

The Beth Shean Valley and its Vicinity in the 10th Century BCE

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Abstract

This article brings together results of archaeological explorations related to the 10th century BCE in the Beth Shean Valley, with emphasis on the excavations at Tel Beth Shean and Tel Reḥov. The evidence is evaluated in light of two transitions that occurred during this century: from the Iron Age I to the early Iron Age IIA and from the early Iron Age IIA to the late Iron Age IIA. These transitions and their dates are well documented by stratigraphic sequences, pottery development, and ¹⁴C dates, the latter mainly at Tel Reḥov. Stratum VI at Tel Reḥov is at the focus of this discussion since it is one of the few cases where the early Iron Age IIA could be isolated and documented, showing continuity of urban life in that period, with no actual crisis at the end of the Iron Age I. This is in contrast to the situation at many other sites such as Tel Beth Shean, Megiddo, Yoqne’am, and Tel Kinneret, where a crisis at the end of the Iron Age I followed by decline or occupational gaps and slow revival in the late 10th century were observed. The article deals with various aspects of the material culture of this period and addresses questions relating to ethnic and geopolitical identity, as well as to the biblical narrative concerning the alleged United Monarchy and the Shoshenq List.

KEYWORDS: Israel, archaeology, Iron Age, Beth Shean Valley, Tel Beth Shean, Tel Reḥov, biblical history, United Monarchy, Shoshenq I

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1. Introduction

In a simplistic reading of the term “10th century BCE,” one might take it to refer to the one hundred years between 1000 and 900 BCE. Yet this time frame, determined by the Christian calendar, means little in terms of cultural history, since these hundred years include two transitions between three archaeological sub-periods (Iron Age I, early Iron Age IIA, and late Iron Age IIA), although the precise dates of these transitions remain debated. In the present paper, I will present the evidence for these transitions in two major sites in the Beth Shean Valley: Tel Beth Shean and Tel Reḥov (Figs. 1–3). I will refer briefly to other sites in the region and raise questions relating to the interpretation of the archaeological evidence in light of textual sources and a wider view of the geopolitical and social situation in the southern Levant during this timeframe.

2. Terminology and Chronology

The term “Iron Age IIA” has been used in different ways in the archaeology of Israel. G.E. Wright (1961: 97–99) and many of his followers used it to describe the period between 900 and 730/700 BCE; in this system, the 10th century BCE was denoted “Iron Age IC.” In Israeli scholarship the term has been used to denote the time of the United Monarchy, namely the 10th century BCE alone (e.g., Aharoni 1979, first published in Hebrew in 1963 and in subsequent editions; Mazar 1990: 30; Stern 1993: 1529). Israel Finkelstein (1996) suggested the lowering of the Iron Age I/IIA transition to the late 10th century BCE and dated the entire Iron Age IIA to the 9th century BCE; this “low chronology” was based on his interpretation of the political and cultural history of the period. In 2003–2005 I suggested a “modified chronology,” on the one hand accepting the extension of the Iron Age IIA into the 9th century BCE (based on finds from Jezreel and ^{14}C dates from Tel Reḥov and several other sites), while on the other hand claiming that the Iron Age IIA started deep in the 10th century BCE. Zeev Herzog and Lili Singer-Avitz (2004, 2006, 2011) accepted this chronological framework but went one step further by suggesting a formal division of the Iron Age IIA into two sub-periods: early Iron Age IIA, which they dated to the 10th century BCE, and late Iron Age IIA, which they dated to the 9th century BCE. In northern Israel, however, this division can be demonstrated at only a few sites (mainly Dor and Tel Reḥov) and it remains extremely problematic at other sites. In particular, the early Iron Age IIA is undetectable at most excavated sites (see below).

A new phase of this research came when Ilan Sharon, Ayelet Gilboa, and



Fig. 1. Map of Iron Age sites in northern Israel and Jordan.

Elisabetta Boaretto (2007) published the results of the first phase of their wide-scale ^{14}C based Iron Age Chronology Project, which supported the low chronology. Nonetheless, a host of studies published since 2008, based on their data and additional ^{14}C dates from Tel Rehov, Megiddo, Khirbet Qeiyafa, and elsewhere (Finkelstein and Piasezky 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011; Mazar and Bronk Ramsey 2008; 2010; Lee, Mazar, and Bronk Ramsey 2013; Tofollo et al. 2014; Garfinkel et al. 2015), have shown that the radiocarbon evidence is complicated and permits

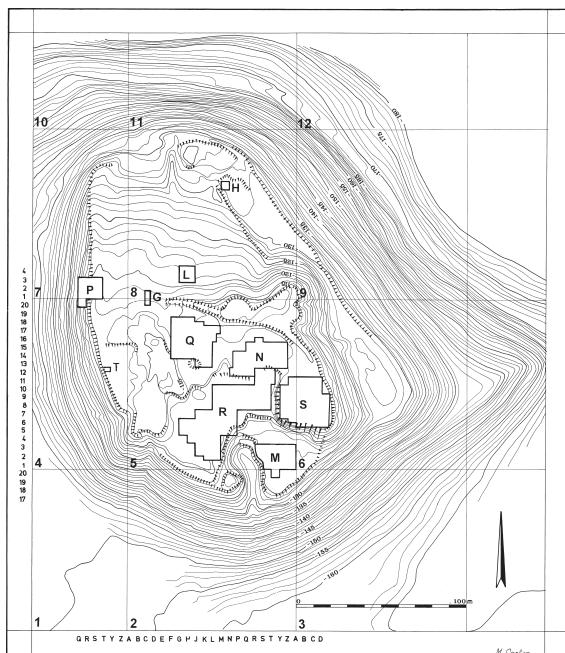


Fig. 2. Topographic map of Tel Beth Shean.

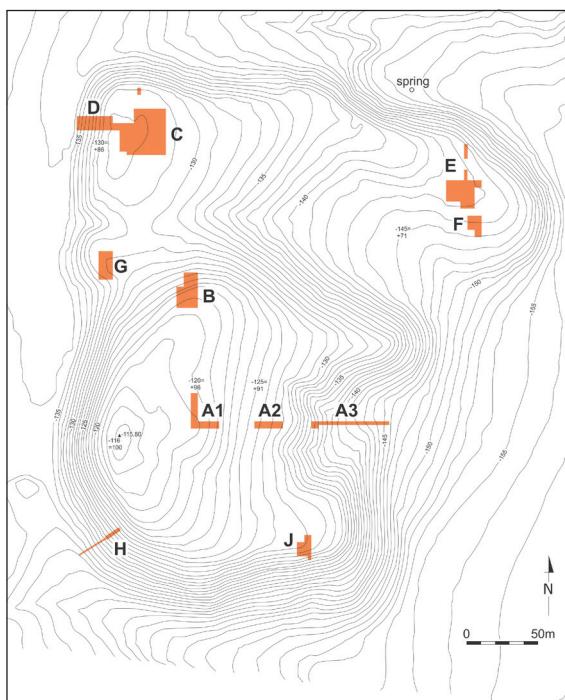


Fig. 3. Topographic map of Tel Reḥov.

different avenues of interpretation. Most important was the recognition that major destruction events at the end of the Iron Age I, like that of Megiddo VIA, must be dated to ca. 1000 BCE or slightly later, and that the transitional Iron Age I/IIA assemblage at Khirbet Qeiyafa points to a similar date. Several Bayesian models included in these studies have indicated a date somewhere in the middle of the 10th century BCE for the Iron Age I/IIA transition.¹ In the latest final report on the Megiddo excavations, Eran Arie dated the foundation of Stratum VB to the mid-10th century BCE, prior to the invasion by Shoshenq I in ca. 920 BCE (Arie 2013: 743). This would in general terms fit in with the results from Tel Reḥov, where the early Iron Age II Stratum VI ended during the last quarter of the 10th century BCE and therefore must have been founded earlier in the 10th century BCE. In any event, placing the Iron Age I/II transition at ca. 900 BCE or even later, in the first half of the 9th century (Gilboa and Sharon 2003), cannot be accepted, as recently stated: “It is by and large agreed that Iron Age II ‘covers’ a still debated portion of the second-half of the 10th century B.C.E. and a large part of the 9th, ending between 830–810 B.C.E.” (Shochat and Gilboa 2019: 378). Hence, all would agree that the Iron Age I/IIA transition took place during the 10th century BCE, though the precise date is still debatable. I suggested the date of ca. 980 BCE for this transition based on ¹⁴C based destruction dates at the end of the Iron Age I at sites like Tell Qasile, Megiddo, Yoqne’am, and others, as well as the dates of the transitional Iron Age I/IIA assemblage at Khirbet Qeiyafa. Others would date this transition to ca. 960–950 BCE, or suggest a longer transitional period that lasted for several decades in the first half or middle of the 10th century BCE.

As for the late Iron Age II A, all agree that it lasted for most of the 9th century BCE, yet the precise dates of its beginning and end are still debated. At Tel Reḥov, the evidence is that the period started before the end of the 10th century BCE (Stratum V) and ended ca. 830 B.C.E. At other sites it may have lasted until the end of the 9th century (e.g., Tell es-Safi = Gath, depending on the historical date of Hazael’s conquest of this city). I thus refer to the Iron Age II A as a period starting sometime during the first half of the 10th century BCE (ca. 980 BCE?) and ending between 830 and 800 BCE.

1. Finkelstein’s suggestion that in certain parts of the country the Iron Age I continued well into the middle or second half of the 10th century BCE was based on ¹⁴C results from Tell el-Hammah, Tel Reḥov, and Tel Hadar, but all three cases are debatable (Mazar 2011: 108, n. 3; 2020a: 132, n. 6).

3. Tel Beth Shean

Following the end of the Egyptian presence at Tel Beth Shean in the second half of the 12th century BCE (Level Lower VI of the Pennsylvania University Museum excavations, Strata S-4 and S-3 in Area S of the Hebrew University excavations), the town was rebuilt in the Iron Age IB. The evidence from Area S Stratum S-2 points to rehabilitation of the former planned quarter in this area and continuity of Canaanite material culture, albeit without the Egyptian traits of the previous period and with new Iron Age IB pottery forms (Mazar 2009: 29–30; Panitz-Cohen and Mazar 2009: 162–184). This stratum is correlated with Late Level VI of the University Museum excavations (James 1966: 19–22), dated by James to a time span immediately after the end of the Egyptian occupation in the second half of the 12th century. This Iron Age IB city may have survived until the end of the period at the beginning of the 10th century BCE. A major question concerning this period is whether the double temple complex excavated by the University Museum expedition belonged to Late Level VI or to the succeeding Level V (see below). Level V of the University Museum expedition belongs to the Iron Age II, but its precise stratigraphy and inner phasing remain elusive (James 1966; Mazar 2006: 29–35; 2009: 10–11, 27–29).

In our excavations in Area S we found that the Iron Age IB city of Stratum S-2 was destroyed, although no thick destruction level was found. It was succeeded by Stratum S-1, which in one place in the western part of the area could be divided into two phases: S-1b and S-1a. Such phases, however, could not be discerned in other parts of Area S. Phase S-1b included a corner of two walls, with a flagstone floor and an oven; the small amount of pottery fits the Iron Age IIA, but it is insufficient to say whether it belongs to the early or late part of this period (Mazar 2006: 174–180, 193, Pls. 6–7). In Phase S-1a parts of three large structures, designated Buildings A, B, and C, were uncovered (Mazar 2006: 180–195). They had wide walls, their foundations made of large basalt boulders, with thick wooden beams above the stones supporting mudbrick superstructures. Although only parts of these structures were preserved, it appears that Buildings A and B were public buildings located on the summit of the mound. Building A is located in a strategic position at the edge of the mound, overlooking the valleys to the east and south. Its plan and the large number of “hippo”-type jars found in one of the rooms hint that this was an administrative building of some sort, probably built by a local or state authority. I have suggested that these structures were part of the well-planned complex assigned to Level V by the University Museum expedition, north of the

Double Temple complex (Fig. 4; James 1966: Fig. 2.2; Mazar 2006: 193, Fig. 7.5). All three buildings were destroyed by severe fire that caused the mudbricks to vitrify or turn into white powder. The pottery found in the destruction layer includes “hippo”-type jars and red-slipped and hand-burnished bowls characteristic of the late Iron Age IIA in this region (Mazar 2006: Pls. 9–14). It resembles the pottery from Tel Reḥov Strata V–IV, Tell el-Hammah, Tel ‘Amal III–IV, Megiddo Strata VB and VA–IVB, and Rosh Zayit Strata 2–3.²

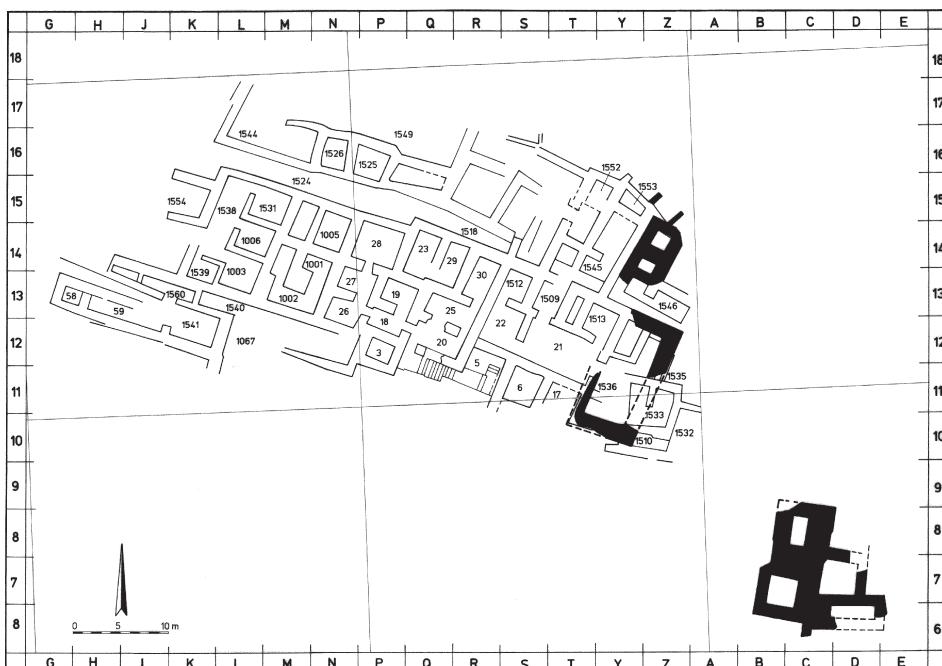


Fig. 4. Combined suggested plan of Tel Beth Shean Stratum S-1a and northern block of Level V.

A major question in connection with this period at Beth Shean is the date of the Double Temple complex and the “monuments courtyard” in front of the Northern Temple, where a group of Egyptian New Kingdom monuments including two stelae of Seti I, one stele of Ramesses II, and a statue of Rameses III were found by the University Museum expedition above the 20th Dynasty temple of Level VI. Francis James attributed these structures to Lower Level V of the Iron Age II and

2. Two ¹⁴C dates of wooden beams used in the foundation of Building A were published. One is in the 13th–12th centuries BCE and must certainly be attributed to old wood, while the other yielded the date of 1050–920 BCE (both at 68.2% probability). The latter may be closer to the construction date, though the old wood effect must be taken into account in this case as well (Carmi Segal and Mazar 2006: 723–725).

more precisely to the 10th century BCE, based on a small group of pottery found on the lower floor of the Northern Temple, including red-slipped and burnished pottery (James 1966: 185, Fig. 3). She stated that such pottery was found in the courtyard in front of the temples as well. However, the nature of excavation in the 1920s and the mixed nature of the pottery related to the temples (James 1966: Figs. 4–7) prevent a firm decision. Indeed, James also mentions a large amount of painted pottery in Iron Age I tradition in the same contexts. She concluded that the temples and monuments were erected close to the end of Late Level VI and continued in use until the time of Shoshenq's invasion, following which the Israelites demolished this complex. She also pointed out several construction phases and changes in these buildings (James 1966: 133–153). I have proposed to date the Double Temple complex to the Iron Age IB and separate it from the rest of the well-planned architectural complex of Level V to the north, which in my view can be dated to the Iron Age IIA. Such a date may explain the lack of any structures in the temple area in the Late Level VI plans as published, and would better fit the nature of the elaborately painted pottery cult stands found in the Southern Temple. I would also explain the erection of the monuments in the Iron Age IB city as an act of commemoration of the city's past glory or perhaps even worship of past rulers (Mazar 1993: 219–223; 2006: 34–35; 2009: 27–28). The temples may have continued in use through the Iron Age IIA, although we lack details of stratigraphic and functional development during this era.

4. Tel Reḥov

The excavations at Tel Reḥov in 1997–2012 revealed a large city with an approximate area of 10 ha that was founded in the Late Bronze I and survived until it was destroyed in the late 9th century BCE, was partly rebuilt during the 8th century BCE, and was finally destroyed by the Assyrians. A series of Late Bronze Age and Iron Age I strata was revealed mainly in Area D, while Iron Age IIA strata were uncovered in most of the excavation areas (for the final report see Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2020). In the following I will discuss the main city of the 10th century BCE (Stratum VI) and the two transitions mentioned above.

4.1. Stratum VII and the Iron I/IIA Transition

Stratum VII is a term referring to several phases of the Iron Age IB city, revealed in Areas A (small-scale exposure), B (local B-7), C (local C-4 and C-3b-a), and D (local D-5, D4b and D-4a). In Area C and D buildings belonging to Stratum VII

were revealed just below structures of Stratum VI, the first Iron Age IIA city, showing architectural continuity between these two periods. Nevertheless, this continuity is interrupted in part of Area D (local Stratum D-3), where 45 pits, some of them cutting each other, cut into the brick debris of Stratum D-4. Most of the pits were shallow and the finds included a small amount of Iron Age I pottery and olive pits; they seem to be refuse pits of some sort. Two such pits were also found in the westernmost square of Area C, which borders Area D, but in most of Area C there were no such pits and Stratum VI walls of the early Iron Age IIA were often constructed right on top of Iron Age IB structures. The pits of Stratum D-3 are hence defined as a local phenomenon that disturbed the urban continuity from the Iron Age I to the Iron Age IIA in a limited area, perhaps due to local circumstances, while elsewhere the city continued to develop without such an architectural break. It should be emphasized that the end of the Iron Age I at Tel Reḥov was not accompanied by a violent destruction (except for a single room in Stratum D-4), and the transition to the following Stratum VI of the early Iron Age IIA appears to have been peaceful and gradual in terms both of architecture and of pottery development. This stands in contrast to the severe destruction by fire of several cities and towns at the end of the Iron Age I, such as Megiddo VIA, Yoqne'ām XVII, Tell Keisan 9, Tel Hadar IV, and Tell Qasile X.

4.2. Stratum VI

Stratum VI is safely dated to the 10th century BCE (see below). The building technique in this and the following two Iron Age IIA strata (V–IV) should be noted: all buildings were constructed of mudbricks without stone foundations, in contrast to the situation in the Late Bronze to Iron Age IB strata, when most walls had stone socles for mudbrick superstructures. The reason for this change remains elusive.

In Area C and the eastern part of Area D parts of nine architectural units were defined in an excavated area of ca. 630 sq m, although most structures were only partly exposed (Fig. 5). In Area D, part of a large hall and a few additional structural remains were found close to the steep slope of the mound, their western sides eroded away. Building CA in the western part of Area C includes two small and two medium-sized rooms; it was attached on the north to another building extending from the excavated area and on the south to Building CB. The latter is a large, well-preserved hall with two intact entranceways, the eastern one leading to additional rooms. East of Building CA was an open courtyard with an oven; north-east of this courtyard stood Building CE, which was only partially exposed. Further

to the east was Building CU, which included four rooms located on two sides of a square courtyard equipped with a large baking oven. North of Building CU stood Building CT, of which only two rooms were excavated; two sub-phases of Stratum VI were defined here, differentiated by architectural changes. In the earlier phase, a jar with an incised inscription was found (see below). East of Building CU stood Building CY, which was only partially excavated; it included at least four rooms flanking a rectangular courtyard with ovens and installations. In the southeastern part of Area C, occupation layers of Stratum VI were removed when the apiary of Stratum V was constructed. It should be noted that in many cases (such as Buildings CA/CB, CU/CT, and CU/CY) double walls separated between buildings, that is, each building had its own outer wall and shared walls were avoided.



Fig. 5. Schematic plan of Tel Rehov, Stratum VI in Area C.

In Area G, Stratum VI was divided into two phases differentiated by minor architectural changes and floor raising. At least four different units (Buildings GA, GB, GC, GD) were defined (Fig. 6); in several cases, the buildings were joined by double walls, as in Area C. In the later phase there was an L-shaped open space with several ovens and a number of circular clay installations, apparently used for food storage, sunk into the floor and lined with plaster; thus this open space

served for food preparation and storage, perhaps serving an extended family or several houses.

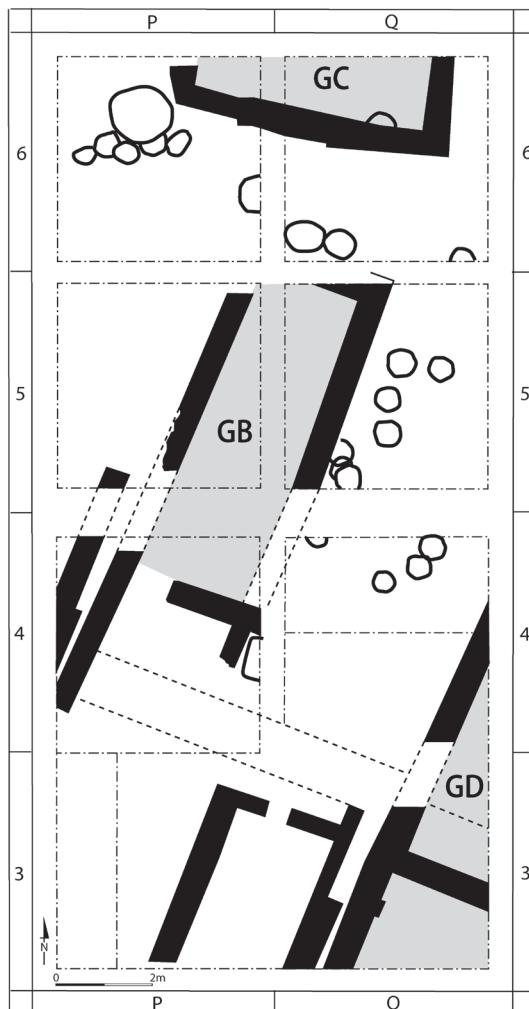


Fig. 6. Schematic plan of Tel Rehov, Stratum VI in Area G.

In the other excavation areas (B, E, F, and J) Stratum VI was reached in limited areas, revealing structural remains, floor surfaces, and installations. In Area B, the segments revealed substantial architecture, probably representing three separate buildings. In two of these areas (B and E) evidence for two phases of Stratum VI was revealed, as in Area G and the single location in Area C. These building remains indicate that Stratum VI was a well-planned and densely built city, with buildings joined to each other by double walls and separated by open

spaces. The two occupation phases exposed in several places are evidence for the longevity of this city.

The local pottery of Stratum VI can be attributed to the early Iron Age IIA. It retains many vessel forms and features of the Iron Age IB assemblage, including the rather sloppy style of painting horizontal and wavy bands in drab red. A new feature is the appearance of red slip, often dark and burnished with irregular lines. “Hippo”-type storage jars appear in small numbers, as do cooking jugs (Fig. 7 provides examples of this pottery assemblage). It is difficult to find similar assemblages elsewhere, since the contexts attributed to the early Iron Age IIA at other sites are not necessarily similar (Panitz-Cohen 2020).

Local crafts and cult objects from Stratum VI are of some significance. Five clay figurines depict female figures (Fig. 8 shows a selection). One of these is a drummer figurine of a type duplicated at Tell el-Far‘ah North Stratum VIIb (Chambon 1984: Pl. 63:2); two are unique standing female figurines, one of them shown with folded legs; two are female heads of exceptional artistic expression. Other figurines are zoomorphic; two of them depict horse heads, probably belonging to zoomorphic vessels (Saarelainen and Kletter 2020: Cat Nos. 5, 10, 12, 15, 16, 22, 35, 39, 50). These figurines are a notable addition to the small repertoire of well-dated 10th-century BCE coroplastic art in northern Israel. Clay cult objects, which were to become abundant in the late Iron Age IIA Strata V–IV, are rare in Stratum VI and include only three items: a leg fragment of a square altar or stand, a foot of a tall ceremonial chalice, and a fragment of the perforated lid of an incense burner (Mazar 2020b: Cat. Nos. 39, 43, 48b).

The glyptic finds from Stratum VI include four stone seals showing animals and in one case a stylized human figure and a quadruped, in a local style that started in the Iron Age IB and continued into the late Iron Age IIA. A seal impression and a green jasper plain scaraboid are probably Middle Bronze Age in origin, and one scarab was a talisman with the name of Thuthmosis III (Keel 2020: Cat. Nos. 1, 2, 9, 14, 42, 43, 45, 51). This mixture of styles and origins will continue into the late Iron Age IIA. Eight Egyptian faience amulets from Stratum VI (out of a total of 28 such amulets found at the site, 27 of them in Iron Age IIA strata), molded in the forms of various Egyptian symbolic figures or gods such as Isis lactans, Bes, Pataikos, and *Udjat* eye, are evidence for connections with Egypt and Egyptian influence on the local culture, even though the religious meaning of each motif may not have been understood by the locals (Herrmann 2020: Cat. Nos. 1, 2, 11–13, 16, 20, 24).

Three or four inscriptions found in Stratum VI contexts are among twelve

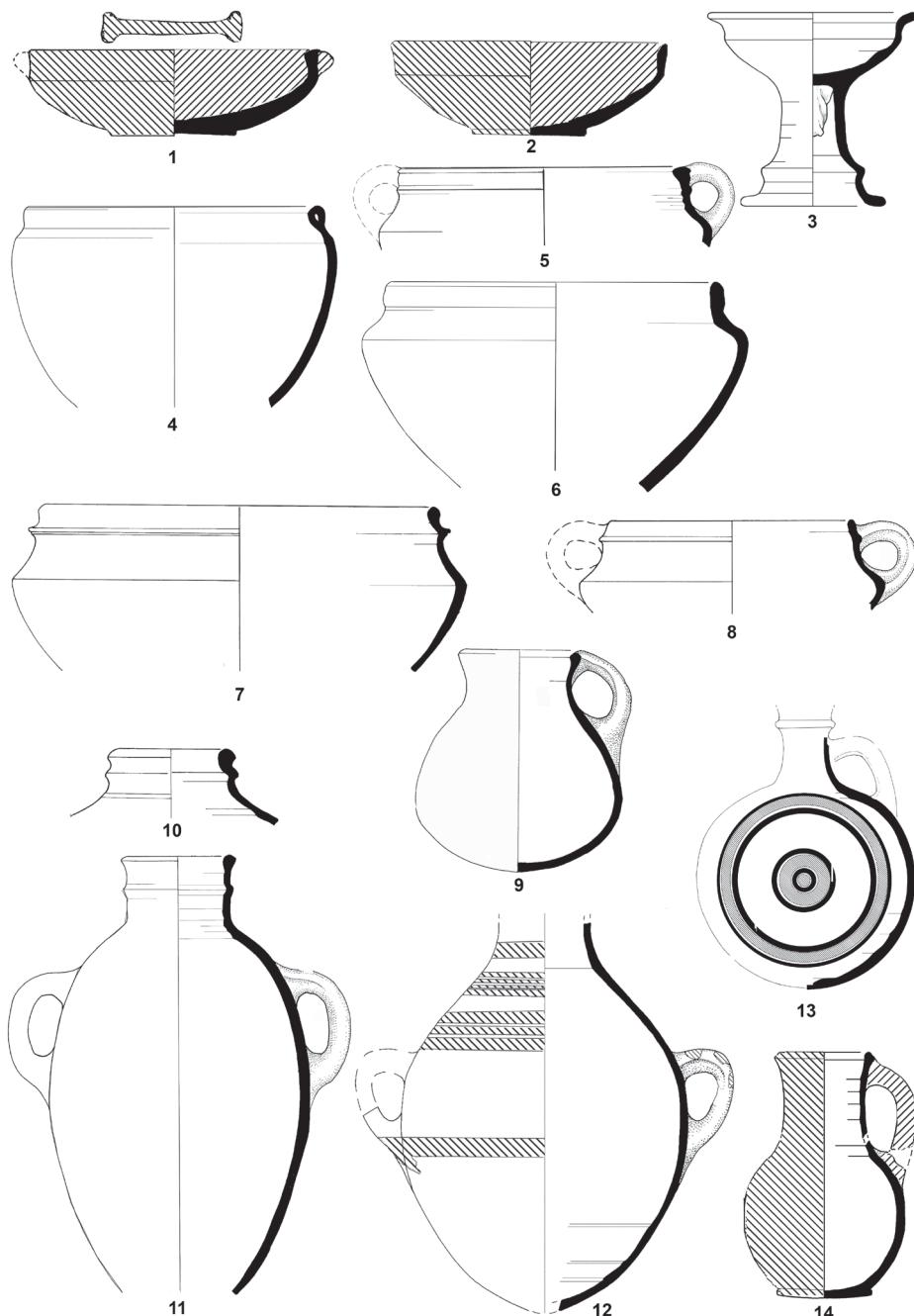


Fig. 7. Selected pottery from Tel Rehov Stratum VI (the following is a list of references for each item to pottery figures in Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2020: Chapters 13 and 21). 1: Bowl (Fig. 13.27:12); 2: Bowl (Fig. 13.20:2); 3: Chalice (Fig. 13.21:16); 4: Krater (Fig. 21.2:1); 5: Krater (Fig. 13.28:3); 6: Krater (Fig. 13.23:8); 7: Cooking pot (Fig. 13.28:10); 8: Cooking pot (Fig. 13.29:3); 9: Cooking jug (Fig. 13.32:12); 10: Storage jar (Fig. 13.29:14); 11: Storage jar (Fig. 13.33:1); 12: Storage jar (Fig. 13.11:1); 13: Jug (Fig. 13.11:7); 14: Jug (Fig. 13.36:13).



Fig. 8A–c. Three clay figurines from Stratum VI at Tel Rehov.

inscriptions from Iron Age IIA strata at Tel Rehov, which comprise an important addition to our knowledge of writing in this period (Ahituv and Mazar 2013; 2020). Inscription No. 2, from an early phase of Building CT of Stratum VI, includes the name *Mt'*, incised twice on two sides of a jar; it is one of the latest appearances of the “Proto-Canaanite” (or better “Canaanite”) phase of alphabetic writing (Fig. 9).

Some technological innovations occurred in this period. Metal objects from Stratum VI show a notable change in metallurgy: iron objects comprise 39% of all metal objects, while in the previous Iron Age IB they comprised only 17% of the metal objects. Iron tools (including two plowshares) appear for the first time. This tendency continues in Strata V–IV of the late Iron Age IIA, when most of the tools were made of iron (Yahalom and Rabinovich 2020). A “slag cake” found in Area B

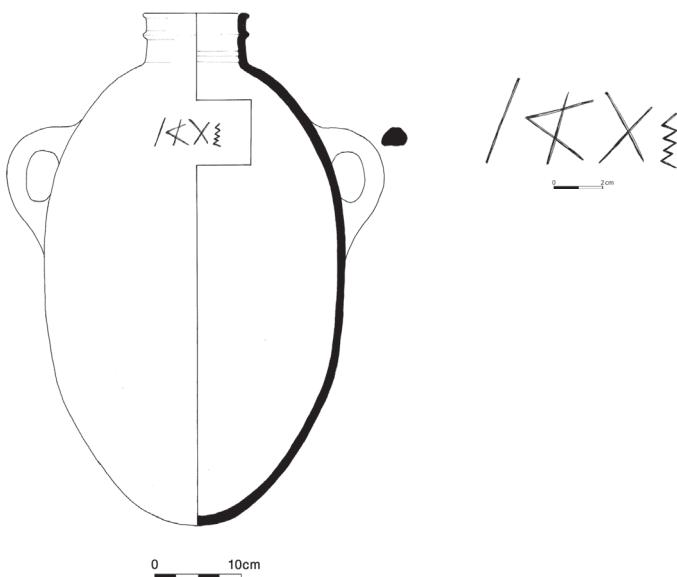


Fig. 9. The inscription *mt'* from the early phase of Stratum VI.
It was incised twice on two sides of a jar.

hints at local production of iron from ores probably brought from Transjordan, and this local industry will continue in the late Iron Age IIA (Yahalom and Behar 2020). Weaving techniques also gradually changed: the weight warp loom, which appeared in the late Iron Age IB after a long break, became more common in the 10th century BCE. In Stratum VI we see clay loom weights beside the first appearance of gypsum stone loom weights, a local feature that will become dominant in the late Iron Age IIA (Mazar 2019; 2020c).

Trade connections in Stratum VI can be deduced from several finds. Imported pottery includes a few sherds of Phoenician Bichrome, a pottery style that already started to appear at Tel Rehov and elsewhere in the later part of the Iron Age IB. A few thin-bodied red-slipped and burnished bowls may be defined as Phoenician too. Cypriot pottery includes a few sherds of White Painted vessels, although Black-on-Red pottery is lacking and will appear only in Strata V–IV. Two Greek sherds found in Stratum VI were identified as Euboean late Protogeometric (LPG) and Sub-Protogeometric (Mazar and Kourou 2019: Nos. 3–4). In the following Stratum V an additional sherd of the same group was found, as well as a single Early Geometric sherd (Mazar and Kourou 2019: Nos. 2, 9). Notably, Middle Geometric sherds first appear in Stratum IV, the last late Iron Age IIA stratum at Tel Rehov. Such imported Greek pottery is rare in this period, and perhaps arrived from Boeotia through Tyre or Sidon.

One of the metal objects from Stratum VI is a bronze violin-bow-shaped fibula, a distinctive type that is unknown in the southern Levant but is known from Italy, Greece, the Balkans, and the northern Levant. It may be taken as evidence for some trade connection with these regions.

The time of Strata VI and V at Tel Reḥov corresponds with the heyday of copper production in Faynan and Timna' (Levy, Najjar, and Ben Yosef 2016). While the bulk of this product was transported through the central and northern Negev to Egypt and to port cities such as Gaza and Ashkelon, there could have been another branch of this trade along the Central and Upper Jordan Valley, or via a combined route that utilized part of the Transjordanian King's Highway, the central Jordan Valley, and the Jezreel Valley, directed towards markets in the Phoenician littoral and from there as far as Greece, where copper from Faynan has been identified as raw material for production of cauldrons at Olympia. Such a northern copper route, bypassing Philistia, may have been utilized as an alternative trade route, perhaps due to political or other constraints. Tel Reḥov could have played an important role in such a trade and this may explain the exceptional presence of Phoenician and Greek pottery in this city (Mazar and Kourou 2019; Mazar 2020a with additional references).

The date of Stratum VI can be estimated based on radiocarbon dates. Three samples of concentrations of seeds from this stratum were measured, each with several repetitions (altogether 18 dates). The average calibrated dates in $\pm 1\sigma$ range for these samples was 968–898 (Sample R18), 994–924 (Sample R19), and 968–856 (Sample R20). These results indicate a time range covering a large part of the 10th century BCE. A Bayesian model based on dates from Areas C and D suggests the start of Stratum VI in the range 936–911 and its end in the range 919–916 CalBC. The beginning of the following Stratum V is dated in this model to the years 911–896 and in the model for Area B to the years 948–896 CalBC. In my opinion, the Bayesian model provides too short a time span for Stratum VI, perhaps due to its allowing over 100 years for the previous Stratum D-3. Yet, since the latter consists of a mere concentration of shallow pits in part of Area D, I suggest that its duration should be shortened and that the beginning of Stratum VI should be dated to somewhere in the first half of the 10th century, perhaps ca. 980 BCE. Taking into consideration the dates of the following Stratum V, the end of Stratum VI should be dated to somewhere in the last quarter of the 10th century BCE (Mazar and Streit 2020; for an earlier study with less data see Mazar et al. 2005).

No evidence for violent destruction of Stratum VI was found, although a thick layer of mudbrick debris, intact fallen bricks, and cracks in the walls hint at severe

damage apparently caused by an earthquake. Since most of the floors were found empty of restorable vessels or valuable objects and walls were still standing high, it seems that the damage was partial and the population had an opportunity to leave their houses safely. They soon returned to evacuate their belongings before rebuilding the city in the following Stratum V (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10. Schematic plan of Tel Rehov Stratum V in Area C.

The new city of Strata V–IV (the late Iron Age IIA city) survived until the second half of the 9th century BCE, when it was violently destroyed, in my view by Hazael king of Aram Damascus, perhaps between 840 and 830 BCE. The rich architecture and finds of these strata are discussed elsewhere (Mazar 2015; 2016; 2020; Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2020).

5. Discussion

5.1. A regional perspective

Smaller sites in the Beth Shean Valley and its vicinity have revealed only scanty evidence for 10th-century BCE occupation. At Tel ‘Amal, 5 km west of Beth Shean, two late Iron Age IIA strata (III–IV) were revealed, and yet there is no information

relating to the early Iron Age IIA. The small mound of Tell al-Hammah, 9.4 km south of Tel Reḥov, yielded three Iron Age strata, exposed in a limited area (Cahill 2006). The uppermost two are contemporary with late Iron Age IIA Strata V–IV at Tel Reḥov. The lower one, excavated only in a small probe, revealed a few pottery sherds which were defined as belonging to the Iron Age I, but could well be contemporary with Tel Reḥov Stratum VI of the early Iron Age IIA. This site, along with a few other small, unexcavated sites in the Beth Shean Valley (e.g., Tel Teomim), could be related to the rural periphery of Tel Reḥov.

East of the Jordan River, Tell Abu al-Kharaz, located 11.5 km southeast of Tel Reḥov, is a large mound (12 ha in area) that yielded a well-published stratigraphic sequence from the Iron Age I to Iron Age IIA–B (Fischer 2013). A unique Iron Age I architectural complex of Phase IX was destroyed in a severe fire and rehabilitated in Phase X, the latter dated by Peter Fischer to 1050?–930 BCE. This was followed by Phases XI–XII, dated to 930–850 and 850–800 BCE respectively. It may be suggested that Phase X at Tell Abu al-Kharaz corresponds with Stratum VI at Tel Reḥov, and Phases XI–XII at Tell Abu al-Kharaz with Strata V–IV at Tel Reḥov. The identification of this mound with Jabesh Gilead, suggested by Nelson Glueck and accepted by Fischer, would suit the importance of this site during the Iron Age I–IIA continuum.

Pella, a mound of 8 ha located 10 km east of Tel Reḥov, has yielded evidence for Iron Age IIA occupation, but the data is known only from preliminary reports. Phase 6 of the temple complex, defined as a “bent axis temple,” with an adjacent large architectural complex, was dated to ca. 950–800 BCE; it was constructed after a scanty occupation of squatters assigned on the basis of ¹⁴C dates to ca. 1050–950 BCE (Bourke 2012: 184–195). Phase 6 came to an end in a fierce conflagration, recalling the end of Stratum IV at Tel Reḥov and perhaps caused by the same event. Therefore, it is difficult to isolate an early Iron Age IIA (10th century BCE) stratum at this site. Two Iron Age IIA pottery altars recalling those from Tel Reḥov were found in a pit close to the edge of the mound and dated by the excavators to the 10th century BCE, although the precise parallels from Tel Reḥov would suggest a 9th-century date (Mazar 2020a: 109–110; 2020b with references). Thus, the 10th century BCE at Pella remains enigmatic.

A survey of other northern sites reveals that urban continuity from the Iron Age I to Iron Age IIA as revealed in Stratum VI at Tel Reḥov is a rare phenomenon, found mainly along the coastal plain in sites related to the rise of the Phoenician culture such as Dor, Tell Abu Hawam (?), Tell Keisan, and Tyre. In most inland sites we witness a great destruction at the end of the Iron Age I followed by a short

or long occupation gap or decline and slow revival accompanied by drastic changes in the material culture. Examples are Tel Beth Shean (see above); Megiddo, where an occupation gap is assumed between the end of Stratum VIA in ca. 1000 BCE and the foundation of Stratum VB; Yoqne'am (between Strata XVII of the Iron Age I and XIV of the late Iron Age IIA there are two ephemeral phases, XVI and XV); Tel Kinneret; Tel Hadar; and perhaps Taanach (Mazar 2020a: 113–118 with references). The only inland northern site where such urban continuity may be observed is perhaps Tel Abel Beth Maachah (Yahalom-Mack, Panitz-Cohen, and Mullins 2018), although this site is still in the process of excavation. In other sites new towns or cities were founded in the Iron Age IIA on virgin soil or in the location of a poor Iron Age I village (e.g., Hazor, Bethsaida, Jezreel, Horbat Tevet, Samaria, Tell el-Far'ah North, Horbat Rosh Zayit), but all of these sites were established during either the second half of the 10th century BCE or the first half of the 9th. Thus, Tel Reḥov provides an almost unique case of urban continuity throughout the range Iron Age I-IIA in the inland parts of the country.

5.2. Geopolitical and Ethnic Affiliation

For about half a millennium from its foundation in the LB IB/IIA until the end of the Iron Age I, Reḥov (or *Rhb*, as it is called in Egyptian and Canaanite texts) was an independent city, one of more than twenty city states in southern Canaan. While until the mid-12th century BCE the city operated in the framework of the Egyptian imperial system and in the shadow of the nearby Egyptian garrison town at Beth Shean, from the end of the Egyptian hegemony until the end of the Iron Age I it was one of the few independent Canaanite cities in the southern Levant. Beth Shean was perhaps another independent city during that time. Yet while at Tel Beth Shean the end of the Iron I city was probably followed by an occupation hiatus and then slow revival, at Tel Reḥov we have seen continuity between these two periods. What was the geopolitical status of Stratum VI of the 10th century BCE? The answer depends very much on the position one takes on the hotly debated issue of the United Monarchy of David and Solomon. While some scholars maintain the historicity of such a kingdom (Millard and Dever in Handy 1997; Ben-Tor 2000; Stager 2003; Dietrich 2007; Blum 2010; Faust 2010; Lemaire 2010), others either negate its very existence or suggest that it was a small political entity centered in Jerusalem and its vicinity (see, e.g., Finkelstein 1996, 2010 and many other publications; Na'aman, Knauf, Niemann, and Lemche in Handy 1997; Grabbe 2007: 111–115; Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg 2016:

225–232; Sergi 2017; for a recent survey and earlier literature, see Na'aman 2019). Still others attempt to find middle ground (e.g., Miller in Handy 1997).

My own view is that the biblical concept of a “United Monarchy,” although ensconced in a thick literary, theological, and ideological wrapping, may reflect a memory of a political reality that emerged from the vacuum created in large parts of the Southern Levant following the destruction of the few Iron Age I Canaanite cities east of the coastal plain mentioned above and the rise of new power in the hill country during the Iron Age, as expressed in the network of “settlement sites” there (Mazar 2007a: 164–166; 2010: 51–52; 2014). While the coastal plain and the lower Shephelah were under the domination of Philistine and Phoenician city states such as Ashdod, Gath and Dor, the inland parts of the country may have undergone severe political changes. At such a time of instability, a charismatic local leader like David, even if emerging from a peripheral hilly region, may have possessed political abilities that led to tribal alliances and treaties, ultimately resulting in the uniting of the inner parts of the country under his control. Such a situation may explain the extraordinary construction of the large architectural complex denoted the Stepped Stone Structure and the Large Building to its west in the City of David in Jerusalem, and the swift expansion of the city to the Ophel and the Temple Mount (Mazar 2010; 2020d). The fact that the name *Btdwd* (“the house of David”) was preserved as the dynastic name of Judah in the 9th century BCE Aramean stele erected by Hazael at Dan and perhaps in the Mesha stele, as well as the abundant biblical traditions relating to David and his dynasty, indicate a substantial historical memory. The Davidic state should perhaps be understood as a short-lived tribal alliance, lacking a centralized administration and hierarchical society yet having an impact on extensive territories. Such political entities created during a short time by exceptional leaders and breaking the rules of linear historical development find parallels in world history and should not surprise us.

The historical Solomon is even more elusive, due to the literary/legendary nature of the biblical narrative, and only a few verses may retain some historical information, perhaps those referring to his building operations (I Kgs 9:17–18). If the concept of a “United Monarchy” is accepted, it would mean that the large and densely built up 10th-century BCE city of Rehob was subordinate in some way to Jerusalem, though in such a loose political structure it could have maintained its own identity and self-rule. If, however, the concept of United Monarchy is ruled out, it would mean that Stratum VI at Tel Rehov continued to be an independent Canaanite city state. In both cases it proves an almost unique example of a

northern inland city with a highly developed urban culture, continuing throughout the 10th century BCE.

What was the identity of the population of Tel Reḥov during the 10th century BCE? The continuity and gradual change in material culture between the Iron Age I and the early Iron Age IIA suggest there was no change of population between the two periods in this particular city, and that the inhabitants were descendants of indigenous Canaanite families who had lived in this city for generations (Mazar 2015; 2016; 2020b; Arie 2017). This Canaanite continuity is perhaps reflected in a few biblical references (e.g., Judg 1:27). It may be assumed that during the lifetime of Strata VI–IV (10th–9th centuries BCE) some Israelite families from the hill country settled in the city alongside the locals and that Israelite religious beliefs and ideology were slowly accepted by the local population, particularly after the establishment of the northern kingdom. This mixed Canaanite-Israelite population probably characterized the late Iron Age IIA Strata V–IV. In contrast, in places like Beth Shean and Megiddo, where the destruction of the last Iron Age I towns was followed by a (possibly short) occupational gap, the rebuilding, first on a small scale (Beth Shean S1b, Megiddo VB) might have been the result of Israelite settlement in the second half of the 10th century BCE. This dichotomy between the indigenous Canaanite population in the northern valleys and the Israelite hill-country population that might have sent offspring to the valleys is fundamental for understanding the social makeup of the northern Kingdom of Israel. Faust (2000) addressed this issue in relation to the rural sector, but his conclusions are also appropriate for an urban society like that of Tel Reḥov.

5.3. Reḥov and Beth Shean in the Shoshenq List

It is notable that according to most reconstructions the raid of Shoshenq I passed through the middle Jordan Valley (the Plain of Succoth) on the way to Reḥob and Beth Shean, which are mentioned beside one another in the topographic list at Karnak. The raid took place some time between 930 and 915 BCE,³ namely the later days of Stratum VI or early days of Stratum V at Tel Reḥov as suggested by the ¹⁴C dates. There are various assessments of the impact of Shoshenq's raid (Helck 1971: 240; Na'aman 1998; 2007: 404–405; Rainey and Notley 2006:

3. The accession year of Shoshenq I is calculated by most scholars (e.g., Kitchen 2000: 50; Shortland 2005) as ca. 945/940 BCE. The lower date of ca. 934/929 BCE was suggested by Ben-Dor Evian (2011), who also suggested that the raid occurred early in his reign, while most other scholars attribute it to the last years of his reign. Thus, according to all, the raid probably occurred between ca. 930 and 915 BCE.

186; Finkelstein 2013: 41–48). While it has been a common practice to attribute destruction layers to this raid, Nadav Na'aman asked whether such destructions indeed occurred. An alternative is to claim that place names were mentioned in the list because either they surrendered to the Egyptian army or the Egyptian officials simply recorded their presence along the raid's route. The presence of a toponym in the list thus means that the place existed during Shoshenq's raid and was known to the Egyptians, and not necessarily that it was destroyed.

In previous articles we suggested that Stratum V at Tel Reḥov was destroyed by Shoshenq (Bruins, van der Plicht, and Mazar 2003a; 2003b). This was based on the results of the first excavation seasons, when the heavy destruction above the apiary area in Area C was discovered and the ^{14}C dates from this destruction pointed to the last quarter of the 10th century BCE. Yet excavation in later seasons showed that this was a local destruction and that other parts of the city of Stratum V were not destroyed but rather continued with some changes into the following Stratum IV. Furthermore, a paleomagnetic study has raised the possibility that an earthquake was responsible for the destruction of the apiary area of Stratum V (Ben-Yosef and Ron 2020). We also suggested that Stratum VI was abandoned due to an earlier earthquake that caused damage to the city. We are thus left with no clear destruction level that can be attributed to Shoshenq.

As for Beth Shean, in the final report (Mazar 2006: 32) I suggested that the massive buildings of Stratum S-1a could have been destroyed during Shoshenq I's campaign, but also explained that, based on the finds at Jezreel and Tel Reḥov, the pottery found in this level continued in use well into the 9th century BCE, and therefore these buildings could equally well belong to the Omride period. The time range of this late Iron Age IIA assemblage stands at the heart of the Iron Age chronology debate, since the same question may be asked concerning Megiddo: if the public structures of Stratum S-1a at Beth Shean and Stratum VB–IVA at Megiddo are dated to the 9th century BCE alone, then at both sites the settlement at the time of Shoshenq's campaign (Megiddo VB and Beth Shean S-1b) would merely be a poor village. If this was the case, it has to be asked why would Shoshenq mention such poor settlements and, in particular, why would he erect a monumental stele at such a poor settlement as Megiddo VB. An alternative would be to suggest that both Beth Shean S-1b and Megiddo IVB–VA were founded during the 10th century BCE, namely the Solomonic period. Although this would be in contrast to the majority of current views, it should nevertheless be considered as an option. In such a case, both places were captured by Shoshenq but were not destroyed and survived into the 9th century BCE.

It has been suggested in several studies that Shoshenq's subsidiary raid to the south was aimed at controlling the copper production centers in the Arabah Valley and the copper trade. It may be surmised that the northern and main branch of this raid was also related in some way to the copper trade. Unlike any other New Kingdom Egyptian military raid to the Levant, Shoshenq's raid passed along the central Jordan Valley to the Beth Shean Valley toward the Jezreel Valley, along the northern copper trade route that I suggested above.

5.4. The Early Kingdom of Israel

Another historical question that should be addressed is the period of the emergence of the Kingdom of Israel, prior to the Omride Dynasty (ca. 930–884 BCE, according to Galil 1996). This time slot fits the radiometric dates for the later years of Stratum VI and the entire range of Stratum V at Tel Reḥov. According to the biblical account, Tirzah (Tell el-Far'ah North) was the capital of the kingdom before the foundation of Samaria. Chambon (1984), following the excavator R. de Vaux, identified this early capital of Israel with Stratum VIIb, a well-planned city with typical “four-room” houses that yielded a pottery assemblage identical to that of Strata V–IV at Tel Reḥov.⁴ Since the pottery repertoire of Stratum VIIb continues at Reḥov and other sites throughout most of the 9th century BCE, one cannot be sure when precisely Stratum VIIb came to an end; it may have lasted well into the 9th century BCE. It thus may be suggested that Stratum V at Tel Reḥov, with its well-planned city and unique apiary, was contemporary with the pre-Omride period in the history of the Northern Kingdom. It still has to be asked whether the city was already under the rule of the northern kingdom at this time. Views on this matter differ. I have suggested that the city became part of the Northern Kingdom from its very beginning, during the time of Stratum V (Mazar 2016a: 98–100). Arie (2017: 14–15), however, emphasized the unique components of Tel Reḥov and its dissimilarity from what he termed “regular” Israelite traits, and suggested that Reḥob was a local Canaanite city-state until the end of Stratum V and was annexed to Israel only in Stratum IV, during the Omride era.⁵ Finkelstein

4. Finkelstein (2013: 69–74) suggested that the early capital of Israel should be identified with Level VIIa and attributed Level VIIb to the Omride period. Level VIIa, the earliest Iron Age level at the site, is known from only a few finds in a single excavation area and was attributed by Chambon to Iron Age I, yet the small amount of published pottery could fit early Iron Age IIa and be contemporary with Reḥov Stratum VI (Kleiman 2018; Mazar 2020a; both attributing Stratum VIIb to the early years of the kingdom).

5. While Arie (2017: 11–12) emphasized the uniqueness of pottery forms at Tel Reḥov, the unique

went further and suggested that both Strata V and IV were non-Israelite, Reḥov being a local “late-Canaanean city state at the southwestern edge of the Aramean culture sphere of influence,” and that Rehov Stratum IV was destroyed during an Israelite conquest attributed to Ahab (Finkelstein 2013: 120–122; 2017: 181). I cannot accept either of these suggestions. Arie’s distinction between Strata V and IV as pre-Israelite versus Israelite contradicts the archaeological situation: in most of the excavated areas Strata V and IV are merely two phases of the same city, with identical material culture. Finkelstein’s statement that “the material culture of Tel Reḥov differs from that of the Israelite centers in the Jezreel Valley – for instance Megiddo – in almost every respect” (2017: 180) is unjustified. Although there are exceptional traits in the local material culture of Tel Reḥov compared to other Israelite sites (such as the building techniques and house plans), there are also many similarities, such as in the pottery assemblage, clay figurines, seals, pottery altars (“cult stands”), and other material-culture components. Additional similarities to Megiddo can be found in the fact that neither city had a city wall in the Iron Age IIA and in the resemblance between Building CF at Tel Reḥov and Building 2081 at Megiddo (Mazar 2020a). Moreover, I cannot discern any Aramean components at Tel Reḥov. In my view, both Strata V and IV represent a city that was under the hegemony of the northern Kingdom of Israel right from its inception and survived throughout the Omride dynasty. However, although Reḥov was part of the Israelite kingdom, it seems that the city retained much of its independent nature and indigenous population throughout this period, until the destruction of Stratum IV, probably by Hazael between 840 and 830 BCE.

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vessels came from houses demonstrating exceptional activity such as Building CP, while most of the forms are typical of northern Israelite sites of the Iron Age IIA, particularly along the Beth Shean and Jezreel Valleys and in Western Galilee (mainly Horbat Rosh Zayit).

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