: 443).

<sup>175</sup> See now the contribution of Uziel, Shai and Cassuto (2014: 301-305) to this discussion. They observe a similar comparison between Gezer and Ekron during the Iron Age II.

<sup>176</sup> The often used account of Achish presenting David with the town of Ziklag, located in the Western Negeb, as a proof text for the existence of a southern Gath also may imply just the opposite, as its remote location allowed David to launch raids against Geshurite, Girzite and Amalekite encampments and villages rather than Judahite settlements and thus enabling them to successfully “tell it not in Gath” (1 Sam 27; 2 Sam 1:20; Micah 1:10; Schniedewind 1998: 74).

the port of Ashkelon were the premier urban centers. Thus, during the late eighth century B.C., Ekron underwent extensive expansion that continued during the seventh century B.C., growing from approximately four hectares to at least 30 hectares (Gitin 1998b: 167-80). Conversely, Safi suffered a dramatic decline during the same period, from 50 hectares to 23 hectares or less (Maeir and Uziel 2007: 35-37 and fig. 4; Zukerman and Shai 2006: 729-31) showing that the issue of proximity and contested use of the hinterland does not necessarily pose an insolvable problem. As additional evidence, two large Iron Age IIB urban centers in Jordan, Tall Jalul (probably biblical Bezer) and Madaba are located only five km apart and both apparently flourished at the same time (ninth-eighth centuries B.C.). It is noteworthy to add that the ebb and flow of Gath and Ekron is reflected in the biblical narrative as well (Machinist 2000: 57-59; A. Mazar 1994: 251-53; Uziel and Maeir 2005: 66).

While Uzziah's actions were clearly against the Philistines, admittedly the Gath listed by Chr does not specifically appear with the qualifier or prefix Philistine. However, its identity is strongly implied by the fact that Uzziah was at war against the Philistines as well as the fact that Gath listed without further qualification should assumedly be *the* Gath, that is, Philistine Gath (Ehrlich 1996: 75 and n. 110). Nevertheless, while the preponderance of evidence favors Tell es-Safi fulfilling the role of both Philistine Gath and the Gath that Uzziah subdued, the possibility yet remains, however slight, that Uzziah attacked Gittaim rather than Gath of the Philistines and archaeological data must be considered for any further clarification of this matter.



## **History of Excavation**

F. J. Bliss and R.A.S. Macalister carried out three brief seasons (two weeks) of excavation at Tell es-Safi in 1899 (Avisar and Maeir 2012a: 110; Bliss and Macalister 1902: 28-43, 63-66). The late Israeli general and defense minister Moshe Dayan conducted several illicit excavations along the northern slope of the site (Maeir 2003: 238; 2012b: 95-96; Maeir and Ehrlich 2001: 26), but much of his pottery and other finds have been studied and published (e.g., Maeir 2012b: 98-100 and references there) and several surveys by Israeli scholars such as Y. Aharoni, R. Amiran and Y. Dagan took place from the 1950's to the 1990's. In 1996, a team led by Aren Maeir of Bar-Ilan University surveyed Safi and subsequently initiated a long term excavation project the following year that continues to the present (Maeir 2003; 2008: 2079; 2012a; Maeir and Ehrlich 2001: 26). The project is universally highly regarded by its peers for utilizing the best methodology, for its prompt and extensive publications, and for its dedication and objectivity in pursuing the truth.

## **Site Description and Discoveries**

Until the current excavations, most, if not all scholars assumed that the built up area of Tell es-Safi in antiquity was confined to the upper tell and did not recognize the existence of a lower city (e.g., Stern 1993b: 1522). They estimated that the city covered only about 150-170 dunams / 15-17 hectares (Maeir 2012b: 97; Uziel and Maeir 2005). In actuality, Tell es-Safi during the Iron Age IIA covered between 100-125 acres (between 40-51 hectares / 400-510 dunams; Maeir 2003: 239, 244; 2008: 2080; 2012b: 97; 2013b: 445-46; Maeir and Ehrlich 2001: 26; Uziel and Maeir 2005: 56) and most likely was the largest city in the entire region during that period and similarly, the most

important Philistine epicenter (Zukerman and Shai 2006: 729). In Maeir's 2003 interim report, (temporary) Stratum 4, subsequently labeled A3, correlated with the ceramic assemblage of Lachish levels V-IV and was assigned to Hazael's destruction. Directly above this stratum and subsequently labeled level A2 was (temporary) Stratum 3, corresponding with the Lachish level III assemblage and probably terminating with Sennacherib's conquest of the city (Maeir 2003: 241-44; 2013a: 199, Table 1; 2013b: 450-51). The built up area of Safi shrank considerably during the eighth century B.C., but nevertheless remained, at 24.5 hectares (60.5 acres), an impressively large city.<sup>177</sup> More importantly, the cultural/regional affinity of the material culture also changed between Iron Age IIA and IIB. Most notably, the Iron Age IIB pottery indicated distinct Judahite influences, such as *lmlk* impressed jar handles, indicated a change in political hegemony as well as the population. "And in fact it appears that in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E, the Judean kingdom had control of this site and its environs" (Maeir 2012a: 62; Uziel and Maeir 2005: 62; 2012: 177). Bliss and Macalister traced and excavated sections of a city wall that seems to conform to the size of the ninth and eighth century B.C. city (Avisar and Maeir 2012: 114-17; Stern 1993b: 1522-24).

## **Hinterland**

An intensive surface survey was conducted at Safi between 1996 and 2001 (Uziel and Maeir 2005; 2012).<sup>178</sup> The results confirmed Safi's role as a border site between the

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<sup>177</sup> See the series of survey maps published by Uziel and Maeir (2005: 55, Fig. 4 and 68, Table 3; 2012: 177 and Plate 8.5A). The Iron Age IIB surface sherd scatter areas show that Safi lost much of its "lower city" to the south, specifically the pocket formed by the crescent-shaped tell, but maintained most of the eastern, northern and northwestern sectors.

<sup>178</sup> Earlier surveys, conducted by Aharoni and Amiran, Dagan and Shavit (2008), among others, were much more cursory (Uziel and Maeir 2005: 52; Maeir 2012b: 100 and references there).

Shephelah of Judah and the Philistine coastal plain. The Iron Age IIB was well represented by 11.5% of all identifiable sherds collected over a 29.5-hectare area. The estimated size of Safi was determined to be 5 hectares less, based upon the migration of sherds due to erosion and agricultural activity (Uziel and Maeir 2005: 68, Table 3 and n. 10; 2012: 173-77 and Table 8.1). Survey results of the hinterland of Safi have not yet been fully published, but a brief report by Dagan (2002: 102, 84\*) reported that six settlements, including several buildings, three farmsteads, seven additional locations with isolated buildings and eleven pottery scatters were datable to the Iron Age IIA-B period. Other installations in the survey area, such as six oil presses, 36 winepresses, and numerous rock-cut basins, cupmarks and kilns were not datable. While Dagan proposes that this evidence reflects Judahite expansion into the region during the eighth century B.C., he does not differentiate between sites with tenth-ninth century B.C. pottery and those with an eighth century B.C. ceramic horizon.

### **The Political Status of Gath at the Time of Hazael**

The tenth and ninth centuries B.C. was the high point of Philistine Gath in terms of size and political influence. Before its destruction by Hazael of Damascus in the late ninth century or very early eighth century B.C. (Chadwick and Maeir 2012: 504-5; Maeir 2012a: 26-49), Gath was the largest city of the Philistine pentapolis and possibly in the entire southern Levant. A number of scholars suggest that Gath controlled much of the Shephelah during the ninth century B.C. (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2011: 42-43; Fantalkin 2008: 30-35; Fantalkin and Finkelstein 2006: 30-31; Maeir 2012a: 26-43; Na'aman 2013: 263-64). The lack of biblical data regarding the relationship of Judah

with Gath during this period may suggest peaceful relations between the two polities (Na'aman 2013: 264-67).

While the Stratum A3 (temporary stratum 4) pottery at Safi includes wares with Judahite orientation, including “pre-*lmlk*” style storage jars (Maeir 2012a: 39; 2013a: 217, 222, Fig. 19; 2013b: 448; Shai and Maeir 2003; 2012: 345-47, 353-58), the coastal forms or “types” are much more numerous. Shai and Maeir (2012: 355) also note that, during the Iron I-IIA and IIC, “the coastal ceramic repertoire was not distinctively different from contemporary assemblages in the Shephelah,” but maintain that the presence of distinctively Philistine forms serves as cultural indicators that point, along with Safi’s location as a border site, to Philistine ethnicity (and assumedly hegemony) until stratum A3’s destruction in the late ninth-very early eighth century B.C.<sup>179</sup>

### **The Hazael Campaign and Its Bearing on 2 Chr 26:6**

The account of Hazael’s capture of Gath, briefly reported in 2 Kgs 12:17 (Hebrew 12:18) and with additional background information about the campaign and its effect on Judah from 2 Chr 24:22-25, raises historical and archaeological questions that relate to Gath in the late ninth and early eighth century B.C. This information has important implications for interpreting the geopolitical status of Gath at the beginning of Uzziah’s reign. Questions focus upon the historicity of the account in Kings, the identity and location of Gath in this passage, the possible link with the mention of Gath in Amos 6:2 and, most importantly, archaeological and chronological issues regarding the Iron Age

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<sup>179</sup> Finkelstein’s (2001; 2002: 139) fanciful suggestion that at the time of Hazael, Gath was possibly a city-state dominated by the Judah-Omride alliance does not rest upon any tangible historical or archaeological basis.

IIA-IIB transition at Safi, specifically the agent responsible for the destruction of Tell es-Safi Stratum A3.

## **Historicity**

While there is no reason to doubt the veracity of the reports in either Kings and Chronicles,<sup>180</sup> it remains rather puzzling as to why the Aramaean ruler Hazael would campaign so far from his homeland, seemingly (by) passing numerous Israelite fortified cities with hardly any mention in the account,<sup>181</sup> to conquer Gath and to threaten Jerusalem.<sup>182</sup> Hazael's earlier military successes in Transjordan (2 Kings 10:32-33; Amos 1:3-5) extended his control as far as the Arnon gorge, providing him with a shorter and much more direct approach to Judah and Jerusalem from the east, via Jericho. Over a century ago, T. K. Cheyne (1913: 137-39) pondered the same question and, based upon the location of Aram-Damascus vis-à-vis Judah and Philistia and 2 Kgs 10:33, proposed that the Gath in 2 Kgs 12:17 actually referred to a site in Gilead in Trans-Jordan, not in Philistia. However, based upon the information in Kings, the more general report in Chronicles (2 Chr 24:23-25), the Tel Dan stele, and, as discussed below, archaeological

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<sup>180</sup> See Ehrlich (1996: 150-53) for textual analysis and discussion of 2 Kgs 12:17 and Rainey's assessment of Chr's account (Aharoni, Avi-Yonah, Rainey and Safrai 2002: 100; Rainey and Notley 2006: 214-15). For the archaeological evidence of a ninth century B.C. Aramean invasion, see Fantalkin and Finkelstein (2006: 21-22 and references there).

<sup>181</sup> The fact that Hazael oppressed Israel is briefly expressed in more theological than geographical terms in 2 Kgs 13:3-7, 22-25 with only a hint that some of the Israelite population was displaced. While this passage may primarily refer to Omride Transjordan, the Tel Dan stele indicates that Aram-Damascus controlled this city during this period (Rainey and Notley 2006: 210-14). Further textual evidence has been demonstrated by Cohen (1965: 155) and archaeological evidence regarding Hazael may derive from Hazor level VII (Aharoni 1979a: 342) as well as other sites.

<sup>182</sup> The LXX (Lucianic) rendering of 2 Kgs 13:22 refers to Hazael's capture of Aphek (probably the Aphek in the Sharon Plain) and part of the Philistine (Western Sea) coastline (Ehrlich 1996: 73, 150-53; Machinist 2000: 56).

evidence from Safi, a western campaign along the coast with an eastern thrust towards Judah remains the preferred model for this military operation.<sup>183</sup>

### **The Location of Gath in the Campaign of Hazael**

Previous scholarship debated whether the Gath captured by Hazael referred to Philistine Gath or Gittaim. B. Mazar (1954: 230-31) proposed Gittaim. Ehrlich (1996: 73-74) prefers relating Gath to a Gittaim located near Aphek. Aharoni (1979a: 342) left the question open. Rainey has identified Hazael's Gath with either Gath Rimmon / Gittaim (1984a: 136; Aharoni, Avi-Yonah, Rainey and Safrai 2002: 100 and Map 133) or Philistine Gath (Rainey 1975b: 73\*; Rainey and Notley 2006: 214-15) and places this action between 798 and late 797 B.C., near the end of the reign of Joash but before Damascus itself was attacked by Adad-nirari III in 796 B.C. Rainey's (Rainey and Notley 2006) final conclusions were apparently based upon archaeological findings at Tell es-Safi. In this view he is followed by Levin (2012: 146).<sup>184</sup> The proposed location for Gath Rimmon (Tel Gerisa) does not exhibit eighth century B.C. occupational evidence and both Gerisa and Gittaim (Tel Ḥamid) are relatively small sites that would hardly qualify as a major military objective for Hazael. Indeed, Tell es-Safi most likely was the largest site in the region at the time and, as Maeir (2013a: 229) states, would have been a prime candidate for subjugation by the Aramaens.<sup>185</sup> Kassis (1965: 263-64)

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<sup>183</sup> Aharoni (1979a: 342), Levin (2012: 146), and B. Mazar (1954: 230-31) note that the LXX version of 2 Kings 13:22 includes mention of Hazael taking all of Philistia from the sea to Aphek.

<sup>184</sup> See further the discussion of Maeir (2012a: 6) as well as Maeir and Gur-Arieh (2011: 229 n. 3) and references cited there.

<sup>185</sup> See also the comments of Niemann (2013: 251-52), who describes Iron Age IIA Gath as "the hub of the Shephelah." However, his statement that Jerusalem at that time belonged to Gath's hinterland (!) and consequently submitted to Hazael without resistance betrays his close association with the "Tel-Aviv School" revisionist ideology.

makes an important, but largely overlooked observation, stating that when mentioned without an appellative, the biblical writers generally intended Gath to refer to Philistine Gath, which played a much larger political role in biblical history than did other cities with Gath in their name. Consequently, historical-geographical evidence once again points to Tell es-Safi.

### **Archaeological Evidence for a Siege by Hazael**

During the preliminary survey of Tell es-Safi, aerial photos revealed a striking monumental “feature” encircling Safi and stretching over 2.5 km. Originally identified by Maeir (Levin 2012: 146; Schniedewind 1998: 73) as an Assyrian siege wall thrown up by Sargon II, Maeir and his colleagues (Maeir 2003: 239-46, 2004a: 323-25; 2008: 2080-81; 2012a: 43-47; 2013a: 229-39; 2013b: 449; Maeir, Ackermann and Bruins 2006: 240; Maeir and Ehrlich 2001:30- 31; Maeir and Gur-Arieh 2011: 227-29; Niemann 2013: 251), following a series of excavation probes, now interpret this “feature” as a siege trench and related berm that was both dug and refilled over a brief period during the late ninth or early eighth centuries B.C.<sup>186</sup> The trench reached an average depth of 5 m. and a width of 4-8 m. The quarried material from the trench was deposited along the edge of the trench away from the city, creating a formidable berm, to which were added structures, perhaps guard towers. Other scanty features in the vicinity of the trench may

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<sup>186</sup> The mention of an apparent defensive moat in the “Letter to God” or “Azekah” inscription, that is related to the conquest of the unnamed “royal city of the Philistines” taken by Judah (Cogan 2008: 208) provides an ample temptation to link with the offensive siege moat at Tell es-Safi/Gath, but the current archaeological evidence dates this monumental feature at Tell es-Safi a century earlier. Perhaps Hezekiah reactivated and enlarged or otherwise developed parts of Hazael’s trench as a *defensive* measure, despite some topographical challenges, if indeed this moat is properly understood as a defensive feature in the inscription. Alternatively, the Assyrians may have seen the (partially filled) moat as an obstacle that they later crossed and utilized as fill for their siege ramps. See further Zukerman and Shai (2006: 753-54).

possibly be remains of siege camps (Maier 2003: 245-46; 2008: 2081; Maier, Ackermann, and Bruins 2006: 240). Maier and others (Levin 2012: 146-47; Maier 2003: 246; 2004a: 323-27; 2008: 2080-81; 2012a; 2013b: 449; Maier, Ackermann, and Bruins 2006: 240; Maier and Ehrlich 2001: 30-31; Maier and Gur-Arieh 2011: 229) attribute this siege wall and trench to Hazael<sup>187</sup> and surmise that the monumental preparation work as well as the siege itself point to a duration of several months, if not years (Maier and Gur-Arieh 2011: 230-31). Moreover, the Zakkur inscription mentions the siege of Hadrach by Hazael's son Bir Hadad, who used a siege trench or moat in his attack (*ANET*: 655-66; Maier 2009; Maier and Ehrlich 2001: 30-31; Rainey and Notley 2006: 220-21). Conversely, Eph'al (2009: 80-81 and n.143) translates and interprets the relevant passage (line 10) from the Zakkur text as a form of tunneling.

Ussishkin (2009b) and other scholars (via personal communication) strongly dispute Maier's interpretation and view the surveyed and excavated siege trench as a natural element in the topography of the site (Ussishkin 2009b: 154). However, Ussishkin's arguments do not seem to presently outweigh the persuasive evidence presented by Maier nor stand against their rebuttal (Maier 2012a: 43-47; Maier and Gur-Arieh 2011: 229-30 n. 4, 238-41).

Consideration that this siege trench may perhaps be linked to the conquest of Gath by Uzziah is a reasonable possibility to consider. Indeed, Lipiński (2006: 81) suggested that the trench was a defensive moat from the mid to late-eighth century B.C. While Lipiński's interpretation and dating makes Uzziah's association with the trench more

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<sup>187</sup> Ussishkin (2009b) strongly disagrees with this view and disputes any link between this feature and Hazael's siege of Tell es-Safi/Gath.



credible, several important factors make this connection extremely unlikely. The relation of the trench to the surrounding topography and the site itself does not befit a defensive feature (Maeir 2012a: 43, n.45; Maeir and Gur-Arieh 2011: 233-34). The pottery from the Stratum A3 destruction level points to a date, at the latest, very early in Uzziah's reign and fits the general time frame of Joash or Amaziah much better. Moreover, that Uzziah possessed the vast resources necessary to carry out such a monumental siege so soon after his accession seems improbable. Maeir (2004a: 326; 2013a: 229) has repeatedly stated that the siege works and investment of Gath demonstrate the actions of a powerful regional polity with far more resources than those possessed by Judah at the time and, of course, the Zakkur inscription seems to confirm the use of siege trenches by the Aramaeans. Indeed, the historical sources clearly show that Hazael's campaign predated both the reigns of Uzziah and Amaziah. While Judah was probably not a notably robust kingdom at the start of Uzziah's reign, it became a very strong polity towards the end of his rule, including his co-regency with Jotham. This is especially evident if one identifies, as we do here, the one remaining reference to *Azriyau* in Assyrian records with Azariah/Uzziah. However, the destruction date of Stratum A3 seems much too early to link with actions during Uzziah's reign and therefore, with the evidence currently at hand, should be associated with Hazael.

### **Excursus Two: Amos 1:6-8, 6:2 and Eighth Century B.C. Gath**

The appearance of Philistia and particularly of Gath in eighth century B.C. prophetic literature provides an important supplementary historical source to understand the geopolitical status of Gath during that tumultuous century. For example, Zukerman and Shai (2006: 739) recently proposed that: "the reappearance of Gath in the eighth

century, in non-folkloristic contexts, is related to the fact that Gath was then a Judahite town, and ceased to carry its former political and symbolic value as a rival of Israel.”

The two texts that are considered here derive from the book of Amos.

According to Amos 1:1, the prophet Amos was active during the reigns of Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam (II) of Israel. According to Rainey (Rainey and Notley 2006: 222), his prophetic career began on or prior to 753 B.C. The prophecies and oracles he spoke during his ministry include important statements concerning Judah’s neighbors, most notably the Philistines. Two passages (Amos 1:6-8 and 6:2) directly or indirectly relate to Philistine Gath and include some potentially important historical information about the geopolitical situation of Gath during the early to mid-eighth century B.C. Most scholars believe these texts not only date to the eighth century B.C., but are contemporary with Amos himself. The literature devoted to these oracles is immense and I have admittedly been selective in my review of this corpus, focusing primarily upon historical-based studies and commentaries. Nevertheless, I am quite confident that all of the main historical interpretations are represented in the discussion that follows.

#### The Absence of Gath in Amos 1:6-8

*Amos 1:6-8: Thus says the LORD: For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because they carried into exile a whole people to deliver them up to Edom. So I will send a fire upon the wall of Gaza, and it shall devour her strongholds. I will cut off the inhabitants from Ashdod, and him that holds the scepter from Ashkelon; I will turn my hand against Ekron and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish,” says the Lord GOD.*

Assuming that the oracle against Philistia does indeed reflect the words of Amos and dates to Uzziah’s reign (Amos 1:1; Andersen and Freedman 1989: 355-56; Barton 1980: 23-24; Ben-Shlomo 2013: 67; Ehrlich 1996: 157; Paul 1991: 16-17; Wolff 1977:

144-51, and others), the text nevertheless remains vague on several points and raises certain historical questions. The absence of Gath from the Philistine cities mentioned in the oracles against the nations in Amos 1:6-8 is both conspicuous and significant. Likewise, the concentration upon Gaza is equally intriguing and potentially more revealing. Regrettably, the text does not provide detailed information to clearly associate this oracle with the activities of Uzziah in Philistia (Andersen and Freedman 1989: 354-57; Barton 1980: 35; Ehrlich 1996: 157; King 1988: 49). Consequently, at least three broad historical scenarios are possible:

Gath was still in ruins as a result of Hazael's conquest (2 Kgs 12:17), or had recovered only as an insignificant satellite or 'vassal' town of Ashdod in the wake of the Aramean destruction. In either case, Gath had become, for Amos, a site undeserving of mention as a separate city. That Amos recognized that Gath was in ruins or under the control of Ashdod is suggested by several scholars (Na'aman 2009: 351; Polley 1989: 77-78; Rainey and Notley 2006: 222; Stuart 1987: 312; Wolff 1977: 158, 274). However, Wolff (1977: 150) doubts that the absence of Gath in Amos 1:6-8 reflects the destruction of the city by Hazael due to the length of elapsed time.

Other scholars believe that Gath was already under Judahite influence or control, either for a long period of time (e.g.: 2 Sam 15:18-22; 2 Chr 11:8), which seems highly unlikely (e.g.: 2 Chr 21:16-17), or had recently come under the control of Judah during the process of Uzziah's subjugation of Philistia (2 Chr 26:6). The presence of Ekron and Ashdod in the oracle therefore suggests that Amos spoke these words while Uzziah advanced into Philistia. If true, Uzziah may have conducted his offensive in stages that covered a considerable period of time. Consequently, while Judah had previously

subdued Gath, Ekron and Ashdod still remained under Philistine control as Amos spoke. This oracle could then be placed during the “interlude” between conquests and would date, according to Wolff (1977: 89-90, 150-51) to ca. 760 B.C., or ca. 750 B.C. as suggested by Bierling (1992: 195) and Yeivin (1979a: 162, 168). If true, this proposal would provide a welcome relative dating for Uzziah’s action, but neither suggestion can be substantiated, despite Yeivin’s attempt to link this oracle with Uzziah’s earthquake, which he dates to 749 B.C. The general view of a “Judahite Gath” is also implied or suggested by numerous scholars (Barton 1980: 23; Cohen 1965: 156-59; Haak 1998: 39; Muntingh 1965: 135, following P. M. Schumpp; Polley 1989: 77-78; Rainey 1975b: 73\*; Soggin 1987: 35-37, following T. H. Robinson; Stuart 1987: 312; Wolff 1977: 149, 158, 274; Zukerman and Shai 2006: 739 n. 34).

On the other hand, the absence of Gath in the oracle may not relate to either an Aramean or Judahite conquest of the city, but rather to other factors of which we can only speculate. Later prophecies regarding Philistia also omit Gaza (Jer 25:20; Zeph 2:4; Zech 9:5-7) and indeed no oracle against Philistia anywhere in prophetic literature names all five Philistine cities (Paul 1991: 16). Polley (1989: 78) observes that “(t)here is no compelling reason... for Amos to have mentioned Gath in this context. From cities mentioned in other oracles, there is no reason to expect an inclusive list here” and therefore the omission of Gath should not be regarded as viable evidence against the authenticity of this oracle. Andersen and Freedman (1989: 27, 259-60, 354-57, 560, 591, 600) date the oracle before Uzziah’s conquest, early in his reign, but sense in the text that, for these nations/states, judgment will occur in totality, not partially. In this case, Gath is represented in 1:8, the all-inclusive Philistine “remnant” (see also Katzenstein

1973: 197 and note 24; Muntingh 1965: 135; Paul 1991: 17, 58-59). Moreover, they expressly note that the appearance of Gath in 6:2 ‘completes’ the list of Philistine epicenters in the oracles. Katzenstein (1973: 135, 197 check) suggests that the remnant refers to the survivors of the destruction of Gath.<sup>188</sup> The later position of Gath as a vassal of Ashdod at the time of Sargon II (*ANET*: 286b) may also explain its absence from this oracle.

Naturally, the few scholars that assign a later date to this passage may attribute the omission of Gath to a prophecy postdating the conquest of Gath by Sargon II in 712-11 B.C. (Aharoni, Avi-Yonah, Rainey and Safrai 2002: 114; *ANET*: 286; Rainey 1975b: 73\*-74\*; Rainey and Notley 2006: 234-38; Tadmor 1958: 83; 2011: 287), such as Muntingh (1965: 135, following the view of A. Weiser). Others date this oracle to the campaign of Nebuchadnezzar II (e.g.: Radine 2010: 178). Indeed, if dating this text was based solely upon archaeological data, a seventh century B.C. context seems to fit especially well, particularly when considering the inclusion of Ekron and the exclusion of Gath. Others admit their uncertainty and answer tentatively or leave the question open (Andersen and Freedman 1989: 354-57; Ehrlich 1996: 157-58; King 1988: 49).

Noth (1960a: 238, 249) argues that Gath was under Judahite control when attacked by Hazael, who, Noth believed, allied himself with the Philistines against Judah. Indeed, the fact that the appellative “Philistine” is omitted from Gath in 2 Kings 12:17 and that Gath is likewise absent from Amos 1:6-8 seems to support Noth’s position. Others either consider or support this interpretation as well (Bright 1981: 255 n. 66;

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<sup>188</sup> Ehrlich (1996: 159) refutes this view, arguing that this statement refers to the total annihilation of the Philistines, not just Gittites; or those living in Gath.

Ehrlich 1996: 74; Haak 1998: 39; and Wolff 1977: 149, 158). However, Levin (2012: 147) argues that the huge size of Safi and the expenditure of so much energy by Hazael to subdue it clearly demonstrate that the city was “the center of a major local polity” and concludes with this observation: “If anything, ninth-century Gath was even more powerful than our sources indicate.” Noth’s Judahite Gath theory must be compared against the material culture unearthed in Safi Stratum A3 and here the answer, while uncertain, seems to favor Philistine ethnicity. Gath was a border site with both coastal and inland pottery, but the majority of recovered Stratum A3 ceramics are coastal forms, so identifying the ethnicity of its population as Judahite and the dominating polity as Judah at this time is somewhat problematic.

Some commentators read Aram for Edom in Amos 1:6 (Barton 1980: 20, 31; Cohen 1965: 159 n.16; Haran 1968: 203-207), which would certainly fit the historical context of the period preceding the prophetic career of Amos.<sup>189</sup> However, Edom admirably fits the criteria of a trade partner with Gaza that brokered in a variety of commodities besides slaves, especially if both polities desired a monopoly on caravan traffic traversing the Arabah, Negeb and Negeb Highlands. Therefore, this suggestion remains largely conjectural.<sup>190</sup> Furthermore, this charge by Amos provides a contemporary glimpse of the strategic and economic value of controlling the trade routes crossing these regions as well as their terminous ports, notably Gaza, but Ashkelon and Ashdod as well, which did not go unnoticed by Judah.

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<sup>189</sup> Haran (1968: 206-207) dates the oracle to the early years of Jeroboam II, before his conquest of Trans-jordan. For the relation of Edom and Philistia, see Tadmor (1966: 89-92); Oded (1979a: 236); Rainey (Rainey and Notley 2006: 222-223) and Hagedorn (2011).

<sup>190</sup> See the discussion by Andersen and Freedman (1989: 259, 292-94), Ehrlich (1996: 156, n. 311) and Gordis (1979).

## The Oracle Against Gath in Amos 6:2

*Amos 6:1-2: Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria; the notable men of the first of the nations, to whom the house of Israel come! Pass over to Calneh, and see; and thence go to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are they better than these kingdoms? Or is their territory greater than your territory...?*

The correct historical context and setting of Amos 6:1 is a highly debated subject in biblical scholarship (Ehrlich 1996: 161-62; Maeir 2004a: 319; Roberts 1985: 155). Nevertheless, as with 1:6-8, most scholars associate this oracle with Amos and correlate his oracle with events in the eighth century B.C. For example, Andersen and Freedman (1989: 461) detect that, since the “Woe” prophetic genre is one of the most ancient, the entire section (Amos 5-6) can safely be attributed to the prophet himself.

While absent in the oracle against Philistia in 1:6-8, the city of Gath does appear here,<sup>191</sup> but shares this context with two cities far to the north in Syria, Calneh and Hamath.<sup>192</sup> Amos specifically names the city Gath of the Philistines, making the city’s

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<sup>191</sup> Rudolph (1971: 216, n. 2a) and Soggin (1987: 103) view Gath of the Philistines as a spurious later addition because, aside from its absence in Amos 1:6, Gath does not match the two cities already mentioned nor appear on an itinerary from south to north. Both scholars argue for its removal from the original message and suggest, as a later addition, the appearance of Gath here is of little historical value. On the contrary, Andersen and Freedman (1989: 561) speculate that Gath in Amos 6:2 represents all of Philistia. Moreover, one must notice the progression from Aram to Philistia in the oracles against the nations in Amos 1:3-8.

<sup>192</sup> Located north of the bend of the Orontes River and usually identified with Tell Ta’yinat, Calneh (*knl / klnh / kinalua*) appears as Calno in Isaiah 10:9 and was capital of the kingdom of Unqi / Patina (*pattinu*) during the ninth and eighth century B.C. Previously, the site was the Northern Sea People (Philistine) capital of the kingdom of Palistin during the eleventh century B.C. (Harrison 2001; 2009: 175, 179, 187; Hawkins 2009: 171-72). Hamath (Numbers 34:8; Joshua 13:5; 2 Kgs 14:25-28) is located in the central Orontes valley north of Damascus. In an as yet undated text, Hazael received tribute from the land of Unqi as well as the neighboring kingdom of Arpad and apparently annexed part of its territory as well. Hazael’s son, Bar-Hadad (alternatively Ben-Hadad or Bir-Hadad) besieged Hadrach (possibly Tell Afis) in the late ninth century B.C. According to Na’aman (2002: 211-12; 2006a: 50-51 with further references), Hamath was conquered by Hazael and subsequently ruled by a usurper named Zakkur, who transferred his capital to Hadrach. Both Calneh and Hamath were later conquered by Tiglath-pileser III in ca. 739-738 B.C. Calneh (*kullani*) was made into an Assyrian province and Hamath restored as a capital, but left as a much smaller kingdom. Successive revolts by Hamath in 720 B.C. and Calneh in 717 B.C. against Assyria were unsuccessful (ANET: 282-84; Noth 1966: 261; Paul 1991: 201-3 and notes 14-25; Roberts 1985: 158 and notes 14-20; Soggin 1987: 102-3). The mention of Hamath and Calno in Isaiah 10:9 is notable, but the

identification with Tell es-Safi nearly certain, as opposed to the several other cities with the same toponym in the southern Levant. However, at this juncture scholarly interpretations differ widely, despite the information provided by the text. The various questions raised by this passage are summarized and discussed below.

### The Date of the Oracle and Amos' Audience

Determining the likely *Sitz im Leben* of the oracle would understandably shed much needed light on the cities mentioned in and the meaning of this oracle. Indeed, if Amos threatened the elites and nobility of Israel and Judah as well as the very existence of the kingdoms themselves by utilizing examples of neighboring kingdoms doubtlessly familiar to his audience, then placing a relative dating for these destructions, particularly of Gath, is of great significance. However, the chronology and longevity of Amos' prophetic ministry is debated and scholarly opinions vary widely. While many scholars date this message as originally spoken by Amos at some point in the first half of the eighth century B.C., others date the oracle after the death of Uzziah, either delivered by Amos or one of his disciples. For example, Andersen and Freedman (1989: 558-59; 591-600) consider a date of ca. 780-760 B.C., before Israel under Jeroboam and Judah under Uzziah reached the height of their expansion, and almost certainly not after ca. 750 B.C. as the likely historical setting for this oracle.<sup>193</sup> However, Israelite occupation of the

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context seems to refer to circumstances after the fall of Samaria (Andersen and Freedman 1989: 558-59). For discussion of these two cities during the eighth century B.C, see also Ikeda (2003). For a survey of the sweeping geographic scope of the oracles in Amos, see van Selms (1965b).

<sup>193</sup> Despite D. N. Freedman's unrivaled reputation as an editor *par excellence* for biblical studies, Andersen and Freedman give conflicting conclusions regarding the exact chronology and geopolitical setting of this oracle. On the one hand they note that consideration must be given to dating this oracle before the conquests of Jeroboam II and Uzziah. The oracle would therefore be placed approximately from 785-765 B.C. They state: "In other words, Amos' view of the northern kingdom (and likely the south) had been fixed long before anything had happened: neither the expansion by conquest nor certainly the later tragic loss of nationhood and territory is evident in his words" (Andersen and Freedman 1989: 591). One



Trans-jordanian cities of Lo-Dabar and Qarnaim (Amos 6:13) suggest this process was already underway, while the reference “from Lebo-Hamath to the Wadi Arabah” in 6:14 seem to reflect Jeroboam’s Israel (with the probable support of Judah) at its full extent. On the other hand, Roberts (1985: 158-59) proposes that the ministry of Amos extended to 738 B.C. and possibly later, as reflected by his own interpretation of the events in this oracle. Likewise, Haran (2008: 255) argues that Amos prophesied for a long period of time, not only during the reign of Jeroboam II, but down to the first deportation of Tiglath-pileser III (2 Kgs 15:29) after the submission of Menahem. Accordingly, some scholars (Stuart 1987: 358) date the oracle before the conquest of Tiglath-pileser III in 738-734 B.C. Wolff (1977: 89-90; 150-51; 274-77) suggests a date of ca. 760 B.C. for the original oracle, which he submits was then “reinterpreted” about 738-733 B.C. Others date the oracle to the last quarter of the eighth century B.C. (Harper 1905: 146; Noth 1966: 261-62).

Some scholars suggest that Amos addressed Israel (Samaria) exclusively (Haak 1998: 39; Wolff 1977: 274) or that Amos only spoke to the northern kingdom initially, but that perhaps the received text is a later (ca. early sixth century B.C.) rereading that transferred the oracle to the south (Soggin 1987: 102-4; Wolff 1977: 89-90; 269-70; 274-75), which would greatly limit its use for historically reconstructing the geopolitical situation of Amos’ own day.<sup>194</sup> Andersen and Freedman (1989: 552, 558-59, 593) view

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the other hand, they later apparently adjust the time to an early phase of the campaigns when national rejoicing over the initial Israelite and Judahite victories (at Lo-Dabar and Qarnaim) were taking place (Andersen and Freedman 1989: 592-95). Likewise, they first suggest that Gath had already fallen, but later argue that Gath was still standing when Amos wrote the oracle (Andersen and Freedman 1989: 559, 595). They (Andersen and Freedman 1989: 600) further suggest that the oracles in Amos chapters 1 and 6 only make sense if they were uttered before the expansion and conquest of Judah under Uzziah.

<sup>194</sup> Wolff (1977: 275) speculates that a disciple of Amos spoke this oracle when he addressed a group of Israelites on a pilgrimage to the Beer-Sheba sanctuary.

Amos 6:2 as an interpolation or intrusion during an oracle addressed to Israel, but authentic to Amos.

If we accept the reading of “Zion” in Amos 6:1, the oracle critiques both Judah and Israel. Zion has always been referred historically and symbolically as Jerusalem, and other references to Judah (e.g.: 1:2, 2:4-5, 9:11) as well as to David in Amos 6:5, demonstrating that Amos did not restrict his message to Israel, but drew Judah into his address (2 Sam 5:7; 1 Chr 11:5; Rainey 1984a: 243-47; Roberts 1985: 157, 160). More specifically, many scholars argue that Amos spoke expressly to the elite classes and nobility of both Judah (Zion) and Israel (Samaria) with accusing words that strongly imply a decadent society (Andersen and Freedman 1989: 550-54; Daiches 1915: 563; Harper 1905: 143; Paul 1991: 199-200; Roberts 1985: 160; Stuart 1987: 358-59), which, for Judah, may also be linked with a false “Royal Zion” theology.<sup>195</sup> Moreover, Andersen and Freedman (1989: 551-52, 596) and Roberts (1985: 160-61) believe both nations are treated as a single entity in a nod to their shared past and future. The future is shown by Isaiah’s (9:1-7) promise of a new glorified Zion whose light shines on the northern regions. The expansion of Judah during the reign of Uzziah undoubtedly revived a hope of a neo-Davidic empire. Likewise, a shared military victory celebration held at Bethel and attended by nobles from both kingdoms, which Andersen and Freedman (1989: 551-52) suggest provides the rather dramatic setting for this text, would

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<sup>195</sup> Campbell’s (1994) study of an elite eighth century B.C. domestic structure (House 1727) at Shechem offers an archaeologically-attested example of a residence typical of those inhabited by Israel’s (and Judah’s) nobility that Amos spoke against. An important observation by Wolff (1977: 277), Roberts (1985: 161) and Paul (1991: 200) that exemplifies the sarcasm of Amos regards two words that form an inclusio (6:1-7): Just like the nobles of the choicest or foremost (רֵאשִׁית) of nations, such as Tutamu from Calneh, the aristocracy from Israel and Judah will be deported at the head (רֵאשִׁית) of the exiles! Roberts (1985: 155-58), developing an earlier suggestion by Rudolph (1971: 215), emends the text of 6:1 by repointing and substituting a *waw* for a *yodh* to read as second masculine plural imperatives: “*Mark the foremost of the nations, and go to them, O house of Israel.*”

further promote this view.<sup>196</sup> Similarly, the rather smug depiction of Judah's nobility may rather reflect unspecified, but perhaps recently completed or ongoing military campaigns of territorial expansion by Israel and Judah as well.

The described decadence of Israel's and Judah's nobility and elites, who were "luxuriating in good fortune, prosperity, and security," provides a context that can only be dated during the first half (or the late first or second quarter) of the eighth century B.C., during the long and prosperous reigns of Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel (Cohen 1965: 153; Paul 1991: 203; Soggin 1987: 105; Zukerman and Shai 2006: 739).<sup>197</sup>

#### Comparisons of These Cities with Israel and Judah

The question is summarized best by Ehrlich (1996: 161): "Is this verse a simple comparison of cities arbitrarily chosen because they were roughly equivalent in size, or wealth, or power? Or does this oracle list these cities in unison because of a common shared fate?" Whether the three cities were chosen at random as representative of a larger group, or whether they were selected strategically for a special purpose indeed remains an open question (Andersen and Freedman 1989: 561), but all three occupied important strategic positions in their respective region(s) and that may be precisely why Tiglath-pileser III later captured or destroyed them. The comparison reflects an object lesson with a message that these cities are not essentially different from Israel and Judah in wealth and size. Because their current status and condition were largely equivalent, the prophetic implication was that these kingdoms can expect to share a similar fate. As

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<sup>196</sup> They do not, however, cite the observations of Noth (1968: 36-38) here regarding equating the message of "man of God" (1 Kgs 13) at Bethel with that of Amos the Prophet.

<sup>197</sup> The famous "beds of ivory" (6:4) of course are archaeologically attested at Samaria (see conveniently A. Mazar 1990a: 408-409; 503-505 and references there).

the text stands, the intention is not to elevate one group over the other or to denigrate one as inferior to the other but to indicate that they are not better or worse than the others.

Israel is not essentially different from these other nation-states and therefore can expect to share a similar destiny (Andersen and Freedman 1989: 558-59, 591-600; King 1989a; 1989b).

Some scholars believe that Amos was comparing the military prowess to offer resistance or giving a rebuttal to those who either saw a much weakened Israelite kingdom as too insignificant to warrant Assyrian attention, as suggested by Wolff (1977: 275) or to those who saw a resurgent Israel and Judah as too secure in their economic power and military strength to notice, let alone to face their own social atrocities and religious hypocrisy.

According to Paul (1991: 204), Amos carefully chose these cities with geographic intentionality and effect as three formerly powerful, now ruined city-states that bordered Israel to the north (Calneh and Hamath) and south (Gath of the Philistines), symbolizing the vulnerability of Israel (and Judah) despite their current military conquests and economic prosperity. Andersen and Freedman (1989: 552, 592-93) view Amos 6:2 as an invitation for the nobles of Israel and Judah to compare their own capitals of Samaria and Jerusalem by going to and observing these three cities, which are vulnerable and whose destruction is either imminent or has already occurred. The fate of these three cities will be shared by Samaria and Jerusalem. Gath had already fallen to Uzziah, while Calneh and Hamath would be captured by the Assyrians in the future (Andersen and Freedman 1989: 559). Later, they state that: "...we are convinced that v 2 makes the point that the cities, all five of them, are in the same situation and may well experience the same

destiny, but that what may happen has not yet come to pass, and therefore Amos' statement precedes the capture or destruction of any of them" (Andersen and Freedman 1989: 597).

An entirely different interpretation was offered by Daiches (1915: 563) a century ago. He suggested that Amos' words did not warn of a similar catastrophic fate for Israel and Judah, but rather referred merely to a comparison of the nobility (טוֹבִים) and their estates from these three city-states to lands administered by Israel's and Judah's aristocracy. Daiches translates Amos 6:2 as follows: "Pass over to Calneh and see, and go thence to Hamath the great (and see), and go down to Gath of the Philistines (and see) the good (prosperous) ones (i.e. the nobles) of these kingdoms (and see) whether their border (their estates) is greater than your border (your estates)" While attractive and plausible, especially since Amos was targeting the elites and nobility of Israel and Judah with his message, the tone of Amos' words and the evidence from Tell es-Safi seems to favor the traditional understanding of this verse over that proposed by Daiches.

#### The Geopolitical Status of Gath, Calneh and Hamath

Stuart (1987: 358-59) views an implied association of Gath with Zion (Judah) and holds that the city was under long term (800-734 B.C.) Judahite domination thus inferring that Uzziah (re) conquered the city. Similarly, Calneh and Hamath were under Israelite control (2 Kgs 14:25, 28; Amos 6:14). Moreover, Haak (1998: 39) and Stuart (1987: 312) assume that the absence of Gath in Amos 1:6-8 implies that the city was already under Judahite control, especially if the oracle dates to ca. 760 B.C. (following Wolff 1977: 89-90, 150-51), but it could also reflect a city in such a destroyed state that it was no longer a threat and thus unworthy of mention when Amos spoke these words. The

line of march indicated in the passage points to an invasion from the northeast, from which either Aram Damascus or Assyria would approach, yet the biblical sources state that Hamath fell under the influence of Israel (2 Kgs 14:25) and Gath was dominated by Judah (2 Chr 26:6).

Amos appears to demonstrate that Israel and Judah are neither better nor larger or more impressive than these three notable city-states are (or once were, but perhaps fell under Israelite and Judahite control). Consequently, if these three cities could be destroyed, so can Samaria and Jerusalem. Consequently, there is simply no place for the false security that still pervaded the nobility of these two kingdoms. Nor should Judah and Israel have priority over others (Roberts 1985: 159; Stuart 1987: 359).

Some scholars view the literary context of Amos 6:2 to be properly understood as cities not yet conquered. Stuart (1987: 358) argues that the language does not imply that these cities have already fallen. Andersen and Freedman (1989: 593-99) note that no clear indication exists in the text as to whether they are destroyed, only that they are to be compared with Israel and Judah in wealth and size. The implication is that the same fate, their conquest by an unnamed foreign state, awaits all of them. Hence, they suggest that the cities fell after the oracle was delivered.

However, most scholars believe the context of Amos 6:2 should be understood as cities already destroyed (Harper 1905: 144-45; Maeir 2004a; Na'aman 2002: 210-12; 2006a: 50-51; Paul 1991: 203-4; Wolff 1977: 274). Rainey links Amos 6:2 to 1:6-8, noting that "Amos refers to Gath as an example of a mighty stronghold that has succumbed to siege (Amos 6:2) by Hazael (2 Kgs 12:18; 2 Chr 24:23), and his own oracle against the leading towns of Philistia includes only Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon and

Ekron (Amos 1:6-8).” However, the mention of Gath, which Rainey identifies with Tell es-Safi, in the records of Sargon II demonstrates that the city had recovered, but was in a subordinate position to Ashdod (Rainey 1975b: 73\*-74\*; Rainey and Notley 2006: 222). Haak (1998: 39) links Amos 6:2 to 9:8 as well as 1:6-8. He observes that Amos 9:8 implies that Philistia already underwent destruction and hence interprets the status of Gath in 6:2 similarly.

### Identifying the Destructive Agent(s) for These Cities

Scholars offer a wide variety of agents as candidates for the destruction of one or more of these three cities referred to by Amos. Suggestions range from Shalmaneser III in the ninth century B.C. to Sennacherib and even later kings such as Nebuchadnezzar in the seventh century B.C. The three most likely agents are listed below along with their respective evidence.

#### **Aram-Damascus (Hazeal)**

Many scholars that believe the oracle refers to Hazeal (Aharoni 1979a: 382 n. 60; Maeir 2003: 244; 2004a: 327-28; 2013b: 443; Na’aman 1996: 176-77; 2002: 210-12; 2006a: 49-51; Noth 1960a: 238, 249; Paul 1991: 201-4; Rainey and Notley 2006: 222; Zukerman and Shai 2006: 739).<sup>198</sup> Na’aman (2002: 210-12; 2006a: 49-51), followed by Maeir (2004a: 320-28) argues that Amos 6:2 reports a late ninth century or early eighth century B.C. setting, in the wake of the Aramaean destruction of Gath, Calneh and Hamath. Hazeal is chosen while Uzziah is dismissed as the agent responsible for the

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<sup>198</sup> Andersen and Freedman (1989: 245) recognize the possibility that Amos 6:2 may reflect the boundaries of Hazeal’s empire.

destruction of Stratum A3 at Gath by Maeir (2004a: 326; Maeir and Gur-Arieh 2011: 236), due to the immense size of the city and the corresponding siege works (also discussed above), which Maeir views as beyond the capabilities of Judah or any other regional polity. Maeir's conclusion has merit, not because he sees Judah as intrinsically incapable of such large scale measures, but rather due to the late Iron Age IIA pottery associated with the siege trench and Safi's corresponding destruction layer. To correlate this destruction with Uzziah demands a date very early in his reign (during his co-regency with Amaziah), which is possible, but very unlikely, given Judah's weakened status after Amaziah's defeat at Beth Shemesh and Jehoash's sacking of Jerusalem. Rebuilding Jerusalem's defenses and raising an army were serious issues to rectify before committing Judah's resources to territorial expansion. Na'aman bases his conclusion in part on the absence of Gath in the records of Tiglath-pileser III and the city's later status as a lowly border town of Ashdod in the inscriptions of Sargon II. Another conjectural view is that Judah aided Hazael in the siege and destruction of Gath early in Uzziah's co-regency with his father and thus the young Judahite king claimed a role in Gath's demise.

### **Judah and Israel (Uzziah and Jeroboam II)**

Many scholars assign this oracle to the actions of Uzziah (Andersen and Freedman 1989: 19, 138, 559, 592-95; Barton 1980: 23; Haak 1998: 39; Macalister 1914: 62-63, 72-73; Myers 1965b: 149 n. 6; Paul 1991: 203-4; Roberts 1985: 158, 163-64 n. 16; Stuart 1987: 359). Stuart (1987: 358-59) argues that the mention of "Zion" in Amos 6:1 seems to imply, if not support Chr's account of Gath's previous capitulation to Uzziah and if Gath was already under Judahite control, this would nicely account for its omission in Amos 1:6-8. Andersen and Freedman (1989: 593, 599) and Bierling (1992: 195)



suggest that Hamath and possibly Calneh were conquered by Jeroboam II (2 Kgs 14:25) and Gath by Uzziah (2 Chr 26:6). Roberts (1985: 158, 163-64, n. 16) not only links the destruction of Gath to actions by Uzziah, but connects the other two cities to the Assyrian response against his coalition (*Azriyau* = Azariah/Uzziah). The mention of Calneh and Hamath does not yet provide a definitive chronological solution to the problem, although both were subdued by Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II. The only known sequence of events that include these three cities falls immediately before and during the Assyrian campaign against the coalition led by *Azriyau* that ended with the Assyrian capture of Calneh (*kullani / kinalu*) in 738 B.C. The reduction of all three of these cities can be tied to Judah's growing power under Uzziah and his ultimately futile attempt to halt Assyrian expansion in the Levant (Roberts 1985: 158). If Uzziah and *Azriyau* are synonymous, the only hint of his coalition in the biblical text is the enigmatic phrase "to Judah in Israel" found in 2 Kgs 14:25. Apparently Judah, by ways and means thus far unknown, "inherited" the dominant position of Israel after the death of Jeroboam II, including, to some extent, control over Hamath and other kingdoms of north-central Syria. Why Chr omitted this momentous affair from his account may be explained by the fact that this foreign policy development and military clash occurred near the end of Uzziah's life, during his co-regency with his son Jotham and after being stricken with a skin disease. This chain of events would have been neither particularly supportive nor compatible with Chr's theological emphasis on immediate retribution. The Assyrians wrote their accounts on the basis that Uzziah (*Azriyau*) was still ruling when in fact Jotham probably held the reigns of power (although the aging Uzziah may have played an advisory role of a co-regent). If this reconstruction is accurate, the reference to an *Azriyau* led coalition in

Tiglath pileser III's records was an Assyrian intelligence failure analogous to the "Jehu son of Omri" inscription of Shalmaneser III.

### **Assyria (Tiglath-pileser III or Sargon II)**

The mention of the destruction of Gath has been assigned to Tiglath-pileser III or Sargon II by Radine (2010: 56-60) and Wolff (1977: 274-75). The serious drawbacks of this position are amply exposed by Andersen and Freedman (1989: 596-600) and Paul (1991: 201-204).

### Conclusions

The oracles of Amos provide important information, but their interpretation and its placement in the proper historical milieu are problematic. The tantalizing clues Amos provides remain inconclusive in terms of the geopolitical status of Judah during Uzziah's reign. That the stinging words of Amos testify either to the past, recent past or forthcoming destruction of these three great cities (but not necessarily by the same agent) has been by and large accepted by most scholars.<sup>199</sup> Some of them (Ehrlich 1996: 162; Haak 1998: 39-40 and n. 5; Roberts 1985: 158; Rudolph 1971: 219) willingly admit that, despite our extensive knowledge of the eighth century B.C., the records we possess are still too fragmentary and lack historical and chronological clarity to provide definitive answers to these questions and consequently leave them open due to the lack of more corresponding data. Some concede that the exact historical setting for these oracles may

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<sup>199</sup> For a survey of earlier, critical views on this verse, see Daiches (1915) and Harper (1905: 142-46) and references there. The classical interpretation is best stated by Roberts (1985: 159): "Verse 2b brings out the point of this visit to these famous and once powerful cities. Israel and Judah are neither better nor larger than these notable states once were, hence if these states could be destroyed, reduced, or robbed of their independence, so can Israel and Judah. There is no rational basis for the false sense of security that still pervaded the ruling classes in the two states."

never be known (Paul 1991: 56, 203). Consequently, any proposed resolution for the historical setting for these oracles must remain tentative. Nevertheless, careful consideration of the content; information and names expressed as well as those that are absent in these oracles, is essential when attempting to place them in a particular historical context. For example, the fact that Assyria is nowhere explicitly named in his oracles is significant and strongly supports an early or mid-eighth century B.C. date for Amos (Muntingh 1965: 134).<sup>200</sup>

Likewise, the historical background regarding an oracle against Gath in Amos 6:2 is debated. The text warns Israel to consider the (assumed) similar fates of Calneh, Hamath the Great and Gath of the Philistines with the approaching “evil day” they will soon face. The oracle shows close similarity with Isaiah 10:9, which compares Calno with Carchemish and Hamath with Arpad, but then differs by comparing Samaria with Damascus. While the text seems to suggest that a single agent was responsible for the destruction of all three cities, this is uncertain. As Haak (1998: 39-40 n. 5) concludes, further archaeological and historical information concerning the fate of Calneh and Hamath in the eighth century B.C. and about the fate of Gath is necessary to clarify the situation. Furthermore, the date of this oracle is contested as well. The two most probable theories are Hazael’s campaign in ca. 835-797 B.C. (Maeir 2004a; Na’aman 2002: 210-12; 2006a: 49-51) or the destructions by Tiglath pileser III in 738 B.C. after defeating Azriyau’s coalition (Radine 2010: 56-60). Others suggest links to destructions as early as Shalmaneser III (Paul 1991: 203) or as late as Sargon II. That Amos 6:2

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<sup>200</sup> Urartu, not Assyria, was the dominant power to the north during the reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam II (Cohen 1965: 158-59; Rainey and Notley 2006: 215-16).

corresponds with Uzziah's actions is possible, but very improbable due to the theological impact of Amos' message to his audience. Ehrlich (1996: 76) actually claims that any attempt to link the total destruction of Gath in Amos 6:2 with 2 Chr 26:6 is nothing less than an example of eisegesis.

While no scholarly consensus exists regarding the agent responsible for Philistine Gath's destruction alluded to in Amos 6:2 or the reason(s) behind its absence from the oracle in Amos 1:6-8, the archaeological evidence unearthed at Tell es-Safi, according to its excavator, seems to point strongly towards the destruction of Gath by Hazael, rather than Uzziah or another agent (Maier 2004a: 323).

### **Historical Background**

While biblical records are largely silent regarding relations between Philistia and Judah in the century prior to Uzziah, a few significant events must be noted. First, the Philistine border city of Gibbethon, identified with either Tel Ḥamid or Tel Malot (Wolff and Shavit 2008), was besieged at least twice by the kingdom of Israel (1 Kgs 15:27; 16:15-18), perhaps to gain a foothold on the coastal plain as well as control a sector of the hinterland of Yavneh and perhaps Joppa (Timm 1980: 38-40). Both recorded sieges were abandoned due to internal power struggles within Israel. The only recorded event between Judah and Philistia was Jehoshaphat's receipt of gifts and silver listed as tribute from some of the Philistines as well as large herds from the Arabs (2 Chr 17:10-11). While the inland Philistine cities of Ekron and Gath may have been dominated by Judah from time to time due to their proximity to the border, the lack of evidence from historical sources, and more importantly, Gath's immense size and predominantly Philistine material culture during this period makes this supposition extremely unlikely.

Perhaps what is more significant and interesting in this short account is Judah's domination over both some of the Philistines and the Arabs, a scenario that strikingly foreshadows Uzziah's actions. The revolt of Libnah against Judah (2 Kgs 8:22) during the reign of Jehoram (853-841 B.C.; Thiele 1965: 205), may well have occurred with assistance from nearby Gath, in conjunction with Edom and their Arab allies.<sup>201</sup> While not directly related to Judah's expansion a century and a half later, these events provide a precedent for later territorial clashes that occurred at the western edge of the Shephelah and beyond.

### **Gath During the Early to Mid-Eighth Century B.C.**

According to Maeir and his staff (Maeir 2012a: 49, 62; 2013b: 449; Zukerman and Shai 2006: 730), Tell es-Safi remained in an abandoned state, with both fully collapsed and at least partially intact and standing buildings, for an undetermined period of time following Hazael's destruction. Maeir and his colleagues reached this conclusion by observing accumulations of wind-blown sediment and washed-away decayed brick material immediately above the destruction level, as well as the presence of apparently unburied skeletal remains, suggesting that the site was at least partially or perhaps completely abandoned for an extended period of time, possibly for decades, in the aftermath of Hazael's campaign. The importance of determining the exact date of

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<sup>201</sup> During the reign of Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram, the Edomites and Libnah (2 Chr 21:8-10), as well as the Philistines and the Arabs (probably including the Me'unites; Rainey and Notley 2006: 206; 2 Kgs 8:22; 2 Chr 21:16-17) successfully revolted and invaded Judah. These setbacks are paralleled by similar events that occurred during the reign of Ahaz, Uzziah's and Jotham's successor. Ehrlich (1996: 72) notes that aid and protection may have been offered, if not given to Libnah (Tel Burna; Aharoni 1979: 219; 332; 353; 403; 439; Rainey and Notley 2006: 127) by one of the Philistine cities, the closest was Gath. While conjectural, this is a significant observation because it hints that Gath was outside of Judah's control after the mid-ninth century B.C.

Hazael's campaign, which is disputed, becomes quite clear in attempting to reconstruct Gath in the early to mid-eighth century B.C. Maeir (2012a: 47-49; 2013b: 443, 447, 449) makes a strong case for dating the fall of Gath to ca. 835-830 B.C., but apparently does not consider Chr's (2 Chr 24:23-25) account of Hazael's venture into the Shephelah and Judah. While Chr does not specifically mention Hazael's conquest of Gath, Rainey (Aharoni, Avi-Yonah, Rainey and Safrai 2002: 100; Rainey and Notley 2006: 214-15) argues that his account, which includes information that has every indication of deriving from an archival source, preserves a more faithful and detailed account of the entire situation than does Kings. Accepting the veracity of both 2 Kgs 12:17 and Chr's version of Hazael's campaign, a date of ca. 798-797 B.C., near the end of Joash's reign, but before Adad-Nirari III's 796 B.C. campaign, is much more likely, if not necessary.

Evidence of earthquake damage in Area F follows this period of abandonment (Chadwick and Maeir 2012: 504, Figure 3; Maeir 2012a: 49 and Figure 1.29; 2012c; 2013b: 450). The collapse of a 20-meter-long mudbrick wall revealed a major seismic event at the site, which is undoubtedly linked to the massive earthquake reported by Amos (1:1) and Zechariah (14:5) and alluded to by Isaiah (2:10-21; Hudon 2010a: 39, n. 20).

Maeir and his staff (Chadwick and Maeir 2012: 512; Maeir 2012a: 49-51; 2012c; 2013a: 233; Maeir and Uziel 2007: 35; Zukerman and Shai 2006: 729-31) have consistently reported that Tell es-Safi continued to be settled during the Iron Age IIB, but on a much more limited scale, spreading over most of the upper mound, and perhaps beyond as well. The finds from the survey indicate that during the Iron Age IIB, although the occupational area was still very large (ca. 23-25 hectares), it was

substantially smaller than in the preceding stratum.<sup>202</sup> This is also indicated by the excavations. No signs of Iron Age IIB occupation were exposed in the lower city, notably in Area D (Maeir 2012a: 49). Bliss and Macalister (1902: 119-21) reported typical Iron Age IIB finds, including several *lmlk*-stamped jar handles, from their excavation on the summit of the site. The current excavations have likewise exposed strata with Iron Age IIB finds, including pottery similar to the Lachish Stratum III assemblage both in the eastern part of the tell (Area A, Stratum A2) and near (just to the NW of) its summit (Area F).<sup>203</sup> It is particularly noteworthy that the finds from these levels seem to show a close relationship to Judah since the majority of the pottery assemblages are inland (Judahite) as opposed to coastal (Philistine) types, strongly indicating that during the Iron Age IIB, or certain phases thereof, the site was under the control of Judah, which correlates well with the historical and biblical sources relating to Gath during this century (Avisar and Maeir 2012: 378-79; Maeir 2008: 2080-82; Zukerman and Shai 2006: 730-31). Maeir (2013a: 233) explains: “Although the remains were not as impressive as in the previous stratum, nevertheless, the material culture of this level facilitated a clear definition of its character... In stark contrast to the earlier Iron Age levels ...the finds from Temporary Stratum 3 (A2) appear to be of a predominantly Judean character.” The diagnostic finds include “folded-rim” bowls, a “pinched” pillar figurine and other forms similar to Lachish level III as well as Judahite (four-room house) architecture, which is constructed at a slightly different orientation

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<sup>202</sup> See especially Uziel and Maeir (2005: 55, Figure 4, 62; 2012: 174-77 and Plate 8.5A) for figures and survey maps.

<sup>203</sup> See the stratigraphic chart and discussion by Maeir (2012a: 11 Figure 1.3, 49-56), an earlier summary by Maeir (2008: 2080) that reported patchy eighth century B.C. remains in Area A and now the summary treatment of Area F in Chadwick and Maeir (2012).

compared to the stratum A3 walls (Maeir 2012a: 50; 2013a: 233; Zukerman and Maeir 2012: 206-9 and Figure 9.4; Zukerman and Shai 2006: 730-32). Maeir concludes that, based on the regional characteristics of the finds, as well as the *lmlk* stamps found in the earlier excavations, it appears that the site was occupied by the Judahites during the late eighth century B.C., after Hazael's destruction of Philistine Gath (Maeir 2003: 244; 2008: 2080; 2012a: 6-7, 50-51, 62; 2013a: 233; 2013b: 450; Na'aman 1986b: 10-11; Uziel and Maeir 2005: 62). Maeir (2012a: 51) interprets the finds from A2 chronologically: "The post-Hazael sequence at the site can be summarized as such: 1) After the destruction of Gath by Hazael, the site was left abandoned for a period of time, during which some of the walls of the buildings were still standing; 2) In the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E, these remaining walls collapsed due to the earthquake; 3) Towards the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E, most likely at the beginning of the final quarter of that century, Gath was occupied by the Judahite kingdom and this occupation level was destroyed; 4) Another Judahite oriented level dating to the late 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E is seen on the site, which was destroyed as well (by Sennacherib in 701 B.C.)."

The most likely background for the change in the cultural affiliation seen in these two late 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E levels at Tell es-Safi/Gath – from Philistine/coastal in the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E, to Judahite/inland in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E, is most probably the expansion of Judahite influence, presence, and political control into the western Shephelah and eastern Philistia towards the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. The evidence – biblical, Assyrian and archaeological – for the westward expansion of the Kingdom



Judah during the reign of Hezekiah is well known...” and thus Maeir seems to attribute the Judahite material culture of this stratum to Hezekiah alone.<sup>204</sup>

Subsequently, Chadwick and Maeir (2012: 512) offered another, slightly (but significantly) different assessment of eighth century B.C. Gath after a study of the successive phases of Area F, which moved the initial phase of Judahite settlement back to the mid-eighth century B.C.: 1) The Iron Age IIA structures of Strata A3 and F9 are destroyed during the second half of the ninth century B.C. and abandoned for several decades, 2) Judahite activity at the site commenced during the mid-eighth century B.C., denoted by the excavators as Stratum F8 (Chadwick and Maeir 2012: 508, fig. 8). A terrace wall was built to surround and cover ruins of the previous level then filled to provide a platform for construction of a new “terrace house,” 3) According to the excavators, the construction of the new “terrace house” on the terrace surface was of the typical four-room Judahite style with an adjacent “kitchen-bakery” and lot of strewn and broken pottery similar to those of Lachish III, 4) An event occurred sometime later in the eighth century B.C. that ended occupation of the terrace house. According to Chadwick and Maeir (2012: 513), this event was the capture of Gath and deportation of its residents by Sargon II, 5) The terrace house was reoccupied, resurfaced, and refurbished commencing a new occupational phase denoted by the excavators as stratum F7 (Chadwick and Maeir 2012: 507, fig. 7). A new, more modest kitchen installation was built on a new surface, 6) The adjacent lot with its broken and strewn pottery was

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<sup>204</sup> See now his most recent summaries (Maeir 2012d: 393-98; 2013b: 450) where Maeir again attributes both phases of A2 (F8 and F7) to late eighth century B.C. Judahite control, thus implying hegemony under Hezekiah rather than Uzziah. “...it appears that the site might have been culturally and politically controlled by the late eighth-century B.C.E. Judahite kingdom... most probably (occurring during) the expansion of the Judahite kingdom into the western Shephelah and eastern Philistia...”

covered with soil and a lower house was constructed, again in the four room style, and using the terrace wall as base of one of its walls. The recovered pottery again paralleled that of Lachish III, 7) An event occurred at the end of the eighth century B.C. that brought an end to the occupation of the terrace house and lower house and of Stratum F7. A portion of the lower house was destroyed and burned. This evidence, according to Chadwick and Maeir, relates to the 701 B.C. campaign of Sennacherib and they follow those suggesting that a missing place name on the well known Assyrian “Letter to God” or “Azekah” inscription refers to Sennacherib’s conquest of Gath (Chadwick and Maeir 2012: 512, 514-15; Na’aman 1974; 2005: 135-52 or see Cogan 2008: 107-9; Zukerman and Shai 2006: 745-59; for alternative views).

However, there are several problems with this historical interpretation of eighth century B.C. Gath and most of these directly relate to a lack of conclusive knowledge regarding both exact chronology about specific eighth century B.C. events at the site and their correlation to historical sources.

#### An undetermined date for Hazael’s Destruction

While both Maeir and Rainey present excellent arguments to support their respective dating of this event, their individual conclusions are close to 40 years apart (ca. 835-832 compared with 798-797 B.C.)! Consequently, unless additional evidence, such as a datable Aramean monumental inscription turns up, using Hazael’s campaign to date the end of Stratum A3 does not yet provide such a secure and firm chronological anchor for biblical history that some have hoped. On the other hand, a late ninth-very early eighth century B.C. destruction date has made a significant impact on archaeological

chronology, notably on the extent and end of the Iron Age IIA and the beginning of the Iron Age IIB, and strengthens the view for a longer Lachish III horizon.

An undetermined timespan from  
Hazeal to Uzziah's Earthquake

The earthquake during Uzziah's reign probably dates between ca. 760-750 B.C., although this is far from certain.<sup>205</sup> The archaeological evidence in Area F seems to indicate a period of at least partial abandonment of the site after Hazeal, yet it is difficult to accept that such an important border city as Tell es-Safi/Gath would lie unoccupied and in ruins for such an extended period of time (from 50 to perhaps as long as 80 years). Furthermore, if Gath was abandoned, why was the siege trench filled in after a short time as Maeir and others claim? The only logical agent for that action would be new or returning residents and settlers, certainly not Hazeal's army. The presence of pig bones in Stratum A2 seems to suggest that at least some continuity of Philistine settlement at the site existed into the eighth century B.C.

An undetermined initial date and duration of the  
eighth century B.C. Judahite presence at Gath

The date of the initial Judahite presence at Gath as well as the span of time Judah controlled the site is as yet undetermined from the archaeological evidence. The data from Tell es-Safi/Gath only reveals a lengthy period of Judahite occupation, but of uncertain duration. Over the last twenty years, Maeir has modified his view and now suggests that Stratum F8 covered a longer span of time, originating in the mid-eighth

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<sup>205</sup> Maeir (2012a: 49-50) dates the earthquake, based solely upon archaeological evidence, from the early to third quarter of the eighth century B.C., but follows the scholarly consensus in positing a more exact date of ca. 762 B.C. and believes that this seismic event was of major consequence in the region and may have produced catastrophic effects as implied by the biblical texts.

century B.C., and therefore dates the initial settlement of this level to Judahites during the reign of Uzziah, not only during the reign of Hezekiah.

The undetermined circumstances behind the establishment of the eighth century B.C. Judahite presence at Gath

This point is particularly relevant and important to this study. The establishment of this Judahite settlement in ca. 750 B.C. (an approximate date according to Maeir and his colleagues) would fall during the reign of Uzziah. The *means* by which this Judahite settlement began is, as far as I can determine, not addressed in the publications of Maeir and his colleagues. Maeir (2012a: 55) wrote that Judahite expansion into the western Shephelah and eastern Philistia was short lived, and “apparently substantially” occurred only during Hezekiah’s reign as a “result of a political vacuum in this region after the fall of Gath.” The implication is that Judahites settled the (largely) abandoned ruins of Gath with little or no resistance from the few inhabitants already living on site. However, this earlier assessment does not match his later view, following Zukerman and Shai (2006: 732) that Judahite occupation of Gath began in the mid-eighth century B.C., decades before Hezekiah ruled.

The undetermined agent(s) and dates for the A2 (F8 and F7) Destructions

Two undetermined destruction dates of the two phases of Stratum A2 (F8 and F7) by undetermined agents presents another question. Assuming that Gath was a Judahite city at this time (Maeir 2003: 244), the possible agents for these destructions include the Philistines during the reign of Ahaz (2 Chr 28:18), or the Assyrian kings Tiglath-pileser III, Sargon II and/or Sennacherib. The only one of these agents explicitly stated in the

historical sources is Sargon II, and the identity and location of *gimtu* in the Assyrian source, and its association with Tell es-Safi/Gath is also disputed.<sup>206</sup> This uncertainty also leaves the exact circumstances surrounding the other destruction, whether before or after Sargon, unclear. Sennacherib is undoubtedly a leading candidate. Yet conquering such a (still) impressively-sized city as Gath would have warranted prominent mention in the annals and prisms that record his notorious third campaign, but the city of Gath is not preserved in these records. Moreover, it seems unlikely that only about a decade after Sargon II sacked Gath, another Assyrian king would have to attack and destroy it again for a second time (Schniedewind 1998: 75). Nevertheless, Chadwick and Maeir (2012: 513-15) conclude that Stratum F8 of Gath fell under the rule of Ashdod after the Philistine incursion into Judah during the reign of Ahaz (2 Chr 28:18).<sup>207</sup> As a city directly controlled by Yamani of Ashdod, Sargon II sacked Gath and deported at least some of its inhabitants as “spoil,” which explains the abandonment of the Stratum F8 terrace house. They also argue that Sennacherib destroyed the final Iron Age IIB phase (F7) in 701 B.C., based upon their insertion of “Gath” in the famous “Letter to God” or “Azekah” inscription, and the (unstratified) *lmlk* handles recovered at the site.

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<sup>206</sup> Zukerman and Shai (2006: 741-44) identify *gimtu* with Tell Abu Ḥamid/Gittaim, partly on the basis that, at the time they submitted their paper, only one Iron Age IIB level was recognized at Tell es-Safi/Gath. Assuming the destruction of this level was related to Sennacherib, they selected Tell Abu Ḥamid as the most suitable candidate for *gimtu*. See Chadwick and Maeir (2012: 515) for a recent critical assessment of this position.

<sup>207</sup> Note however the more skeptical view taken by Maeir (2012a: 53) in a main Tell es-Safi publication.

## An undetermined stratigraphic correlation with Lachish Levels IV-III

Apparently, Chadwick and Maeir (2012: 508, 512-13) rely upon the view that Lachish level III existed for a maximum of only about 50-60 years (ca. 760/ 750-701 B.C.)<sup>208</sup> and accordingly so also its pottery horizon, as argued earlier by Ussishkin and Zimhoni. Maeir also follows a similar assumption that attributes all of the *lmlk*-impressed jars solely to the time of Hezekiah's revolt (705-701 B.C.). Indeed, both of these positions presently lack a firm scholarly consensus, and thus are both far from certain and increasingly disputed. Consequently, the origin and development of both the *lmlk* seal impressions and Lachish III type pottery may have occurred considerably earlier than previously thought.<sup>209</sup>

Tell es-Safi's stratigraphic tables (Chadwick and Maeir 2012: 504 Figure 3; Maeir 2012a: 11 Figure 1.3;) show essentially a "ghost stratum" (denoted as F-8A in Area F) between A3 and A2 datable to the first half of the eighth century B.C. This is followed by Stratum A2 and its two phases found in Area F (F8 and F7) that Maeir dates to the second half of the century. While Maeir sees evidence of a period of abandonment, his conclusions seem subjectively based upon several factors: The earthquake (Amos 1:1; Zechariah 14:5) collapsed partially-ruined walls of an essentially unoccupied city; a short

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<sup>208</sup> Chadwick and Maeir (2012: 513) state that "reliable historical allusions from biblical records suggest that neither stratum can be dated earlier than the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E." Without explaining as to what these "reliable historical allusions" are, they nevertheless cite 2 Chr 28:18 as evidence for a Philistine attack that "probably saw Judahite Gath come under Philistine political control in the later years of Ahaz's reign." This nearly contradicts a much more skeptical assessment published the same year by Maeir (2012a: 53).

<sup>209</sup> Maeir (2012a: 51, n.57) mentions a recently published bulla impressed with *lmlk gt* (belonging to [or for] the king of Gath) with paleographic features that suggest a date in the eighth or seventh century B.C. (Deutsch 2011: 81-82 and Fig. 516). While unprovenanced, this bulla presents intriguing historical possibilities relating to the geopolitical status of Gath, if it originated from an eighth century B.C. context at Tell es-Safi. However, without further data, one can merely speculate.

50 year span for Lachish III; an assumption (with question marks) of two Assyrian destructions by Sargon II *and* Sennacherib respectively merely ten years apart (although he may accept the possibility that the earlier phase is linked with the Philistine incursions recorded in 2 Chr 28:18); and a final broad assumption that the *lmlk* jars date solely to Hezekiah's revolt and therefore provide proof of a Sennacherib destruction of a Judahite Gath.

The archaeological evidence does appear to indicate that Gath never fully recovered after its destruction by Hazael (Na'aman 1996: 176) and after the reign of Uzziah (ca. 740 B.C.), Gath is no longer mentioned in the Hebrew Bible (Oded 1979a: 240; Gitin 1998b: 164 n. 6). Assyrian sources also fall silent regarding Gath after Sargon II's 712 B.C. campaign (ANET: 286; Rainey and Notley 2006: 237; Younger 2002: 315).<sup>210</sup> The inclusion of Gath in an Assyrian text recording Sennacherib's 701 B.C. campaign is possible, but by no means certain (Rainey 1975b: 73\*-75\*).<sup>211</sup> Following the Hazael destruction level, only a modest resettlement of the site occurred during the

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<sup>210</sup> Tadmor (1958: 83; 1966: 94-95; 2011: 287) and Zukerman and Shai (2006) identify the Gath of Sargon with Gittaim, while Rainey (1975b: 73\*-74\*; Rainey and Notley 2006: 237) and Chadwick and Maeir (2012: 513-15) see no reason to doubt that Sargon referred to Philistine Gath / Tell es-Safi for two reasons; Gath was probably a daughter / satellite city of Ashdod, which Sargon also destroyed and a smaller, less sensational site such as Gittaim would hardly merit mention in his report.

<sup>211</sup> Some scholars believe that the fragmentary "Letter to God" or "Azekah" inscription may have originally included Gath in a lacuna that refers to a "Royal city" of Philistia, but this restoration is far from certain and scholars remain divided about the identity of this unnamed city and whether to associate the inscription with Sargon II or with Sennacherib (see the discussions in Chadwick and Maeir 2012: 514-15; Cogan 2008: 107-9; Maeir 2012a: 53-54; 2012b: 96-97; 2013: 235, n. 24; Na'aman 1974: 35; 2005: 145-46; Rainey and Notley 2006: 242-43; Uziel and Maeir 2005: 64 n. 8; Younger 2002: 316-18; Zukerman and Shai 2006: 745-59 and the references cited in these sources). If Hezekiah controlled Gath in 701 B.C., it seems that Sennacherib would not only emphasize his capture of Gath, but proclaim it as a royal city of Judah, not just Philistia, given that fact that Jerusalem remained unconquered. Other possibilities may stem from the Assyrian scribe committing an anachronistic error or to highlight an illegitimate Judahite claim to and occupation of the city. See further the astute observations (and conjectures) of Zukerman and Shai (2006: 755-59) on this topic. Since Gath (*gimtu*) was recognized as a daughter city to Ashdod by Sargon II during his 712/11 B.C. campaign, coupled with the absence of Ashdod in Sennacherib's inscriptions and the brief (10 year) time span between their respective military campaigns in the region seems to favor ascribing this inscription to Sargon II (Cogan 2008: 107-9).

eighth and seventh centuries B.C. Finds from this period are rather poorly represented and Gath appears to have shrunk substantially in size from 125 to about 50 acres (Maier 2004a: 323). However, an Iron Age IIB (eighth century B.C.) settlement existed at the site (Stratum A2) and at least two Judahite occupational phases of this stratum, largely based upon four room house architectural style and ceramic finds comparable to Lachish Level III, have been identified after recent excavations in Areas A and F (Avissar and Maier 2012b; Chadwick and Maier 2012: 501-12; Zukerman and Maier 2012: 206-9 and Figure 9.4). While the excavators date both of these phases to the second half of the eighth century B.C., the earlier phase may have been established before ca. 750 B.C., if one accepts the evidence for a longer Lachish III chronological horizon as well as the presence of transitional Lachish IV-III ceramic forms (Avissar and Maier 2012b: 366-67). The destruction layer of the final phase of Stratum A2 has been attributed to Sennacherib despite any firm correlation from the historical sources. It seems that the presence of *lmlk*-stamped jar handles at the site provide the primary evidence for this view. However, some scholars suggest that *lmlk* stamps were introduced and used for a substantial period of time *prior* to Hezekiah's revolt (Hudon 2010a; Kletter 2002; Schniedewind 1998: 76, n.6; Vaughn 1999a: 152; and the references there).<sup>212</sup> Consequently, in the case of Safi, care must be taken before unreservedly attributing the final destruction of Stratum A2 to Sennacherib solely on the basis of the *lmlk* seal impressions recovered at the site (e.g., Maier 2012a: 53, fig. 1.31).

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<sup>212</sup> Recent assertions that production of *lmlk* stamped storage jars continued during the seventh century B.C. (under Assyrian oversight) are fraught with unproven assumptions and historical difficulties (e.g. Lipschits; Sergi; and Koch 2010). See especially the comments of Grena (2010); Ussishkin (2011; 2012); and Vaughn (2016: 498-501).



## Conclusions

If the geopolitical status of Philistia during the ninth and eighth centuries B.C. is carefully considered, Uzziah's decision to specifically attack Ashdod and Gath, along with Yavneh, gains historical credibility. Maeir (2012a: 40) suggests "that perhaps, just as Ashkelon and Ekron were the dominant urban entities in Philistia towards the end of the Iron Age—one a coastal city and the other inland—perhaps, during the Iron Age IIA, a similar situation can be seen with Ashdod and Gath playing these roles." By breaching the walls of these two dominant cities, Uzziah of Judah would have eliminated the two largest military obstacles in his sphere of influence to dominate part of Philistia and the coastline during the first half of the eighth century B.C. It should hardly be necessary to mention that, without archival sources, Chr could never invent such an accurate historical and political setting for his account.

Philistine Gath (Tell es-Safi) is thus a particularly crucial site for examining the veracity of the book of Chronicles as a historical source for the reign of Uzziah and, noting that the ongoing excavations conducted by Bar-Ilan University and other institutions are concerned with establishing historical probabilities and facts based upon firm evidence rather than buttressing a self-serving ideology, Tell es-Safi currently provides (and still offers enormous potential as) an excellent test site for our study. Moreover, several historical texts datable to the general period surrounding the first half of the eighth century B.C. mention (albeit briefly) Gath. One can reasonably conclude that these two factors would provide more than enough puzzle pieces and ample clarification necessary to either confirm or refute the historicity of Uzziah's conquest of Philistia. Nevertheless, in our opinion, both the historical and archaeological records

relating to Safi vis-à-vis the account in 2 Chr 26 are still too fragmentary and ambiguous to draw any clear, definitive conclusions. The data presently at hand is fraught with indistinct clues and tentative, uncertain answers to the persistent questions raised by scholarship. Reservations yet remain regarding topographical factors (did Uzziah sack Safi or Gittaim?), chronological questions (for Hazael's destruction, Uzziah's conquest, the earthquake and the dates of the phases associated with strata A2, F8 and F7), hegemony (the agents responsible for each destruction level, the ethnicity of each subsequent settlement and the polities exercising hegemony over Gath during the eighth century B.C.) and the interpretation of finds; specifically those concerning chronology, ethnicity and hegemony. The current assessment of Tell es-Safi during the early to mid-eighth century B.C. by its excavator, Aren Maeir, is admittedly disappointing to our thesis. Maeir (2004a: 323; 2012a: 62) concluded, after examining the data at hand, that Safi initially remained largely in ruins and was subsequently inhabited by a much smaller settlement during this period. However, this statement is somewhat misleading. While Tell es-Safi dramatically shrank in size after the destruction of Stratum A3, the eighth century B.C. city (Stratum A2) still encompassed about 60 acres, a formidably-large area by Iron Age standards. He later added that Chr's account of Uzziah's destruction of the walls of Gath "might be an etiological understanding of the vague memory, at the time of the composition of Chronicles, of the collapsed state of the walls of Gath during Uzziah's reign..." (Maeir 2012a: 50-53 and n. 54; 2012c: 246 n. 23)<sup>213</sup> and also states that the source used by Chr may be later and that "there is no other clear evidence that the

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<sup>213</sup> This follows earlier assessments that questioned the reliability of Chr's account without dismissing it entirely (Maeir and Ehrlich 2001: 29).

Judahite expansion to the western edges of the Shephelah, including Gath, occurred prior to the reign of Hezekiah” (Maier 2012a: 53). While Maier’s explanation of 2 Chr 26:6 is interesting, it seems rather far fetched. The memory of this catastrophic earthquake persisted well into the post-exilic period (Zech 14:5), so it is difficult to imagine that Chr would be able to locate, let alone interpret, tumbled ruins at Gath, undoubtedly by then largely buried under subsequent debris, and attribute them to the exploits of a Judahite king rather than to seismic activity. While many scholars would argue that Chr was a historian and theologian, it is most unlikely he was trained in archaeology and stratigraphy. To write an account of the eighth century B.C. that includes detailed information on cities, rulers and campaigns roughly 300 years later demands reliance, then as now, upon written archival sources.

What seems to be quite clear is that the excavations have confirmed that the general history of the site corresponds with both extra-biblical and biblical sources, notably the absence of references to Gath after the mid-eighth century B.C., aside from the mention by Sargon II (Uziel and Maier 2005: 63-64). Moreover, Maier and his staff argue that, at certain point(s) during the eighth century B.C., Gath was controlled and at least partially settled by Judahites. The concentration of Judahite pottery in the phases of Stratum A2 (F8 and F7) as well as the existence of unstratified *lmlk*-stamped jar handles testify to Judahite hegemony over the site, not only during the reign of Hezekiah, but perhaps earlier as well (Hudon 2010a; Ortiz 2009: 367).

An observation by Andersen and Freedman (1989: 599-601) concerning the geopolitical status of the southern Levant during Uzziah’s reign as reflected by Amos 6:1-2 is worth noting. The comparison of Israel and Judah with three other strong city-

states / kingdoms in the region is compelling. Calneh and Hamath occupied the strategic northern approach to Israel, while Gath was placed along an equally strategic western approach to Judah. These two routes had and subsequently continued to serve Assyria and others as avenues of conquest. Similarly, these observations were not lost on either Israel or Judah and indeed the biblical records indicate that Jeroboam II conquered Hamath (and perhaps Calneh; 2 Kgs 14:25) and Uzziah neutralized Gath (2 Chr 26:6). Israel and Judah took these actions to eliminate possible threats from neighboring city states or kingdoms, but also to expand their own territories and to bolster their own defenses, now located at more remote borders securely distant from their respective capitals. This brief object lesson by Amos, as well as his condemnation of the (false) security and (illegitimate) prosperity enjoyed by the nobility in Israel and Judah, can only make sense if placed in an early to mid-eighth century B.C. historical context. As I have noted elsewhere (Hudon 2012c: 60), Tell es-Safi undoubtedly experienced an eventful eighth century B.C., but the lack of definitive historical and archaeological data thus far prevents us from knowing the crucial details necessary to present a firm historical framework. Rather, we must yet consider each of the various historical scenarios with a particular “degree of likelihood” pertaining to their historical reality. Also worthy of mention is how the historical symbolism evoked by the subjugation of Philistine Gath would have been received by Judah’s population. Such a successful conquest of Judah’s old nemesis undoubtedly stirred up national fervor throughout Judah. Accordingly, Uzziah may have intentionally defeated a smaller, less formidable Gath (at Tell es-Safi or far less likely, at Gittaim / Tel Ḥamid) for ideological and nationalistic (read propaganda) motivations as well as strategic purposes in order to identify himself more closely with

and to be recognized as a worthy successor of his illustrious forebear, King David, which the biblical records demonstrate had a long and turbulent relationship with Gath.<sup>214</sup>

Alternatively, Chr may have selected Gath from the annalistic records at his disposal to include in his summary account of Uzziah's military victories for essentially the same purpose. As for the archaeological evidence at Gath, the absence (thus far) of a fortified city that was (at least partially) destroyed during the second quarter of the eighth century B.C. is unfortunate. Either Uzziah took over, at best; a sparsely- populated shanty town or occupational evidence for Maeir's Stratum F8A has thus far eluded the excavators. At least one scholar has accepted the current archaeological assessment and concludes that after Gath was devastated by Hazael, the much degraded settlement was later captured by Uzziah (Rainey and Notley 2006: 222). There are other factors to consider, however. Maeir (2013b: 449) notes that Tell es-Safi/Gath was not completely obliterated by Hazael, as originally assumed. At least some of the Stratum A3 structures were left standing, as evidenced by walls uncovered in Areas A and F, which imply that some of the fortifications may have survived as well. This hypothesis would allow for a more rapid re-occupation and refortification of Gath by a polity in the eighth century B.C. Furthermore, Maeir and Avissar (Avissar and Maeir 2012: 379, n. 8; Maeir 2008: 2080-81) report that pig bones continue to appear in the zooarchaeological assemblage of Stratum A2, which not only indicates pork consumption, but also appears to demonstrate the continuity of at least a portion of Gath's Philistine population from Stratum A3 to A2 and seems to conflict with the archaeological indicators that support a long period of

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<sup>214</sup> See Ehrlich (1996: 36-37) and Machinist (2000: 55-59 and references there) for a discussion showing the primacy of Gath among the Philistine city-states.

abandonment as well as pointing towards a mixed Philistine-Judahite population under Judahite hegemony inhabited Gath during the eighth century B.C. Moreover, the presence of at least two clearly Judahite eighth-century B.C. occupational phases, which Maeir and his staff now assign at least as early as 760-750 B.C. (and perhaps dating even earlier), following the earlier proposal by Zukerman and Shai (2006: 732), clearly places Gath within Judah's orbit and under her control during the reign of Uzziah.<sup>215</sup> However, evidence for the means by which Judah initially gained control of Gath during the eighth century B.C. is still lacking and this is *the* primary question for our thesis. How and when this hegemonic change occurred has not yet been attested archaeologically, nor has any specific hypothesis been suggested (e.g., Maeir 2003: 244; Zukerman and Shai 2006: 730-31). Nevertheless, some of Maeir's colleagues give a fairly positive assessment of Chr's account of Uzziah's conquest of Philistia (Levin 2012: 147; Rainey and Notley 2006: 222; Zukerman and Shai 2006: 732, 734).<sup>216</sup>

The location of Safi-Gath in relation to Yavneh and Ashdod is also significant. The recovery of conclusive evidence supporting Uzziah's actions at either of the latter two sites, located on the Coastal (Philistine) Plain to the west of Tell es-Safi, would render the current paucity of corroborative evidence at Gath largely irrelevant regarding the historicity of 2 Chr 26:6. Indeed, if evidence was found at just one of the three sites, there would be absolutely no reason to question or doubt Chr's account regarding the other two cities. In other words, if destruction / or occupational evidence unearthed at

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<sup>215</sup> The ratio of Stratum A2 bowls with hand burnishing (60) to those with wheel burnishing (8) on their inside may be another significant factor in dating the *terminus post quem* of the Judahite occupation of Safi/Gath earlier within (the second quarter of) the eighth century B.C. (Avissar and Maeir 2012: 379). This position has also been supported by Ortiz (2009: 366-67).

<sup>216</sup> See also Rainey (1983a: 14) and Na'aman (1986b: 10-11; 2005: 157).

either Yavneh or Ashdod can securely be attributed to Uzziah, the factual basis of his subjugation of Gath would be, by implication, a near certainty.

Tel Harasim; (Ancient Name Unknown)

### **Location and Identification**

Tel Harasim (map reference 134180.127950) is located in the inner Coastal Plain south of Tel Miqne-Ekron, north of Tell es-Safi (Gath) and west of Beth Shemesh. The site lies between two streams, the Naḥal Barkai to the south and the Naḥal Haruvit to the north. The ancient name for Harasim is unknown; suggestions include Libnah, Eltekeh, Sha'arim or Moreseth Gath (Byrne 2000; Levin 2002).

### **History of Excavation**

Apparently overlooked by earlier historical geographers, the site was surveyed by Y. Dagan and excavated for eleven seasons from 1990-2001 by S. Givon (2008) of Bar Ilan University. In his preliminary reports, Givon presents and discusses evidence for Iron Age II (Stratum IVb) occupation during the eighth century B.C. at the site (e.g., Givon and Byrne 2000: 14\*-19\*), but later states that no occupational evidence exists for this period (Givon 2008: 1767).<sup>217</sup> As Faust (2013a: 216, n. 7) observes, this serious inconsistency needs to be clarified and corrected when the final publication of the excavation is prepared. Among the finds relevant to the eighth century B.C. are a *lmk*-impressed jar handle incised with three concentric circles (Givon 1997: 3\*), a mid-ninth to eighth century B.C. Iron Age IIB ceramic repertoire (Stratum IVb) that seems to be

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<sup>217</sup> Givon (2008: 1767) does mention evidence for a late tenth-late ninth century B.C. Israelite settlement with a casemate wall, houses and installations, which was destroyed around 800 B.C. However, he fails to provide any basis on how he ascribes this town to Israel/Judah.

distinctly Judahite (Givon 1998: figs. 10-12, 14:1), an outer revetment wall with a glacis very similar to that of Lachish IV, that is placed upon a massive brick foundation, and a segment of a casemate wall (Givon 1998: 11\*; Rainey 1998: 27\*; Schneider and Krieger 1998: 6\*-8\*).

## **Conclusions**

The location of Harasim falls directly within the area of Philistia that Judah captured during Uzziah's reign (2 Chr 26:6) and thus may provide potentially important information regarding the historicity of the account. However, there is apparently a paucity of Philistine finds, which is quite surprising considering Harasim is located directly between two large Philistine epicenters. Rainey (1998: 28\*-30\*) suggests that the westward thrust of Uzziah in 2 Chr 26:6 provides "a tempting background" for the eighth century B.C. evidence at Harasim.

At present, the eighth century B.C. occupational evidence at Harasim remains somewhat of an enigma. While the site is located in the hinterland that separates two major Philistine cities, the ninth and eighth century B.C. material remains seem to be predominately Judahite. One possible explanation is that, while Harasim was inhabited by Judahites, control of the city itself oscillated between Philistia and Judah. The lack of an Iron Age I occupational level at the site may support this hypothesis, suggesting that initial Judahite settlement at the site occurred during the United Monarchy (Givon and Byrne 2000: 9\*-10\*). An earlier ninth century B.C. occupational phase may be attributable to Jehoshaphat (2 Chr 17: 10-12), while the late ninth to eighth century B.C. level seems to point to Uzziah's rebuilding operations (2 Chr 26:6).



### **Introduction, Identification and Excavation**

Tel Zayit (map reference 133960.115260) is a 7.5-acre mound located west of Tel Burna in the Beth Guvrin Valley and sits along the south bank of the Naḥal Guvrin, approximately 30 km east of Ashkelon. Like Burna, Zayit was a Judahite border site overlooking the Coastal (Philistine) Plain. Tappy (2000: 2008b: 2082; 2009: 451-52) notes that six roadways intersected near the site in antiquity, thus adding to its already strategic placement. Surveys and excavations at Zayit by Ron Tappy of Pittsburg Theological Seminary commenced in 1998 and are ongoing. The project has unearthed finds from the Chalcolithic to the Ottoman Periods and the site has produced evidence of extensive occupation throughout Iron Age II, including the ninth and eighth centuries B.C. (Tappy 2008b: 2083). At least two ninth century B.C. occupational levels have been recognized. Some of the pottery forms, including Ashdod ware, seem to be coastal in style (Tappy 2009: 460), prompting the excavator to align the site with Gath during this time (Tappy 2009: 460; 2011: 129\*-30\*).<sup>218</sup> Furthermore, a late ninth century B.C. destruction layer has been attributed to Hazael and evidence of seismic damage in the form of a fissure running north to south has been unearthed. This fracture postdates the ninth century B.C., and may be related to the earthquake during Uzziah's reign (Tappy 2011: 129\*-31\*). Eighth century B.C. pottery, including *lmlk* storage jar sherds and other characteristic Lachish III forms, have been found (Tappy 2000: 10-11 n. 3, 29).<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> The shared late ninth century destruction levels and close ceramic parallels with Safi (Tappy 2009: 460 n. 31 and a further reference there) as well as the biblical account of Libnah's revolt (if Zayit is indeed ancient Libnah) seem to support this conclusion.

<sup>219</sup> The pottery was characteristic of Lachish Level III (personal communication from Gabriel Barkay).

The eighth century B.C. occupational stratum is substantial and exhibits the characteristic late eighth century B.C. destruction layer commonly attributed to Sennacherib (Tappy 2000: 33; 2011: 137\*-38\*). However, no fortifications have yet been exposed. Tappy (2008a: 386-87; 2008b: 2083; 2009: 460-61; 2011: 138\*) has suggested identifying Zayit with Libnah.

Tell esh-Sheikh Ahmed el-‘Araini; Tel ‘Erani;  
(ancient name unknown)

### **Location and Identification**

Tel ‘Erani (map reference 129810.113410) is an important ancient site in the eastern Coastal (Philistine) Plain that covers about 15 dunams and is located roughly 19 km east of Ashkelon north of the Naḥal No’am and south of the Naḥal Lachish. The site was mistakenly identified with Philistine Gath, which was invalidated after excavations failed to demonstrate the appropriate remains. The Arabic name, Tell esh-Sheikh Ahmed el-‘Areini, corresponds to a small *weli* on the summit of the mound. While various scholars have identified the site with either Libnah or Gath, excavations have proved this identification wrong and the ancient name for ‘Erani remains uncertain (Aharoni 1979a: 271; Kempinski and Gilead 1991: 164; Yeivin 1993: 417-18). Yeivin’s (1961a: 9-11) suggestion to equate it with *mmst* is also not convincing.

### **History of Excavation**

Shmuel Yeivin, on behalf of the Israel Department of Antiquities (IAA) carried out large scale excavations at the site from 1956-1961, but wrote only preliminary reports (Yeivin 1961a; 1993). More recently, limited excavations at the site from 1985-1988 (Kempinski and Gilead 1991) have focused upon its earlier (Early Bronze Age) strata,

which have not shed additional light on 'Erani's Iron Age II history. In their publication, the Iron Age II is identified with Layer A2 (Kempinski and Gilead 1991: 169-70).

### **Site Description and Discoveries**

The acropolis was apparently enclosed by a series of casemate walls and a gate during Iron Age II, but a more specific dating has not been determined. Stratum VIII corresponds to the eighth century B.C.<sup>220</sup> Two adjoining courtyard-style buildings with two phases were uncovered as well as a potter's kiln and oven. At least ten *lmlk*-stamped jar handles were found in a later (seventh century B.C.) context (Stratum V; Yeivin 1961a: 4-10, pl. II; 1993: 418-21).<sup>221</sup> While Finkelstein and Na'aman (2004: 60-61 n. 1) believe that insufficient evidence exists to attribute any occupational level to Judah, the existence of significant numbers of *lmlk*-stamped jar handles at 'Erani cannot be ignored when assigning hegemony to the site during the eighth century B.C. Blakely and Hardin (2002: 32-34) and Brandl (1997) note some similarities in the fortifications of 'Erani and Hesi, and date the two courtyard buildings to the mid-eighth century B.C., which provides additional evidence that 'Erani was a Judahite site during this period. Clearly, full publication of the excavations and most likely additional work at the site is needed in order to present a reasonably accurate portrait of 'Erani during the eighth century B.C. Yet, some of the finds seem to parallel those from Judahite sites, suggesting that the political status of 'Erani fell within the realm of Judah during Uzziah's reign.

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<sup>220</sup> The stratigraphy of the site is confused. For example, in his preliminary report, Yeivin (1961: 5) assigns Stratum VI to the ninth century B.C. while his later (1993: 419) summary treatment equates this level to the seventh century B.C. Similarly, the *lmlk*-seal impressions are first attributed to Stratum IV (Yeivin 1961: 9), then to Stratum V (Yeivin 1993: 418).

<sup>221</sup> In his corpus, Vaughn (1999a: 191) reports that 15 *lmlk* seal impressions were discovered at the site. Moreover, at least eight Judean pillar-figurines have been unearthed at 'Erani (Kletter 1996: 46).

## Tell el-Hesi; Tel Hasi; (Migdal Gad)

### **Location and Identification**

Tell el-Hesi (map reference 124000.106000) is located in the eastern part of the Coastal (Philistine) Plain, 16 miles 26 km (16 miles) northeast of Gaza. The site lies along the west bank of the Wadi el Hesi.

For well over a century, scholars have attempted to identify Hesi with various biblical sites, most notably Lachish (e.g., Petrie 1891: 18-20) and 'Eglon (e.g., Aharoni 1979a: 97, 124, 174, 212, 219, 271, 434; Wright 1971a: 439-44; 1971b: 77-82 and the references cited there). These two erroneous proposals were based solely upon the toponyms of nearby Umm Lakis and Khirbet 'Ajlan. More recently, other scholars have linked Hesi with Yurza (Rainey 1980: 197; 1983a: 9-10; 1993c: 185\*), Gederoth or Gimzo (Doermann 1987: 141-42) or with Migdal Gad (Joshua 15:37; Hardin, Rollston and Blakely 2012: 29-33).<sup>222</sup>

### **History of Excavation**

Hesi is famous for its pioneering role as the first scientific archaeological excavation where stratigraphy and pottery were utilized to determine the history of a site, and was initially excavated in 1890 by Flinders Petrie (Petrie 1891), then by Bliss from 1891-93 (Bliss 1898). Based upon his mistaken view that Hesi was ancient Lachish,

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<sup>222</sup> For detailed discussions of Hesi's ancient name, see Doermann (1987: 130-37) and Blakely and Horton (1995; 2001). The arguments linking Hesi with Migdal Gad reflect a reading of the towns listed in Joshua 15:37-41 from west to east (Hardin, Rollston and Blakely 2012: 28-34). The first three correspond with the three known Iron Age sites (all exhibiting Judahite material culture) along the Wadi el-Hesi: Zenan, identified as Khirbet Summeily, Hadashah, with Tel Sheqf, followed by Migdal Gad (Hesi). This reconstruction seems to match the archaeological and historical evidence best. The suggested toponym of Migdal Gad is not stated in the discussion of Hesi's ancient name by Blakely, Hardin and Master (2014: 37, 42) as this article was in press for an extended period of time.

Petrie (1891: 27-29 and pl. III) ascribed the “long range of building” and wall stumps uncovered by his workmen to Uzziah. After a lapse of nearly 80 years, the site was excavated again for eight seasons from 1970-1983 by the Joint Expedition with several directors. That Hesi is situated in the Coastal (Philistine) Plain is clearly demonstrated by the terrain that surrounds the site, which is distinctly different from the low Eocene hills of the Shephelah (Blakely, Hardin and Master 2014: 33-34). Yet Hesi’s apparent role as a satellite post for Lachish and other Judahite sites to the east, suggest its inclusion, at least for geopolitical purposes, in the Shephelah district of Judah (Rainey 1983a: 7). Hesi is often excluded from discussions concerning the Shephelah, either because some scholars believe that this sub-region was never part of Judah (Finkelstein and Na’aman 2004: 60-61) or simply for geographical reasons (Faust 2013a: 204). Developing and revising an initial observation by Wright (1971a; 1971b), Fargo (1987: 161), Blakely and Horton (2001: 31), Blakely, Horton, and Doermann (2007), Hardin, Rollston and Blakely (2012: 24) and Blakely, Hardin and Master (2014: 35-38) suggest that several fortified sites, including Zayit, Burna, Erani, Qeshet, Milh and Hesi formed a defensive arch of satellite fortified border posts around Lachish from the early ninth through the end of the eighth century B.C.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Excavations at Khirbet Summeily, a small Iron Age site located 4 km west of Hesi and identified with biblical Zenan (Joshua 15:37; Micah 1:11 and the note above) have also revealed a distinctively Judahite material culture along with limited Philistine pottery, which seems to suggest Summeily was a border site (Hardin, Rollston and Blakely 2012: 28, 31).

## Site Description and Discoveries

Tell el-Hesi is comprised of a 25-acre lower city with a four-acre acropolis at the northeast corner. The acropolis is undercut by the Wadi el-Hesi along its eastern edge, which revealed the various strata that Petrie deduced were occupational layers.

A spectacularly large scale building project was carried out at Hesi in stages during the ninth and early eighth centuries B.C. (Stratum VIII; Bliss's City VI).<sup>224</sup> A platform was constructed of crisscross walls and fill, raising the height of the southern portion of the acropolis some 20 feet. On this platform (*millo*) a large courtyard building (perhaps an example of a biblical *bet millo*; 2 Kings 12:20; Fargo 1987: 161-62) and other installations were built. Blakely and Horton (2001: 28) believe that this fragmentary courtyard building may have originally stood two or three stories and served as a watchtower and signaling station to warn Lachish and the other Judahite population centers to the east. The entire complex was surrounded by a mud brick double wall system with a supporting glacis (Blakely and Horton 2001: 29-31; Doermann and Fargo 1985: 1-9; Fargo 1987: 159-60; Toombs 1983: 25-33; 1990: 105-8 and figure 9). These fortifications existed until they were destroyed in the late eighth century B.C. by the Assyrians. Based on its ninth century B.C. date, this platform and citadel was possibly the work of Rehoboam (2 Chr 11), Asa (2 Chr 14:20) or Jehoshaphat (Blakely, Hardin, and Master 2014: 46). Indeed, evidence seems to demonstrate that Hesi was a distinctly Judahite site during the tenth through the eighth centuries B.C. This monumental

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<sup>224</sup> The Joint Expedition has changed its stratigraphic nomenclature. Fargo (1993: 632-33) denotes the late ninth and early eighth centuries as strata VIII-d-c, which corresponds to stratum VIIIb-a in current literature (see Blakely and Horton 2001: 27-30 and Hardin, Rollston and Blakely 2012: 23). The early to mid-ninth century B.C. Hesi fort (Stratum VIII-D) underwent three additional occupational phases (Strata VIII-C, VIII-B, and VIII-A) before its destruction in the late eighth century (Blakely, Hardin and Master 2014: 37).

defensive project displays several structural and construction similarities with Judahite Lachish, including corresponding usage of the same units of measurement (see also Blakely, Hardin and Master 2014: 37-41; Doermann 1987: 140-4; Fargo 1987: 157, 161 and references there). Secondly, Hesi's ceramic assemblage is nearly identical with that from Lachish.<sup>225</sup> Most notably, Coastal-Philistine pottery is almost completely absent at both sites. Thirdly, two Hebrew epigraphic finds from Hesi, consisting of a seal and an ostrakon, both date to the eighth century B.C. Finally, the excavations of Bliss (City V: Bliss 1894: 90-98; Fargo 1993: 631) at Hesi exposed three tripartite buildings, which parallel in plan and date those at tenth century B.C. Israelite sites and may have been utilized as stables for cavalry units patrolling the border areas. The pasture lands surrounding Hesi would have provided abundant forage for this activity (Blakely 2002; Blakely and Horton 2001: 28-29; Hardin, Rollston and Blakely 2012: 23-28).

## Conclusions

The evidence presented above provides a strong case for Hesi as a Judahite border citadel during the ninth and eighth centuries B.C. and, if true, changes our perspective on Judah's role relative to Philistia during the early eighth century B.C. These conclusions reveal a pronounced westward bulge in Judah's southwestern border, pointing to the Mediterranean coastline north of Gaza and, furthermore, may argue for an eighth century B.C. historical *realia* or *Sitz in leben* behind Joshua 15:45-47. Doermann (1987: 142) suggests that the massive fortifications of Stratum VIIId (now Stratum VIII) correlate well

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<sup>225</sup> A significant amount of locally manufactured Assyrian Palace Ware was recovered at Hesi and datable to the late eighth and seventh centuries B.C., the period of Assyrian domination of the region (Engstrom 2004), but this should be interpreted as the result of trade with sites of the Beer Sheba basin and the Western Negeb, according to J. Blakely (personal communication), not as evidence for an Assyrian occupational presence, as argued by Oren (1993b: 104).

with Uzziah's reign. As such, Hesi and other border posts were tasked with containing the Philistines, protecting the surrounding settlements and farmland, as well as serving as early warning posts for approaching armies and offering delaying resistance to attackers in order to allow time for Judah's population centers to prepare themselves for war (Fargo 1987: 160). Interestingly, Blakely, Hardin, and Master (2014: 46-47) interpret their findings by suggesting that, unlike the sometimes volatile northern border between Philistia and Judah, the border area separating Gaza and Ashkelon from Judah here to the south was quiet until the arrival of Assyria at the end of the eighth century B.C. This view is greatly strengthened by the absence of Philistine incursions in this region during the reign of Ahaz (2 Chr 28:18).

Tel Nagila; (Ancient Name Unknown)

### **Location and Identification**

Tel Nagila (map reference 12700.101200) is a site located along the west bank of the Nahal Shiqma in the convergence zone of the Philistine Plain, the Shephelah and the Negeb as well as the junction point of several roads (Blakely and Hardin 2002: 13-14; Dorsey 1991: 58, 193-201). Gaza is about 28 km (17.5 miles) to the west and Tell el-Hesi is approximately six km (four miles) to the north. Nagila's ancient name is unknown.

### **History of Excavation, Site Description and Discoveries**

Rectangular in shape, with rounded corners, Tel Nagila is about ten acres in size, and rises six to seven meters above the surrounding area. Bülow and Mitchell surveyed the site in 1959 and traced a rectangular casemate enclosure, where they made some



minor soundings. Many Iron Age II sherds, mostly wheel burnished, were reportedly recovered (Bülow and Mitchell 1961: 106-7). The plan and walls of the enclosure showed similarities with Ḥorvat 'Uza and the Iron Age II Negeb sites, which prompted Bülow and Mitchell to date it to the eighth century B.C. and somewhat brazenly suggest that it served as a military post and pen for the royal herds of Uzziah (2 Chr 26:10). Their contention that Nagila was Gath of the Philistines was made despite the lack of Philistine pottery at the site (Bülow and Mitchell 1961: 108-10). Amiran and Eitan conducted excavations at Nagila in 1962-63, which promptly corrected and clarified these earlier interpretations, notably the date of the enclosure (Amiran 1962: 24-25).<sup>226</sup> The lack of any Iron Age I pottery excluded the site as a candidate for Gath and the enclosure was redated and reinterpreted as a Mamluk khan with a very large courtyard (Amiran and Eitan 1993: 1081; Rainey 1975b: 75\*, n. 108 and references there). The field notes and finds from the site have been recently reassessed (Shai, Ilan, Maeir and Uziel 2011) as part of the process to prepare the final publication. Stratum III, representing the eighth century B.C., was only exposed in Area G, 200 m south of the site, despite claims that pottery from this occupational level was found on the tell itself (Amiran and Eitan 1993: 1081). Two structures, built directly on bedrock, were excavated. One of the buildings, Structure B, was only partially preserved, but was a rectangular building with three construction phases and consisted of an open courtyard surrounded by rooms. Most significantly, nearly the entire pottery assemblage had close parallels to Lachish III and other Judahite sites (Shai, Ilan, Maeir and Uziel 2011: 33-35, 37; Table 4). The location

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<sup>226</sup> In a privately published semi-popular annual report and summary of the excavation, Mitchell (1963:10) omits any reference to Uzziah occupying the site.

of Area G at an off site location, partly hidden in a nearby Naḥal, and the lack of large storage vessels, has led the current publication team to identify the two buildings as a caravanserai (Shai, Ilan, Maeir and Uziel 2011: 39; Thareani-Sussely 2008: 202-5). Identifying these two buildings as an equivalent of a customs station is also a possibility since Nagila is clearly in a border region and the identity of its inhabitants during the eighth century B.C. remains uncertain. However, if contemporary Judahite occupation can be demonstrated at Tell el-Hesi, Nagila's role as a Judahite site is nearly assured.

### **Conclusions**

While initially published by amateurs, Tel Nagila provides an example of the flimsiness and transitory nature of some so-called archaeologically-based historical conclusions. The Mamluk khan they mistakenly identified as an Iron Age II military fort and animal pen for Uzziah's royal herds reveals a chronological blunder and discrepancy totaling approximately 2,100 years. On the other hand, Nagila does have eighth century B.C. Judahite pottery and when publication is completed, the site may ultimately regain much of its initial status as a royal Judahite border town and post.

### **The Coastline (חוף הים)**

Yavneh-Yam; Khirbet edh-Dherbeh; Minet Rubin

### **Location and Identification**

Yavneh-Yam (map reference 121120.147860) is an ancient site located on the Mediterranean coastline that boasts a natural anchorage formed by a small peninsula. The site is located about midway between Jaffa and Ashdod. In antiquity, Yavneh-Yam served as a harbor facility for Yavneh, which lies about 8 km to the south east. The

identification is confirmed in several classical sources as well as the Madaba map. Dothan (1952: 114-15), Fischer (2008: 2073), and Kaplan (1993c: 1504) suggested equating the site with *muhazi* (haven or harbor) from the Amarna correspondence, which Barako and other scholars equate with Tel Mor (see below).

### **History of Excavation**

M. Dothan (1952) surveyed the site and its hinterland. Subsequently, J. Kaplan conducted limited excavations from 1966-69 (Kaplan 1993c), followed by a later expedition to the site led by M. Fischer (Tel-Aviv University) from 1992-96 (Fischer 2008: 2073).

### **Site Description and Discoveries**

Yavneh-Yam was occupied from the Late Bronze Age until the Mamluk period. The Fischer excavations uncovered Iron Age II material (strata X-IV) in Areas A, B, and C, both at the base of and just north of the peninsula. A large 2 m. thick fortification wall dating from ca. 900-700 B.C. was exposed in Area C and the foundational courses of a monumental ashlar structure with marginal drafting and constructed in header and stretcher fashion was excavated in Area A. The upper courses of the building were apparently constructed of mud brick as revealed by the heavy layer of surrounding brick debris. A group of Judahite stone weights, including an inscribed *pym* weight, were among the small finds (Fischer 2005: 177-82, XVI; 2008: 2073). As with Yavneh to the east, the site was also occupied during the Persian Period.

## **Hinterland**

Dothan's survey uncovered Iron Age remains at Yavneh-Yam, possibly including a wall, at the base of the peninsula (Fischer's Area A; Dothan 1952: 111). He reported Iron Age II pottery at small sites along the coastline and kurkar hills, along the Rubin River, in the vicinity of the shrine at Nebi Rubin, and at Tell Ghazza, which yielded only a few sherds. The sites of Tell es-Sultan and el-Jiser also had Iron Age II pottery (Dothan 1952: 111-12).

## **Conclusions**

Later historical sources speak of two settlements named Yavneh. Thus, it is entirely possible that Chr referred to Yavneh-Yam rather than the inland Yavneh. The choice would certainly make good tactical sense since the strategic value of Yavneh-Yam surpassed Yavneh proper. If Uzziah succeeded in subjugating Yavneh-Yam, Judah would have possessed port facilities and an important trade outlet as well as control over a section of the main coastal road. It is reasonable to assume that Judahite hegemony over Yavneh-Yam, Tel Mor, and / or Ashdod-Yam (or any combination of the three) must have played a role in Uzziah's overall strategy when he marched into Philistia. It is also important to note that only about 1.5 km south of Yavneh-Yam lies the site of Meşad Ḥashavyahu, where Josiah established a Judahite fort and economic presence for a brief period nearly a century and a half later (see above and below). While conjectural, is it certainly plausible that Judah controlled both sites during Josiah's reign and that Uzziah exercised hegemony over Yavneh-Yam as a trading port for Judah during the eighth century B.C.

## Meşad Hāshavyahu (Ancient Name Unknown)

### **Summary and Relevance of the Site**

The site of Meşad Hāshavyahu (map reference 120350.146400) is a small seaside fort excavated in 1960 by J. Naveh (1960; 1962; 1964; 1993) and an additional season in 1986 by R. Reich (1989). Despite the absence of eighth century B.C. occupation, the site has important significance for our study in two areas. First, it provides a rebuttle for the “pots and peoples” model by demonstrating that the presence of an apparent dominating (ethnic or national) material culture at a site does not necessarily imply that hegemony was held by the same. Several Hebrew ostraca recovered by Naveh at the site provide evidence for Judahite control of the site during the third quarter of the seventh century B.C. (Cross 2003: 122; Master and Stager 2011: 738-39; Naveh 1960; 1962; 1993: 586; Tadmor 1966: 102) despite the presence of a large amount of Greek imported pottery (Bunimovitz and Yasur-Landau 1996: 90-91). The seventh century B.C. Ashkelon marketplace demonstrates the context and interpretation of imported wares found at coastal sites of this region and contradicts the views of Na’aman (1991: 44-47; 2005: 372-76), Kletter (1999: 27, 40-42) and Fantalkin (2001), who argue that the site was garrisoned by Greek mercenaries under Egyptian employ based upon the abundance of Greek pottery at the site. Such historical claims are largely speculative. The famous Hebrew judicial petition, one of seven Hebrew ostraca discovered at this fort, paints an entirely different historical picture. Cross (2003: 121-22) linked this site with Chr’s description of Josiah’s expansion to the coast (2 Chr 34:3-7), due in part to Hoshayahu ben Shobay, the addressee of the petition and an official at the fort that was familiar with biblical law. Master and Stager (2011: 738-39 and nn. 3 and 5) expose methodological

weaknesses with Fantalkin's conclusions, based upon perceived discrepancies in pottery recording by the original excavators, a broken chain of custody exemplified by a quarter of the pottery baskets being misplaced, and the long period of time from excavation to its reevaluation by a scholar with only second hand knowledge of the original excavation. Consequently, Cross, Master and Stager suggest that, despite the presence of imported pottery at this small site, Meşad Ḥashavyahu functioned as a lightly fortified coastal lookout, manned by Judahites. No particular features of this site or its setting would attract the attention of Egypt for strategic purposes and the palaeography of the Hebrew script dates at least a full generation before the Lachish letters (Cross 2003: 116). Consequently, Meşad Ḥashavyahu likely served, albeit briefly, as a coastal military outpost and trading station for Judah, during the reign of Josiah in approximately 625 B.C.

This site also reflects a long standing goal by Judah for a trade outlet on the Mediterranean Sea and control over a part of the strategic coastal highway linking Egypt with northern Syria, Asia Minor and Mesopotamia. The recognized need for such an outpost that formed a crucial part of Judah's foreign policy in the seventh century B.C. certainly followed a long standing political and economic objective of Judah that already existed, and was probably even more acutely felt, a century earlier during the reigns of Uzziah (2 Chr 26:6) and Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:8; 1 Chr 4:39-43). Also noteworthy is Meşad Ḥashavyahu's proximity to Yavneh, which lies only about 8 km to the east-southeast.

## Holot Yavne; (ancient name unknown)

### **Summary and Relevance of the Site**

A square open court fortress (map reference 117900.139000), measuring 29 x 29 m, was excavated by Y. Porath in 1969 at a site north of the modern city of Ashdod and about 450 m from the coastline (Porath 1974). The fortress was constructed with 1.1-1.2 m wide kurkar stone and mud brick walls and the gateway apparently faced west. While Porath (1974: 6\*) reports that the fortress had only a single phase of occupation, he does note changes, including new floors, doorways, and repairs. Two other buildings west of the fortress were also found. Perhaps these were part of a settlement connected to the fortress. The site is referenced and discussed in a number of subsequent publications (Stark, Barda, and Berman 2005: 21\*, 63, map 4; Stern 1982: 19, 54-55, 262, n. 24; 2001: 407). The pottery and other finds recovered date to the Persian Period and the excavator did not find any earlier occupational remains below the fortress or in the adjacent buildings to the west. Porath (1974) suggested that this fortress guarded the coast between Yavneh-Yam and Tel Mor, which seems to be a reasonable assumption. However, the plan, dimensions (29 x 29 m) and certain design features of this fortress seem to parallel Judahite fortifications dated to the Iron Age IIB, such as Khirbet er-Rasm (north), Khirbet er-Rasm and Khirbet Abu et-Twain (Faust 2012: 183-84; Faust and Erlich 2011: 202-8; A. Mazar 1982a; 1982b). Somewhat ironically, the fort at Khirbet er-Rasm (North) was abandoned and thoroughly cleaned before reoccupation during the Hellenistic Period, leaving only negligible Iron Age II evidence.<sup>227</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>227</sup> One may also mention the Iron Age II fortress on the En Gedi ascent surveyed in 1956 by Aharoni (1958c: 30-32). The fort was excavated in 1985 and recently published by Meshel and Ofer (2008: 51-59), which, apart from one complete vessel and a few seventh-sixth century B.C. sherds, along with a handful of coins dating to the first Jewish Revolt, was largely devoid of finds, leading the excavators

the plausibility exists that Ḥolot Yavne was initially constructed earlier, perhaps during the eighth century B.C., consequently abandoned, then reoccupied during the Persian Period based upon clear architectural parallels from Iron Age II fortresses in Judah. Similar circumstances have been attested at other sites. During his limited excavations at the well-known Ammonite tower of Rujm El-Malfuf (north) in Amman, Borass (1971: 43-45) unearthed pottery dating exclusively to the Roman period and concluded that either a meticulous cleaning of the structure and apron took place during Roman rebuilding and reoccupation of the site during the first century B.C., or that Romans hired local craftsmen to construct the tower in the tradition of their distant ancestors, which seems rather far-fetched. Use of early style cyclopean stones and other details had probably been long abandoned due to the extremely long time span between the Iron Age and the arrival of the Romans.<sup>228</sup> If the examples of Khirbet er-Rasm (north) and Rujm El-Malfuf (north) are indeed relevant to the Ḥolot Yavne fortress, this site may possibly represent one of Uzziah's fortified "cities" near Ashdod (2 Chr 26:6) that, after a period of abandonment, were reoccupied at some point during the Persian Period, when

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to conclude that the site was only briefly garrisoned as a lookout dating to the end of the monarchy. While this certainly may be true, earlier kings of Judah also recognized the strategic importance of the eastern approaches to the the Hill Country and a fortified tower or observation post overlooking En Gedi undoubtedly existed earlier in the monarchy (e.g., 2 Chr 20:24). Rehoboam's fortification of Tekoa (2 Chr 11:6) was, by itself, woefully inadequate to defend Judah from potential threats along its eastern border with the Dead Sea. At least since the ninth century B.C., when Jehoshaphat successfully defended Judah from invasion (2 Chr 20:1-30; for discussions of this text, see Davies 1992; Klein 1995; and Rainey 2000a), additional fortresses existed along the Nahal Arugot, the biblical "Ascent of Ziz" (Bar Adon 1972: 139, 143; sites 172 and 202) and neighboring wadis such as the Nahal Seelim and Nahal Hardof, where two were surveyed (2 Chr 20:16; Aharoni 1961b: 15-16; 1979a: 60). Some of these towers and forts were likely constructed by Uzziah (2 Chr 26:10). Whether the En Gedi fort replaced an earlier stronghold or tower overlooking En Gedi is uncertain, yet this location was the highest point in the area and provided the best view of all access routes approaching from the east. Thus, this same structure may have served a similar purpose earlier and, after a period of abandonment, was cleaned and reactivated during the last days of Judah (Hudon 2010b and see Stern 2007 for the archaeological findings and conclusions from Tel Goren).

<sup>228</sup> Consequently, Shea (1981: 109) and Yassine (1988: 16-17) reported that Iron Age II (sixth-fifth century B.C.) pottery was recovered from a foundation trench of one of its walls.



extensive cleaning, repairs and modest remodeling, including new doorways installed in the casemates, were carried out.

Tel Mor; Tell Mura; Tell Kheidar (*mḥd*?)

### **Location and Identification**

Tel Mor (map reference 117500.136800) is a small site located on the northern bank of the Naḥal Lachish (Wadi Sukreir), approximately 1 km inland from the Mediterranean Sea and about 6 km northwest of Ashdod. The ancient name of Tel Mor remains uncertain, but Dothan (1993b: 1073-74; see also Dever 1997b: 49) follows the view of scholars that identify Tel Mor with the Ashdod Yam destroyed by Sargon II, after which the site was abandoned, with its name transferred to Ashdod-Yam (Minat el-Isdud). However, Barako (2007: 4-5) argues that a toponym *mḥd* found in Late Bronze Age Egyptian and Ugaritic sources seems to fit Tel Mor particularly well and the word appears in Hebrew as *maḥoz* (מחוז) meaning city or marketplace, but is in a more general sense also a harbor (Psalm 107:30; Barako 2007: 5; *BDB*: 562; M. Dothan 1981: 151, 153 n. 3). Furthermore, the dearth of eighth century B.C. material at Tel Mor, coupled with the lack of any destruction layers, strongly points to an earlier transfer of Ashdod's harbor facilities from Tel Mor to Ashdod-Yam (Barako 2007: 246). Another ancient site, Mizpeh Yonah (Nebi Yunis) sits on the southern bank of the Naḥal Lachish, but closer to the sea coast. A probe opened in 1960 only recovered Persian period remains (Barako 2007: 4; Dothan 1973b: 2; Stern 2001: 407-8), but survey work in the vicinity recovered evidence of activity at the site during Iron Age II (Berman, Barda, and Stark 2005: 16\*, 25\*).

## **History of Excavation**

M. Dothan excavated the site on behalf of the IAA for two seasons in 1959 and 1960.<sup>229</sup> Largely based upon topographical considerations and Dothan's perception that Tel Mor had a similar occupational history with Ashdod, he identified the former as the harbor or inland port for the latter (Barako 2007: 3; M. Dothan 1959: 272; 1960b: 124; 1960c: 19; 1967: 132; 1969: 16-18; 1973b: 2-3; 1981; 1993b: 1073; Dothan and Dothan 1992: 120-26). As discussed below, Dothan's preconceived views stem from a perspective he adopted as a young soldier and student. These possibly influenced his interpretation of the data of both sites and had important implications for his historical reconstruction of Tel Mor and Ashdod. Dothan presented his views in numerous lectures, popular publications and preliminary reports for both sites, as well as his expressed conclusions in the Ashdod final report. Unfortunately, Dothan died before writing the final report for Tel Mor, which T. Barako (2007) and others completed and published 47 years after field work ended and eight years after Dothan's death. The reception and assessment of Barako's report has been largely appreciative and affirming (e.g., Mullins 2009).

## **Site Description and Discoveries**

Tel Mor in antiquity roughly covered an acre and a half, but the forces of erosion have shrunk it to its current size of only a one half acre mound that rises about 17 m above the surrounding terrain. Dothan (1960a; 1960b; 1973b: 1-3; 1993b: 1074) identified twelve occupational strata and, according to Barako (2007: 11, 69), their

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<sup>229</sup> For summary accounts of the excavation, see especially Barako (2007: 4-9) and Dothan and Dothan (1992:120-26).

respective dates as ascribed by Dothan “are essentially accurate.” The *flourit* of the site apparently occurred during the Late Bronze Age, when a succession of small fortresses were in turn erected and destroyed. Dothan dated Stratum 2 to the eighth century B.C. However, prolonged exposure and erosion all but eradicated this level and virtually nothing remained apart from two parallel brick walls, which Dothan interpreted as remnants of a casemate fortress. The damage caused by long term wind and erosion, followed by Dothan’s excavations, completely removed the upper eight strata of the site. Hence, Stratum 2, the focus of our analysis, cannot be rechecked, apart from the saved material and recorded data.

As he later did for Ashdod (see below), Dothan repeatedly suggested linking archaeological finds from Stratum 2 with Uzziah. At Tel Mor he proposed that the two parallel walls of Stratum 2 belonged to a casemate fortress built at the site by the Judahite king (2 Chr 26:6; M. Dothan 1959: 272; 1960a: 128-31, III; 1960b: 124; 1960c: 18; 1993b: 1074).<sup>230</sup> For example, Dothan (1959: 272) wrote that these walls: “probably belong to a fortress situated on the tell in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. It may perhaps be suggested that this fortress was built by King Uzziah of Judah, who ‘built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines’ (2 Chron. xxvi, 6), and destroyed by Sargon II.” Dothan (1960b: 124) reiterated his interpretation in his next preliminary report, noting that following the tenth century B.C., Tel Mor lay abandoned: “until about the eighth century B.C. The rebuilding may be due to King Uzziah of Judah (Stratum II). The city

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<sup>230</sup> A number of scholars, such as Berman, Barda, and Stark (2005: 12\*, 24\*-25\*), Bierling (1992: 195), Dever (1997b: 50), and Rainey (1984a: 87-88) follow Dothan’s eighth century B.C. dating for Stratum 2 and identify the two walls as remains of a casemate fortress. Bierling and the survey team also link Uzziah with the site. However, all of them most likely relied solely upon Dothan’s preliminary reports and communications and thus wrote their assessments without personally examining the (then) largely unpublished data.

was probably destroyed by Sargon of Assyria, who conquered Ashdod and Ashdod-Yam during his campaign of 712 B.C.”

While preparing the final report for Tel Mor, Barako was well aware of the stratigraphical conclusions Dothan had proposed. However, the data and records available to Barako did not provide firm support for Dothan’s view of a Judahite eighth century B.C. casemate fortress built by Uzziah. Stratum 2 yielded 117 registered sherds. The two parallel walls were 1.5 m thick with a 3 m space separating them. No associated surfaces or evidence of connecting walls were noted (Barako 2007: 32, 246 and Plan 2.6). Since the course of the two walls run approximately east to west directly across the middle of the summit rather than along its perimeter, Barako (2007: 34) rightly questions their defensive function. Moreover, Barako only had architectural plans, section drawings and a locus list for Stratum 2 from which to prepare his report and the small amount of associated pottery was so poorly stratified that he refrained from drawing parallels from other sites for his small assemblage of sherds (Barako 2007: 41, n. 16, 46). Most forms, such as red-slip burnished ware (mostly bowls) seem to fit best into earlier Iron Age IIA contexts, yet clearly eighth century B.C. forms are present, notably storage jars that parallel those found at Judahite sites such Lachish and Timnah Level III and, more significantly, Ashdod Stratum (IX-)VIII (Barako 2007: 64, 117, 246 and fig. 3:26:14-16). However, he notes that the Stratum 2 pottery, while poorly stratified, “is closer in date to the tenth than to the eight (*sic!*) century BCE...” (Barako 2007: 69).

## **Hinterland**

The Archaeological Survey of Israel Map of Ashdod (84) corresponds not to the agricultural hinterland of the ancient city of Ashdod, but rather to the modern Israeli city

of Ashdod, to the north. This archaeological survey was conducted in several phases, initially by Berman in 1970, then again by Barda and Stark in 1997-98, which incorporated salvage excavations and survey work of others as well as Geographic Information System and Global Positioning System (GIS/GPS) instrumentation for better accuracy. The survey map was published by all three (Berman, Barda, and Stark 2005).

The Iron Age II is represented by 24 sites. Most are located in the southern portion of the surveyed sector and are mainly pottery scatters (Berman, Barda, and Stark 2005: 12\*), which provide only doubtful evidence for the existence of an ancient coastal site. As discussed below (Ashkelon), designating pottery scatters as ancient sites is now highly suspect due to Ottoman and Mandate Period Arab farmers introducing soil mixed with pottery, which they brought from nearby tells, for use as fertilizer in garden and orchard plots they farmed along the coastal dunes.

While Tel Mor (Site 18) and Ashdod-Yam (Sites 38 and 60) are included in the survey area, the surveyers do not specify sites with Iron Age IIB (eighth century B.C.) pottery, except in the instance of Site 60. Consequently, their published data is only of limited value.<sup>231</sup> A salvage excavation at Mizpe Yona in 2012 uncovered a massive foundation of a building dated to the ninth century B.C. and two levels (Strata I and II) produced pottery ascribed to Iron Age IIB-C, which seems to indicate that Mizpe Yona inherited, at least in part, the strategic position of Tel Mor during the eighth century B.C. (Yegorov 2013).

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<sup>231</sup> The surveyed sites with evidence of activity during the Iron Age II are as follows: Sites 2, 6 (pottery scatter), 18 (Tel Mor), 19 (Mizpeh Yonah; see also Yegorov 2013), 20 (pottery scatter), 23 (pottery scatter), 38 (fortress wall and structures), 41, 42, 45, 54, 60 (eighth century B.C. fortress), 70 (pottery scatter), 74 (pottery scatter), 75 (pottery scatter), 76, 79, 90, 94, 99 (pottery scatter), 100 (pottery scatter), 101 (pottery scatter), 102 (pottery scatter), 105.

## Conclusions

Any questions or concerns raised over Dothan's interpretations of evidence linking Uzziah with Ashdod, as discussed in detail below, are exacerbated when Dothan's excavations at this seaside fortress and port reached final publication. Dothan (1952; 1959; 1960a; 1960b; 1960c; 1993b: 1074) claimed to find an occupational layer attributable to Uzziah's actions.<sup>232</sup> However, Barako's (2007) final report did not find enough data to support Dothan's oft-repeated assertions. Most of the Iron Age II architecture and material evidence had apparently eroded away over the centuries and an examination of the pottery and excavation records led Barako to tentatively redate the Stratum 2 horizon to Iron Age IIA (see also Mullins 2009: 87) and thus largely remove the evidence for any eighth century B.C. occupation by dating the sparse data available to him at least a half century or more earlier. Whether Dothan found evidence at Tel Mor to substantiate Uzziah's expansion into Philistia or not, while important, is secondary to concerns Barako's report raised over Dothan's substandard methodology and what may be perceived as historical subjectivity; that is, an effort to create a "desired past" for the site in accordance with the biblical record. Dothan should not be faulted for any inability to differentiate between Iron Age IIA and IIB ceramic typologies due to the apparent absence of clean, stratified loci as well as working without the benefits of utilizing later advancements in ceramic chronology. Moreover, one must emphasize that some eighth century B.C. Judahite pottery is attested at the site. Consequently, determining the status

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<sup>232</sup> While his excavations at Tel Mor are recounted at length in the popular book he wrote with his wife and colleague on the Sea Peoples, Dothan omits any reference to Uzziah in relation to this specific site (Dothan and Dothan 1992: 120-26).

of Tel Mor during Uzziah's reign must be left as an open question, at least for now, due to the lack of evidence, as Barako (2007: 246) demonstrates.

However, the consequences stemming from Dothan's inability to complete the final report during his lifetime comprises, in my opinion, the issue of utmost importance here. Invariably, when an excavator dies before completion of the final report, important insights and details are irrevocably lost with him or her. Usually, as with Tel Mor, the person or persons (customarily of a following generation) left with the responsibility of preparing, writing up and publishing the data must do so solely from the excavation records and any saved materials.<sup>233</sup> Additional data, observations and /or material evidence that Dothan possessed may have influenced his historical conclusions regarding Uzziah and a Judahite presence at the site, but these, whether imagined or real, were not written down or otherwise preserved in the excavation records available to Barako and his team.

### **Excursus Three: Moshe Dothan's Excavation of Tel Mor and Ashdod: A Quest for a Desired Past?**<sup>234</sup>

Moshe Dothan (1919-1999) was among the pioneering generation of Israeli archaeologists who studied under such early Jewish Palestinian luminaries as Benjamin Mazar, Eliezer Sukenik and Michael Avi-Yonah at Hebrew University. His immigration from Poland to then Mandatory Palestine in 1938, service in the British Army in World

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<sup>233</sup> Fortunately for Barako (and by extension the entire field), Trude Dothan, the excavator's widow and a renowned archaeologist in her own right, was available for consultation as were some of the core staff that assisted Dothan at Tel Mor, yet Barako (2007: vii) does not note any information or other support provided by them.

<sup>234</sup> Some of the material for this biographical sketch is drawn from Dothan and Dothan (1992); Heltzer, Segal and Kaufman (1993); Shanks (1993a; 1993b); and Silberman (2013). I am much indebted to Øystein S. LaBianca for introducing me to several helpful anthropological models, including the concept of a "Desired Past" used in this biographical sketch.

War II and subsequently with the Haganah during Israel's war for independence in 1948, allowed him to personally witness the emergent Jewish state. Like other recent Jewish immigrants to Palestine, Dothan's initial contact with *Eretz Israel* understandably instilled within him a profound and deep rooted connection with his Jewish cultural and religious heritage as well as a strong national identity, developed in part through a powerful connection with the land itself.<sup>235</sup> Dothan balanced graduate studies with employment at the burgeoning Department of Antiquities, later known as the IAA, and wrote his MA thesis based upon his archaeological survey of the Lower Ruben River. He then surveyed the Sorek Valley to the east for the IAA while completing his doctorate. Ironically, the Sorek region features prominently in Chr's account of Uzziah's expansion into Philistia, which Dothan (1952: 111-12) noted in an article summarizing the data collected during his Ruben River survey. Nearly concurrent with Dothan's survey work, Jacob Kaplan conducted a neighboring survey to the south in the region of Yavneh and likewise mentioned evidence for Uzziah's eighth century B.C. expansion towards the coast in his survey report covering this area (Kaplan 1957: 204-5). Additionally, Kaplan included an explanation of Uzziah's expansion, complete with a hand drawn map, in his popular Hebrew book: *The Archaeology and History of Tel-Aviv—Jaffa* (Kaplan 1959:

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<sup>235</sup> Such sentiments are usually found only in Hebrew publications, but also occasionally appear in English as well (e.g., Aharoni 1979a: XII; Silberman 2013: ix and more expressly in Ben-Tor 2009: 1-2). A classic example of this newfound nationalism is the title for a Hebrew archaeological handbook edited by Michael Avi-Yonah and Shmuel Yeivin, which was a timely and popular Israeli publication, appearing in 1955. Its Hebrew title, *Antiquities of Our Land* (קדמוניות ארצנו), notably differs from its corresponding English name, *The Antiquities of Israel*. For a fascinating account of the formative years of the Israeli archaeological establishment that describes the political and religious background that helped shape Dothan's historical views and archaeological conclusions, as well as the sweeping national passion over archaeology during this period, see Kletter (2006: 314-20).



66-71 and Figure 23).<sup>236</sup> Furthermore, in 1950 a group of Jewish refugees from Libya established a moshav just south of modern Ashdod and adjacent to Tel Ashdod itself and aptly named Moshav *Sde Uziyahu* (Field of Uzziah) to memorialize Uzziah's conquest of that ancient city. Later, during the brief period of Israeli occupation of the Sinai after the Suez War in 1956, Dothan surveyed and conducted limited excavations at the Iron Age II casemate fortress at Tell el-Qudeirat (Kadesh-barnea), which he suggested was garrisoned and possibly rebuilt by Uzziah (Dothan 1965: 136-39, 142).<sup>237</sup> Consequently, the political and religious environment in which Dothan lived, worked and studied undoubtedly nurtured a strong desire, indeed expectancy, to recover material evidence of his people's biblical-national heritage.<sup>238</sup> For several of the sites, this expectation included discovering evidence of Uzziah's actions from Philistia as far as the "border of Egypt" (2 Chr 26:6-8).<sup>239</sup> Consequently, these external factors may have influenced or at

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<sup>236</sup> Kaplan (1953: 143; 1957: 204-205) claimed to find evidence of settlements and fortresses built by Uzziah on the coastal plain and even suggested that the description of Judah's northern border (Joshua 15:10-11) represents the *de facto* geopolitical situation during Uzziah's reign (Kaplan 1957: 205). Yet any mention of Uzziah is notably absent in Kaplan's later summaries of his archaeological work in the Tel-Aviv area (Kaplan 1967a; 1972) and note further his rather guarded comment about Dothan's interpretation of Tel Mor (Kaplan 1969: 149, n. 29). For other archaeological and historical treatments of Joppa (Jaffa) and its hinterland during the Iron Age IIB period, see the publications of Fantalkin (2005), Fantalkin and Tal (2009: 229-47), Hudon (2012c), Kaplan (1953; 1956; 1957; 1959; 1960; 1961; 1962; 1964; 1966; 1967a; 1970; 1971; 1972; 1974a; 1974b; 1975), Oded (1979a: 236-37), Peilstöcker and Burke (2011: 17-32, 63-93), Rainey (1989; 1998a), Tadmor (1960a), and Tal and Fantalkin (2009a; 2009b) with additional references cited therein. In terms of our present knowledge, any attempt to determine the northern extent of Uzziah's expansion into Philistia must remain largely conjectural (Kallai 1960: 66-67 and Map 6).

<sup>237</sup> Ussishkin (1995b: 118-26) largely follows Dothan's stratigraphy, but dates the rectangular fortress to eighth century B.C. at the earliest and (not surprisingly) questions whether it was ever under Judahite control.

<sup>238</sup> Silberman (2013: ix) describes Israeli archaeology during this era as a "romantic national celebration."

<sup>239</sup> The word understood as border here is literally rendered "entering" (לבוֹא) and Tadmor (1961: 233, n. 6) suggests a possible textual construct or contraction that originally outlined a Judahite empire encompassing both the southern (at the Brook of Egypt) and northern (at Lebo Hamath) historical borders of Canaan. Noting discoveries that have occurred subsequent to Tadmor's paper, I would suggest that Chr is actually providing a veiled reference, not to the Brook of Egypt, but rather to the border caravanserai of Kuntillet 'Ajrud, which seems to have been co-controlled and garrisoned by both Judah and Israel during

least colored Dothan's interpretations and historical conclusions he presented regarding his sites and findings. Despite some later statements to the contrary (see for example the general comments expressed throughout Dothan and Dothan 1992), Dothan's excavations and conclusions, whether consciously or not, were possibly enlisted as tangible evidence; tools to support the desired past he shared with countless other Jews and Christians that, then as now, keenly anticipate dramatic new evidence to buttress the Biblical account. No accusation is stated or implied here of fabricating data. Rather Dothan, not unlike other Israelis who lived through the exceedingly difficult, yet heady early days of their statehood, was, if anything, simply guilty of interpreting archaeological data through a religious and nationalistic lens that provided connectivity with their past, coupled with two common attributes among the *yishuv* of that early post war era; pride and resolve. In other words, Dothan viewed the data in a manner that directly correlated material finds with the biblical record, perhaps even when a firm basis of supporting evidence needed for such claims was largely missing. While his conclusions regarding Tell el-Qudeirat and, more importantly, Ashdod may be fairly accurate, Dothan's statements vis-à-vis Tel Mor perhaps exemplify this suggested tendency. If the above observation has credibility, Dothan may have essentially committed (unwittingly of course) a form of archaeological eisegesis during his early archaeological career.<sup>240</sup>

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this time, or to the *kāru* (a border port and trading center) south of Gaza. I hope to develop this hypothesis in the future.

<sup>240</sup> On the other hand, Dothan must be commended for the unapologetic respect he gives the Hebrew Bible as a reliable historical source; a fact he recognized and maintained throughout his long, distinguished career. In a retrospective interview with Hershel Shanks (1993b: 88), Dothan makes this reflective and telling assessment: "As time goes on, we see that more and more of the facts mentioned in the Bible can be used in reconstructing what we find in our excavations. The truth is that everybody, even people who are against the Bible, go first to the Bible to see if something there supports what they find. Many Biblical texts have been vindicated. When the Bible gives us a sentence or even a word, we have to use it."

Ashdod Yam; Minat el-Isdud; Minat el-Qal'a; (*Asdudimmu*)

### **Location and Identification**

Ashdod-Yam (map reference 114200.132100) is another fortified Mediterranean port located about 3 miles northwest of Ashdod and 1.2 miles south of modern Ashdod. The name of Ashdod Yam appears solely in Assyrian documents describing the conquests of Ashdod by Sargon II in 712 B.C. in response to the revolt of Yamani, a rebellious usurper ruler of Ashdod (Isaiah 20:1; *ANET*: 285-87; Fantalkin 2014: 46; Luckenbill 1926-1927 2: §§5, 30, 62, 137, 195; Rainey and Notley 2006: 235-38; Tadmor 1958: 79-80; 1966: 94-95; 2011: 278-81). The identification of the site, especially after the recent excavations, is assured (e. g., Aharoni 1979a: 48-49, 377).

### **History of Excavation**

J. Kaplan (1969: 137; 1993c: 102) conducted surveys at the site over many years, noting that its ancient city walls extended for approximately 1 km. Iron Age II pottery was found when this same mud brick wall was subsequently surveyed by IAA archaeologists (Berman, Barda and Stark 2005: 29\*-30\*). Kaplan led excavations there from 1965-68, uncovering “a large, semicircular, rampart-like structure in the southern part of the site” dating to the Iron Age IIB-C (Kaplan 1969: 137; 1993c: 102-103). The site was later surveyed by the IAA (Berman, Barda and Stark 2005: 35\*), which seemed to confirm Kaplan’s earlier conclusions. A new expedition, led by A. Fantalkin (Tel Aviv University) began excavating the site in 2013 and the project is ongoing as of 2016.

## Site Description and Discoveries

Kaplan's excavations revealed a large semicircular 3.1-4.5 m wide mud brick wall with both an outer and inner glacis. Pottery from two occupational levels was recovered. Kaplan dated the first level to the second half of the eighth century B.C., contemporary with the construction of the fortress (Kaplan 1967b: 268-69; 1969: 142-47; 1993c: 103). The second stratum, he later proposed, dated to the seventh century B.C., when the fortifications went out of use (Kaplan 1993c: 103). Kaplan assumed a western wall once existed along the shoreline as well, but eroded away into the sea. An artificial mound of earth adjoining the inside wall of the southern fortifications was thought to be a redoubt or citadel to counter a topographically vulnerable point in the defences (Kaplan 1969: 138-40), but recent work here by Fantalkin has thus far only produced Hellenistic remains (Fantalkin 2014: 49-50). Fantalkin also reinterpreted the semicircular mud brick enclosure wall, suggesting rather that it may have served as a quay or fortified seawall to protect the harbor and its facilities (Fantalkin 2014: 45-46, 53). A small *favissa*, containing six chalices and one bowl, dating to Iron Age IIA-B, was discovered near the wall on the upper part of the outer glacis (Fantalkin 2014: 52). In the excavator's own words: "(q)uite a number of Iron Age IIB sherds and some organic material were detected embedded within the outer edge of the surface, providing, together with the finds from the *favissa*, a good corroboration of Kaplan's dating of the fortification system to the Iron Age IIB." Moreover, a clay surface was found abutting the wall that apparently has two phases and the poorly preserved earlier surface may predate the wall (Fantalkin 2014: 52). Fantalkin (2014: 53-54 and fig. 26) also suggested that an Assyrian relief from Khorsabad may actually represent the Assyrian siege of Ashdod-Yam by Sargon II due to

similarities in topography and the course of the walls. The remains of an Assyrian siege ramp may also be present. The extent of the site is now known to cover about 2 km north to south and roughly 1.5 km from east to west. As far as how much of this area was settled during the eighth century B.C., Fantalkin (2014: 46) does not speculate.

### **Hinterland**

Ashdod-Yam corresponds to the southern sector of the Archaeological Survey Map 84, which is fully referenced and discussed above in my treatment of Tel Mor. Ashdod-Yam appears as sites 38 and 60 on this map. The surveyers took particular interest in the large (ca. 150 x 450 m) horseshoe shaped fortified enclosure at Ashdod Yam (IAA survey site 60) with eighth century B.C. pottery (Berman, Barda, and Stark 2005: 29\*-30\*, 35\*).

### **Conclusions**

Ashdod-Yam is an intriguing site that regrettably remains inadequately published, which is the sad legacy of J. Kaplan's many excavations. Likewise, the new excavations thus far provide only preliminary reports. If the long mud brick wall to the north is incorporated into the Iron Age II defenses, the site has similarities with Yavneh-Yam. As it now appears, the semi-circular course of the wall is comparable (on a much smaller scale) to the walls of Ashkelon to the south, but may have enclosed or fortified a harbor. An important observation and question that Fantalkin (2014: 53) raises concerns the paucity of Assyrian evidence and finds at the site as well as determining when the massive defense/sea walls were established during the eighth century B.C. Whether these defenses were the work of Ashdodites, Assyrians or perhaps another agent is unknown at

present. Additional excavations at the site and more detailed reports are needed to determine whether Ashdod-Yam has special significance for our study.<sup>241</sup>

Tel Ashdod; Azotus; ‘Isdud; er-Râs; Jâlûd er-Râs; (Ashdod)

### **Location and Identification**

Tel Ashdod (map reference 117685.129425) is a large mound rising 52 m above sea level and 15-22 m above the surrounding area. The site is located about 4.5 km (2.8 miles) inland from the Mediterranean Sea at the edge of the kurkar sand dunes, about 6 km south of modern Ashdod and roughly 29 km northeast of Gaza. Ashdod is also positioned alongside and enjoys a commanding presence over the coastal road (the so-called “Via Maris”), which follows the eastern edge of the kurkar dunes that stretch west from Ashdod to the coastline. For its role as a seaport, Ashdod initially utilized the Naḥal Lachish as an estuary for anchorage and the site of Tel Mor as a coastline satellite or “daughter” city and port facility. Later, during the Iron Age II and notably during the eighth and seventh centuries B.C., Ashdod-Yam apparently assumed this role. Niemann (2013: 250) observes that Ashdod and her two satellites were the closest ports to the kingdom of Judah. This geographical factor undoubtedly did not escape the notice of Judah’s kings, who certainly coveted the harbors and the wealth of this great Philistine city.

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<sup>241</sup> The proposal offered by Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz (2001: 246-54; 2004: 127-33; followed by Na’aman 2001 and Niemann (2013: 250-51) that Ashdod sat virtually abandoned shortly after Sargon’s campaign in 712 B.C. and during the seventh century B.C., when its infrastructure and population moved to Ashdod-Yam, is little more than idle fantasy, coupled with a gross misreading of both the archaeological and historical data (Ben-Shlomo 2003: 95-104; Fantalkin 2001: 135-36; Fantalkin and Tal 2009: 242, n. 67; Shavit 2008; Stager, Master and Schloen 2011: 71). Their theory can now be dismissed after the discovery of a probable Assyrian provincial center, dated to the seventh century B.C., 200 meters from the base of Tel Ashdod (Fantalkin 2015: 47-49; Kletter and Zwickel 2006: 178; Kogan-Zehavi 2006; 2008). See also my discussion regarding Tel Ashdod and references cited there.

Cross and Freedman (1964: 49; see also Dothan and Freedman 1967: 8) argued that Ashdod is a Semitic name attested in fourteenth and thirteenth century B.C. Ugaritic documents. The name apparently derives from the root “to measure” and Shai (2009: 16) recently concurred that these early sources clearly refer to an Ashdod located in the southern Levant, not on Cyprus.<sup>242</sup>

Ashdod appears in the Bible as a city of the Anakim (Joshua 11:22), which was apportioned to the tribe of Judah (Joshua 15:45-47), but not occupied by them (Joshua 13:3). Later, as one of the epicenters of the Philistine pentapolis, Ashdod is mentioned in the Ark Narrative (1 Sam 5:1-8). The next biblical references are the conquest of the city by Uzziah (2 Chr 26:6) and in two eighth century B.C. prophecies, Amos (1:8; 3:9) and Isaiah (20:1). Ashdod is also mentioned by other prophets and biblical writers in later contexts (Jer 25:20; Zeph 2:4; Zech 9:6 and Neh 4:7 and 13:23-24). Finally, Ashdod is attested in several Assyrian historical sources, notably texts commissioned by Sargon II (*ANET*: 286-87; Luckenbill 1926-1927 2 §§ 30, 62, 195; Tadmor 1958: 79-84; 1966: 94-95; 1971: 192-97; 2011: 278-89, 495-504).<sup>243</sup>

The identification of Tel Ashdod with the ancient city of the same name is certain. The site admirably fulfills all of the requirements required by the historical sources, including extensive Philistine occupation, the fragments of a stele erected at the site by

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<sup>242</sup> See also Aharoni (1979a: 17, 269-70), Dothan (1964: 79; 1967: 130; 1969a: 16; 1992b; 1993a: 93-94) and the cited literature there. Recently, Ben-Shlomo (2013: 67) has accepted an alternative theory that he had previously opposed (Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005: 2-3). The theory was apparently introduced by Na’aman (1997c: 610) based in part upon the mysterious absence of Ashdod in Egyptian texts dating to the New Kingdom (Late Bronze Age). He suggests that Tianna of the Amarna correspondence refers to Ashdod and that the Ugaritic texts refer to Enkomi, or Ashdad in Cyprus. Thus, following Ben-Shlomo, Ashdod was subsequently settled in the Iron Age I by a contingent of Cypriot Enkomites, from whence its name derives.

<sup>243</sup> For a discussion of Ashdod as attested in historical sources, see Dothan and Freedman (1967: 8-13).

Sargon II shortly after 712 B.C. (Dothan 1963: 341; 1993a: 100; Rainey 1984a: 85; Tadmor 1966: 94-95; 1971: 192-97; 2011: 495-504) and the Arabic toponym of the neighboring, but now abandoned Palestinian village of 'Isdud, located 6 km southeast of modern Ashdod preserves the ancient name (Aharoni 1979a: 119-20, 130, n. 31a; Dothan 1993a: 93; Dothan and Freedman 1967: 5-7; Rainey 1984a: 84). All of this evidence provides irrefutable proof that ancient Ashdod and Tel Ashdod are one and the same (Aharoni 1979a: 17, 431; Rainey 1984a: 84-88).

### **Importance of the Site**

Most scholars recognize that Ashdod is a key site for understanding the history of the Levant throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages, but especially during the Iron Age I and II (e.g.: Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz 2001: 231). The significance of Ashdod has been enhanced by comparing and contrasting stratigraphy and material culture with those from the recent excavations at Tel Miqne and the ongoing work at Tell es-Safi and Ashkelon (Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005: 1). With its port facilities (initially at Tel Mor and later transferred to Ashdod-Yam; Aharoni 1979a: 17-18, 25; Fantalkin 2015: 45), Ashdod assumed the role of a trading broker and center between Edom and Arabia on the one hand, and Phoenicia and polities to the west on the other and continued in this role during the eighth century B.C. Ashdod's important status during Iron Age II and specifically the eighth century B.C. is emphasized in oracles preserved in Joel 3:4-8 and Amos 1:6-10, and also demonstrated by archaeological evidence (e.g.: Dothan and Porath 1982: 52-58).

While a modicum of uncertainty remains regarding which Gath (Gath-Gittaim or Gath of the Philistines) is referred to in 2 Chr 26:6, the locations of ancient Yavneh and especially Ashdod are certain and both sites provide historical geographical benchmarks



for our investigation. Yet, of the latter two cities, only Ashdod has been extensively excavated. Thus, for our purposes, the archaeological data from Ashdod is most relevant and crucial and potentially provides the most important direct archaeological evidence to test the veracity of Chr's account of Uzziah.<sup>244</sup> Consequently, properly interpreting all of its archaeological data is of paramount importance and the conclusions of its excavators and the assessment of others must be carefully and critically examined. Our task, as elsewhere, focuses on searching for a destruction level dating to the mid-eighth century B.C., which corresponds with Stratum IX, according to Ashdod's excavators, and subsequent evidence of a Judahite presence in the material culture and building remains. Two issues also confront and complicate this inquiry: Another historically documented destruction of Ashdod occurred during the eighth century B.C. in 712 B.C. (Stratum VIII). Secondly, the rather cosmopolitan status of Ashdod as a trading hub makes the "pots and peoples" paradigm for determining ethnicity largely irrelevant (Bunimovitz and Yasur-Landau 1996; Kletter 1999). Thus, all data from both historical and archaeological sources must be considered, then integrated into the most probable historical narrative.

Assyrian sources dating to the reign of Sargon II (*ANET*: 284-87; Tadmor 1958: 79-84; 1966: 94-95; 2011: 278-89) mention that Ashdod, under the leadership of Azuri, revolted in 713 B.C. (Isaiah 20:1-6).<sup>245</sup> This action took place merely 50-60 years (approximately) after Uzziah's action. Consequently, two destruction levels should be sought with their respective pottery horizons a half century apart. Neutron activation

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<sup>244</sup> The other sites named by Chr are Gath, Yavneh and Jerusalem, the latter is not dealt with in detail here. Tel Yavneh still essentially lies unexcavated and Gath (Tell es-Safi) has not yet provided any dramatic evidence to either support or conflict with Chr's account. This leaves Ashdod, which has been extensively excavated and whose director claims to have evidence supporting Chr's account.

<sup>245</sup> The similarities of Azuri and Azariah (Uzziah), at least in their English rendering, are noteworthy.

analysis determined that ovoid store jars from Kuntillet 'Ajrud were manufactured at Ashdod (Gunneweg, Perlman and Meshel 1985), which demonstrates a probable trading link between Israel, Judah and Philistia during the reigns of Joash, Amaziah and the first half of Uzziah's reign. The discoveries of Hebrew inscriptions (an ostrakon and stone weights) as well as a *lmlk*-seal impression, seem to support this hypothesis. The six-chamber gate unearthed by Dothan during the 1969-72 seasons and dated by him to the late tenth century B.C. presents a remarkably close match to the well known Iron Age IIA gates from Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer. The similarities, both architecturally and (at least initially) chronologically, of Ashdod's gateway are difficult to dismiss as mere coincidence and this circumstantial evidence has led some scholars (Dothan and Porath 1982: 54-56; Yadin 1979: 217-18; 1980: 21-22) to date it towards the end of Solomon's reign or shortly thereafter. Dothan suggests that Solomon may have actually constructed the Ashdod gateway and controlled Ashdod for an undetermined period of time.<sup>246</sup> However, based upon red-slipped, burnished sherds from installations in use before the construction of the gate (Dothan and Porath 1982: 15-16) with the absence of similar sherds related to the gate at Gezer, Ussishkin (1990: 82) argues that the Ashdod gate may have been constructed after the Gezer gate, during the period of the Divided Monarchy. Moreover, following Ussishkin's (1980; 1990: 77-82) reassessment of Ashdod Area M, Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz (2001; 2004) redate the Ashdod Stratum IX six-chamber gateway to the eighth century B.C.

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<sup>246</sup> If this theory has credibility, one must consider the possibility of a link between 1 Kings 9:16 (Pharaoh's ceding of Gezer and the offer of his daughter to Solomon in marriage) with the construction of the Ashdod gate. See further Ehrlich (1996: 51-56) for a discussion of the historical background of this episode with bibliography.

## **History of Excavation**

Tel Ashdod was excavated over nine seasons, from 1962-1972 by Moshe Dothan (Department of Antiquities = IAA) and others.<sup>247</sup> Aside from a large number of unstratified small objects (Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005: vi), the final publication of the excavation has been completed (Dothan 1971a; 1971b; Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005; Dothan and Freedman 1967; Dothan and Porath 1982; 1993). More recently, a series of IAA salvage digs led by E. Kogan-Zehavi and others have uncovered dramatic new evidence near the foot of the mound revealing more of Ashdod's history during the mid-late eighth century B.C.

## **Site Description and Discoveries**

Ashdod was one of the largest cities in the region during the Iron Age II, and included both an upper city and a much more extensive lower city. Portions of the ancient site were damaged by generations of cultivation, fertilizer removal and building activity. Therefore, the exact extent of the ancient city is difficult to ascertain. Dothan (1964: 80; 1967: 129; 1993a: 93; Dothan and Freedman 1967: 14-16) estimated the site covered at least 90 acres; comprising an impressive 17-20-acre acropolis, a second hill of slightly lower elevation, and a huge lower city of at least 70 acres during the Iron Age II period. The primary occupational phases of Ashdod were during the Late Bronze and Iron Ages, and the city reached its peak, both in settled area and population during the eighth century B.C. (Ben-Shlomo 2013: 70).

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<sup>247</sup> Excavations were conducted in 1962, 1963, 1965, 1967, and 1968-1972. The American co-directors and sponsors were James L. Swager (Carnegie Museum) and, for the first two seasons, David Noel Freedman (Pittsburg Theological Seminary). Various (mainly Israeli) scholars co-authored and assisted in the publication of the site.

Dothan (1969a: 16; 1993a: 95) initially identified 20 strata, but eventually identified a total of 28 occupational levels dating from the Chalcolithic-Early Bronze Age to the Byzantine period.<sup>248</sup> Naturally, not every period of occupation was present in each of the several areas excavated.<sup>249</sup> As is well known, Ashdod's Iron Age I-IIA levels have received the most attention due to their significance for Sea People and early biblical history. Yet the later Iron Age levels have also received a considerable amount of interest in the literature. Dothan dated the demise of Stratum IX, Stratum VIII and the building of Stratum VII all to the eighth century B.C. Excavations on the acropolis (Areas A, G and K) did not unearth significant remains associated with these strata aside from fortress and city walls, a street, drainage channel and houses with stone foundations (Dothan 1993a: 98). Dothan and Ben-Shlomo (2005: 6) summarized their findings: "During Iron Age IIB (ninth-eighth centuries BCE) the settlement at Tel Ashdod probably reached its peak, as evidenced in Areas A, C, D, G, H, K and M. The city expanded towards the lower city, occupying at least 28 hectares. Stratum VIII remains in Area D are particularly noteworthy. This phase of the late Iron Age IIA and IIB, which by and large remains unattested at regional sites such as Tel Miqne-'Ekron, Tell Qasile and Bet(h) Shemesh, is very conspicuous at Tel Ashdod and recently at Tell es-Safi... and Tel Zayit as well." Nevertheless, Dothan and Ben-Shlomo (2005: 6) also concede that: "At Ashdod, however, the dividing lines between the consecutive strata of this period (X-IX, IX-VIII, VIII-VII) have variable manifestations and are not always well

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<sup>248</sup> The number of Ashdod's occupational levels varies in the literature as well. For instance, Dever (1997a: 219) recognizes 23 strata.

<sup>249</sup> See conveniently Dothan (1993a: 94) or Dothan and Ben-Shlomo (2005: vii, Plan 1.1) for site maps with the various excavated areas marked.

synchronized between the different areas of the tell. The large size of the settlement was probably retained, with a possible gap extending from the late sixth century BCE through the Hellenistic period.” Dothan and Ben-Shlomo (2005: 8) then add that: “the finds relating traditionally to the tenth century BCE—the Iron Age IIA-IIB transition—are fragmentary both in architecture and pottery. This horizon might be relatively wider at Ashdod, as Stratum IX hardly exists in most areas. Thus, a tenth/ninth-century transition may not have been very well distinguished. Moreover, Areas H and K show no signs of violent destruction in Stratum VIII, in contrast to the situation in Area D. Therefore, we also lack the chronological anchor of the Sargonid conquest of 712 BCE. Lacking a textual chronological anchor, it seems preferable to define an Iron Age IIA (tenth-ninth century) assemblage in Strata X and IX, an Iron Age IIB (late ninth-eighth century) assemblage in Stratum IX-VIII and an Iron Age IIB/C (eighth-seventh century) assemblage in Strata VII and VI.” Consequently, the lack of clear cut separations between strata in this critical period poses a serious problem for reconstructing the history of the site and especially for resolving our inquiry. Dothan and Ben-Shlomo (2005: 7) reported that early Stratum IX-VIII pottery shows similarities to a number of sites to the east, notably at Tell es-Safi (Phase 4), which seems to support the dates Dothan and Ben-Shlomo attribute to these strata. Aside from Areas D and M, from which the data is also disputed, if not controversial, the stratigraphic picture of Stratum IX at Ashdod is indistinct and blurred. In a recent encyclopedia article on Ashdod, Ben-Shlomo (2013: 70-71) does not discuss the circumstances surrounding the end of Stratum IX, only that Stratum VIII was probably destroyed by Sargon II. Gitin (2010: 328) also follows this approach.

## Local Stratigraphic Summary

The stratigraphic picture for Area A reflects continuity throughout Strata X-VI (Dothan 1971a: 31-38 and Plan 3; Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005: 6). A Philistine building erected in Stratum X remained in use, despite several destructions, throughout Strata IX-VII. For Area G, the general architectural plan changed very little in Strata IX-VI. Part of a large building with thick walls along with a silo and tabun were unearthed (Dothan 1971a: 149-41; Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005: 6). In Area H, the Iron Age IIB-C strata were almost completely eroded away. Dothan (1971a: 163-64; Ben-Shlomo 2005: 44) designated these levels Strata IX-VIII (local) Stratum 2b (Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005: 6-9).

The lowest level in Area K parallels Strata IX-VIII of Areas A and G, Stratum VIII of Area D and Strata IX and VIII of Area M. The relatively thin accumulation of approximately one meter, coupled with a lengthy occupational period of three to four hundred years (Strata IX-VI, and in some areas Stratum X as well), suggests only sparse occupation. Moreover, these thin layers almost guarantee mixed sherds, complicating their interpretation and dating. A rather substantial building (6176), consisting of a courtyard or hall surrounded by at least four rooms, seems to indicate a certain degree of prosperity (Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005: 45-48). Across a street (running southeast to northwest) from this structure, the scanty remains of another building (5109) was exposed in Area H (Dothan 1971a: 162-64; Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005: 50) and the general sequence of settlement shows continuity without interruption. However, most of the recovered pottery was not well stratified and came from "poorly substantiated loci." Consequently, chronological conclusions for Area K cannot rely on ceramic evidence

alone (Ben-Shlomo 2005: 6-8). On the other hand, several forms of bowls, kraters, storage jars, jugs and cooking pots have excellent parallels at Judahite sites dating to the reign of Uzziah, such as Lachish IV-III, Tel 'Eton and Timnah III (Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005: 200-13).

Area D, located in Ashdod's lower city, revealed four superimposed Iron Age II settlements including a brick wall that enclosed the lower city of at least 3 m (to possibly more than 6 m wide) in width and a small temple or sanctuary with several rooms and a peculiar whitewashed brick structure, perhaps an altar, with many votive vessels and pottery, including fragments of figurines found nearby and in adjacent rooms (Dothan 1963: 341; 1969a: 20; 1993a: 99-100; Dothan and Freedman 1967: 132-39). Initially, Dothan dated the destruction of (local) Stratum 3b to Uzziah, including the temple and its cult objects and suggested Uzziah consequently rebuilt parts of the city (local Stratum 3a; Dothan and Freedman 1967: 139). Dothan (1971a: 21, 114-15) later dated these features to strata dating from the mid to late eighth century B.C., revising the stratigraphy.<sup>250</sup> Stratum VIII included part of the city wall, a residential quarter with pottery workshops with kilns and mass burials uncovered in three of the buildings. These seemingly secondary burials contained large groupings of mostly male skeletons, some exhibiting limb mutilation, which may reflect some of Ashdod's casualties during Sargon II's

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<sup>250</sup> The relevant revisions are the destruction of local Stratum 4 (IX) attributed to Uzziah; the destruction of Stratum 3b (VIII) attributed to Sargon II and that of Stratum 3a (VII) to Psamtik (Dothan 1971a: 21). Later in the same volume, Dothan (1971a: 114-15) makes another stratigraphical adjustment, writing: "After the second season, which furnished additional material about Stratum 3, it became evident that there was continuity between the two phases (3b and 3a). Stratum 3b may have been destroyed by Uzziah, who did not retain his hold on Ashdod. The city continued to exist in 3a, the houses were repaired and the victims of the war were buried in mass burials under the plaster floors. Stratum 3, including the lower city wall, was destroyed by Sargon II in 712 B.C.E."

conquest of the city (Ben-Shlomo 2013: 70; Dothan 1971a: 88-94; 1971b: Plate 39) or, less likely, victims from Uzziah's earlier attack on the city (Dothan 1971a: 115).

Excavations in 1969-1970 in Area M, also located in the lower city, revealed a large (ca. 20.9 x 18.4 m) six-chamber gateway built of mud brick with a stone foundation that included dressed ashlar stones with traces of drafted margins.<sup>251</sup> Two solid towers flanked the 5 m wide entrance passage into the city. Excavations also unearthed part of a massive 8.7 m wide solid mud brick city wall, extending south from the gateway. Dothan (1993a: 98-99) suggested that the additional width of the wall reflects its solid, not casemate construction. This feature may point to a slightly later date than the tenth century B.C. for the gate. Conversely, the solid wall may reflect an early example of an 'innovative' feature at the site. The wall, running north from the gateway, was traced over 40 m. After about 40 m, the width of the southern wall was reduced to 5 m. These walls were preserved up to a height of three courses. Another 3.75 m wide wall extended from the east gate tower and possibly led to an outer gate. The gateway, very similar in plan to the famous Solomonic gates found at Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer and Lachish, was preserved to a height of 2 m in some places and was dated to the late tenth century B.C. and attributed either to Solomon or perhaps built slightly later by others, partially on the ruins of an earlier gateway (Dothan 1969b: 245; 1970: 119-20; 1971c: 175; 1972: 244; 1993a: 99; Dothan and Porath 1982: 55), followed by Yadin (1979: 217-18; 1980: 21).<sup>252</sup> The gateway persisted through several "phases" or strata, which are extremely important

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<sup>251</sup> See Dothan 1969b: 245; 1970: 119-20; 1971c: 175; 1972: 244; 1993a: 98-99; Dothan and Porath 1982: 19-28 and Plan 6.

<sup>252</sup> The pottery associated with the four-chamber gateway of the previous Stratum (X) was dated to the early tenth century B.C. by the excavators, who also tentatively dated its destruction to Siamun (Dothan 1993a: 98; Dothan and Porath 1982: 53-54; 1993: 13) between 970-960 B.C.



for our purposes here. Evidence of repairs suggests that the initial phase of the gateway existed for a long time, yet minimal accumulation was unearthed in its various chambers (Dothan and Porath 1982: 25). According to the excavators, this initial phase (Stratum IX), which had the six-chambers, closed off from the passageway and mainly eighth century B.C. pottery on the floors, was destroyed by fire and discernable by a line of ash. The excavators attributed this destruction layer to Uzziah in about 750 B.C. (Dothan and Porath 1982: 29, 55-56). The excavators also propose that a blocking structure or cross wall (W7128 and W7129) erected in front of the gateway anticipated this assault (Dothan and Porath 1982: 24-25, 55; Ussishkin 1990: 77-78, 81). Possibly as a response to Ussishkin's rejection of Dothan's stratigraphic interpretation of the Area M gateway, Dothan (1993a: 98) suggested that accessibility to the blocked off chambers was achieved from inside the city. Once again, according to the excavators, the destroyed walls of Stratum IX were rebuilt and those that survived were reused (Dothan and Porath 1982: 28-29). This rebuilt phase, which lasted about 40-50 years, was destroyed by Sargon II (Stratum VIII). During the third phase (Stratum VII), the gate opening was narrowed by undressed stones and bricks and repairs were made to the south eastern tower. A wall closed off each of the six-chambers, which in turn were filled with bricks to the level of the raised passageway. This gate was possibly destroyed by Psamtik or Josiah. The final phase of the gate stood until the late seventh century B.C., possibly until the campaign of Nebuchadnezzar (Stratum VI), but apparently only had two pairs of rooms. The various floors that existed during the life of the gateway (Strata IX-VI) were "clearly recognized in the open space leading into the city from the gate" (Dothan 1972: 244).

The settlement of this lower city suggests a marked rise in Ashdod's population and political status, possibly beginning during the tenth and continuing during the ninth and eighth centuries B.C. (Ben-Shlomo 2013: 70; Dothan 1969a: 20). The end of Stratum VIII occurred when the lower city was destroyed. In the following level, Stratum VII, the temple area was dotted with refuse pits full of kilns, ashes, sherds, bones and pottery wasters. This seems to indicate that a large pottery workshop existed here that likely produced, along with workshops at Tell es-Safi, the distinctive "Ashdod ware" burnished and red slipped black and white linear pottery forms from the late tenth-eighth centuries B.C. (Ben-Shlomo 2013: 71-72; Ben-Shlomo, Shai, and Maeir 2004). A Hebrew inscription, incised on a potsherd reads *phr*, perhaps rendered "(the) potter," was attributed to this level (Dothan 1963: 341; 1969a: 21; 1969b: 245; 1993a: 100) and strongly supports the pottery workshop interpretation. Other Hebrew inscriptions were recovered, such as weight measures (inscribed with *pym*, *nsf*, and possibly *beqa'*; Dothan 1963: 341; 1969b: 245) and a *lmlk*-impressed jar handle. It is especially noteworthy that the *lmlk* handle would turn up at Ashdod, outside of Judah's borders. The city was destroyed at the end of the eighth century B.C. by Sargon II in 712 B.C. (Isaiah 20:1). Dramatic confirmation of this Assyrian attack surfaced during the second season. Three fragments of either a basalt stele or statue pedestal of Sargon (Dothan 1963: 341; 1993a: 100; Tadmor 1971: 192-97) were recovered.<sup>253</sup> Approximately 30 skeletons were uncovered in a small room and exhibit signs of a hasty burial (Dothan 1963: 341; 1969a: 21). This quarter was in turn destroyed either by Psamtik I in the seventh century B.C.,

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<sup>253</sup> Although the name of Sargon II does not appear on any of the fragments, the surviving text duplicates extant victory stelae unearthed at Khorsabad, Sargon's capital. Ashdod's rebellious populous probably smashed this statue or stele when word reached the city of Sargon's death in 705 B.C. (Rainey 1984a: 86).

who, according to Herodotus (ii 157), besieged Ashdod for an astounding 29 years, Josiah, as noted above, or by Nebuchadnezzar.

Based principally, but not entirely upon the evidence found at the Area M gateway, Dothan maintained, in numerous publications published both during and after his excavation of Ashdod, that he possessed hard evidence of an early to mid-eighth century B.C. destruction of part of the city gate and walls, which he attributed to Uzziah's expansion into Philistia (2 Chr 26:6; Dothan 1964: 79, 86; 1967: 130-31, 133-36; 1969a: 17; 1969b: 245; 1970: 120; 1971a: 21, 114-15; 1972: 244; 1973a; 1977: 90-91; 1992a: 477, 480; 1993a: 98-99; Dothan and Dothan 1992: 133, 185-87; Dothan and Freedman 1967: 9-10, 139; Dothan and Porath 1982: 29, 55-56).<sup>254</sup>

Continued urban development and chance finds on and around Tel Ashdod have raised the need for several salvage excavations. In 2003, Varga directed a salvage excavation, opening eight squares along the route of a planned railroad right of way, about 120 m north of the base of Tel Ashdod. These revealed massive Iron Age II foundational or fortification walls constructed with square flat mud bricks measuring 0.4 x .04 m wide and 0.1 m in height, and corresponding mud brick pavement layers, which

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<sup>254</sup> See also similar assessments of Uzziah in brief reports written by Biran (1963: 13; citing information from the Ashdod excavation provided by Dothan and Freedman), Campbell (1963: 30-32), Freedman (1962: 18; 1963: 138-39), and again in a later encyclopedia article (Freedman 1979: 315-16). Dothan is followed, in various levels of certainty, by others scholars (e.g.: Bierling 1992: 195; Myers 1965b: 152-53; Oded 1979a: 240; and Yadin 1979: 218). G. Barkay (1992: 335) and A. Mazar (1990a: 532-33) commented that the second of the three Iron Age II destructions of Ashdod are ascribed or attributed to Uzziah. In his first preliminary report, Dothan (1962: 148) raised the possibility that Uzziah broke down the walls after "the city reached its greatest extent under Solomon or after the division of the Israelite kingdom." Yet, no claim is made that evidence was found to confirm this account. See also the cautious statement of support given by Rainey (1984a: 85). However, Rainey, following Freedman (1963: 138), felt that Sargon II was actually a better candidate for this destruction. Rainey wrote his impressions for use as student field trip handouts shortly after the completion of Ashdod's third season of excavations in 1965, but they remained unpublished for 19 years.

likewise probably belonged to a building or part of Ashdod's fortification system. Both walls enclosed later installations (Berman and Barda 2005: 42\*-43\*; Varga 2005).

A particularly extensive salvage project conducted by E. Kogan-Zehavi (2006; 2008; Berman and Barda 2005: 41\*-42\*) and others near the base of the tel<sup>255</sup> opened 42 squares in four areas (A, B, C, and D) and uncovered an extremely large, thick-walled structure built of square mud bricks, which they ascribed to their Strata 7-6. Areas B, C, and D were located at the margins of the site in order to determine the size of this massive building. The excavators identify this clearly monumental structure, built upon an expansive (38 by 38 by 10 m) podium with mud bricks similar in shape to those from Mesopotamia, as an Assyrian palace dating either to the late eighth or, less likely, the early seventh century B.C. during the so-called *Pax Assyriaca* (Ben-Shlomo 2013: 71; Berman and Barda 2005: 42\*; Kogan-Zehavi 2006; 2008: 1573-74). The palace included three stone and ceramic bathtub-shaped basins in a plastered room adjoined by another room built of fine ashlar. Two other bathtub-shaped basins from a third room apparently collapsed from a second floor. The excavators interpret these rooms as part of a bathing complex, supporting their interpretation that the entire structure, podium and adjacent 30 m wide courtyard functioned as an Assyrian provincial center and ascribe its construction to Sargon II (Isaiah 20:1-6; Ben-Shlomo 2013: 71; Kogan-Zehavi 2006; 2008: 1574),<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> The main excavations were carried out at a site about 200 m northwest of the tel, but close enough to be considered an unwalled (extramural) district or quarter directly associated with the city. Ben-Shlomo (2013: 71) argues that this area was actually part of Ashdod's walled (lower) city during its *flourit*, earlier during the ninth and eighth century B.C. The Assyrians apparently appropriated this area for their provincial capital after 712 B.C. See also the summary treatments of this excavation by Sudilovsky (2004) and Gitin (2010: 329).

<sup>256</sup> Other finds include a 2.8 m wide wall of a structure with five flanking rooms. One room was excavated, revealing walls preserved up to 1.8 m, numerous crushed storage jars and evidence of destruction from an intense fire (Kogan-Zehavi 2008: 1574). As the subsequent strata both date to the late

which seems quite likely. However, below this palace, three earlier phases of Iron Age II structures, designated together as Stratum 8, were excavated in Area B.<sup>257</sup> The first phase consists of a mud brick wall and pottery dating from the tenth to the eighth century B.C. The excavators are uncertain whether an overlaying burn layer belongs to this level or to the next phase, which is comprised of fieldstone collapse and mud brick fragments. The final (upper) phase included one course of an east-west wall constructed of rectangular-shaped mud bricks. The pottery retrieved from fills alongside this wall date to the eighth century B.C. More significantly, this final phase of Stratum 8 is clearly built *above* an earlier eighth-century B.C. destruction layer and *below* the walls of the later Assyrian-period public building. If the excavators are correct in ascribing this earlier destruction to the eighth century B.C., there is consequently independent evidence from a different excavator working at a different area of the site to correlate with Dothan's Stratum IX destruction layer. Since this area was possibly an extramural quarter of the city, its destruction by Uzziah would seem assured, even though Chr only mentions the destruction of (at least) part of the city wall.

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seventh century B.C., it is probable that the destruction of this fire is related to the withdrawal of Assyrian forces from the Levant at some point during the third quarter of the seventh century B.C.

<sup>257</sup> Berman and Barda (2005: 42\*) report that "(a) wide, massive wall (city wall? part of a building foundation surface?), built of flat, square mud bricks (the majority measuring 0.4 x 0.4 m), was attributed to Iron Age II. The wall, c. 15 m wide and 1.8 m high, ran N—S. Iron Age II pottery (tenth-ninth centuries BCE and eighth century BCE) and a few LB potsherds were discovered in a section and in the fill on the W portion of the wall." While the massive wall with its characteristic flat and square mud bricks should be attributed to the Assyrian provincial center, the associated pottery apparently originated in the wall's foundation trenches and properly belongs to Stratum 8. The various summary reports of these salvage excavations clearly need to be published together in a more detailed final report.

## Criticism of Dothan's Methodology and Conclusions

Dothan's excavation and recording methodologies utilized at Ashdod, as well as the final reports for the site, have been criticized by other scholars as confused, incomplete, sloppy and consequently problematic. For instance, Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz (2004: 132-33) recognize problems in excavation and registration methodology, poor standards in publication, errors in plans and "*the consistent preference, by the excavators and their followers, of vague historical considerations over straightforward archaeological data*" (italics mine). Stager, Master, and Schloen (2011: 71-72) write that "(t)he seventh-century remains (at Ashdod) are a confusing assortment of phases" adding that "the publication of the finds, although quite extensive, has been done in a piecemeal fashion over the years, giving rise to some uncertainty with regard to the internal correlations among the phases excavated at the site and, more broadly, causing problems for the reconstruction of Ashdod's settlement history." In his review of *Ashdod VI* (Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005), Master (2007: 110-11) describes the lack of earth loci or other datable contexts for most of the finds, stating that: "Objects are often tied to loci which are as generic as "room" or "area" and which might include a meter or more of vertical accumulation." Clearly, Dothan did not achieve tight enough stratigraphic controls at Ashdod. Maeir (2013a: 195) agrees, remarking that "the lack of sufficient stratigraphic control somewhat confounds the discussion of the relevant levels at this site."<sup>258</sup> Dothan's successor in the final publication project for Ashdod, Ben-Shlomo

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<sup>258</sup> The confusing stratigraphy of Ashdod, as presented in Dothan's reports, has been recognized for many years (e.g.: see the brief discussion of Mattingly 1981: 52). A well known archaeologist with extensive excavation experience in the southern Levant commented to me privately that M. Dothan's lack of stratigraphic control and sloppy methodology at Tel Ashdod was, in this person's opinion, one of the worst they had ever witnessed and sadly matched only the excavations carried out concurrently by A. Biran at Tel Dan. The work of Dothan and Biran were consequently not textbook examples for demonstrating the

(2003: 85), recognizes these issues as well. In Dothan's defense, the architectural features unearthed at Ashdod are largely mud brick; a material sometimes difficult to discern and isolate from the surrounding soil and their associated floors, especially when section balks are not used. The architectural focus of the excavation did permit the drawing of coherent plans. Moreover, the Ashdod project was a pioneering dig of sorts and introduced several innovative components, such as being the first joint Israeli-American project with a multi-disciplinary approach and utilizing foreign volunteers and specialists. Ashdod also was among the first excavators to use Neutron Activation Analysis to determine the provenience of ceramics. Dothan and his team also revealed the complex character, development, adaptation and evolution of Philistine settlement exemplified in part by the discovery of the red burnished "Ashdod Ware" and the tenth-ninth century B.C. six-chamber city gate as recognized by Silberman (2013: x-xii) in a posthumous note of appreciation to Dothan.<sup>259</sup>

By far the most wide-ranging criticism of Dothan's methodology and conclusions was voiced in three papers; the first by Ussishkin (1990: 77-82), followed by two articles published by Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz (2001; 2004). Especially relevant to our study was their treatment of Stratum IX, which Dothan documented in Areas A, C, D, G, H, K, and M and argued was destroyed by Uzziah during the mid-eighth century B.C. As part of a larger study of Iron Age II six-chamber gates at several sites in the southern Levant,

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benefits of the "Locus to Stratum" or "architectural" excavation methodology practiced by Israeli archaeologists at the time. For the history and legacy of this so-called "Israeli Method" of excavation, see the comprehensive treatment of Kletter (2015) with additional literature cited there.

<sup>259</sup> Silberman's tribute, written as a preface to an edited volume on the Philistines and other Sea Peoples that Silberman essentially dedicates to Dothan, would naturally prohibit any critical remarks regarding Dothan's work. See also the short biographical essay in the forward to an earlier *festschrift* in Dothan's honor edited by Heltzer, Segal and Kaufman (1993: 11♦-13♦).

Ussishkin (1990: 77-82) presented an extensive and detailed reassessment and reinterpretation of the Ashdod Area M gateway. He noted that the data presented by the excavators were “insufficient” and contested many of their reconstructions and interpretations, concluding that some of the exposed architectural details of the six-chamber gateway were built-up foundational sleeper walls with constructional fill and not part of its superstructure or floor(s). The validity of this observation is especially apparent in the walled-off gate chambers, which should have been easily accessed by the central passage. Significantly, Ussishkin (1990: 81-82) interprets the barrier or cross walls (W7128 and W7129) as another sleeper wall that joined the two entrance towers and makes this additional observation: “At least some walls of the superstructure (as well as the upper part of the foundations) were narrower than the corresponding foundation walls. Hence, the narrower, upper parts of the walls need not be interpreted as a rebuilding in Stratum VIII of the earlier Stratum IX gate (Dothan and Porath 1982: 29; Plate 4:2).” Ussishkin (1990: 82) suggests that the gateway had two or three floor surfaces, the lowest one representing the original floor and the highest dating to its last days. Ussishkin also redated the Stratum IX Ashdod gate to a period later than the date of the Gezer six-chamber gateway, apparently during the ninth or early eighth century B.C.<sup>260</sup>

While Ussishkin’s arguments are well presented and persuasive, A. Mazar (2007: 156, n. 2) does not accept the built up and filled foundations interpretation, noting that the use of wooden beams and two courses of ashlar stones for the substructure of the

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<sup>260</sup> Halpern (1997: 332-35 and n. 62) superbly demonstrates the implications for both the traditional view, represented by Holladay’s (1990) study, and Ussishkin’s (1980; 1990) reinterpretation and (lowered) redating of the Iron Age IIA six-chamber gates.



Megiddo (Level VA-IVB) gate complex is highly unlikely. Neither of these two elements would be incorporated into the foundation of a city gateway; the wood would rapidly rot away and the investment in labor to shape beautiful ashlar, also hidden underground, would be pointless.

Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz (2001: 242-44, 254; 2004: 127, 132) suggested that Stratum IX is a ghost stratum that “cannot be interpreted as an independent layer” and “was created because of possible evidence for constructional phases in the Stratum VIII-VII continuum and boosted in order to provide a pre-8<sup>th</sup> century date for the four-entry (six-chamber) gate in Area M. All remains which were ascribed to this stratum should be assigned to the city of Stratum VIII.” The Stratum IX pottery in Area D they reassigned to Stratum X. Dothan’s (1971a: 21, 114-15) assertion that Uzziah destroyed an occupational level in Area D (local Stratum 3b) was rejected. On the contrary, Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz (2001: 246; 2004: 127-30) claimed that firm evidence exists for only one level and one destruction layer and this they attribute to Stratum VIII and Sargon II. In Area G, they associate the city wall (Locus 4014) and its pottery to Stratum VIII (Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz 2001: 240-42). While Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz (2001: 242-44) reassigned the finds from Areas D and G to other levels, they also deemed the Stratum IX remains from Areas A and H either insignificant or too meager to draw any conclusions. More importantly, they also dated the Area M six-chamber gateway to Stratum VIII, basing their arguments on Ussishkin’s (1980: 12-17; 1990: 77-82)<sup>261</sup> proposal that this six-chamber gateway was constructed of built up foundations and fills,

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<sup>261</sup> Ussishkin (1990: 77) notes that: “the data are insufficient to discuss in depth many of the details (of the Ashdod six-chamber gateway).”

giving Dothan and his team the mistaken illusion of earlier occupational layers and floors when in fact these were merely foundational fill layers (Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz 2001: 242-44, 254).<sup>262</sup> Moreover, they recognized Strata VIII-VII as merely a single occupational phase extending from the late ninth century B.C. until Ashdod fell to Sargon II in 712 B.C. (Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz 2001: 236, 244-46 and Table 2). Consequently, if one accepts the Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz (2001: 242-44) stratigraphic interpretation of the Iron Age II levels at Ashdod, Stratum IX and its corresponding destruction level essentially disappears and consequently, the Area M evidence for a mid-eighth century B.C. conquest by Uzziah likewise evaporates. If the gate is associated solely to Stratum VIII (-VII), Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz (2001: 246) date its destruction to Sargon II in 712 B.C. Thus, the conclusion that Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz present essentially eliminates any link between Uzziah and the destruction of this gateway. Finally, Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz (2001: 246-54; 2004: 127-33) argue that Ashdod was essentially abandoned shortly after Sargon II's campaign and the city was relocated to Ashdod-Yam and consequently, all historical references to Ashdod during the seventh century B.C. refer to the latter coastal town, not the former inland site

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<sup>262</sup> Determining the dates of gates and fortifications are, as Bunimovitz and Lederman (2001: 134-36) and Ben-Shlomo (2003: 90, n. 4) remind us, are often problematic. Ussishkin's built up foundations and fills theory for six-chamber gateways may be applicable for some sites, such as Lachish. However, the excavators of other Iron Age II sites with six-chamber gateways, such as at Timnah, (Kelm and Mazar 1995: 122-27, 138, n. 4) cannot find any supporting evidence and strongly oppose this interpretation. Various building phases and destruction levels noted and recorded along the walls and at gates can create stratigraphic incompatibilities with other areas of the site, where such evidence may not be preserved or may never have been present. Establishment dates for fortifications should be determined by the latest finds recovered from the earliest foundation trenches. Interestingly, the most comprehensive discussion of the topic, written by Herzog (1986: 117-18) restates and thus seemingly accepts the excavator's conclusions regarding the Area M six-chamber gateway. Admittedly, Herzog's 1986 publication was translated from an earlier Hebrew edition, published in 1976, when Ussishkin was still formulating his views on these gates during the Lachish excavations. Herzog's (1992: 265-74) later summary treatment, also translated from an earlier Hebrew edition, is more critical of Yadin, yet maintains a late tenth century B.C. date for the Ashdod gate.

of Ashdod. While a few of their statements regarding Stratum IX and the six-chamber gateway may contain some degree of credibility, their assumptions concerning Ashdod during the seventh century B.C. have been soundly refuted from both historical and archaeological evidence (Ben-Shlomo 2003: 95-104; Fantalkin 2001: 135-36; 2015: 47-49; Kogan-Zehavi 2006; 2008; Shavit 2008; Stager, Master and Schloen 2011: 71), the most recent, notably and clearly the most devastating evidence are the reports by Kogan-Zehavi, which document the discovery of an enormous (almost certainly Assyrian) administrative center, dated to the seventh century B.C., merely 200 m north of the base of Tel Ashdod.

Ben-Shlomo (2003) wrote a lengthy rejoinder to Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz (2001) and contested nearly all of their assertions, arguing that the original stratigraphy and dating for the Iron Age levels be retained. Regarding the Area M gateway, Ben-Shlomo (2003: 91) countered that, while the stratigraphic interpretation has been previously contested by Ussishkin: “It is clear, however, that levels below the Iron Age IIB gate of Stratum M8-VIII do exist. The early (Iron Age IIA Stratum X) walls are clearly discernable” (Dothan and Porath 1982: 13-16, Plan 5). With this remark, Ben-Shlomo seems to suggest that the earlier four-chamber gateway represents strata X and IX and indeed his stratigraphic chart confirms this inference (Ben-Shlomo 2003: 104, Table 1). However, while Ben-Shlomo (2003: 93) leaves the possibility that architectural evidence for Stratum IX may exist in Area M, the pottery is “not clearly characterized” and therefore uncertain.<sup>263</sup> Ben-Shlomo (2003: 103) concludes by remarking that: “The

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<sup>263</sup> “The claim that Stratum IX is not a distinct stratum at Tel Ashdod is based on its problematic nature. There are no independent architectural remains from this stratum, except possibly in Area M, and its related pottery is also not clearly characterized. This could be explained by the fact that Stratum X was of long duration, possibly longer than its equivalents at other contemporary sites (such as Lachish V-IV,

difficulty in the definition of Stratum IX at Ashdod has already been noted in the past (e.g., Ussishkin 1980; 1990), but pottery associated with this stage has been found in various fills. The fact that there are hardly any Iron Age destruction levels at Ashdod may contribute to some discrepancies related to the relative chronology of the region.” A concerted effort to defend the evidence of destruction for the six-chamber gateway in Stratum IX as reported by Dothan is notably absent from Ben-Shlomo’s rejoinder and the above concluding summary of his response implies just the opposite: Hardly any evidence for Iron Age II destruction layers exist and most Stratum IX pottery is confined to fills. Consequently, his silence on the important point of a mid-eighth century B.C. destruction layer at the Area M gateway does not encourage confidence in Dothan’s earlier conclusions. Ben-Shlomo (2003: 91) does note that the pottery assemblages of Strata X-IX are “quite similar” and difficult to distinguish from each other; a common issue when dating Iron Age IIA levels. In Area K, several architectural phases from Strata IX-VIII were recognized (Squares T-U/6-7; Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005: 39, 44-50 and Plans 2.11-12), yet Ben-Shlomo offered another less than positive assessment: “The claim that Stratum IX is not a distinct stratum at Tel Ashdod is based on its problematic nature. There are no independent architectural remains from this stratum, except possibly in Area M, and its related pottery is also not clearly characterized” (Ben-Shlomo 2003: 93). Moreover, Stager, Master, and Schloen (2011: 71) contested the ceramic-based argument that Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz (2001; 2004) utilize to reconstruct Ashdod’s chronology in the seventh century B.C.

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Tell Qasile X, and Tel Batash IV). Pottery forms traditionally associated with 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE assemblages were found in several loci lying above Stratum X and below Stratum IX-VIII or Stratum VIII floors, for example Pit 5117 in Area H, which was dug into the Stratum X street level below the street level of Stratum IX-VIII, thus, dating earlier than the Stratum IX-VIII remains” (Ben-Shlomo 2003: 93-95).

While the evidence Dothan utilized to correlate his data with Uzziah's conquest of Ashdod (2 Chr 26:6) is contested, it is equally important to add that he also repeatedly suggested that Judah destroyed and / or had control over Ashdod during Josiah's reign. Dothan pointed to the well-known Hebrew ostraca from Meşad Ḥashavyahu, along with several stone weights incised with Hebrew letters as well as other inscribed objects to support his position (Aharoni 1979a: 312, 348, 403; Ben-Shlomo 2013: 67-68; Campbell 1963: 32; Dothan 1962: 148; 1963: 341-42; 1973a; 1977: 91; 1992a: 481; 1993a: 94, 100; Freedman 1962: 19; 1963: 138-39).<sup>264</sup>

Consequently, despite Dothan's claims of finding evidence for Uzziah's actions at Ashdod as recorded in 2 Chr 26:6, his conclusions are possibly tainted both by his apparent impetuosity in correlating biblical connections in his assessment of the data and his suspect methodology in the field. Debates regarding how to unravel and interpret the excavated data from Ashdod as well as critiques of Dothan's interpretations therefore persist (Ben-Shlomo 2003: 85; Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz 2001; 2004; Master 2007), although some of this criticism seems to promote certain ideological agendas as well. While the recommendation of Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz (2004: 133) to reexcavate the site is well taken, the salvage excavations conducted near the base of the tell have already provided important new information regarding Ashdod's history during the the eighth century B.C., and it is here, where *two* eighth century B.C. destruction layers have been

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<sup>264</sup> Along with his attempts to connect Uzziah with Ashdod, Dothan made similar assertions about Josiah, suggesting in several publications over a number of years that Judah possibly controlled Ashdod for a brief time during the seventh century B.C. (Aharoni 1979a: 312, 348, 403; Ben-Shlomo 2013: 67-68; Campbell 1963: 32; Dothan 1962: 148; 1963: 341-42; 1973a; 1977: 91; 1993a: 94, 100; Freedman 1963: 138-39). In doing so, he mistakenly ascribed the *lmk*-impressed jar handle found at the site to Josiah's reign (Dothan 1977: 91; 1993a: 100). Other scholars argue that Ashdod was not under Judahite control, but rather merely enjoyed close trade relations with her neighbor in the highlands to the east (e.g., Dever 1997a: 220).

found beneath the massive Assyrian construction, that probable evidence of Uzziah's destructive actions may be, at least for now, most likely demonstrated.

## **Hinterland**

While Tel Ashdod is included within the Archaeological Survey of Israel Map of Nizzanim—West and Nizzanim—East (87-88), the site falls within the northeast sector of the map (Berman and Barda 2005). The bulk of the survey map is to the south and west, including modern Ashkelon. The area to the north of Ashdod, which includes the modern city, Ashdod-Yam and Tel Mor is included in the Map of Ashdod (84), which was discussed above.

Berman and Barda (2005: 11\*) recorded 27 surveyed sites with Iron Age II pottery, all within Map 88. However, one of the sites was Tel Ashdod itself and sherds from another (Site 96) were only tentatively dated to this period. Iron Age II sherds were also found at Tel Poran, while the other sites were largely pottery scatters without any visible architectural remains.<sup>265</sup>

The recent reinterpretation of the survey data by Huster (2015: 30-36 and fig. 2.8) shows four Iron Age II sites<sup>266</sup> and a cemetery within an approximately 2 km radius of Tel Ashdod. Several additional sites are located along a roughly NW-SE line about 5 km farther south near or on the Nahal Evtah. These sites are the most promising candidates for satellite towns or daughter towns of Ashdod that Uzziah either established or rebuilt

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<sup>265</sup> The locations where Iron Age II pottery was recovered are Sites 10, 14 (pottery scatter), 15 (pottery scatter), 20, 21 (pottery scatter), 24 (Tel Ashdod), 30 (pottery scatter), 31 (pottery scatter), 38 (pottery scatter), 39 (pottery scatter), 41 (pottery scatter), 42 (Tell Kursun), 45 (tombs and pottery), 46, 52 (pottery scatter), 67, 73 (pottery scatter), 87 (pottery scatter), 90 (pottery scatter), 96 (uncertain), 99, 106 (pottery scatter), 107, 110 (Tel Poran), 140 (Khirbat Bezzeh), 142, and 147 (pottery scatter).

<sup>266</sup> The respective locations are Sites 10, 20, 25, 45 and 48 (cemetery), as well as Tel Ashdod (site 24) itself.

(2 Chr 26:6).<sup>267</sup> Huster (2015: 4-11) has also demonstrated that many pottery scatters or patches found in surveys along the dunes bordering the Mediterranean Sea and subsequently interpreted as sites actually represent the contents of topsoil brought in from nearby tells and used for crop fertilizer by *fellaheen* during the Ottoman and Mandate Periods. Huster (2015: 4-7) notes both of the IAA survey maps of Nezzanim (West and East) and Ziqim make this error. Importantly for us, the same IAA team published the Map of Ashdod (84) and consequently, the assumption must be made that similar errors occurred during the reading of survey data from that sector as well. Hence, the identification of scatters or patches along the coastal dunes containing Iron Age II sherds should be treated with caution before interpreting them as ancient sites.

#### **Excursus Four: Ashdod in the Oracles of Amos and Isaiah**

Amos 1:8 and 3:9

*Amos 1:6-10: This is what the LORD says: “For three sins of Gaza, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because she took captive whole communities and sold them to Edom, I will send fire upon the walls of Gaza that will consume her fortresses. I will destroy the king of Ashdod and the one who holds the scepter in Ashkelon. I will turn my hand against Ekron, till the last of the Philistines is dead,” says the Sovereign LORD. This is what the LORD says: “For three sins of Tyre, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because she sold whole communities of captives to Edom, disregarding a treaty of brotherhood, I will send fire upon the walls of Tyre that will consume her fortresses.”*

While the historical background of this oracle against Philistia and its textual context (Amos 1:6-10) was already discussed in detail above in our treatment of Tell es-Safi / Gath, specifically in regards to the absence of Gath, an additional observation regarding Ashdod is appropriate. Its appearance here (along with Gaza, Ashkelon and

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<sup>267</sup> Pierce and Master (2015: 115-16 and fig. 4.2) imply that this cluster of satellite villages around Ashdod were established later, during the seventh century B.C.

Ekron) is significant chronologically since Amos regards these cities as foreign territory. The absence of Gath implies that this city was either already under Judahite control or in such a comparatively weakened state as to not merit mention. If this view is true, this oracle may plausibly be placed in the midst of Judah's expansionist efforts under Uzziah. The geopolitical and seismic circumstances (Amos 1:1) behind this oracle only match at this particular juncture during Uzziah's reign.

*Amos 3:9: Proclaim to the fortresses of Ashdod (LXX: Assyria) and to the fortresses of Egypt: "Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria; see the great unrest within her and the oppression among her people."*

The Hebrew word translated as fortresses (אַרְמוֹת) has a broad meaning and refers to palaces, redoubts / strongholds, citadels, but more specifically here to fortified royal compounds (Andersen and Freedman 1989: 242-44; *BDB*: 74b; Campbell 1994: 33; King 1988: 67; Wolff 1977: 155) and may be roughly synonymous with the term *ophel* (עֶפְלָי), which is well exemplified by Samaria's royal compound (*BDB*: 779a; 2 Kgs 5:24) and pertinent to the context of the verse.<sup>268</sup> Stuart's (1987: 327) use of the term "royal fortifications" also captures the meaning in this context, but Andersen and Freedman's (1989: 406) "ramparts" less so. While the plural suffix may imply exceptional greatness as well as number, it is noteworthy that the topography of Tel Ashdod has three distinct summits as well as a fortified upper and lower city (e.g., Dothan 1993a: 94; Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005: vii, Plan 1.1; Dothan and Freedman 1967: 14-15 and Plan 1). Amos may also be presenting a veiled pairing of Ashdod with its fortified port at Ashdod-Yam. Ashdod was certainly a strong polity during the eighth century B.C. (e.g., Ben-Shlomo

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<sup>268</sup> For Samaria, see conveniently the summary treatments in A. Mazar (1990a: 406-10), Barkay (1992: 319-23), Fritz (1995: 128-31), and Herzog (1992: 247-50; 1997: 229-30). The equally enigmatic *qarho* found in the Mesha Stele may serve as a Moabite synonym for אַרְמוֹן (Rainey and Notley 2006: 203-4).



2003: 90) so other cities under her hegemony or influence may be alluded to as well in this passage. Others presupposed the LXX *Vorlage* reads lands (ארצות) rather than fortresses (ארמונות). However, the prolific use of this rather enigmatic term (ארמון) by the prophets makes the validity of such a conjectural view unlikely (Andersen and Freedman 1989: 405-7).

Many scholars follow the LXX rendering of *Assyria* as the original wording, which seems to form a more appropriate geopolitical parallel (Andersen and Freedman 1989: 19, 404-6; Ehrlich 1996: 159-60; Polley 1989: 62, 194, n. 18, 196; Radine 2010: 142, n. 70; Stuart 1987: 327-30). Andersen and Freedman (1989: 406) note that, even though not otherwise attested in Amos, Assyria is commonly paired with Egypt by the eighth century B.C. prophets. Haran (2008: 252-54 and n. 3) follows the LXX and further notes that the allusion to Assyria in Amos 5:27 argues for a longer prophetic career that extended beyond the reigns of Jeroboam II and Uzziah. For Haran and others, Amos produced a much larger corpus of prophecies than are reflected in the small selection of his oracles that were preserved.<sup>269</sup> Another reason for this discrepancy may be attributed to the LXX translator, who saw Ashdod as an inappropriate pairing with Egypt, or desired a larger geopolitical horizon to emphasize the prophet's words.

Other scholars follow the MT reading of *Ashdod* (Haak 1998: 39; Harper 1905: 74-77; Paul 1991; Soggin 1987: 60-61; Wolff 1977: 189-93). Harper (1905: 76) surmised that Ashdod represented all of Philistia, which remains a valid point, since Gath

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<sup>269</sup> See further the comments of Wolff (1977: 106, 184), Andersen and Freedman (1989: 19) and Haran (2008: 252) on the chronological issues behind this reading. A weakness of the LXX rendering is that the might and potential threat that Assyria represented was of minimal concern, if known at all, to the populace of the Northern Kingdom when Amos prophesied around 760 B.C. and thus the symbolism would not have resonated particularly well with them.

was, by the middle of the eighth century B.C., a mere shadow of its former self and under Judahite domination. Its lack of geopolitical status is reflected by its omission in the Oracles against the Nations (Amos 1:8). Neither had Ekron, Ashkelon and Gaza yet experienced the economic *flourit* they enjoyed during the seventh century B.C. On the other hand, Ashdod's expansion during the eighth century B.C. boasted an extensive lower city and the satellite port of Ashdod-Yam, making it the premier Philistine epicenter during the time of Amos. Since this is the only possible mention of Assyria in Amos, Wolff (1977: 189-93) believed Assyria was not (yet) relevant to Judah when Amos spoke. Rather, Wolff deduced that Amos actually viewed and toured Ashdod's impressive fortifications and consequently mentioned them here. Paul (1991: 115-16) interprets these two polities from a literary point of view; a rhetorical call with two word plays involved in verses 9-10. He also follows Rudolph (1971: 163) in viewing Ashdod and Egypt as two eye-witnesses symbolically summoned to this legal case. Their relative strength and location is irrelevant for this purpose. Snyman (1994: 560-61) interprets this verse from a tradition-historical point of view: Ashdod represents the conquest of the land and Egypt represents the deliverance from Pharaoh and the oppression. Snyman notes that Amos mentions Egypt several times in his prophecy and several of these refer to YHWH's liberation and deliverance of Israel (2:10; 3:1; 4:10; 9:7) and thus vs. 3:9 may be an allusion to the Exodus and YHWH's great act of salvation. Similarly, earlier biblical references to Ashdod (Joshua 11:22; 13:3 and 15:47) reflect the conquest of the land, which is another theme in Amos (2:10; 9:11-15) and a polemical verdict against Samaria.

While the evidence seems to weight slightly in favor of the MT, *Ashdod* rather than the LXX *Assyria*, the passage has only limited value for our purposes and merely reveals that Ashdod was a formidable polity when Amos (1:8; 3:9) spoke his oracle.

#### Isaiah 20:1

Isaiah 20:1: *In the year that the commander in chief, who was sent by Sargon the king of Assyria, came to Ashdod and fought against it and took it.*

Isaiah alludes to Assyria in several texts (Machinist 1983; Rainey and Notley 2006: 235), but explicitly mentioned Sargon II only once, in the context of his 712 B.C. conquest of Ashdod. The discovery of three fragments of a stele erected by Sargon II during Dothan's excavations at Ashdod provides archaeological confirmation of this passage from Isaiah (Tadmor 1966: 94-95; 1971; 2011: 495-504). The collective testimony of Isaiah 20:1, Assyrian inscriptions (see *ANET*: 286, Younger 2002: 288, 313-18, and particularly Rainey and Notley 2006: 234-38 with earlier references), and the dramatic archaeological evidence from Ashdod (Dothan 1969a: 22; 1992: 480; Mattingly 1981), specifically the Stratum VIII destruction including the likely mass burial of approximately 3,000 persons in Area D, and the three Assyrian stele fragments, we recognize a situation where all three sources dramatically corroborate the same event. Consequently, the historical accuracy of Isaiah's account is beyond question.

#### Conclusions

While these prophetic texts give valuable historical background information, there are, aside from the absence of Gath in Amos 1:8, very little data that shed light on Uzziah's conquest of this city. Isaiah informs us that Ashdod was destroyed by Sargon II

later, which necessarily raises the need to identify *two* eighth century B.C. destruction layers at the city in order to find evidence for its earlier subjugation under Judah.

### **The *lmlk* Impressed Jar Handle**

As I have argued elsewhere (Hudon 2010a), the introduction of *lmlk*-stamped storage jars seems to predate the reign of Hezekiah and their production and distribution may have actually been initiated during Uzziah's reign. Remarkably, Dothan's excavations at Ashdod unearthed a single *lmlk*-stamped handle (Dothan 1971a: 22; 1971b: Plate XCV.4; 1993a: 100; Vaughn 1999a: 193 and n. 50).<sup>270</sup> This *lmlk*-seal impressed handle was apparently the first discovered outside of Judah's borders. While apparently discovered in an unstratified context, Dothan (1971a: 22, n. 26; Vaughn 1999a: 193 and n. 50) attributed the *lmlk* handle to Stratum VII or VI, which date to the seventh century B.C., and of which he probably based upon historical considerations. If so, Dothan simply followed the prevailing scholarly consensus at the time of the Ashdod excavations, which generally dated the *lmlk*-seal impressions to Josiah (e.g.: Cross 1969: 20-22; Lance 1971); an erroneous position that persisted until the late 1970's, when Ussishkin (1976; 1977; 1985) presented conclusive evidence demonstrating an eighth century B.C. provenance for these stamps.<sup>271</sup> While this significant discovery may, when coupled with other evidence such as the Hebrew incipations discussed below, point to a

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<sup>270</sup> Dever (1997a: 220) mentions "a few royal stamped jar handles" being found at Ashdod. Apparently this reflects a faulty reliance on memory coupled with a failure to check the Ashdod reports on Dever's part.

<sup>271</sup> Accepting that Sargon II destroyed Ashdod Stratum VIII in 712 B.C., a *lmlk*-stamped jar could easily have migrated to Ashdod from Judah in the ten-year span before Sennacherib's invasion in 701 B.C. and thus Dothan's Stratum VII attribution is entirely possible, as is an early seventh century B.C. date for the arrival of this jar to Ashdod (Vaughn 1999a: 193-94, n. 50). However, I highly doubt these historical factors, all which relate to a 701 B.C. termination date of the *lmlk*-stamped jars were considered, at least initially, by Dothan.

geopolitical connection between Judah and Ashdod, an isolated (and probably unstratified) *lmlk*-stamped jar handle can not be used as proof of Judahite hegemony of Ashdod, whether under Uzziah or Hezekiah, as Timm (1980: 30) has rightly noted.<sup>272</sup> While a relatively rare occurrence, jar handles impressed with *lmlk* stamps found outside of Judah's borders (Eshel 1989; Vaughn 1999a: 193-95) may also indicate trade or other commercial activities of the local polity with Judah (Dothan 1992a: 481; 1993a: 100; Fox 2000: 216, 227, 232; Niemann 2013: 251). Consequently, the jar in question may have migrated to the site as a result of trade or other non-political reasons. Nevertheless, this find remains noteworthy and possibly could reflect both geopolitical and historical significance if indeed Uzziah initiated production of these stamped jars.

### **The Hebrew Ostraca and Inscribed Weights**

Dothan (1963: 341; 1964: 86; 1967: 135; 1969a: 21; 1971a: 21-22; 1992a: 481; 1993a: 100; Dothan and Freedman 1967: 84-85) found an incised inscription on a pot sherd in Hebrew characters of the mid-eighth century B.C.,<sup>273</sup> but in a "Philistine" dialect reading פחר [ה] "[the] potter" and found in another area. Stone weights with inscribed the Hebrew terms *nsf*, *pym* and (probably) *beqa'* were found (Dothan 1963: 341; 1969b: 245; 1971a: 22; 1993a: 100). Freedman (1979: 316) notes that these weights "indicate that Philistia was in close contact with Judah."

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<sup>272</sup> Dothan (1993a: 100) states that the evidence "suggests trade and possibly even a closer relationship between Ashdod and Judah, mainly in the seventh century BCE." However, given the indisputable dating of the *lmlk*-seal impressions and the eighth century B.C. pottery used as an ostrakon, as well as the Judahite stone weights, an eighth century B.C. context is much more likely. The full extent of that relationship, whether economic or political, is still uncertain, however.

<sup>273</sup> While not found *in situ*, Dothan (1992: 481) subsequently associated this inscription with either stratum VII or VI, as well as the several Hebrew inscribed weights.

## Historical Background and Summary

Despite the extensive and careful excavations at Tell es-Safi, the data recovered thus far fails to provide clear evidence either to support or contest Chr's account of Uzziah. Since Tel Yavneh essentially remains unexcavated, the currently-available evidence from Tel Ashdod establishes it as the most critical site for testing the veracity of Chr's account of Judah's domination of these three cities and their hinterland. Moreover, as the closest Mediterranean ports to Judah, Ashdod, Ashdod-Yam and Tel Mor undoubtedly held great strategic value for Uzziah and their conquest was one of his ultimate objectives.

Of the numerous biblical scholars that argue for an authentic archival source standing behind Chr's account of Uzziah's expansion into Philistia (2 Chr 26:6), surprisingly few of them cite Dothan's work or conclusions in their respective treatments of 2 Chr 26:6.<sup>274</sup>

The evidence presented by Dothan in his second Ashdod final report (Dothan 1971a; 1971b) and reported in several other of his publications (Dothan 1964: 79, 86; 1967: 130-31, 133-36; 1969a: 17; 1969b: 245; 1970: 120; 1971a: 21, 114-15; 1972: 244; 1973a; 1977: 90-91; 1992a: 477, 480; 1993a: 98-99; Dothan and Dothan 1992: 133, 185-87; Dothan and Freedman 1967: 9-10, 139; Dothan and Porath 1982: 29, 55-56), which is followed, with various levels of certainty, by others as well (e.g.: Bierling 1992: 195; Oded 1979a: 240; and Yadin 1979: 218) in essence plays the role of the star witness in

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<sup>274</sup> Both Dillard (1987: 208-9) and Williamson (1982: 334-35) merely note that Uzziah's expansion to the south and west made good geo-political sense and cite Myers (1965b) for evidence relating to Philistia. However, Myers (1965b: XXVIII-XXIX, 151-52) completed his commentary when the Ashdod excavations had barely begun and therefore only cited Dothan's publications on Tel Mor. Japhet (1993: 877) and Klein (2012: 371-72) fail to cite any archaeologically-based source.

providing archaeological confirmation for Uzziah's expansion into Philistia (2 Chr 26:6). Even Ben-Shlomo (2013: 67) notes that Chr's account "clearly shows the strength of Ashdod during the eighth century."

### **The Eighth Century B.C. Remains Near the Base of Tel Ashdod**

The recent salvage excavations at the foot of Tel Ashdod currently provide the best evidence for a mid-eighth century B.C. destruction layer. The middle and upper phase of Stratum 8 both show eighth century B.C. destruction layers. The upper phase can safely be attributed to Sargon II in 712 B.C., which leaves the middle phase destruction layer. I believe Chr's account of Uzziah's assault against Ashdod provides the best candidate for the middle phase destruction layer.

### **Stratum IX**

Stratum IX probably does exist, but, as Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz suggest, may be merely an occupational phase rather than a distinct stratum. However, the fact that Dothan recognized and documented it in various areas of the site cannot be completely dismissed either. Finally, the eighth century B.C. destruction layers documented at the base of the tell by Kogan-Zehavi almost certainly reflect similar destructions on the tell proper. Unfortunately, the extant remains of this stratum, aside from Area M, do not provide crucial data for our investigation.

### **Area M**

The stratigraphic history of the Area M six-chamber gateway is problematic and disputed, especially so when endeavoring to isolate a mid-eighth century B.C. destruction layer, which Dothan purportedly found. Dothan's stratigraphic interpretation and

subsequent dating of the Area M gateway is indeed questionable in light of Ussishkin's (1980; 1990) proposal concerning the use of built up foundations and fills in the construction of these gateways. Ussishkin and Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz (2001: 242-43) have also argued for reinterpreting the stratigraphy and chronology of the Ashdod and Gezer six-chamber gateways. While Dever (1990; 2005a), Gitin (2010: 327-28), A. Mazar (1990: 532-33), and Yadin (1980) essentially accepted Dothan's traditional interpretation and chronology of Ashdod, Dothan in turn based his dates in part on the earlier conclusions of Yadin and Dever. Dever later softened his position and acceded to the viability of Ussishkin's "built-up foundations and fills" interpretation. Indeed, the walled-off chambers Dothan unearthed seem to support Ussishkin's interpretation that these served as foundational "sleeper walls" rather than part of the gateway's superstructure. This explanation is summarized by Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz (2001: 243): "The walls separating the passageway from the chambers should be understood as 'sleeper walls' which supported the thresholds leading into the chambers. The original thresholds of the gate are those reported for Strata VIII-VII. The elevation indicates the original floor of the gate. The walls of the superstructure—the Stratum VIII walls—were narrower than the buried foundations. The early 'floors' reported by the excavators are no more than layers in the fill which was laid together with the construction of the built-up foundations and the sleeper walls. Hence the fills in the right chambers which were assigned to Stratum VIII are, in fact, the original fills of the gatehouse." The reinterpretation by Ussishkin, Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz is persuasive and makes placing any reliance on Dothan's conclusions regarding Uzziah's destruction of Ashdod's walls (and gate) questionable. Whether this reinterpretation actually eliminates all



evidence for an Area M Stratum IX destruction level is far from certain. Yet Ben-Shlomo's recent summary of the gateway omits any reference to a mid-eighth century B.C. destruction layer or to Uzziah.

Scholars also differ on their dating of the Area M six-chamber gateway; from the late tenth century B.C. (Solomonic or slightly later), the ninth century B.C. (Philistine) or the early eighth century B.C., roughly contemporaneous with Lachish Level III. If this latter date is accurate, as proposed by Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz, the identity of the builder(s) also remains uncertain. While Philistines may have overseen its construction, another plausible builder exists. Perhaps the Area M six-chamber gateway was not destroyed, but rather constructed by Uzziah after his conquest of the city. Acceptance of this view would, by implication, also suggest that the demise of the Stratum X four-chamber gateway, which Ussishkin (1990: 82) questions ever existed, was related to Uzziah's actions. My interpretation is supported by the eighth century B.C. chronology and the design of the gateway, which has been already noted, closely parallels the six-chamber gateways at Gezer and, importantly, the clearly Judahite city of Lachish (IV)-III, which we have demonstrated was rebuilt early in Uzziah's reign. Of the Iron Age IIA-B six-chamber gateways that have been excavated; all of them, except the Ashdod gate, are located at either Israelite (Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer) or Judahite sites (Lachish, Tel Batash, Tel 'Ira). The gates at Lachish (Level III), Tel Batash and Tel 'Ira are also datable to the eighth century B.C. At Tel Batash, the excavator attributes the six-chamber gateway, which exhibits parallels with Lachish, to Judahite hegemony under Uzziah (Kelm and Mazar 1995: 118-27; Mazar and Kelm 1993: 155-57). Similar gateways are found at Tel Mique (dated to the seventh century B.C.: T. Dothan and Gitin

1993: 1057) and at Tel 'Ira in the Negeb (Beit-Arieh 1993: 643-44; 1999: 68-74 and Figs. 3.56 and 3.62).

Scholars have proposed varying explanations for the existence of the “Solomonic” gateway at Ashdod in Philistia, clearly outside of Israel and Judah. Dothan suggested dating its construction to the late tenth century B.C., arguing that Ashdod was under Israelite hegemony during the reign of Solomon (Dothan 1973a; 1977: 90). Others, such as Barkay (1992: 307-8) ascribe it to the Philistines, who merely observed and utilized preexisting “Solomonic” gateways as design templates. All this means is that, while evidence for a mid-eighth century B.C. destruction of the Stratum IX gateway has been contested and possibly refuted, its apparent construction during the same century gives every indication of being a Judahite-influenced project undertaken under Judahite initiative, based upon its plan and the 9 m wide attaching walls, which closely parallel the Israelite and Judahite tenth-eighth century B.C. gateways and their massive ninth-eighth century B.C. solid inset-offset city walls.

I have argued that Uzziah rebuilt Lachish Level III after Level IV suffered significant damage and A. Mazar attributes the Stratum III city and gate at Tel Batash to Judah and Uzziah as well. Consequently, the Ashdod gateway is the only known gate of this distinctive architectural style found outside the boundaries of Israel and Judah. If indeed this impressive gateway was erected during the eighth century B.C., Uzziah would be an excellent candidate. This interpretation also correlates fully with Chr’s account: *“and he built cities in the territory of Ashdod and elsewhere among the Philistines”* (2 Chr 26:6).

Alternatively, if the Stratum IX gateway was erected during the late tenth or ninth centuries, B.C., which is still quite possible, since Ussishkin (1990: 82) notes up to three floors that were preserved during its period of use, the dispute surrounding a clearly defined and datable early eighth century B.C. destruction layer makes reexcavation of Ashdod's lower city defenses an attractive, if not mandatory solution, as Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz (2004: 133) recommend.

### **Conclusions**

As noted earlier, conclusive evidence from merely one of the three cities mentioned by Chr (Gath, Ashdod or Yavneh) would serve to safely assure the historicity of the biblical passage and confirm that Uzziah conquered the other two sites as well, even if material evidence is presently lacking. At best, this evidence would consist of a mid-eighth century B.C. destruction layer observed along the city walls and in the vicinity of the gate as well as ample evidence of pottery and objects typical of Judahite material culture present in the stratum lying directly above / over this destruction layer. Indeed, it was precisely this interpretation of the data that was stated in the literature for years. However, recent reassessments of the site coupled with the publication of the last stratigraphic final report, either demand that Dothan's conclusions be approached with considerable caution, or propose that alternative interpretations for Ashdod during the Iron Age II period be adopted. Nevertheless, new evidence from the salvage excavations just north of the tel clearly reveal two eighth century B.C. destruction layers and redating the Area M gateway to the early eighth century B.C. may point to a Judahite initiative during Uzziah's reign. Therefore, despite all of its methodological shortcomings,

disputes and detractors, Ashdod seems to provide crucial evidence necessary for establishing the historical credibility of Chr's account of Uzziah.

Tel Ashkelon; Ascalon; (Ashkelon)

### **Location and Identification**

Ashkelon (map reference 107.119 / 108660.121195) was a major city located on the Mediterranean coastline, 63 km (39 miles) south of Tel Aviv and 16 km (10 miles) north of Gaza. One of the five major Philistine cities, Ashkelon was allotted to the tribe of Judah but not mentioned in the town list of Joshua (15:45-47), and not conquered (Judges 1:18 LXX). Attested in the Assyrian inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III and Sennacherib (Na'aman 2009: 352-55; Tadmor 1994: 80-83, 178-81), Ashkelon revolted against both of these Assyrian monarchs, joining Judah in her revolt against Assyria in 705 B.C. (*ANET*: 287-88). As a result of this insurrection, Assyria seized vast tracts of Ashkelon's coastal territory, which, according to Stager (1993: 104; Stager, Schoen and Master 2008: 8) and Na'aman (2009: 351), reached to Joppa and its environs before the eve of Sennacherib's invasion.<sup>275</sup> The identification of ancient Ashkelon with the tell of the same name is certain and its name reflects a Semitic origin, deriving from the root (אקל) "to weigh" (Cross and Freedman 1964: 48-49; Shai 2009: 16).

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<sup>275</sup> For an opposing view, see Na'aman (2009: 351), who suggests that the Wadi Ibtah served as Ashkelon's border with Ashdod as did the Nahal Shiqma for Ashkelon and Gaza, but that Ashkelon expanded east after the fall of Gath to Hazael, and controlled an area of about 400-450 square kilometers. This speculation naturally contradicts the biblical account of Hezekiah's expansion (2 Kgs 18:8; 1 Chr 4:41) as well as recent archaeological evidence from Khirbet Summeily (Blakely, Hardin and Master 2014; Hardin, Rollston and Blakely 2012) and elsewhere.

## **History of Excavation**

J. Garstang excavated at the site in 1921-22. His assistant, W. J. Phythian-Adams, cut a step trench on the north side of the southern mound (*weli*) of el-Khadra, possibly the core of ancient Ashkelon before its early expansion (grid 38 of the current excavations) and another N-S trench along the sea wall (grids 50-57), both trenches uncovered Iron Age II remains (Phythian-Adams 1921: 166-69; 1923d; Stager 1993: 104-105). Large scale excavations by L. E. Stager of Harvard University began in 1985 and are ongoing. A series of salvage excavations have also been conducted at the site over the last 80 years.<sup>276</sup>

## **Site Description and Discoveries**

The area of the ancient city of Ashkelon is shaped much like a large bow, with a 2 km long eastern-facing semi-circular wall course conforming to the bow arc itself and the Mediterranean coast forming the bow string to the west and enclosing an area of ca. 60 ha (150 acres). Two elevated mounds are conspicuous within the area of Tel Ashkelon, one along the North Slope and near the coastline and the small 6 ha (15 acre) mound of el-Khadra, located in the south central part of the site, but also bordering the shoreline. One or both of these two areas were thought to conceal the Bronze and Iron Age settlement at the site (Stager 1991: 6-7; Stager, Schloen and Master 2008: 148-49, 215).

Along the north slope of the site, a line of fortifications, including towers, were erected during the Iron Age II, possibly during the eighth century B.C. in preparation for

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<sup>276</sup> For additional details, see the surveys of the history of excavations at the site by Schloen and Stager and references there (Stager, Schloen and Master 2008: 143-82).

an Assyrian attack and siege (Stager, Schloen and Master 2008: 236 and figs. 14.32, 14.33).

In grid 38 (lower), the Iron Age IIB is attested, but poorly preserved, which seems to hint at only a scattering of occupation in this area of the site during the eighth century B.C. Pottery was primarily recovered from fill layers. Excavators revealed a ninth-eighth century B.C. house and a subterranean grain silo in a courtyard with imported Phoenician pottery and / or Samaria ware (phases 16-15; Stager 1993: 107; 2008: 1584; Stager, Schloen and Master 2008: 275-78 and fig. 15.48). While some pottery forms, characteristic of Lachish III do appear, such as folded-rim bowls, ovoid and rilled-rim storage jars, and high-neck jugs, they are also common in the seventh century B.C. and most tested samples indicate local clays, and thus local production (Blakely, Hardin and Master 2014: 36; Stager, Master and Schloen 2011: 81, 88-89, 92). Phase 8 of grid 50 contains late occupational evidence dating to the late eighth-early seventh century B.C., and some walls, but later quarrying destroyed most of this level (Stager, Schloen and Master 2008: 308 and Figure 15.83).

The annals of Sennacherib's (*ANET*: 287-88; Luckenbill 1926-1927 2 § 240) expressly report that the cities of Beth-Dagon, Joppa, Banai-Barqa, and Azuru fell under the hegemony of Sidqia, king of Ashkelon in 701 B.C. The geo-political factors and events that led to this situation are uncertain. It is possible that Ashkelon's influence over this coastal area reflects a power vacuum that developed in northern Philistia during the third quarter of the eighth century B.C. Scholars are naturally divided over the

circumstances behind Ashkelon's hegemony over this area.<sup>277</sup> One possible scenario is that Ashdod dominated the four towns until this great Philistine city fell to Uzziah. Then, at some point during the reign of Ahaz, when Judahite domination over Philistia waned, Ashkelon annexed the four cities.

## **Hinterland**

A regional survey of the hinterland of Ashkelon (generally to the south east), in conjunction with the Harvard excavations and the Israel Antiquities Authority (Map 92 on the IAA grid), was conducted from 1986-1992 by M. Allen. Over the survey area, Iron Age II sherds appeared at only four sites, notably at Tel Obed and Khirbet Irza as well as six other "possible" sites where only a sherd or two were collected. The published pottery appears to be later than eighth century B.C. (Allen 2008: 33-36 and figs. 3.12, 3.13, 3.15). An IAA team surveyed the immediate environs of Ashkelon and the area to the south (Map 91 on the IAA grid), recording Iron Age II pottery at 40 sites, but only ten of these had architectural remains (Berman, Stark and Barda 2004: 12\*, 17\*, 80, Map 3).<sup>278</sup>

The recent publication by Huster (2015) collects data from various IAA salvage excavations, published data from IAA Maps 87-88 (Berman and Barda 2005), 91 (Berman, Stark and Barda 2004) and 92 (Allen 2008) as well presenting the data from

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<sup>277</sup> For further discussion, see Aharoni (1979a: 389), Fantalkin and Tal (2009: 240-41), Na'aman (2001: 262; 2009: 352) and references there. Fantalkin and Tal (2009: 241-42) also suggest that Ashdod dominated these cities during the "main part" of the eighth century B.C. until Sargon II conquered Ashdod and gave these cities to Ashkelon.

<sup>278</sup> Unfortunately, Berman, Stark and Barda do not specifically list Iron Age IIB sites. Iron Age II pottery was found at the following Sites: 1 (Tel Ashkelon), 23, 39, 41, 42, 44, 51, 52, 53, 57, 62, 63, 69, 70, 71, 92, 99, 109, 114, 118 (Tell esh Shuqaf), 134, 139, 150, 153, 155, 158, 177, 179, 180, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 190, 192, 194, 197, and 200 (a pottery kiln from the 7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.).

Map 96 (Huster 2015: 125-207; the Map of Sderot), which is located southeast of Ashkelon and yielded three Iron Age II sites.<sup>279</sup> Furthermore, additional unpublished survey data from Shavit is also utilized and his conclusions generally concur with that of Huster (2015: 10-11 and Table 1.1). Huster (2015: 128) cites an earlier study by Gophna in 1981, which argues that the marked absence of Iron Age II sites in the areas of Map 92 and 96 in fact represents a marginal region; a geographical, political, and ethnic border between Judah and Philistia.

### **Conclusions**

Ashkelon was a booming port city during the seventh century B.C. This prosperous level was utterly destroyed by the Babylonians in 604 B.C. Unfortunately, the occupational levels corresponding to the previous two centuries (ninth-eighth century B.C.) have limited exposure and/or are poorly preserved primarily due to later intrusions. Evidence at Ashkelon is therefore minimal as far as any tangible links with Judah concerning material culture. However, Cross (2003: 164-65; 2008: 336-39)<sup>280</sup> notes Judahite influence upon the (Hebrew styled) inscriptions found at the site and argues for Israelite (and Judahite) cultural and political influence and/or hegemony over Philistia during the Iron Age II. Concerning the script of Ashkelon ostrakon 1.2, which apparently derives from the 604 B.C. destruction layer, Cross (2003: 164; 2008: 337) makes this observation: “It (the ostrakon) stands very close to Hebrew, and is obviously derived

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<sup>279</sup> Only three sites in this sector yielded Iron Age II evidence (Sites 176, 189, 199; Huster 2015: 128, 138, Fig. 5.7), which correlates well with the paucity of sites in the surveyed area of Map 92 directly to the north (Allen 2008).

<sup>280</sup> Dever (1995a: 115) refers to this language as a coastal dialect of Judean Hebrew, as the inscribed weights from the region clearly reveal.



from Hebrew. However, it shows distinctive typological characters and must be given its own name as a local or national script. I have been inclined to call it “Hebreo-Philistine” (or Neo-Philistine) to underline its affinities with Hebrew...” Cross finds it surprising that late Iron Age II Philistine script and orthography stem primarily from the early Hebrew script of the tenth-ninth century B.C. and not Phoenician.<sup>281</sup> He further notes that these factors “point to a(n earlier) period of strong Israelite cultural influence on—and most likely political or economic domination of—the Philistines” (Cross 2003: 165; 2008: 338). Conversely, Yeivin (1974: 19-20, n. 73) observed that Ashkelon’s omission from both Uzziah’s conquests (2 Chr 26:6), and Joshua 15:45-47 was due to topographical factors. As a port city, Ashkelon could endure a land siege, while Judah lacked the means to blockade supply ships. While no historical sources provide any testimony regarding Judahite control over Ashkelon or its environs during the Iron Age IIB, the Hebrew influence demonstrated in the language used in Philistia during the late Iron Age II may reflect earlier Judahite control to the north, at Ashdod and Gath.

Tell el-Kharrubi; Tell el-Harubeh; Tel ‘Azza;  
(Gaza and Nearby Sites) Gaza

### **Location and Identification**

The ancient mound in the heart of the modern city of Gaza (map references 100-100, 099-101 / 095650.100000) is almost surely that of the ancient city and is located about 4-5 km (2 ½ to 3 miles) inland from the Mediterranean coastline (Aharoni 1979a: 113-15, 123, 268, 434; Maeir 2013c: 451; Rainey 1984a: 137; Sadeq 2014: 241, 251).

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<sup>281</sup> For further discussion of the relevant orthographic details, see Cross (2003: 351-56).

The Semitic name means “(to be) strong” but the origin and transmission of the name is apparently more complex (Rainey 1984a: 137; Shai 2009: 15-16).

### **History of Excavation**

Soundings were made at Gaza by Chevalier Laurent d’Arvieux in 1659 (Dothan and Dothan 1992: 7, 257) and by W. J. Phythian-Adams in 1922 (Phythian-Adams (1923a; 1923b; 1923c). Further excavation has been severely hampered by two factors. First, the mound is nearly entirely covered by buildings from intensive modern occupational encroachment and secondly, the violence and precarious political situation that sadly mark Gaza and the surrounding region has made excavation unfeasible over the last half century.

### **Site Description and Discoveries**

The ancient mound of Gaza rises 30m (or from 60 to 200 feet, according to Rainey 1984a: 137) above the surrounding plain and is 148 acres (60 ha) in size (Maeir 2013ac: 451). Phythian-Adams (1923a: 12) noted that walking the perimeter of the tell required about 50 minutes. It is difficult to overstate the vitally strategic location that Gaza occupied in antiquity, both as a trading center and as an important border town. As a port city astride the International Coastal road linking Egypt and Syria, as well as serving as the western terminus for the caravan trade routes originating in Edom (Amos 1:6-7), the Hejaz and beyond, Gaza played a pivotal role as a center for both maritime and overland trade (Bienkowski and van der Steen 2001: 24, 41). Her position as a city on the long recognized border between Canaan (Genesis 10:19; 1 Kgs 4:24) and the Sinai Desert made the control of Gaza a high geopolitical and military priority for both

Egyptian and Mesopotamian powers, as well as vigorous expansionist regional kingdoms. During the eighth century B.C., Gaza remained a prominent city under local Philistine control. Tiglath-pileser III captured Gaza in 734 B.C., forcing Hanun its king to flee to Egypt. Hanun then returned and was reinstated as king (*ANET*: 282-84; Rainey and Notley 2006: 228-29). The city was taken again by Sargon II in 720 B.C. (*ANET*: 284-85). Gaza's refusal to join in the anti-Assyrian coalition led by Judah led to her coming under the domination of Judah for a short time during the reign of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:8; 1 Chr 4:41-43; Aharoni 1979a: 388). Gaza was allotted to the tribe of Judah in Joshua 15:47, which may reflect a mid-eighth century B.C. administrative document (see above and Aharoni 1979a: 348-52). Gaza is also mentioned in Judges 1:18.<sup>282</sup> The trenches and cuts made by Phythian-Adams (1923b: 25-28; 1923c: 36; 19) revealed five brick city walls and a stone faced glacis, none of which can be ascribed to the Iron Age II with any degree of certainty, although Garstang (1920) observed a partially exposed red brick wall when examining five freshly dug "holes" along the scarp of the site<sup>283</sup> and posited a possible link to Assyrian influence. Likewise, Phythian-Adams (1923c: 36) ascribed his "Grey" and "Green" walls to the Iron Age (Sadeq 2014: 242). However, ceramic finds did include Iron Age II burnished ware and possibly a storage jar and juglet ascribed to the Iron Age by the excavator (Ovadia 1993: 465; Phythian-Adams 1923b: 23, 28-29) and a timely and fortuitous visit to the site by L. H. Vincent allowed the relative dating of

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<sup>282</sup> The LXX reading of verses 18-19 states that Judah did *not* take Gaza, Ashkelon and Ekron and should be preferred over the MT, based on its textual context and the geopolitical realities during the Settlement period along the coastal plain (Aharoni 1979a: 218; Rainey 1984a: 139).

<sup>283</sup> These freshly dug holes were possibly the evidence of illicit excavations as they were not reported by Duncan MacKenzie after his post war visit to the site or, as Phythian-Adams (1922b: 18-19) reported, tunnels used as ammunition bunkers or "dug-out(s)" by Turkish soldiers during the war.

some sherds to the late Iron Age (probably Iron Age IIC-Persian period; as reported by Garstang 1920: 157).

Tell el-‘Ajjul; (Beth ‘eglaim or Sharuhen)

### **Location, Identification and Site Description**

Tell el-‘Ajjul (map reference 093450.097670) is located about 6 km (4 mi) southwest of Gaza on the northern bank of the Naḥal Besor. The identification is Tell el-‘Ajjul is disputed. Most scholars identify the site with either Beth ‘eglaim or Sharuhen (Aharoni 1979a: 48, 148, 201, 432; Rainey 1984a: 137; 1993c: 183\*-85\*; Rainey and Notley 2006: 74-75; Tufnell and Kempinski 1993: 49). The rectangular mound is about 30 acres in size and was intensively occupied during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. Iron Age remains are rather scanty.

### **History of Excavation and Discoveries**

Tell el-‘Ajjul was excavated from 1930-38 by W. M. Flinders Petrie, E. H. Mackay and M. A. Murray.<sup>284</sup> Recently, a joint Swedish and Palestinian team led by P. M. Fischer and M. Sadeq (2008: 1566), have reexcavated the mound and ascribe their phase H1A to the Iron Age and later. Sadeq (2014: 242-43) reports that occupation at the site seems to have continued throughout the Iron Age, but due to the limited exposure of the excavation, only meager finds have been unearthed, largely Iron Age IIC material from the seventh century B.C. Data about the eighth century B.C. is not yet available.

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<sup>284</sup> See Sadeq (2014: 241-53) and Tufnell and Kempinski (1993: 49) for brief descriptions and further bibliography. Naturally, the value of the reports from these early explorations is quite limited for our purposes here. An examination of each report failed to reveal any clear examples of eighth century B.C. Judahite pottery or artifacts.

## **Hinterland**

Exploration and excavation have been conducted at two nearby sites. The first, Iblakhiyya (Libkakhiyeh; Tidah; Anthedon) was excavated by Phythian-Adams (1923a: 14-17) and more recently by a joint French and Palestinian team (Burdajewicz 2000; Sadeq 2014: 246-48). The second site, Tell el-Ruqeish (map reference 086300.091500), exhibits remains characteristic of Neo-Assyrian occupation, which falls into the late eighth and seventh centuries B.C. No earlier Iron Age levels or material finds have been noted. Iblakhiyya and Ruqeish draw parallels with a cluster of trading and military centers in the Western Negeb that Assyria built and garrisoned at the same time (Oren 1993a: 1294; 1993b; Sadeq 2014: 248-50).

## **Conclusions**

The limited excavations at Gaza, as well as those at neighboring sites that took place early in the twentieth century were poorly recorded and are of extremely limited value in determining the geopolitical status of the Gaza region during the mid-eighth century B.C. (Gitin 1998b: 165; 2010: 334-35). Likewise, the recent work at two of these sites has exposed only limited evidence relating to Iron Age II occupation and mostly relate to the seventh century B.C. Consequently, archaeological sources for these sites are thus far virtually silent regarding any link between Uzziah's reign and Josh 15:45-47. Nevertheless, some scholars have suggested that Judah's expansion under Uzziah extended as far as Gaza, probably based in part on Amos 1:6 (Bierling 1992: 196; Yeivin 1979a: 165;). Yeivin includes Gaza, but not Ashkelon, with the other cities conquered by Uzziah, as noted above. Hopefully, future excavations will provide a clearer and more comprehensive picture of these sites during the eighth century B.C.

### **Location and Identification**

The site of Tell Abu Salima (map reference 0646.0708) is located in northern Sinai, between El-Arish and Rafaḥ near Sheikh Zuweid, about 2.5 km (1.5 mi) from the coastline. Limited cultivation took place in antiquity, but encroaching sand dunes covered this fertile strip. Petrie (Petrie and Ellis 1937: 1) identified Tell Abu Salima as Hellenistic Anthedon, but classical sources place that site north of Gaza, possibly at Khirbet Teda (Avi-Yonah 2002: 100, 148, 150; Petrie and Ellis 1937: 2; Reich 1993a). While Tell Abu Salima's classical toponym remains uncertain, Aharoni (1974: 88-90, 14\*; 1979a: 48, 152, 377, 438) identifies it with Laban in pre-classical times, attested in the topographical list of Shishak and mentioned by Sargon II (Aharoni 1979a: 329; *ANET*: 286; Kitchen 1986: 297-99; B. Mazar 1986: 149, n. 23; and references there). Reich (1984; 1993a) argues that the excavated remains of an Assyrian-style fortress on the mound seem to link it with the Assyrian *kāru* (harbor or port), essentially an Assyrian-controlled trading center and market place on the Egyptian border, which Sargon II reopened or established after defeating a rebellion in southern Philistia in 720 B.C. (*ANET*: 286; Rainey and Notley 2006: 234-37). Oren (1993a: 1294; 1993b: 103-4) equates *kāru* with Tell el-Ruqeish. Rainey (Rainey and Notley 2006: 236) suggested identifying *kāru* with the site of Sebkhēt el-Bardāwīl on the sea coast at the mouth of the Brook of Egypt (Wadi el-'Arish).

## History of Excavation

Excavations were conducted at the site for three brief seasons during 1935-36 by W. M. F. Petrie of the British School of Archaeology in Egypt. Twelve occupational strata dating from the Late Bronze Age to the early Roman period were identified (Petrie and Ellis 1937: Plate XVII). Aharoni (1974) conducted a survey of several sites in the area in 1957, during the brief Israeli occupation of the Sinai following the Suez Crisis and visited Tell Abu Salima.<sup>285</sup>

## Site Description and Discoveries

Petrie excavated the northeastern quarter of the site, identifying twelve strata of occupation (Petrie and Ellis 1937: Plate XVII). Strata H and G revealed the northeastern wing of a large building constructed of mud bricks with several rooms surrounding a courtyard. Petrie identified the structure as a sixth century B.C. Babylonian-period shrine, while Reich (1984: 38; 1993a) interpreted it as an eighth or early seventh century B.C. Assyrian fortress with a temple. The surrounding inset-offset defensive wall was sloped in staggered fashion to form a glacis. A well-preserved monumental staircase and *cella* paved with large square-shaped baked brick tiles was exposed (Petrie and Ellis 1937: 6, Plates II: 7; XVI; Reich 1984: 38). Petrie and Ellis (1937: 5, 7, Plates IX, XVI, XVII) interpreted the massive-stepped mud brick wall to Uzziah and level J below to Jehoshaphat and Joash. An inscribed *pym* weight was discovered, but dismissed as a forgery by Petrie (Petrie and Ellis 1937: 13).<sup>286</sup> The conclusions reached by Petrie and

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<sup>285</sup> See also Humbert (2000: 20-26)

<sup>286</sup> See the rather arbitrary comments by McCown (1943: 130-32) and his suggestion to redate Stratum J to Uzziah (McCown 1943: 131) based on the prosperity reflected in the finds.

Ellis effortlessly link biblical history with their own stratigraphic findings and must be considered with utmost caution.

Apparently local *fellaheen* or Bedouin later removed the remaining unexcavated material for fertilizer as there are no visible remains at the site today (Aharoni 1974: 88; Reich 1993a: 15).

## **Conclusions**

Chr's account of the subjugation of the Arabs and Me'unites by Uzziah (2 Chr 26:7; Eph'al 1982: 101-11; Tadmor 1972; 2011: 793-804), coupled with archaeological evidence at various sites, clearly indicates that Judah controlled the caravan routes from the Aravah across the Negeb and Negeb Highlands via Elath, Tamar, Kadesh Barnea and Kuntillet 'Ajrud, to the coast. The extent of influence and / or hegemony Judah exercised in the vicinity of Gaza and to the south, along the northern Sinai coast is uncertain. Yet Chr also notes in passing that Uzziah's fame spread to the borders of Egypt (2 Chr 26:8); apparently to the border on the Brook of Egypt (Wadi el-'Arish) on the coast of northern Sinai. While conjectural, it is tempting to suggest that Judah garrisoned a similar trading center in this vicinity during Uzziah's reign, a *kāru* of sorts, that Sargon II plausibly reopened decades later.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> For a differing, but reasonable view based on the material evidence, see Oren (1993b: 105).



## CHAPTER 4

### SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL CONCLUSIONS

My initial interest in pursuing this study, which assembles and interprets eighth century B.C. archaeological evidence from sites in the Shephelah and the Philistine Plain, followed a rather surprising personal observation that, for the last forty years, an apparent mid-eighth century B.C. gap existed in the archaeological history of Judah and Philistia. As outlined above, publications have only just begun to address this long-overlooked historical horizon.<sup>288</sup>

The evidence presented above falls short of providing a conclusive confirmation that Judah expanded into Philistia during the reign of Uzziah. Neither does the currently available archaeological data prove that Uzziah “broke down” the walls of Gath, Ashdod or Yavneh. Nevertheless, a substantial amount of archaeological evidence, unearthed

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<sup>288</sup> Aside from Ortiz (2009), several scholars previously or currently affiliated with Bar-Ilan University and the Tell es-Safi excavations currently advocate this position. For example, Shai; Cassuto; Dagan; and Uziel (2012: 153) and Maeir (2012a: 19-43) all believe that the resurgent material culture and robust architecture at Judahite Shephelah sites reflects her expansion into the Philistine Plain. Recently, Amit Dagan agrees and suggests in his Ph.D. dissertation entitled: *Between Judah and Philistia in the 8th century BCE: The Material Culture of Tell es-Safi/Gath as a Test Case for Political and Cultural Change* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 2014; unavailable to me, but cited by McKinny, Cassuto, and Shai 2015), that the prosperity of the Shephelah during the eighth century B.C. indicates, if not presumes Judahite expansion to the west (2 Kgs 18:8; 2 Chr 26:6). Conversely, excavations at Tell es-Safi have influenced recent attempts to read the Azekah Inscription (Cogan 2008: 108 lines 10-12; Zukerman and Shai 2006) and point to Tell es-Safi as “the... royal city of the Philistines, which Hezekiah had taken and fortified for himself.” Thus, Tell es-Safi (Gath) may have been this Judahite stronghold that Sargon or Sennacherib destroyed. Yet the question remains how this reading relates to the status of the site during Uzziah’s reign and whether the site was retaken by the Philistines during the reign of Ahaz.

from many excavated and surveyed sites throughout the region, supports the historical credibility of 2 Chronicles 26:6-7a and the cumulative weight and value of this evidence, provides probable, if not compelling indications that a resurgent, expansionist Judah existed during the first half of the eighth century B.C. The lack of direct epigraphic evidence from these sites, such as a mid-eighth century B.C. equivalent of the Meşad Ḥashavyahu inscription, is especially telling and unfortunate. The information gleaned from the prophetic books of Amos and Isaiah, as well as Hosea to a lesser extent, is tantalizing, but sadly inconclusive. The widely diverse chronological and historical scenarios proposed by commentators clearly demonstrates that, until further information surfaces, all conclusions are largely conjectural. Textual scholars and historians have long recognized that the archival style of writing Chr presents in this concise and specific report, coupled with the lack of supernatural elements (aside from the theological assessments and editorial comments in 2 Chr 26:4, 7-8, 15) appears to be authentic. Furthermore, the place names and regions make good geopolitical sense as far as our understanding of the eighth century B.C. Similarly, many field archaeologists recognize that a holistic view of the evidence supports the historicity of Chr's account. Tappy (2008: 397) argues that Assyrian inscriptions seem to indicate previous Judahite control or influence in the Philistine plain. Moreover, Sennacherib's number of forty-six towns and villages exceeds the list of towns in the Shephelah found in Joshua 15 unless one includes the unnamed towns in Joshua 15:45-47. Niemann (2012: 250, 261, n. 68) accepts that the text as "not improbable," but remains uncertain as to whether Uzziah conducted a raid or permanently occupied the cities and areas mentioned by Chr. He specifically notes the possibility that Uzziah was a junior partner to Jeroboam II.

Interpreting the archaeological data admittedly is, at times, subjective. More importantly, the data is nearly always incomplete, more often extremely fragmentary. Hence, historical (written) sources must take precedence whenever available. Even Na'aman (2013: 248), among other scholars, recognizes that, when attempting to reconstruct the history of Judah, there is no justification for the preference of archaeological data over the biblical text.

Evidence from Tell el-Hesi and Khirbet Summeily seem to support that Judah's southwestern border had a pronounced westward bulge onto the Coastal Plain and was heavily fortified from the tenth to the eighth centuries B.C. (Blakely, Hardin and Master 2014; Hardin, Rollston and Blakely 2012). This data appears to correlate well with Chr's account, which only records Uzziah campaigning and annexing territory in northern Philistia.

The major Judahite sites constructed by Uzziah, Lachish (Level III) and Beth Shemesh (Level II) show impressive urban planning and a robust material culture. Lachish boasts monumental buildings and massive defenses. The focus on olive oil processing and textile production, rather than defenses at the strategically-located Beth Shemesh is also significant, and suggests a strong and secure polity. The surrounding region may have enjoyed a type of "*Pax Judaica*" during the mid-eighth century B.C. as the border of the kingdom apparently moved significantly to the west of the strong defenses of Timnah. The important city of Gezer (Level VIA; Tandy Stratum 6) also appears to have been under a royal Judahite program of aggressive urban planning. Likewise, smaller towns and sites reflect strong economic conditions as well as a royal presence with forts and estates dotting the countryside.

While Judahite sites in the Shephelah correlate extremely well with Chr's account of Uzziah's reign, evidence from Philistia exists, but is negligible. In particular, evidence for new Judahite coastal settlements (עריים) is inconclusive, based upon indistinct material cultural finds at eighth century B.C. sites near Ashdod in particular. Moreover, eighth century B.C. occupation of the fortress at Holot Yavne is possible, but unproven.

The three sites that serve as our "star witnesses" for determining the veracity of Chr's account are naturally Gath, Yavneh and Ashdod. However, as I attempted to demonstrate above, the evidence at each of these sites is admittedly mixed and subject to interpretation. However, both Tell es-Safi and Ashdod offer vital clues that support Chr's text. Tel Yavneh is exceptional as only minor probes have been made on the mound itself. The *favissa* discovered nearby is important due to its date and the circumstances surrounding its deposition. The non-cultic pottery associated with the excavated pit is of special significance and Panitz-Cohen's date of late ninth-early eighth century B.C. places it within the horizon of Uzziah's early years. Whether actions by Judah had anything to do with the apparently ritualistic destruction of these cultic items remains unknown. Yet, Kletter and Ziffer (2008: 2071) do not dismiss Chr's account of Uzziah, recognizing that: "(m)any scholars believe this verse to be a reliable source, evidence that Yavneh was ruled by the Philistines prior to Uzziah's conquest." The political status of Yavneh-Yam during the reign of Uzziah is also uncertain and it is quite possible that Chr referred to this strongly fortified port town rather than Tel Yavneh as Uzziah's object of conquest.

Much of the evidence from Ashdod is problematic. In various venues and publications, M. Dothan repeatedly claimed to have uncovered evidence for Uzziah's

conquest of Ashdod from the supposed Stratum IX destruction of the Area M six chamber gateway. This evidence has now come under serious question due to poor methodology, which resulted in the loss of close stratigraphic control and probably also from Dothan's subconscious quest for a "desired past." This has led to appropriate calls for further excavations on the site to confirm, clarify and / or establish a better stratigraphic progression and history for Tel Ashdod and until such data can be recorded and recovered, the question must remain open. However, if the Area M gateway does date to the early eighth century B.C., Uzziah is an excellent candidate, not necessarily for its destruction, but rather its *construction*, as this gate finds its closest parallels at the eighth century B.C. Judahite sites of Lachish (Level III), Timnah (Level III) and Tel 'Ira (Stratum VII). Finally, the earlier of the two eighth century B.C. destruction levels beneath the enormous extramural Assyrian structure near the base of the tel needs further confirmation, but presently provides our best evidence to correlate Chr's account with archaeological remains at the three Philistine cities he mentions.

The current excavations at Tell es-Safi continue to illuminate the history of Philistine Gath. However, firm evidence directly linking Uzziah with the site has not been established. Similarly, a series of questions surrounding the site still remain. First, while Tell es-Safi is almost certainly Philistine Gath, Uzziah may have possibly conquered another Gath, notably Gath-Gittaim (Tel Ḥamid). Secondly, questions surround the exact date of the Hazael destruction layer. While a late ninth century B.C. date seems likely, a precise chronology is uncertain and, aside from a single biblical reference (2 Kgs 12:18), no conclusive evidence ties the Aramaean king to the site. The ceramic horizon of this destruction layer touches on Uzziah's early years, but the size of

the city and the scope of the siege seems far beyond the capabilities of a young local monarch busily attempting to rebuild his own weakened kingdom. For now, Hazael is overwhelmingly the best candidate for this destruction. Nevertheless, Finkelstein (2002: 139-41) leaves open the possibility of a westward thrust by Judah, stating that Judah possibly dominated Gath during the mid eighth century B.C. if 2 Chr 26:6 is historically valid and that Safi's major destruction layer, dated to the ninth or early eighth century B.C. may reflect "a possible westward expansion by Uzziah" as well as to Hazael, Thirdly, the excavators of Tell es-Safi report that the city lay largely abandoned for a time of uncertain duration after Hazael's destruction. Fourthly, evidence of mid-eighth century B.C. earthquake damage (Amos 1:1) was observed at the site. Lastly, during the last half of the eighth century B.C., the acropolis was reoccupied and settled by Judahites, based upon their distinctively Judahite material culture. Two distinct phases of this occupational level (A2) have been identified. The final two points are particularly significant and demonstrate that Judah controlled the site for about a half century (ca. 750-700 B.C.). Therefore, Judah gained hegemony over Tell es-Safi and occupied the city during the later years of Uzziah's reign, which fully supports Chr's account. The issue at present is the apparent lack of defences (walls) for Uzziah to breach. Yet the previous, much more expansive stratum (A3) confronted the excavators at Tell es-Safi with the same problem (e.g., Maeir 2012d: 371).<sup>289</sup> As their work is ongoing, it is

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<sup>289</sup> While Beth Shemesh Level II was apparently unwallled during the eighth century B.C., prompting its excavators to suggest that this bustling, but unfortified city reflected a strong, secure polity (e.g., Bunimovitz and Lederman 2009: 137-39), fortifications probably encircled Tell es-Safi during the previous century. The recent discovery of a city gate and continued investigation of walls traced by Bliss and Macalister will hopefully clarify this issue (e.g., Ussishkin 2015: 130-31). A similar explanatory statement given by the excavators of Tel Burna is therefore most likely erroneous: "(T)he rulers of Gath were sending a clear message of rebuttal to the forts being built by Judah, implying that the great city of Gath had no need for fortifications, since, as the most powerful force in the region, they had no reason to fear military attack" (Maeir 2012a: 34; Shai, Cassuto, Dagan, and Uziel 2012: 153).

sincerely hoped that additional light on the history of Tell es-Safi during the first half of the eighth century B.C. will be unearthed by its excavators. A recent note by Na'aman (2009: 351) posits that Ashdod expanded eastwards in the wake of Hazael's sack of Gath and established hegemony over a considerable strip of territory up to the border of Judah. Hence, Uzziah's actions against Gath (Tell es-Safi) may have been merely the first stage of a war against the kingdom of Ashdod, which also held a 23 km stretch of Mediterranean coastline from the Naḥal Evtah (Wadi Ibtah) in the south to the Naḥal Sorek (Nahr Rubin) in the north.

To conclude, the Hebrew term “breaking down the wall” probably referred only to a partial destruction, not a total razing of the city's fortifications, as noted above, and was used to weaken an enemy city and its population psychologically as much as physically. Consequently, the lack of a widespread destruction throughout the city and its defenses limits material evidence for this action and archaeological confirmation may be more elusive than previously thought.

Looking at these three sites in retrospect, one observes that the archaeological evidence for Uzziah's war with Philistia is somewhat of a paradox. Where evidence is claimed, as in the case of Ashdod, methodology and objectivity have been questioned. However, when and where careful methodology and best practice techniques are used, such as the recent work at Tell es-Safi and Yavneh, there is an apparent paucity of evidence for a mid-eighth century B.C. destruction layer and destroyed fortifications. The summation of our study and the resulting conclusions gained from the evidence presented is not unlike choosing either to look at a cup “half full” or “half empty” (e.g., A. Mazar 2006). These three sites clearly exhibit eighth century B.C. settlement. Tell es-

Safi displays two occupational phases of predominately Judahite material culture originating during Uzziah's reign while Ashdod demonstrates an eighth century B.C. destruction layer pre-dating the one attributed to Sargon II. Moreover, a Philistine eighth century B.C. *realia* is also supported by Chr's mention of Yavneh, a rather obscure Philistine town unattested elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, yet strategically important for Judah in the geopolitics during Uzziah's reign, rather than the well known major centers of Ekron, Ashkelon or Gaza. Likewise, Chr could hardly have invented the Me'unites when he wrote his history.<sup>290</sup> Indeed, nearly all historical conclusions based solely upon archaeological evidence, especially the lack thereof, must be interpreted as tentative and preliminary with the knowledge that these data are often presented subjectively from a particular world view. The available historical and archaeological records are fragmentary at best, minutely fractional as the norm, and completely lacking at worst. The historian must work with woefully incomplete information and make assumptions, conjectures and ultimately conclusions from the available evidence.

In a trio of seminal articles, Anson F. Rainey (1984b; 2001b; 2002b) wrestled with precisely this issue and evaluated the extent of archaeology's role in recovering the ancient past. He noted: "One must avoid the common pitfall of thinking that the

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<sup>290</sup> On the historical credibility of the Philistines during the Iron Age II, see Machinist (2000) and Stager (2006). A recent paper by Finkelstein (2015: 684) attempts to argue for a Hasmonean historical milieu lying behind Chr's account of Uzziah's conquest of Philistia, and cites various passages from 1 Maccabees that mention Jamnia (Yavneh) and Ashdod. Yet Finkelstein is forced to attribute the Chr's mention of the Me'unites, a nomadic people active during the eighth century B.C. and known from Assyrian and biblical sources, but long forgotten by the Hellenistic Period, to Chr's supposed "elaboration" of Hezekiah's activities (1 Kgs 18:8). Finkelstein's views are a superb example of dogged determination, at any cost, to view the glass as "half empty" if not completely dry. In his response to an earlier minimalistic charge, Stager (2006: 384) concludes: "From such abysmal knowledge about the (Mediterranean Sea) coast, there is no way that a Jewish storyteller in the postexilic period could have composed the many traditions about the Philistines preserved in the Bible—traditions that resonate with what we know from other Iron Age sources."



available data comprise a comprehensive picture, for any of the periods or phases of antiquity. Every year, as new data come to light, it is necessary to accommodate them within the parameters of previous understanding. But there will always be gaps (Rainey 2001b: 141). Moreover, archaeological “facts” are often actually nothing more than informed, yet fallible opinions of archaeological “authority figures” and habitually based upon archaeological material evidence that is fragmentary. Therefore, many archaeological “facts” are merely provisional conjectures (Rainey 2001b: 141) and his summation (Rainey 2002b: 543-47) comprises a stunning critique of the discipline: “However, the real problem is that artifactual, ecological, epigraphic, and even stratigraphic evidence is often *ambiguous*. Anyone who has struggled with the nitty-gritty details of an excavation (or of an inscription) knows this. Perhaps we don’t admit it often enough... Beware the opinions of archaeologists!”

I believe Rainey’s arguments retain merit. Indeed, while certain “authority figures” dominated previous decades of research, these prejudices have largely been eclipsed by widely divergent ideological views that underlie the motivation of the excavators and manifest themselves in the lectures, video-based media and publications of a number of scholars, which Rainey, along with the vast majority of those working in the field recognize and strongly oppose (e.g., Dever 1994; 2001; Rainey 2001b; 2002b). Then as now, knowledge of a scholar’s preconceptions and their world view is often essential before critically reviewing their work. Perhaps the comments of Dillard (1987: 94) best encapsulate my own view regarding a cautionary approach to interpreting archaeological data: “While skill in archeological method continues to grow, this data is often subject to reinterpretation; today’s results from archeological investigation become

tomorrow's footnotes about earlier errors. At a methodological level one has to question the relative weight of the epigraphic and archeological evidence: written evidence from the Chronicler who was so much closer to the events and sources is set against the interpretation of data from partial excavations." Nevertheless, I remain optimistic that an extremely valuable corpus of historical information unknown at present will eventually surface in the wake of continued archaeological research and I am highly confident that our exciting and engaging discipline shall continue to uncover and clarify more of the eighth century B.C. historical context of Uzziah's Judah and Philistia, as it shall for all of antiquity.

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## VITA

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### Education

- Ph.D. in Near Eastern Archaeology and Old Testament Exegesis, Andrews University (2016)
- Master of Arts in Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary (2003)
- Master of Arts in Biblical History, Jerusalem University College (1994)
- Bachelor of Arts in History, Simpson University (1984)
- Associate of Arts, Everett Community College (1982)

### Employment and Professional Activities

- Adjunct Professor, Department of Religion and Philosophy: Bethel College (2011-2016)
- Adjunct Professor, Department of Behavioral Sciences: Andrews University (2009-2016)
- Graduate Assistant, Department of Behavioral Sciences: Andrews University (2009-2016)
- Administrative Director, Tall Hisban Cultural Heritage Project (2014-2016)
- Assistant to the VP of Committee on Archaeology Research and Policy (2008-2014)

### Publications

- Tall Hisban: Seasons 2013-2014: A Preliminary Report (with Bethany Walker and others). *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 60 (in press).
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