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## REHOB

Tel Rehob (often written *Rehov*; Arabic *Tell es-Şarem*, summit at elevation 380.6 ft [116 m] below sea level) is the largest mound in the Beth-Shean Valley, extending over 24.7 acres (10 ha). The mound is located in a colluvial valley, about 3.7 miles (6 km) west of the Jordan River, 1.9 miles (3 km) east of the Gilboa ridge, and 3.1 miles (5 km) south of Tel Beth-Shean. The site enjoys ideal geographic conditions: it is located in a low topography, close to fertile lands and to main roads that cross the Jordan Valley from north to south and from west to east.

The site comprises an upper mound and a lower mound. The upper mound rises 65.6 ft (20 m) and the lower mound about 26.2 ft (8 m) above the surrounding plain. The closest water source is a spring near the northeastern corner of the mound, and additional springs are to be found at short distances. Geomorphological research has shown that the site was founded on a very shallow natural hill. Excavations have shown that the earliest occupation layers on the lower mound, dated to the Late Bronze Age, are lower by almost 6.6 ft (2 m) than the level of the colluvial plain to the west, indicating that the level of the plain was raised by several meters during the last 3,000 years. Evidence was also found for geological faults, related to the nearby great Syro-African fault, which may have affected settlement during historic periods.

**Historical Geography and Identification.** Rehob (*Rhb*) is mentioned in several Late-Bronze Canaanite and Egyptian sources, including an Akkadian letter

from Taanach (fifteenth century B.C.E.); the stele of Seti I found at Beth-Shean (ca. 1300 B.C.E.), where it is mentioned as remaining loyal to the Egyptian regime while its neighbors Peḥel, Ḥamat, and Yeno'am rebelled against the Egyptian administration; and in Papyrus Anastasi I (thirteenth century B.C.E.), where it is mentioned in relation to Beth-Shean and the crossing of the Jordan. The city is also mentioned in the topographic list of Sheshonk I (r. ca. 935–914 B.C.E.) at Karnak (c. 925 B.C.E.), after the toponym "The Valley" and before Beth-Shean. Several other Egyptian sources refer to a city of this name either in the Beth-Shean Valley or in western Galilee. The identification of *Rhb* of the Egyptian texts with Tel Rehob, suggested in the 1920s, is based on the preservation of the name in the Byzantine Jewish town Rehob, located 0.6 mile (1 km) to the west of the mound, and on the name in the Islamic tomb of esh-Sheikh er-Riḥab, south of the mound. "Rehob" (the Hebrew word for "piazza" and "street") was the name of several cities mentioned in the Bible and other ancient Near-Eastern sources (Josh 19:28–30, a city in the Plain of Acco; 2 Sam 10:6, 8, the name of an Aramean state in Syria). However, Rehob in the Beth-Shean Valley is not mentioned in the Old Testament.

**The Excavations.** Excavations at Tel Rehob were directed by Amihai Mazar on behalf of the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University, with Nava Panitz-Cohen as senior researcher and sponsored by John Camp, between the years 1997 and 2011. Four excavation areas (A, B, H, J) were located on the upper mound and five (C, D, E, F, G) on the lower mound. The following table presents the local stratigraphy in each of the excavation areas, final stratum numbers, and approximate dates.

**The Third Millennium B.C.E.** A massive fortification system dating to the Early Bronze Age II–III was explored on the southwestern slope of the upper mound. It included a 31.2 ft (9.5 m) wide mud-brick wall abutted on its outer side by an earthen rampart preserved up to 42.7 ft (13 m) wide and 11.5 ft (3.5 m) high. This suggests that the site was one of the two main cities (alongside Beth-Shean) in the Beth-Shean Valley during this period.

*Stratigraphy and Chronology at Tel Rehob*

<i>Final</i>	<i>Local strata in excavation areas</i>								<i>Period</i>	<i>Dates</i>	
	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>G</i>	<i>J</i>			
I	A-1	B-1	-	-	-				J-1	Early Islamic	Eighth–twelfth centuries C.E.
II	A-2	B-2	-	-	-				J-2?	Iron Age IIC	Late eighth century B.C.E.
III	A-3a	B-3	-	-	-				J-3	Iron Age IIB	ca. 930–732 B.C.E.
	A-3b								J-4		
IV	A-4	B-4*	C-1a	D-1a	E-1a	F-1	G-1a		J-5	Iron Age IIA	ca. 980–ca. 830 B.C.E.
V		B-5a	C-1b	D-1b	E-1b	F-2	G-1b		J-6		
VI		B-5b							J-7		
		B-6	C-2	D-2	E-2	F-3	G-2a		J-8		
VII				D-3						Iron Age Ib	Eleventh–early tenth century B.C.E.
		B-7	C-3	D-4							
				D-5						Iron Age IA	ca. 1200–1150 B.C.E.
				D-6							
				D-7							
				D-8						Late Bronze II	Fourteenth–thirteenth century B.C.E.
				D-9a							
				D-9b						Late Bronze I–IIA	Fifteenth–fourteenth century B.C.E.
				D-10							
				D-11b-a							

**The Late Bronze–Age City.** After a long occupation break, a large city was founded at Tel Rehob during the Late Bronze Age I. This is an exceptional phenomenon since many other city sites declined in the transition from the Middle Bronze to the Late Bronze Age.

In Area D on the slope of the lower mound, four strata are attributed to the fifteenth to thirteenth centuries B.C.E. The earliest, stratum D-11, consists of two occupation phases above the bedrock. In stratum D-10 of the fourteenth century B.C.E., a massive building was constructed. Its 3.3 ft (1 m) wide mud-brick walls were supported by deep foundations and buttresses, and the building had deep constructional fills. The small excavated portion appears to be part of a much larger building, perhaps a small palace, the full extent of which remains unknown. The building went out of use and was rebuilt on a somewhat new plan in the following stratum (D-9), also dated to the fourteenth century B.C.E. Among the finds are a scarab with the name of an Egyptian scribe, a Canaanite clay figurine of exceptional quality, and a Mycenaean

vessel. In the following stratum, D-8 (thirteenth century B.C.E.), the large building went out of use, and its area became an open space in which a copper-melting installation was found.

No evidence for a fierce destruction was found in any of the four Late-Bronze strata, though the changes between the various Late-Bronze phases are substantial. Because of limited exposure, it is unknown to what extent these changes reflect the history of the entire city. At the bottom of the eastern slope of the upper mound (Area A) evidence for Late-Bronze occupation was also found. Thus, the city appears to have occupied the entire mound and, as such, was apparently one of the largest Late Bronze–Age cities in the entire country. It appears to have been a prosperous, though probably unfortified, city-state, which controlled large portions of the Beth-Shean Valley, though it was under Egyptian control centered at nearby Beth-Shean. Its loyalty to Egyptian domination, as expressed in the Seti I stela from Beth-Shean, can be explained in light of its

prosperity, short distance from Beth-Shean, and lack of strategic advantages.

**The Iron Age IA (Twelfth Century B.C.E.).** Two strata in Area D (D-7 and D-6) are dated to the twelfth century B.C.E. In stratum D-7, the area was renovated and part of a dwelling was exposed. Stratum D-6 of the mid- to late twelfth century B.C.E. included several phases of domestic and industrial activities, indicated by plastered installations of unknown function. The material culture in both layers is basically Canaanite, including pottery forms typical of the twelfth century B.C.E. Several Canaanite foundation deposits of the "bowl-and-lamp" type were found. A surprising discovery in stratum D-7 was a deposit of reeled clay loom weights of Aegean type, known in the earliest settlement levels of the Sea Peoples in Philistia and northern Syria. This discovery, as well as a few Mycenaean III C sherds, hint at a limited presence of people of Aegean origin living among the local Canaanite population.

**The Iron Age-IB City (Late Twelfth to Early Tenth Centuries B.C.E.).** In Area D, several occupation phases and subphases from this period were defined. With their substantial architectural changes, they represent a lengthy period of continuous building and renovation in an urban environment. Massive buildings on both sides of a street were excavated. A massive building in stratum D-5 appears to be a storage building, which may indicate some kind of central administration or the economic activity of a prosperous family. Adjacent and later buildings (D-4) were regular dwellings made up of a courtyard surrounded by several rooms. By the end of the period (stratum D-3), more than 50 pits of various sizes, probably used for food storage, were cut into the previous building of stratum D-4.

In Area C massive walls and the remains of an open area with successive floor layers from the late Iron I were found. The Iron-I pottery is characterized by painted decoration with some local stylistic features. Trade with the Coastal Plain is indicated by several Phoenician pottery vessels and a few Philistine sherds. Radiocarbon dates from strata D-5 and D-4 point to the late twelfth and eleventh centuries B.C.E., while the pits of phase D-3 date to the late

eleventh and early tenth centuries B.C.E. The Iron-IB material culture indicates that it continued to be an autonomous Canaanite city with a local regime, free from the Egyptian domination of the previous period. Similar continuity can be observed in other sites along the Beth-Shean and Jezreel Valleys (i.e., Megiddo) and in the northern Coastal Plain (i.e., Dor, Tell Keisan). For biblical echoes of this continuity, see Joshua 17:11–13 and Judges 1:27–28.

**The Iron Age-IIA City.** The main period exposed and studied at Tel Rehob is the Iron IIA, dated roughly to the tenth to ninth centuries B.C.E. Three general strata, VI, V, and IV, were defined. They are based on the correlation between local stratigraphic phases in each excavation area, which differed as a result of local variations in the development of the city within each area. A large number of radiocarbon dates of short-lived samples from the Iron Age-IIA strata provide one of the best chronological sequences from this period. However, because of wiggles in the calibration curve of radiocarbon dates, the standard deviation is sometimes wide and the results depend on statistical evaluations. Stratum VI is clearly dated to the tenth century B.C.E., perhaps starting in the first half of that century. The stratum-V dates range between the last quarter of the tenth and the first quarter of the ninth centuries B.C.E., and stratum IV is dated to the ninth century (not later than 830 B.C.E.).

**Urban plan and architecture.** During all three occupational periods, Tel Rehob was a thriving city of about 24.7 acres (10 ha). Notably, the city remained unfortified throughout this period. The town plan appears to have been preconceived and well ordered, with parallel blocks of densely built buildings separated by small piazzas used for cooking and other domestic activity. Sacred enclosures and industrial areas were defined. Some architectural features and techniques are unparalleled elsewhere in Iron-Age Israel. For example, the buildings were constructed of mud bricks without stone foundations, a feature unknown elsewhere. In strata V and IV, narrow wood beams were used as foundations for walls, giving them a flexibility perhaps intended to protect the structures from damage by earthquakes, which are common in the Jordan Valley. Wood was also used as

a foundation for beaten-earth floors. In many cases the outer walls of buildings were attached to the outer walls of the neighboring buildings, thus creating massive double walls that may have carried more than one story. Mud-brick benches along walls are a common feature in the houses.

The plans of individual houses differ: some were “courtyard houses” (a courtyard surrounded by rooms on several sides), while others were small houses with no more than three rooms and a total floor area of ca. 215 ft<sup>2</sup> (20 m<sup>2</sup>). Several larger and more complex houses may have been used for special functions. Among these is Building CF, with six rooms and floor space of 581 ft<sup>2</sup> (54 m<sup>2</sup>). A special feature in the western part of this house is a row of four small chambers, each lined with benches. The first chamber contained a sophisticated grinding installation and the innermost chamber, a unique large pottery crate with a lid. Another grindstone installation and a pottery shrine decorated with a unique relief were found in the courtyard. These and other special finds from this house indicate that it had exceptional function as the dwelling of an elite family, perhaps combined with other economic and ritual functions. Building CP, in the same block, is also unique in plan: it comprises an entrance space, two large spaces, and three small back chambers, two of which are connected by an opening. Outside the entrance to one of these small chambers were two decorated pottery altars, and inside the room a red ink inscription, possibly mentioning the name “Elisha,” was found. The exceptional plan and finds, as well as several additional cult objects from this house, such as a mold to make female figurines, hint at its function in relation to some religious activity. Other structures in the same area were used as a granary and for storage.

These diversified plans cannot be classified typologically and certainly differ from the typical Iron-Age “pillared buildings” (“four-room” or “three-room” houses). No fortifications were discerned, and the buildings reached the edge of the mound, where they were damaged by erosion.

The nature of the transition between the three Iron-IIA strata is diverse. Stratum-VI buildings appear to have been damaged by an earthquake, but since

the floors were mostly empty of finds, it seems that the population evacuated them in an orderly manner. The buildings of stratum V continued in most cases to be utilized, with some changes, in stratum IV, but in a considerable part of Area C (the apiary and its vicinity) structures were destroyed by a heavy conflagration. The final destruction of stratum IV was violent. All of the excavated houses were burnt, and those in the lower city contained rich collections of artifacts buried under the destruction debris, thus indicating abrupt destruction.

**Grinding, cooking, weaving.** Much evidence was retrieved concerning daily life at Iron-IIA Rehob. Grinding of cereals was done inside houses with large basalt querns, which were often encircled by a clay parapet and in several cases laid on a raised foundation. These features made it easier to collect flour. Cooking was done normally in small open spaces outside the houses, but sometimes ovens were inside. Ovens were renewed from time to time, and in one case five such ovens were found, one above the other. One of the ovens in stratum VI was preserved intact, including its lower opening. It was covered on the outside by large fragments of pottery vessels, perhaps for better insulation. Some of the small houses did not have ovens close by; perhaps in these cases women had to share ovens in common, small courtyards. Stone bowls, mortars, pestles, and handstones were used in food processing. Grain was stored in pottery jars, and in one building unique rectangular pottery bins were found. Metal objects are rather rare. Weaving was conducted in the houses using large vertical looms, as can be identified by the large number of clay and stone loom weights found in each house, numbering up to 80 in one place, and sometimes by the charred beams found next to the loom weights and probably belonging to the loom itself.

**Pottery.** The pottery from stratum VI belongs to an early phase of the Iron IIA; in addition to the burnished red slip treatment of the outer surface, there is still abundant painted decoration in the local Canaanite tradition. The pottery of strata V and IV is almost identical and includes many “Hippo”-type storage jars, one- and two-handled cooking jugs, and

many other forms typical of the later phase of Iron IIA. Crudely painted red-brown geometric designs continue to appear to some extent until stratum IV. Chalices were particularly abundant. The best parallels to this assemblage are found at Megiddo strata VB and VA-IVB, Taanach periods IIA and IIB, Ḥorvat Rosh Zayit strata III-II, Tel 'Amal, Tell el-Ḥammah, and Jezreel.

**Economy.** More than 50 percent of about 400 samples of identified wood from Tel Rehob are of olive trees, indicating that olive groves were common around the site. Olive oil production was probably important, though no production installations were located. Jars and bins found full of charred grain are evidence of the importance of cereals in the daily economy. Analysis of animal bones has shown that sheep and goats comprised 75 percent, cattle 20 percent, and wild boar 1.5 percent. According to the experts, "the meat consumption habits of the population included the partaking of gourmet portions of sheep and goat meat from young animals, most of which were males, which indicates strong consumer economy... indicating that Rehob was inhabited by socioeconomic elite" (Marom, Ba-Oz, Raban-Gerstel, and Mazar, 2009, p. 1).

Long-range trade is evidenced by imported pottery from Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Greece. Bichrome Phoenician vessels were imported between the eleventh and ninth centuries B.C.E. from the coastal Phoenician cities of Lebanon. Cypriot white-painted sherds were found in strata VI and V, while bichrome and black-on-red Cypriot pottery was found in strata V and IV alone. Fragments of Greek sherds constitute a rare find. They include a Euboean Sub-Proto-Geometric pyxis (stratum V), a few sherds of Proto-Geometric vessels (mostly in stratum V), and three sherds of an Attic Early Middle Geometric cup (stratum IV). The connections with Greece appear to be indirect, through the Phoenician coast, where such pottery was found mainly in Tyre. The strong affinity between the local pottery repertoire in strata V and IV and the pottery of Ḥorvat Rosh Zayit in western Galilee may be explained as the result of the latter being a

trade station on the border between Israel and Phoenicia, playing an important role in trade, which may have continued through the Jezreel and Beth-Shean Valleys and eastward toward Transjordan, through Pella.

**The apiary.** An exceptional discovery related to the ancient economy and social structure at the site is the apiary discovered in Area C, stratum V. The apiary is located in an area of about 65.6 by 65.6 ft (20 by 20 m). It includes three rows of cylindrical hives laid horizontally, with evidence of at least three tiers of hives in each row. In each row the number of preserved hives differs, yet altogether more than 30 hives were preserved; and the total number of hives in the apiary is estimated as between 100 and 200. The cylindrical hives (1.3 ft [0.4 m] in diameter, ca. 2.3 ft [0.7 m] long, walls ca. 1.6 in [4 cm] thick) were made of unfired mud mixed with straw. One side of the cylinder was closed and had a small hole that enabled the bees to fly in and out, while the other side was closed by a portable lid made of mud and equipped with a handle, enabling easy extraction of the honeycombs. A pottery altar decorated with two female figures and a tree, as well as a large ceremonial chalice, found in the apiary provide evidence for cult practices that were carried out here, perhaps to secure the productivity of this industry. This organized and planned enterprise is the only apiary found so far in the archaeology of the ancient Near East. Among the finds in the area of the apiary was a pottery jar carrying the inscription *lnmš* ("belonging to Nimshi"). This name was found also in an inscription from stratum IV and in nearby Tel 'Amal. This name appears in the Bible as that of Jehu's father and once as the name of his grandfather, perhaps indicating a family name. It may be surmised that this is the same family mentioned in the three inscriptions and that the Nimshi family was an important one centered at Tel Rehob and its vicinity. Perhaps it was even influential enough to construct such an apiary inside the crowded city.

Remains of actual bees were found in charred honeycombs recovered from the hives. These were identified as *Apis mellifera anatolica*, a subspecies that is typical of Turkey and known for its high





Four-horned altar. Kim Walton, courtesy of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem

productivity and mellow behavior, in contrast to the local and more aggressive *Apis mellifera syriaca*. This is unique evidence for the import of bees from a distance of more than 311 miles (500 km), perhaps through middlemen in Syria or Phoenicia. The import of bees is known also from an Assyrian document dated to the eighth century B.C.E. It is estimated that the industrial apiary at Tel Rehob yielded about 0.6 tons (0.5 metric tons) of honey and about 132 to 154 lb (60–70 kg) of beeswax per year. Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Hittite documents provide evidence for the importance and multiple uses of honey and wax in various functions. One of the important uses of beeswax was in the “lost wax” technique of metal casting, and since in the same period the large-scale copper mines at Feinan, east of the Arabah Valley, were at the peak of their activity, it might be that wax used in the metal industry was one of the products of this apiary. Indeed, the Bible reflects copper-melting activity in

the middle Jordan Valley (1 Kgs 7:46). The apiary might also throw light on the meaning of the word *dvash* in the Hebrew Bible, as bees’ honey (as well as fruit syrup). Thus, the apiary illuminates a heretofore unknown aspect of the Israelite economy in the late tenth to early ninth centuries B.C.E. However, the apiary did not last a long time; it was heavily burnt before new buildings of stratum IV were erected above it.

**Inscriptions.** Ten inscriptions, most of them incised on pottery jars found in the three Iron-IIA strata, are evidence for the spread of literacy in daily activities in this city. One from stratum VI mentions the hypocoristic *mt*<sup>2</sup>; another, from stratum VI, perhaps mentions *lnhm* (“belonging to Nah[m?]”). The name *nmš* (biblical “Nimshi”) appears twice: once in the inscription from the apiary and a second time in an inscription from stratum IV saying *lšky[?]/nmš* (“belonging to Shakai [?] [son of] Nimshi”). Additional inscriptions from stratum IV mention *ʿlzdak šhly* (“Elyzedek [son of] Shachaly”), *m<sup>c</sup> . . . m* (possibly a private name), and *[ʿl]š<sup>c</sup>* (perhaps the biblical name “Elisha”).

**Religious practices.** In Area E, in the northeastern corner of the lower mound, an open-air sanctuary of strata V and IV was positioned next to a dwelling area. A brick platform was embedded in the corner of a building, facing a spacious courtyard. On this platform was a smaller stone platform with three upright stones, which, though relatively small, may have served as sacred standing stones (*mašseboth*). A large, flat stone in front of the platform was probably an offering table, and a pottery altar with triangular apertures found broken near the platform was part of the cultic paraphernalia. The walls of the building into which the platform was embedded were lined with mud plaster decorated with seal impressions depicting volutes, lotus flowers, and buds in Phoenician style. The courtyard was enclosed by walls, and in its floor surfaces accumulated to a total depth of ca. 3.3 ft (1 m), indicating a long period of use. Installations in this courtyard included clay bins, ovens, and benches. Among the finds was an elaborately decorated Phoenician jar, which was probably placed as an offering in the sanctuary.

It appears that this open-air sanctuary (perhaps a biblical *bamah*, “high place”) served the local neighborhood or a clan. The standing stones may have functioned as commemorative stones in an ancestor cult. This sanctuary is an important addition to the small number of Iron-Age cult places excavated in Israel and Jordan.

Various portable finds provide additional evidence for ritual and cult at Tel Rehob. Four complete or almost complete ceramic altars (known also as “cult stands”) and fragments of at least 10 more indicate that this type of altar was common in the city. The altars were about 1.3 to 1.6 ft (0.4–0.5 m) tall, square in section, with a flat tray at the top and a horn at each of the four corners. Apertures were cut in the body, and they were decorated with incised geometric motifs. At least three had applied figures showing naked females, probably fertility goddesses; and in one case a tree motif, perhaps representing Asherah, was incised between the two female figures. To some extent these altars represent tall buildings, perhaps towers or temple facades. They appear to have been used for burning incense or sacrificing small animals (like birds) in various locations in the city, such as at the small open-air sanctuary, next to the apiary, and in dwellings. Similar altars are known at Pella, and a few examples found at Hazor, Megiddo, and Taanach belong to this general class, all dated to the Iron-IIA period. The pottery form of a tower with horns at the corners is known from northern Syria at the end of the Late Bronze Age, yet the relationship between these two groups remains unclear.

A ceramic model shrine was decorated with unique molding on its roof, which depicted a crouching animal (lion?) with its front paws gripping two grotesquely shaped human heads. This scene must have represented some myth or religious idea, the meaning of which remains elusive. A variety of clay figurines from the Iron-IIA strata belong to the Canaanite/Phoenician artistic tradition. Some are typical of northern Israel, such as eight examples of a woman playing a drum, one of them also holding a child. Faience amulets of Egyptian

origin showing Egyptian deities and religious symbols can also be considered part of the popular or folk religion at the site.

**Glyptique.** A collection of more than 40 seals and seal impressions is one of the largest ever discovered from the Iron Age IIA. The seals were carved in a local style from local stones and represent a variety of human figures, animals, and plants. Several unique seal impressions on jar handles, known so far only from Tel Rehob and Tel Beth-Shean, show schematic human figures (or deities?) striding on mountaintops (?), and in two cases arranged in *tête-bêche* (one upside down relative to the other) composition. The seals and impressions on jar handles must have been used for the official marking of documents and goods. Even so, no inscribed seals are known from this period (although they are known elsewhere).

**Ivory.** A unique ivory object from stratum IV is a three-dimensional statuette showing an enthroned human figure dressed in a long garment, sitting on a throne. The object is hollow, and the head, hands, and legs, which were not preserved, were made separately and attached to the main body. This may have represented a royal figure, perhaps hinting at the royal house of Samaria.

**Population and historical implications.** During the Iron Age IIA, Tel Rehob was the site of one of the largest Iron-Age cities in the entire country. Since the city continued to exist with various changes but without any occupation gap from the Late Bronze Age, one may surmise that there was no drastic change in its population. Rather, Canaanite families continued to be the main component of the city's population throughout the Iron Age I and IIA, slowly integrating into the emerging Israelite political and cultural entity. This would fit the biblical tradition concerning Canaanite continuity in this part of the country. Indeed, strong Canaanite traditions can be seen in the material culture of the site, particularly in pottery decoration and cult objects.

Was the city part of the United Monarchy of David and Solomon in the tenth century B.C.E.? The answer to that question depends on one's opinion regarding the historical reality behind the

biblical narratives concerning this kingdom, and this issue, much debated, remains unresolved. If the rulers of Jerusalem succeeded in creating a political alliance that survived two generations, Rehob and its local population could have become part of such a loose-knit polity. The mention of *Rhb* in the topographic list of Sheshonk I indicates its importance in this period, but it remains an open question whether a destruction layer related to Sheshonk can be identified in the excavations. In terms of radiocarbon dates, the end of either stratum VI or stratum V could fit this event. Yet stratum VI was not destroyed violently, and in stratum V evidence for a violent destruction is limited mostly to the apiary area. In fact, destruction layers are not a necessity if Sheshonk passed through the country without actually destroying every site mentioned in his list.

During the ninth century B.C.E., the city was part of the kingdom of northern Israel, and it seems that the influence of the new Israelite entity became stronger. The Nimshi family that is mentioned three times in inscriptions from the site and its vicinity could have been an elite Israelite family centered in the city. Jehu, the founder of the new dynasty in Israel (whose name is clearly Israelite) could have been a member of this clan, and perhaps he came from Rehob. With due caution, we may connect the possible presence of the name Elisha in the exceptional Building CP of stratum IV with the historical figure of Elisha, the “man of god” who, among other deeds, sent one of his followers to anoint Jehu as a king of Israel (2 Kgs 9:1–7). It is thus possible that although the city is not mentioned by name in the Bible, it had an important role in the history of tenth- to ninth-century B.C.E. northern Israel. The violent destruction of stratum IV during the ninth century B.C.E. may be related to a conquest by Hazael, king of Damascus. Indeed, the similar and contemporary destruction of Gath (Tell es-Safi) is also attributed to Hazael, as mentioned in the Bible.

**The Iron Age–IIB City (Stratum III).** Following the heavy destruction of stratum IV, the lower city was abandoned and never resettled. During the Iron Age IIB (ca. 830–732 B.C.E.) the city was limited to the

upper mound (ca. 12 acres [5 ha]). On the northern slope of the upper mound (Area B), a mud-brick casemate wall and tower appear to have been part of a fortification system or of a large structure. Later (in stratum III) a 31.2 ft (9.5 m) wide offset-inset mud-brick wall replaced the former casemate structure, while utilizing it as its foundation. This new wall was probably intended to withstand the threat of Assyrian battering rams. South of this wall and in Area A on the summit of the upper mound, several phases of dwellings were excavated.

Evidence for the Assyrian conquest of 732 B.C.E. includes the collapse of the massive fortification wall; its destruction created a thick layer of brick debris on the slope of the mound to the north. In Area A, the last phase of local dwellings terminated in a violent destruction. Two human skeletons, one of them decapitated, were found in the destruction layer, perhaps indicating the slaughter of people in their houses during the Assyrian assault.

**The Assyrian Period (Stratum II).** Floor surfaces and installations on top of the collapsed fortification in Area B are evidence of squatters’ activity following the Assyrian conquest. Several pit burials found in Areas A, B, and J are related to this period; and in four of them Assyrian pottery bottles were found. An exceptional burial of a high-ranking person contained a long iron sword, an iron dagger, a bronze fibula, an Assyrian-shaped bronze bowl, an Assyrian-shaped pottery bottle, and a typical Judean decanter, which perhaps was either purchased or taken from Judah as booty. A seal with the Hebrew name *l’l’m* (“belonging to El’am”) was on his chest, perhaps another item of booty of Israelite or Judean origin. It can be conjectured that an Assyrian fort stood on the summit of the mound, as at Hazor, and that the burials were of Assyrian soldiers or officials.

**The Early Islamic and Medieval Periods.** Following a long occupation break, a small village was founded on the summit of the mound, which was inhabited from the eighth to the twelfth centuries C.E. Only a few plaster floors and refuse layers belonging to the periphery of this settlement were revealed, in Areas A and B. A number of Islamic



graves were found in Areas B and E. These lacked finds, and their date remains obscure.

[See also Beth-Shean, Bronze and Iron Age; Domestic Architecture, Bronze and Iron Age; Gath; Horbat Rosh Zayit; and Jordan Valley.]

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