

Early City Planning in the Kingdom of Judah: Khirbet Qeiyafa, Beth Shemesh 4, Tell en-Naşbeh, Khirbet ed-Dawwara, and Lachish V

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Abstract

The earliest fortified sites in the kingdom of Judah in the early 10th century BCE feature a casemate city wall lined with an abutting belt of houses, which incorporate the casemates as rear rooms. This urban plan is clearly recognized in the sites of Khirbet Qeiyafa, Tell en-Naşbeh, Khirbet ed-Dawwara, and, as discussed in detail, Beth Shemesh. Recently, excavations at Lachish, Level V, uncovered a similar pattern comprising a peripheral belt of structures abutting the city wall. This city wall was solid with no casemates. These sites have far-reaching implications for understanding the urbanization process, urban planning, and borders of the earliest phase of the kingdom of Judah.

Keywords: casemate city wall, fortifications.

1. Introduction

The Shephelah (shefela) region, southwest of Jerusalem, was the kingdom of Judah's most favorable ecological zone. In the Judean and Hebron hills, which constituted the kingdom's geographical core, the slopes are steep, and the landscape's suitability for agriculture is limited. To the east and south, the arid



and hilly Judean and Negev deserts can support a pastoral economy but not large-scale agriculture. Hence, the Shephelah, with its low rolling topography, fertile soil, and comparatively substantial annual precipitation, is the only part of the kingdom where large-scale agriculture was possible, constituting it as the domain's bread basket and the sole part of which that could support a large population. Therefore, the kingdom's takeover of the Shephelah and its agricultural resources was an important stage in its development.

The kingdom's expansion in the hill country and, from there, further south and west has been the subject of several discussions in the last decade, most of which sought to defend the claim that this process took place only in the late 9th or 8th century BCE (e.g., Na'aman 2013; Faust 2013; Sergi 2013; Lehmann and Niemann 2014). However, since these articles' publication, new data have been uncovered, suggesting that the kingdom had begun expanding in the hill country and the northern Shephelah as early as the 10th century BCE and that it expanded into the southern Shephelah about two generations later.

In this paper, I examine the kingdom of Judah's early urbanization as manifested in its known fortified settlements, five sites altogether. Three are located in the Shephelah—Khirbet Qeiyafa, Beth Shemesh, and Lachish—and two are located in the hill country: Tell en-Nasbeh and Khirbet ed-Dawwara (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. The kingdom of Judah and Philistia and the sites mentioned in the text.

2. Khirbet Qeiyafa IV

Khirbet Qeiyafa IV was a 2.3-ha fortified city. It was located on a prominent hill overlooking the Valley of Elah, between the sites of Socoh and Azeka, and about a day's walk from Jerusalem. The city was destroyed shortly after its construction. In the excavated structures, hundreds of well-preserved finds were recovered, including pottery, stone tools, metal tools, ritual objects, scarabs and seals, inscriptions, botanical remains, and animal bones.

We excavated the site in 2007–2013. The shallow accumulations allowed us to uncover a considerable part of the city (ca. 20%), including two gates, two piazzas, a casemate city wall, a peripheral belt of buildings abutting the city wall, a large pillared building (Area F), and a major public building occupying the highest point of the site (Area A) (Fig. 2). While the excavation results have been published in detail (Garfinkel and Ganor 2009; Garfinkel, Ganor, and Hasel 2014; Keimer, Kreimerman, and Garfinkel 2015; Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg 2016), three points are worth rehearsing. Firstly, the casemates are oriented away from the gates (Fig. 3). Secondly, a peripheral belt of buildings abuts the city wall and incorporates the casemates as rear rooms. Thirdly, two inscriptions in (proto-) Canaanite script were recovered (Misgav, Garfinkel, and Ganor 2009; Garfinkel et al. 2015a). Carbon-14 dates assign the fortified city to the first quarter of the 10th century BCE (Table 1; Fig. 4; Garfinkel et al. 2012; Garfinkel et al. 2015b).

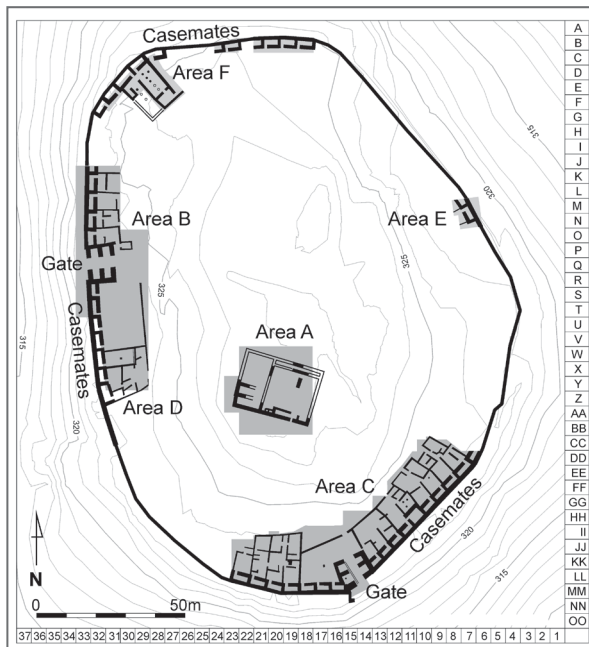


Fig. 2. Khirbet Qeiyafa IV, a plan of the Iron Age fortified city.

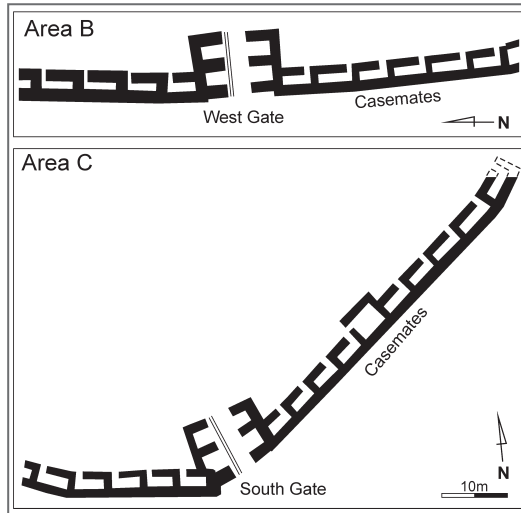


Fig. 3. Khirbet Qeiyafa IV, a schematic plan of the gates and the adjacent city wall; note that the casemates' openings are oriented away from the gate.

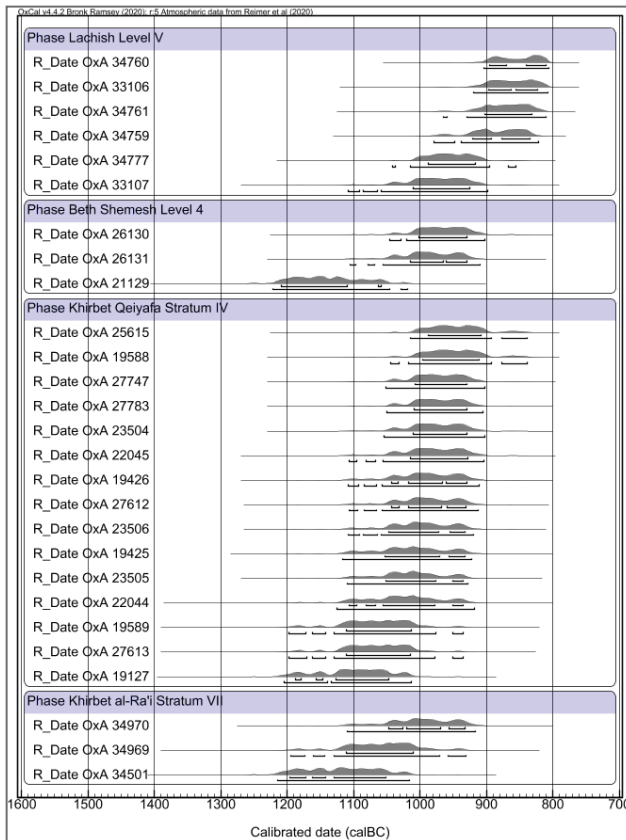


Fig. 4. Radiometric dates from Khirbet Qeiyafa IV, Khirbet al-Ra'i VII, Beth Shemesh 4, and Lachish V (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2016; Garfinkel et al. 2019).

Table 1. Radiometric dates from Khirbet Qeiyafa IV, Khirbet al-Ra'i VII, Beth Shemesh 4, and Lachish V.

Lab Reference	Date	68.2% range (BCE)	95.4% range (BCE)	$\delta^{13}C$	Material	Reference
<i>Lachish V</i>						
OxA 34760	2701±28	894–814	904–807	-21.89	Olive pit	Garfinkel et al. 2019
OxA 33106	2717±32	896–831	919–809	-19.4	Olive pit	Garfinkel et al. 2019
OxA 34761	2734±30	903–839	968–814	-21.08	Olive pit	Garfinkel et al. 2019
OxA 34759	2753±27	920–844	975–827	-21.21	Cereal grain	Garfinkel et al. 2019
OxA 34777	2801±24	993–917	1016–896	-23.51	Olive pit	Garfinkel et al. 2019
OxA 33107	2822±33	1011–926	1086–898	-19.5	Olive pit	Garfinkel et al. 2019
<i>Beth Shemesh 4</i>						
OxA 26130	2817±25	1002–969 963–931	1041–906	-21.92	Olive pit	Bunimovitz and Lederman 2016
OxA 26131	2835±25	1019–970 961–933	1056–912	-19.12	Olive pit	Bunimovitz and Lederman 2016
OxA 21129	2935±26	1212–1162	1261–1047	-21.0	Olive pit	Bunimovitz and Lederman 2016
<i>Khirbet Qeiyafa IV</i>						
OxA-25615	2796±29	993–910	1016–847	-20.29	Olive pit	Garfinkel et al. 2019
OxA-19588	2799±31	996–914	1027–846	-19.55	Olive pit	Garfinkel et al. 2019
OxA-27747	2823±27	1007–931	1048–909	-20.08	Olive pit	Garfinkel et al. 2019
OxA-27783	2825±26	1009–932	1048–912	-21.81	Olive pit	Garfinkel et al. 2019
OxA-23504	2827±27	1011–931	1052–909	-23.05	Grape seed	Garfinkel et al. 2019
OxA-22045	2830±30	1016–929	1083–906	-22.59	Olive pit	Garfinkel et al. 2019
OxA-19426	2837±29	1026–933	1107–914	-21.99	Olive pit	Garfinkel et al. 2019
OxA-27612	2838±27	1026–935	1085–915	-20.53	Olive pit	Garfinkel et al. 2019
OxA-23506	2843±26	1041–941	1107–921	-20.05	Olive pit	Garfinkel et al. 2019
OxA-19425	2851±31	1054–939	1112–927	-20.64	Olive pit	Garfinkel et al. 2019
OxA-23505	2852±26	1051–945	1111–929	-20.91	Olive pit	Garfinkel et al. 2019
OxA-22044	2858±33	1082–944	1121–923	-22.55	Olive pit	Garfinkel et al. 2019
OxA-19589	2883±29	1110–1015	1192–944	-22.23	Olive pit	Garfinkel et al. 2019
OxA-27613	2884±28	1110–1016	1192–946	-21.82	Olive pit	Garfinkel et al. 2019
OxA-19127	2910±26	1188–1046	1207–1014	-19.70	Olive pit	Garfinkel et al. 2019
<i>Khirbet al-Ra'i VII</i>						
OxA-34970	2842±30	1046–937	1109–919	-22.69	Legume	Garfinkel et al. 2019
OxA-34969	2878±30	1110–1010	1192–937	-21.02	Legume	Garfinkel et al. 2019
OxA-34501	2922±30	1192–1054	1213–1022	-21.45	Legume	Garfinkel et al. 2019

The excavation of Khirbet Qeiyafa prompted an animated debate on whether this site should be assigned to the late Iron Age I or the early Iron Age IIA (Singer-Avitz 2010; 2012; Garfinkel and Kang 2011; Kang 2015). The pottery supports an early Iron Age IIA attribution. It includes black juglets (Cohen-Weinberger and Panitz-Cohen 2014) and Cypriot black-on-white ware, barrel-shaped juglets (Gilboa 2012; Gilboa and Waiman-Barak 2014) but lacks Philistine pottery typical of the Iron Age I (Kang and Garfinkel 2018). Furthermore, a detailed analysis of the site's pottery assemblage suggests close parallels with other early Iron Age IIA sites in the region, including Tel Sheva VIII, Arad XII, Beth Shemesh 4, Khirbet ed-Dawwara, and Khirbet al-Ra'i (Kang and Garfinkel 2018; Thomas, Keimer, and Garfinkel 2021).

The site's expedition conducted a comparative analysis of Khirbet Qeiyafa's material culture against the various ethnic entities in the region: Philistine, Judahite, Canaanite, and Israelite. The various aspects analyzed included urban planning, faunal assemblage compositions, stamped jar handles, and female clay figurines. The observed patterns indicate that Khirbet Qeiyafa's material culture is closest to that of sites in Judah, like Tel Sheva VII and Arad XII (Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg 2016: 173–187; Garfinkel 2017a; 2017b).

3. Beth Shemesh 4

The site of Beth Shemesh is located in the northern Shephelah, roughly a day's walk from Jerusalem. It has been extensively excavated since 1911. The first expedition worked in 1911–1912 (Mackenzie 1912–1913; Mackenzie et al. 2015). A second large-scale excavation project at the site was conducted in 1928–1933 (Grant 1931–1932; Grant and Wright 1939). It recognized that the early Iron Age II (Stratum IIA) city was enclosed by a casemate wall. A photograph of this city wall depicts two casemates built of massive stones, as would be expected for a city's fortification (Fig. 5; Grant and Wright 1938: Pl. V:1). The excavation report pointed out this wall's similarity to the well-known casemate city wall found at Tel Beit Mirsim (Grant and Wright 1939: 24). The existence of a casemate city wall in early Iron Age II Beth Shemesh was accepted by numerous notable scholars (e.g., Avigad 1954: 113–114, 117; Albright 1960: 122; Wright 1970: 80).



Fig. 5. Beth Shemesh, a photograph of two casemates (after Grant and Wright 1938: Pl. V:1).

Shiloh (1978: 40, Fig. 4) studied the layout and fortifications of Beth Shemesh. Although faced with plans that lumped together several Iron Age phases, he managed to produce a convincing blueprint of a segment of the casemate city wall and abutting houses. Indeed, close observation of the plan published for the Iron Age cities of Beth Shemesh reveals a rounded arrangement of houses in an orientation different from the other buildings and fortifications of the later cities (Fig. 6; Grant and Wright 1939). Striving to distinguish the early level from the otherwise undifferentiated plan, we may observe three principal components: a casemate city wall, a belt of houses that abut the city wall, and a peripheral road.

From 1990 until recently, Bunimovitz and Lederman (2001; 2006; 2009; 2011; 2016) led a third excavation project at Beth Shemesh. These excavations have significantly refined the site's stratigraphy and provided a new numerical system for its historical sequence (Table 2). This sequence comprises a Late Bronze Age Canaanite city (Levels 8–7), an Iron Age I Canaanite village (Levels 6–4), an Iron Age IIA–B city affiliated with the Kingdom of Judah (Levels 3–2), and, finally, an Iron Age IIC horizon of ephemeral activities (Level 1). This expedition overlooked the casemate city wall addressed by Grant, Avigad, Albright, Wright, and Shiloh.

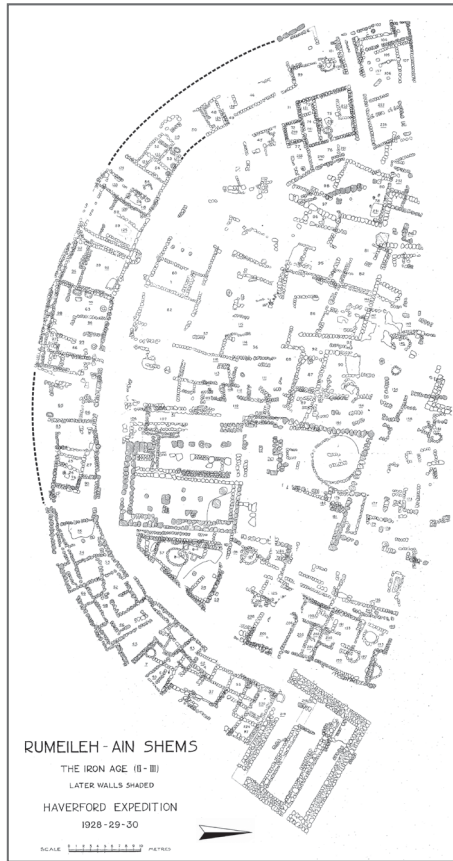


Fig. 6. Beth Shemesh, the urban layout of the early Iron Age II remains from Grant’s plan (see Grant and Wright 1939).

Table 2. The settlement history of Tel Beth Shemesh, with the stratum numbers assigned by Grant’s expedition and the more refined stratigraphy of the current expedition.

Grant	Bunimovitz and Lederman	Description
I	1	Ends by 586 BCE; comprises an industrial zone on the eastern side of the site
IIB	2	780–701 BCE, a fortified city destroyed by Sennacherib
	3	9th century BCE, a fortified city of the kingdom of Judah
IIA	4	10th century BCE, a fortified city of the kingdom of Judah
III	5	11th century BCE, a Canaanite village
	6	12th–early 11th century BCE, a Canaanite village
IV	7	13th century BCE, a Canaanite city
	8	14th century BCE, a Canaanite city

Bunimovitz and Lederman's expedition understands Level 4 (Grant's Stratum IIA) as a Canaanite village, which continues the simple social organization of the Iron Age I. They dated this village to 1050–950 BCE and assigned it to the late Iron Age I (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2009: 116; 2016: 678). However, in their concluding remarks, they stated that "the Level 4 assemblage gives the impression of a pottery horizon belonging to the very end of Iron I—beginning of Iron II" (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2016: 213). Indeed, notwithstanding some differences—e.g., the absence of black juglets and Ashdod ware—the Beth Shemesh 4 pottery assemblage is almost identical to the early Iron Age IIA Judahite Khirbet Qeiyafa assemblage (Lederman and Bunimovitz 2014; Kang and Garfinkel 2018; Bunimovitz et al. 2019). Furthermore, the slight difference observed may be accounted for by the difference in scales of exposure: While ca. 5,000 m² of Khirbet Qeiyafa were uncovered, only ca. 100 m² of Beth Shemesh 4 were excavated (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2016: Figs. 6.26, 6.31).

Bunimovitz and Lederman's Level 3 (Grant's Stratum IIB) marked a major change in the site's layout, manifesting features of state organization: large public buildings, an impressive underground rock-cut water reservoir, a commercial area, a storehouse, and an enormous grain silo (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2009: 127–136; 2016). It was dated to 950–790 BCE on historical grounds (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2009: 116; 2016). However, its proposed foundation in the 10th century BCE was heavily criticized for being based on two sherds from a fill and should probably be pushed back (Finkelstein 2002: 121–122).

Notably, the radiometric dates are not wholly consistent with the expedition's chronological framework. They provide lower determinations for most levels (Boaretto, Sharon, and Gilboa 2016), and experts called the statistical analysis underlying them into question, especially regarding Level 4 (Boaretto, Sharon, and Gilboa 2016: 685; Piasecki 2016). According to these critical accounts, the Beth Shemesh 4 carbon dates fall in the middle of the 10th century BCE.

Why did Bunimovitz and Lederman fail to recognize the urban character of Level 4? Most likely, this is because they did not excavate the Level 4 casemate wall. The spatial distribution of the excavation areas dictates, to a large extent, the understanding of the nature of Level 4. A similar issue arose regarding the site's 7th-century BCE phase. Bunimovitz and Lederman thought the site to be mostly abandoned at this time because their fieldwork concentrated on the western side of the site and missed the intensive Level 1 activities east of the mound (Haddad, Ben-Ari, and De Groot 2020; Govrin and Singer-Avitz 2022).

4. Tell en-Naṣbeh

Tell en-Naṣbeh is located about half a day's walk from Jerusalem. Badè excavated the entire site in five seasons between 1926 and 1935. The final report was published some ten years later (McCown 1947), and Zorn (1993) provided an updated analysis of the site. Among other remains, two Iron Age II cities were uncovered. The earlier city was encircled by a casemate wall, which was lined by a belt of houses incorporating the casemates as rear rooms; on the other end, these houses opened onto a peripheral road. Additional constructions were found inside the city (Fig. 7). About two centuries later, sometimes in the late 9th century BCE, a second fortification system was constructed. It encircled a larger city and consisted of a massive solid offset-inset city wall dubbed *the Great Wall* (McClellan 1984; Herzog 1997: Fig. 5:26; Zorn 1997; Katz 1998; Finkelstein 2012). The dating of these two cities is not supported by radiometric dates. However, based on stratigraphic considerations and plan, it seems that the earlier city with its casemate city wall was built during the early 10th century BCE (Sergi 2017: 10).



Fig. 7. Tell en-Naṣbeh, the Iron Age cities. The earlier city was encircled with a casemate wall, whereas the later city was larger and encircled with a solid wall (after Herzog 1997: Fig. 5:26).

5. Khirbet ed-Dawwara

Khirbet ed-Dawwara is a small fortified site, only 0.5 ha in size. It is located on the desert fringe of the Benjaminite hill country, about half a day's walk from Jerusalem. The arid environmental conditions implicated that the site could not support a large population, but its topographical position provided it with an excellent view in every direction, especially of the Dead Sea and the Transjordanian plateau to the east and the Judean desert to the east and south. Undoubtedly, it was strategically significant.

Finkelstein (1990) conducted two seasons of excavations at the site in 1985–1986. He found a poorly preserved, short-lived site built on bedrock and featuring shallow accumulations. It comprised a single phase of settlement with remnants of four-room houses and a casemate fortification (Fig. 8; Finkelstein 1990: Fig. 22).

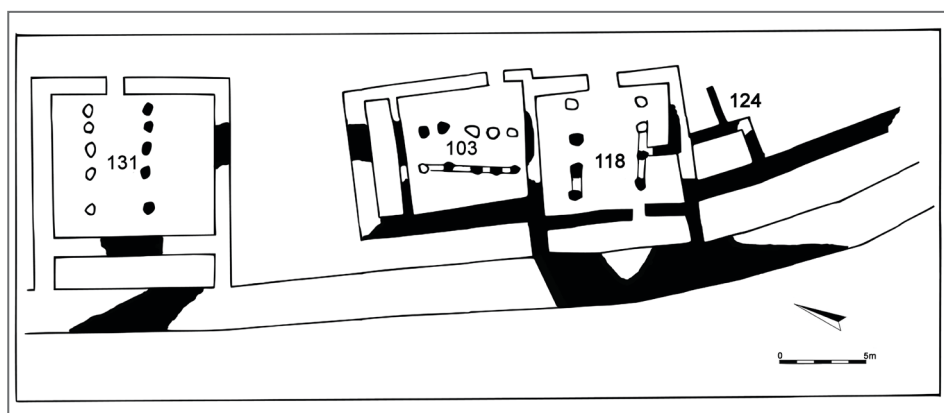


Fig. 8. Khirbet ed-Dawwara, a reconstruction of a segment of the casemate city wall and houses abutting it (after Finkelstein 1990: Fig. 22).

The excavator suggested that the site was occupied for two centuries and discussed it within the chronological and cultural framework of the Iron Age I. However, it featured pottery vessels (Finkelstein 1990: Figs.13–19) similar to those of Khirbet Qeiyafa (Kang and Garfinkel 2018), suggesting that the site might be more suitably dated to the early 10th century BCE and the Iron Age IIA.

6. Lachish

Tel Lachish is located in the southern Shephelah, approximately two days' walking distance from Jerusalem. The site has been extensively excavated by seven different expeditions from 1932 until today. The earliest Iron Age fortification identified by the first and third expeditions was a 6 m-wide brick construction that encircled

the entire 7.5-ha site and is assigned to Levels IV–III. A wide range of proposals was made concerning the dating of the early Iron Age levels at Lachish: the early 10th century BCE during the time of David and Solomon (Tufnell 1953), the late 10th century BCE during the time of Rehoboam (Aharoni 1975; Yadin 1980), the early–mid-9th century BCE (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001; Ussishkin 2004; 2015; Na’aman 2013; Katz and Faust 2014), and sometime after the destruction of the large Philistine city of Gath, Tell es-Safi (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2011: 42–43; Niemann 2011; Sergi 2013; Lehmann and Niemann 2014). None of these proposals were based on radiometric dates. A recent field project conducted in 2013–2017 sought to resolve this controversy (Garfinkel, Hasel, and Klingbeil 2013) by closely exploring the city’s fortifications on the northern slope (Fig. 9). A previously unknown 3 m-wide city wall built of medium-sized stones was uncovered (Kang 2016; Garfinkel et al. 2019). In Area CC, a drainage channel for runoff water was recorded (Fig. 10), and in Area BC, where the wall is poorly preserved, pillar buildings abutted its inner face (Fig. 11). The subsequent mudbrick city wall of Levels IV–III was built on top of these buildings, putting them out of use.

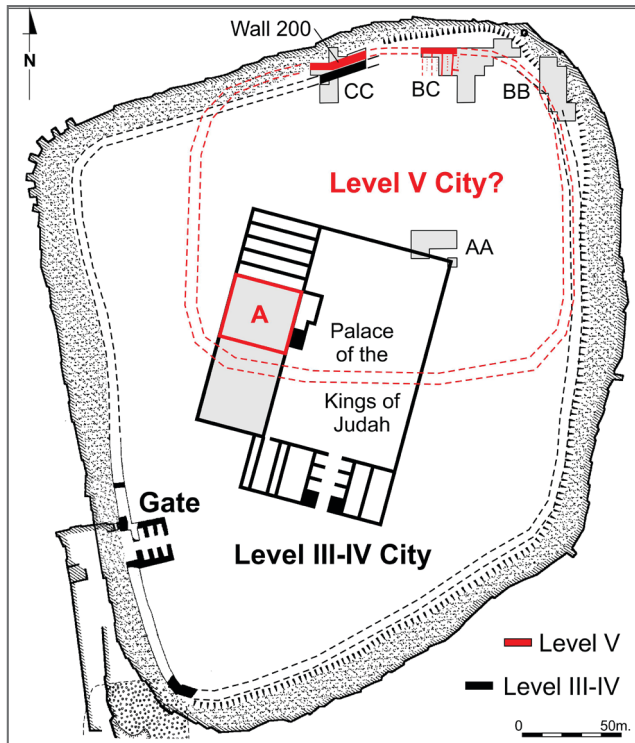


Fig. 9. Tel Lachish with the location of the excavation areas and the estimated outline of the Level V city.



Fig. 10. Lachish, Area CC, the previously unknown city wall, looking south (photo: Emil Aladjem).

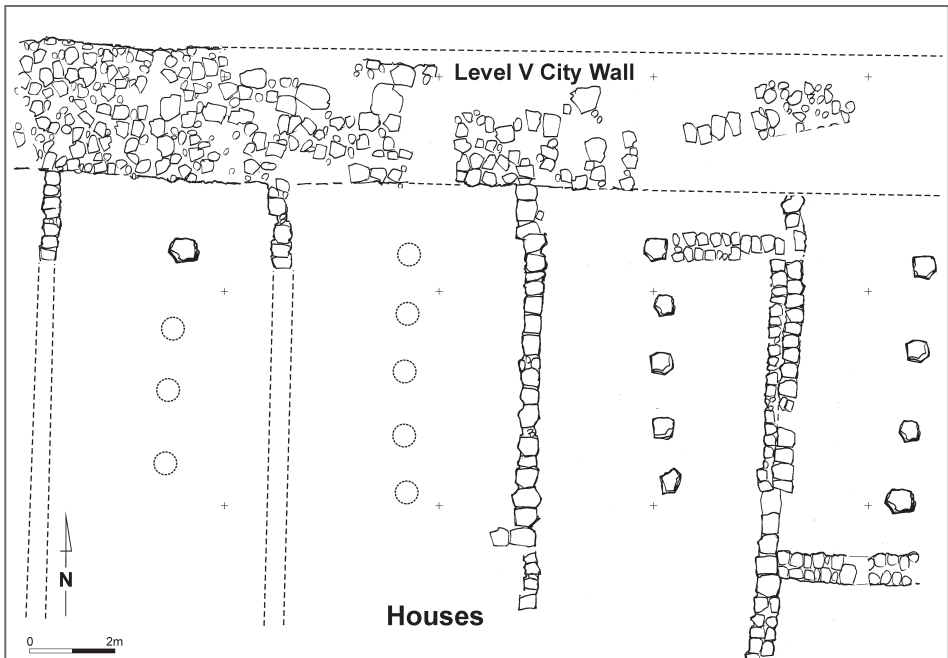


Fig. 11. Lachish, Area BC, a plan of the eastern segment of the Level V city wall abutted from the inside by typical Judean pillar houses.

The floor running up to the city wall in Area CC produced olive pits for radiometric dating. Stratigraphically, this floor was located above the last Canaanite city of Level VI and below the mudbrick city wall of Levels IV–III. Its ceramic assemblage included red-slipped and irregularly hand-burnished sherds. The radiometric dates, most of which represent the last years of Level V, cover the second half of the 10th century BCE and the first half of the 9th century BCE (Table 1; Garfinkel et al. 2019).

These results were challenged by Ussishkin, the site's former excavator. He argued that the recently uncovered wall was a revetment of the Level IV–III city wall, not a city wall proper (Ussishkin 2019; Finkelstein 2020). However, as discussed elsewhere (Kang and Garfinkel 2021; Kang, Chang, and Garfinkel 2023), this claim disregards some critical factors and cannot be accepted.

7. Early Iron Age Fortifications in the Kingdom of Judah

In 1978, Shiloh recognized a particular plan that characterized early Iron Age cities. It consisted of a peripheral belt with three components: a casemate city wall, residential houses abutting the city wall, and a street. This urban pattern has been observed in at least four early 10th-century BCE sites: Khirbet Qeiyafa, Beth Shemesh, Tell en-Naşbeh, and Khirbet ed-Dawwara. As Khirbet ed-Dawwara was built in an arid zone that could not support a large population, it comprised a smaller settlement. In addition, Tel Sheva and Tel Beit Mirsim applied the same urban plan in the 8th century BCE.

The accumulation of data supports a tripartite division of the Iron Age IIA (Table 3; Garfinkel 2011; Katz and Faust 2014; Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg 2016: 204):

1. *The early Iron Age IIA* (ca. 1000–930 BCE) is characterized by the low quantities of red-slipped and irregularly hand-burnished pottery decoration, Cypriot white-painted vessels, early Ashdod Ware, and archaic (Canaanite) script. Khirbet Qeiyafa IV, Khirbet al-Ra'i, Khirbet ed-Dawwara, Beth Shemesh 4, Arad XII, and Tel Sheva VII are dated to this phase.
2. *The middle Iron Age IIA* (ac. 930–860 BCE) is characterized by abundant irregularly and geometrically hand-burnished bowls, Cypriot black-on-red vessels, and early Phoenician-Hebrew script. Beth Shemesh 3 and Lachish V are assigned to this phase.
3. *The late Iron Age IIA* (ca. 860–800 BCE) is characterized by red-slipped pottery, irregularly hand-burnished ceramics, and late Ashdod Ware. Tell eš-Şafi IV, Lachish IV, and Beth Shemesh 3 belong to this phase.

The available radiometric dates for early Iron Age IIA come from Khirbet al-Ra'i VII, Khirbet Qeiyafa IV, and Beth Shemesh 4. Tenth-century BCE radiometric dates have also been produced for Tel 'Eton, but the nature of the architecture and pottery assemblage associated with them is still unclear (Faust and Sapir 2018; Faust 2020). The dates for the middle and Iron Age IIA derive from Lachish V–IV.

Table 3. The settlement sequence in the sites mentioned in the text. Empty cells represent settlement gaps.

Period	Khirbet Qeiyafa	Beth Shemesh	Tell en-Naşbeh	Khirbet ed-Dawwara	Lachish	Khirbet al-Ra'i
Iron Age IIC (end 586 BC)	Area W*	1	The Great Wall		II	V
Iron Age IIB (end 701 BC)		2			III	VI
Iron Age IIA (late)		3	Casemate city wall		IV	
Iron Age IIA (middle)					V	
Iron Age IIA (early)	IV	4		Fortified site		VII
Iron Age I		6–5				IX–VIII

* Area W is located ca. 150 m west of the fortified Iron Age IIA city (Weiss, Ganor, and Garfinkel 2017)

Most of the dates produce an orderly chronological sequence. Khirbet al-Ra'i VII is the earliest, followed by Khirbet Qeiyafa IV, and Beth Shemesh 4 (Fig. 4). Although all of these sites produced a few earlier radiometric dates falling in the early–mid-11th century BCE, they did not include Iron Age I Philistine pottery typical of this time. Therefore, Khirbet al-Ra'i VII, Khirbet Qeiyafa IV, and Beth Shemesh 4 ought to be assigned to the 10th century BCE. The radiometric dates from Lachish V are the latest in the sequence, falling in the second half of the 10th century BCE and the first half of the 9th century BCE.

Above, I reviewed some patterns characteristic of the two earliest phases in the development of the kingdom of Judah. Here, I offer a summary and some conclusions. During the early Iron Age IIA, the kingdom of Judah encompassed at least three cities: Khirbet Qeiyafa, Beth Shemesh, and Tell en-Naşbeh. They featured the same underlying urban plan comprised of an outer casemate city wall and a belt of houses abutting the casemates, on the one side, and facing a peripheral road, on the other. Furthermore, none was more than a day's walk from Jerusalem and, thus, may be considered as marking the kingdom's geographical core. They were calculably positioned to guard strategic roads leading into the kingdom: Khirbet Qeiyafa controlled the Elah Valley, Beth Shemesh controlled the Soreq Valley, and Tell en-Naşbeh controlled the northern road to Jerusalem.

As Beth Shemesh 4 and Khirbet Qeiyafa feature the same material culture, they illuminate various aspects of the earliest phase of the Iron Age IIA in Judah. Particularly notable are the (proto-)Canaanite inscriptions found in both sites (Grant 1931–1932: Pl. X; Misgav, Garfinkel, and Ganor 2009; McCarter, Bunimovitz, and Lederman 2011; Garfinkel et al. 2015a). The spread of writing indicated by these inscriptions is a sign of increasing demand for communication and a marker of centralized authority.

In the middle Iron Age IIA, a fortified city was founded at Lachish (Level V), occupying only the northeastern side of the mound. Unlike the earlier cities mentioned above, Lachish's city wall was solid, reflecting its importance as a regional center as early as the second half of the 10th century BCE.

Some scholars have argued that the kingdom of Judah's expansion into the Shephelah occurred in the mid- or late 9th century BCE (Na'aman 2013; Sergi 2013; Lehmann and Niemann 2013). However, Khirbet Qeiyafa IV and Beth Shemesh 4 show that this process was already on its way in the early 10th century BCE at sites located one day's walk from Jerusalem. Along with the casemate-walled city of Tell en-Naşbeh, these sites mark the earliest borders of the kingdom of Judah. Towards the end of the 10th century BCE, the kingdom expanded its territory to a two-day walking distance from Jerusalem, primarily manifested by Lachish Level V.

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