

# The 10th Century BCE in Judah: Archaeology and the Biblical Tradition

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## Abstract

In the framework of the regional project in the Judean Shephelah, which started in 2007, four sites were investigated: Khirbet Qeiyafa, Khirbet el-Ra'i, Socoh, and Lachish. The data for the 10th century is presented here together with the relevant biblical traditions. The data is analyzed according to an urban geography model and the gradual development and territorial expansion of the Kingdom of Judah is suggested.

**KEYWORDS:** 10th century BCE, Kingdom of Judah, Khirbet Qeiyafa, Khirbet al-Ra'i, Socoh, Lachish

## 1. Introduction

According to the biblical tradition, the Kingdom of Judah existed for about four centuries, from the 10th to the early 6th century BCE (ca. 1000–586 BCE). This chronological framework is based on the lists of biblical kings, the number of years of each of their reigns, and synchronisms with historical sources from other parts of the ancient Near East (Thiele 1983; Hughes 1990; Galil 1996). The second half of this era (the 8th and 7th centuries BCE) is relatively well known to modern research. Extensive excavations at many sites, especially in Jerusalem, Beth-Shemesh, Lachish, Beersheba, and Arad, have provided much information about dwellings, pottery, and other artifacts, economics, trade relations, worship, burial customs, personal names, fortification of cities, administration, and tax

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payments. On the other hand, the picture of the earlier stages, the 10th and 9th centuries BCE, is much more fragmented and hence is intensely debated. In the biblical historical accounts, however, the opposite is true. The books of Samuel and Kings tell of the beginning of the Kingdom of Judah and the activities of David, Solomon, and Rehoboam in much more detail than any other time in the history of the kingdom.

How did two such disparate situations come about? Without discussing this question in depth, it is clear that the answer lies on the one hand in the way in which the archaeological record was deposited, and on the other in the manner in which the biblical tradition was formulated.

The archaeological sequence is created by the deposition of settlement levels. When there was a long period of peace, an archaeological level may represent hundreds of years without leaving significant remains. Hence, we lack significant destruction levels for the 10th, 9th, and 8th centuries BCE, which were a relatively tranquil time in Judah. The subsequent invasions of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires, however, left impressive destruction levels in 701 BCE and 586 BCE. These destruction events dominate the archaeological record and put in the shade the earlier centuries of peace, which are poorly represented in the archaeological record (Faust and Sapir 2018; Lipschits and Koch 2019).

The biblical narrative tends to concentrate on key events in the history of the kingdom and does not provide systematical historical data for each and every year. The era in which a kingdom, a dynasty, a capital, and a temple were established was a formative one, the foundation on which the kingdom was based. Consequently, the biblical historicity of this era, the 10th century BCE, has received extensive interest, out of proportion to its chronological length. Each king in Jerusalem emphasized his legitimacy as another successor in the House of David. In this way the traditions about David and Solomon, the founders of the dynasty, were preserved, elaborated, and sometimes exaggerated from generation to generation, resulting in the detailed description that we have today.

The great discrepancy between the text and the archaeological data has been used since the 1980s by various scholars to argue that the Kingdom of Judah was established only at the end of the 9th century or even as late as the end of the 8th century BCE. In this way two or three centuries have been erased from the kingdom's history. I have previously discussed the history of this school (popularly known as "minimalists"), with its three phases of evolution, and will not repeat it here (Garfinkel et al. 2016; Garfinkel 2017a).

In previous generations scholars accepted the biblical account as representing

authentic historical memories, and therefore described or interpreted the archaeological record according to the biblical tradition. It is interesting, then, that W.F. Albright, the founding father of biblical archaeology, adopted a fairly realistic approach to the 10th century BCE. He wrote: "... there are scarcely any building remains which we can attribute with any confidence to the reign of David. Israel was still a rather primitive agricultural and pastoral state in the time of Saul and David, though it must have been making great strides towards a more complex industrial and mercantile level before the death of David, about 960 B.C." (Albright 1956: 122). Even Yadin (1958), who attributed the construction of Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer to Solomon, envisaged a kingdom in a relatively limited area in the Southern Levant. Only after the Six-Day War did some Israeli scholars begin to view the United Monarchy as an "empire" ruling a territory stretching from the Sinai Desert to the Euphrates (B. Mazar 1979; Malamat 1981; 1982). This hyperbolic approach, however, received little support.

The use of the biblical tradition to explain, and to date, various archaeological phenomena was quite common in the past. Thus, for example, the destructions in the Iron Age I of both the last Canaanite cities and the classical Philistine culture have been attributed to David (B. Mazar 1979; 1986). This led in turn to a chronological conclusion: the end of the Iron Age I, and hence the beginning of the Iron Age IIA, took place around 1000 BCE. Three similar gates found at Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer were attributed to Solomon, mentioned in the Bible as the builder of these three cities, and consequently were dated to the mid-10th century BCE (Yadin 1958). The biblical description of the palace and temple in Jerusalem was seen as an extract from documents kept in the kingdom's archives (Montgomery 1934). The biblical account of the fortification of cities by Rehoboam son of Solomon was also perceived as a reflection of reality (Kallai 1971).

This research approach involves a circular argument: first archaeological strata are dated and interpreted in light of biblical traditions, and then the archaeological data are seen as corresponding to the biblical traditions and hence proving their reliability.

There is certainly room for criticism of this method, which was commonly used by the first generations of scholars, and so it is surprising to find that even today there are scholars who repeat the same methodological error. For example, it has been suggested that the gates of Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer reflect the glory days of the reign of King Ahab of Israel in the mid-9th century BCE (Finkelstein 1996). Other scholars have suggested that the gates relate to the days of Jeroboam II in the 8th century BCE (Knauf and Guillaume 2016: 99). In both interpretations,

biblical traditions and archaeological data have been combined without an objective methodology. The correct methodology in this case would be to date each gate at each site independently, and then see if they were all constructed at the same time or were built by different kings.

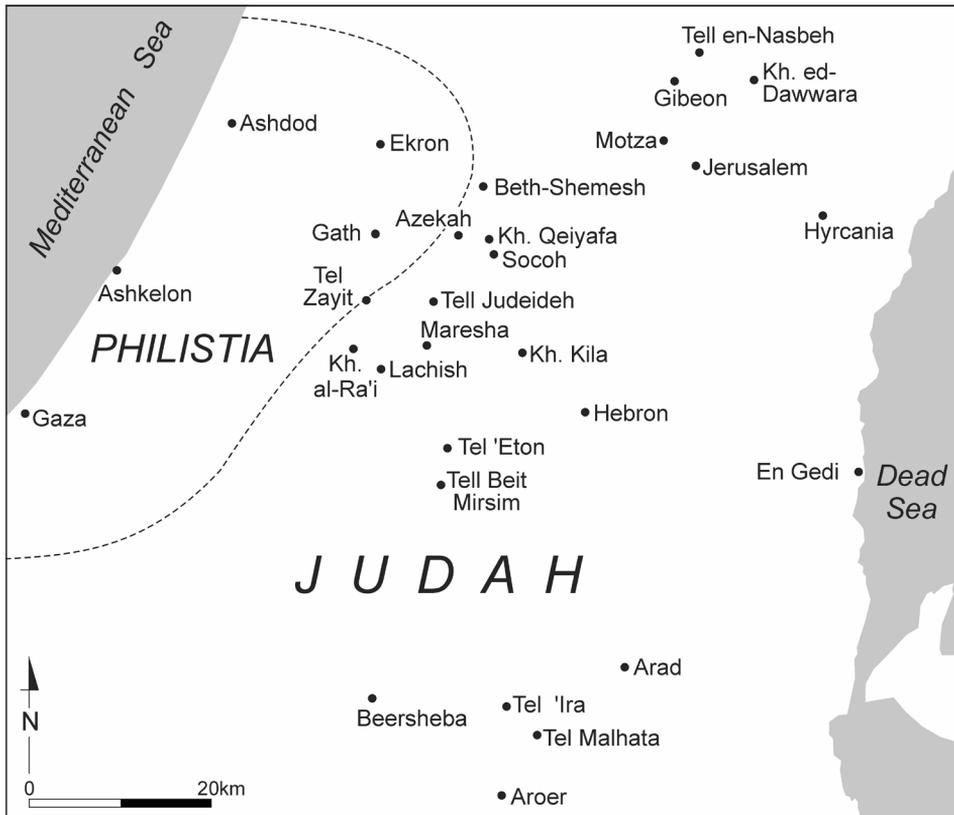
Today, the dating of archaeological levels should be carried out by radiometric methods (such as C14) and the comparison of pottery assemblages. Dating based on “historical considerations” is subjective and at best no more than an educated guess. The biggest mistakes in the archaeology of ancient Israel were made when excavation finds were linked to biblical traditions, when in fact they did not belong together at all. The most prominent example occurred when the Yokan mentioned in the seal impressions bearing the inscription “Eliakim Na’ar Yokan” was identified as King Jehoiachin of Judah, who reigned in the early 6th century BCE, toward the end of the kingdom. This in turn was used to date the destruction of Level III at Lachish to 597 BCE rather than the correct date of 701 BCE, an error that dominated the archaeology of Judah for nearly fifty years (Garfinkel 1990).

The current presentation has two main sections. The first is a brief survey of the fieldwork that we have carried out since 2007 at four sites in the Judean Shephelah: Khirbet Qeiyafa, Khirbet al-Ra’i, Lachish, and Socoh. This regional research was organized in collaboration with various scholars, listed below. Second, the data will be presented in order of its contribution to understanding the historical developments that took place during the 10th century BCE in Judah. Here the archaeological data and the biblical tradition will be confronted.

This article is based on fieldwork conducted since 2007 with the collaboration of many scholars: Saar Ganor of the Israel Antiquities Authority excavated with me at Khirbet Qeiyafa and at Khirbet al-Ra’i (2007–2013, 2015–2020), Prof. Michael G. Hasel of the Southern Adventist University excavated at Khirbet Qeiyafa and Lachish (2009–2011, 2013–2017) and conducted the survey at Socoh (2010), Prof. Martin G. Klingbeil of the Southern Adventist University and Prof. Hoo-Goo Kang of Seoul Jangsin University excavated at Lachish (2013–2017), and Prof. Kyle H. Keimer and Prof. Gil Davis of the Macquarie University excavated at Khirbet al-Ra’i (2018–2020).

## 2. The Regional Project in the Judean Shephelah: Khirbet Qeiyafa, Khirbet Al-Ra'i, Lachish, and Socoh

When discussing the first stage of the establishment of the Kingdom of Judah, one must determine when the settlement pattern of hundreds of small villages typical of the Iron Age I was replaced by a new pattern of urban settlements typical of the Iron Age II, with fortified towns, urban planning, and public administration (Faust 2015). Anyone wishing to talk about the existence of a kingdom should point to some of the basic geographical features of such a social organization: fortified administrative centers, territorial continuity, and road networks (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1.** Map of the main sites in the Kingdom of Judah.

The Shephelah region, located southwest of Jerusalem, was chosen for the research project since it is the most favorable ecological zone of the Kingdom of Judah. In the hill country (the Judean Mountains and the Hebron Mountains), the land slopes steeply and the areas suitable for agriculture are limited. In the east, the arid and hilly Judean Desert can support a pastoral economy but not large-scale

agriculture, a limitation that also applies to the Negev Desert in the south. Hence, the Shephelah, with its relatively flat topography, fertile soil, and adequate annual precipitation, is the only region in Judah where large-scale agriculture can be practiced. The Shephelah was the bread basket of the kingdom and the only area that could support a large population (for a different opinion, see Faust 2014).

In addition, it should be mentioned that after more than a century of excavation in Jerusalem, particularly in the area known as the City of David, no remains that can be absolutely dated to the early 10th century BCE have been uncovered. There are intense debates over various structures, some scholars dating them to the early or later 10th century BCE (see, for example, A. Mazar 2006; 2007; E. Mazar 2011) while others suggest later dates for the same constructions (Ussishkin 2003; Finkelstein et al. 2007).

The question of when the Kingdom of Judah spread into the Shephelah is a key issue in any attempt to understand the expansion of the kingdom from the surroundings of Jerusalem toward the south and west. Indeed, this issue has been the subject of several discussions in recent years (see, for example, Na'aman 2013; Sergi 2013; Lehmann and Niemann 2014). All of these articles, published after we had presented the results of our excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa, attempt to defend a generation of claims that Judah became a kingdom only in the late 9th century or even during the 8th century BCE. These theories, developed in the 1980s, were based not on data but on the absence of data, and hence should be considered as speculations, hypotheses, or wishful thinking. We, on the other hand, came along with fresh data that severely challenged this school of thought.

Our fieldwork has focused since 2007 on four sites in the Shephelah: Khirbet Qeiyafa, Khirbet al-Ra'i, Lachish (Tell ed-Duweir), and Socoh (Khirbet Shuweikeh and Khirbet 'Abbâd). Each site will be summarized here in a paragraph or two, since much of the relevant data has already been published in various final excavation reports and articles. The sites are presented here in their chronological order within the 10th century BCE rather than their order of excavation.

### **2.1. Khirbet Qeiyafa**

This 2.3-hectare city was built on top of a hill overlooking the Valley of Elah, along which runs a major route leading from Jerusalem to the coastal plain. It is located on the border with Philistia, opposite Tell es-Safi (biblical Gath). The site was encircled by heavy fortifications of extraordinary strength, including a casemate city wall and two gates (Figs. 2–3). The city was destroyed shortly after it was built, and in each building we uncovered rich assemblages of diverse

finds: pottery, animal bones, stone tools, metal objects, cultic paraphernalia, seals, and inscriptions. To date, five volumes of detailed excavation reports have been published (Garfinkel and Ganor 2009; Garfinkel et al. 2014; Farhi 2016; Kang and Garfinkel 2018; Garfinkel et al. 2018), and three more volumes are in advanced stages of preparation. Additional data on other aspects has been presented as well (Gilboa 2012; Kang and Garfinkel 2015; Keimer et al. 2015; Cohen-Klonymus 2016; Garfinkel et al. 2016; Garfinkel 2017b; Rabinovich et al. 2019). The city has been radiometrically dated by C14 analysis to the first quarter of the 10th century BCE (Garfinkel, Streit, et al. 2015). The sudden destruction of the city and its abandonment for centuries have left us a crystal-clear archaeological picture of the early 10th century BCE in Judah and beyond.

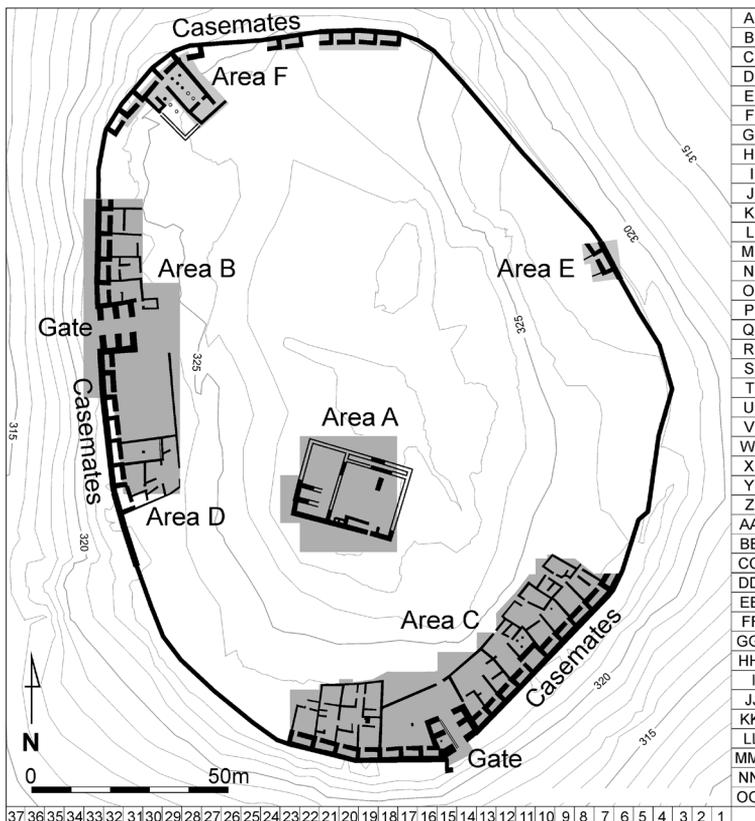
The dwellings in Khirbet Qeiyafa about the city wall in the pattern that characterizes other cities in the Kingdom of Judah: Tell en-Nasbeh, Beth-Shemesh, Tell Beit Mirsim, and Beersheba (Shiloh 1978). A unique find was a large stone box, 35 cm high, uncovered in a cultic room near the southern gate. It will be discussed in detail below.

## **2.2. Khirbet Al-Ra'ı**

This site is located on top of a hill overlooking the Lachish Valley, about 3 km west of Lachish (Garfinkel and Ganor 2018; 2019; Garfinkel, Keimer, et al. 2019). This 1.7-hectare site was occupied mainly in the Iron Age I, in the 12th and 11th centuries BCE. The settlement was well organized: monumental building were constructed at the highest point in the center and simple courtyard dwellings were built in the southern sector. The pottery was largely in the local Canaanite tradition, with a few Philistine vessels as well. This prosperous settlement phase came to an end in the late 11th century BCE. Later on a small village, no more than 0.1 hectare in size, reused the site, with extensive recycling of walls and building stones. This phase has been radiometrically dated to the first quarter of the 10th century BCE (Garfinkel, Hasel, et al. 2019). This was a very short episode that ended in a sudden destruction, leaving dozens of complete pottery vessels in the destruction layer (Figs. 4–6). The pottery assemblage of this phase resembles that of Khirbet Qeiyafa. From the radiometric dating and the pottery analysis it is clear that Khirbet al-Ra'ı and Khirbet Qeiyafa coexisted, the former as a village and the latter as a fortified city.



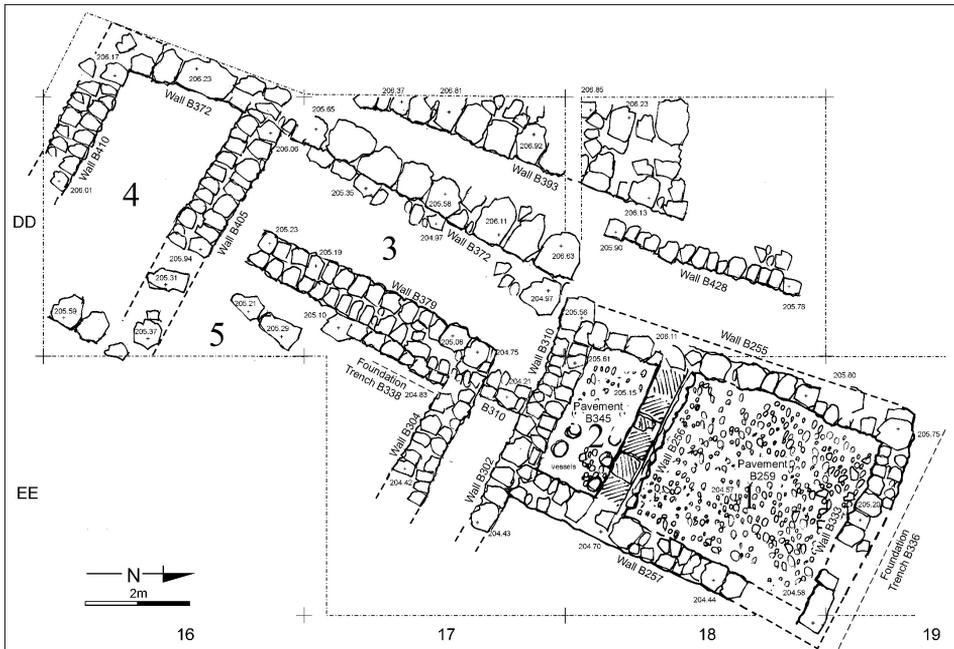
**Fig. 2.** Aerial photograph of Khirbet Qeiyafa, view to the north.



**Fig. 3.** The fortified city of Khirbet Qeiyafa. Note that the casemates of the city wall are incorporated in the private dwellings, a building style typical of the Kingdom of Judah.



**Fig. 4.** Aerial photograph of Khirbet al-Ra'i with the locations of the excavation areas.



**Fig. 5.** Khirbet al-Ra'i: a group of four rooms dating from the beginning of the 10th century BCE. Their eastern part was destroyed when a dirt road was constructed at the site in the 1950s.



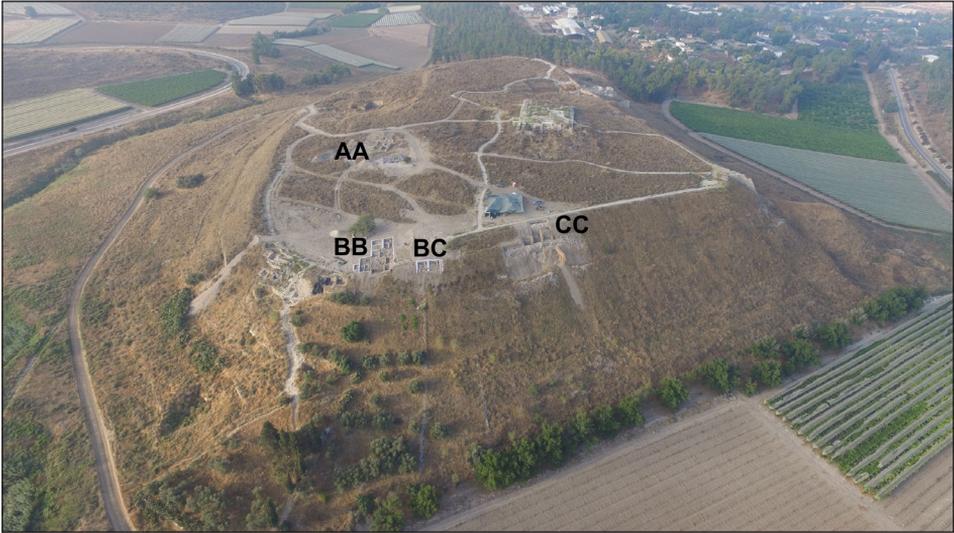
**Fig. 6.** Various pottery vessels from the level of the early 10th century BCE at Khirbet al-Ra'i.

### 2.3. Lachish

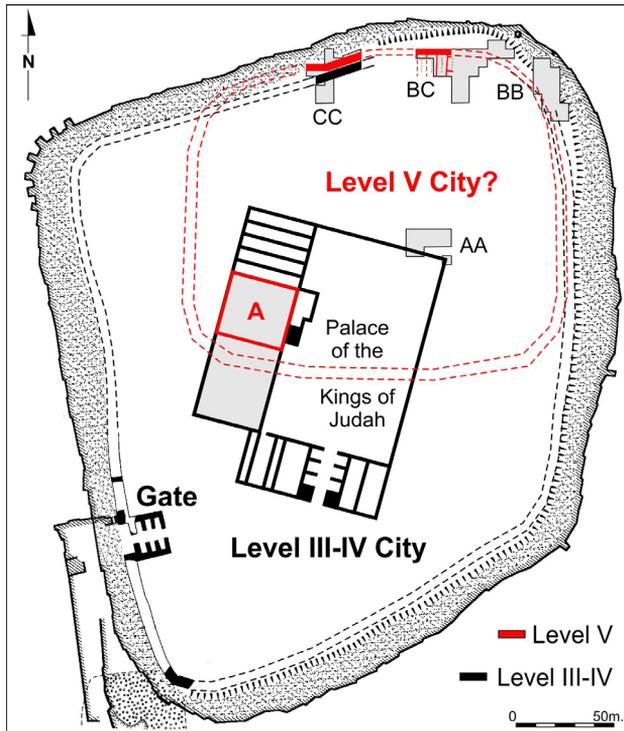
Lachish is located in the southern part of the Judean Shephelah, two days' walk from Jerusalem. It was the most important city after Jerusalem in the Kingdom of Judah. The settlement sequence of Lachish had been investigated by three previous expeditions (Tufnell 1953; Aharoni 1975; Ussishkin 2004). Despite this, Level V, the earliest Iron Age II settlement, was little known, a fact that attracted our attention (Garfinkel et al. 2013). Two major questions remained unanswered: whether Level V was a village or a fortified city and what was the date of the earliest Iron Age fortifications.

Our excavations focused on the northeast corner of the site, assuming that the earliest Iron Age city was small and was constructed in the area closest to the nearby valley (Garfinkel, Kreimerman, et al. 2019) and that the entire 7.5-hectare site was occupied only in a later phase (Figs. 7–8). A similar process was observed for the Iron Age at Hazor, Tell en-Nasbeh, and other sites, where at first a relatively small city was built and the city increased in size over time (Garfinkel 2012a).

Our expedition unearthed a previously unknown massive city wall on the northern slope of the mound. This well-built stone construction, excavated in Areas CC and BC, is ca. 3 m wide and includes a drain for evacuating rainwater



**Fig. 7.** Aerial photograph of Tel Lachish and the excavation of the city wall in Area CC on the northern slope of the site.



**Fig. 8.** Lachish: site plan, location of remains of Stratum V, and proposed reconstruction of the line of the Iron Age city wall in the first phase of its existence

out of the city (Fig. 9). In Area CC the wall was exposed over a length of ca. 35 m, while in Area BC, some 50 m to the east, the wall was damaged by erosion of the slope and was preserved only in its western part. Typical Judean houses with rows of stone monoliths were found abutting the city wall (Fig. 10). A solid wall is stronger than a hollow casemate wall, but requires more raw material for its construction and is consequently more expensive. Thus, the construction of a solid city wall at Lachish is an indication of its strategic importance to the kingdom as early as Level V. The pottery of Stratum V includes bowls decorated with red slip and irregular hand burnish, typical of the Iron Age IIA. While this type of decoration was rare at Khirbet Qeiyafa and Khirbet al-Ra'i, it was quite common here.

Radiometric dating of olive pits from the floor running up to the city wall from inside the city yielded dates in the second half of the 10th and the first half of the 9th centuries BCE (Garfinkel, Hasel, et al. 2019). In Area BC simple dwellings abutted the city wall from the inside of the city. These houses went out of use when the city wall of Level IV was built above them.

#### 2.4. Socoh

In 2010 we conducted an intensive survey at the site of Socoh, which is composed of two parts, Khirbet 'Abbâd in the west and Khirbet Shuweikeh in the east. The identification of the site as biblical Socoh is based on its location in the Elah Valley and its Arabic name Shuweikeh (Robinson and Smith 1841). The results of our survey were published in the first monograph ever dedicated to this site (Hasel et al. 2017). The southwest part of the area, known as Khirbet 'Abbâd, yielded pottery sherds typical of the Iron Age IIA, with red slip and irregular hand burnish. To the south of the site we observed a number of rock-cut shaft graves with pottery of the Iron Age IIA. Pottery vessels of the Iron Age IIB with the typical decoration of red slip and wheel burnish, as well as *Lmlk* jar handles, were found all over the site. The pottery distribution indicates that the city of the Iron Age IIA (late 10th and 9th centuries BCE) was smaller, probably occupying only 2 hectares and confined to the southwest part of the site. The city of the Iron Age IIB (8th century BCE) was larger and spread over the entire 6-hectare site.



**Fig. 9.** Lachish Area CC: a closer look at the Stratum V city wall.



**Fig. 10.** Lachish Area BC: aerial photograph of Stratum V with residential buildings adjacent to the wall.

### **3. The Major Contributions of Our Fieldwork to Research of the 10th Century BCE in Judah**

The excavation of three sites and survey of the fourth have resulted in an enormous amount of fresh data on various aspects such as city fortifications, material culture, cult, administration, and writing. The good chronological control achieved by radiometric dating and pottery analysis enables clear differentiation between the early and late 10th century BCE.

#### **3.1. The Early 10th Century BCE (King David)**

The fortified city at Khirbet Qeiyafa, one day's walk from Jerusalem, testifies to the appearance of fortified cities in Judah as early as the end of the 11th century BCE. At this time, the site of Khirbet al-Ra'i was a small village.

The exposure of previously unknown settlement layers of the 10th century BCE in two different sites, one of them a heavily fortified city, completely transforms the state of research. During the 1990s it was commonly believed that Judah was empty of population in the 10th century BCE. This perception relied on the results of extensive surveys conducted in the lowlands, which did not identify sites of the period in question (Dagan 1992; 1993; Lehmann 2003). Although both Khirbet Qeiyafa and Khirbet al-Ra'i were investigated in this survey, no remains of the 10th century BCE were recognized there. This means that the resolution of the survey method is not high enough to identify short periods of time, even in a fortified site like Khirbet Qeiyafa. It also means that dozens of other 10th century BCE sites have probably been overlooked.

It was also suggested in the 1990s that writing in Judah began only in the 8th century BCE (Jamieson-Drake 1991). Four new inscriptions from the 10th century from sites in the core area of Judah clearly reflect a different reality: there are two inscriptions from Khirbet Qeiyafa (Misgav et al. 2009; Garfinkel, Golub, et al. 2015), one from Beth-Shemesh (McCarter et al. 2011), and another from Jerusalem (E. Mazar et al. 2013). All of these inscriptions were written in the archaic Canaanite script rather than the more developed Phoenician-Hebrew script.

Beth-Shemesh is located about 8 km north of Khirbet Qeiyafa. Stratum IV of the site presents a very similar pottery assemblage to that of Khirbet Qeiyafa, including finger-impressed handles (Bunimovitz et al. 2019). Both sites have yielded Canaanite inscriptions as well. The two sites apparently belonged to the same cultural and political unit, the Kingdom of Judah. The excavators of Beth-Shemesh believe that their Stratum IV was Canaanite, and that only in Stratum III

did the site become Judean. This approach, however, assumed that transitions in archaeology are clear-cut and overlooks the possibility of gradual change over time. Why should Stratum IV be 100% Canaanite and Stratum III 100% Judean? In view of the data from Khirbet Qeiyafa, Beth-Shemesh could have been under the political control of Jerusalem in the early 10th century BCE (Faust 2020).

In this context we should relate to the study of Yigal Shiloh (1978), who pointed out that there was an early Iron Age phase at Beth-Shemesh that was characterized by a casemate city wall and houses abutting the casemates. This typically Judean urban planning is known at four other sites: Tell en-Nasbeh, Khirbet Qeiyafa, Tell Beit Mirsim, and Beersheba. This fact should not be underestimated, since according to this analysis Level IV at Beth-Shemesh was not a village, but a fortified city, like the nearby Khirbet Qeiyafa.

In my view Hebron, Jerusalem, Khirbet Qeiyafa, and Beth-Shemesh represent the core of the Kingdom of Judah in its initial stage, immediately after its foundation. In this earlier stage the kingdom controlled an area with a radius of one day's walk from Jerusalem, including the northern part of the Judean Shephelah.

### 3.2. The Mid-10th Century BCE (King Solomon)

The reign of Solomon has attracted much attention: various archaeological levels have been attributed to this king and different interpretations of the nature of his kingship have been offered (Yadin 1958; Ussishkin 1966; B. Mazar 1979; Malamat 1981; Stager 2003; E. Mazar 2011). On the other hand, some scholars have disregarded these findings altogether or suggested later dates for the same archaeological levels (see, for example, Wightman 1990; Finkelstein 1996; Knoppers 1997; Ussishkin 2003; Knauf and Guillaume 2016: 99).

No archaeological levels of this particular era were uncovered in our project. Despite this, one object from Khirbet Qeiyafa surprisingly threw light on the biblical account of the construction of a palace and a temple in Jerusalem in the mid-10th century BCE. A portable shrine carved in limestone uncovered in a cultic room near the southern gate of Khirbet Qeiyafa displays a number of prominent architectural elements (Fig. 11).

Iconographic and textual analyses have clarified that these elements also appear in the biblical descriptions of Solomon's palace and temple (Garfinkel and Mumcuoglu 2013; 2016; 2019):

1. Rectangular wooden beams, organized in groups of three, are located under the roof. This motif (the triglyph) is well known in classical architecture. It is



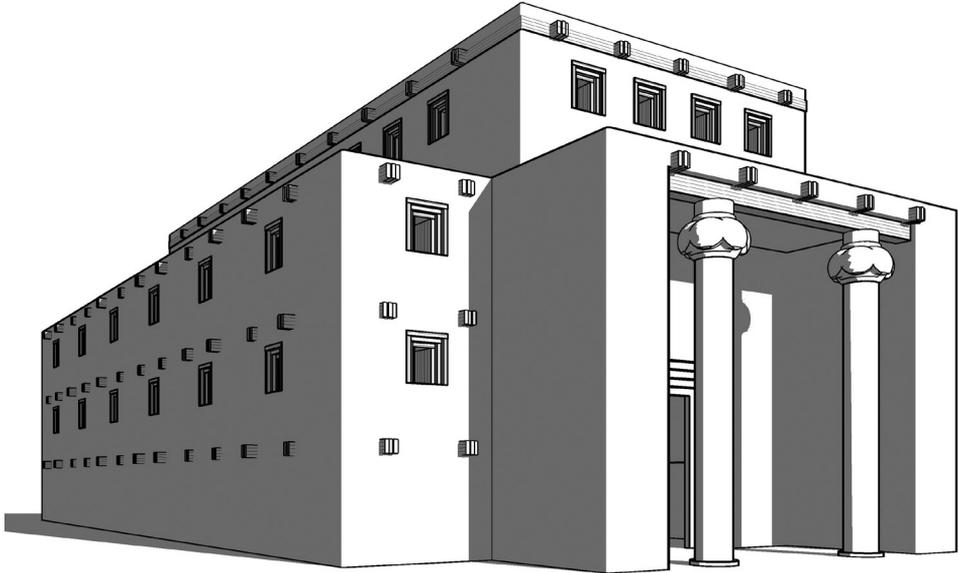
**Fig. 11.** The limestone portable shrine from Khirbet Qeiyafa. Near the roof are seven groups of wooden beams organized in groups of three (triglyphs). Around the door are three recessed frames, embedded within one another.

surprising to see that this method of roofing was used in Judah four centuries before the temples on the Acropolis of Athens. Wooden beams near the roof, organized in groups of three, are mentioned in the biblical account of Solomon's palace and temple.

2. Around the door are three frames, recessed toward the interior. This architectural motif, which highlighted the entrance to important buildings such as temples, palaces, and royal tombs, was already known in Mesopotamia in the Ubaid culture around 4500 BCE, and continued in use for millennia throughout the ancient Near East (Mumcuoglu and Garfinkel 2018).

The portable shrine from Khirbet Qeiyafa has enabled a new reconstruction

of the Temple (Fig. 12). It is evident that elements of royal architecture that were current in the Levant during the Iron Age II in elaborate buildings, royal tombs, and ivories appear in Judah as early as the beginning of the 10th century BCE.



**Fig. 12.** Reconstruction of Solomon's temple in light of the limestone portable shrine from Khirbet Qeiyafa and the interpretation of various technical terms in the biblical text (Garfinkel and Mumcuoglu 2016).

### 3.3. The Late 10th Century BCE (King Rehoboam)

The excavations in the northeast corner of Lachish revealed abundant data on Level V, which was poorly known in other parts of the site. The last Canaanite city at Lachish (Level VI) was destroyed around the mid-12th century BCE. The site was deserted for centuries until, at a certain time, it was settled again as Level V. There is intense debate among scholars over the date of Lachish's first Iron Age fortifications, with a difference of over 250 years between the earliest and latest suggestions:

1. Level V was built by David/Solomon and was destroyed during the campaign of Shishak around 925 BCE. Level IV was built by Rehoboam, according to the list of cities attributed to him in 2 Chr 11:5–12 (Tufnell 1953; Zukerman and Gitin 2016: 417).
2. Level V was built during the reign of Rehoboam in the last quarter of the 10th century BCE (Aharoni 1975; Yadin 1980).

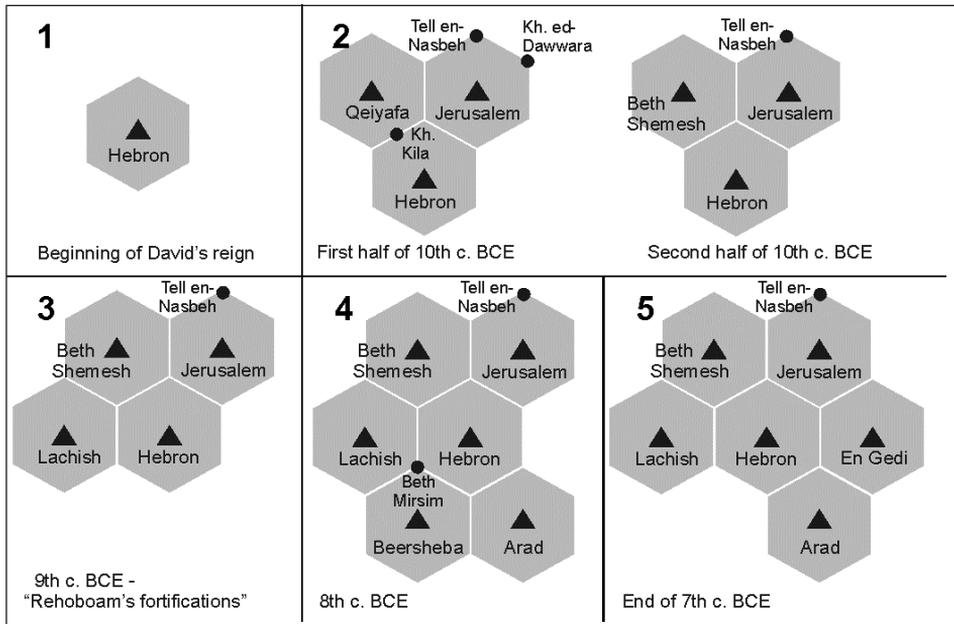
3. Lachish was fortified in the early or mid-9th century BCE (Na'aman 2013; Katz and Faust 2014; Ussishkin 2015).
4. Lachish was fortified at the end of the 9th century BCE, after the destruction of the great Philistine city of Gath (Tell es-Safi). As long as Gath controlled the area, it did not allow the Kingdom of Judah to gain a foothold in the lowlands (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2011; Sergi 2013; Lehmann and Niemann 2014).
5. Lachish was fortified only during the 8th century BCE (Niemann 2011).

Our excavations at Lachish have clarified two controversial aspects. Lachish was fortified during Level V, in the later part of the 10th century BCE. This date is based not on subjective “historical considerations” but on radiometric datings (Garfinkel, Hasel, et al. 2019). It should be noted that similar dates were recently published from Tel ‘Eton in the eastern lowlands, indicating activity at the site in the second half of the 10th century BCE (Faust and Sapir 2018; Faust 2020). This new data has two important implications. First, the Kingdom of Judah built a fortified city at Lachish toward the end of the 10th century BCE, two generations after the construction of the fortified city of Khirbet Qeiyafa. Second, the construction date of the Lachish fortifications, established radiometrically, corresponds with the biblical tradition of the fortifications of Rehoboam: Iron Age Lachish was indeed first fortified in the days of this king.

The second important issue clarified by our expedition is the route of the Level V city wall and the extent of the settlement in this period. The previous expeditions, which also examined the slopes of the mound, detected no city wall of Level V on the southern and western sides of Lachish. In my opinion, this indicates that the city of Level V was small and occupied only the northeast part of the site (Fig. 8). It was not until Level IV that a new city wall encircling the entire mound was built, and a large city with an area of about 7.5 hectares was established. In Ussishkin’s excavation of Area S on the western edge of the site, a house dated to Level V was unearthed, but there was no sign of a city wall (Ussishkin 2004: 78–76, 411–416). This house was probably built after the area confined by the Level V city wall was entirely built up, but before the construction of the Level IV city wall. A similar phenomenon was observed in Level II at Lachish, when a few buildings were built outside the city wall in Square D25 of Area 500 (Tufnell 1953: 220).

#### 4. Discussion: The Territorial Expansion of the Kingdom of Judah Over Time

Demographic and settlement processes usually require centuries to take place, and this is true for the Kingdom of Judah as well (Fig. 13). A gradual development can be proposed for the kingdom from its beginning to its destruction at the end of the First Temple period (Garfinkel 2012b).



**Fig. 13.** The five stages in the model of settlement development in Judah from the establishment of the kingdom until the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE.

Methodologically, it should be noted that settlement analysis should be based on tools originating in the field of urban geography. The two main characteristics to be examined and analyzed are the size of settlements and their location relative to one another. A simple analytical tool well suited to the analysis of ancient settlement patterns is the Central Place Theory, proposed by the German geographer Walter Christaller (1933). The theory emphasizes distance and mobility between places as a major factor in the analysis. The distance that can be covered in a day on foot or using pack animals is no more than ca. 30 km, and this limitation dictates the nature of settlement organization. Each urban center has its agrarian hinterland, and mutual relations develop between the two. The agrarian hinterland provides the city with food and manpower, while the urban center provides villagers around it with specialized products such as metal artifacts, pottery, religious services

(temples), legal services, and so on. Two urban centers cannot coexist too close to one another, as they would be in competition. The settlement pattern of the five Philistine cities during the Iron Age is a good illustration of this principle (Garfinkel 2007). Another example is the settlement pattern in Judah at the end of the 8th century BCE, which was based on six main administrative centers, located one day's walk apart: Jerusalem, Beth-Shemesh, Lachish, Hebron, Beersheba, and Arad (Garfinkel 1984).

Since settlement processes continue over centuries, we should be able to trace them in the Kingdom of Judah as well. Any model that envisages the sudden appearance of a densely populated kingdom, whether in the 10th or the 9th century BCE, presents an unrealistic picture. To build a realistic model we need to utilize both the archaeological data and the biblical tradition. Our findings from Khirbet Qeiyafa and Lachish Level V have shown that the biblical account of the 10th century BCE preserves authentic historical memories. Consequently, if there is a geographical logic in the biblical tradition, it will be incorporated in the discussion. Overall, five phases can be detected in the development of the Kingdom of Judah (Garfinkel 2012b; Garfinkel et al. 2016: 226–232). Here I will concentrate on the first three, covering the 10th and the 9th centuries BCE.

#### **4.1. King David in Hebron (End of the 11th Century BCE)**

According to the biblical tradition, David was crowned in Hebron and moved to Jerusalem only in his seventh regnal year. Hence, one should view Hebron as the core from which the Kingdom of Judah developed. In terms of geographical logic, it should be noted that Hebron is situated in the center of Judah and is undoubtedly the ideal location for the capital of the kingdom. Regrettably, archaeological research at Tell Rumeidah (ancient Hebron) has contributed little to our understanding of the Iron Age. The presence of a modern city makes survey and excavation difficult; only limited excavations have been conducted at the site, and some of these excavations have not yet been published in detail.

Hebron is indeed mentioned as a central place in various ritual and political traditions. The fathers of the nation and their wives are buried here, David sent offerings to the elders of Hebron when he stayed in Ziklag (1 Sam 30:31), he was crowned in the city (2 Sam 2:3–4), Avner ben Ner was murdered there (2 Sam 3:27), and Absalom crowned himself there (2 Sam 15:10). All of these traditions predate the era of Solomon. It is noteworthy that Hebron is not mentioned at all in the Books of Kings and seems to have lost its importance once Jerusalem became the capital of the kingdom. The only evidence of the administrative importance of

Hebron in the 8th century BCE is the appearance of the city's name on the royal (*Lmlk*) Judean storage jars. It can only be hoped that further excavation at this key site will clarify the history of Hebron in the early Iron Age.

#### 4.2. The 10th Century BCE

Toward the very end of the 11th or the very beginning of the 10th century BCE, David left Hebron and established Jerusalem as his capital city. This was the time when a fortified city was built at Khirbet Qeiyafa. Following the Central Place Theory, Jerusalem, Hebron, and Khirbet Qeiyafa were the three major urban centers of the kingdom, since Khirbet Qeiyafa is located one day's walk from both Jerusalem and Hebron, the two major centers in the hill country. Khirbet Qeiyafa marks the western border of the kingdom, being located opposite Tell es-Safi (biblical Gath). It is hardly surprising that the biblical tradition places the battle of David with Goliath in the Valley of Elah, immediately below the site.

Khirbet Qeiyafa was destroyed shortly after it was constructed, probably by the nearby Philistine city of Gath, located just 12 km west of Khirbet Qeiyafa. The Bible describes numerous border disputes in the vicinity of the Elah Valley at precisely this time. It is no coincidence that Khirbet Qeiyafa, located as it was on the border opposite Gath, was destroyed a short time after its establishment.

How did the Kingdom of Judah react to the destruction of Khirbet Qeiyafa and how was the settlement system reorganized? This is where the data from the excavations at nearby Beth-Shemesh comes in. In the analysis of Shiloh (1978), there was an earlier and smaller Iron Age fortified city at the site, with a casemate city wall and houses abutting the wall and incorporating the casemate spaces as their back room. Beth-Shemesh apparently replaced Khirbet Qeiyafa during the second half of the 10th century BCE.

The pottery types that are typical of Khirbet Qeiyafa also appear at more southerly sites, such as Khirbet al-Ra'i, Beersheba Stratum VII, and Arad Stratum XII. At the time these sites were small, unfortified villages, and Lachish was not yet settled. Hence, at the beginning of the 10th century BCE the Kingdom of Judah had a limited urban core consisting of a few small fortified cities.

#### 4.3. The Very End of the 10th and the First Half of the 9th Centuries BCE

Toward the end of the 10th century BCE the Kingdom of Judah expanded into the southern Shephelah and reached the site of Lachish. The settlement layers of this period yielded pottery vessels that are typologically later than those of Khirbet Qeiyafa and Khirbet al-Ra'i and in many cases bear red slip with irregular

hand burnish. The excavations at Tel Zayit, 8 km north of Lachish, uncovered a limestone bowl incised with letters in the Phoenician/Hebrew script dated to the Iron Age IIA (Tappy 2006); this script replaced the earlier Canaanite script known from Khirbet Qeiyafa and Beth-Shemesh. Geographically, the expansion to Lachish corresponds with the biblical list of cities constructed by King Rehoboam (2 Chr 11:5–12), indicating that the list does indeed preserve a historical memory of the late 10th century BCE and making redundant the proposals to relate the list to other kings (Fritz 1981; Na'aman 1986). The geographical distribution of the cities in the list fits well with the expansion of the Kingdom of Judah from three urban centers located within one day's walking distance from one another to four urban centers located up to two days' walking distance from Jerusalem.

The next step was the expansion of the Kingdom of Judah into the Beersheba Valley and the building of fortified sites in Arad and Beersheba. This interesting topic is beyond the scope of this study, but I accept the proposal of Herzog and Singer-Avitz (2004), who place this process in the second half of the 9th century BCE. Their methodological error was to attempt to date the construction of the northern centers on the basis of the data from the kingdom's far southern periphery (see Garfinkel and Kang 2011; Kang 2015).

The overwhelming Assyrian and Babylonian destruction levels of 701 BCE and 586 BCE in Judah have up to now overshadowed the previous peaceful centuries. This situation has now changed, thanks to our regional project in the Judean Shephelah. The new data, especially the substantial destruction level of Khirbet Qeiyafa and the remains of Level V uncovered at Lachish, have direct implications not only for the archaeological record but also for reassessing the quantity and quality of historical information preserved in the biblical traditions about the 10th century BCE:

1. The existence of a fortified Judean city at Khirbet Qeiyafa, which displays the urban planning typical of other cities in the Judean kingdom, indicates that a centralized state was formed as early as the end of the 11th century BCE, in the days of David. The state's western border was in the Elah Valley, opposite the major Philistine city of Gath.
2. The elaborate royal construction style typical of the Iron Age in the Levant, which includes wooden beams organized in groups of three (triglyphs) and recessed frames around doorways, was known in the Kingdom of Judah in the early 10th century BCE. According to the Bible, Solomon's palace and temple were built in this architectural style.

3. The fortification of Lachish toward the end of the 10th century BCE corresponds to the biblical account of Rehoboam's fortifications.

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