

Summer 2013

# Ethnic Continuity and Change at Gezer

Philip Webb  
*San Jose State University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd\\_theses](https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses)

---

## Recommended Citation

Webb, Philip, "Ethnic Continuity and Change at Gezer" (2013). *Master's Theses*. 4370.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.vfx8-n6uj>  
[https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd\\_theses/4370](https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/4370)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses and Graduate Research at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@sjsu.edu](mailto:scholarworks@sjsu.edu).

ETHNIC CONTINUITY AND CHANGE AT GEZER

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Philip A. Webb

August 2013

© 2013

Philip A. Webb

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED**

The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

ETHNIC CONTINUITY AND CHANGE AT GEZER

by

Philip A. Webb

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

August 2013

Dr. Jonathan Roth

Department of History

Dr. Isabelle Pafford

Department of Art History and Visual Culture

Dr. Gary Arbino

Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary

## ABSTRACT

### ETHNIC CONTINUITY AND CHANGE AT GEZER

by Philip A. Webb

This project examines the issue of social identity, particularly ethnicity, in the ancient world. It focuses on one site, Gezer, and how ethnic identities there evolved between the Middle Bronze Age and the end of the Iron Age. Modern anthropological perspectives on ethnicity and methods used by archaeologists for identifying ethnicity archaeologically are examined. In light of these studies, the history of Gezer is inspected.

The site is chronologically divided into three periods, the Bronze Age, the Early Iron Age, and the Late Iron Age. Using both historical and archaeological sources, the occupational history of Gezer is outlined, highlighting ethnically salient points. The data from Gezer are compared to wider ethnic developments in the surrounding region, namely the Canaanites as an ethno-cultural entity, the Philistines, and the Israelites.

The analysis shows that from the Middle Bronze Age through the end of the Iron Age, Gezer experienced long periods of ethnic continuity as well as shorter phases of ethnic variety. During the Bronze Age, the city was the quintessential Canaanite city-state. It continued to be largely Canaanite in the Early Iron Age, though it was ethnically mixed having a minority of Philistines occupying part of the site. In the Late Iron Age the ethnic balance shifted as the site became gradually more Israelite, being completely Israelite by the end of the Iron Age. This study demonstrates that ethnic identity was an existing form of social identity in antiquity and is capable of being revealed in the historical and archaeological record.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my professors and readers for their critical readings and helpful insights. I have learned a great deal from my interaction with them and without their constructive comments and encouraging remarks this thesis would be woefully incomplete.

Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude for my friends and family who have encouraged me throughout my education, particularly through the process of completing this thesis. Most of all, I would like to thank my wonderful wife, Leah, without whose love and support I would be nowhere.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Introduction                            | 1   |
| CHAPTER                                 |     |
| 1. THE SITE OF TELL GEZER               | 5   |
| 2. RACE AND ETHNICITY                   | 19  |
| History of the Study of Race            | 20  |
| Ethnicity                               | 33  |
| Ethnicity and Archaeology               | 42  |
| 3. THE BRONZE AGE                       | 63  |
| Gezer in the Bronze Age                 | 63  |
| Canaanites in the Bronze age            | 84  |
| Ethnicity at Gezer in the Bronze Age    | 106 |
| 4. THE EARLY IRON AGE                   | 108 |
| Gezer in the Early Iron Age             | 108 |
| The Philistines in the Early Iron Age   | 113 |
| Philistines at Gezer                    | 142 |
| 5. THE LATE IRON AGE                    | 151 |
| Gezer in the Late Iron Age              | 151 |
| The Israelites                          | 161 |
| Ethnicity at Gezer in the Late Iron Age | 186 |
| Conclusion                              | 192 |
| Bibliography                            | 197 |

## Introduction

Scholars have studied the ancient past for centuries. They have investigated numerous topics and issues using a variety of methods for their inquiries. The disciplines of history and archaeology are both excellent tools for the examination of the ancient past, though they use different methods to accomplish their goals. This study of ethnicity at the ancient city of Gezer utilizes both, though it is important to understand the purposes and limits of each discipline.

Historians seek to answer questions about the past largely through the use of texts. Using the written words of past societies they attempt to gain insight into those who left the texts. Historians use careful analysis of written sources to answer specific questions about specific issues in specific contexts. Though historians are capable of studying nearly every aspect of past societies, they are particularly equipped to examine matters such as intellectual developments, economies, religious beliefs, and other intangible aspects of society that are expressed most clearly in written sources.

Conversely, archaeologists study the material remains of past societies. Through excavations of sites occupied in the past, archaeologists uncover artifacts and implements used in the day-to-day lives of historical peoples. By interpreting the recovered material culture archaeologists work to better understand the societies that left behind those artifacts. Though archaeologists may differ on methods of interpretation of the excavated data, they do concern themselves with material remains.



Despite the differences between the disciplines, they make natural allies. Both seek to address questions about past societies, though they go about it in different ways. Historians and archaeologists are capable of inquiring into the same issues. The combination of texts and material remains examined in tandem can provide a fuller picture of past societies and particular issues. One issue both disciplines can address is that of social groups in the ancient world. While history and archaeology have a lot to offer to the study of ancient social groups, such an inquiry is not without difficulties.

It is clear both historians and archaeologists recognize that ancient societies formed distinct groups. Ancient texts are filled with references to groups of people, and archaeologists recognize differences in material culture they attribute to different groups. However, historians and archaeologists have struggled with how to define such past groups. Some have described them in the terms used by the ancient societies. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, scholars most frequently used racial theory to describe ancient and contemporary societies. In the latter half of the twentieth century, more scholars began to look at specific social groups called ethnicities.

To study issues of ethnic identity in the modern world, scholars spend time among ethnic groups to answer their questions. Those who study ethnicity in the ancient world do not have such a luxury. The chronological separation puts them at a disadvantage as the topic of their study is long gone. Absent the option of actual interaction, historians and archaeologists use texts and artifacts to examine the phenomenon of ethnicity in the ancient world. Additionally, they must determine the scope of their inquiries.

This study of ancient ethnicity has a limited range; that is, it is limited to ethnic developments in a single city. It focuses on a city, the ruins of which are in the modern nation of Israel, named Gezer. This city is a particularly attractive area of inquiry for a number of reasons. The city was occupied nearly continuously for several thousand years, leaving behind a highly stratified site. It was an important site for much of its occupational history, which in part resulted in it being well attested in the written record, making it a suitable site for historical inquiry. The site has hosted a series of archaeological excavations, including one ongoing, which has revealed in published reports a great deal of the city's occupational record. Due to the site's geographic position it was in the midst of known historical ethnic developments.<sup>1</sup>

The city is well documented both in the ancient historical record as well as by modern excavators. The available sources, both historical and archaeological, allow researchers numerous avenues of investigation, ethnicity certainly among them. Furthermore, Gezer offers researchers the chance to examine how ethnicity and ethnic identity developed and changed over time.

The ethnic history of Gezer is marked by long periods of continuity with comparatively brief periods of intermingling with ethnic newcomers. This study will document this pattern only during the Bronze and Iron Ages, though the site experienced ethnic developments in the following Persian and Hellenistic periods as well. In the Middle Bronze Age an ethno-cultural group identified as the Canaanites occupied the city. Throughout the Bronze Age the Canaanites, who did not compose an ethnic group

---

<sup>1</sup> On a personal note, the site is of particular interest because of the author's participation in the ongoing excavations.

in the exact way modern scholars understand the idea, lived at the city. In the beginning of the Iron Age the city experienced the incursion of a new ethnic element, the Philistines. However, the city remained mostly Canaanite in terms of its ethnic and cultural composition. The Philistines were present at the site but the material remains indicate they never gained an ethnic majority. After a couple centuries, the Philistines withdrew from the city, and it was politically dominated by the fledgling Israelite state. Yet, initially, the city was not occupied by ethnic Israelites. It remained a Canaanite city. Over the course of the late Iron Age, the city became more Israelite than Canaanite. Markers of Canaanite presence gradually give way to markers of Israelite ethnic boundary maintenance. Eventually, the city fell under the control of the Neo-Assyrian state, and the evidence suggests by this time the city was fully Israelite. Under the Assyrians the city decreased in size and importance; although it remained occupied by a number of ethnically Israelites and a smaller number of individuals associated with the Assyrian state.

## Chapter One

### The Site of Tell Gezer

While it is important to identify a site with a historical city, it is often no easy task. Some sites have been continuously occupied since antiquity, such as Jerusalem and Jericho, thus making it quite simple to identify their ancient remains. Other ancient settlements are connected with modern ruins based on the modern toponyms. Still other sites must be identified based on the remains discovered at them. Once a site has been linked with an ancient city by an excavator, it does not necessarily mean that the scholarly community will accept the equation. For example, the ancient city of Lachish was initially believed to be at the site Tel el-Hesi but it is now understood the site of Tell ed-Duweir is the location of the ancient city.<sup>2</sup> This study, about ethnicity in the ancient city of Gezer, is dependent upon the correct identification of the ruins of the city.

The ancient city of Gezer has been connected with the mound known in Arabic as Tell el-Jezer (or variously Tell el-Jazar, Tell el-Jazari, Tell Jeser). The mound was first linked with the ancient city of Gezer by the French scholar Charles Clermont-Ganneau in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The professor was studying the Arab historian Mujîr ed-Dîn, who wrote extensively on the medieval history of Palestine and in one passage mentioned the mound of Jezar.<sup>3</sup> Clermont-Ganneau believed the mound of Jezar to be the ancient city of Gezer based on the toponym alone. He proceeded to search for the mound based on

---

<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey A. Blakely and Fred L. Norton Jr., "On Site Identifications Old and New: The Example of Tell el-Hesi," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 64 (March-June 2001): 25.

<sup>3</sup> R.A.S. Macalister, *Bible Side-Lights From the Mound of Gezer: A Record of Excavation and Discovery in Palestine* (Hodder and Stoughton, London: 1907), 19.

the criterion put forth in the passage he was studying. The text indicates the mound is between Ramlah and Khuldeh, and one is able to hear the sounds of Khuldeh from the mound. The mound of Tell el-Jezar fits both the above requirements and, he believed, the requirements necessary for the site to be the ancient city of Gezer.<sup>4</sup>

The mound itself has a distinct character. It has the appearance of two hills with a lower saddle between them. In early publication of the site these were designated as the “Western Hill,” (the higher knoll) the “Eastern Hill” opposite it, and the “Central Valley” connecting the two. The mound has somewhat of an oval or rectangular shape and is nearly half a mile in length oriented east-west.<sup>5</sup> The breadth of the hill varies between two hundred seventy five and two hundred twenty yards.<sup>6</sup> In all, the site measures approximately thirty acres. While it is not as large as many Bronze Age sites in Syria and the Northern Levant, such as Ugarit, Qatna, and Hazor which measure in triple digit acreage, it is much larger than other excavated sites in the Southern Levant such as Tell Beit Mirsim and Megiddo which both measure under fifteen acres.<sup>7</sup>

The region in which the mound lies is fertile and capable of supporting a large population. Water is the ultimate resource and the supply of it regulates the size and extent of any settlement. Gezer is fortunate in having an excellent water supply. Macalister recounts no less than seven water sources, including wells and seasonal springs, within the immediate vicinity of the mound.<sup>8</sup> The fields surrounding the site

---

<sup>4</sup> Macalister, *Bible Side-Lights From Gezer*, 21.

<sup>5</sup> R.A.S. Macalister, *The Excavation of Gezer 1902-1905 and 1907-1909*, vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1911): 1.

<sup>6</sup> H. Darrell Lance, “Gezer in the Land and in History,” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 30 (1967): 36.

<sup>7</sup> Lance, 36.

<sup>8</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 1, 3.

support numerous types of crops including olives, grapes, and cereals. Numerous wine presses have been found in archaeological surveys of the area as evidence of the rich viticultural potential of the land.<sup>9</sup> The fields also provide excellent grazing for the pastoralist. Even today, herds of sheep and goats can be seen on the mound and in the surrounding fields. The potential of the site was restricted by very little as far as natural resources are concerned.

The site was chosen by the Palestine Exploration Fund to be one of their first archaeological excavations. As a part of the project, overseen by R.A.S. Macalister, an archaeological survey around the tell was conducted. There were several dozen archaeological features or installations noted in close proximity to the mound. Included among these were six inscribed stones.<sup>10</sup> More stones have been found in subsequent excavations, including one recently discovered as part of an archaeological survey in the spring of 2012.<sup>11</sup> All of the stones are bilingual, in Greek and Hebrew, and apparently were intended to be identical. The stones, popularly referred to as “boundary stones,” date to the Hellenistic era ca. 100 B.C. The Greek inscription is transliterated “Alkiou” with translations reasonably suggesting “belonging to Alkios.” The Hebrew inscription is upside down if read while facing the Greek inscription and is transliterated “tḥm gẓr” and translated “the boundary of Gezer.”<sup>12</sup> These boundary stones give positive proof of the identification of Tel Gezer with the ancient city of Gezer. This type of inscriptional data

---

<sup>9</sup> Lance, 36.

<sup>10</sup> A sketch of the inscription on one stone was actually provided to Professor Clermont-Ganneau as early as 1874.

<sup>11</sup> Eric Mitchell and Jason Zan. “Southwestern Students Find Ancient Inscription in Tel Gezer, Israel,” Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, <http://www.swbts.edu/campusnews/story.cfm?id=2C98015B-0467-8083-6010AB46F06CC1F1> (accessed June 26, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> Lance, 46.

identifying the site as Gezer is rare. Most sites excavated in Syria-Palestine have no written, positive, identification markers; typically the best scholars can say is there is no data indicating an identification is inaccurate.<sup>13</sup> The boundary stones are written, positive identification at Gezer that certainly qualify the site as atypical.

The strategic location and surrounding fertile landscape of the mound combined to make Gezer an important city in antiquity. Geographically it sat in the Shephelah, a term from the Hebrew Bible from the root *š-p-l* meaning to be low or abased, thus is rendered “lowlands.” The city’s location alone made it important geopolitically and put it in the midst of ethnic and political developments throughout history.

The Southern Levant has numerous distinct geographical and geological zones. Starting in Mount Carmel in the north proceeding south is the coastal plain, which is further subdivided into the Sharon Plain and Philistia. The northern stretch of plain was composed of alluvial soil and sand bounded on the east by a sandstone ridge. Further south, in Philistia, the plain widens. In northern Philistia the plain is around ten and a half miles (seventeen kilometers) and widens to fifteen and a half miles (twenty five kilometers) in the south.<sup>14</sup> The coastline offers very few natural harbors or inlets and in antiquity was lined with sand dunes. Beyond the sand dunes was a “topographic corridor, somewhat troughlike,” in which the many inhabitants of the region resided.<sup>15</sup> The soil in Philistia grows a variety of crops, primarily grains but also olives for oil and grapes for wine. Given the natural agricultural wealth of the region it is not surprising the coastal

---

<sup>13</sup> Blakely, 26.

<sup>14</sup> Anson F. Rainey and Steven R. Notley, *Carta’s New Century Handbook and Atlas of the Bible* (Jerusalem: CARTA Jerusalem, 2007), 19.

<sup>15</sup> Rainey and Notley, 19.

plain generally boasted a significantly higher population density as compared to the highlands further inland.<sup>16</sup>

The flat, troughlike, section of the coastal plain was host to a flurry of human activity, not least of which was the primary road running north-south through the Levant. The Romans called the highway the *Via Maris*, or the Way of the Sea, as it ran from Egypt along the Mediterranean into Syria and further to Mesopotamia. This highway was the primary land connection between the civilization of Egypt and the rest of Asia thus trade caravans, armies, and all other overland transportation passed through the coastal plain.<sup>17</sup>

Rising above the coastal plain of Philistia is the Shephelah. In the Hebrew Bible, the word is frequently used to refer to a region belonging to the tribe of Judah. It is a geographical area which corresponds to an administrative district. As the etymology of the term implies the geographical area of the Shephelah are the low hills which begin to rise above the coastal plain. It is important to note, the Hebrew Bible does make a distinction between the Shephelah and the coastal plain despite the ambiguity in defining the western boundary of the region.<sup>18</sup>

The foothills of the Shephelah separate the fertile coastal plain from the highlands further inland. At their highest they rise only to a height of four hundred meters above sea level.<sup>19</sup> The Eocene limestone hills of the Shephelah run north to south and are cut by

---

<sup>16</sup> Rainey and Notley, 19.

<sup>17</sup> Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000 – 586 B.C.E.* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 8.

<sup>18</sup> Anson F. Rainey, “The Biblical Shephelah of Judah,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 251 (1983): 2.

<sup>19</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Bible*, 4.



valleys east to west.<sup>20</sup> The most important of these valleys include the Aijalon in the north near Gezer, and further south the Sorek and Elah valleys. In these valleys ran highways and roads leading from the highlands down to the coastal plain and the main highway running along the coast. They also supported a sizeable population. Some of the cities in the Shephelah include Gezer, Timnah, Beth Shemesh, and Lachish, all important and, in their time, sizeable settlements. This region was not only a geological transitional zone but also a demographic transitional zone between the densely populated coastal plain and the significantly less occupied highlands.

Between the Shephelah and the Rift Valley is the hill country. The region is higher in elevation, reaching a height of one thousand meters, and contains much rougher terrain.<sup>21</sup> The region is less fertile than either the plain or the Shephelah, making subsistence living more difficult in the highlands, in part because of the lack of flat arable land. It is no surprise the area underwent cycles of depopulation and renewal. Even in periods of renewed settlement it was under-populated compared to the coastal region. During the Iron Age I period, a time of demographic revival in the highlands, Israel Finkelstein estimates the Judean hills held only 22,000 people while for the same period the coastal plain he gives a figure of 30,000 inhabitants.<sup>22</sup> While these figures are estimates they demonstrate the disparity demographically between the highlands and the coastal plain.

---

<sup>20</sup> Rainey, "Biblical Shephelah," 2.

<sup>21</sup> Rainey and Notley, 20.

<sup>22</sup> Faust, Avraham and Justin Lev-Tov, "The Constitution of Philistine Identity: Ethnic Dynamics in Twelfth to Tenth Century Philistia," *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 30 (2011): 15.

In the midst of these geological and geographical realities sits the mound of Gezer. It is located at the extreme north of the Shephelah by the Aijalon Valley. When viewed from the plains the hill is not particularly imposing; it only rises to a height of two to three hundred feet above the plain.<sup>23</sup> However, due to its location, the only hills which rise higher are to the south. In fact, immediately to the south is a large hill on which the modern village of Karmeï Yosef sits, which impedes views in that direction. In all other directions one can see for miles, and a watch post on the opposite hill would provide a magnificent view to the south. R.A.S. Macalister claims on a clear day one can see “practically the whole of the sea-coast plain as far as the misty range of Carmel.”<sup>24</sup> This is certainly a bold statement, and Macalister likely exaggerated in claiming one could see almost sixty two miles (one hundred kilometers) from the summit. However, the approximately eighteen miles (thirty kilometers) north to the modern city of Tel Aviv can certainly be viewed from the peak of the mound. To the west the majority of the coastal plain and the coast itself thirteen miles (twenty one kilometers) distant, and all the cities therein, are clearly visible.<sup>25</sup> To the west and the north there is an unimpeded view and no doubt an approaching army would be seen kilometers before they arrived at the gates of the city. On a more lucrative note, trade caravans moving along the coast could also be spied as they passed beneath the city. Additionally, trade coming from and going to the highlands, especially from Jerusalem, had to pass by the city. Not only was the

---

<sup>23</sup> Lance, 34.

<sup>24</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 1, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Lance, 35.

city defensible because of its location, it was a key site to control trade and commerce. Only to the east, where the Judean highlands rise, and south was the city's view impeded.

Given the size and importance of the site of Gezer, it is no surprise it was selected as one of the first sites to officially be excavated. Work at Tel Gezer was conducted under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF). Founded on June 22, 1865, the Fund was a society dedicated to scientific examination of the land of Palestine and its environs. The first several decades of work conducted by the PEF was limited to primarily observations of archaeological installations and limited excavations. In 1890, however, the PEF began its first excavation at Tell el-Hesi, falsely believed to be Lachish, under the direction of the Egyptologist Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie.<sup>26</sup> This was succeeded by excavations in Jerusalem and minor excavations at sites the PEF assumed to be Azekah, Gath, and Mareshah. In 1902, Macalister, who assisted in some of the PEF's earlier excavations, began an examination of Gezer on behalf of the Fund.<sup>27</sup>

When Macalister began excavating at Gezer, he was entering a new arena. The uniqueness of the ruins found in Palestine, the tell phenomenon, required a method of excavation unfamiliar to European archaeologists. Furthermore, as Palestinian archaeology was in its infancy at the turn of the century, there was not a great deal of information available to Macalister as he developed a plan for excavating and constructing the sites stratigraphy. Macalister, in fact, sought to remedy this want of useful information as part of the Gezer excavations. As he notes in his published report "I shall confine myself strictly... to experiences and deductions there-from that may be

---

<sup>26</sup> Macalister, *Bible Side-Lights From Gezer*, 214.

<sup>27</sup> Macalister, *Bible Side-Lights From Gezer*, 217.

useful in guiding other explorers in similar work.”<sup>28</sup> In the attendant footnote with this quote Macalister notes for the “would-be explorer” the supreme importance of the camp cook, and that the ninth Gezer cook was “not wholly unsatisfactory.”<sup>29</sup> While such an observation may have been made in jest, it could also point to not only the scholarly deficiency vis-à-vis Palestinian archaeology but also the logistical aspect.

Macalister received his permit to begin excavations from the Ottoman government in the spring of 1902 and by the summer he was organizing his camp on the site. He hired local men and women as workers organized into gangs responsible for a specific area, the size of which varied as Macalister tested various sizes gauging the productivity and speed of the workers. Teams of workers dug down to bedrock creating a large pit. Once one pit was finished another pit was dug across the tell. After a full trench was dug across the mound, another trench was made and the first filled with the rubble from the second.<sup>30</sup>

The treatment of material culture was as rudimentary as the excavation techniques. Macalister records jar-handles were sorted and cleaned with the sole purpose of discovering potters’ marks. Everything which did not have a potters’ mark, or some other distinguishing factor, was either reburied or tossed aside. There is no indication of a systematic cataloging of artifacts unless they are of special import. For example, while he notes jar-handles were examined, no other diagnostic pieces are mentioned as being

---

<sup>28</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 1, 46.

<sup>29</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 1, 46.

<sup>30</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 1, 48.

examined or preserved. He even states it was of no importance where an object was found.<sup>31</sup>

Macalister excavated the tell for the duration of his permit. Except for a few breaks due to health issues, including cholera and malaria outbreaks and random days lost to the rain, the excavations continued year round from 1902 through 1905. The permit was renewed and the excavations concluded during the years 1907 to 1909.<sup>32</sup> After five years on the site Macalister finally left Gezer and took a post as Professor of Celtic Archaeology at University College in Dublin.<sup>33</sup> What is perhaps most admirable of Macalister's endeavors at Gezer is his prompt and thorough publication of his results. He published his results in three volumes with what he describes as "numerous illustrations," which amounts to about ten thousand photos, figures, and sketches.<sup>34</sup>

Macalister provided a stratigraphic analysis of the city. His stated intention was to find the successive epochs of the city and give a "bird's-eye view" of the city for each layer of history. It is apparent to the reader of his multi-volume work Macalister was quite frustrated and simply overwhelmed by the immensity of the work he had undertaken. He states the situation he uncovered, the complicated stratigraphic nature of the site, made his stated goals difficult to accomplish.<sup>35</sup> He identified a total of eight strata. These strata he identified as cultural periods, the majority of which he, after deliberating the nomenclature (rejecting both "Palestinian" and "Canaanite"), called

---

<sup>31</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 1, ix.

<sup>32</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 1, 54.

<sup>33</sup> William G. Dever, "Excavations at Gezer," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 30 (1967): 49.

<sup>34</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 1, x.

<sup>35</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 1, vii.

“Semitic.”<sup>36</sup> The cultural phases identified are Pre-Semitic, First, Second, Third, and Fourth Semitic, Persian and Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Early Arab, Crusader, and Modern Arab. However, because of Macalister’s excavation techniques, the material he uncovered is mostly useless to modern researchers attempting to analyze the history of Gezer.<sup>37</sup>

Macalister was the just the first archaeologist to dig at Gezer. Other, smaller scale excavations were carried out at Tel Gezer prior to World War II and following Israel’s independence. Raymond-Charles Weill excavated areas around the site acquired by Baron Rothschild, the results of which were only recently published. Alan Rowe operated a single season at the site in 1934 under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Fund, and only preliminary reports were published.<sup>38</sup>

The second major excavation was a ten year project conducted by The Hebrew Union College Biblical and Archaeological School in Jerusalem, the Israel branch of the Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, and the Semitic Museum of Harvard University.<sup>39</sup> The excavations were conducted between 1964 and 1974, with a minor delay for the Six-Day War in 1967, and were the first major excavations at the site which provided useful, scientifically gathered data.<sup>40</sup> The results of the project have thus far been published in five volumes, with two more in press, as well as in numerous

---

<sup>36</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 1, 57.

<sup>37</sup> Dever, “Excavations at Gezer,” 50.

<sup>38</sup> *The Tel Gezer Excavation Project Volunteer Handbook* (Fort Worth: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), 6.

<sup>39</sup> William G. Dever, H. Darrell Lance, and G. Ernest Wright, *Gezer I: Preliminary Report of the 1964-66 Seasons*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Hebrew Union College Biblical and Archaeological School, 1970), 17.

<sup>40</sup> William G. Dever, H. Darrell Lance, Reuben G. Bullard, Dan P. Cole, and Joe D. Seger, *Gezer II: Report of the 1967-70 Seasons in Fields I and II*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Hebrew Union College Biblical and Archaeological School, 1970), 1.

journal articles.<sup>41</sup> Over the course of the project the Hebrew Union College (HUC) teams identified twenty six general strata designated I-XXVI. While Macalister noted the complex stratigraphy of the site, he came nowhere near identifying twenty-six individual strata. The stratified remains at Gezer spanned from the Late Chalcolithic into the Roman period with scattered remains dating to even later periods (Late Roman, Byzantine, and Mameluke).<sup>42</sup>

The project started with four main goals. The first goal was to clarify the stratigraphy relating to the city's defenses, which Macalister had termed the "Inner" and "Outer" wall systems. A related second goal was to excavate and clarify the stratigraphy of any remaining monumental architecture, particularly the high place. Thirdly, it was desired to examine some of the cities domestic architecture inside the fortifications. Finally, the HUC team stated their desire to open an area which had not been excavated by Macalister, namely on the western hill.<sup>43</sup>

Over the course of the excavations a number of fields were opened and excavated. Fields I, II, and IV are on the southern slope of the western hill, or occasionally referred to as the acropolis, and were opened to examine the fortifications surrounding the city. Fields III and X are on the southern slope of central valley. Field III is of particular note as it examined what Macalister misidentified as a "Maccabean Castle," and which was later identified as a "Solomonic Gate" by the Israeli general and archaeologist Yigael Yadin. The "high place" and the adjacent northern fortifications were examined in

---

<sup>41</sup> *Gezer Project Volunteer Handbook*, 6.

<sup>42</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer II*, 4-5.

<sup>43</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer I*, 7.

Fields V and VIII. Gezer's domestic architecture was uncovered in Field VII on the eastern slope of the western hill as it descends into the mounds central valley. On the previously untouched top of the western hill Fields VI and IX were opened in accordance with the dig's stated goals.

Except for minor, single season forays in 1984 and 1990, no major excavations were conducted at the site until 2006 when a consortium of American institutions, with the cooperation of the Israel Antiquities Authority, began renewed excavations as part of the Tel Gezer Excavation Project sponsored by the Tandy Institute for Archaeology. The project has three primary goals as part of its research design. The first stated goal is the publication and analysis of Palaces 8,000 and 10,000 which were uncovered in prior excavations. An additional goal was to open a new field, between HUC Fields III and VII, so as to reveal and analyze more Iron Age strata. Finally, the renewed excavations seek to further understand the various fortification systems, specifically the relationship of the six-chambered gate and attendant casemate wall to the Outer Wall.<sup>44</sup> The Tandy excavations, under the direction of Dr. Steven Ortiz of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Dr. Sam Wolff of the Israel Antiquities Authority, are currently under way.

A total of five seasons have been completed at Gezer as a part of the Tandy excavations. Two fields were opened; one designated Field E is west of the Iron Age gate complex while the other, Field W, is adjacent to Field E on its west. Both fields lie within the HUC excavation's Field III. Field E runs east-west along the Iron Age fortification system and has revealed a number of administrative buildings in a series of

---

<sup>44</sup> Steven M. Ortiz and Samuel Wolff, *Tel Gezer 2006: 2006 Season Excavation Summary Report* (Fort Worth: TX: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006), 3.



phases allowing excavators to better understand urbanization at Gezer in the Iron Age. In Field W a domestic quarter was excavated as well as a sondage running north-south through the field.<sup>45</sup> Thus far, an area of nearly 300 square meters has been excavated allowing the archaeologists to study fortifications, the administrative quarter, and domestic quarters and how each evolved over time.

---

<sup>45</sup> Steven Ortiz and Samuel Wolff, “Guarding the Border to Jerusalem: The Iron Age City of Gezer,” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 75 (2012): 7.

## Chapter Two

### Race and Ethnicity

When discussing the communities of Bronze and Iron Age Syria-Palestine there is difficulty finding an appropriate term. Words used to describe contemporary groups all carry connotations and nuances uniquely conditioned by the modern age. Furthermore, aspects of group identity in the ancient world are not fully understood, and hotly debated. Without fully understanding group dynamics in the ancient world it is challenging to assign names to describe such societies. Numerous options are available to scholars discussing societies in the ancient Near East. For example, the nomenclature used in the ancient world may be of use. The Hebrew term “*‘am*” is used in the Hebrew Bible as a generic term for “people” or “nation.” Additionally, “*bnei*” is often used in construct with the name of an eponymous ancestor such as “*bnei Israel*” to mean the people of Israel or the Israelites. Similarly, Neo-Assyrian texts use the term “*bit-humri*,” or “House of Omri,” to refer to the state of Israel.

Other terms, informed by modern scholarship, may also be of use. Terminology borrowed from the social sciences such as “race,” “nation,” and “ethnicity,” have some merit, as they are commonly used in contemporary society to refer to social groups though each term is uniquely conditioned by the modern era. An alternative is to shy away from the more familiar, more easily understood, terms and use a new term which is,

thus far, less charged such as the term polity.<sup>46</sup> While the latter option is a tempting one, it neglects, intentionally so, the wealth of research and information available in connection with more widespread terms which can offer helpful insights into ancient communities.

### *History of the Study of Race*

There is indeed a wealth of research regarding social groups and the formation of communities throughout history. Ancient societies had many different ideas and ways to classify the different people groups with which they came into contact. The Egyptians classified people into those to their North, South, East, and West.<sup>47</sup> The ancient Israelites understood the people groups around them as interrelated, each having a patrilineal, eponymous, ancestor, all of which in turn descended from a common ancestor in Noah.<sup>48</sup> However, the origins of modern discussions on race and ethnicity are typically cited as beginning with Greek and Roman authors. Classical authors also noted differences between themselves and those around them. There were a number of factors which contributed to the perceived differences between people groups in the Greco-Roman mind.<sup>49</sup>

Classical authors attributed differences in physical appearance to factors such as climate and geography. In the treatise *Airs, Waters, and Places* a theory of environmental determinism is outlined. According to classical authors, the climate of a

---

<sup>46</sup> Raz Kletter, "Pots and Politics: Material Remains of Late Iron Age Judah in Relation to Its Political Borders," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 314 (May, 1999): 24.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 4.

<sup>48</sup> Genesis 10

<sup>49</sup> Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 163-8

region, and its place geographically, will impact the appearance and temperament of the inhabitants, usually with the extremes of “yellow” and “black” and a perfect middle, making them weak or strong, brave or fearful.<sup>50</sup> Various climatic conditions will permanently change a group of people either for better or worse. The implication is the character of an individual is ultimately determined by forces exterior to them. The theory outlined in *Airs, Waters, and Places*, attributed to Hippocrates, became popular among Greek authors, including Aristotle, and later among Roman ones, receiving only minor revisions.<sup>51</sup>

A parallel idea to the environmental determinism involved political institutions. Good or bad forms of government would have a corresponding impact upon the character and temperament of those under those institutions. Even in *Airs, Waters, and Places* institutional factors are considered in tandem with environmental ones. Among Greek authors, despotism and monarchy were believed to contribute to negative qualities in those living under them.<sup>52</sup> In the classical mind, the character of individuals is determined by a number of factors, some of which are permanent.

Given the perceived differences between themselves and others, classical authors used a variety terms to refer to different entities. For example, the Greek term *ethnos* was most often used to refer to people groups who shared common values with Greek society, yet did not share the same civic structures such as the *polis* and citizenship.<sup>53</sup> Latin

---

<sup>50</sup> Hippocrates, *Hippocrates, Volume I: Ancient Medicine (loeb Classical Library, No. 147)* trans. W.H.S. Jones (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 105.

<sup>51</sup> Isaac, 163.

<sup>52</sup> Hippocrates, 115.

<sup>53</sup> Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 28.

authors used the terms *natio* and *gens* to refer to groups of people. The term *gens* referred to a tribe, or clan, in Roman society though in later societies it gained a different connotation and was sometimes translated as “race.”<sup>54</sup>

Centuries later the works of classical authors were used to support the pseudo-scientific works of racial theorists. Theories of race developed in Europe and America during the eighteenth century and proliferated in the nineteenth. Many of the influential theories borrowed from classical sources. One of the first authors to pen a major, influential work of racial theory was Johann Blumenbach.

Blumenbach was a German professor who taught at the Georg-August University at Göttingen beginning in the mid-1770s. His most noted work includes his dissertation, *De Generis Humani Varietate Natura, or On the Natural Variety of Mankind*, which was published and republished in multiple languages and editions and outlined an early theory of race. Blumenbach was influenced by a number of sources, including Aristotle and his system of classification.<sup>55</sup> In the first edition of his work, Blumenbach describes four varieties of people, not races. In the third edition he postulated five varieties of humanity: Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian, American, and Malay.<sup>56</sup> The comparisons of the varieties of men are based primarily on physical characteristics, but he does not make comparisons between character and temperament. These varieties are considered to be all part of the same species; they are all men but have diverged into five different kinds of men. The Caucasian variety, though, is considered to be the most primeval and

---

<sup>54</sup> Hannaford, 6.

<sup>55</sup> Hannaford, 205.

<sup>56</sup> Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, “On the Natural Variety of Mankind,” in *Slavery, Abolition, and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*, ed. Peter J. Kitson (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), 201-202.

beautiful. As Caucasian peoples have light skin, all other varieties came from them as, it was believed, it was easier to degenerate to brown though much harder for darker to become light.<sup>57</sup>

Blumenbach's work is among the first concerted attempts by modern scholars to classify humanity into categories. All varieties of men, not races, had the same intellectual, psychological, and physical potential. In Blumenbach's paradigm the Caucasian variety was the most ancient and all other varieties were degenerated forms of it. However, he conceded that the classifications had a degree of overlap and were not wholly fixed and immutable.<sup>58</sup> Blumenbach's theories were later utilized and expanded to create a fuller theory of race.

With the philosophical groundwork laid by Blumenbach and others, including John Locke and Carolus Linnaeus, later figures applied the theory to history and natural history.<sup>59</sup> The theory of race became an integral part of how society understood their past, present, and future. Figures such as Barthold Niebuhr, Arthur Comte de Gobineau, Charles Darwin, Louis Agassiz, and Samuel Morton all contributed different elements to the theory of racism.

The German scholar, Barthold Niebuhr, was an influential historian of ancient Rome. His *History of Rome*, published in 1828, is a significant work in numerous respects, such as its historiographical methods regarding ancient history. He was influential in bringing ideas of race into the study of past societies. Specifically he

---

<sup>57</sup> Blumenbach, 205.

<sup>58</sup> Hannaford, 208.

<sup>59</sup> Hannaford, 274.

understood the conflicts between the Etruscans and Latins as racially-based. Tribal conflicts in early Roman history were described as racial in nature, including the conflicts between Patricians and Plebeians.<sup>60</sup> Numerous authors followed Niebuhr's example and saw race as a major factor which shaped human history.

Niebuhr also placed great value on language and the discipline of philology. The study of languages and their historical development was closely connected with, and important to, the development of racial theory. In 1786 the British scholar Sir William Jones noted the similarities between Sanskrit and Greek and Latin and posited a common origin.<sup>61</sup> Following Jones' revelation, philologists across Europe studied languages in the hopes of determining human origins through studying the development of languages.<sup>62</sup>

Philologists believed if they could trace the evolution of languages they could also determine where the races of the world derived. One scholar, Alexander von Humboldt wrote "the vast domain of language, in whose varied structure we see mysteriously reflected the destinies of nations, is most intimately associated with the affinity of races."<sup>63</sup> Languages were tied with the history and fate of races. They were also linked with origins, which were a key factor in studying race. As a part of the philologists studies they classified languages comparable to how biologists classified flora and fauna, and how racial theorists classified humanity.

---

<sup>60</sup> Hannaford, 238.

<sup>61</sup> William Jones, "Discourse III" in *Discourses Delivered Before the Asiatic Society: And Miscellaneous Papers, on the Religion, Poetry, Literature, Etc. of the Nations of India*, ed. James Elmes (London: W.N Carpenter, 1824), 28-29.

<sup>62</sup> Hannaford, 241.

<sup>63</sup> Alexander von Humboldt, *Cosmos: A Sketch of A Physical Description of the Universe*, trans. E.C. Otte (New York: Harper Brothers Publishing, 1866), 351.

Many of the classifications created by nineteenth century philologists are still used today. Languages such as Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, German, and English were found to be derived from a common source, which was labeled Indo-European. Another language family was called Hamito-Semitic, now referred to as Afro-Asiatic, and includes languages such as Arabic, Aramaic, Akkadian, Canaanite and Ugaritic. The nomenclature borrowed from the old division of the world into three groups, the descendents of the sons of the Biblical figure Noah: Ham, Shem, and Japhet.

This tripartite division of humanity was supported by a major proponent of racial theory, Arthur Comte de Gobineau. His work entitled *The Inequality of Human Races* is considered one of the first real works expounding the theory of pseudo-scientific racism. Gobineau's contribution to the pseudo-scientific field of racism can hardly be overstated. Reviewing all his ideas, and their impact on racial theory, would prove an immense task, however, a selection of his most salient points deserves close attention.

Gobineau saw race as the primary factor which shaped history. In his dedication to the work he states he came by "the conviction that the racial question overshadows all other problems of history, that it holds the key to them all, and that the inequality of the races from whose fusion a people is formed is enough to explain the whole course of its destiny."<sup>64</sup> For Gobineau, the importance of race is supreme. It is through the lens of race the human experience is most clearly seen.

In the mind of Gobineau there are three distinct races: white, yellow, and black. All existing varieties of humanity are due to various mixings of the original three races.

---

<sup>64</sup> Arthur de Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, trans. Adrian Collins (London: William Heinemann, 1915), xiv.



Membership among any of the races imparted on an individual their physical and moral character, which was permanent. That is to say, race is in the blood, not conditioned by climate, geography, institutions, or any other mutable factor. Race is a permanent condition in any individual. However, that does not mean races are wholly stable entities.

Gobineau argued the races have undergone a process of degeneration. Through mixed marriages and the mixing of blood, the races have intermingled and hence become less pure. This mixing has a direct impact on the quality of race, and consequently on civilization. “The word *degenerate*, when applied to a people, means (as it ought to mean) that the people has no longer the same intrinsic value as it had before, because it has no longer the same blood in its veins, continual adulterations having gradually affected the quality of that blood.”<sup>65</sup> Only through the mixing of blood could both the positive and negative features of a race be fully explained. For example, the Semitic people were originally part of the white race but intermingled with the already contaminated Hamitic peoples, and to a lesser extent the black race.

The mixing of the races brought about degeneration because, in Gobineau’s understanding, the races were inherently unequal. The white race, according to Gobineau, was the supreme race, naturally superior to both the yellow race and the black race. It was the black race, or “negroid variety,” which was inherently the lowest as its “animal character, that appears in the shape of the pelvis, is stamped on the negro from

---

<sup>65</sup> de Gobineau, 25.

birth, and foreshadows his destiny.”<sup>66</sup> To demonstrate his thesis, Gobineau cites ten of the world’s greatest civilizations and suggests each was started by the work of members of the white race; more specifically, the Aryan, or Indo-European, race of antiquity which was the white race in its purest, devoid of the contaminating effects of the yellow and black races.

Gobineau’s work popularized numerous racist ideas, though it was not until numerous years after initially published. His work influenced the work of numerous later authors who amended some of his assertions and built on others. For example, following the work of Darwin, the concept of polygenesis gained popularity and Gobineau’s monogenesis was rejected. Additionally, Gobineau had a favorable attitude toward Jews which was later abandoned as secular, racially based Anti-Semitism became a social phenomenon. In fact, Gobineau went to great lengths to separate the Canaanites, or Phoenicians, from the Hebrews in his racial classification. Even though philologists and biblical scholars had long known Hebrew and Canaanite were mutually intelligible and essentially dialects of a single language.<sup>67</sup> Despite the universally recognized linguistic affinities, Gobineau believed the Canaanites to be Hamitic people, and severely contaminated by the black race. The Hebrews, he believed were Semitic, and part of the white race, which accounted for their positive aspects, but they too became contaminated by mixing with the black and corrupted Hamitic races. This differs quite a bit from the

---

<sup>66</sup> de Gobineau, 205.

<sup>67</sup> Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, vol. 1, *The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 168.

majority of nineteenth century racist authors who, following the linguistic evidence, classified both Jews and Canaanites as Semitic.<sup>68</sup>

Many of Gobineau's ideas, though, were widely believed and perpetuated, especially in the latter part of the nineteenth century.<sup>69</sup> Such concepts include the inherent inequality of the races. The notion the white race was the caretaker of civilization in addition to being physically, intellectually, and morally superior to all other races. Furthermore, an individual's race was immutable. No force could alter one's race, and the qualities it imparted upon them, as race was inherited from birth. It was in the blood and thus one's race, and the destiny associated with it, were fixed permanently.

In addition to Gobineau, Charles Darwin contributed to racial theory. Darwin's discoveries, while a passenger aboard the H.M.S. Beagle, are well known. He developed a theory of evolution and applied it to the natural world in which natural selection was the primary agent responsible for the change of species.<sup>70</sup> Darwin's theory of evolution became accepted throughout the scientific community to explain the diversity of species which exists. The evolutionary theory was applied to the natural world, including man. Throughout his career, Darwin applied his theory of evolution to humans biologically. He focused on the biological aspect of race, and the mixing of races.

In regards to race, Darwin recognized the existence of races and variations within them, though admitted races have a great deal in common. He notes there are more similarities among even the most disparate races than many people believe. The most

---

<sup>68</sup> Bernal, 365.

<sup>69</sup> Hannaford, 272.

<sup>70</sup> Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1864), 61.

obvious racial distinction Darwin noted was skin color, though he also suggests less obvious differences, including variation in intellectual competencies among the races.<sup>71</sup> Though admitting to races, and racial distinctions, Darwin believed them to all be a part of the same species, which evolved to reach its current form. In Darwin's theory, races are biological classifications, comparable to the classification of sub-species.<sup>72</sup>

The distinctions between the races were discussed in greater detail by a number of scholars including Louis Agassiz. The prominent Swiss scholar immigrated to the United States in the early 1840s and greatly contributed to the study of natural history in America.<sup>73</sup> In regards to race, Agassiz was both a creationist and a polygenist. He believed different species of man had been created, with the Biblical Adam being the progenitor of the white race.<sup>74</sup> As separate species, each race bears unique characteristics. In the *Christian Examiner* Agassiz described “the indomitable, courageous, proud Indian,” the “submissive obsequious, imitative negro,” and the “tricky, cunning, and cowardly Mongolian!”<sup>75</sup> Agassiz asserts these “facts,” the characteristic attitudes or temperaments of the races, prove their inequality. The races all fell somewhere along the spectrum where the Caucasian race was superior and the black race inferior. A contemporary of Agassiz, Samuel Morton, not only agreed but attempted to prove it scientifically.

---

<sup>71</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1896), 167.

<sup>72</sup> Darwin, *Descent of Man*, 175.

<sup>73</sup> Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), 75.

<sup>74</sup> Gould, 78.

<sup>75</sup> Louis Agassiz “The Diversity of Origin of the Human Race,” *Christian Examiner* 49 (July, September, November 1850): 144.

Morton hierarchically classified races using the practice of craniometry. He believed the size of an individual's brain determined his or her intellectual capacity. As the volume of the cranial cavity reflects the size of the brain, Morton measured the size of various skulls from individuals of various races in an attempt to determine which race had, on average, the largest brains, and thus the greatest intellectual potential. In two major volumes Morton published the results of his study in which he determined Caucasian people had the greatest internal capacity, followed by Mongolian, Malay, American, and finally Ethiopian.<sup>76</sup> Despite statistical errors and faulty assumptions Morton's work remained very popular as it validated widely held beliefs with "science."

Throughout the nineteenth century, and into the twentieth, racism was a popular theory guiding understanding of society and history. It was within this intellectual context R.A.S. Macalister first excavated Gezer and wrote about the history of the ancient Near East. Racial theory informed his understanding of the ancient world, and provided him with the vocabulary necessary to express his ideas. Macalister never formally concerned himself with studying race, instead writing on archaeology and history. However, throughout his works, the idea of race is present and never fully explained or clarified.

In 1911 Macalister published a book discussing the history of the Philistines. Racial theory, though not explicitly cited, is clearly present. On the first page he suggests the mighty Egyptian civilization "show evident signs of having been at least crossed with

---

<sup>76</sup> Gould, 86.

a Semitic strain at some period early in their long and wonderful history.”<sup>77</sup> When Macalister addresses the origins of the Philistines he first uses language and philology as clues. He discusses the nature of the Philistine language, using only etymology from names and supposed loan words in the Hebrew Bible. He does not believe the Philistines spoke a Semitic language early in their history, and thus were not Semitic people. Although he is not fully convinced of it himself, he notes that several scholars believe the Philistines were of Aryan stock.<sup>78</sup> Macalister believed the Philistines were not Semitic, but originated from Greece, and attributes the invention of the alphabet to them. Thus, the alphabet, previously thought to be Phoenician and borrowed into Greek, was originally Greek, and popularized by Phoenicians and Hebrews.<sup>79</sup> The alphabet, which “laid the foundation-stone of civilization,” was thus attributable to pre-Hellenic Greeks and not the Semitic Phoenicians.

Beyond language, other popular markers of race are noted. He discusses the Philistines along with other non-Semitic tribes of the Sea Peoples and immediately discusses the color of their skin; the Shekelesh and Philistines were yellow skinned and the Tursha were red skinned.<sup>80</sup> He invokes racist ideas when he discusses the Philistines’ migration to the Levant. He posits “a people, or rather a group of peoples, the remnant – the degenerate remnant if you will – of a great civilization, settled on the Palestine coast.”<sup>81</sup> Macalister attributes the decline of the Philistines to the activities of the

---

<sup>77</sup> R.A. Stewart Macalister, *The Philistines: Their History and Civilization* (London: Oxford University Press, 1913), 1.

<sup>78</sup> Macalister, *Philistines: History and Civilization*, 13.

<sup>79</sup> Macalister, *Philistines: History and Civilization*, 129.

<sup>80</sup> Macalister, *Philistines: History and Civilization*, 120.

<sup>81</sup> Macalister, *Philistines: History and Civilization*, 114.

Israelite kings, but he also suggests climate played a role. As foreigners in a new land their physical constitution did not adjust. “The climate of that country guards it for its Semitic heirs, and Philistine and Crusader alike must submit to the laws of human limitations.”<sup>82</sup>

In Macalister’s report on his excavations at Gezer, racist ideas are also present. Stereotype and a sense of superiority are evident when discussing the ancient residents of Gezer. The “pre-Semitic” inhabitants are characterized variously as the “primitive race” in a “settlement of savages.”<sup>83</sup> When discussing the Semitic history of the city he doubts the biblical story in which the king of Gezer aids another Canaanite city because of “Oriental procrastination.”<sup>84</sup> Macalister utilized craniometric terminology while discussing the osteology of the ancient Gezerites. He characterizes the pre-Semitic inhabitants as dolichocephalic, meaning it has a low score on a cephalic index and thus a low cranial volume, while he sees greater diversity among the Semitic residents of Gezer. Macalister describes in further detail the osteological remains from the Semitic era of the city. He notes at least two crania “markedly negroid in type” and several were characteristic of Egypt. Of the crania recovered and examined, the majority were of moderate size, while only a few were large; no craniometric conclusions were explicitly drawn.<sup>85</sup> He does suggest the “race to which these bones belonged” differed very little from the modern fellahîn whose heads are “almost all dolicho-ellipsoid.” There is a marked distinction, according to Macalister, between the remains found in the tombs of

---

<sup>82</sup> Macalister, *Philistines: History and Civilization*, 61.

<sup>83</sup> Macalister, *Philistines: History and Civilization*, 6-7.

<sup>84</sup> Macalister, *Philistines: History and Civilization*, 16.

<sup>85</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 1, 60.

Semitic residents and those found in the Philistine graves which resemble those discovered in Crete.<sup>86</sup>

Even though Macalister does not promote racist ideas, their presence in his writings indicates he was a product of his times. He characterized groups of people as races because that was the popularly and scholarly accepted classification. Not all anthropologists were racial theorists, some, such as Franz Boas opposed pseudo-scientific racism. It was not until after World War II that the widely accepted notion of race was challenged within the scholarly community, particularly by the eminent anthropologist Ashley Montagu who, following the end of World War II and the foundation of the United Nations, worked with other scholars for UNESCO to write a statement against racism. One such concept challenged by Montagu is race as a biological, immutable, destiny of inequality which is inherited.<sup>87</sup> Modern study in anthropology and genetics show scientific racism is not based on biological realia.

With the decline of scientific racism, and the classification of people biologically, a new paradigm came to prominence: ethnicity. Instead of organizing people into categories on a biological basis, sociologists and anthropologists began to see groups of people as socially created constructs. Just as racial theory was developed gradually, so too were theories of ethnicity.

### *Ethnicity*

Any discussion of ethnicity must grapple with the ideas of Fredrik Barth. Barth's importance cannot be over stated. One scholar comments "work on the subject

---

<sup>86</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 1, 64.

<sup>87</sup> Ashley Montagu, et al., *The Race Question*, UNESCO, Paris. 1950.



(ethnicity) has even been dated B.B. (before Barth) and A.B. (after Barth), according to its relationship to the founding work of the new paradigm.”<sup>88</sup> This new paradigm was outlined in the Introduction to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, a collection of essays edited by Barth and published in 1969; in it he posits an understanding of ethnicity which has become the benchmark for nearly all subsequent discussions of ethnicity. His discussion must be the starting point for the development of a working definition of ethnic identity.

Barth begins his study with a review of prior understandings of ethnicity. He notes four criteria which formerly were interpreted as markers of ethnicity. The first is a “largely biologically self-perpetuating” group, the second is a shared cultural foundation, “realized in overt unity in cultural forms,” and the third is the group constitutes a “field of communication and interaction,” or it shares a linguistic paradigm. While the final criterion is that it is distinguishable as a discrete unit, separate from others of the same order, and recognizable as such by those from within and those outside of it.<sup>89</sup> The issue Barth raises is that while these criteria do distinguish segments of humanity, they do not uniquely illuminate ethnic groups. The first group can be classified as a race, the second a culture, and the third a language group. But a language group can be represented in multiple ethnic groups, just as a common culture can be spread across disparate

---

<sup>88</sup> Geoff Emberling, “Ethnicity in Complex Societies: Archaeological Perspectives,” *Journal of Archaeological Research* 5 (1997): 295.

<sup>89</sup> Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969), 11.

ethnicities. He understands these to be a priori arguments for ethnic identity which focus on the content of ethnicity.<sup>90</sup>

It is the fourth criterion which Barth sees as the most pertinent to ethnic identity. Self ascription and ascription by others are the critical features of ethnic identity. One must identify with members of a group, and be accepted as a member by such group, while simultaneously being recognized by those not within the group as being a part of a distinct and identifiable group. The primary distinguishing feature of ethnicity, then, is social not linguistic, biological, or cultural.

A similar observation was made over two decades earlier by Jean-Paul Sartre. In his post-war work *Anti-Semite and Jew*, Sartre examines the phenomenon of Anti-Semitism in France. He identifies four parties involved in France: Anti-Semite, democrat, inauthentic Jew, and authentic Jew. Each group defines the others, but conversely is also defined by the other groups. For example, the Anti-Semite is distrustful of society and discontent with his standing in it. He sees the Jew as representative of all he dislikes in society and responsible for his diminished standing and thus hates the Jew for it. “Thus the anti-Semite is in the unhappy position of having a vital need for the very enemy he wishes to destroy.”<sup>91</sup> The Jew is necessary for the Anti-Semite as he needs an object for his hatred. Sartre suggests if the Jew did not exist, the Anti-Semite would create him.<sup>92</sup> Conversely, the Jew, particularly the inauthentic Jew, reacts to the Anti-Semite’s false understanding of them and yearns to live a life which

---

<sup>90</sup> Marcus, Banks, *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 12.

<sup>91</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, trans. George J. Becker (New York: Schocken Books Inc., 1948), 28.

<sup>92</sup> Sartre, 13.

disproves the Anti-Semite's perception of them. Sartre demonstrates how different social groups recognize and form, sometimes even create, other social groups. Without self-ascription and ascription by others, the groups do not exist.

The manner in which self-ascription and ascription by others is done, Barth suggests, is done in a number of ways. Cultural differences and similarities cannot be used as simple ethnic markers but they can be used to help determine ethnicity. However, there is no objective list of such ethnic markers one can use to distinguish who belongs in which ethnic category. To determine ethnic identity one must identify features "which the actors themselves regard as significant."<sup>93</sup> This task can be difficult as some "cultural features are used by the actors as signals and emblems of differences, others are ignored, and in some relationships radical differences are played down and denied."<sup>94</sup> That is, there are a great number of features which may be ethnically significant such as dress, architecture, and other physical aspects in addition to intangible aspects including language and standards of morality. These features can vary from group to group and are not necessarily static. As a group is faced with changing societal circumstances it is possible its emblems of ethnic identity can change. Furthermore, the features of significance to the actors can vary from things which are foundational to daily life or can be so innocuous they go unnoticed by those outside the group.

Given the fact that the characteristics which mark an ethnic group can change, Barth determines the key to understanding ethnic units is through boundary maintenance. Even if everything which marks a group as different from other groups, features which

---

<sup>93</sup> Barth, 14.

<sup>94</sup> Barth, 14

are mutually understood as separating them, change, “the fact of continuing dichotomization between members and outsiders allows us to specify the nature of continuity, and investigate the changing cultural form and content.” Thus, an objective list of ethnic markers, a cultural list of ethnic content, fails to identify ethnicity. The key to understanding ethnicity is through examining boundaries of an ethnicity, “not the cultural stuff that it encloses.”<sup>95</sup>

Ethnicity, then, in Barth’s view, is a continual process of boundary maintenance. A “boundary” is a social, not territorial, divider between people, though of course the social boundary may be recognizable territorially. These boundaries, though, are by no means impermeable. In fact, Barth notes there is a nearly constant flow of people across them yet the boundaries persist. He suggests ethnic distinctions are not diminished by the flow of people and ideas across boundaries but are strengthened, and the exchange of personnel and ideas is necessary to the maintenance of boundaries. While ethnic boundaries endure “stable, persisting, and often vitally important social relations are maintained.”<sup>96</sup> These relationships across ethnic boundaries often are the basis for the dichotomization in ethnic identity. One cannot be a part of an inclusive group without knowledge or contact with an “other” with which to compare, as in Sartre’s view the Anti-Semite needs the Jew to exist as an object of his or her discontent. Barth states “ethnic groups only persist as significant units if they imply marked difference in

---

<sup>95</sup> Barth, 15.

<sup>96</sup> Barth, 10.

behavior, i.e. persisting cultural differences.”<sup>97</sup> Thus a flow of personnel and maintaining relationships across ethnic boundaries are vital to the maintenance of ethnic boundaries.

Following Barth’s seminal work a number of other anthropologists began delving into studies of ethnicity. Scholars including Yulian Bromley, Abner Cohen, Pierre Bourdieu, and G. Carter Bentley, began to parse out the difficulties in understanding ethnicity. In their works the various spectra which would be, and continue to be, debated emerged. The first, and most important, debate within discussions of ethnic identity is that of primordialism and instrumentalism.

Those who espouse the primordial perspective believe ethnic identity is an innate part of the human experience. In this view “ethnicity is a permanent and essential condition” under which all humans exist.<sup>98</sup> The development of an ethnic identity is a natural and fundamental aspect of all individuals. The primordialist argument borrows a great deal from racial theory, simply substituting ethnicity for race as the innate feature of the human experience.

Opposing this perspective is the instrumentalist view. According to this position ethnic identities are constructed as a response to an external situation. Thus, an ethnic identity fundamentally serves a purpose. This view suggests ethnic groups form and maintain ethnic identity for a reason, to achieve some sort of social, economic, or political purpose.<sup>99</sup> Ethnicity is not an inert, static, or passive form of identity; it is actively used to benefit those who bear the ethnic identity. Both the primordial and

---

<sup>97</sup> Barth, 15.

<sup>98</sup> Banks, 17.

<sup>99</sup> Emberling, 306.

instrumental views have flaws and numerous scholars have attempted to reconcile them. The crux of this argument is from where does ethnicity come? The answer is somewhere along a spectrum with the primordial standpoint on one extreme and the instrumentalist on the other. Every treatment of ethnicity must grapple with these opinions and place itself somewhere on the continuum between either extreme.

Nearly all of the major scholars of ethnicity either fit somewhere on the spectrum or posit some sort of resolution between the two stances. For example, according to Barth, ethnic identity is somewhere between primordial and instrumental. Barth says of ethnic identity “it is imperative in that it cannot be disregarded and temporarily set aside by other definitions of the situation. The constraints on a person’s behavior which spring from his ethnic identity thus tend to be absolute.”<sup>100</sup> Thus, in his view, ethnicity is not something which can be easily constructed or set aside to suit a particular purpose in the way instrumentalist advocates do. However, his main thesis is ethnic identity is constantly changing despite the fact the ethnic boundary is maintained. On the spectrum between primordialist and instrumentalist Barth treads middle ground as he sees ethnic identity as a superordinate identity compared to other types of identity such as sex or status, yet it does change when the circumstances demand it. His work is not focused on the genesis of ethnicity, though, the way numerous other scholars do.

Some put forth extremely overt primordialist theories on ethnicity. One such example comes from the former Soviet Union. Yulian Bromley developed a theory of ethnicity, along with a number of other Soviet anthropologists, with a strong primordialist

---

<sup>100</sup> Barth, 17.

foundation. The Ethnos Theory developed by Bromley suggests there exists both “ethnos” and “ethnikos” which are generic and specific manifestations of ethnicity respectively.<sup>101</sup> An “ethnos” is defined as a “historically formed community” which shares “stable cultural features, certain distinctive psychological traits, and the consciousness of their unity as distinguished from other similar communities.” This ethnos is stable and constant, such as the Ukrainian “ethnikos” which existed under feudalism, capitalism, and socialism.<sup>102</sup> While the core ethnic identity is influenced and manipulated by conditions throughout time, such as the economic epochs proposed by Marxism, the innate core identity is persistent throughout time. Even though Ethnos Theory is decidedly primordialist it still leaves room for instrumentalist notions as it allows for external factors, such as economic and political circumstances, to impact the manifestation of the core ethnos.

The instrumentalist perspective is most strongly championed by the British anthropologist Abner Cohen. Based on field work in Africa he developed a theory of ethnicity based on its instrumentality. He proposes ethnicity as “political ethnicity” which functions as a means for a group to accomplish a purpose and not an innate form of identity. Ethnic identity is an *ad hoc* mechanism which is created when it is salient to the affected group. In Cohen’s understanding ethnicity is not a central feature of identity but is an interest group which exploits aspects of a group’s common culture.<sup>103</sup> Crawford Young states ethnic groups exist as a weapon used to pursue a common, collective

---

<sup>101</sup> Yulian Bromley, “The Term *Ethnos* and its Definition,” in *Soviet Ethnology and Anthropology Today*, ed. Yulian Bromley (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), 71-72.

<sup>102</sup> Bromley, 69.

<sup>103</sup> Abner Cohen, *Two-Dimensional Man: An Essay on the Anthropology of Power and Symbolism in Complex Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 91.

advantage for the group.<sup>104</sup> The spectrum between primordialism and instrumentalism runs from those who view ethnic identity as an innate, natural expression of identity to those who view it as an ever changing, fluid avenue for groups to achieve a goal.

Some researchers attempt to reconcile, or transcend, the debate between primordialism and instrumentalism. One important example is the theory proposed by G. Carter Bentley. He states the debate between primordialism and instrumentalism has dominated the debate within studies of ethnicity to such a degree other aspects of ethnic identity have become obscured. Both theories have serious shortcomings, as neither fully answers how groups recognize the factors contributing to a shared identity. The instrumentalist theories fails to acknowledge the individual's sense of belonging and from where it comes while the primordialist theories fail to acknowledge how specific circumstances influence ethnic expression.<sup>105</sup>

Thus, there is a need to resolve the conflict. Bentley proposes a theory called practice, or praxis, theory. His hypothesis relies heavily on the work of the French scholar Pierre Bourdieu and his development of the idea of "habitus." Bourdieu's theory posits there is a habitus, which is a "generative principle" which creates normative practices in people. The habitus is learned, in the same way a child learns language. It is learned through inculcation, on a largely unconscious level, and informs individuals as to what are reasonable and unreasonable beliefs and behaviors.<sup>106</sup> As the habitus is largely unconscious, it is beyond manipulation though capable of change, particularly from

---

<sup>104</sup> Crawford Young, "The Temple of Ethnicity," *World Politics* 35 (1983): 660.

<sup>105</sup> G. Carter Bentley, "Ethnicity and Practice," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29 (1987): 26.

<sup>106</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 77.



generation to generation. The practices it produce are learned and the product of habit, they are not innate behaviors.

Bentley developed a theory of ethnicity based on Bourdieu's theory. He suggests it is the habitus which "is the locus of ethnic identification."<sup>107</sup> It is the practices which a community shares which bind it together as an ethnicity. The sensation of ethnic affinity is based on shared experience and lifestyles above all else.<sup>108</sup> Those who live lives with a certain degree of commonality to those around them, those with whom they share a habitus, are inclined to share an identity. Bentley suggests praxis theory surpasses both primordialist and instrumentalist theories. The "preconscious patterns of practice,"<sup>109</sup> or the habitus, accounts for the primordial sentiment described by some anthropologists, though it also accounts for the shared beliefs and behaviors characterizing instrumentalist theories of ethnicity.

### *Ethnicity and Archaeology*

The debates regarding ethnicity have been raging within anthropological circles for decades. One thing is clear; the nuances of ethnicity are difficult to understand even when scholars study ethnic groups which exist in the modern era. The debate is often misrepresented or not fully understood by those outside the disciplines which foster the dialogue. The waters get significantly muddier when archaeologists enter the discussion and apply various theories of ethnicity to ancient peoples and the archaeological record. The interdisciplinary effort is admirable yet it is apparent not all archaeologists

---

<sup>107</sup> Banks, 45.

<sup>108</sup> Bentley, 32.

<sup>109</sup> Bentley, 48.

understand the many theories of ethnicity or are even well versed in the literature regarding ethnicity. It is no wonder the archaeological community, particularly those who study Syro-Palestinian archaeology, is split regarding ethnicity in the archaeological record. Essentially the debate centers on the question of whether or not ethnicity manifests itself in the material culture left in the archaeological record. And if so, how can archaeologists differentiate between ancient ethnicities?

The first major issue in identifying ethnic communities in antiquity is whether true ethnic groups existed at such a time. If not, then there really is no purpose in speaking of ethnicity in the ancient world. However, there is evidence of ethnic communities in the distant past.<sup>110</sup> Ancient societies themselves used ethnonyms to differentiate one group from another. Egyptian historical texts make reference to various ethnic groups. Official Egyptian sources spoke of Egypt's enemies, often referred to as the Nine Bows, in terms of power and prestige painting foreign groups in a decidedly negative light, though, it is apparent non-Egyptians did settle and even thrive in Egypt.<sup>111</sup> Ramses III during his conflict with the Sea Peoples records a number of ethnic elements including Thekel, Shekelesh, and Denyen among others.<sup>112</sup> Cuneiform texts specifically mention ethnic groups, including Amorites and Akkadians.<sup>113</sup> Canaanite and Biblical texts clearly differentiate between ethnicities. If the ancient sources freely used ethnic

---

<sup>110</sup> Kathryn A. Kamp and Norman Yoffee, "Ethnicity in Ancient Western Asia during the Early Second Millennium B.C.: Archaeological Assessments and Ethnoarchaeological Perspectives," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 237 (1980): 89.

<sup>111</sup> Ian Shaw, "Egypt and the Outside World," in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* ed. Ian Shaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 323.

<sup>112</sup> "Northern War, Year 8" in *The Twentieth Dynasty*, vol. 4 of *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents from the Earliest of Times to the Persian Conquest*, trans. and ed. James Henry Breasted (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906), 38.

<sup>113</sup> Kamp and Yoffee, 89.

terms, modern sources ought to be able to use them as well. Furthermore, if they were a part of the ancient world, they ought to be studied if we are to have a full understanding of antiquity, and to not attempt to study them is to ignore an important aspect of ancient society.

If archaeologists are to identify any such ethnic group in the archaeological record, though, they must have a working understanding of ethnicity. They must be clear about what they are looking before determining how it will manifest in the archaeological record. Without such an understanding, there is no way to know how ethnicity will appear archaeologically. Archaeologists from around the world have dealt with this issue, and those who study the ancient Near East are no exception.

Archaeologists have dealt with ethnicity in a wide variety of ways. Some assume ethnicity *a priori* or discuss it without any acknowledgement of the vast body of literature provided mostly by anthropologists.<sup>114</sup> Some have resorted to a simple list of cultural traits with which to identify ethnicity. Others, though, have endeavored to engage the literature on ethnicity and translate it to archaeology with varying degrees of success.

A number of archaeologists have conducted studies on various aspects of ethnicity and material culture, and a number of specialists in ethnicity have discussed how it might apply to archaeology. The literature on such topics is vast, but there is considerable overlap between numerous studies, some studies are better than others, and some do an excellent job of summarizing the state of scholarship. Not all need be examined in detail here, only those which offer pertinent information to the study at hand.

---

<sup>114</sup> Robert D. Miller II, "Identifying Earliest Israel," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 333 (2004): 55.

In an article by Kathryn Kamp and Norman Yoffee, ethnicity in archaeology is addressed directly. The shortcomings of archaeological inquiry to detect ethnic groups are discussed followed by the presentation of an alternative model for the identifying ethnicity archaeologically. They come to the conclusion ethnicity can be identified in the archaeological remains of complex societies.

In complex societies, such as those in the Levant during the Bronze and Iron Ages, ethnic identity is just one type of identity existing alongside others. It differs, though, from other types of identity including familial, class, and gender in that it is based on both ascription and self-ascription, as described by Barth, not on immutable or relatively established criterion. This makes ethnic identity very flexible as the criterion for membership may change over time. Furthermore it can include other types of identity within it; nomads and sedentary people, villagers and urbanites, poor and wealthy can all share the same ethnic identity. For example, a text from Alalakh lists people all described as *'apiru* soldiers, and includes an individual called a “son of the land of Canaan.”<sup>115</sup> The *'apiru* were a socially defined group who rejected traditional authorities and lived outside the law. The term *'apiru* is a socioeconomic one and is not used in ancient sources as an ethnic designation.<sup>116</sup>

How ethnicity is manifested varies from group to group. Any trait-list used to identify ethnic groups “entail prior assumptions of the analyst about the behavior of an ethnic group.”<sup>117</sup> Instead each “behavioral correlate” to “ethnic affiliation” ought to be

---

<sup>115</sup> Rainey, “Who is a Canaanite?” 3.

<sup>116</sup> Nadav Na'aman, “Habiru and Hebrews: The Transfer of a Social Term to the Literary Sphere,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 45 (1986): 278.

<sup>117</sup> Kamp and Yoffee, 88.

sought out and analyzed instead of assuming a list of characteristics will show the boundaries of an ethnic group.<sup>118</sup> Finding these correlates in the archaeological record requires different methods than have previously been employed in the field.

Archaeological methods in use are not devised to identify ethnic groups specifically. The methods used today by archaeologists have been developed to identify cultures.<sup>119</sup> Continuity in assemblages is sought, and features which break the mold are considered to represent a foreign element or an intrusive cultural feature. Essentially archaeologists tend to use trait-lists in their excavations and use these to delineate cultural units. A common religion, language, ceramic repertoire, and funerary customs are all excellent indicators of a common culture. If one relies on continuity in the material cultural assemblage to determine ethnicity as though it were culture, a true ethnic group will never be identified archaeologically. Such reliance assumes “a high degree of intragroup homogeneity and infrequent and unimportant interaction with other groups”<sup>120</sup> which scholars, including Barth, have clearly shown is not the case in ethnicity.

Kamp and Yoffee suggest an alternative model for the interpretation of the archaeological material which will facilitate a better understanding of ethnicity in antiquity. Norman Kamp identifies three types of “behaviors constellations” associated with ethnic affiliation.<sup>121</sup> The first type involves behavior concerned with marking ethnic identity through overt ethnic symbols. It may include numerous things including clothing, language, ceremonies, or any number of things, some of which may be reflected

---

<sup>118</sup> Kamp and Yoffee, 88.

<sup>119</sup> Kamp and Yoffee, 94.

<sup>120</sup> Kamp and Yoffee, 96.

<sup>121</sup> Kamp and Yoffee, 96.

in the archaeological record. The second includes behaviors learned as a part of socialization and upbringing in a specific ethnic group. In other words, some ethnically charged behaviors are learned, most often they are learned as children are reared in their parents' home. Additionally, household activities may carry ethnic significance and these would all be learned behaviors, such as household production techniques, dietary and cooking methods, and even domestic architectural styles. These behaviors are learned not from contact with other groups, but are behaviors perpetuated within the group regardless of outside contact. The final behavior reflects economic or political strategies on the basis of ethnicity. It is the opposite of the second in that it describes such behaviors which are used to maintain or benefit the ethnic group, especially when outside contact is available. Such behaviors might include favoring a merchant of the same ethnicity, or specializing in an ethnically specific vocation. Any of these may be represented materially; a community favoring a merchant will likely reveal a pattern materially of the same wares would be spread throughout a site.<sup>122</sup>

However, while all three of these behaviors are important to ethnic affiliation and are all capable of being represented materially, each material pattern may have other explanations. Items which may be symbolic of ethnic identity could just as well represent religious or political membership. Certain dietary practices may be related to ethnic purposes or could be related to a simple lack of resources or the lack of availability

---

<sup>122</sup> Kamp and Yoffee, 97.

of certain foodstuffs.<sup>123</sup> While the distribution of similar wares around a site may be because a merchant was selling them at a lower cost and had no ethnic purpose at all.

Even though each behavior's material representation can be explained by some other non-ethnic behavior, it is beyond doubt that some behaviors are ethnically charged, and some of those are manifested in material culture. The difficulty is determining which items reflect which behaviors. One activity and its material correlate does not necessarily indicate ethnic affiliation is at work, but if multiple behaviors with ethnic significance are detected it allows researchers to conclude with a high degree of probability that ethnic behavior is present and not some other type of behavior.

Israel Finkelstein is a well known Israeli archaeologist specializing in Syro-Palestinian archaeology. He is, perhaps, best known for developing and utilizing the Low Chronology in which he lowers the traditional date of assemblages by close to a century: assemblages traditionally dated to the eleventh century he dates to the tenth, and tenth century assemblages he places in the ninth. Though many archaeologists reject the Low Chronology, none deny Finkelstein is an experienced archaeologist and author and has an excellent command on numerous issues within Syro-Palestinian archaeology, including ethnicity. Finkelstein, unlike some of his peers, demonstrates a familiarity with the available literature on ethnicity. His views on ethnicity in the archaeological record have evolved over his career, beginning with a very positive view to being less certain of the

---

<sup>123</sup> Kamp and Yoffee, 97.

identification of ethnic groups archaeologically. His first major publication, in 1988, practically takes for granted the identification of ethnicity archaeologically.<sup>124</sup>

Finkelstein discussed ethnicity within the specific context of ancient Israel, not as a general theory. The volume entitled *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement* assumes one can identify Israelite settlements archaeologically. Finkelstein does not explicitly define Israelites as an ethnic group but uses the term to describe a “hill country people in the process of settling down.” Finkelstein does not use the term ethnic group or ethnicity to describe the Israelites during the Iron I period, the era under review in the book, as he believes the ethnic boundaries were not quite settled at that point. However, the premise of the study is the identification of a specific people group within the archaeological record. While material culture is primarily what is used to identify “Israelite Settlement” Finkelstein admits a reliance on textual data to determine which group is located where. In regards to the Israelites the pertinent texts include the Merneptah Stele and the Hebrew Bible. The combination of the textual information with archaeological data leaves no doubt for Finkelstein that Israelites can be archaeologically identified. The only difficulty is then identifying Israelites in marginal or border regions. Finkelstein suggests a combination of factors related to material culture ought to be evaluated in tandem to determine the ethnic composition of a site including “function, chronology, and quantity, in addition to location.”<sup>125</sup> In marginal and border regions there were cultural influences from both directions and thus characteristic material

---

<sup>124</sup> Israel Finkelstein, *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*, trans. D. Saltz (Jerusalem, Israel Exploration Society, 1988).

<sup>125</sup> Finkelstein, *Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*, 29.



culture from different cultures or ethnicities may be found side by side. This is why a number of features ought to be evaluated together to determine the ethnic composition of the site. While this task is significantly more difficult it is not impossible, especially if the characteristic material features are clearly differentiated.

Finkelstein has changed his views regarding ethnicity in the archaeological record, though, since his seminal work on Israelite settlements. While he still believes ethnicity can be identified archaeologically he is much more tentative. In his later works Finkelstein tackles ethnicity directly; demonstrating an understanding and familiarity with the literature regarding ethnicity. Ethnicity is defined by Finkelstein as a primarily social construction though it may be expressed in a number of material ways. Finkelstein cites a number of material cultural traits, and social behaviors, which may be ethnically significant, along with the studies which have determined they may be ethnic markers, including language, script, rituals, physical features, dietary choices, architectural forms, clothing styles, mortuary practices, lithics, pottery, weapons, and jewelry.<sup>126</sup>

Anthropologists conducting studies in contemporary ethnic groups can observe these features and determine which are ethnic markers. When these ethnic groups are relics of the distant past it makes it significantly more difficult to determine which features are ethnically charged. Texts pertaining to ancient entities, when available, can be useful tools to determine ethnic boundaries, but they cannot always be seen as reflecting past reality, as the texts themselves can be tools of boundary maintenance and ethnic

---

<sup>126</sup> Israel Finkelstein, "Ethnicity and the Origin of the Iron I Settlers in the Highlands of Canaan: Can the Real Israel Stand Up?" *The Biblical Archaeologist* 59 (1996): 203.

legitimization.<sup>127</sup> Despite all of this, Finkelstein still believes, with caution, ethnic identification can still be made in the archaeological record. Instead of attributing variations in material culture to ethnicity, Finkelstein is more eager to attribute them to socio-economic factors. Where formerly Finkelstein identified Israelite settlements in the Iron I period he has come to see the ethnic development of the Israelites as a slow process in which the ethnic boundaries did not crystallize until later in the Iron II period.<sup>128</sup>

William Dever is another Syro-Palestinian archaeologist and prolific author, as well as one of the excavators to have dug at Gezer. He has published a number of books and articles dealing with numerous topics and issues within Syro-Palestinian archaeology; ethnicity in the archaeological record is just one of the subjects with which he has concerned himself. However, his handling of ethnicity is overly simplified. He continually resorts to using trait-lists to identify ethnicity. To compound the issue he cites Barth's work on ethnicity as his source for the trait-list. He suggests the list useful "if only as a matter of convenience, since the theoretical literature on ethnicity is enormous."<sup>129</sup> He maintains the same five item list even in later works. The trait-list he uses to identify ethnicity is:

1. biologically self-perpetuating;
2. shares a fundamental, recognizable, relatively uniform set of cultural values, including language;
3. constitutes a partly independent 'interaction sphere'
4. have a membership that defines itself, as well as being defined by others, as a category distinct from other categories of the same order;

---

<sup>127</sup> Finkelstein, "Ethnicity and Origin," 204.

<sup>128</sup> Finkelstein, "Ethnicity and Origin," 209.

<sup>129</sup> William G. Dever, "Ceramics, Ethnicity, and the Question of Israel's Origin," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 58 (1995): 201.

5. perpetuate their self-identity both by developing rules for maintaining ethnic boundaries as well as for participating in inter-ethnic social encounters.<sup>130</sup>

While Dever's list is clearly influenced by Barth's work, one would be hard-pressed to find such a trait-list espoused by Barth the way Dever uses it. Nevertheless, Dever utilizes the list to identify ethnic units in the archaeological record. This is a complicated issue as many theorists of ethnicity discourage trait-lists, archaeologists must deal with the material realia and ultimately rely on certain material remains to locate ethnic groups. Instead of using a generic ethnic trait-list, archaeologists ought to develop such lists on a case-by-case basis, evaluating what material remains might characterize each group individually.

While his use of trait-lists simplifies a complicated topic, he does rightly identify material culture as "material correlates of behavior."<sup>131</sup> As a reflection of human behavior, material culture must indicate, among many other things, ethnicity. Thus archaeology can identify ethnic units in the ancient world. However, despite Dever's confidence in the explanatory prowess of the archaeological record, he resorts to textual data when identifying which ethnic group is which in the archaeological record.<sup>132</sup> For example, in his defense of the term "proto-Israelite," Dever cites material culture continuity between Iron I and Iron II sites but also "the reference to 'Israel' on the Merneptah Stele."<sup>133</sup> Additionally, Dever demonstrates ethnic differences between three sites in close proximity, one Canaanite, one Philistine, and one proto-Israelite. The

---

<sup>130</sup> William G. Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 192.

<sup>131</sup> Dever, "Ceramics, Ethnicity, and Israel's Origin," 204.

<sup>132</sup> Dever, "Ceramics, Ethnicity, and Israel's Origin," 208.

<sup>133</sup> Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* 195.

proto-Israelite site is in part identified with biblical evidence.<sup>134</sup> In Dever's opinion archaeology can differentiate between ethnic groups in the ancient world, but textual artifacts are used alongside material remains to help determine which group is which.

In an important article by Geoff Emberling, entitled *Ethnicity in Complex Societies*, an outline for identifying ethnic groups is detailed. After a detailed description of what ethnicity is, Emberling discusses how ethnicity might manifest itself archaeologically. He concludes ethnicity might be manifest in any number of material ways. As evidence Emberling cites over fifty different studies examining material categories including ceramics, architecture, lithics, food, body ornamentation, burial and others as all potentially significant ethnic markers. In order to determine which objects are important ethnically, there are several steps. The first is to "identify a potentially distinctive group" either through stylistic assemblages or typologies, historical ethnonyms, or even modern sources. Second, by comparing with neighboring groups, the social and geographical boundaries can be delimited.<sup>135</sup> Finally, is the identification of the group. The group could be an ethnicity or some other sort of social group including class or political unit.

Ethnoarchaeological studies contribute to the ability of archaeologists to identify ethnicity. Their contribution is twofold: they show ethnicity is not always considered an important form of social identity among certain groups and material culture is more than capable of delineating social boundaries.<sup>136</sup> Among some groups kinship based identities

---

<sup>134</sup> William G. Dever, "Archaeology, Ideology, and the Quest for an 'Ancient' or 'Biblical Israel,'" *Near Eastern Archaeology* 61 (March 1998): 47.

<sup>135</sup> Emberling, 311.

<sup>136</sup> Emberling, 313.

or nationalist identities take precedence over ethnic ones. Ethnic identity should not be assumed to be a primary form of identity and thus a social factor influencing material production. However, whether the primary social identity is ethnic or some other sort of social grouping, material culture is influenced by it and thus can be used to mark social identities. One way to identify such social identities is through historical sources. They can be used either in addition to, or instead of, material culture to identify ethnic groups and other social groups. One of the numerous possible shortcomings of such documents, especially from antiquity, is they are often written by government officials and not by the specific groups they purport to describe.<sup>137</sup> They may lack the critical element of ethnic identity that is self-ascription. While the text might identify a specific group as a coherent ethnicity, it does not mean those within that group identify themselves comparably.

When historical texts are lacking, material culture is able to mark social groupings in the archaeological record. One reliable manner in which material culture is best able to distinguish between ethnicities is in the identification of enclaves. In limited geographical areas where people of a specific ethnicity are highly concentrated distinctiveness in the material culture is much more apparent. In ethnic enclaves numerous processes of ethnic boundary maintenance occur.<sup>138</sup> However, such enclaves may not be readily available for study for every ethnicity and cannot always be relied upon to consistently show ethnic boundaries. Other material features, outside of enclaves, can be used to identify ethnicity though. For instance, important social

---

<sup>137</sup> Emberling, 313.

<sup>138</sup> Emberling, 316.

boundaries are most likely maintained in a number of different ways. Objects important to the maintenance of social boundaries appear frequently; the symbols are used repeatedly to reinforce the boundary. Additionally, stylistic differences and similarities are also possible indicators of social groups. Common styles exhibited across multiple material categories suggest the maintenance or negotiation of a social boundary. If two regions have internally homogenous material cultures, but exhibit variations between them, it is possible the difference is explained by different social groups, including ethnicities.

Emberling suggests differences in material culture can be used to differentiate between social groups. The key is to understand the significance belying stylistic differences within a material cultural assemblage.<sup>139</sup> If the significance can be determined, the type of social group it represents can also be determined whether it be political, class based, or ethnic. Knowing the reason behind stylistic differences is the only way to determine if they represent ethnic boundaries or some other sort of economic or social process.

Ethnicity can, in Emberling's opinion, be determined through careful analysis of material culture. Ethnicity is not a stable social feature; it can manifest itself through any aspect of material culture and can change over time as social conditions change. There are, though, some features which are more stable indicators of ethnicity. Some include

---

<sup>139</sup> Emberling, 319.

household structures and aspects of domestic life including dietary patterns as well as some cultic and ritual activities.<sup>140</sup>

In summary, Emberling believes ethnicity was as vital an aspect of social identity in the ancient world as it is in the modern one. Thus the rules which operate within ethnicity today must have done so in the ancient world as well. This means any aspect of material culture is capable of bearing ethnic symbolism and is usable as a means of ethnic boundary maintenance. However, in order to archaeologically identify ethnicity, one must know which material features are salient ethnically.

Following Emberling, the critical feature in identifying ethnicity archaeologically is determining which features are ethnically important and how those features manifest themselves materially. It acknowledges what anthropologists and most archaeologists consider to be a key element in ethnicity; that is self-ascription. One archaeologist, Raz Kletter, states the core features of ethnicity are in “shared myths, memories, and associations” which are all incorporeal or mental and do not necessarily ever exhibit themselves materially.<sup>141</sup> As ethnicity is based mostly on perception, particularly self-perception, this poses a problem for archaeologists who deal with tangible remains that generally do not reflect perception.<sup>142</sup> He admits there are certain aspects of ethnicity which can be reflected materially, but raises the point there is no way to archaeologically determine which features of an assemblage bear ethnic significance and not some other

---

<sup>140</sup> Emberling, 325.

<sup>141</sup> Raz Kletter “Can a Proto-Israelite Please Stand Up? Notes on Ethnicity of Iron Age Israel and Judah,” in *I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Times: Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Aren Maeir and Pierre de Miroschedji (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 574.

<sup>142</sup> Kletter, “Can a Proto-Israelite Please Stand Up?” 577.

sort of significance. The only way archaeologists can identify ethnicity is with some sort of external help. Written sources are the best available external source available for archaeologists to use.<sup>143</sup> Despite their shortcomings, as generally acknowledged, texts are, in Kletter's opinion, archaeologists' best option for identifying ethnically significant boundaries and their material correlates.

Another archaeologist who discusses ethnicity in the ancient world is Ann Killebrew. In her book *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity* she examines the archaeological remains of Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, and Israelites following the Late Bronze Age. In her study she defines the term ethnicity as simply "group identity." The term is vague enough it allows for a wide variety of interpretations and one cannot suggest such identity did not exist in the ancient world. Ethnicity, to Killebrew, is somewhere between the primordial and instrumentalist viewpoints. It is a process of ethnogenesis and interaction between different groups of people on different levels including but not limited to religion, politics, and the family.<sup>144</sup> While this is an ongoing and dynamic process subject to change, ethnicity represents itself most overtly during times of distress and is used for self-preservation or political purposes.<sup>145</sup> Killebrew has a positive attitude vis-à-vis the identification of ethnicity in the archaeological record. She links this to a change within the archaeological community.

Processual archaeology, or "New Archaeology," which came to prominence during the 1960's and 70's, is methodologically focused on quantitative and scientific

---

<sup>143</sup> Kletter, "Can a Proto-Israelite Please Stand Up?" 577.

<sup>144</sup> Ann E. Killebrew, *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity: An Archaeological Study of Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, and Early Israel 1300-1100 B.C.E.* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 9.

<sup>145</sup> Killebrew, 9.



theories. It is an “objective” archaeology which endeavors to focus on measurable facts and the application of scientific theories.<sup>146</sup> This archaeological system was challenged in the 1980’s and afterward. What developed is often collectively referred to as postprocessual archaeology, which criticized the processual approach declaring it did not adequately account for human agency. Processual archaeology was focused on systems and laws to such an extent it did not fully appreciate the disparate ways in which humans respond to their environmental and social circumstances.<sup>147</sup> Postprocessual archaeology alternatively argues material culture is “meaningfully constituted within its specific context,” individuals and human agency ought to be considered when developing theories of material culture, and history is the closest disciplinary connection to archaeology.<sup>148</sup> In postprocessual archaeological theory human influence on material culture is important and any interpretation of that material culture ought to account for the different human forces which might have affected it, including ethnicity. It is above all contextual, placing stress on the symbolic elements of artifacts and placing them in historical context.<sup>149</sup> Thus, ethnicity might manifest itself in the archaeological record, though there are other factors which are just as capable of influencing material culture as ethnicity.<sup>150</sup> While processual archaeology offers many advantages to understanding ancient cultures, it does not take into account the action of individuals who are not passive agents in cultural or economic systems but are instead active in manipulating

---

<sup>146</sup> Killebrew, 3.

<sup>147</sup> Jesse C Long Jr., “Theory in Archaeology: Culture Change at the End of the Bronze Age,” in *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader*, ed. Suzanne Richard (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 314.

<sup>148</sup> Killebrew, 4.

<sup>149</sup> Kletter, “Pots and Politics,” 19.

<sup>150</sup> Killebrew, 9.

social structures.<sup>151</sup> In regard to ethnicity, Killebrew follows the postprocessual approach affirming ethnicity can be reflected in the material remains recovered archaeologically.

Surveying the literature on ethnicity and ethnicity in archaeology shows a consensus that an ethnic group is a supra-familial social group based primarily upon real or perceived kinship and is recognized as a discrete unit by both members and nonmembers of the group. Ethnicity, which is the phenomenon behind the forming of ethnic groups, is an active process which includes identifying and differentiating between potential constituents.<sup>152</sup> Ethnic groups are above all, based on ascription and self-ascription. Those outside the group acknowledge the existence, and inherent difference, of the group while those within the group mutually acknowledge membership amongst themselves. Both those within and outside of the ethnic group recognize what makes the group separate from others of the same type. Within this paradigm it is even possible for sub-groups to form within the larger whole. Smaller, more exclusive, ethnic identities may form within the larger ethnic identity.

There are a number of features which make an ethnic group different from others and recognizable as a unique unit. Some of the features which differentiate between groups include, but are not limited to, culture, language, belief system, history, moral code, politics, and homeland. Ethnic groups may have any number of such features in common with one another, or they may be drastically different. Such distinctions are fully capable of marking ethnic distinctions, but they do not necessitate them. Only the

---

<sup>151</sup> Matthew Johnson, *Archaeological Theory: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1999), 104.

<sup>152</sup> Emberling, 306.

features determined as significant by those performing the boundary maintenance are relevant for differentiating between ethnic groups.<sup>153</sup> Ethnic groups establish boundaries composed of symbols of social and ethnic significance. These symbols are maintained not only in spite of, but because of, continued contact and relationships beyond the ethnic boundary. Due to the constant flow of information across the ethnic boundary the boundary can fluctuate over time as conditions change. Thus while ethnic groups and ethnicity is a constant form of identity it can grow in importance or evolve if external circumstances make it expedient.

As ethnic identity is not necessarily fixed and is a process of boundary maintenance it is difficult to identify in the archaeological record. If great caution is taken and supplementary sources are used, ethnic groups can be identified archaeologically. What is apparent is that trait-lists are of no use for the identification of ethnic groups in antiquity. Assuming a one-to-one relationship between cultural traits and ethnic ones is fallacious and at best provides a faulty picture of ethnicity in ancient societies. Finding cultural elements from trait-lists is relatively easy archaeologically as modern archaeological methods were designed to identify cultural units.<sup>154</sup>

Postprocessual archaeological theory, however, offers a great deal of potential for examining ethnicity archaeologically. It recognizes the role of human agency in the creation of material culture. The assemblages recovered were created by humans for some purpose. There was a motive behind the formation of the material culture; some sort of social process was the impetus behind its creation. One such impetus is ethnicity.

---

<sup>153</sup> Barth, 14.

<sup>154</sup> Kamp and Yoffee, 94.

Some objects must, then, be understood as markers of ethnicity. The difficulty is in determining which objects serve as such markers. Much of ethnic identity is based on perceptions, and ethnically sensitive features are not limited to tangible material things. Behaviors and ideas are just as capable of carrying ethnic significance. This poses a problem for archaeologists as some features, for example, a particular social greeting of ethnic importance, have absolutely no presence materially. However, some behaviors and ideas may translate into a material representation. Behaviors such as wearing a particular hair style might appear in artistic representations or certain religious beliefs may leave behind material remains at cultic sites. The scholars studying the ancient world are charged with discerning the behavior behind the remains. Additionally, they must determine which features play a role in ethnic boundary maintenance. This challenge extends to other material remains which are not directly related to behaviors. A number of anthropologists and archaeologists have shown certain aspects of material culture are more likely to be of ethnic significance than others. As ethnicity has a significant kinship-based component, it is no surprise that remains pertaining to the domestic sphere are of special import.<sup>155</sup> Many ethnic behaviors and symbols are learned in the household and are conservative indicators of ethnic identity, less prone to situational adaptations. Domestic aspects such as cuisine and modes of household production are just some examples of potential ethnic indicators. The problem still remains, in determining which features are part of ethnic boundary maintenance.

---

<sup>155</sup> Emberling, 325.

Archaeology alone is hard pressed to determine the material remains that represent ethnic indicators. Without some insight into the society, beyond its material remains, archaeology cannot determine what is ethnically sensitive. To determine ethnic markers, additional sources must be consulted. Postprocessual archaeological theory recognizes history as the closest disciplinary tie to archaeology. It is only fitting, then, to look to texts to inform archaeology's shortcomings. Texts are capable of revealing ethnic groups. Some are written from outside sources which observe and name groups they see as distinct, while others are written from an inside perspective. Such texts have varying degrees of value for identifying ethnicity but do contribute to our understanding of ethnicity in the ancient world. Not all texts are of value, and even the ones which are, must have their bias taken into account. Sources that peer into ethnic boundaries from the outside might not fully understand the complexities of the societies they are describing, and especially when describing foreign lands and foreign peoples there is no guarantee such sources will be entirely accurate. If these and other shortcomings are taken into account, however, then texts complementing archaeological data are capable of delineating ethnic boundaries in ancient communities.

## Chapter Three

### The Bronze Age

#### *Gezer in the Bronze Age*

Every excavation at Gezer, excluding the minor forays limited to a few seasons, has recovered material dating to the Bronze Age. R.A.S. Macalister recovered material and architecture dating from the Middle and Late Bronze Age, though he did not call them as such, instead referring to them as Second and Third Semitic. The HUC expedition identified nine general strata dating to the Middle and Late Bronze Ages.<sup>156</sup> The Tandy's excavation has recovered features which date to the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, though not to the extent of prior excavations.

One thing which is clear from all excavations is Gezer was well fortified. In fact, it was better fortified than most Bronze Age city-states in Canaan, the region roughly corresponding to the coastal area west of the Orontes River and Cis-Jordan south of the source of the Orontes River. Not all fortification systems were used simultaneously though. Macalister identified "the foundations of three successive walls."<sup>157</sup> The first wall, Macalister dubbed the "central wall," turned out to be related to the second wall and not a real wall at all.<sup>158</sup> The second wall, the "Inner Wall," was excavated by both Macalister's expedition as well as the HUC team. The final wall noted by Macalister is

---

<sup>156</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer II*, 4-5.

<sup>157</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 1, 236.

<sup>158</sup> William G. Dever et al., "Further Excavations at Gezer, 1967-1971," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 34, no. 4 (December 1971): 101.

the “Outer Wall” which was also noted by successive expeditions, though its date is controversial.

The first Bronze Age fortification constructed was the “Inner Wall.” Based on the ceramic composition of the foundation trench, the “Inner Wall” is dated to the “MB IIB/C, ca. 1650 B.C.” at the latest.<sup>159</sup> The wall encircled the site, running nearly the length of a mile.<sup>160</sup> Its width is about thirteen feet in most places while averaging towers, forty one feet long by twenty four feet wide, every ninety feet.<sup>161</sup> The walls, or their foundations, are preserved up to a height of fifteen feet in some places.<sup>162</sup> The massive foundations of the structure suggest the mudbrick superstructure was immense.

There was a gate complex on the south-western side of the city associated with the already impressive wall. The gate complex was originally discovered by Macalister and designated the “South Gate.” It was subsequently re-excavated in the late sixties and early seventies. Their discoveries confirmed Macalister’s description of them. The gateway has a central passageway with three pairs of orthostats, six feet high and nearly ten feet long, emerging from a mudbrick superstructure preserved, in some places, to a height of seventeen feet. The entry was originally covered, comparable to gates excavated at Ashkelon and Tell Dan.<sup>163</sup>

The gate is not even the most formidable fortification system dating to the Middle Bronze Age. The HUC excavations uncovered the foundations of a massive structure

---

<sup>159</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer II*, 33.

<sup>160</sup> William Dever, “Archaeological Sources for the History of Palestine: The Middle Bronze Age: The Zenith of the Urban Canaanite Era,” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 50 (1987): 156.

<sup>161</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 1, 238.

<sup>162</sup> Dever, “Archaeological Sources for the History of Palestine,” 156.

<sup>163</sup> Dever et al., “Further Excavations at Gezer,” 102.

designated Tower 5017 located just west of the “South Gate.” The towers’ foundations were sunk some fourteen feet and are over fifty feet in width.<sup>164</sup> The stones used in the construction, many hammer dressed, are of varying size, most being over three feet in length, though many stones which comprised the outer face of the wall were larger.<sup>165</sup> Some such stones measure nearly five feet. The construction exhibits a great degree of sophistication as the large stones are fitted together well with smaller stones wedged into the gaps.<sup>166</sup> The tower must have been enormous, completing a gate complex of magnificence unparalleled in all of the Bronze Age. In fact, Tower 5017 is the largest single-phase, pre-Roman stone structure in all of Palestine.<sup>167</sup>

The entire “Inner Wall” structure, including Tower 5017, was further fortified with a *glacis* sometime after the construction of the fortifications was completed; sometime in MB IIC, around 1600 B.C.<sup>168</sup> The stratification from the site clearly shows how, and with what proficiency, the structure was built. A triangular layer of chalk was lain abutting the wall, then a layer of soil and tell debris was poured over the chalk. An additional layer of chalk was put on top with more soil and debris on top of that. The process continued in such a manner until the *glacis* was over twenty-five feet tall and stood at a forty-five degree angle.<sup>169</sup> The final construction was so solid it resisted even

---

<sup>164</sup> Dever, “Archaeological Sources for the History of Palestine,” 157.

<sup>165</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer I*, 19.

<sup>166</sup> Dever, “Excavations at Gezer,” 55.

<sup>167</sup> Dever, “Archaeological Sources for the History of Palestine,” 157.

<sup>168</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer II*, 34.

<sup>169</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer II*, 43.



rainwater and when sections were excavated twenty-five hundred years later it was mistaken as a wall in and of itself (Macalister's "Central Wall").<sup>170</sup>

The "Outer Wall" was originally dated by Macalister to the Late Bronze Age but this has since been challenged and most scholars date the wall to the Iron Age.<sup>171</sup> It is possible the "Inner Wall" was used into the Late Bronze, albeit in a dilapidated state or that the Late Bronze city was entirely unfortified.<sup>172</sup> It is also possible there was, what Macalister described as a palace, built on the site during the Late Bronze period. Scholars, such as Itamar Singer, Shlomo Bunimovitz, and Aren Maeir have noted the building resembles a New Kingdom "residence," or an Egyptian administrative complex.<sup>173</sup> During all of Macalister's excavations the only structures with thicker, more solid construction were the city walls themselves.<sup>174</sup> Fortunately, he did not remove the building as he did with nearly every other feature he uncovered. Instead he left it behind, and it was excavated by the HUC expedition so as to determine its date of construction. It was determined the building abutted, but did not join, the "Inner Wall;" in fact it is sitting on a chalk chip and plaster foundation which itself abuts the wall. It must, therefore, date to a time later than the "Inner Wall," which is universally recognized as dating to the Middle Bronze. The exact date of the building after the Middle Bronze is

---

<sup>170</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer II*, 43.

<sup>171</sup> Ortiz and Wolff, "Guarding the Border," 7.

<sup>172</sup> Israel Finkelstein, "On Archaeological Methods and Historical Considerations: Iron Age II Gezer and Samaria," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 277/278 (February-May 1990): 112.

<sup>173</sup> William G. Dever, "Further Evidence on the Date of the Outer Wall at Gezer," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 289 (February 1993): 40.

<sup>174</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 1, 207.

not secure but most likely it was constructed in the LB II.<sup>175</sup> If there was an Egyptian presence maintained at Gezer it would likely have been stationed at that complex.

Excavations at Gezer have also revealed a number of artifacts pertaining to folk religion. This is most clearly seen in the many “Astarte Plaques” discovered on the site. These plaques come in a variety of sizes and styles but have enough in common to be understood as a clear material cultural category. Most “Astarte Plaques” are oval in shape with a nude, female figure, in relief, standing in something akin to a doorway. Many of the plaques appear to have been formed in a mold and not individually sculpted by an artist. The iconography of many of the “Astarte Plaques” indicates the female figure depicted is indeed a deity. Often the figure is depicted with the “Hathor bouffant,” known from depictions of the Egyptian goddess. Numerous examples also show the figure holding lotus plants or other botanical objects, though the figure is also shown holding her breasts or with her arms at her sides.<sup>176</sup> Though these are called “Astarte Plaques,” it is not clear the deity represented is the Canaanite deity Astarte and could be another deity. Many scholars, in fact, suggest the figure is Asherah not Astarte, though a clear identity cannot be said with confidence.<sup>177</sup>

Dozens of these plaques have been discovered at Gezer, most following the standard model. Macalister discovered over forty plaque figurines during his excavations on the tell, uncovering even more in caves and tombs around the site. While the majority are fragmentary, all those which still have a head visible exhibit Egyptian influenced

---

<sup>175</sup> Dever, “Further Evidence on Outer Wall,” 40.

<sup>176</sup> Johanna H. Stuckey, “The Great Goddesses of the Levant,” *Journal for the Society of the Study of Egyptian Antiquities* 30 (2003): 136.

<sup>177</sup> William G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 177.

hairstyles, with the “Hathor bouffant” being by far the most common. Additionally, many of the plaque figurines follow the Canaanite model of either holding their breasts or lotus plants. Only one plaque recovered by Macalister shows indication of being handmade, the rest are likely mold-poured examples. Macalister states these plaques are of negligible value as works of art.<sup>178</sup> He may take an unnecessarily dim view of the artifacts but it is clear these objects were not of superb quality and likely not implements of the official cult, instead being objects used in the folk religion of everyday people, perhaps as amulets.

Macalister’s excavations uncovered dozens of the plaque figurines but they have virtually no stratigraphical context. However, comparable plaque figurines have been recovered in subsequent excavations. Nowhere near as many figurines have been excavated by the expeditions following Macalister, however, the finds they have uncovered have a much clearer stratigraphic context. For example, from Field II of the HUC excavations the top half of a plaque figurine was recovered which bears striking resemblance to a figurine recovered by Macalister. It is even suggested the figurine originated in the same mould Macalister recovered and published in his report.<sup>179</sup> The plaque, unlike Macalister’s example, is dated fairly securely to the LB IIB, or sometime in the late twelfth century, based on the ceramic finds in the locus in which the plaque was found.<sup>180</sup> Two additional plaques were recovered from the same field, one nearly complete and the other with only the top half extant; both have the “Hathor bouffant,”

---

<sup>178</sup> R.A.S. Macalister, *The Excavation of Gezer 1902-1905 and 1907-1909*, vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1912), 412.

<sup>179</sup> T.A. Holland, “Appendix C: A Figurine Plaque From Gezer,” in *Gezer II: Report of the 1967-70 Seasons in Fields I and II*, (Jerusalem: Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, 1974), 133.

<sup>180</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer II*, 107.

and the larger example is holding a lotus stem in either hand.<sup>181</sup> Again, a much clearer stratigraphic context reveals these plaques were recovered alongside ceramic finds predominated by the LB II forms.<sup>182</sup> The same pattern follows in other regions of the tell, such as in Field VI, on the top of the western hill. A fragmentary, mold made, plaque with a figure bearing the “Hathor bouffant” was discovered among mostly LB IIB ceramic vessels; some earlier ceramic forms were present though nothing of a clearly later date was in the locus.<sup>183</sup>

In addition to the terra-cotta plaques, gold pendants of a female deity were also discovered at Gezer. Two sheet-gold figurines, roughly six and four inches (sixteen and ten centimeters) in height respectively, were recovered in the “Southern Gate” complex and date to the Middle Bronze Age.<sup>184</sup> There are numerous parallels for the metal repoussé female figurines throughout the Levant. Many of the gold examples hail from the northern Levant, while many bronze parallels come from Canaanite sites such as Megiddo, Hazor, and Nahariyeh.<sup>185</sup> The iconography and technique of the figurines clearly indicate they belong to the corpus of Canaanite work and were not imported, foreign pendants.<sup>186</sup> The excavators believe the figures represent the goddess Asherah, though this, as with the ceramic plaques, is unsure.<sup>187</sup> Unlike the ceramic plaques, though, the sheet-gold figures recovered were not the implements of folk religion, or

---

<sup>181</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer I*, plate 37.

<sup>182</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer I*, 109.

<sup>183</sup> William G. Dever et al., *Gezer IV: The 1969-1971 Seasons in Field VI, the “Acropolis,”* vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, 1986), 239.

<sup>184</sup> Dever, “Archaeological Sources for the History of Palestine,” 168.

<sup>185</sup> Joe D. Seger, “Reflections on the Gold Hoard from Gezer,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 221 (February 1976): 136.

<sup>186</sup> Seger, “Reflections on the Gold Hoard,” 139.

<sup>187</sup> Dever, “Archaeological Sources for the History of Palestine,” 168.

magical amulets, used by the common people of Gezer. They were recovered in a domestic area, though it was probably a prestige item and only the very wealthy were able to afford them.

The gold pendants from the Middle Bronze show a Canaanite artistic tradition and the veneration of some sort of deity. The ceramic “Astarte Plaques” from stratified contexts clearly indicate they were popular in the Late Bronze Age. It is most likely R.A.S. Macalister’s numerous finds have a comparable date. The plaques reached the height of their popularity in the Late Bronze, though they did continue into the Iron Age.<sup>188</sup> Macalister even notes the figurines passed out of favor by the time of his “Fourth Semitic” phase, which is roughly comparable with the Iron II.<sup>189</sup> The people of Gezer, ostensibly both elite and common, acknowledged the same pantheon. The evidence of organized, state religious expression is less clear. There is no clear cultic site, though one area potentially had a cultic function during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages.

During Macalister’s excavation he uncovered an area he called the “High Place,” which included a row of standing stones he termed “The Alignment.” The features he associated as part of the “High Place” have been proven to be unconnected, including infant jar burials, two caves, and some domestic features.<sup>190</sup> The whole complex is set just inside the confines of the “Inner Wall.” He did uncover a row of ten monoliths, set in a gentle arc running roughly north-south, all but one of local limestone. Six of the ten were found still standing *in situ*, while two had been broken in antiquity, one had toppled,

---

<sup>188</sup> Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?* 177.

<sup>189</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 2, 417.

<sup>190</sup> Dever et al., “Further Excavations at Gezer,” 120.

and one was tilted at a forty-five degree angle when uncovered. They varied in dimensions, from just under eleven feet tall to five feet, five inches, though all were of undressed stone.<sup>191</sup> Additionally, a large stone roughly rectangular in shape, with a depression intentionally carved out of the center of the top surface, was uncovered between the fifth and sixth stones.<sup>192</sup> Thankfully, Macalister covered “The Alignment” with rubble to preserve it “till the remote time when a national pride in monuments of antiquity such as this shall have fully developed locally.”<sup>193</sup>

Such expression of national pride came sooner than Macalister thought, only some sixty years after his initial expedition. In 1968, the HUC expedition sought to clarify the date and function of “The Alignment” as many of Macalister’s assertions were difficult to accept and, as a result of the 1968 excavations, are now defunct. What was determined was all ten stones, plus the rectangular stone, were erected at the same time and functioned as a unit, though that function is still unclear. In the plaster surface associated with the first phase of “The Alignment” burnt animal bones and teeth were recovered, suggesting some sort of ritual sacrifice took place. The hole in the rectangular stone was determined to have been cut intentionally and the unbraided sides of the hole suggest it was intended as a basin for liquids, such as blood, rather than the socket for another stone.<sup>194</sup> The whole construction was erected in the MB IIC, sometime near the end of the seventeenth century and continued in use late into the Late Bronze Age with

---

<sup>191</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 2, 386.

<sup>192</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 2, 394.

<sup>193</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 2, 385.

<sup>194</sup> Dever et al., “Further Excavations at Gezer,” 122.

only slight modification; the surrounding area was replastered.<sup>195</sup> The construction ultimately went out of use by the Iron Age, but it does not appear to have been systematically destroyed as seven stones were found *in situ*, with only three stones broken or completely toppled.

The exact function of “The Alignment” at Gezer is unclear. There are a number of possible functions which can be supported by the extant evidence. For instance, it is possible the stones represent a “council” of deities and served as an open air shrine where burnt sacrifices were offered on the rectangular stone, where the depression in it collected the blood from the animals sacrificed. It is also possible they were legal *māṣṣēbôt* erected to commemorate the formation of a legal relationship, such as a treaty or covenant, between ten parties. In such a situation each member of the union would have provided their own stone, perhaps the size relational to the constituent’s capabilities or power. The rectangular stone might have served as a blood altar for covenant renewal rituals. The stones could also have a secondary significance; such as a commemorative meaning in addition to their legal implications. The stones may represent an individual, or leader, of the members of the hypothetical union, or a common ancestor of the group.<sup>196</sup>

The only thing which is clear is “The Alignment” had some sort of importance to the city of Gezer, and possibly to the inhabitants of the region. The large space devoted to “The Alignment” inside the confines of the city suggests it played some important

---

<sup>195</sup> Carl F. Graesser “Standing Stones in Ancient Palestine,” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 35, no. 2(May 1972): 58.

<sup>196</sup> Graesser, 58.

public function in the city.<sup>197</sup> It is entirely possible that purpose was cultic, or it could just as easily have been legal or commemorative. It is plausible it was an open air shrine using the *māṣṣēbôt* as facilitators of cult. Conversely, the stones could have commemorated some event, such as a union of ten groups in a legal or political confederation of some sort. This union may have been intra-urban, further suggesting the Gezerites were a varied group who nevertheless shared a corporate calling or identity as a unified group. The stones could recall an alliance or union between city-states or regions, indicating Gezer was thoroughly involved with the surrounding population. There is simply not enough evidence to determine the exact nature and function of “The Alignment.”

The ceramic finds at Gezer dating to the Middle and Late Bronze Ages mirror those found at other sites in the region. Imports from Cyprus, the Aegean, and Egypt are common alongside the characteristic local forms which evolved throughout the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. Pottery also provides another important function. It contributes to our understanding of settlement patterns. Ceramics were the implements of life; everyone used them to store their food, cook their food, and transport their tradable commodities. Pottery and small finds contribute to our understanding of where and when people lived, though, it cannot always say what ethnic affiliation those people maintained.

When settlement resumed at Gezer following the Intermediate Bronze Age, the ceramic assemblage accompanying it was characteristic of the period. In Field VI on the

---

<sup>197</sup> Graesser, 57.



“acropolis” on the “Western Hill,” the ceramic corpus is described by the excavators as comprising a model assemblage for the MB IIA.<sup>198</sup> The ceramic evidence from MB IIB and MB IIC strata in Field VI are also characteristic of the period. In Field I the excavators indicate the Middle Bronze ceramic corpus was in line with Middle Bronze traditions, showing clear evolution within typologies and overall ceramic continuity with clear parallels from other Canaanite sites.<sup>199</sup> Sites with comparable assemblages include Tell Beit Mirsim, Hazor, Megiddo, and Shechem.<sup>200</sup> Throughout Gezer, where there are Middle Bronze occupied strata, the ceramic evidence shows clear parallels with sites throughout the region.

Macalister used the term “Second Semitic” to refer to what current scholarship calls the Middle Bronze Age, approximately 2000-1500 B.C.E. He uncovered remains of the “Second Semitic” across the site, but the architecture and attendant finds were concentrated on the “Western Hill” and the “Central Valley.” The “Eastern Hill” did reveal some “Second Semitic” architecture, but not as dense as on the other sections of the mound.<sup>201</sup> According to Macalister’s plans, which are of questionable value, the city was most densely populated on the western side of the city where the city gate and Tower 5017 were located.

The Middle Bronze period came to an abrupt end at Gezer in every field in which it was uncovered. In three Fields, I, IV, and VI a large destruction layer ended the

---

<sup>198</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer IV*, 16.

<sup>199</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer II*, 29.

<sup>200</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer II*, 32.

<sup>201</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 2, plate 3.

Middle Bronze Age, followed by an occupational gap until the LB IIA.<sup>202</sup> The destruction was likely perpetrated by Thutmose III's invasion in 1486.<sup>203</sup> The conflagration was significant, destroying every part of the city in which well stratified remains have been uncovered. In the domestic areas adjacent to the "Southern Gate" the destruction debris was six feet deep in some places.<sup>204</sup> The "Southern Gate" and Tower 5017 were destroyed and were never rebuilt. This is in line with every important contemporary site which experienced at least one major destruction. Many sites, including Gezer, were abandoned for nearly a generation.<sup>205</sup>

As at other sites, urban life resumed at Gezer in the LB IIA, around the fourteenth century. The ceramic evidence from Gezer reveals a great deal of continuity between the Middle Bronze and the Late Bronze. Local traditions continued alongside imports both in the city itself and the tombs and caves around it. Not only do Late Bronze Age forms occur in abundance, but many local decorative motifs, known from surrounding sites, flourish at Gezer as well. During Macalister's excavations he uncovered Late Bronze Age finds, though he called them "Third Semitic." His finds are not well stratified, but a general picture of the settlement during the period shows, as with the previous era, the settlement was concentrated on the "Western Hill" and "Central Valley," though there are more architectural remains on the "Eastern Hill" in this period than during his "Second Semitic."<sup>206</sup>

---

<sup>202</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer IV*, 8-9.

<sup>203</sup> Dever et al., "Further Excavations at Gezer," 103.

<sup>204</sup> Dever, "Archaeological Sources for the History of Palestine," 174.

<sup>205</sup> Dever, "Archaeological Sources for the History of Palestine," 174.

<sup>206</sup> R.A.S. Macalister, *The Excavation of Gezer 1902-1905 and 1907-1909*, vol. 3 (London: John Murray, 1912), plate IV.

Late Bronze Age finds from clearly stratified contexts at Gezer come from the HUC excavations in Fields I, II, V, VI, VII, and Field W of the Tandy excavations.

There is general ceramic continuity between the Middle Bronze and Late Bronze despite a gap in occupation. In some locations, due to trenching and backfilling in antiquity, the cultural horizon between the Middle and Late Bronze Ages is difficult to delineate, as in the domestic quarter of Field VI.<sup>207</sup> There are certain hallmarks of the Late Bronze Age that are unmistakable, though.

Cypriot imports appear alongside local Late Bronze ceramic traditions. The best examples hail from Field VI and Tombs 30 and 252 excavated by Macalister. Field VI produced a Base Ring II bilbil (a characteristic Cypriot form with a bulbous body and extended neck), and Cypriot Monochrome bowls.<sup>208</sup> Tomb 30 had multiple Cypriot vessels, including bilbils and other jugs, including some with light striped line decorations over a dark slip base.<sup>209</sup> In the caves in Field I numerous Cypriot forms were recovered, including Base Ring I, Base Ring II, Monochrome Ware, and White Painted Ware.<sup>210</sup> There is a comparable assemblage in Tomb 252; which includes what are clearly Cypriot imports alongside local ceramic traditions.<sup>211</sup>

One local tradition which occurs alongside the imports is the local cooking pots. They have a rounded bottom with a carinated top and a triangular, flanged rim.<sup>212</sup>

---

<sup>207</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer IV*, 43.

<sup>208</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer IV*, plate 10.

<sup>209</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 3, plate LXXIV.

<sup>210</sup> Joe D. Seger, *Gezer V: The Field I Caves*, (Jerusalem: Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, 1988), 78-79.

<sup>211</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 3, plate CXXII.

<sup>212</sup> Killebrew, 119.

Examples from Gezer can be found in Field II,<sup>213</sup> Field VI,<sup>214</sup> and among Macalister's "Third Semitic" phase taken from around the site.<sup>215</sup> The cooking pots, along with other forms such as bowls, jars, juglets, lamps, and kraters (a large open bowl), continue Middle Bronze traditions indicating the local inhabitants persisted and simply imported foreign goods in foreign vessels. Parallels for such a situation exist from Megiddo, Hazor, Beth-shan, Shechem, Lachish, Ashdod, and numerous others.<sup>216</sup>

The local traditions at Gezer also apply to the decorative motifs employed. The vast majority of the pottery in the Bronze Age was undecorated. However, when vessels were decorated the Canaanite potters used common motifs including simple bands, triglyph-metope friezes, ibexes, and palm-tree motifs, often with antithetical ibexes flanking a palm.<sup>217</sup> Macalister recorded a number of these decorative features when he cataloged some of the decorative, non-diagnostic sherds from the "Third Semitic" period. There are a few sherds identified as Philistine based on their characteristic decorations, which are later intrusions, but the others are clearly local in origin. For example, one plate includes two sherds with palm-tree motifs alongside one sherd with a red and black bird, common among Philistine potters.<sup>218</sup>

The ceramic evidence shows local traditions dominated the assemblage at Gezer. The vessels in particular and the assemblage in general, have clear parallels in cities around the region. Beginning in the Middle Bronze Age the ceramic repertoire which

---

<sup>213</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer II*, plate 23.

<sup>214</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer IV*, plate 11-12.

<sup>215</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 3, plate CLXII.

<sup>216</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer IV*, 45.

<sup>217</sup> Killebrew, 132.

<sup>218</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 3, plate CLXV.

developed at Gezer remained until the close of the Bronze Age, despite a gap in settlement at the close of the Middle Bronze Age.

The only references to Gezer in the historical record which date to the Middle and Late Bronze Ages come from Egypt, equated with the Egyptian name K' - 'd- 'r.<sup>219</sup> The first dates to the reign of Thutmose III and the final from the reign of Amenhotep IV, or Akhenaten.<sup>220</sup> With these sources scholars can secure an understanding of the history of Gezer, and its ethnic composition, between the mid-fifteenth and the mid fourteenth centuries B.C.E.

The first reference comes from the reign of the Eighteenth Dynasty pharaoh Thutmose III. He campaigned several times through the Levant into Syria conquering cities as he progressed through the land. At Karnak he constructed monuments to his many victories. On one such monument, the wall is decorated with lines of stylized Asiatic captives where the body of each individual names in hieroglyphics the place of origin of the captive.<sup>221</sup> One of those captives is designated as Gezer. The Gezerite prisoner is in no way differentiated from the rest of the prisoners in his physical appearance. The monument clearly depicts the inhabitants of Gezer like all the other Asiatic cities listed. The campaign which the monument is commemorating is believed to have taken place in 1486 B.C.<sup>222</sup> Thus, at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age

---

<sup>219</sup> "Hymn on the Victory over the Libyans (Israel Stela)" in *The Nineteenth Dynasty*, vol. 3 of *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents from the Earliest of Times to the Persian Conquest*, trans. and ed. James Henry Breasted (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906), para. 617.

<sup>220</sup> James F. Ross, "Gezer in the Tell el-Amarna Letters," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 30, no. 2 (May 1967): 68.

<sup>221</sup> Lance, 36.

<sup>222</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer I*, 4.

Egyptian sources identify the inhabitants of Gezer as “‘<sup>3</sup>*mw*” or “Asiatics,” a generic Egyptian term for speakers of a West Semitic language.<sup>223</sup>

An inscription from nearly seventy years later, during the reign of Thutmose IV, offers the next reference to Gezer in the historical record. At a temple complex in Thebes, Thutmose IV records the transplant of captives from Asia to the temple complex in Egypt. The scribes record “settlement of the ‘Fortress of Menkheprure,’ with Syrians which his majesty captured in the city of (Gezer).”<sup>224</sup> The name is fragmentary but the identification of the city is widely accepted as Gezer. The Egyptian word, which is translated “Syrians,” is *Kharu*, which is a reference to the Hurrians.<sup>225</sup> The Hurrians were an ethnic entity which likely originated near the region of modern Armenia, and as early as the Middle Bronze Age began to migrate south into Mesopotamia and the Levant. By the Late Bronze Age the Hurrian kingdom of Mitanni was established in Syria. Hurrian names appear in the Levant, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia throughout the Late Bronze Age, indicating ethnic Hurrians had moved beyond the borders of Mitanni.<sup>226</sup> In Egyptian sources the term *Kharu* was often used as a synonym for Asiatics and for the inhabitants of Palestine generally.<sup>227</sup> The region of Canaan, often referred to as Kharu, did have Hurrian ethnic elements in it, so it is possible the captives

---

<sup>223</sup> Donald B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 100.

<sup>224</sup> “Asiatic Campaign” in *The Eighteenth Dynasty*, vol. 2 of *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents from the Earliest of Times to the Persian Conquest*, trans. and ed. James Henry Breasted (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906), para. 821.

<sup>225</sup> Redford, 137.

<sup>226</sup> William H. Stiebing Jr., *Ancient Near Eastern History and Culture* (New York: Pearson Education Inc., 2009), 180.

<sup>227</sup> Redford, 137.

taken from Gezer were ethnically Hurrian.<sup>228</sup> However, it is just as likely, even probable, the captives were of indigenous Palestinian origin, not Hurrian, and the reference to *Kharu* was more rhetorical than factual.

There are no references to Gezer dating to the reign of Thutmose IV's successor, Amenhotep III. During the reign of Amenhotep IV, or Akhenaten, and the Amarna period there are numerous letters written between the Pharaoh and his vassals in Canaan. There are nearly twenty letters in the Amarna cache which pertain to Gezer or one of its rulers. Examining the letters as a whole reveals a great deal about the political history of Gezer, though not as much overt information is given regarding the ethnic history of the city.

Given the nature of the letters involved, not much is written concerning the average resident of any city-state. The only possible exception is the accusation of an enemy being '*apiru*, which functions just as easily as a simple pejorative and does not necessarily reflect a real socio-economic predilection.<sup>229</sup> The term '*apiru* was originally a term applied to people who were uprooted from their original social and political structure and forced into a new life. The historical sources show they often came from a sedentarized, even urban, background and earned a livelihood through mercenary work, brigandry, and general vagrancy. Individuals described as '*apiru* are mentioned in the historical texts throughout the ancient Near East, including in Mesopotamia, written in Sumerian as SA.GAZ, and Egypt where it is a condition which may befall otherwise

---

<sup>228</sup> Redford, 167.

<sup>229</sup> Edward F. Campbell Jr., "The Amarna Letters and the Amarna Period," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 23, no. 1 (February 1960): 14.

upstanding Egyptian subjects.<sup>230</sup> Status as an *'apiru* was not permanent, nor was it an identity which replaced other ones, such as ethnic identity. A Hurrian, for example, who became an *'apiru* may be such for a number of years and then reintegrate into society as a Hurrian. Furthermore, the appearance of *'apiru* in the historical texts is over a large geographical and chronological extent and no specific ethnic affiliation is attributed to them.<sup>231</sup> Thus, though it was a social identity, the term bears no real ethnic significance. However, while *'apiru* may not be useful for ethnic identification in the Amarna archive, there is some valuable evidence from the archive which sheds light on the ethnic history of Gezer.

The Amarna correspondences were written in the East Semitic language Akkadian, however, not all the words are in that language, especially names. The names of people, namely kings (*šarru* in the Akkadian text), or “mayors,” from Gezer are examples of non-Akkadian names.<sup>232</sup> For example, the first king of Gezer mentioned in the Amarna cache is Milkilu, or alternatively Ili-Milku. The name is West Semitic, which includes languages such as Aramaic, Ugaritic, and the various dialects of Canaanite such as Hebrew and Phoenician.<sup>233</sup> Milkilu is not only a West Semitic name it is a theophoric name meaning “Milku is god” or “Milku is the god.”<sup>234</sup> It is likely the god Milku is the same god known as Moloch in the Hebrew Bible which was worshipped by Canaanites and even some Israelites. The sons of Milkilu, Adda-danu and Yapaḥu,

---

<sup>230</sup> Na'aman, “Ḥabiru and Hebrews,” 271.

<sup>231</sup> Rainey and Notley, 30.

<sup>232</sup> William L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), xxvii.

<sup>233</sup> Joel H. Hunt and William M. Schniedewind, *A Primer on Ugaritic: Language, Culture, and Literature*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 32.

<sup>234</sup> Moran, 382.



both served as “mayor” of Gezer after their father and both are West Semitic, theophoric names. The first, Adda-danu means “Hadda has judged” and is likely comparable to the known Canaanite deity Hadad, often simply called Ba’al.<sup>235</sup> The second name, Yapaḥu, is a hypocoristic, and the theophoric element has been dropped in the shortening. It is still West Semitic and means “(Dropped divine name) has appeared.”<sup>236</sup> The names from people from Gezer are all linguistically West Semitic and contain theophoric elements of deities popular in Canaan.

The Amarna cache reveals Gezer to have had a dominant position among the city-states of the southern Levant and to be thoroughly involved in the political intrigues and schemes which characterized the system under Egyptian suzerainty. Using the Amarna letters, it is possible to partially reconstruct the political history of Gezer. The letters reveal Gezer was involved in a partnership with the city of Shechem,<sup>237</sup> but it dissolved in a less than amicable manner.<sup>238</sup> After the demise of the king of Shechem, Gezer organized another coalition of city-states, presumably so as to rule the land of Canaan.<sup>239</sup> This would have been theoretically feasible as the nature of Egyptian imperial control in the region was indirect. The archaeological evidence indicates minimal Egyptian presence, military or civilian, outside of a few settlements such as Gaza and Beth Shean.<sup>240</sup> The alliance apparently saw significant success, taking control of the Jezreel

---

<sup>235</sup> Moran, 379.

<sup>236</sup> Moran, 385.

<sup>237</sup> “EA 249,” in *The Amarna Letters*, ed. William L. Moran (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 302.

<sup>238</sup> “EA 253,” in *The Amarna Letters*, ed. William L. Moran (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 306.

<sup>239</sup> Ross, “Gezer in the Tell el-Amarna Letters,” 66.

<sup>240</sup> Shaw, “Egypt and the Outside World,” 319.

Valley, the coastal plain, and even significant portions of the highlands.<sup>241</sup> However, the success was not to last as some of the allies switched sides and appealed for Egyptian aid.<sup>242</sup> Milkilu ostensibly died in the twilight days of the alliance leaving his sons to rule the city.<sup>243</sup> Yapaḥu and Adda-danu did not carry on the ambitions of their father and instead submitted to Egyptian rule. They maintained control of Gezer, but had to defend their city-state from aggressive neighbors and raiders alike.<sup>244</sup>

Throughout the Late Bronze Age, the first period Gezer appears in the historical record, the city exerts nominal control but is ultimately answerable to Egypt. It endured during the expansionistic policies of the eighteenth dynasty and early nineteenth dynasty. Despite being under Egyptian control, there is no indication the city hosted any extensive Egyptian occupation for an extended period of time. It is likely the city received occasional garrisons of Egyptian troops, but if so they were small and not permanent. There is the possibility the Egyptians constructed a fortress on the site to house officials and soldiers, but this is not confirmed.<sup>245</sup> It seems implausible Milkilu was conducting his rebellious schemes with Egyptian officials or forces in the city. When his son Yapaḥu took control of the city he was forced to appeal to the Pharaoh to send forces, as his were insufficient to counter threats to the city, suggesting there was no Egyptian garrison already present in the city, or if there was, it was an insufficient supplement to his own

---

<sup>241</sup> Ross, "Gezer in the Tell el-Amarna Letters," 67.

<sup>242</sup> "EA 366," in *The Amarna Letters*, ed. William L. Moran (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 364.

<sup>243</sup> Ross, "Gezer in the Tell el-Amarna Letters," 68.

<sup>244</sup> "EA 299," in *The Amarna Letters*, ed. William L. Moran (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 340.

<sup>245</sup> Dever, "Further Evidence the Outer Wall," 40.

forces.<sup>246</sup> There were certainly no attempts to colonize the city on behalf of the Egyptians as that was never part of their foreign policy in Canaan. Instead of settling people in Gezer, there is only evidence from the time of Thutmose IV people were taken from Gezer. It seems as though under Egyptian control Gezer maintained its ethnic composition with only transient imperial forces coming as necessary.

Gezer's political history, reconstructed from the Amarna letters, does not reveal much else in regard to the ethnic composition of the city. It does reveal Gezer's prominent role among the Canaanite cities of the region. It was able to coordinate and lead a coalition of city-states from the southern coastal plain, the Carmel ridge, and the highlands. Gezer was not just any city-state; it was dominant politically and apparently militarily. When compared to other city-states in the region, Gezer is remarkable only in its size and importance as it shared the common ethno-cultural world of Canaan.

#### *Canaanites in the Bronze Age*

Dozens of Canaanite cities dating to the Middle and Late Bronze Ages have been excavated since excavations began in earnest around the turn of the twentieth century. What has been discovered is a remarkable, documentable, cultural similarity over the region of Canaan. That is to say, there was a Canaanite culture which corresponds to the geopolitical entity. This Canaanite culture included a common language, common political system namely large fortified city-states, common religion, and a shared material culture including a common pottery corpus. While there was a great degree of similarity there were also regional variants perhaps mirroring the competition and lack of political

---

<sup>246</sup> "EA 300," in *The Amarna Letters*, ed. William L. Moran (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 341.

unity among the Canaanites. The presence of multiple social identities, including ethnicities, in Canaan during the Bronze Age makes concretely defining Canaanite ethnic identity difficult. What can be said is that the term Canaanite refers to the autochthonous inhabitants of the Levant who shared a common culture and language, if not a common heritage and identity.

Included in the term Canaanite were multiple social, and even ethnic, groups. Egyptian sources often refer to the inhabitants of Canaan as Asiatics, but closer examination of the evidence reveals a much more complicated picture. Ethnic groups such as the Amorites and Hurrians also lived in the land of Canaan, the geographic region which roughly corresponds to modern Lebanon, south western Syria, Israel and the Palestinian territories. In addition to these ethnic entities, social categories including Shasu, the tribal, nomadic pastoralists of the southern Levant, and *'apiru* existed in conjunction with the existing ethnic identities. An individual who identifies as an Amorite may still be a Canaanite, particularly to an outside observer. A band of *'apiru* may have diverse ethnic origins, but all still be considered Canaanite. The term Canaanite encompasses the great deal of ethnic and social complexity which existed in the Levant during the Bronze Age.

Though Canaanite ethnicity in the ancient world is difficult to ascertain, it is beyond doubt there was a Canaanite culture. In the MB I, after the urban and social collapse of the EB IV, a new culture began to develop. The inhabitants of the MB I in the Levant mark a distinct cultural and demographic change from the immediately preceding era. Comparative analysis of skeletal remains from EB IV and MB I shows

marked differences. Statistical analysis of several Middle Bronze Age human osteological remains reveals a change in craniofacial characteristics from the preceding era to a degree beyond what is expected from microevolutionary trends or environmental factors.<sup>247</sup> Additionally, the MB I is characterized by a revolution in many aspects of material culture including settlement pattern, urbanism, architecture, pottery, metallurgy, and burial customs.<sup>248</sup> This change in osteological remains and material culture suggests a new population settled in the Levant, though from where they originated is not fully known. The new culture of the MB I persisted and evolved over time. The bearers of the new cultural phenomenon of the MB I in the Levant are called Canaanites.

One thing the Canaanites had in common was a mutually intelligible language. Philologists group languages into families and then subdivide the families further. The Semitic family of languages is subdivided into geographic regions East, South, and West. Each of these subdivisions contains a number of languages, which in turn have dialects. For example, the East Semitic group of languages includes Akkadian, which has the regional dialects of Assyrian and Babylonian. The West Semitic group of languages includes Syrian and Canaanite, and includes the Canaanite dialects of Phoenician and Hebrew.<sup>249</sup> This language is known mostly from inscriptions recovered from archaeological excavations. Most of the inscriptions are short and the translations are difficult to assert with confidence. Two inscriptions in a Canaanite script, dating to the

---

<sup>247</sup> Patricia Smith, "People of the Holy Land from Prehistory to the Recent Past," *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, ed. Thomas E. Levy (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1995), 69.

<sup>248</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Bible*, 175.

<sup>249</sup> Gary A. Rendsburg, "Semitic Languages (with Special References to the Levant)," in *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader*, ed. Suzanne Richard (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 72.

Late Bronze Age, have been discovered at Lachish and Tel Nagila.<sup>250</sup> The most significant feature of the inscriptions recovered in the Canaanite language is its utilization of an alphabetic script, as opposed to the syllabic cuneiform scripts of Mesopotamia and Anatolia and the hieroglyphics used in Egypt. The origin of the alphabet is hotly debated by scholars but there is a consensus it was developed in the first half of the second millennium by speakers of one of the West Semitic languages.<sup>251</sup>

Both cuneiform and hieroglyphic writing systems were known in Canaan throughout the Bronze Age. However, these were most often used for writing foreign languages and the vast majority of the general population was not literate in such systems. A scribal class was needed to master the vastly complicated literary systems used by the great river valley civilizations and yet Akkadian and Egyptian hieroglyphic texts have been discovered in Canaan. However, scripts do not necessarily indicate language. A language can be written in numerous scripts, whether it is an alphabetic writing system or syllabic cuneiform script. The absence or presence of a certain writing system does not necessitate the absence or presence of a specific language. For example, some of the Amarna tablets which originated in Canaan can be interpreted as an example of alloglottography, which is the use of one writable language to write a different language.<sup>252</sup> In other words, the Canaanite scribes used Akkadian script to write Canaanite.<sup>253</sup> Essentially, the Canaanite language was used by the people of Canaan, though they used a foreign writing system to write it.

---

<sup>250</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Bible*, 276.

<sup>251</sup> Rendsburg, 65.

<sup>252</sup> von Dassow, "Canaanite in Cuneiform," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 124 (2004): 642.

<sup>253</sup> von Dassow, 642.

Another common cultural feature throughout Canaan during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages was its highly urbanized society. Following the Intermediate Bronze Age, in the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age, large city-states began to be constructed complete with massive fortifications. There is also a change in settlement patterns from the Early Bronze and Intermediate Bronze Age to the Middle Bronze Age. In the MB I cities arose primarily along coasts, rivers, and along trade routes. This trend continued as more cities were constructed in the MB II and III. The majority of the nearly four hundred MB sites known in Canaan are small villages and hamlets. However, these smaller sites seem to have been dominated as part of the economic hinterland of the much larger city-states.<sup>254</sup>

The Bronze Age city-states in Canaan all had massive fortifications. The most basic form of fortification was the city wall. Walls had stone foundations with either stone or mudbrick construction. Walls ranged from three to ten meters in thickness and up to ten meters in height.<sup>255</sup> In addition to large walls and towers enclosing the city, there were also new fortification techniques. Such defenses include the construction of huge earthen ramparts outside the walls as well as large *glacis*, both of which seem to have been introduced from Syria and Mesopotamia.<sup>256</sup> These fortifications were accompanied by large city gates typically with three entryways marked by stone piers

---

<sup>254</sup> Dever, "Archaeological Sources for the History of Palestine," 153.

<sup>255</sup> William J. Hamblin, *Warfare in the Ancient Near East to 1600 BC: Holy Warriors at the Dawn of History* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 278.

<sup>256</sup> Hamblin, 277.

with shallow bays for guards between each entryway.<sup>257</sup> Such gates are known from sites such as Hazor, Yavneh Yam, Shechem, and of course Gezer.<sup>258</sup>

While it is unclear if Late Bronze Age Canaanite city-states had fortifications around them, there is extensive evidence of monumental, public architecture used presumably for administrative functions. These buildings are usually called palaces, though it was much more than a royal residence, as it was the seat of power for the local authority. Such palace structures have been excavated at Megiddo and Hazor.<sup>259</sup> A number of other palatial structures have been excavated throughout the Levant, notably outside of Canaan at Ugarit, and several of these buildings had some degree of protection or fortification in lieu of the entire city being fortified.<sup>260</sup> While some cities fared better than others in the transition to the Late Bronze Age, there is significant cultural continuity between the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. The city-state system persisted, as evinced by the Amarna tablets.

The large defensive systems and monumental public architecture suggest a high degree of social stratification and political organization. In order to construct such massive structures labor must have been organized, which implies someone organized it. Many scholars have posited such construction projects required some sort of centralized authority capable of planning and organizing such projects through taxation and possible conscript labor.<sup>261</sup> Furthermore, it has been suggested such labor was gathered from the

---

<sup>257</sup> Dever, "Archaeological Sources for the History of Palestine," 154.

<sup>258</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Bible*, 206.

<sup>259</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Bible*, 244.

<sup>260</sup> Killebrew, 101.

<sup>261</sup> Dever, "Archaeological Sources for the History of Palestine," 163.



rural hinterland which the city-states dominated.<sup>262</sup> The lack of a unified defensive paradigm also suggests there was not a regional authority dictating and constructing such massive projects. Instead each city-state had its own political structure and social hierarchy which was in charge of its defense. Canaanite society seems to have been based around the local city-state instead of a unified Canaanite state.

Still another common cultural feature to Canaanite society was a shared religion. The ancient Near East shared a polytheistic worldview. While the pantheons varied by region there was often overlap as some gods were worshipped more widely than others. The Canaanite pantheon is well known from texts recovered from Ugarit, the later Biblical tradition, as well as from archaeological remains.

Ugarit and Canaan had a great deal in common. Linguistically Ugaritic and Canaanite are closely related, though the exact relationship between the two languages is debated. Canaanite and Ugaritic use different scripts, one using an alphabetic and the other alphabetic-cuneiform. Additionally, there are many common vocabulary words and grammatical structures. Furthermore, the languages share some literary structures, particularly poetic characteristics, such as meter and parallelism. The languages were active during different periods chronologically, though. Ugaritic ceased as a language around the thirteenth century B.C.E. while Canaanite inscriptions become common only in the tenth century B.C.E. and later.<sup>263</sup>

---

<sup>262</sup> David Ilan, "The Middle Bronze Age," *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader*, ed. Suzanne Richard (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 338.

<sup>263</sup> Hunt and Schniedewind, 32-3.

The debate over the two languages relationship is possible because of the prolific work of the scribes at Ugarit. Excavations have uncovered the archives of Ugarit, which have revealed a vast library of texts illuminating, among other things, the religious world of Ugarit. Despite the fact that scribes from ancient Ugarit marked a distinction between themselves and Canaanites, it has long been believed the Ugaritic religious canon is comparable to that of the Canaanites further to the south. The gods in the Ugaritic and Canaanite pantheon include the chief pair El and his consort Asherah. The deity which figures prominently within the Canaanite pantheon is Ba'al, or Hadad. Ba'al is paired with the goddess Anat, and on occasion with the astral deity Astarte. There were numerous deities who were associated with various natural aspects or crafts such as Yamm with the sea, Mot with death, Shemesh with the sun, Yarih with the moon, Kothar with technology, and Reshef with pestilence.<sup>264</sup> The texts also reveal a bit of how the cult functioned. Priests and priestess oversaw animal sacrifices and offerings of food and drink which were central to the function of the cult. These rituals were conducted alongside other rituals such as "the enthronement of Ba'al" and the "sacred marriage" of the gods to name just a few.<sup>265</sup>

The Hebrew Bible offers a similar picture as to the Canaanite pantheon. The worship of Ba'al and Asherah is common throughout Canaan, even among the Israelites, in part due to the relationship between Canaanite and Israelite religion. Other deities mentioned include Astarte, as the Queen of Heaven, in the book of Jeremiah.<sup>266</sup> Ba'al

---

<sup>264</sup> Hunt and Schniedewind, 19.

<sup>265</sup> William G. Dever, "Religion and Cult in the Levant: The Archaeological Data," *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader*, ed. Suzanne Richard (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 387.

<sup>266</sup> Jeremiah 44:17

was known to have numerous prophets and priests who conducted his worship. Asherah was worshipped at shrines, often called Asherah poles, which likely refers to either wooden pole or even a sacred tree or grove.<sup>267</sup> One particularly infamous practice was the sacrifice of children as part of a religious ritual. The custom of infant sacrifice is mentioned as having occurred, though it was condemned, among Israelites. Additionally, the practice is archaeologically attested, particularly at the Phoenician colony of Carthage.<sup>268</sup> Often worship of the Canaanite deities was done at *bāmôt*, or high places, which is some sort of open air shrine, not necessarily limited to a cultic site at a high elevation.<sup>269</sup> Sacrifices were made at altars and standing stones, or *māššēbôt*, which were erected for various cultic and civic functions.<sup>270</sup> Due to the inherent nature of *māššēbôt*, uninscribed stones as opposed to the inscribed standing stones called stele, their interpretation is difficult. These stones performed several functions including civic, memorial, commemorative, and cultic and a stone was not limited to one function at a time.<sup>271</sup> Their presence in cultic contexts, though, indicates some sort of religious meaning, such as marking “the place where the deity is in some manner immanent so that worship offered there reaches him or her.”<sup>272</sup> Also gods were worshipped at household shrines such as Gideon’s father’s altar of Ba’al described in the in the book of Judges.<sup>273</sup> Additionally there were household gods, which are not specifically named, though their

---

<sup>267</sup> Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?* 101.

<sup>268</sup> Richard J. Clifford, “Phoenician Religion,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 279 (August 1990): 58.

<sup>269</sup> Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?* 93.

<sup>270</sup> Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?* 99.

<sup>271</sup> Graesser, 37.

<sup>272</sup> Graesser, 44.

<sup>273</sup> Judges 6:25-26

presence is not doubted and were widely worshipped in addition to the chief gods in the pantheon.

Archaeology also reveals a great deal about Canaanite religion. Excavations throughout the Levant have uncovered temple complexes dating to both the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. The temples excavated along the Levantine coast which date to the Middle Bronze Age have a striking architectural similarity. The temple architecture is an excellent example of the religious uniformity of the Levant during the Middle Bronze Age. Some temples, including one from Tel Kitan was excavated with a line of *māṣṣēbôt* in front of it reinforcing the cultic function of such stones.<sup>274</sup>

In the Late Bronze Age there was continuity with the earlier Middle Bronze Age. At Hazor the temple was reused, with minor renovations, into the LB I.<sup>275</sup> The temple at Megiddo has a similar story as it was originally constructed in the Middle Bronze Age but was used into the Late Bronze Age.<sup>276</sup> At Shechem the temple went out of use, but a new temple was constructed on its ruins in the Late Bronze Age. The new temple, like the one at Tel Kitan, had a large standing stone in front which undoubtedly served an important cultic purpose. There were new architectural traditions in Canaan. At Beth-Shean a temple which combined Canaanite and Egyptian influences was constructed during the Late Bronze Age.<sup>277</sup>

Other remains from cultic sites have been excavated which shed further light on the collective Canaanite religious experience. Metal figurines of deities gained

---

<sup>274</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Bible*, 212.

<sup>275</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Bible*, 248.

<sup>276</sup> Killebrew, 105.

<sup>277</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Bible*, 252.

popularity during the Middle Bronze Age. At a temple in Nahariyah, in what is now northern Israel, a stone mold for casting such figurines has been discovered.<sup>278</sup> This sort of cultic paraphernalia has been found not only in temples and cultic shrines, as would be expected, but also in domestic contexts indicating their use in the daily worship of the Canaanite people.<sup>279</sup> These figurines gained in popularity in the Late Bronze Age. Both male and female deities are depicted in both metal and terracotta figurines. Excavators at Megiddo uncovered a bronze figure of a “smiting god” most likely Ba’al Hadad.<sup>280</sup> Female deities are quite commonly depicted. The goddesses Asherah and Astarte are the most commonly depicted female deities. In addition to the Egyptian style headdress the goddess is frequently shown standing over a lion or a horse and occasionally holds either snakes or lotus flowers in her hands.<sup>281</sup> Deities are also depicted on other cultural, non-cultic, items including seals and amulets. Such graphic depictions of Canaanite deities have been discovered throughout the entirety of the Levant at sites including Ugarit, Hazor, and Lachish, among many others.

While Canaanite religion may have evolved over the centuries of the Middle and Late Bronze Ages as it was exposed to foreign influences, notably Egyptian, it maintained its integrity as a truly Canaanite religion. The deities, and their names, had regional variants but the pantheon was more or less fixed. Thus the Canaanites had a common religion featuring a common pantheon which was worshipped using common rituals and architectural features. What bound the Canaanites together as a cultural unit

---

<sup>278</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Bible*, 220.

<sup>279</sup> Dever, “Archaeological Sources for the History of Palestine,” 167.

<sup>280</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Bible*, 272.

<sup>281</sup> Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?* 185.

was not just their religion, architecture, political structure, and language, though, but the common material aspects of their daily life.

The most common element of material culture discovered by archaeologists in the Levant is pottery. Pottery seriation, a method of dating ceramic types relative to one another based on the popularity of various forms over time, constitutes the basis of relative dating throughout the Ancient Near East and extensive ceramic typologies have been compiled for the region. Ruth Amiran's 1969 work *Ancient Pottery of the Holy Land* is the definitive work on Syro-Palestinian ceramic typologies. The detailed typologies collected over decades of excavations provide an excellent basis for detailed seriation and relative chronologies. In the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age new ceramic technologies were utilized. The introduction of the fast-wheel facilitated the creation and widespread dispersion of new ceramic forms.<sup>282</sup> By the end of the Middle Bronze Age the prowess of the Palestinian potters became quite impressive. The diversity of forms decreased slightly by the end of the Middle Bronze era, suggesting specialization and mass production as part of an increasingly complex production and trading network.<sup>283</sup> The forms became more standardized, though clearly still derivative of earlier Middle Bronze prototypes. Certain decorative trends are noticeable in the Middle Bronze. Two styles, Chocolate on White Ware and Bichrome Ware, make their debut late in the Middle Bronze and continue into the Late Bronze.<sup>284</sup> The first, as the name suggests, consists of, mainly, geometric designs done in a brown slip over a thick

---

<sup>282</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Bible*, 182.

<sup>283</sup> Ilan, 306.

<sup>284</sup> Dever, "Archaeological Sources for the History of Palestine," 162.

white slip. The second, much more popular, is characterized by black decoration on a red slipped base.<sup>285</sup>

In the Late Bronze there was a great variety of ceramic forms and decorative styles and motifs. The Late Bronze Canaanite ceramic tradition, though, is a continuation from the Middle Bronze. The transition from Middle to Late Bronze Age is gradual and characterized by continuity in ceramic forms. The Late Bronze has clear cultural continuity with the Middle Bronze with evolution best describing the ceramic forms rather than revolution. The Chocolate on White decorative style continued and the Black and Red Bichrome style is so characteristic of the Late Bronze it is often considered a hallmark of the period in ceramic assemblages.<sup>286</sup> An additional hallmark is the presence of imported Cypriot and Mycenaean wares. The native Canaanite forms though remain diverse, including different types of bowls and kraters, goblets, chalices, jugs, juglets, carinated cooking pots, varied storage jar forms, flasks, *pyxides* (a squat, round boxlike vessel), *amphoriskoi* (a small globular jar with a tall neck), and other forms meant to imitate the imported wares.<sup>287</sup> While the majority of vessels were undecorated, some were decorated with a variety of motifs, the most common Canaanite motifs being simple bands, triglyph-metope friezes, geometric designs, concentric circles, stylized palm-trees, ibexes, antithetic ibexes, or some combination thereof.<sup>288</sup>

The Late Bronze ceramic corpus started to decline in quality in the latter half of the era. The change is perhaps best described as degeneration than development or

---

<sup>285</sup> Dever, "Archaeological Sources for the History of Palestine," 162.

<sup>286</sup> Albert Leonard Jr., "Archaeological Sources for the History of Palestine: The Late Bronze Age," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 52 (1989): 10.

<sup>287</sup> Killebrew, 113-25.

<sup>288</sup> Killebrew, 132.

evolution.<sup>289</sup> Following the Bronze Age collapses known throughout the Mediterranean the imports from Cyprus and the Mycenaean world ceased. The Canaanite ceramic tradition continued into the Iron Age, though with an evolution in forms. Ultimately the Canaanites of the Bronze Age persisted along the Lebanese coast and became known to the Greeks as the Phoenicians.

Identification of Canaanites is not dependent on the archaeological record alone. References to Canaan and Canaanites begin in the Middle Bronze Age. From the massive archive discovered at the ancient city of Mari there is a reference to “thieves and Canaanites.” The reference, which dates to the eighteenth century, is the earliest known mention of either Canaan or Canaanites.<sup>290</sup> Thus, by the Middle Bronze Age, a king from as far away as Mari, on the Euphrates River, understood there to be a group of people known as Canaanites. It is an example of ascribed identity, not self-ascribed. It is unclear if a group of people at this point in history referred to themselves as Canaanites. References to Canaan and Canaanites increase as the Bronze Age progressed, notably during the Late Bronze Age.

At Alalakh, a city in northern Syria, a number of tablets dating to the Late Bronze Age mention Canaan and Canaanites. One tablet, AT 181, is a list of individuals identified as *‘apiru* and it includes “Šarniya, a son of the land of Canaan.” Another tablet, from the same archive, mentions one Ba‘laya from Canaan who borrowed money from a citizen of Alalakh. Still another reference to the land of Canaan is a literary inscription found on a statue of Idrimi, king of Alalakh. It recounts a story of how Idrimi

---

<sup>289</sup> Leonard Jr., 20.

<sup>290</sup> Killebrew, 95.



fled his domain following an uprising, crossed the Syrian desert and “the next day I went forth and came to the land of Canaan.”<sup>291</sup> He mentions a number of settlements in which he stayed in Canaan, such as Ammiya, and other lands through which he traversed until he was able to return triumphantly to his homeland. It is significant because the inscription mentions a settlement within Canaan, like Ammiya which is identified with ruins known in modern Lebanon. In the tablets from Alalakh, all of the references to Canaan occur alongside other well defined geographical terms thus leading to the assumption Canaan was also a clearly defined region, incorporating the region south of Syria along the Lebanese coast down into Palestine, recognized at the very least by those outside of the Canaan itself.<sup>292</sup>

The records from Alalakh and Mari both provide clear examples of outside identification of Canaan and Canaanites. Anson Rainey, however, argues the records discovered at Alalakh also show individuals identified themselves as Canaanite or from Canaan. He notes individuals from Alalakh are noted by their patronymics in legal and administrative texts. Individuals not from Alalakh are instead identified by their country of origin. When foreigners visited the city they registered with scribes in the city. “The scribes undoubtedly asked the foreigners where they came from and each one replied that he was from Canaan.”<sup>293</sup> If Rainey is accurate in his assumptions there is evidence of individuals self-ascribed as from Canaan.

---

<sup>291</sup> Rainey, “Who is a Canaanite?” 3.

<sup>292</sup> Rainey, “Who is a Canaanite?” 2.

<sup>293</sup> Rainey, “Who is a Canaanite?” 4.

Two tablets from Ugarit also mention Canaan and Canaanites. The first reference comes from a tablet designated RS 11.840 = KTU 4.96 and is a list of individuals, both foreigners and those within Ugarit. The names are listed along with their origin. Some individuals hail from towns inside the kingdom of Ugarit such as “Mulukku” and “Wool Town” while others are designated variously “an Ashdadite,” “an Egyptian,” and notably “y’l kn ‘ny” or “Ya’ilu a Canaanite.” Comparable to the situation in Alalakh, individuals are identified with a “recognized political and geographical entity.”<sup>294</sup> The text indicates the region of Canaan was separate from Ugarit, at least according to the scribe who left the record.

In the second text from Ugarit the relation between the kingdom and Canaan is obliquely addressed. The fragmentary text of RS 20.182A+B deals with a judicial decision between Ugarit and an Egyptian Pharaoh.<sup>295</sup> The text has to do with the seizure of a Canaanite caravan by Ugarit, after which the Egyptian Pharaoh, likely Ramses II, required an indemnity. As the Canaanite city-states were vassals of Egypt, it was the Pharaoh’s duty to protect their, and his, interests. He sent a request for retribution to which the extant tablet is the reply.<sup>296</sup> In the text of the letter, even in its fragmentary state, there is a clear distinction between “the sons of Canaan” and “the sons of Ugarit.” Both entities are recognized as “legal entities” who can take part in an international lawsuit.<sup>297</sup> Ugarit and Canaan are thus discrete, contemporaneous entities during the Bronze Age. Ugarit was located outside of Canaan, outside the authority of the Pharaoh.

---

<sup>294</sup> Rainey, “Who is a Canaanite?” 4.

<sup>295</sup> Killebrew, 95.

<sup>296</sup> Nadav Na’aman, “Four Notes on the Size of Late Bronze Age Canaan,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 313 (1999): 35.

<sup>297</sup> Rainey, “Who is a Canaanite?” 5.

This text also clearly shows Canaan was oriented towards Egypt to a significant degree. It is thus not surprising many references to Canaan during the Bronze Age come from the numerous textual sources of Egypt.

The Egyptians had numerous terms to refer to foreigners and their lands. As a major international power beginning near the end of the third millennium they had countless interactions with foreign people and lands both near and far. As the Levant lies between Egypt and the other international powers of the Bronze Age in Anatolia and Mesopotamia it is no surprise the inhabitants of the Levant appear throughout Egypt's numerous textual remains. However, during the Middle Bronze Age the Egyptians did not need go far to interact with Canaanites; only as far as the Nile Delta.

The fifteenth and sixteenth "Hyksos" dynasties of the Second Intermediate Period were in fact Canaanite. The term "Hyksos" derives from the Egyptian historian, Manetho, whose work, *Aegyptiaca*, was preserved only in the Greek texts of other ancient authors such as Josephus. The Egyptian phrase *hekau khasut*, meaning "rulers of foreign countries," became, in Greek, "Hyksos."<sup>298</sup> Texts dating to the eighteenth dynasty refer to the Hyksos as Asiatics, meaning speakers of a West Semitic language. Nearly all of the names of Hyksos individuals preserved from seals and dedicatory inscriptions are West Semitic and not Egyptian.<sup>299</sup> Archaeological excavations of Hyksos sites, such as Tell el-Dab'a and Tell el-Maskhuta, reveal the material culture is comparable to contemporary

---

<sup>298</sup> Janine Bourriau, "The Second Intermediate Period," in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* ed. Ian Shaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 174.

<sup>299</sup> Redford, 100.

sites in Canaan suggesting the ethnic affiliation of the Hyksos in Egypt was akin to those in Canaan.<sup>300</sup>

When the tables of domination turned and the Hyksos were expelled from Egypt and the emergent New Kingdom began to control the Levant references to Canaan and Canaanites occurred much more frequently in Egyptian textual sources. One such reference comes from the reign of Amenhotep II where he boasts of the capture of “640 *Ki-na- ‘-nu*” or Canaanites.<sup>301</sup> This reference comes from a highly stylized list and it may or may not accurately reflect plunder captured from a military campaign. However, it does show there was a group of people who were internationally recognized as Canaanites. This trend is further supported by the textual evidence available from the reigns of subsequent Pharaohs, Amenhotep III and Akhenaten.

Of the 382 tablets composing the Amarna archive, all but thirty-two are letters exchanged between the Pharaoh and foreign entities.<sup>302</sup> Some of the correspondences are between the Pharaoh and other Great Powers such as the kings of the Hittites and Babylonians while the majority are between the Pharaoh’s vassals in the Levant. Eleven of the letters make a direct reference to Canaan and Canaanites giving further clarity as to what and where such entities existed in the Late Bronze Age, including the well known cities of Tyre, Sidon, Hazor and Gezer.

Of the letters which mention Canaan or Canaanites, five originate outside the Levant among the Great Powers while the remaining six were composed at three different

---

<sup>300</sup> Carol Redmount, “Ethnicity, Pottery, and the Hyksos at Tell El-Makhuta in the Egyptian Delta,” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 58 (1995): 183.

<sup>301</sup> Rainey, “Who is a Canaanite?” 6.

<sup>302</sup> Moran, xv.

cities along the Phoenician littoral. While there are only eleven letters which specifically mention Canaan, there are hundreds which provide insight into the reality of the land itself and the economic, political, and social circumstances of its inhabitants.

A review of the letters which refer to Canaan clarifies the geographical extent of the territory as well as painting a unique picture of the regions inhabitants. In EA 8 the king of Babylon refers to Canaan as a geographically entity under the sway of Egypt, though acting contrary to Egyptian policy.<sup>303</sup> In EA 9, the Babylonian king describes an historical incident in which the Canaanites appealed to Mesopotamia for backing in a revolt.<sup>304</sup> The Canaanites apparently acted corporately in seeking a different patron. They refer to their country and apparently planned to rebel together. The king of Mitanni wrote a passport for one of his envoys in EA 30 in which he recognizes Canaan as a political entity with numerous kings within it.<sup>305</sup>

Not all references to Canaan in the Amarna archive come from Syrian and Mesopotamian sources. One letter, EA 367, is from the Pharaoh to a vassal who states “the king herewith sends to you Ḫanni, the son of Maireya, the stable overseer of the king in Canaan.”<sup>306</sup> According to Alexander Joffe, this is an example of the term Canaan being used within the formal Egyptian bureaucracy.<sup>307</sup> The term Canaan is known in

---

<sup>303</sup> “EA 8,” in *The Amarna Letters*, ed. William L. Moran (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 16.

<sup>304</sup> “EA 9,” in *The Amarna Letters*, ed. William L. Moran (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 18.

<sup>305</sup> Rainey, “Who is a Canaanite?” 6.

<sup>306</sup> “EA 367,” in *The Amarna Letters*, ed. William L. Moran (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 365.

<sup>307</sup> Rainey, “Who is a Canaanite?” 7.

other New Kingdom inscriptions. In the Egyptian literature the term “Canaan” is often used as a “generic geographic and ethnic designation.”<sup>308</sup>

The vast majority of the texts recovered from Tell el-Amarna are correspondences between the Pharaoh in Egypt and his Canaanite vassals. Along with the letters from the international powers, there are references to Canaan in the letters between the vassals and the Pharaoh. One notable letter from Tyre makes reference to Canaan and provides an important insight into the borders and extent of Canaan, clarifying with textual evidence who the Canaanites were. The letter, designated EA 148, is a complaint to the Pharaoh by Abi-Milku the king of Tyre. His grievance is not dissimilar from dozens of other extant letters from Egyptian vassals: he is complaining about his neighbors who are assaulting his domain. Abi-Milku details for the monarch who is at fault. “I write to the king, my lord, because every day the king of Sidon has captured a palace attendant of mine.” A few lines later he states even clearer “The one who raids the land of the king is the king of Sidon.” Additionally he informs the Pharaoh “the king of Ḥaṣura has abandoned his house and has aligned himself with the ‘*apiru*.”<sup>309</sup> Abi-milku is likely insinuating the king of Ḥaṣura, identified with Hazor, is in league not only with the renegade ‘*apiru*, but also with the king of Sidon in a plot to ruin Tyre.<sup>310</sup> He does not expect the Pharaoh to rely on his good word, though, as he implores “may the king ask

---

<sup>308</sup> Alexander H. Joffe, “The Rise of Secondary States in the Iron Age Levant,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 45 (2002): 428.

<sup>309</sup> “EA 148,” in *The Amarna Letters*, ed. William L. Moran (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 235.

<sup>310</sup> Rainey, “Who is a Canaanite?” 9.

his commissioner, who is familiar with Canaan.”<sup>311</sup> Clearly the implication is Tyre, Sidon, and Hazor are all included within Canaan. All of the examples cited thus far are outsiders referring to Canaan and Canaanites. This is an example of a Canaanite referring to the land in which he lives as in Canaan. It is the first sign of any type of self-ascribed Canaanite identity. Yet the context of the letter also clearly shows Canaan was by no means a unified entity. Competition among city-states was ruthless and violent.

A much later text which makes numerous references to Canaan and Canaanites is the Hebrew Bible. The Biblical text is first and foremost a religious document. It is meant to convey theological principles yet it does so within a historical context. The Biblical text is a composite work, the result of authors and editors working over a period of centuries who created the text available today. Thus, certain sections of the text are of greater antiquity than others, and certain accounts are of greater historical veracity than others. One collection of texts within the Hebrew Bible is called the Deuteronomistic History, which includes the biblical books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. This compilation of texts contains elements which date to the end of the Iron Age, sometime during the sixth century, though it was finalized only after the period of the Exile. While it is a comparatively late document it can be used to glean information about Bronze Age Syria-Palestine if used with caution.<sup>312</sup>

The Hebrew Bible mentions Canaan and Canaanites no less than 160 times.

While the Canaanites feature prominently in the prose of the Hebrew Bible there is little

---

<sup>311</sup> “EA 148,” in *The Amarna Letters*, ed. William L. Moran (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 235.

<sup>312</sup> David Noel Freedman, “The Pentateuch,” in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 29.

which can be used to document a Canaanite ethnic identity. In fact the inhabitants of the Biblical land of Canaan are often portrayed as multiethnic following a type of stylized list including Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.<sup>313</sup> The Biblical description of the boundary of Canaan, as described in passages such as Numbers 34:1-12, however, does generally correspond to those indicated in extra-Biblical sources.<sup>314</sup>

The textual evidence indicates during the Bronze Age there was a land called Canaan, recognized internationally as a political entity, whose inhabitants were called Canaanites. “Canaan as a geographic and social entity was a reality to the various authors.”<sup>315</sup> Canaan was a region which covered the modern countries of Lebanon, southern Syria, Israel, the Palestinian territories, and perhaps into the Sinai. It was roughly consistent with the “Asian” province of Egypt.<sup>316</sup> While it certainly existed as a geographic and political unit there is little overt support for a Canaanite ethnic identity. Instead there is support for competing city-states who operated within a bounded geographical space. Thus the textual evidence suggests geography, and perhaps some sort of political affinity, tied these people together.

The Canaanites represent a historically recognized political and geographical entity. The historical texts indicate Canaan was an internationally known geographic term, populated by people called Canaanites. They shared a political system, independent city-states, which were prone to intense competition, though apparently did

---

<sup>313</sup> John van Seters, “The Terms ‘Amorite’ and ‘Hittite’ in the Old Testament,” *Vetus Testamentum* 22 (1972): 67.

<sup>314</sup> Killebrew, 96.

<sup>315</sup> Rainey, “Who is a Canaanite?” 12.

<sup>316</sup> Killebrew, 94.



occasionally act together. It is possible, though unclear, if the Canaanites used the term to refer to themselves. The archaeological evidence clearly shows there was a shared culture in the geographic region known as Canaan. They shared a language, political paradigm, religion, and ceramic corpus. Certain aspects of the shared culture, such as religion and ideology, are often considered “sensitive indicators of ethnicity.”<sup>317</sup> The evidence for a shared culture is strong; there is not enough evidence at hand, though, to indicate the Canaanites composed an ethnic group according to modern understandings of ethnicity. The origins of the Canaanite population were likely varied ethnically; they were unified by what they had in common.<sup>318</sup> In the words of one scholar, the Canaanites represent an ethnic mosaic.<sup>319</sup> Their variation is an integral part in what united them as a whole.

#### *Ethnicity at Gezer in the Bronze Age*

Upon comparing the material culture recovered from Gezer and the documentary evidence concerning Gezer with the contemporary archaeological and documentary evidence from the wider region, it is apparent Gezer was a Canaanite city in the Bronze Age. Furthermore, it was the quintessential Canaanite city in the Bronze Age. Beginning in the Middle Bronze Age until the end of the Late Bronze Age Gezer exhibits all of the markers of being a Canaanite city-state.

Nearly every Canaanite ethno-cultural aspect is present at the site. During the Middle Bronze it was likely the most heavily fortified city in the entire southern Levant.

---

<sup>317</sup> Killebrew, 138.

<sup>318</sup> Killebrew, 138.

<sup>319</sup> Killebrew, 93.

Following Egyptian domination in the Late Bronze, Gezer was either unfortified or only nominally so. If a similar political paradigm, which includes the construction of public architecture and fortifications, was part of the collective ethno-cultural Canaanite experience, the inhabitants of Gezer certainly qualify as the Amarna letters indicate the city was governed by a local king. It was engaged in regional politics, even taking a lead role in them. The small finds from the site indicate the Canaanite pantheon was revered among the Bronze Age residents at the site. The ceramic evidence from Gezer also places it thoroughly within the Canaanite ethno-cultural spectrum.

The Canaanites prospered in the Bronze Age and lingered in the Iron Age. Their ethno-cultural domination of Syria-Palestine was challenged in the Iron Age. Among the challengers were the Israelites and the Philistines in the east and south respectively. Unlike the Canaanites, however, both the Israelites and Philistines were more akin to ethnic groups as understood by modern scholarship. These, though, are contentious assertions, not accepted by everyone who studies them. However, examination of the historical and archaeological evidence shows both groups did constitute recognizable ethnic groups each with their own distinctive ethnic markers.

## Chapter Four

### The Early Iron Age

The Bronze Age did not end simultaneously across the entire Levant. Cities and regions experienced it differently, some enjoyed relative continuity well into the twelfth century, many of the rest were either abandoned or destroyed, some of which were immediately reoccupied and others started the Iron Age with a gap in occupation. It is not easy to determine when the Bronze Age came to an end and when the Iron Age began. At the beginning of the twelfth century the entire Eastern Mediterranean experienced intense social and political upheavals, the scholar Robert Drews simply termed the series of events “the Catastrophe.”<sup>320</sup>

#### *Gezer in the Early Iron Age*

At Gezer in particular, the transition to the Iron Age was a turbulent time. This is testified by the Nineteenth Dynasty Pharaoh Merneptah in monuments dating to approximately 1207. In his famous stela celebrating victory in his Asiatic campaign, along with vanquishing an entity named Israel, he lists Gezer among three Canaanite cities which he conquered. He boasts that “carried off is Askalon, seized upon is Gezer, Yenoam is made as a thing not existing.”<sup>321</sup> This is not just an isolated claim, as he claims the epithet “binder of Gezer,” or alternatively “subduer of Gezer,” among his

---

<sup>320</sup> Robert Drews, *The End of the Bronze Age: Changes in Warfare and the Catastrophe CA. 1200 B.C.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 4.

<sup>321</sup> “Hymn on the Victory over the Libyans (Israel Stela)” in *The Nineteenth Dynasty*, vol. 3 of *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents from the Earliest of Times to the Persian Conquest*, trans. and ed. James Henry Breasted (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906), para. 617.

titulary on an inscription from Amada.<sup>322</sup> While Pharaohs took many titles, not all of them reflected historical realia. However, “for the mention of a specific town, or even nation, in such an epithet, in a titulary must refer to some definite occurrence.”<sup>323</sup>

Merneptah’s destruction of Gezer may even have been visually recorded at a temple in Karnak.

Frank Yurco has identified several scenes from Karnak which he believes ought to be attributed to Merneptah and not Ramses II as previously thought. His theory is not accepted by all scholars, including a number of Egyptologists.<sup>324</sup> However, if he is correct, four scenes, which include sieges of three cities and a battle in an open field, would depict the destruction of Ashkelon, Gezer, Yenoam, and Israel. Though only one scene still identifies what is being depicted, that of Ashkelon, Yurco identifies “Scene 2” as the siege of Gezer.<sup>325</sup> In all four combat scenes, including “Scene 2” at the presumptive fortress of Gezer, the Egyptians do battle with people depicted as Asiatics, or Canaanites.<sup>326</sup> If Yurco is correct in his identification of the reliefs as originating under Merneptah, the depiction of Gezer only further supports the assertion the Bronze Age city was populated by Canaanites and met a violent end.

---

<sup>322</sup> Itamar Singer, “Merneptah’s Campaign to Canaan and the Egyptian Occupation of the Southern Coastal Plain of Palestine in the Ramesside Period,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 269 (1988): 3.

<sup>323</sup> James Henry Breasted, *The Nineteenth Dynasty*, vol. 3 of *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents from the Earliest of Times to the Persian Conquest*, trans. and ed. James Henry Breasted (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906), para. 606.

<sup>324</sup> Killebrew, 155.

<sup>325</sup> Frank J. Yurco, “Merneptah’s Canaanite Campaign,” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 23 (1986): 199.

<sup>326</sup> Yurco, 207.

Merneptah's destruction of Gezer is probably identifiable archaeologically. In Field II the local stratum thirteen ended in destruction, attributable to Merneptah.<sup>327</sup> This seems to be a relatively localized destruction as no other fields have revealed a comparable layer of ash and debris. While the destruction may have been localized the conquest of the city was much more complete. In Field II stratum 12 reused the architecture of stratum 13 but the entire stratum was ephemeral and when the stratum ended nothing in it was reused in following strata.<sup>328</sup> There is comparable evidence in Field VI. There is no destruction indicated at the end of the Bronze Age in Field VI, but a clear interruption in settlement. It does not seem the entire population was killed or removed from the site, but it was severely depopulated at the beginning of the twelfth century. In Field VI the evidence of occupation is notably absent suggesting a break in occupation or perhaps a settlement of squatters.<sup>329</sup> The evidence suggests Merneptah destroyed the city of Gezer, during which many of the Canaanite inhabitants were either killed or scattered leaving only a few to resume life on the site. The scale of the occupation at the beginning of the Iron Age was significantly smaller than during the preceding Bronze Age.

Following Merneptah's destruction of Gezer the city entered a period of demographic decline. The city seems to have been populated by Canaanites, as the depictions at Karnak suggest, when Merneptah attacked. The evidence indicates following the destruction, the city was depopulated, though it seems as though some of

---

<sup>327</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer II*, 52.

<sup>328</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer II*, 53.

<sup>329</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer IV*, 59.

the former residents returned. There were few architectural remains recovered from the Late Bronze to Iron Age transition and what did exist was simply reused from the prior stratum.<sup>330</sup> Though it is unclear, the reuse of the earlier city plan, albeit on a much smaller scale, suggests it was not a new group of settlers who repopulated Gezer, but former residents returning to their city. Early in the Iron Age the city was apparently still occupied by Canaanites, though not nearly as many.

The city underwent demographic and attendant architectural changes beginning early in the twelfth century. In the HUC Fields II and VI the architecture and use of space changed dramatically. In Field II and Field VI the city underwent functional changes as both fields were used in the early Iron Age for industrial purposes. The remains in Field II indicate that area of the city was turned from a domestic section into an industrial area. Field II was likely the dump site for industrial, and some domestic, waste, likely for an adjacent, though unexcavated, industrial installation, possibly for the treatment and processing of lime.<sup>331</sup> A comparable situation existed in Field VI where the domestic area was again converted into a “Cyclopean Complex,” which functioned as a large granary.<sup>332</sup> Though, after an extended period of use the granary was again converted into a domestic area.

In the newly converted domestic area on the acropolis two large houses were excavated. An approximate date for the houses to the last quarter of the twelfth century through the middle of the eleventh century is appropriate.<sup>333</sup> The houses are large, the

---

<sup>330</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer II*, 52.

<sup>331</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer II*, 57.

<sup>332</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer IV*, 60.

<sup>333</sup> Dever et al. *Gezer IV*, 117.

“Northwest House” being forty feet by thirty feet in dimensions.<sup>334</sup> The size and location on the site suggest these houses were occupied by wealthy individuals, perhaps even an elite ruling class. The data from Field VI suggests during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.E. wealth and influence began to concentrate in the hands of a few.<sup>335</sup> It is clear the architectural plan of the city changed in the early Iron Age with the influx of a small but elite coterie of ethnic newcomers: probably to be identified as the Philistines.

There are no extant historical sources which date to the twelfth or eleventh centuries and mention Gezer or illuminate the city’s ethnic composition. However, the Hebrew Bible does offer some interesting insights into both the political and ethnic history of Gezer during this time, though references to Gezer in the Iron I period are certainly not contemporary, and the historical veracity of some references is suspect. The city is first mentioned as a Canaanite city, whose king, Horam, came to the military aid of another Canaanite city, Lachish, as it was besieged by Joshua and the Israelites. However, the Gezerite army was unsuccessful and defeated.<sup>336</sup> Only the army is recorded as being defeated, and elsewhere in the narrative it is confirmed the Canaanite inhabitants of Gezer were not driven from the city.<sup>337</sup> In the biblical book of Judges, this is again confirmed stating “neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who lived at Gezer, so the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them.”<sup>338</sup> During the period of the Judges and the beginning of the monarchy Gezer is not mentioned. However, following the accession of David it again enters the text. After David took control of the state he

---

<sup>334</sup> Dever et al., “Further Excavations at Gezer,” 129.

<sup>335</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer IV*, 116.

<sup>336</sup> Joshua 10:33

<sup>337</sup> Joshua 16:10

<sup>338</sup> Judges 1:29

became engaged in wars with the Philistines. One such campaign is described in the Deuteronomistic History as ending when David “struck down the Philistines from Geba as far as Gezer.”<sup>339</sup> In the book of Chronicles, the text records during David’s reign “war broke out at Gezer with the Philistines.”<sup>340</sup> However, Chronicles was written much later than the Deuteronomistic History, around the year 400 B.C. or later. It is even likely the Chronicler relied on the Deuteronomistic books of Samuel and Kings to write the account of David and Solomon.<sup>341</sup> Thus, though this passage discusses Gezer in the context of the Philistines, it is chronologically far removed from the time period which it discusses and its historicity is not guaranteed. Furthermore, it does not state whether Gezer is in fact a Philistine city, but it at the very least must be inferred the city was on the Philistine border, likely sympathetic to the Philistines, if not outright under Philistine control. Though, there is no way to determine when the city fell under Philistine influence, if it did.

#### *The Philistines in the Early Iron Age*

The archaeological and literary data from Gezer from the Iron I is best understood in a wider context. This is made easier as there are numerous references to the Philistines in historical sources and dozens of sites with Philistine remains have been excavated. For example, of the pentapolis sites, that is the five cities which comprise the core of Philistine settlement, four of the five have had major excavations conducted at them, only Gaza remains unexcavated, due in part to current political circumstances. Over forty

---

<sup>339</sup> 2 Samuel 5:25

<sup>340</sup> 1 Chronicles 20:4

<sup>341</sup> Sara Japhet, *I and II Chronicles: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1993), 16-24.



other sites excavated in the modern states of Israel and Jordan have revealed some sort of Philistine remains.<sup>342</sup> There are many noticeable trends relating to Philistine ethnic boundary maintenance, particularly outside of the core area.

Philistines are relatively easy to identify archaeologically, particularly early in the Iron Age. There are many cultural features which are uniquely Philistine and not found among either Israelites or Canaanites, indicating the Philistines were a distinct ethnic unit. Philistine domestic assemblages, particular the presence of hearths and attendant dietary practices, cultic practices, and ceramic assemblages all are distinct from the native Canaanite and Israelite parallels.

Though the Philistines are relatively easy to identify in the archaeological record, there is one difficulty, in that they intermingled with the indigenous Late Bronze Canaanite population which resulted in a progressively mixed culture and ethnicity. Results from excavations suggest the initial settlers, ethnic Philistines, settled amongst, and politically dominated, the native, ethnic Canaanites. Over time the Philistines and Canaanites mixed, yet Philistine ethnicity persisted though it went through a process of “creolization” or “acculturation.”<sup>343</sup>

Acculturation is a social process in which individuals of two groups, with two different cultures, have continuous contact and changes occur in the original cultural patterns.<sup>344</sup> In the process of acculturation, cultural traits are adopted from the donor culture into the recipient culture. The foreign cultural elements are adopted into the

---

<sup>342</sup> Trude Dothan, *The Philistines and Their Material Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 26.

<sup>343</sup> Faust and Lev-Tov, “Constitution of Philistine Identity,” 13.

<sup>344</sup> Robert Redfield, Ralph Linton and Melville J. Herskovits, “Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation,” *American Anthropologist* 38 (January – March 1936): 149.

recipient culture to such an extent they are no longer considered foreign.<sup>345</sup> In the case of the Philistines, they were a recipient culture which embraced cultural elements from the donor Canaanite culture. As the Philistines lived among the local Canaanite population, in prolonged, direct contact, they eventually adopted various Canaanite cultural traits, such as language and religion, which ceased to be foreign characteristics, and became Philistine. Thus, archaeologically it can be difficult to determine Philistine artifacts as the acculturation process turned some Canaanite material traits into both Canaanite and Philistine.

What further complicates the issue is while the cultural process of acculturation was taking place, other social processes were happening simultaneously, namely the negotiation of ethnic boundaries. Furthermore, as Philistines lived alongside Canaanites, particularly in their cultural and political core area of the pentapolis, it is possible two different processes of ethnic boundary maintenance occurred simultaneously, one outside of the core ethnic area between the Philistines and other ethnicities and one within the core area between Philistines and Canaanites.<sup>346</sup> The site of Gezer lay just outside of the Philistine ethnic core area, indicating if any Philistine ethnic presence were there, and ethnic boundary maintenance were to occur it would be akin to the former process.

At numerous sites, discoveries indicate the Philistines represented a new ethnic and cultural group in Canaan. One architectural feature which makes a sudden appearance in and around the pentapolis sites at the beginning of the Iron I is the hearth.

---

<sup>345</sup> Bryan Jack Stone, "The Philistines and Acculturation: Culture Change and Ethnic Continuity in the Iron Age" *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 298 (1995): 8.

<sup>346</sup> Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman, "Canaanite Resistance: The Philistines and Beth-Shemesh – A Case Study from Iron Age I," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 364 (2011): 46.

At Tel Miqne, identified as Ekron, Tel es-Şafi, identified as Gath, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Tel Qasile hearths have been discovered in Philistine contexts.<sup>347</sup> Throughout the second millennium such hearths are known throughout the Aegean, Cyprus, and Cilicia but were unknown in Canaan.<sup>348</sup> They are even known in sites throughout Syria, but not in the southern Levant.<sup>349</sup> They are believed to have had numerous functions including cooking, cultic, social, and industrial.<sup>350</sup> The hearths are more than an architectural curiosity at Philistine sites. They represent and facilitate the social structures of the Aegean and Cypriot world.<sup>351</sup> At Ekron, a large structure, possibly a governor's residence, which had some areas of cultic significance, also had a sizeable room with a large hearth with a pebble base.<sup>352</sup> Near the hearth, bones were discovered, including fish and chicken bones.<sup>353</sup> The hearth uncovered in Ekron indicates the Philistines likely used such structures for domestic cooking functions, as evinced by the faunal remains, but also likely a social function indicated by its presence in a monumental structure in semi-public space.

The hearths represent a change in dietary patterns. Canaanite and Israelite cooking took place in *tabuns* or clay ovens. Philistine cooking installations, like the hearth, indicate different cooking techniques, used for different dietary customs.

Cooking pots utilized by the Canaanite population in the Iron Age continued Bronze Age

---

<sup>347</sup> David Ben-Shlomo et al., "Cooking Identifies: Aegean-Style Cooking Jugs and Cultural Interaction in Iron Age Philistia and Neighboring Regions," *American Journal of Archaeology* 112 (2008): 236.

<sup>348</sup> Killebrew, 211.

<sup>349</sup> Harvey Weiss, "Archaeology in Syria," *American Journal of Archaeology* 101 (January 1997): 146.

<sup>350</sup> Killebrew, 212.

<sup>351</sup> Trude Dothan and Moshe Dothan, *People of the Sea: The Search for the Philistines* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992), 245.

<sup>352</sup> Seymour Gitin and Trude Dothan, "The Rise and Fall of Ekron of the Philistines: Recent Excavations at an Urban Border Site," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 50 (1987): 205.

<sup>353</sup> Gitin and Dothan, "Rise and Fall of Ekron," 205.

traditions. It is believed they were utilized by setting them in hot coals or embers to heat the food inside. In the Iron I, the Philistines brought with them a new cooking tradition. Philistine cooking jugs are distinct from the Canaanite ceramic cooking vessels of the preceding centuries.<sup>354</sup> Globular shaped, handled-jugs, of varying size were used by Philistines to cook on the hearth. The constructed hearths allowed the jugs to be set on the perimeter of the structure and heated by the embers in the hearth.<sup>355</sup> Such a method for cooking seems to have been used in the Aegean, Cyprus and other locations where hearths were in use. Burn marks on the sides of cooking jugs at places from Crete, the Greek mainland, and Philistia, suggests all these vessels were heated in the same manner on a hearth.<sup>356</sup> The evidence shows the Philistines utilized the hearth in the same way as those from the Aegean and Cyprus.

In the Iron I, Philistine cooking traditions reflect practices recalling those known from the Bronze Age Aegean. The small, “globular-to-ovoid” cooking jugs in the southern Levant break with Canaanite tradition to such an extent they are often considered a hallmark of Philistine ethnic presence.<sup>357</sup> The Philistine cooking tradition continued throughout the Iron I and into the Iron II. The fact there is a clear ceramic development in a limited geographic space known to have been occupied by the Philistines indicates the Philistines continued Aegean culinary practices in the Iron II.<sup>358</sup> Philistine cooking pots evolved over generations but Iron II forms can still trace their

---

<sup>354</sup> Killebrew, 222.

<sup>355</sup> Assaf Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines and Aegean Migration at the End of the Late Bronze Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 238.

<sup>356</sup> Ben-Shlomo et al., “Cooking Identifies,” 236.

<sup>357</sup> Ben-Shlomo et al., “Cooking Identifies,” 226.

<sup>358</sup> Ben-Shlomo et al., “Cooking Identifies,” 229.

conceptual roots to Iron I prototypes. Such continuity is rare in Philistine studies as many aspects of Philistine culture evolved and adapted as the society underwent acculturation.<sup>359</sup>

The new cooking pot tradition introduced into Philistia ushered in not only new cooking techniques but also new dietary habits to the region. Archaeological excavations show the Philistines favored new eating habits, not common in Canaan during the Bronze Age. The majority of Philistine cooking pots, particularly in the early stages of their settlement, were closed form jugs. These ceramic forms most likely lent themselves to the preparation of liquid dishes, not roasting or frying foods.<sup>360</sup> It is also apparent the incorporation of pork was a staple of the Philistine diet.

Faunal remains from Philistine sites reveal pork consumption was high during the Iron Age I. The Late Bronze contexts at Ashkelon and Tel Mique reveal pork percentages of four and eight percent of the total faunal assemblages.<sup>361</sup> The earliest levels of Philistine occupation at these sites reveal pigs composed over fifteen percent of the total faunal assemblage.<sup>362</sup> At Tel Mique, the increase in pork bones rose to over twenty-five percent of the total assemblage near the end of the Iron I.<sup>363</sup> In the core of Philistine ethnic occupation, the pentapolis sites, pork consumption was high in the Iron I period. At sites on the periphery of Philistia, like Beth Shemesh and Tel Batash, identified as Timnah, there are dissimilar pictures in terms of pig remains. At Beth-

---

<sup>359</sup> Ben-Shlomo et al., "Cooking Identifies," 240.

<sup>360</sup> Yasur-Landau, 131.

<sup>361</sup> Brian Hesse, "Pig Lovers and Pig Haters: Patterns of Palestinian Pork Consumption," *Journal of Ethnobiology* 10 (1990): 216.

<sup>362</sup> Hesse, 216.

<sup>363</sup> Faust and Lev-Tov, "Constitution of Philistine Identity," 18.

Shemesh, a site in the Shephelah, over 12,000 animal bones were analyzed and the results show pork was avoided.<sup>364</sup> At Timnah, a site believed to have had a Philistine presence, pig bones reached eight percent of the total assemblage, well short of the pentapolis sites, though clearly total pork avoidance was not practiced.

The popularity of pork in Philistia seems to have been an element of Philistine ethnic boundary maintenance during the Iron I. The distinct cooking pots and evidence of new dietary customs suggest the Philistines brought the new customs with them from their homeland. “The conservative qualities of foodways, the low status connected with everyday food preparation, and the strong sense of identity and worldviews associated with food” make dietary customs a stable indicator of ethnic identity.<sup>365</sup>

An additional Philistine ethnic marker from the Iron Age I is their distinctive pottery. While it is usually bad archaeological practice to equate “pots” with “people” in the case of the Philistines it is appropriate in certain circumstances. At the pentapolis sites the earliest Philistine strata are characterized by the appearance of pottery known as Philistine monochrome. The earlier, monochrome, Philistine pottery clearly evolved into a characteristic, more widespread bichrome style pottery. As with Canaanite and Israelite pottery, the typologies of Philistine pottery are well known and easily accessible in published volumes, particularly Trude Dothan’s *The Philistines and Their Material Culture*.<sup>366</sup> Thus, there is no need to include a lengthy discussion on Philistine ceramic

---

<sup>364</sup> Bunimovitz and Lederman, “Canaanite Resistance,” 44.

<sup>365</sup> Yasur-Landau, 240.

<sup>366</sup> Dothan, *Philistines and Material Culture*, 95.

forms; though certain aspects are worth noting as Philistine pottery was a tool in ethnic boundary maintenance.

The first pottery corpus associated with the Philistines, called Philistine monochrome, is identical in form to those known throughout the Mediterranean as Mycenaean IIIC, or Late Helladic IIIC. However, the Mycenaean IIIC discovered at Philistine sites, in particular Tel Miqne and Ashdod, through petrographic analysis were proven to have been manufactured from local clay.<sup>367</sup> The locally manufactured Philistine monochrome pottery has a very small geographical distribution, having been excavated only at Tel Miqne, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Tel es-Safi, and Tel Haror; essentially, limited to the pentapolis region.<sup>368</sup> The limited geographical distribution of the Philistine monochrome has been attributed to a number of reasons, but the most convincing is the pottery style carried an ethnic significance.

The majority of the Philistine monochrome forms are domestic ones which represent a distinctly Aegean lifestyle and cultural preferences. The monochrome forms are dominated by various bowls, kraters, jugs, *kylikes* (shallow, stemmed drinking ware), strainer jugs, stirrup jars, and cooking jugs.<sup>369</sup> Additionally, many of the decorative motifs common on Philistine monochrome ware are attested in Aegean and Cypriot parallels from earlier periods including checkerboards, antithetic and stemmed spirals,

---

<sup>367</sup> Trude Dothan, "The Arrival of the Sea Peoples: Cultural Diversity in Early Iron Age Canaan," in *Recent Excavations in Israel: Studies in Iron Age Archaeology*, ed. Seymour Gitin and William G. Dever (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 1989), 4.

<sup>368</sup> Trude Dothan and Alexander Zuckerman, "A Preliminary Study of the Mycenaean IIIC:1 Pottery Assemblages from Tel Miqne-Ekron and Ashdod," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 333 (2004): 42.

<sup>369</sup> Dothan and Zuckerman, "Study of the Mycenaean IIIC:1 Pottery," 7-28.

and antithetic and stemmed tongues.<sup>370</sup> Another common motif, the Philistine bird, does not have any direct parallels with earlier periods but is almost certainly influenced by Minoan and Mycenaean examples.<sup>371</sup> The Philistine monochrome clearly represents an Aegean lifestyle transplanted to the Levant. It was not luxury ware, but was commonly used in daily activities such as cooking and serving. It encapsulated an Aegean lifestyle that was foreign to the local inhabitants. It is thus not surprising the monochrome ware was avoided by the local inhabitants of the Levant as it represented foreign customs and behaviors. They associated the pottery with the Philistines and avoided it beginning with the earliest wave of Philistine occupation. It is possible the monochrome ware functioned as an ethnic marker even if it was not produced for such a purpose.<sup>372</sup>

By the middle of the twelfth century, the Philistine monochrome was replaced by the bichrome style.<sup>373</sup> The Philistine bichrome is a hallmark of Philistine occupation; it is instantly identifiable as Philistine when recovered archaeologically. Even body shards can be diagnostic; archaeologists need not rely on rim and base pieces to identify Philistine bichrome ceramics. The introduction of Philistine bichrome followed the disappearance of the monochrome. Whereas the monochrome was a wholly Aegean corpus transplanted and manufactured in Canaan, the bichrome is a fusion of Aegean and indigenous influences.

---

<sup>370</sup> Dothan and Zuckerman, "Study of the Mycenaean IIIC:1 Pottery," 37-40.

<sup>371</sup> Dothan and Zuckerman, "Study of the Mycenaean IIIC:1 Pottery," 39.

<sup>372</sup> Shlomo Bunimovitz and Avraham Faust, "Chronological Separation, Geographical Segregation, or Ethnic Demarcation? Ethnography and the Iron Age Low Chronology," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 322 (2001): 7.

<sup>373</sup> Elizabeth Bloch-Smith and Beth Albert Nakhai, "A Landscape Comes to Life: The Iron Age I," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 62 (1999): 116.



The Aegean influence on the monochrome is total, over the several decades which led to the development of the bichrome, though, new vessel types were introduced. Trude Dothan identified eighteen main Philistine bichrome forms. Eight of these forms derived from Mycenaean styles, three from Cypriot prototypes, four from Canaanite models, one is an Egyptian style, and two are uniquely Philistine.<sup>374</sup> While many of the Philistine bichrome vessels were derived from foreign influences, the Philistines made them distinctly their own. As the term “bichrome” suggests the vessels are most often decorated in black and red. As with the monochrome, the decorative motifs are largely indebted to the Philistines Aegean heritage, yet there are new decorations incorporated into the bichrome style of non-Mycenaean origin. For example, Egyptian stylized lotus motifs represent a foreign influence on Philistine ceramic art, date palm motifs, introduced in the bichrome corpus, clearly point to an indigenous Canaanite influence. Additionally, bichrome decoration is uncommon in Mycenaean tradition, yet is a hallmark of Late Bronze Age Canaanite ceramic decoration, albeit with different vessel forms and motifs.<sup>375</sup> The thoroughly Aegean nature of Philistine ceramics, characterized by the monochrome style, began to undergo change, reflecting the influence different cultures and customs. The Aegean forms and decorative motifs, combined with the Canaanite red and black decoration, produced a uniquely Philistine pottery corpus.<sup>376</sup>

The bichrome style has a much greater distribution than the monochrome. The majority of the bichrome finds are concentrated in Philistia, though examples come from

---

<sup>374</sup> Dothan, *Philistines and Material Culture*, 96.

<sup>375</sup> Dothan, *Philistines and Material Culture*, 215.

<sup>376</sup> Bloch-Smith and Nakhai, “Landscape Comes to Life,” 91.

the Shephelah, into the Negev, some in the highlands, and even in the Jezreel Valley; from Dor to Beth-Shean.<sup>377</sup> There is no clear explanation for the widespread discovery of bichrome forms.<sup>378</sup> The distribution is not equal, though. In the pentapolis sites of Ashkelon and Tel Miqne, bichrome pottery comprises as much as thirty-one and forty-one percent, respectively, of the total ceramic assemblage during the Iron I. At Timnah, bichrome pottery composed as much as thirty-four percent of the assemblage, while at sites such as Beth-Shemesh and Aphek the bichrome group comprised less than six, and three percent respectively.<sup>379</sup>

The bichrome pottery style underwent three distinct phases of development before finally going out of favor at the end of the Iron Age I. The first stage of bichrome evolution began in the twelfth century and ended in the last quarter of the same century. It represents the pinnacle of Philistine bichrome production. The majority of the vessels hearken to Mycenaean prototypes both in form and decoration, with the inclusion of the Canaanite bichrome decoration. The second phase, dating to the last quarter of the twelfth century until the middle of the eleventh, is similar to the first period except more non-Mycenaean style vessels were produced and the overall quality began to decline. During the second half of the eleventh century until the beginning of the tenth century, the Philistine bichrome style pottery entered its final decline as a distinctive style. In this phase the motifs which originated with Mycenaean potters are still utilized, though they

---

<sup>377</sup> Dothan, *Philistines and Material Culture*, 26.

<sup>378</sup> Avner Raban, "The Philistines in the Western Jezreel Valley," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 284 (1991): 25.

<sup>379</sup> Bunimovitz and Lederman, "Canaanite Resistance," 44.

seem to be “misunderstood” by the Philistine potters.<sup>380</sup> This suggests the potters were too far removed from their Aegean homeland to fully comprehend their cultural heritage, yet attempted to retain it. The eponymous decorative technique even began to be utilized less, taking on characteristics of the indigenous tradition. Throughout the Iron Age I, the bichrome ware evolved, ultimately losing its distinctive Aegean characteristics. It was not until the end of the Iron Age I that the bichrome finally went out of style, and quite suddenly at that.

An example of the abruptness with which the bichrome style went out of favor can be seen at the pentapolis site of Ashdod. It has four strata which have been dated to the Iron I. In the first stratum, only twenty-four percent of the assemblage was Philistine, while the rest represent a continuation of the Canaanite tradition. The second stratum had a near equal distribution of Philistine and local traditions, totaling forty-seven Philistine. In the third stratum, Philistine bichrome pottery represents fifty-eight percent of the recovered ceramic assemblage. However, the final stratum, dating to the tenth century, is virtually devoid of bichrome ware. The disappearance of bichrome ware is not unique to Ashdod, though, and is mirrored at other sites, including another pentapolis site, Ashkelon.<sup>381</sup>

While the bichrome differs from the monochrome in many ways, it seems to have retained an ethnic significance. Especially outside of Philistia proper, the bichrome ware seems to have played a role in ethnic boundary maintenance. It was the finest tableware available in the Levant during the Iron I, and while it was immensely popular in Philistia,

---

<sup>380</sup> Dothan, *Philistines and Material Culture*, 96.

<sup>381</sup> Faust and Lev-Tov, “Constitution of Philistine Identity,” 22.

its popularity declined sharply outside the region. Evidence of Philistine bichrome ware has been found at sites all over the southern Levant, but nowhere outside of Philistia did it rival the statistical popularity it enjoyed in Philistia, particularly the pentapolis sites. The bichrome ware was the best available pottery in the area yet was avoided outside the areas of Philistine occupation, because it carried symbolic significance to the Philistines. Its lack of demand outside Philistia is due to more than economics or limited access.<sup>382</sup> It seems as though it was deliberately avoided as part of a process of ethnic boundary maintenance. The Canaanites and Israelites presumably avoided it as they understood the pottery had “emblemic properties” connecting it ethnically to the Philistines.<sup>383</sup>

Excavations from Tel Qasile provide an excellent case study documenting Philistine pottery bore ethnic significance. The site of Tel Qasile, located in the modern city of Tel Aviv, is only four acres in size and was originally founded by Philistines.<sup>384</sup> It was a dense, well-organized city with residential quarters and storehouses in the southern part of the site, and successive cultic structures in the north of the site. It persisted as a primarily Philistine city for nearly two centuries before being destroyed at the end of the Iron Age I.<sup>385</sup> Philistine bichrome pottery was recovered in abundance at the site; it comprised nearly twenty-five percent of the total assemblage.<sup>386</sup> However, the bichrome

---

<sup>382</sup> Bunimovitz and Lederman, “Canaanite Resistance,” 46.

<sup>383</sup> Ayelet Gilboa, Anat Cohen-Weinberger and Yuval Goren, “Philistine Bichrome Pottery: The View from the Northern Canaanite Coast,” in *I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Times: Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Aren Maeir and Pierre de Miroschedji (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 321.

<sup>384</sup> Dothan and Dothan, *People of the Sea*, 81-82.

<sup>385</sup> Dothan, *Philistines and Material Culture*, 58.

<sup>386</sup> Bunimovitz and Lederman, “Canaanite Resistance,” 44.

ware was concentrated in certain areas of the site and virtually absent in others.<sup>387</sup> In the northern cultic area and nearby residences the bichrome ware was abundant, while in the southern residential quarter it was missing.<sup>388</sup> One possible interpretation of the data is to recognize the presence of an ethnic enclave. In such an interpretation the Philistine pottery was understood as ethnically significant and its avoidance is evident within the site.

In addition to diet and ceramics, the Philistine cult also distinguished them in the Iron Age I period. The only clearly cultic contexts to have been excavated, and published, are at Ashdod and Tel Qasile.<sup>389</sup> However, other objects recovered in other excavations suggest a cultic function broadening modern scholarship's understanding of early Philistine religious practices. As with the ceramic evidence, the Philistine religious objects bear a striking Aegean influence.

Many of the objects associated with Philistine cultic activity have clear Aegean and Cypriot antecedents. For example, *kernoi* and *rhyta*, both used in libation rituals, were widely used in Mycenaean, and before that, Minoan, cultic contexts.<sup>390</sup> *Kernoi* are ceramic or stone vessels, often in a hollow ring shape, which also often has other vessels affixed to its top. Functionally, liquids were added into the *kernos* and poured out in libation rituals. *Rhyta* were also libation vessels, though were conically shaped cups, often in the shape of animals heads. Most Mycenaean and Minoan *rhyta* have a hole in the bottom of the cone which facilitated libation rituals.

---

<sup>387</sup> Faust and Lev-Tov, "Constitution of Philistine Identity," 21.

<sup>388</sup> Bloch-Smith and Nakhai, "Landscape Comes to Life," 92.

<sup>389</sup> Dothan, *Philistines and Material Culture*, 219.

<sup>390</sup> Oliver Dickinson, *The Aegean Bronze Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 281.

Both of these types of objects have been found in Philistine contexts. Ring *kernoi* have been recovered at Ashdod, Megiddo, and other sites with the closest parallels coming from the final phase of Mycenaean culture. *Kernoi* bowls, or fragments of them, have been recovered from Ashdod and Beth-Shemesh which also derived from a Mycenaean tradition.<sup>391</sup> The Philistines also used *rhyta*, some designed to have the appearance of a lioness head were found in cultic contexts. One excellent example from a *favissa*, or cultic dump, near the Philistine temple at Tel Qasile is highly stylized but is still clearly a *rhyta* with lion ornamentation.<sup>392</sup>

Clay figurines were used by the Philistines as part of their religious practice, but the use of clay figurines, particularly female figurines, was not a strictly Aegean or Philistine practice. Canaanites and Israelites also used clay figurines as part of their folk religion, notably for the worship of Canaanite goddesses such as Asherah.<sup>393</sup> Female figurines were also used in Mycenaean cultic contexts during the Bronze Age.<sup>394</sup> Philistine figurines, though, appear to have derived from Aegean and Cypriot prototypes. The “Ashdoda” figurine, named after the place of her discovery, is an excellent example of a Philistine figurine with Aegean precursors. The terracotta figure is a stylized seated woman decorated in the bichrome style standing just under seven inches (seventeen centimeters) tall. It is reminiscent of examples known from the Greek mainland and Cyprus.<sup>395</sup> The Mycenaean examples represent a female deity of some sort, and many have suggested it is a mother goddess. While the “Ashdoda” is the only complete extant

---

<sup>391</sup> Dothan, *Philistines and Material Culture*, 224.

<sup>392</sup> Dothan, *Philistines and Material Culture*, 231.

<sup>393</sup> Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?* 176.

<sup>394</sup> Dickinson, 293.

<sup>395</sup> Dothan and Dothan, *People of the Sea*, 155.

form it is far from unique. Its discovery provides a context for some of the other fragmentary figurines found at Philistine sites.<sup>396</sup>

Philistine cultic practices clearly originated in the Aegean world. Mycenaean and Cypriot influences are apparent in nearly all Iron Age I Philistine cultic finds. Even the architecture of the temple complex at Tel Qasile is different from Canaanite styles.<sup>397</sup> The Philistine religion was, like the pottery, foreign to the collective Canaanite experience. It was avoided by non-Philistines as its customs were unfamiliar. Religion and ideology are often conservative ethnic markers, this is certainly the case with the Philistines. Throughout the Iron I, their cult, diet, and pottery were all elements in their process of ethnic boundary maintenance. That all changed, quite drastically, in the Iron Age II.

The influences of local traditions on Philistine culture are already apparent even in the Iron Age I. Canaanite and Egyptian ceramic forms and decorative motifs began to appear in the Philistine repertoire half way through the Iron Age I. However, it is clear despite the indigenous cultural encroachment the Philistines vigorously maintained their ethnic boundaries, despite the inclusion of elements not originally “Philistine.”

The archaeological evidence suggests the Philistines did not maintain any sort of contact with their homeland. The Aegean influence in their material culture is strong throughout the Iron Age I, but it does not keep pace with any contemporary trends in the Aegean world. Instead the influence of local traditions grows, which is understandable for as time passed, the Philistines became more greatly removed from their Aegean

---

<sup>396</sup> Dothan, *Philistines and Material Culture*, 234.

<sup>397</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Bible*, 322.

heritage and adopted Canaanite customs. However, the abandonment of certain features of their ethnic boundary is profoundly sudden and complete in the tenth century. It suggests more than just a process of acculturation was at work as Philistine ethnic boundaries quickly shifted as formerly ethnically significant aspects lost their ethnic value.<sup>398</sup>

Virtually every aspect of Philistine culture, even those which formerly marked ethnic boundaries, changed early in Iron Age II, taking on Canaanite characteristics. The Philistine bichrome pottery goes from popular to virtually nonexistent during the Iron I/II transition. It is replaced with a type of pottery often called “Ashdod Ware” or alternatively “Late Philistine Decorated Ware.”<sup>399</sup> Philistine cultic practices shift, too. Inscriptions from Tel Miqne make reference to the Canaanite goddess Asherah. The Philistines abandoned their Aegean-based religious practices in favor of the local Canaanite ones.

Shortly after the end of the Iron Age I, in the tenth century, it became expedient to the Philistines to shift their ethnic boundaries and completely abandon many of their ethnically sensitive actions and beliefs. They borrowed religious traditions, ceramic styles, even the Canaanite language. The vestiges of their Aegean heritage were, apparently, consciously discarded. With the exception of their dietary customs, specifically the use of closed form cooking pots, none of the Iron I ethnic markers can be

---

<sup>398</sup> Faust and Lev-Tov, “Constitution of Philistine Identity,” 27.

<sup>399</sup> David Ben Shlomo, Itzhaq Shai, and Aren M. Maeir, “Late Philistine Decorated Ware (“Ashdod Ware”): Typology, Chronology, and Production Centers,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 335 (2004): 2.



readily relied upon in the Iron II.<sup>400</sup> Their ethnic identity did not disappear, but because their acculturation was so extensive, and there are no written records which can clarify the matter, the identification of Philistine ethnicity in the Iron Age II is difficult. In the written record the Philistines persisted throughout the Iron Age as an ethnic group. They existed in the Levant as a distinct group until their defeat and exile at the hands of the Neo-Babylonian state. Even in exile the Philistines maintained some sort of ethnic identity, though it is difficult to determine how long they maintained that identity while in exile in Mesopotamia.<sup>401</sup>

The ethnic boundary markers maintained and mutually recognized in the Iron Age I do not apply to the Iron Age II, with the exception of dietary customs. The evidence of Philistine material culture is much less prevalent during this period, though, concentrated in Philistia and in the Shephelah. It is possible the Late Philistine Decorated Ware carried some of the symbolic significance of the bichrome, but such an assertion is not clearly proven or easily accepted.<sup>402</sup> Their former ethnically significant material traits lost their meaning, but that does not mean the Philistines lost their ethnic identity. New processes of ethnic boundary maintenance replaced the old ones. A possible interpretation is they were no longer an Aegean people, but a Levantine one, and they no longer used ethnic markers which emphasized their Aegean heritage.<sup>403</sup>

It is clear that Philistine identity persisted throughout the Iron Age II period; however, it is less clear what features were used to mark their ethnic identity. Historical

---

<sup>400</sup> Ben-Shlomo et al., "Cooking Identifies," 240.

<sup>401</sup> Ran Zadok, "Phoenicians, Philistines, and Moabites in Mesopotamia," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 230 (1978): 61.

<sup>402</sup> Ben Shlomo, Shai, and Maier, "Late Philistine Decorated Ware," 20.

<sup>403</sup> Stone, 25.

sources clearly indicate the Philistines were acknowledged as an entity during the Iron Age II. Thus it is clear the abandonment of traditional ethnic markers does not correlate to an abandonment of ethnic identity and a process of assimilation. However, the process of acculturation was so thorough, and there are no Iron Age II documents from a Philistine perspective to enlighten modern scholars, there is virtually no way to determine archaeologically what marks Philistines ethnically in the Iron Age II.

In historical sources pertaining to Iron Age I the Philistines are well known and distinguished as a unique ethnic entity. Texts from the Twentieth Dynasty in particular reveal a great deal about the Philistines and their early history in the Levant. Such texts come from Ramses III's mortuary temple at Medinet Habu on the west bank of the Nile. The temple is covered in artistic representations of events which occurred during his reign and are accompanied by inscriptions. Some additional details, and additional events, supplementing the Medinet Habu corpus can be found in a papyrus scroll, the Great Harris Papyrus or simply Harris Papyrus, which dates to just after the reign of Ramses III.<sup>404</sup>

In the Egyptian texts the Philistines are encountered as enemies of the Pharaoh, along with other groups collectively known to modern scholarship as the Sea Peoples. They are first encountered assisting the enemies of Egypt, namely the Libyans. Ramses records his victory over the Libyans and their allies but they do not disappear. In his eighth year as Pharaoh, Ramses again encounters the Sea Peoples, though not allied with any of Egypt's traditional enemies. He records victories, in word and image, over the

---

<sup>404</sup> Dothan and Dothan, *People of the Sea*, 27.

Philistines and their allies in two battles, one on sea and one on land. According to Ramses, the conflicts began when:

“The Northerners in their isles were disturbed, taken away in the fray – at one time. Not one stood before their hands, from Kheta, Kode, Carchemish, Arvad, Cyprus, they were wasted. They set up a camp in one place in Amor. They desolated his people and his land like that which is not. They came with fire prepared before them, forward to Egypt. Their main support was Peleset, Thekel, Shekelesh, Denyen, and Weshesh, (These) lands were united, and they laid their hands upon the land as far as the Circle of the Earth. Their hearts were confident, full of their plans.”<sup>405</sup>

The Peleset, or Philistines, were part of a coalition of seemingly independent groups which were involved in conflicts from Anatolia (Kheta) in the north, to Cyprus in the south. They camped in Amurru (Amor) in modern Lebanon, before continuing on to do battle against Egypt on both land and sea. In the depiction of the battles the Egyptian forces are shown vanquishing their enemies, Philistines among them. In the sea battle, the Philistine warriors are depicted on their single-mast ships wearing feathered headwear, armed with round shields and long spears.<sup>406</sup> In the land battle the Philistine forces are composed of chariotry with six-spoked wheels, small bands of soldiers armed with either a sword or spear and a round shield, and non-combatants in ox-drawn carts.<sup>407</sup> Both conflicts, Ramses claims, occurred on the borders of Egypt; the sea battle presumably in the Nile delta and the land battle in Djahi. The term Djahi was, by the

---

<sup>405</sup> “Northern War, Year 8” in *The Twentieth Dynasty*, vol. 4 of *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents from the Earliest of Times to the Persian Conquest*, trans. and ed. James Henry Breasted (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906), para. 64.

<sup>406</sup> Redford, 251.

<sup>407</sup> Dothan and Dothan, *People of the Sea*, 21.

Twentieth Dynasty, a vague term roughly analogous to the region of Canaan, or some part of it.<sup>408</sup>

The Harris Papyrus continues to sing Ramses' praise. He claims not only to have defeated the Sea Peoples but made them subject to Egyptian authority. The scribes record Ramses:

“I slew the Denyen in their isles, the Thekel and the Peleset were made ashes. The Sherden and the Weshesh of the sea, they were made as those that exist not, taken captive at one time, brought as captives to Egypt, like the sand of the shore. I settled them in strongholds, bound in my name. Numerous were their classes like hundred-thousands. I taxed them all, in clothing and grain from the storehouses and granaries each year.”<sup>409</sup>

Ramses claims he defeated the Sea Peoples and took some captive and settled others in his domain. These inscriptions have long been used to understand how the Philistines settled in the pentapolis sites. The presence of non-combatants in the relief of the land battle led many, including Gaston Maspero, R.A.S. Macalister, Amihai Mazar, and Trude Dothan, to believe the Philistines were a part of a mass migration fleeing the Aegean. Based on the etymology of the various groups of Sea Peoples, their origins, including those of the Philistines, were originally placed in the Aegean. After raiding the eastern Mediterranean, the Philistines and the rest of the Sea Peoples were stopped on the borders of Egypt and given a coastal enclave under the suzerainty of the Pharaoh.<sup>410</sup> The tale spun by the Pharaoh is not without its difficulties.

---

<sup>408</sup> Redford, 255.

<sup>409</sup> “Papyrus Harris” in *The Twentieth Dynasty*, vol. 4 of *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents from the Earliest of Times to the Persian Conquest*, trans. and ed. James Henry Breasted (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906), para. 403.

<sup>410</sup> Dothan and Dothan, *People of the Sea*, 27.

Even though nearly all scholars believe Ramses III engaged in a conflict with the Sea Peoples, there is still disagreement as to the nature of the conflict. Old and Middle Kingdom Pharaohs depicted themselves being courageous and pious in stylized and symbolic ways, such as the Pharaoh smiting his enemies with the larger-than-life monarch raising an arm to smite his enemies kneeling below. The New Kingdom Pharaohs began depicting “real” actions and battlefield scenes. And while these events did occur, the Egyptian scribes and artists did not let the details bother them when the eternal reputation of their patron was at stake. Depictions of the pharaoh were intended to convey a deeper truth about the pharaoh rather than any sort of journalistic account of events that actually happened.<sup>411</sup> Thus, it can be safely assumed Ramses III did battle with the Sea Peoples, including the Philistines, whether or not he did soundly defeat them in just two battles is suspect. The victories won by the pharaoh may not have been as sweeping or final as described in official documents, though it is plausible he did obstruct the invasion forces from entering Egypt proper.<sup>412</sup>

In light of this understanding of New Kingdom monuments, some have rejected outright the idea of a Philistine migration. Robert Drews, for example, has posited the Philistines were natives of Palestine, who, taking advantage of international weakness, attempted to invade Egypt for economic benefit but were defeated (in a sea battle) and then suffered Egyptian retaliation in their native land of Canaan.<sup>413</sup> Their Aegean culture, subsequent to their defeat by Egypt, was a process of elite emulation, trying to

---

<sup>411</sup> Robert Drews, “Medinet Habu: Oxcarts, Ships, and Migration Theories,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 59 (2000): 171.

<sup>412</sup> Redford, 255.

<sup>413</sup> Drews, “Medinet Habu,” 190.

recreate the lifestyle associated with the Aegean wares so popular during the Late Bronze Age which were no longer available due to the international economic and political collapse. Drews suggests many of the Sea Peoples originated in the Western Mediterranean and they, with the Philistines, ought to be understood as pirates, or raiders, who began a revolution in military strategy, moving away from charioteers armed with bows, to one dominated by infantry bearing swords, specifically, of the Naue II type, developed in central Europe during the Late Bronze Age. He believes members of the Sea Peoples utilized these swords, including the Philistines and the Shardana, or Sherden.<sup>414</sup> Additionally, he believes groups such as the Shardana originated in the Western Mediterranean, as the Naue II type sword moved from the West to the Eastern Mediterranean and Near East. Many scholars have posited an origin of the Sea Peoples beyond the Aegean basin. William Phythian-Adams, for example, posited a theory which placed the Philistines and the Sea Peoples origins on the Illyrian coast in the Balkans.<sup>415</sup>

The majority of scholars, however, do believe in a Philistine migration. The Philistines, or at least some of them, represent an ethnic group not native to the southern Levant in which they settled. There is some disagreement, though, regarding when the Philistines settled, how many of them settled, the ethnic composition of the settlers, and from whence they came. There are multiple theories on Philistine migration and ethnogenesis informed by both Egyptian sources and archaeological discoveries.

Many archaeologists and historians have weighed in on the issue of Philistine origins and settlement. The evidence presented suggests a core group of Philistines

---

<sup>414</sup> Drews, *End of the Bronze Age*, 198-199

<sup>415</sup> Dothan and Dothan, *People of the Sea*, 48.

originated somewhere within the East Aegean *koine*, that is within the Mycenaean sphere of cultural influence either in the Dodecanese, Cyclades, or the Eastern Anatolia coast.<sup>416</sup> Due to the political conditions at the end of the Late Bronze Age no significant geopolitical entity posed a threat to any migrants or travelers moving from the East Aegean to the southern Levantine coast, particularly if traveled an overland route along the southern coastline on Anatolia and down the Syrian and Levantine littoral.<sup>417</sup> It is also probable, in light of modern understanding of migrations, the settlement process was not a mass folk migration but a gradual, yet continuous, flow of migrants. Ramses III attempted to stop this flow of immigrants but was apparently less than successful. It is possible the Medinet Habu reliefs depict two of many skirmishes the Egyptian forces fought against the steady stream of immigrants. While the migrants may have suffered setbacks at the hands of the pharaoh's forces, they ultimately did find a place to settle on a permanent basis.

The ethnic composition of these settlers, who ultimately established themselves in the pentapolis sites, is still a complicated picture. The archaeological evidence confirms what can be extrapolated from the Medinet Habu reliefs. In the depiction of the land battle between the Egyptians and coalition, including the Philistines, there are ox-carts carrying non-combatants. The carts appear to be similar to Anatolian prototypes, suggesting the migrants found the carts useful and adopted their use as they passed through Anatolia.<sup>418</sup> Many of the non-combatants depicted are women, none of which

---

<sup>416</sup> Yasur-Landau, 192.

<sup>417</sup> Yasur-Landau, 116-117.

<sup>418</sup> Dothan, *Philistines and Material Culture*, 7.

are depicted in the same way. Egyptian artists often used different costumes and hairstyles to differentiate between various ethnic elements. The different hairstyles of the women depicted in the Medinet Habu reliefs indicate some were of Syro-Canaanite origin, at least one of Aegean origin, and one with no parallels in Egyptian or Mycenaean artistic representations. It is possible, even likely, the women represent the result of inter-marriages which occurred along the migration route. Not all of the non-combatants depicted are women, though; some men of Canaanite and Hittite dress are depicted as well. The Egyptian reliefs suggest the Philistines were ethnically mixed, with only the soldiers being depicted uniformly.<sup>419</sup>

The Philistines seem to have been a mixed group of immigrants during their initial settlement. The bulk of their group most likely originated somewhere within the Mycenaean cultural sphere of influence but local Canaanites were involved in some way in their settlement. The extent of their complicity is not fully understood, but it is apparent the Philistines were not wholly hostile invaders in the southern Levant. The Philistines seem to have settled at the pentapolis sites as “opportunistic settlers rather than violent conquerors.”<sup>420</sup> The continuation of certain Canaanite cultural elements suggests the Philistines adopted a policy of peaceful integration whenever possible, not always resorting to violence and domination.

If scholars are correct in stating the Philistines migrated from the Aegean world, and were an ethnically diverse group in the Levant, it is most likely the ethnic variety came from women who married into the group as the Philistine migrants moved along

---

<sup>419</sup> Yasur-Landau, 175.

<sup>420</sup> Yasur-Landau, 227.



their migration route.<sup>421</sup> Studies suggest many migrant streams are undertaken primarily by young men in early stages of migration<sup>422</sup> Such parity leaves a scarcity of women of their own ethnicity, making interethnic marriages the only viable option to young men far from their homeland. So while the initial settlers called Philistines were not a pure ethnic group, they most likely were largely from the Aegean basin with a few Aegeanized Cypriots or Cilicians added along the way.<sup>423</sup> Once in the southern Levant they coexisted with the Canaanite population, yet seemingly formed the military aristocracy and assumed leadership of the cities.<sup>424</sup>

The Philistines left no written records of their own. There is evidence the Philistines were a literate society, coming from seals and some later inscriptions from Philistine sites. There are very few inscriptions which can be attributed to a Philistine language, but what does exist suggests it was quite different from contemporary languages used in the Levant as it utilized a linear script similar to those of the Aegean.<sup>425</sup> For example, a stamp seal recovered at Ashdod, in a clear Philistine context, has been tentatively related to the Cypro-Minoan script.<sup>426</sup> Excavators found an additional seal, also found in an early Philistine context, this one at Tel Miqne-Ekron, with comparable signs to the Cypro-Mycenaean script.<sup>427</sup> No inscriptions have been found in early Philistine contexts; at least nothing before the Philistines adopted the Canaanite language.

---

<sup>421</sup> Yasur-Landau, , 313.

<sup>422</sup> David W. Anthony, "Migration in Archaeology: The Baby and the Bathwater," *American Anthropologist* 92 (1990): 905.

<sup>423</sup> Yasur-Landau, 328.

<sup>424</sup> Itzhaq Shai, "Understanding Philistine Migration: City Names and Their Implications," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 354 (2009): 23.

<sup>425</sup> Faust and Lev-Tov, "Constitution of Philistine Identity," 15.

<sup>426</sup> Dothan, *Philistines and Material Culture*, 41.

<sup>427</sup> Dothan and Dothan, *People of the Sea*, 153.

A few Philistine words and names have been preserved in the archaeological and literary record. For example, the term *serenim*, used in the Hebrew Bible to refer to the rulers of Philistine cities has been etymologically linked with a Luwian title, *tarwanis*, applied to some Neo-Hittite rulers and these led to the seventh century Lydian term *tyrannos*, which was later borrowed into Greek.<sup>428</sup> If the term *seren* is a Philistine word borrowed into Hebrew, it is possible the Philistine language has affinities to Anatolian languages. A number of Philistine names have been preserved in the biblical tradition, Assyrian and Babylonian archives, and archaeological artifacts. Philistine names such as Goliath and Achish, for example, are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. The name Goliath, is non-Semitic, and has traditionally been linked to the Lydian name Alyattes, though this has been challenged by some scholars, including Aren Maeir, who suggest a Carian parallel.<sup>429</sup> The name Achish is attested in the biblical, historical and archaeological record. In the biblical record Achish is listed as a king of Gath, not a *seren*. In Assyrian records an Ikausu, long etymologically linked with the name Achish, ruled Ekron during the first half of the seventh century. Additionally, a dedicatory inscription recovered from Tel Miqne/Ekron dating to first half of the seventh century records “the temple Ikausu son of Padi... ruler of Ekron built.” The name Achish/Ikausu has been linked to the name Anchises, the Trojan hero, as well as Achaean, meaning “Greek.”<sup>430</sup> Though

---

<sup>428</sup> Itzhaq Shai, “The Political Organization of the Philistines,” in “*I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Times:*” *Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Aren Maeir and Pierre de Miroschedji (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 349.

<sup>429</sup> Aren M. Maeir et al., “A Late Iron I/Early Iron II Old Canaanite Inscription from Tell es-Safi/Gath, Israel: Paleography, Dating, and Historical-Cultural Significance,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 351 (August 2008): 58.

<sup>430</sup> Joseph Naveh, “Achish-Ikausu in the Light of the Ekron Inscription,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* (May 1998): 35.

there is not enough evidence to indicate what language the Philistines originally spoke, what information is available points toward an Aegean or Anatolian affinity. Whatever the original Philistine language was, it is clear the Philistines eventually adopted both the Canaanite language and the Canaanite writing system. An inscription dating to the end of the Iron I or early Iron II recovered from Tell es-Safi/Gath lists two non-Semitic names, likely of Anatolian origin, and is written in a Canaanite alphabetic script. The Ekron dedicatory inscription, from the seventh century, is also in a Canaanite script. While the names Goliath and Achish are non-Semitic, other names of Philistine rulers, particularly from Assyrian archives, are clearly Semitic in origin.<sup>431</sup> The Philistines appear to have spoken a language similar to those of the Anatolian world early in their settlement in the Levant but adopted the West-Semitic language of the indigenous Canaanites sometime after their initial settlement.<sup>432</sup> Unfortunately if the Philistines kept some sort of archive it has either not been recovered or was destroyed. Therefore, any self-ascribed ethnic identity from Philistine written sources is unavailable. Also, any record of their history or ethnogenesis is unknown to modern scholarship.

The Philistines are, of course, known from the biblical record. They make numerous appearances in the narrative of Israel's history. Except for a few anachronistic references to interactions with the Patriarchs, such as the patriarch Isaac's interactions with the Philistine king Abimelek, the Philistines appear as one of the primary enemies of the Israelites after they settled in the land of Canaan.<sup>433</sup> During the time of the Judges,

---

<sup>431</sup> Naveh, 36.

<sup>432</sup> Dothan and Dothan, *People of the Sea*, 186.

<sup>433</sup> Genesis 26:1

the Israelites were in frequent conflict with the Philistines, and often on the losing side of the conflicts. According to the Biblical narrative conflicts with the Philistines intensified after the coronation of the first Israelite king, culminating in his defeat and death. The Hebrew Bible describes the victories of the second Israelite king, David, after which the Philistines waned as an existential threat to Israel. They lingered on throughout the period of the monarchy, and while Israel and Judah were condemned to exile the fate of the Philistines is left unrecorded.<sup>434</sup>

As the Biblical text is obviously from an Israelite perspective, it does not provide details of Philistine society and political structure. There are some things which can be inferred, though. The base of power for the Philistines was centered in the Pentapolis: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron and Gath. Each city is recorded as having its own ruler called a *seren* (*serenim* in the plural), though Gath, at least early in Philistine history, was *primus inter pares* among the united Philistine forces.<sup>435</sup> During the time of the divided monarchy, though, Gath fell to Judah and lost its position of prominence among the Philistines.<sup>436</sup> Particularly during the time of the Judges, the Philistines were a united, political and military threat against the Israelites who were a disjointed conglomeration of people with no organization on par with the Philistines. Following the development of the Israelite state, the regional Philistine threat graduated to international ones in Assyria and Aram.

---

<sup>434</sup> Judges 13:1; 1 Samuel 31:1-6; 2 Samuel 5:17-25

<sup>435</sup> Shai, "Political Organization of the Philistines," 358.

<sup>436</sup> Shai, "Political Organization of the Philistines," 356.

In summation, it is clear the Philistines clearly represented a distinct group in the historical record left behind by the cultures that encountered them. The Egyptians record them as part of a coalition of at least five distinct entities: the Philistines (Peleset), Tjeker (Thekel), Shekelesh, Denyen and Weshesh.<sup>437</sup> The Philistines are clearly distinguished as a discrete group by the Egyptian scribes. The Israelites also recognized the Philistines as a group entirely separate from themselves. They constituted a cultural, political, and ethnic “other” to the Israelites and stood in opposition to them in nearly every conceivable way. In Assyrian and Babylonian documents too, the Philistines, and their eponymous region Philistia, or *Palastu*, were recognized. It is likely their political makeup underwent a change during the Iron Age II but they seem to have retained their unique identity throughout the period, even after exile. Clearly, in the historical record, the Philistines composed an ethnic group, that was described as such by outside groups. Due to the lack of written sources from a Philistine perspective, we are unable to confirm they self-ascribed as a discrete ethnic group.

#### *Philistines at Gezer*

It is in this historical and archaeological context that the Iron I history of Gezer ought to be interpreted. The evidence shows that around the turn of the twelfth century Merneptah conquered the city, and though it only experienced localized destruction the entire city entered demographic decline. The Biblical sources suggest the city had some affinity with the Philistines, but the exact nature of the relationship is ambiguous.

---

<sup>437</sup> Yasur-Landau, 329.

The material culture recovered at the site dating to the early Iron Age strata indicates the Philistines were the new element in the city. Ethnically, they were not the dominant group but there was almost certainly an ethnic Philistine presence at the site. Though no excavations at Gezer have kept detailed records of the faunal assemblages at the site, many other aspects of the sites material culture have been kept and published. Some of these objects were part of Philistine ethnic boundary maintenance. These include Philistine bichrome pottery and cultic objects.

The distinctive Philistine pottery first appears at Gezer after the first quarter of the twelfth century and does not disappear until the middle of the eleventh century. At no time, and in no location dating to the twelfth or eleventh century, does Philistine bichrome ware constitute more than five percent of the total assemblage.<sup>438</sup> Nor does the Philistine monochrome ware ever appear at the site; it starts with the first phase of the bichrome ware and ultimately ends with all three phases having some representation at the site.<sup>439</sup> It is possible the Philistines maintained an enclave somewhere on the site which has not been thoroughly excavated, or perhaps on the eastern end of the site, though as Macalister trenched the majority of the “Eastern Hill” there is no way to know for sure. It is certain Macalister recovered numerous Philistine vessels, all in the bichrome style. Some were recovered on the tell while a number were removed from tombs located on and around the site.

The Philistine ceramic corpus at Gezer has a number of notable elements worth mentioning. Of the eighteen different Philistine forms Trude Dothan recognized which

---

<sup>438</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer IV*, 87.

<sup>439</sup> Dothan, *Philistines and Material Culture*, 52.

have the bichrome decoration. Gezer has produced eleven of the eighteen types, with only the forms influenced by Canaanite prototypes and those which came to prominence at the end of the bichrome era missing.<sup>440</sup> Some examples are of particular interest. For example, a bowl recovered by Macalister has a decorative motif of wavy, horizontal lines unique to Philistine ceramics, though very common on Late Mycenaean IIIC ceramics.<sup>441</sup> Additionally, a stirrup jar recovered from Gezer has a globular shape, color scheme, and triangular pattern above the metope which is strikingly reminiscent of Late Mycenaean IIIC styles.<sup>442</sup> Macalister also excavated a tomb, designated Tomb 9, which was used in the Late Bronze Age, Iron Age I, and Roman periods, in which multiple Philistine vessels were recovered including a *krater*, stirrup jar, *pyxis*, and various sherds with clear Philistine decorative motifs.<sup>443</sup> The top part of the stirrup jar is so similar to Mycenaean styles it is unclear if it should be classified as Philistine and dated to the Iron Age I, or if it is a Mycenaean import and date to the Late Bronze Age. All of the decorated Philistine wares from Tomb 9 stand out in some way or another. They are distinguished from other Philistine ware only in their high artistic quality.<sup>444</sup> The Philistine potters at Gezer were highly skilled and familiar with their Aegean background. It is highly unlikely a Canaanite potter would have been able or willing to manufacture such specialized wares either for local or Philistine consumption. Given the symbolic load carried by the bichrome ware, despite it being of superior quality, it is unlikely the Canaanite population of Gezer produced or utilized the Philistine ware.

---

<sup>440</sup> Dothan, *Philistines and Material Culture*, 96-197.

<sup>441</sup> Dothan, *Philistines and Material Culture*, 102.

<sup>442</sup> Dothan, *Philistines and Material Culture*, 124.

<sup>443</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 3, plate LXX-LXXI.

<sup>444</sup> Dothan, *Philistines and Material Culture*, 52.

Macalister recovered more than just common utilitarian ceramic vessels; he also unearthed a cache of cultic implements of Philistine provenance. Associated with the finds was a fragmentary cartouche of Ramses III, providing a *terminus a quo* for the collection. Macalister records finding the cult cache at the “south end of trench 29, above the inner city wall.” This would put the finds near the ruins of the Middle Bronze Age gate, west of HUC Field II and south of Field VI on the acropolis. It included a hollow, clay, duck-like bird figurine, a miniature cylindrical bottle, and the fragments of two separate ring *kernoi*; the smaller example depicts an animal head while the larger sample has a pomegranate and a bird, like the larger figurine found with it, attached to a hollow ring.<sup>445</sup>

Many of the vessels recovered by Macalister are clearly Philistine and most likely date to very early in the Philistine occupation in the Levant. The ring *kernoi* are comparable to those found at other Philistine sites, such as Ashdod and Philistine contexts at Megiddo, in addition to having Aegean parallels.<sup>446</sup> Several *kernoi* fragments were recovered during the HUC excavations, especially on the acropolis. One example is a terracotta swan head recovered in Field VI in a Philistine context which was most likely attached to a *kernos* but broken in antiquity.<sup>447</sup>

Birds in general, and water fowl in particular, have a strong presence in Philistine art and cult. The stylized depictions of birds on Philistine ceramics are ubiquitous on bichrome ware and perhaps carried some sort of religious significance. The zoomorphic

---

<sup>445</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 2, 235-237.

<sup>446</sup> Dothan, *Philistines and Material Culture*, 222.

<sup>447</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer IV*, 116.



bird figurine has two holes on its bottom which suggest it was hung, perhaps in a temple.<sup>448</sup> Not many comparable vessels have been recovered in Palestine to date. However, parallels for the Gezer figurine exist within the late Mycenaean material culture and in particular in Cypriot contexts.<sup>449</sup>

One vexing find comes from an eleventh century domestic context in a house believed to be Philistine. That is a realistic, terracotta sculpture of a circumcised phallus.<sup>450</sup> It is troublesome as the Philistines did not practice circumcision as is amply testified in the Biblical narrative, but also in Egyptian texts. Zoomorphic and anthropomorphic terracotta figurines are common finds in Levantine sites, but a realistic, phallus figurine is a rare find. Furthermore, it is unclear what purpose this artifact served, or if it was even Philistine as it is plain clay with no decoration. However, one highly tentative connection may be made to stylized phallic shaped vessels recovered in Iron Age IIA Philistine contexts at Tell es-Safi/Gath. The vessels from Gath are of a later date and much more stylized. It is unclear whether the later figures are circumcised or not but they have been linked to a cultic context.<sup>451</sup> It is impossible to say with confidence the Gezer example and those from Gath are linked as two elements on an evolutionary continuum. Though, it is interesting to speculate on a potential relationship between the two examples. The Gezer example is a naturalized figurine dating to the middle of the Iron I while those from Gath are stylized and date to the beginning of the Iron II. Perhaps

---

<sup>448</sup> Dothan, *Philistines and Material Culture*, 227.

<sup>449</sup> Dothan, *Philistines and Material Culture*, 227.

<sup>450</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer IV*, 115.

<sup>451</sup> Alexander Zuckerman and Aren Maeir, "The Stratigraphy and Architecture of Area A: Strata A1-A5," in *Tell es-Safi/Gath I: The 1996-2005 Seasons Part I: Text* ed. Aren Maeir (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz-Verlag, 2012), 199.

the Gezer phallus served as a cultic implement early in the Philistines religious development which eventually formalized and solidified into a stylized version later in Philistine history. If there is an evolutionary link between the two, the more clearly defined cultic context of the artifacts from Gath could inform the interpretation of the earlier versions from Gezer. It is impossible with the evidence available for such a claim to move beyond speculation, though it would provide a possible explanation for the otherwise puzzling artifact at Gezer.

What is much clearer is the bichrome decorated pottery and cultic artifacts are clearly Philistine. Additional ceramic evidence of Philistine habits comes from cooking jugs in Iron I contexts. As was the Aegean custom, the Philistines utilized closed forms as a part of their cooking tradition. Cooking jugs were part of the Philistine dietary experience. They never replaced the open Canaanite cooking pot forms, and outside Philistia proper they are especially rare.<sup>452</sup> Though Gezer is outside of Philistia, the Iron I strata in Field VI, that is strata 6B-5A, there are some examples of Philistine cooking jugs. These are the strata corresponding to the end of the industrial installations on the acropolis and the duration of the domestic structures. The local open-form cooking pot forms never disappeared, but occur alongside the rarer cooking jugs, even in the same strata.<sup>453</sup> It is important to note, however, while there is evidence of Philistine dietary customs in the form of cooking jugs, there is no characteristic Philistine architectural evidence at Gezer. No Philistine “kitchens” equipped with hearths, the architectural feature identified with the Philistines and their cooking practices, have been excavated.

---

<sup>452</sup> Ben-Shlomo et al., “Cooking Identifies,” 226.

<sup>453</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer IV*, plate 37.

As noted, the local Canaanite ceramic tradition never disappeared but existed contemporaneously with the Philistine tradition at Gezer. The Philistine bichrome constitutes only approximately five percent of the assemblage. What is striking about Iron I Gezer is “the strong evidence of ceramic continuity... which sees the persistence of a number of LB IIB forms and styles of decoration.”<sup>454</sup> The Late Bronze Canaanite tradition continued into the Iron Age, with the only change being the typological evolutions experienced throughout the region. Besides the Philistines, there is no indication from the material culture a new ethnic entity settled Gezer in the Iron Age I.

By the end of the Iron Age I the distinctive Philistine bichrome ware at Gezer, as it did throughout the region, simply disappeared. There was no city-wide destruction associated with the cessation of the bichrome. Before the conflagration associated with Siamun there was a period of no Philistine wares and what the excavators termed “post-Philistine/pre-Solomonic.”<sup>455</sup> The ceramic ware associated with this period, wares with thin, red, unburnished slip, slightly overlaps the Philistine bichrome as it entered its degenerative state and continued until the destruction of the city in the mid-tenth century.<sup>456</sup>

Iron Age I at Gezer, then, saw two ethnic elements in the city. Following Merneptah’s attack on the city the Canaanite inhabitants began to come back to their homes. The city was beginning to grow again as it avoided the upheavals of the highlands, associated with the ethnogenesis of the Israelites, as well as those of the

---

<sup>454</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer IV*, 87.

<sup>455</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer IV*, 123.

<sup>456</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer IV*, 122.

lowlands, associated with the arrival of the Sea Peoples, namely the Philistines. As no Philistine monochrome was present at the site it can safely be stated the city was not a part of the initial settlement of the Philistines. The presence of the first phase of bichrome ware indicates the city very quickly hosted their neighbors to the southwest. The fact the city was still recovering demographically from Merneptah's campaign, its geographical location, and proximity to the pentapolis sites would have made it a very tempting target for early Philistine forays. The city of Gath, the *primo inter pares* among Iron Age I Philistine cities, was in such close proximity it is possible the Philistines were able to maintain political control of the city with only a small ethnic presence at the city.

There is no destruction layer associated with the movement of the Philistines to Gezer, nor is there any written record describing it, so there is no way to comment on how the Philistine presence came to the site, whether through conquest or peaceful infiltration. Both the cultic and ceramic evidence suggests ethnic Philistines occupied the site. The architecture associated with the Philistines finds is devoid of any characteristic Philistine architectural elements, such as a hearth, but the comparative size of the structures and the ceramic finds suggests the Philistines were among the wealthy inhabitants of the city. The small percentage of the bichrome as part of the overall assemblage suggests the Philistines at Gezer were a minority ethnically, though the bichrome ware comprised never exceeded five percent of the ceramic assemblage that does not mean the Philistines only composed five percent of the population. The strong Aegean affinities of the cultic implements and ceramics suggest the Philistines who

initially settled at Gezer were generationally, at the very least culturally, not far removed from their homeland in the Aegean basin. As with the rest of the Philistines in the region, over time they underwent acculturation and their ethnic boundaries shifted.

At Gezer, the cessation of the bichrome ware was abrupt, as it was elsewhere in the region. The third and final phase of the bichrome ware is underrepresented, but it is not entirely absent. The cooking jugs, though, did not cease, suggesting not all the Philistine dietary customs disappeared with the decorated tableware. Without an analysis of faunal remains it is difficult to ascertain whether the Philistine affinity for pork existed at Gezer and continued past the disappearance of the bichrome. Other sources show Philistine ethnic identity did not end when the production of the bichrome pottery did; instead their boundaries shifted and different factors gained ethnic significance. In light of such an understanding of Philistine ethnicity, there is nothing to indicate the Philistines abandoned Gezer when their distinctive pottery vanished. It seems the ethnic composition during the Iron Age I at Gezer was predominately Canaanite, though there likely existed a Philistine minority which served as the social and perhaps political upper class of the city.

## Chapter Five

### The Late Iron Age

#### *Gezer in the Late Iron Age*

The transition between the Iron Age I and the Iron Age II is clearly marked archaeologically at Gezer. The change is discernible by a destruction which occurred sometime around the mid-tenth century. This destruction layer is attested at the site in HUC's Fields II, III, VI, and VII. In addition to Gezer, numerous Philistine cities experienced destructions around the same time. It is plausible that the forces responsible for the destruction of the Philistine cities viewed Gezer as a Philistine city and destroyed it along with the other Philistine sites.

Following the destruction of the site, a new organization to the site is evident. Most notable is the shift in the city's fortifications. The gateway to the city shifted to the middle of the southern side of the "Central Valley." A large six-chambered gate made of ashlar masonry with a well engineered, closed drainage system guarded the entrance to the city. The structure reveals a great degree of engineering skill and planning as the entire area of construction was built-up and prepared for the structure.<sup>457</sup> The gate at Gezer has several close parallels from Megiddo, Hazor, Lachish and Ashdod.<sup>458</sup> A unique element at Gezer is a row of benches lining the walls of the chambers.

The gate was not a stand-alone structure. A casemate wall was also an integral part of the new fortification system. In contrast to the gate, the wall was made of unhewn

---

<sup>457</sup> John S. Holladay Jr., "Red Slip, Burnish, and the Solomonic Gateway at Gezer," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 277/2778 (February-May 1990): 25.

<sup>458</sup> Holladay Jr., 58.

stones, but like the gate it was an impressive structure as it extended over thirty meters west of the gate.<sup>459</sup> Just inside the wall and to the west of the gate complex were large administrative buildings.<sup>460</sup> This confirms the space served a public, administrative purpose. No domestic structures dating to the tenth century were found in the vicinity of the gate and fortification structures.

The six-chambered gate and Iron Age fortifications at Gezer are subject to intense debate. Archaeologists originally dated them to the middle of the tenth century based on ceramic evidence. The pottery associated with the first phase of the new fortifications has a red slip, and hand burnish.<sup>461</sup> The difficulty is this style of pottery has a long history and is difficult to date with certainty. This has led Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman to posit an alternative date for the Gezer fortifications.<sup>462</sup> However, the alternative dating system used is not without its own flaws and is not convincing enough to deviate from the traditional chronological paradigm.

There is ample evidence to suggest a new political entity controlled Gezer in the tenth century, but there is little to indicate the ethnicity of the city's residents in the tenth century. The casemate wall and six-chambered gate have attracted the most attention from scholars in regards to tenth century Gezer. There are no excavated domestic contexts near the gate, if there was any architecture in Field VI it was removed in antiquity.<sup>463</sup> Field II revealed some domestic architecture, but the exposure was quite

---

<sup>459</sup> Ortiz and Wolff, "Guarding the Border," 11.

<sup>460</sup> Ortiz and Wolff, "Guarding the Border," 13.

<sup>461</sup> Holladay Jr., 63.

<sup>462</sup> Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), 141.

<sup>463</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer IV*, 124.

limited which gives an incomplete picture of the field's architectural history.<sup>464</sup> There was a small altar recovered from this stratum which suggests the practice of domestic folk religion, though the cult in question is not immediately apparent. A drawing etched on one side of the small altar depicts a stick figure striding forward with a stick of some sort in a raised arm.<sup>465</sup> The figure is reminiscent of depictions of the Canaanite storm god Ba'al, or Hadad, as well as images of the Egyptian pharaoh smiting his enemies. In Field VII there is indication of new domestic architecture contemporaneous with the construction of the fortifications, though only a few rooms have been excavated.<sup>466</sup> The ceramic evidence across the site, where tenth century occupation is present is characterized by the typical red slipped and hand burnished ware.<sup>467</sup> One find from Macalister's excavations, the so-called Gezer Calendar, is believed to have originated in the tenth century.<sup>468</sup> It is a stone tablet with an inscription, written in either Hebrew or Canaanite, outlining the agricultural calendar. There is some debate concerning the function of the stone, a common suggestion is it functioned as a schoolboy's practice tablet.<sup>469</sup>

The tenth century at Gezer ended similarly to how it began; by suffering a destruction. Following the large scale building programs of the tenth century the city was destroyed, at least parts of it. The six-chambered gate was destroyed as well as the administrative buildings and domestic areas. In Field VII the tenth century surfaces were

---

<sup>464</sup> Dever et al., "Further Excavations at Gezer," 111.

<sup>465</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer II*, plate 41.

<sup>466</sup> Seymour Gitin, *Gezer III: A Ceramic Typology of the Late Iron II, Persian and Hellenistic Periods at Tell Gezer*, (Jerusalem: Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, 1990), 29.

<sup>467</sup> Holladay Jr., 63.

<sup>468</sup> Dever, Lance, and Wright, *Gezer I*, 5.

<sup>469</sup> Allen P. Ross, *Introducing Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 14.



covered in ash, burnt wood, and other charred evidence of destruction.<sup>470</sup> The six-chambered gate and casemate wall were destroyed to such an extent the casemates were not reopened in antiquity.<sup>471</sup> Following its recovery from the attack the city underwent numerous changes in the ninth century.

During the ninth century Gezer experienced a diminished geopolitical role which is reflected archaeologically. The public sector near the casemate wall and gateway changed to a domestic one. The administrative buildings were not rebuilt in the ninth century; instead three houses took its place, though as only the southern portions of the houses have been excavated it is possible they represent a larger domestic quarter which extends to the north. The excavated houses are not of the four-room variety and no analysis of the faunal assemblage has been published. They are clearly domestic in nature though as storage jars, a gaming board, and a *tabun* were among the finds in the houses. Sometime in the ninth century the city was again destroyed preserving the domestic quarter abutting the casemate wall under ash.<sup>472</sup> Elsewhere on the mound, in Field II, the ninth century occupation was “modest,” and after later periods dug trenches and pits through the stratum, the “modest” remains appear even more unremarkable.<sup>473</sup> What occupation did exist in the ninth century in Field II was interrupted sometime in the mid-late ninth century.<sup>474</sup> The interruption in occupation is attributed to the Aramean king Hazael as he campaigned against Philistia, a campaign attested at Gath.<sup>475</sup> The

---

<sup>470</sup> Gitin, *Gezer III*, 29.

<sup>471</sup> Dever et al., “Further Excavations at Gezer,” 117.

<sup>472</sup> Ortiz and Wolff, “Guarding the Border,” 14.

<sup>473</sup> Dever et al., “Further Excavations at Gezer,” 112.

<sup>474</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer II*, 69.

<sup>475</sup> Ortiz and Wolff, “Guarding the Border,” 18.

destruction was limited as Field VII differs in its occupational history completely avoiding destruction in the ninth century.

In the stratum following the late tenth century destruction in Field VII excavators uncovered a crowded domestic quarter. Six distinct buildings existed in the western portion of the field,<sup>476</sup> while four unique buildings existed in the central and eastern portions. Of the ten buildings, eight distinctly follow the traditional four-room house model, with only two in the east and central portion of the field not following the pattern.<sup>477</sup> The majority of the houses follow the established plan with a broad room in the back and three long rooms, separated by stone walls or pillars, abutting it. During the ninth century the four-room house model was the standard domestic construction at Gezer. In Field VII the same pattern is observed in the eighth century. The transition from the ninth to the eighth century is slight. The excavators marked the division of Phase 22, Stratum VIB and Phase 21, Stratum VIA based on the resurfacing of floors.<sup>478</sup> In certain neighborhoods the transition to the eighth century was gradual and peaceful.

The eighth century city recovered quickly after its encounter with Hazael. It is believed the city passed into the hands of the southern kingdom of Judah sometime in the early eighth century, likely as result of the expansionistic policy of the Judahite king Uzziah.<sup>479</sup> The city again assumed an administrative function as the domestic buildings adjacent to the casemate wall were reverted to administrative buildings once again.

Three buildings, following a tripartite plan, were constructed against the northern wall of

---

<sup>476</sup> Gitin, *Gezer III*, 13.

<sup>477</sup> Gitin, *Gezer III*, 29.

<sup>478</sup> Gitin, *Gezer III*, 14.

<sup>479</sup> Ortiz and Wolff, "Guarding the Border," 18.

the casemate wall. Some of the wall lines from the tenth century buildings were even reused.<sup>480</sup> The casemate wall itself was even rebuilt, the damage from earlier attacks repaired, to make it a cohesive defensive system once again.<sup>481</sup>

The domestic quarter of the city during the eighth century was largely unchanged from earlier periods. Field VII follows essentially the same plan as it did in the ninth century. Some of the buildings received minor modifications, as some of the rooms were divided in the eighth century when they were one room in the ninth.<sup>482</sup> There is more evidence of domestic industrial activity in the eighth century, such as stone weights, a crushing basin, and olive pit ash in a four-room house indicating olive oil production was practiced.<sup>483</sup> An additional four-room house was discovered east of Field VII, north of the administrative buildings across a cobbled surface, perhaps a street.

The four-room house was uncovered as part of the Tandy excavations in Field W. It had an estimated total area of 1,453 ft<sup>2</sup> (135 m<sup>2</sup>), which is larger than most urban four-room houses. Numerous small finds and ceramic artifacts were recovered from the house. Items which are characteristic of domestic assemblages were present such as loomweights and grinding stones. Most of the ceramic finds were storage jars, with some *kraters*, bowls and cooking pots, though no cooking jugs. One long room remains in the balk, which is the unexcavated strip between exposed squares, and is yet to be revealed, so it is possible a fuller ceramic assemblage is present, yet simply unexcavated. One interesting find, paralleled in the Field VII four-room houses, was the presence of *lmlk*

---

<sup>480</sup> Ortiz and Wolff, "Guarding the Border," 14.

<sup>481</sup> Ortiz and Wolff, "Guarding the Border," 15.

<sup>482</sup> Gitin, *Gezer III*, 30.

<sup>483</sup> Gitin, *Gezer III*, 30.

store jars, the characteristic storage vessels of the later Judahite royal redistributive economic system, often impressed with seal impressions of the Hebrew term “*lmlk*” meaning “belonging to the king,” though none from the four-room house have seal impressions.<sup>484</sup> The *lmlk* jars indicate the city fell under the political control of the kingdom of Judah.

The city experienced a large destruction at the hands of the burgeoning Neo-Assyrian Empire. Tiglath-Pileser III, the Assyrian monarch from 744-727 B.C.E., destroyed the city as he expanded his kingdom into the Levant. The victory was recorded on a relief at a palace in Nimrud. Assyrian siege equipment is shown attacking a walled city with the Akkadian name “*Gazru*” with the determinative for city written above the city wall. Unfortunately, the relief itself is no longer extant. Early excavators drew copies of the sculpture though the relief itself has since disappeared.<sup>485</sup> The conquest by Tiglath-Pileser III is clearly demonstrated in the archaeological evidence by a thick layer of ash. The destruction did not occur in all areas of the city, being concentrated primarily near the gate and administrative sector.<sup>486</sup> The subsequent occupation is evidenced by the Akkadian tablets discovered by Macalister.<sup>487</sup> The city was lost to the kingdom of Judah as the Assyrians maintained control of the city.

The city never recovered demographically or otherwise after its encounter with the Assyrians. The century and a half after Tiglath-Pileser III’s campaign saw the city dwindle in size and importance. The Assyrians did build an administrative complex on

---

<sup>484</sup> Ortiz and Wolff, “Guarding the Border,” 16.

<sup>485</sup> Lance, 43.

<sup>486</sup> Dever et al., “Further Excavations at Gezer,” 118.

<sup>487</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 1, 22-6.

the acropolis on the “Western Hill.”<sup>488</sup> They maintained Gezer as an outpost until after the reign of Ashurbanipal, 668-627 B.C.E., when the empire entered permanent decline. Following the withdrawal of the Assyrians from the southern Levant, Josiah and the Kingdom of Judah expanded into the political void, including the city of Gezer.<sup>489</sup>

The Assyrian, and final Judahite, occupations are not well attested at the site. This is in part due to the fact the later Persian and Hellenistic era inhabitants of the site plundered the easily accessible stone for building materials, looting the later, and in some instances the earlier, strata of occupation. However, some artifacts and trends are available for analysis.

Macalister found two tablets at Gezer written in Assyrian. Both are fragmentary but some basic information can be gleaned from them. The first tablet is a contract for a land sale and is dated to the “month Sivan, day 17<sup>th</sup> eponymy which is after Aššur-dûra-ušur.”<sup>490</sup> This date is known by modern scholars to be 650, over eighty years after the Assyrians took the city. As a part of the land contract, twelve witnesses are cited. Some of the names are too fragmentary to be clearly understood, but the majority of them are of Assyrian origin.<sup>491</sup> The second tablet is much more fragmentary but still securely dated to only a few years after the first. As with the first, the second tablet is also a contract for the sale of land. The seller is named Nethaniah, which is a Hebrew name, and though the

---

<sup>488</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer IV*, 17.

<sup>489</sup> Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, 283.

<sup>490</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 1, 25.

<sup>491</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 1, 25

buyer is not named, several witnesses are named. The listed witnesses have Assyrian names, and one of the witnesses on the second tablet is also on the first.<sup>492</sup>

Nearly every aspect of the city was on a diminished scale. The domestic area in Field VII continued though on a much smaller basis. The majority of the buildings of the eighth century were left abandoned following the Assyrian occupation, though a few of the wall lines were rebuilt.<sup>493</sup> Other features, such as an olive oil press, were also reused in the seventh century. The gateway was reused as a two-entry way structure common to other eighth and seventh century sites.<sup>494</sup> Stamped jar handles attributed to Josiah provide evidence the city did pass into the hands of Judah once more after the Assyrians retreated from the region.<sup>495</sup> It was only briefly held by Judah before the Iron Age at Gezer came to a close.

Gezer in the later Iron Age is not only known from archaeology, but it is also known in literary sources. While Gezer is not always mentioned by name in many literary sources, the city's history is understood in light of the literary sources available. Such sources include the Hebrew Bible, as well as Egyptian and Assyrian inscriptions.

The Biblical account provides a plausible historical context for the early tenth century destruction at Gezer. The Book of Kings states a pharaoh took Gezer and destroyed it with fire.<sup>496</sup> He then gave it to his son-in-law, Solomon, as part of his daughter's dowry, at which point the city was rebuilt and fortified as part of Solomon's administrative structure. The claim that an Egyptian pharaoh took the city is not difficult

---

<sup>492</sup> Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer* vol. 1, 29.

<sup>493</sup> Gitin, *Gezer III*, 15.

<sup>494</sup> Dever et al., "Further Excavations at Gezer," 118.

<sup>495</sup> Dever et al., *Gezer IV*, 127.

<sup>496</sup> 1 Kings 9:16

to accept. As the Philistines gained their control of the land, notably the longtime Egyptian stronghold of Gaza, at the expense of the Egyptians, early Israel would have made a natural ally as they were the Philistines' ethnic and political rivals. While still only a hypothetical, without historical sources to support it, elements of the Biblical story seem to ring true. Numerous Philistine cities experienced destructions which excavators associate with Siamun. With the Philistine political threat mitigated, the pharaoh turned control of the city over to Solomon to secure his frontier with the Philistines as well as the highway approaching his capital in Jerusalem. The core of the Siamun narrative in I Kings makes sense in light of the wider political and archaeological evidence.

The second tenth century destruction is best explained by the well known razzia conducted by the first pharaoh of the Twenty-Second Dynasty, Sheshonq I (943-922). The Hebrew Bible describes how after Solomon's death, one of his former lieutenants returned from exile in Egypt and was made king over the northern part of his kingdom while the southern part passed to his son, Rehoboam. Early in the reign of Rehoboam, the Egyptian Sheshonq I, or Shishak as he is named in the Hebrew text, seized upon the internal confusion of the Israelites and raided their territory. Only Jerusalem is recorded as being targeted by Sheshonq, but archaeological excavations suggest his expedition was larger in scale.<sup>497</sup> Egyptian sources also indicate the razzia impacted more locations than just Jerusalem.

Sheshonq I recorded the events of his Palestinian campaign on reliefs at Karnak, which supplement the Biblical account. The account at Karnak, though, is highly

---

<sup>497</sup> 1 Kings 14:25

stylized, using stock phrases and stereotypical lines drawn directly from other monuments of earlier pharaohs so the whole account is too vague to get any clear understanding of how the campaign unfolded.<sup>498</sup> However, along with the stylized campaign account is a list of conquered towns in Palestine. The list is fragmented and thus not all the cities allegedly conquered are available. The extant list, though, reveals Sheshonq's razzia was quite extensive and almost certainly included Gezer. Sites conquered include Taanach, Beth Shean, Ajalon, Megiddo, and Arad.<sup>499</sup> The campaign clearly covered the entirety of Palestine, from Megiddo and Beth Shean in the north, by Gezer and Ajalon, and to Arad in the Negev. While Gezer is not on the extant list of conquered cities, Sheshonq's Palestinian campaign is the most plausible candidate for the late tenth century destruction at the site.

In the later Iron Age, Gezer experienced various ethnic developments. Politically it passed between various states yet that does not necessarily indicate ethnic change at the site. The archaeological and literary data are capable of showing the city's ethnic history if understood in the right context. Such a context is the rise of Israelite ethnic identity which began in the early Iron Age but came to full fruition in the later Iron Age.

### *The Israelites*

There is a great deal of archaeological evidence for the ethnogenesis of the Israelites, but it is controversial. During the Late Bronze Age the coastal lowlands were heavily populated by Canaanites and dominated politically by the Egyptian New

---

<sup>498</sup> James Henry Breasted, *The Twenty-Second Dynasty*, vol. 4 of *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents from the Earliest of Times to the Persian Conquest*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906), 348.

<sup>499</sup> James Henry Breasted, *The Twenty-Second Dynasty*, 354.



Kingdom. During the Iron I, though, the highlands experienced a population explosion. Dozens of small new sites appear throughout the highlands with a characteristic material culture including similar site layout, architectural style, and ceramic repertoire.<sup>500</sup> The evidence from surveys and excavations is fairly straightforward, its interpretation is not.

Four main theories have emerged regarding Israelite ethnogenesis. All four understand the highland culture to represent Israelites, or at the very least “Proto-Israelites.” However, there is different understanding as to how they settled as they did. The first theory developed, referred to as the “Conquest Model,” was postulated by William Albright which takes the Biblical account as historical. Countering the “Conquest Model,” Albrecht Alt proposed the “Peaceful Infiltration Model.” A third model, based on sociological studies, characterized the emergent Israelites as part of a social upheaval. Recently a fourth model proposes the early Israelites were a “mixed multitude.”

The American archaeologist William Albright pioneered the “Conquest Model” based on the narrative of the Book of Joshua and archaeological excavations. In this model, the Israelites entered the land of the Canaanites as a unified military force, conquered the inhabitants of the land, and then settled as a unified group, as is described in the Biblical narrative. In support of this theory is the archaeologically attested destruction of the Late Bronze city Hazor, which is mentioned in the book of Joshua and attributed to the Israelites as part of their conquest of the land. However, as more sites were excavated it became more apparent the Joshua narrative, which is the basis of the

---

<sup>500</sup> Randall Younker, “The Iron Age in the Southern Levant,” in *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader*, ed. Suzanne Richards (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 373.

“Conquest Model,” has dubious historical veracity. While Joshua does allude to sources, including what are presumably written sources, there is consensus throughout the scholarly community the conquest narrative in Joshua poses significant historical problems and ought to be treated with caution.<sup>501</sup>

While the “Conquest Model” was gaining acceptance, primarily among American scholars, a rival model was being postulated by Albrecht Alt and his student Martin Noth. Their model has become known as the “Peaceful Infiltration Model.” This model suggests the inhabitants of the highlands were a nomadic people who peacefully settled in the depopulated highlands. It harkens back to the Biblical tradition of the Patriarchs who are described as leading a nomadic lifestyle. Additionally, it appeals to ethnographic studies, conducted early in the twentieth century, documenting the sedentarization of nomads in the modern Middle East.<sup>502</sup> A revised version of this theory has received new life from sponsorship by the Israeli archaeologist Israel Finkelstein.<sup>503</sup>

Using primarily archaeological sources, Finkelstein has consistently argued the Israelites were a nomadic group who sedentarized, starting in the Iron Age I, and ultimately grew into a monarchic state. His *longue dureé* approach sees the Israelites as the Iron Age manifestation of a process of sedentarization and nomadization which occurred in the highlands throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages.<sup>504</sup> His theory answers some of the questions archaeologists must inevitably face, such as where did the highland inhabitants of the Middle Bronze age go and from where did Iron Age I settlers

---

<sup>501</sup> Killebrew, 153.

<sup>502</sup> Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* 51.

<sup>503</sup> Finkelstein, “Ethnicity and Origin,” 206-9

<sup>504</sup> Finkelstein, “Ethnicity and Origin,” 201.

“materialize?”<sup>505</sup> Finkelstein avoids some of the shortfalls of Alt and Noth’s model. Both rely on ethnographic studies of modern Bedouin communities, though many of the studies on which Alt relied are not understood to be accurate by modern scholars. Finkelstein’s model is on more secure ground as he relies primarily on archaeological data for his theory. His model states following the Late Bronze Age, the nomadic pastoralists of the era, who were Canaanite, settled in the highlands and eventually developed into the Israelite state.<sup>506</sup>

During the 1960s George Mendenhall, and later Norman Gottwald, developed a theory which has become known as the “Revolt of the Peasants” or “Social Revolution” model. It takes a much more sociological perspective on the issue of Israelite settlement. Its premise is that at the end of the Late Bronze Age the Canaanite peasantry, discontented with the burdensome, bureaucratic city-state system, revolted and abandoned the cities in the lowlands to settle in small villages throughout the highlands. It was internal disharmony, not external factors, which brought about the demise of the Late Bronze Age society and a religious ideology, Yahwism, unified the displaced Canaanite peasants.<sup>507</sup> This theory has received wide support among many archaeologists, notably by William Dever among them. The theory is based primarily upon sociological models and not textual or archaeological data. As with the other

---

<sup>505</sup> Finkelstein, *Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*, 341.

<sup>506</sup> Israel Finkelstein “When and How Did the Israelites Emerge?” in *The Quest for the Historical Israel: Debating Archaeology and the History of Early Israel*, ed. Brian B. Schmidt (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 83.

<sup>507</sup> Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* 54.

theories, each can find some support from the extant literary and archaeological remains but no theory fully accounts for all the evidence available.<sup>508</sup>

One final model is based on the assumption all the prior theories are not entirely mutually exclusive. The “Mixed Multitude” theory understands Israelite ethnogenesis as a complicated process, involving numerous factors and actors. This theory suggests all of the above theories have elements of truth to them. The group which was to become the Israelites started as a conglomeration of elements of mixed origin, ethnicity, class, and culture. Pastoral elements, as suggested by Alt and Finkelstein, were almost certainly a part of the group which settled in the highlands. Settled peasants retreating from the cities in the lowlands are also inclusive in “Mixed Multitude” theory and almost certainly formed a constituent element of the Israelite settlements. It is even possible a group of Canaanite slaves escaping bondage in Egypt settled in the highlands. Other ancient Near Eastern social groups, such as the ‘*apîru*, known from numerous texts, are also likely candidates as members of the Iron I highland settlers.<sup>509</sup> In short, the early Israelites were a diverse group of people looking for a “new mode of subsistence” in the highlands.<sup>510</sup> The settlers in the highlands in Iron Age I came from a variety of backgrounds but came to form a new ethnic identity known as Israel. The Iron Age I was the crucible in which that identity was forged.

While the early Iron Age, approximately 1200-1000 B.C.E., was the period in which the Israelite identity began to take form, it was the later Iron Age, approximately

---

<sup>508</sup> Killebrew, 184.

<sup>509</sup> Killebrew, 184.

<sup>510</sup> Amihai Mazar, “The Israelite Settlement,” in *The Quest for the Historical Israel: Debating Archaeology and the History of Early Israel*, ed. Brian B. Schmidt (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 95.

1000-600 B.C.E., in which Israelite ethnic identity is most clearly recognized in both the archaeological and literary evidence. There were a number of factors at work in the process of forming Israelite ethnic identity and thus it would be remiss to try and identify the primary or central factor which led to it. However, there are two features of particular interest which were pertinent to the formation of Israelite ethnic identity, both of which are manifest archaeologically. The first is the contact with the Philistines during the Iron Age I period and the second is Israelite religion.

With the growing influence of the Philistines came varying responses from the Canaanites and Israelites. Some, especially those near the core of Philistine influence on the coast, appear to have undergone a process of hybridization and amalgamation into the Philistine polity. Those on the periphery of the Philistine expansion were faced with the choice of siding with the Philistines or resisting them through self-distinction.<sup>511</sup> While some Canaanites opted for the former, other Canaanites, including those at Beth-Shemesh, and the Israelites in the highlands chose the latter. Ethnic identity is about boundary maintenance, and part of the process is distinguishing through actions and objects what separates “us” from “them.” In light of this, many scholars have suggested a number of characteristically Israelite customs became such because they were opposite those of the Philistines.<sup>512</sup> Some suggested features include pork prohibition,<sup>513</sup> utilitarian pottery, and circumcision.<sup>514</sup> It was the contact with Philistines, and the desire to set themselves apart, which in part created such distinguishing Israelite customs.

---

<sup>511</sup> Bunimovitz and Lederman, “Canaanite Resistance,” 46.

<sup>512</sup> Faust and Lev-Tov, “Constitution of Philistine Identity,” 17.

<sup>513</sup> Hesse, 220.

<sup>514</sup> Faust and Lev-Tov, “Constitution of Philistine Identity,” 18.

Another factor in the development of Israelite ethnic identity was their religious beliefs. The majority of these beliefs became crystallized in the Hebrew Bible either sometime late in the Iron Age or the period following. The religious laws and codes of conduct in the Biblical record represent a later tradition and cannot necessarily be read back into early Iron Age I Israelite communities. There are some Biblical traditions that do date to the Iron I era and the beginning of Israelite ethnogenesis.

Some passages are considered to preserve earlier, even premonarchic traditions. Judges 5 is one such example, considered by scholars, including Walter Brueggemann, to preserve early traditions and as such can shed a great deal of light on early Israelite religious history.<sup>515</sup> The Song of Deborah in Judges 5 is widely accepted as originating in the premonarchic period and as such is a “virtually unimpeachable source for the study of early Israel.”<sup>516</sup> Its form is comparable to other victory odes from the late second millennium and its archaic language and style suggest a date of composition as early as 1200.<sup>517</sup> The poem describes a military victory over a Canaanite army at the hands of some Israelites. Not all of Israel participated in the conflict and groups, or tribes, who were not there, are chastised for their absence. Throughout the poem “Israel” is frequently used to refer to the victorious party, and it is clear the God of “Israel” is identified as “Yahweh.” The terms “Israel” and “the people of Yahweh” are even used

---

<sup>515</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 123.

<sup>516</sup> Baruch Halpern, “The Resourceful Israelite Historian: The Song of Deborah and Israelite Historiography,” *Harvard Theological Review* 76 (1983): 379.

<sup>517</sup> Alexander Globe, “The Literary Structure and Unity of the Song of Deborah,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93 (1974): 511-12.

with interchangeable meaning.<sup>518</sup> It is clear from the Song of Deborah that prior to the tenth century there was a self-identified entity known as Israel which, though it had social and perhaps ethnic complexity, was understood as composing a single unit that worshipped the same deity. It even strongly suggests its unity as a group was tied in a shared cultic tradition.<sup>519</sup>

While the age of certain aspects of Israelite religion is generally agreed, the specifics of the early beliefs are unclear. Furthermore, it is unclear how early certain rituals and cultic requirements entered into the Israelite religious experience. Archaeology, though, can help to determine some early beliefs. The task for archaeologists is to determine how Israelite religious beliefs, as understood in the Hebrew Bible, might be reflected materially, or conversely how some material remains might represent religious practices.

Archaeologists have long noted material traits which they have considered markers for Israelite settlement. Not all can be considered ethnic markers though. However, if certain material traits can be determined to be ethnically significant, or reflect ethnically charged behaviors, they may be used to identify Israelite settlement. Archaeologists, such as Israel Finkelstein, William Dever, and Amihai Mazar have historically identified Israelite settlements on the basis of factors including town planning, architecture, dietary practices, and certain ceramic forms. Some scholars have

---

<sup>518</sup> Halpern, 381.

<sup>519</sup> Volmar Fritz, "The Complex of Traditions in Judges 4 and 5 and the Religion of Pre-State Israel," in *I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Times: Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Aren Maeir and Pierre de Miroschedji (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 697.

questioned whether some of these are indicators of ethnic identity, suggesting other, non-ethnic, reasons lie behind their widespread use.

One of the primary assertions against the most frequently cited Israelite ethnic markers is that each feature has other possible explanations. Particularly when Iron Age I sites are in question, town planning and settlement size are often considered key elements to identifying Israelites. Such criterion include small settlement sizes, the largest being no larger than two and a half acres (just over one hectare), lack of fortification, lack of monumental architecture, and similar domestic architecture.<sup>520</sup> Contributing to the agrarian nature of these small, highland settlements is the proliferation of stone-lined silos and agricultural terraces.<sup>521</sup> However there are compelling socio-economic justifications for such features. As these features are common to Iron Age I settlements, not during the later era of the monarchy, it seems as though if these were ethnic markers, they were not stable ones. Small settlement sizes, no monumental architecture, and elementary agricultural installations suggest a socio-economic cause rather than an ethnic one. They are all most easily explained as the most practical means to maintain a livelihood in the highlands without the intervention of a state. In Iron Age I the Israelites had no state, and while some of the early Israelites likely came from a sedentary, urban background, others were in the process of sedentarization. The lack of fortifications and monumental architecture can be attributed to the lack of a centralized authority overseeing and financing such projects. Terraces were simply the most efficient manner in which to conduct agricultural activities in the highlands as it creates precious arable

---

<sup>520</sup> Finkelstein, *Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*, 30.

<sup>521</sup> Finkelstein, *Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*, 30.



land. Silos were necessary to store the excess produce in lieu of larger store houses, often constructed by states.<sup>522</sup> Small settlement sizes, like the terraces, are simply more conducive to the difficult hilly terrain as large settlements are difficult to maintain without large construction projects to supply them with grain storage and water systems. During the Iron Age II period, with the rise of the Israelite monarchies, settlements did not remain small. They became fortified, with various defensive apparatus including gate structures, solid, and casemate walls, and other aspects of the Iron Age I highland settlements were less prominent. It thus stands to reason such settlement features are not ethnic markers of Israelites, but rather socio-economic ones. While it is highly likely in Iron Age I Israelites did occupy these, small, highland sites, with modest architecture, no fortifications, and agricultural installations, modern scholars cannot draw the conclusion that Israelites were present because of such features.

An additional “type fossil” of Israelite activity which may have non-ethnic origins is the collared-rim *pithos*. The ceramic assemblages of the presumed Israelite sites throughout the Iron Age are characterized by their utilitarian nature. Ceramics from the highlands during Iron Age I and Iron Age II tend to be practical forms, dominated by cooking and storage vessels.<sup>523</sup> There are other forms, including some bowls, *kraters*, and jugs, but they all are based on Canaanite prototypes and remain undecorated, in contrast with many Canaanite assemblages.<sup>524</sup> The collared-rim *pithos* is a storage vessel which is ubiquitous at alleged Israelite sites throughout the Iron Age. Archaeologists,

---

<sup>522</sup> Finkelstein, *Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*, 266.

<sup>523</sup> Killebrew, 177.

<sup>524</sup> Younker, 372.

starting nearly from the beginning of Syro-Palestinian archaeology, associated the distinctive jar with the Israelites and many generations of scholars accepted the assertion.

The idea the collared-rim *pithos* is an Israelite ethnic marker, though, has come under criticism. Such forms are attested in Late Bronze Age contexts, well before the appearance of the Israelites.<sup>525</sup> During the Iron I, and into the early Iron II, the collared-rim *pithos* form exploded in popularity, particularly in the highlands. While they seem to have been manufactured in Israelite sites, they have been found in neighboring regions such as Ammon, Philistia, and Canaanite city-states. The fact that these ceramic forms are found at sites which are generally agreed to not be Israelite alone mitigates the likelihood they served as ethnic boundary markers. Following the introduction of the monarchies in Israel the popularity of collared-rim *pithoi* declined sharply.<sup>526</sup> This decline is likely because there was an increase in trade and the large *pithoi* were too cumbersome to be moved in a cost-effective manner. It also suggests the jars are most likely suited to a self-sustaining society, not dependant on, or accustomed to, a trading economy.<sup>527</sup> Such considerations led many to suggest a socio-economic reason for the prevalence of the collared-rim *pithos*, not an ethnic one. Some scholars, though, maintain these jars are of special significance. Douglas Esse asserts there is a growing amount of quantitative evidence showing the collared *pithos* did bear some ethnic significance.<sup>528</sup>

---

<sup>525</sup> Killebrew, 177.

<sup>526</sup> Finkelstein, *Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*, 285.

<sup>527</sup> Finkelstein, *Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*, 285.

<sup>528</sup> Douglas L. Esse, "The Collared Pithos at Megiddo: Ceramic Distribution and Ethnicity," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 51 (1992): 102.

Ann Killebrew suggests at the very least these vessels indicate a social boundary, if not an ethnic one, based on their percentage in site assemblages, provenance, and function.<sup>529</sup>

Two features common in Israelite settlement, which have also come under criticism, represent better examples of ethnic boundary maintenance. Both are domestic aspects which contribute to the probability they represent conservative ethnic patterns. The first has to do with dietary customs and the second is domestic architecture. Anthropologists have long known diet and food production are often ethnic markers which are less susceptible to change. What food is prepared, how it is prepared, and even how it is consumed can all be very sensitive to maintaining ethnic identity. Culinary traditions are often remarkably stable cultural features, slow to change or be influenced by other changing social circumstances, in the same ideology and religious beliefs are.<sup>530</sup> Archaeologically dietary practices reveal themselves in a number of ways. For example, the recovery of faunal remains can indicate what types of animals were raised and consumed at a particular site and cooking pots can show how those animals were cooked.

At Israelite sites, the lack of pig remains in the faunal assemblages indicates a pork taboo. During the Middle and Late Bronze Ages the evidence from excavations provide a complicated picture. Some sites, particularly northern ones, indicate the use, even ritual use, of pigs while many southern ones have only limited evidence of pig use. Additionally, there is an inverse relationship between city size and pork consumption; the larger the site the smaller the evidence of pig presence.<sup>531</sup> During the Bronze Age there

---

<sup>529</sup> Killebrew, 177.

<sup>530</sup> Finkelstein, "Ethnicity and Origin," 206.

<sup>531</sup> Hesse, 219.

is evidence of some pork taboos but it is apparent pigs were raised in the lowlands and highlands alike.<sup>532</sup> The situation changes dramatically in the Iron Age I and Iron Age II. In the regions traditionally associated with Israelite settlement pig bones drop sharply in the faunal assemblages. The Iron Age I strata at sites such as Beersheba, Masos, Shiloh, and Dan have less than one percent of their faunal remains represented by pig bones. The situation is the same at Iron II sites including Jerusalem, Dan, and Hesi.<sup>533</sup> In the lowlands, particularly the Philistine pentapolis sites, pork consumption, as indicated by pig bones in non-cultic contexts, jumps. Ashkelon and Tel Miqne-Ekron both reveal pig bones representing ten percent or greater of the faunal assemblages.<sup>534</sup>

The sudden disfavor of pigs in the highlands during the Iron I has a number of possible explanations. Pigs are often favored by settlers new to a region as they reach sexual maturity rapidly and thus provide a quick, renewable source of protein. However, in more stable agricultural societies sheep and goats tend to be more cost-effective as they are easily herded and can pasture in terrain not suited to pigs, or agriculture, thus they do not tie up valuable arable land. Additionally, pigs are physiologically ill-suited to hot, arid climates.<sup>535</sup> Thus, it could be explained that pigs are absent from the Iron Age highlands because the climate and terrain both make the raising of pigs a difficult task. Why should the Iron Age highlanders raise pigs when sheep and goats are readily available and much more appropriate to the ecological conditions?

---

<sup>532</sup> Finkelstein, "Ethnicity and Origin," 206.

<sup>533</sup> Hesse, 215.

<sup>534</sup> Finkelstein, "Ethnicity and Origin," 206.

<sup>535</sup> Hesse, 199.

These explanations are insufficient and an additional rationale must be sought. Pig bones are present in both Iron Age I and II Transjordanian assemblages, in a climate just as ill-suited to pig husbandry as the Cisjordanian highlands.<sup>536</sup> Ecological factors might have contributed to an absence of pork consumption but there is an ethnic and religious reason readily available. In the Biblical tradition pork is considered an unclean animal and the Israelites are forbidden to consume it. In the Biblical books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy the pork prohibition is listed among a number of other laws concerning retaining cultic purity. These books represent a later tradition and it is unclear whether the pork taboo in the Iron Age I is representative of an already present religious tradition or the later prohibition formalizes an old ethnic distinction. Whether the religious component was present in the Iron Age I or not, which though it cannot be proven with extant evidence seems highly likely, the pork taboo represents an ethnically sensitive boundary marker.

The absence of pigs among the Israelites represents an active avoidance of the animals. This is either an act of ethnic boundary maintenance, as they set themselves apart from the pork-loving Philistines, which Biblically are seen as posing an existential threat to the Israelites, or they are observing an old religious law. Even if it is representing a response to religious commandment it can still serve as an ethnic marker. The Israelites understood their religion as a distinguishing feature, setting them apart from native Canaanites and intrusive Philistines. Thus the pork taboo is either an overt ethnic boundary marker which later gained a religious component, or it was always an

---

<sup>536</sup> Finkelstein, "Ethnicity and Origin," 206.

action, or perhaps inaction, done in response to their religion which carried an ethnic significance. Either way, pork taboo in the Iron Age is the most commonly agreed upon ethnic marker of early Israel.<sup>537</sup>

Another strong Israelite ethnic indicator is architectural. Israelite domestic architecture is dominated by a structure called either “pillar-courtyard” or “four-room” houses. This house structure is the most dominant type of domestic building in all Iron Age highland sites. The origin of the houses’ form has been greatly debated with the two leading theories that the house began as a replicate of the nomadic tent, or it is an evolution from a Late Bronze house form.<sup>538</sup> Either way, by the Iron Age it had a fairly uniform design. That design was rectangular in shape, usually with four rooms, though three room configurations are known as well.<sup>539</sup> Essentially one broad room in the back of the structure is connected to, most commonly, three long rooms.<sup>540</sup> The central long room is often demarcated by rows of pillars separating it from its longitudinal pairs, providing the basis for the “pillar-courtyard” name also associated with the structure. It is widely believed most four-room houses had at least two stories. The bottom floor, it is believed, was used for the economic domain of the household with space for storage, livestock accommodations, and domestic industries while the upper floors were used as living space.<sup>541</sup>

Discussions of the four-room house are numerous. Theories abound to explain the widespread popularity of the structure and why it took the form it did. There are two

---

<sup>537</sup> Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* 108.

<sup>538</sup> Finkelstein, *Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*, 255.

<sup>539</sup> Killebrew, 173.

<sup>540</sup> Oded Borowski, *Daily Life in Biblical Times* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 17.

<sup>541</sup> Borowski, 18.

leading theories, one is functional and the other is ethnic. The first theory suggests the four-room house gained its unprecedented popularity because its form lends itself to being highly functional, particularly to those in small scale agrarian societies. This theory stands in opposition to the ethnic theory as it contends the four-room house owes its popularity to socio-economic conditions and cannot be an ethnic marker. There is nearly unanimous agreement the house was highly functional for its Iron Age inhabitants. It is spacious enough to store foodstuffs, and equipment for domestic industry, as well as house animals, which would heat the home and provide fuel for fires. In addition it had room for a multi-generational family to live.<sup>542</sup> However, the belief that socio-economic considerations provided the chief impetus for the four-room houses popularity are predicated on the understanding it cannot be an ethnic indicator. This is based on the discovery of four-room houses at sites in the lowlands and in Transjordan, regions not associated with Israelite settlement.<sup>543</sup> Furthermore, antecedents of the four-room house have been found in Late Bronze Age Canaanite contexts suggesting the form did not originate with the Israelites. Thus instead of an ethnic indicator it is a marker of a socio-economic status; it was utilized by peasantry in a rural, agrarian economy.

The functional theory is deficient, though, and an ethnic explanation is the best one available to account for the widespread popularity of the four-room house throughout the Iron Age. This is not to deny that the four-room house form was ideal for the early Israelites in the highlands. The structure did suit their socio-economic needs well, and perhaps that is how the structure originated. The functional theory is accurate in this

---

<sup>542</sup> Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites?* 104.

<sup>543</sup> Finkelstein, "Ethnicity and Origin," 205.

respect but it falls short. After the Iron Age in the Babylonian and Persian periods in Syria-Palestine the four-room house decreased in popularity. In the sixth century B.C.E. the four-room house abruptly disappears from the archaeological record. If it was the ideal house type for the highland peasantry why did it fall out of favor so rapidly? If it really was so perfect why did it fall out of favor with the inhabitants of the region in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods?<sup>544</sup> The answer is in that the structure had an ethnic affiliation. It was avoided, particularly in the Iron Age II, because it was affiliated with the Israelites. In support of this assertion is the fact these houses were popular in rural locales, as is to be expected, but also in urban sites where their socio-economic suitability is less apparent. Urban Israelites had other architectural models to utilize yet they consistently chose the four-room type. To prove it is an ethnic marker, the function it played in ethnic boundary maintenance must be shown. What ethnic behavior, action, or belief is behind the material remains of the four-room house?

Abraham Faust and Shlomo Bunimovitz offer a hypothesis on the ethnic significance of the four-room house. They state there is a reflexive relationship between a society and its architecture; people shape buildings and they in turn shape their builders.<sup>545</sup> The four-room house was built to suit specific socio-economic needs but then helped to shape the mind of its builders. Analysis of the “space syntax” of the four-room house reveals it has a shallow hierarchy of access. Once in the central courtyard space, nearly every other room can be accessed directly from it. In contrast, many

---

<sup>544</sup> Avraham Faust and Shlomo Bunimovitz, “The Four Room House: Embodying Iron Age Israelite Society,” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66 (2003): 25.

<sup>545</sup> Faust and Bunimovitz, “Four Room House,” 28.



Canaanite domestic structures from the Bronze and Iron Ages have a deeper hierarchy of access; some rooms can only be accessed by passing through one, two, or more rooms. The difference in space syntax suggests there were two different social and cultural structures at work.<sup>546</sup>

The space syntax of the four-room house has led scholars to draw a number of interesting conclusions. Of particular note is the connection between space syntax and purity. The four-room house structure allows for the maintenance of purity. If a ritually “impure” person were in the house, they could stay within the house and others could move about it without entering the same room as the individual who is “impure,” thus maintaining their purity. For example, women during menstruation under biblical law are ritually unclean, though in contrast to many Near Eastern cultures not required to leave the house.<sup>547</sup> Others in the house would still be able to move about the house and avoid contact, thus retaining their pure status. The shallow hierarchy of access facilitates the cohabitation and simultaneous segregation of pure and impure.

Faust and Bunimovitz make an additional connection between Israelite religion and the four-room house. In the influential essay “The Abominations of Leviticus” Dame Mary Douglas argued “holiness” in the Hebrew Bible is epitomized in wholeness, completeness, and order. She notes “to be holy is to be whole, to be one; holiness is unity, integrity, perfection of the individual and of the kind.”<sup>548</sup> The prescription for holiness, and thus unity and order, cover nearly all realms of society and culture from

---

<sup>546</sup> Faust and Bunimovitz, “Four Room House,” 28.

<sup>547</sup> Faust and Bunimovitz, “Four Room House,” 29.

<sup>548</sup> Mary Douglas, “The Abominations of Leviticus,” in *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2003), 54.

sexual behaviors to diet to religion and dress. Faust and Bunimovitz believe, based on Douglas' paradigm, the Israelites were fascinated with "unity and 'order' as a negation of separateness and confusion, then these concepts must have percolated through all spheres of daily life, including material culture." In light of such an understanding of Israelite religious theory the domination of a single form of domestic architectural style is clear. At the end of the Iron Age I and beginning of the Iron Age II, when the four-room style became more-or-less standardized, "for whatever reasons, it became the 'right' house type" for the Israelites.<sup>549</sup>

The four-room house must be understood as an ethnic marker as no other explanation fully accounts for its widespread popularity and uniformity. It started simply as an advantageous structure fitting to the socio-economic needs of the Iron Age I highland settlers. However, it became much more than a functional building. It became a tool in Israelite ethnic boundary maintenance. It accommodated Israelite religious customs concerning purity, or perhaps the religious customs accommodated the four-room house. Its dominance in the Iron Age archaeological record is testimony to the Israelite perspective on holiness. During the Iron Age it came to be a symbol of uniquely Israelite ways of thinking and was thus avoided by the surrounding ethnic groups.<sup>550</sup> Thus, uniquely Israelite ideas and actions led to the development of the four-room house and its use in ethnic boundary maintenance.

Using such archaeological sources it is possible to identify Israelites in the Iron Age. However, archaeology is not the only source available. Numerous sources from the

---

<sup>549</sup> Faust and Bunimovitz, "Four Room House," 29.

<sup>550</sup> Faust and Bunimovitz, "Four Room House," 30.

Iron Age reveal Israel was a recognized ethnic entity. Besides the self-ascribed ethnic identity in the Hebrew Bible other literate, neighboring entities recognized Israel as a discrete ethnic polity. In addition to the Biblical evidence, Egyptian and Assyrian texts, as well as sources from some of Israel's smaller political neighbors, make reference to Israel. The vast majority of these extra-biblical, historical references come from the later Iron Age.

The first extra-biblical mention of Israel comes from a stele erected by the Egyptian Pharaoh Merneptah, the "Binder of Gezer," and heir of the powerful Nineteenth Dynasty Pharaoh Ramses II. In the fifth year of his reign, 1207, Merneptah conducted a military campaign into Palestine.<sup>551</sup> To honor the successful Palestinian campaign, along with other successful military exploits, Merneptah erected a stele inscribed with details of his victories. The majority of the text is concerned with his battles against the Libyans, but there is a short chiasmic poem, or "Hymn of Victory," concluding the inscription. The text states:

"The kings are overthrown, saying: 'Salâm!'  
Not one holds up his head among the Nine Bows.  
Wasted is Tehenu,  
Kheta is pacified  
Plundered is Canaan, with every evil,  
Carried off is Askalon  
Seized upon is Gezer  
Yenoam is made as a thing not existing  
Israel is desolated, his seed is not;  
Palestine has become a widow for Egypt.  
All lands are united, they are pacified;

---

<sup>551</sup> Singer, 3.

Everyone that is turbulent is bound by King Merneptah, given life like Re, every day.”<sup>552</sup>

This is chronologically the first reference to Israel in an extra-Biblical source. Not all agree, though, that the entity translated here as “Israel” does in fact refer to the Biblical entity of Israel. Scholars have suggested it should instead be rendered Jezreel or Išarel, and does not refer to Israel. These interpretations all have significant flaws and rely on scribal errors or complicated grammatical arguments to prove their point. The consensus view among scholars is the Israel mentioned in Merneptah’s stela is related to the Biblical Israel in some way.<sup>553</sup>

If the Israel of the stele is related to, or is, the Biblical Israel, what can the inscription tell us about them? The first line suggests those conquered by Merneptah spoke a west Semitic language, exclaiming “Salâm,” a well known Canaanite expression meaning “peace.” Additionally, the inscription indicates Israel had no fixed city-state associated with them. The three locales mentioned prior to Israel, Askalon, Gezer, and Yenoam, are all followed by the determinative indicating they are cities.<sup>554</sup> The determinative associated with Israel denotes a “people without a specific city state.”<sup>555</sup> The phrase “his seed is not” has been interpreted as indicating the Egyptians destroyed their agricultural subsistence and means of security in lieu of destroying their city.<sup>556</sup> Alternatively, it has been interpreted as indicating the destruction of Israel’s descendants

---

<sup>552</sup> “Hymn on the Victory over the Libyans (Israel Stela)” in *The Nineteenth Dynasty*, vol. 3 of *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents from the Earliest of Times to the Persian Conquest*, trans. and ed. James Henry Breasted (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906), para. 617.

<sup>553</sup> Michael G. Hasel, “Israel in the Merneptah Stela,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 296 (1994): 47.

<sup>554</sup> Yurco, 190.

<sup>555</sup> Yurco, 200.

<sup>556</sup> Hasel, 53.

or offspring.<sup>557</sup> However, the line “his seed is not” is a well known stock phrase within Egyptian royal inscriptions simply meaning Egypt’s enemies were defeated and plundered.<sup>558</sup> While the inscription does not contain a geographic element as to the location of Merneptah’s Israel, most scholars, based on the structure of the victory poem, place Israel somewhere in the highlands of Cisjordan, while some place them in Transjordan.<sup>559</sup> It can thus safely be assumed by 1207 the Egyptians recognized an important, non-urban, people group called Israel most likely somewhere in the highlands of Cisjordan.

While Merneptah’s stele is the earliest extra-Biblical reference to Israel, it is far from the only one. Texts from throughout the Iron Age II period make references to Israel and other cognates for Israel. The period of the Biblical divided monarchy is particularly well represented in the annals of their neighbors. Some of these inscriptions include the Monolith Inscription of Shalmeneser III, the Black Obelisk of Shalmenser III, the Rimah Stele, the Nimrud Slab, the Mesha Stele, the Tel Dan Stele, and a number of other Neo-Assyrian archived texts.<sup>560</sup> Not all of the extant references need be cited to show Israel was recognized as a discrete group by those outside it but a few examples will demonstrate multiple ancient entities recognized Israel as an historical unit.

---

<sup>557</sup> Hasel, 52.

<sup>558</sup> James Henry Breasted, *The Nineteenth Dynasty*, vol. 3 of *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents from the Earliest of Times to the Persian Conquest*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906), 258.

<sup>559</sup> Killebrew, 155.

<sup>560</sup> Brad E. Kelle, “What’s in a Name? Neo-Assyrian Designations for the Northern Kingdom and Their Implications for Israelite History and Biblical Interpretation,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121 (2002): 640.

The first, and only, specific mention of Israel in Assyrian documents dates to the reign of Shalmaneser III ca. 853. A part of Shalmaneser III's Monolith Inscription recounts the conflict of the Assyrian army with a coalition of Syro-Palestinian states. The three most significant of these Syro-Palestinian states are "Adad-idri (Hadadezer) of Aram-Damascus, Irḫu-leni of Hamath, and *a-ḫa-ab-bu KUR sir-`i-la-a-a*," or Ahab of the land of Israel. The armies of each of the combatants against Assyria are described, and Ahab's is among the largest, rivaling in size the army of Assyria itself. While some see this as impossible, and perhaps a scribal error, it is easily explained if it is understood as referring to not just the Israelite army, but also the armies of Ahab's vassals including Judah, Moab, and perhaps even some Phoenician city-states.<sup>561</sup>

An added difficulty in the text is the fact this is the only reference to "Israel" in Assyrian archives. Why is the term used in this text and only this text? Why are the terms "Bit-Ḫumri" and "Samaria" not employed, as they are elsewhere in Assyrian texts, to refer to Israel? The use of the term Israel might be indicative that Assyrian scribes had never contacted Israel previously and were using a foreign term "influenced by the local designations."<sup>562</sup> The Assyrian scribes, it seems, did mark distinctions between their enemies as they noted separately Israel, Hamath, and Aram-Damascus, among others. However, they apparently did not know their new enemy Israel well enough to know its inner political and ethnic complexities. They recognized Israel as a distinct group, but failed to recognize the diversity within that group.

---

<sup>561</sup> Kelle, 643.

<sup>562</sup> Kelle, 644.

Two contemporary inscriptions, one from Moab the other from Aram, both mention Israel. Both inscriptions are in a West Semitic language, though each is in a different language, from a different west Semitic subgroup. The first is in Moabite, which is a dialect of the Canaanite subgroup, which also includes the dialects Hebrew, Phoenician, Edomite, and Ammonite. The second is in Aramaic, which is classified under the subgroup of the Syrian West Semitic languages.<sup>563</sup> Most of the languages of the Canaanite subgroup were spoken by people in the southern Levant or along the Lebanese coast, while Aramaic was the language Aramean states in the northern Levantine interior of Syria.

The first inscription, dating to ca. 840, was commissioned by King Mesha of Moab and commemorates his liberation of Moab from Israelite domination.<sup>564</sup> Like Shalmaneser III's Monolith Inscription, Mesha uses the term Israel to refer to his enemy, whom he specifically identifies as Omri. There is also a possible mention of the "House of David," which would be the southern Kingdom of Judah, though the identification is based on reconstructed text and is not universally accepted.<sup>565</sup> Of additional note, is the reference to "cult vessels of Yahweh" being captured.<sup>566</sup> The cult vessels were taken from a city previously belonging to Israel, implying the worship of Yahweh by Israel at least by the mid-ninth century. It is clear the Moabite scribes clearly had a greater

---

<sup>563</sup> Rendsburg, 72.

<sup>564</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Bible*, 542.

<sup>565</sup> Schmidt, Brian B., "Neo-Assyrian and Syro-Palestinian Texts I: The Moabite Stone," in *The Ancient Near East: Historical Sources in Translation*, ed. Chavalas, Mark William (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2006), 312-313.

<sup>566</sup> Schmidt, 312-313.

familiarity with the intricacies of their enemies to the west. They had a fuller understanding of the cultural and political nature of Israel, and perhaps of Judah.

The Tel Dan Stele, like the Mesha Stele, mentions Israel. It, like the Mesha Stele, dates to ca. 840. The Tel Dan Stele was found in secondary use and is much more fragmentary than the Mesha inscription. Therefore its context and author are much more difficult to determine. What is clear, though, is the repeated mention of Israel. There are two mentions of the king of Israel, one complete and one reconstructed, and a reconstructed mention of Israel presumably as a land or state. Additionally there is a reference to the “house of David,” which is the kingdom of Judah known by its eponymous founder of the dynasty.<sup>567</sup> One further note, is the preservation of part of an Israelite name ending in “-yahu” which is a theophoric element. What can be gleaned from this inscription is that still another neighboring state recognized Israel as a distinct unit, but also recognized Judah as its own unit, if subordinate to Israel politically. In the ninth century those outside of Israel clearly recognized it, and to some extent Judah, as their own group.

Numerous other inscriptions, particularly of Assyrian provenance, refer to the northern Kingdom of Israel. As noted, Assyrian sources mention “Israel” only once with every other reference to either the “land of the House of Omri,” “land of Samaria,” or the “city of Samaria.” As the political situation changed and Israel fell further and further under the sway of Assyria the terminology used reflected the shrinking political power of the Israelite state. References to the Israelite state come from the annals of such Assyrian

---

<sup>567</sup> Lawrence J. Mykytiuk, *Identifying Biblical Persons in Northwest Semitic Inscriptions of 1200-539 B.C.E.* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 113.



kings as Adad-Nirari III in the 800s, Tiglath-Pileser III in the 730s, and Sargon II in the 720s.<sup>568</sup>

The historical sources clearly demonstrate foreign entities understood Israel, and Judah, were discrete units. Some of the references suggest Israel was seen as ethnic group, like in the Merneptah stele, the majority, though, explicitly recognize Israel as a state. The references to Israel and Judah as “Bit-Ḥumri,” or “House of Omri,” and “House of David” respectively are referencing the political founders of dynastic lines, thus political terms. Many scholars, though, understand the ancient states of Israel and Judah, along with such states as Moab, Edom, Aram, as ethnic states. While these states certainly had some variety ethnically, they were largely ethnically homogeneous. Alexander Joffe suggests these states were more than just ethnic states but uses the term “ethnicizing” to describe them. He suggests these states grew and created ethnic identities. A core ethnic identity existed prior to the state, but as an ethnicizing state it developed that core identity and strengthened it throughout the state.<sup>569</sup> Thus while most historical sources refer to Israel and Judah as political units the ethnic identification is implicated.

#### *Ethnicity at Gezer in the Late Iron Age*

The evidence relating to Gezer during the tenth century offers no clear ethnic markers. The city was in all probability conquered by Siamun along with other Philistine cities in the region. The Biblical account indicates at this point the city was given to the Israelite state. The new orientation of the city evidenced in the fortifications and public

---

<sup>568</sup> Kelle, 640.

<sup>569</sup> Joffe, 456.

structures supports this assertion. Unfortunately, public structures tend not to offer much in terms of ethnic identity. A political entity might control a region of mixed ethnicities. However, some general observations of the site suggest an Israelite presence.

Certain material aspects from Gezer suggest it was occupied by Israelites in the tenth century. The public architecture is associated with the Israelite monarchy, either under Solomon, Omri, or Ahab depending on one's chronological persuasion. The gate at Gezer has stone benches lining the deep inset chambers, which is uncommon in Bronze Age gate structures. It is possible this was made to reflect the Israelite custom of "judging in the gate" where city elders gathered in the gateway and conducted various civic and social duties.<sup>570</sup> It is possible, then, the fortifications were built to accommodate a custom practiced by the Israelites, though not necessarily an ethnically sensitive custom. The Gezer Calendar might also indicate some Israelite presence at the site. The script is clearly a dialect of Canaanite, and many believe it to be early Hebrew.<sup>571</sup> The text itself is of no significance ethnically, but the author signed the document "Abijah."<sup>572</sup> The name is clearly a theophoric name meaning "Yah is my father" or "My father is Yah." The author was given a name associated with the Israelite deity, revealing a religious affinity. The artifact is dated to the tenth century on paleographic analysis and not stratigraphy so while it suggests at least some Israelite presence at the site in the tenth century, without the stratigraphic context it is difficult to confirm this with authority.

---

<sup>570</sup> Dever et al., "Further Excavations at Gezer," 115.

<sup>571</sup> Borowski, 99.

<sup>572</sup> W.F. Albright, "The Gezer Calendar," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 92 (December 1943): 18.

It is in domestic contexts ethnic boundaries are most frequently maintained and easily discerned. However, with such a limited exposure of the domestic quarter it is difficult to comment on the ethnicity of the residents. The lack of an analysis of the faunal assemblage makes it impossible to identify the pork taboo characteristic of the Israelites. The red-slipped and burnished pottery is characteristic of the time, but cannot function as an ethnic indicator.<sup>573</sup> The discovery of a small altar in a domestic area indicates little more than the residents practiced some religious customs, which describes essentially all residents of the ancient Near East.

Thus the ethnic composition of Gezer in the tenth century is ambiguous. It suffered destruction at the hands of the Twenty-First dynasty Pharaoh Siamun, as did many other cities in the southern coastal plain.<sup>574</sup> None of the other sites which fell to the pharaoh indicate they were demographically exterminated. While they no doubt suffered loss of life, nothing suggests they were wholly depopulated. Gezer is no different. Nothing indicates the former inhabitants were massacred. It seems unlikely, from a political perspective that the Philistines stayed at Gezer but the Canaanite population likely continued to live at the city.

After the city passed into the hands of the Israelite monarchy, the city was rebuilt on a new plan. The city's fortifications reflect Israelite traditions but the ceramic and other small finds, with the exception of an Israelite name on the Gezer Calendar, do little

---

<sup>573</sup> Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman, "The Early Israelite Monarchy in the Sorek Valley: Tel Beth-Shemesh and Tel Batash (Timnah) in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Centuries BCE," in *"I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Times:" Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Aren Maeir and Pierre de Miroschedji (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 422.

<sup>574</sup> Karol Myśliwiec, *The Twilight of Ancient Egypt: First Millennium B.C.E.* trans. David Lorton (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 40.

to affirm an Israelite presence at the site. It is completely plausible the city was populated by Israelites after it passed into their control, but the evidence does not demand it. It is reasonable to believe those who engineered and built the fortifications, in their Israelite style, were in fact Israelites, but that too is not necessary; the Hebrew Bible records Solomon conscripted non-Israelites into his labor force.<sup>575</sup> It seems likely the city of Gezer in the tenth century was populated by both Canaanites and Israelites, though there is no way to indicate which population held the ethnic majority.

At the close of the tenth century the city experienced a violent end, likely falling victim to the razzia of Sheshonq.<sup>576</sup> Following its recovery it most likely was politically controlled by the kingdom of Israel based at Samaria. The ninth century city took on a different role in the region, no longer being an important administrative center. The administrative quarter was turned into a domestic one, though the ethnicity of its inhabitants is unclear, the material culture suggests Canaanite, Israelite, or a combination to be the most likely. In the adjacent area, termed Field VII by excavators, the circumstances are different. The majority of the buildings in this domestic area conform to the four-room house variety. Thus, at the beginning of the ninth century the city certainly was occupied by Israelites, though it is possible some of the inhabitants may not have identified as Israelite.

The city was attacked by Hazael shortly after the middle of the ninth century. However, the city was quick to recover and throughout the rest of the ninth and into the eighth century Field VII remained a domestic quarter dominated by Israelite inhabitants

---

<sup>575</sup> 1 Kings 9:20-22

<sup>576</sup> Myśliwiec, 45.

in four-room houses. The evidence pertaining to the end of the ninth century and into the eighth century suggests the city maintained an ethnic composition similar to that before the attack by Hazael.

The eighth century city was populated by Israelites. The administrative buildings and the *lmlk* jars indicate it was part of the Judahite redistributive economic system. Though the *lmlk* seals are most commonly dated to the reign of Hezekiah, their presence at Gezer in secure eighth century contexts indicates they were entered into the Judahite economy earlier than Hezekiah's reign. The city was clearly under the control of Judah, and the multiple four-room houses forming the domestic quarter demonstrate the residents of the city were Israelites. They were part of a socially stratified society, with wealthy residents displaying their prosperity the same way people do today, by building large houses in important places. Despite the stratification, the sites residents maintained a common ethnic identity.

After the city was conquered by Tiglath-Pileser III it entered a severe decline. The Assyrians maintained an outpost at the site, though Israelite occupation persisted. The two tablets recovered by Macalister suggest the city had a mixed ethnic composition. It is understandable the Assyrians were involved in the buying and selling of property as they likely constituted the upper echelon of society. While the name Nethaniah indicates the city still had some Israelite inhabitants, and they interacted with the Assyrian contingent at the city.

The occupation of the city after it passed into the hands of the Kingdom of Judah is too poorly attested to determine the ethnic composition of the site. It is possible some

Assyrian presence persisted at the site, though it is impossible to confirm given the available evidence. If there were any change in the ethnic composition of the site, it is most likely the ratio changed in favor of the Israelites given the political change, particularly if the assertion the Israelite states were ethnicizing states is correct.

## Conclusion

Ethnicity is a complicated topic in the modern world, and its complexity is only compounded when discussing ethnicity in the ancient world. However, with a careful examination of available sources it is possible to discuss ethnicity in such a context. The historical and archaeological sources enable some insights to be made into ethnic identity at Gezer during the Bronze and Iron Ages.

Though it is unclear whether they constituted an ethnic group in light of modern understandings of the term, the Canaanites were a distinct socio-cultural group who occupied the land of Canaan beginning in the Middle Bronze Age. Despite the fact the Canaanites were politically fragmented, living mostly in independent city-states, they did share a common culture and lifestyle which consisted of a number of features including a common language, religious pantheon, and material culture. The evidence is clear, Canaanites occupied Gezer and it operated as a city-state during the Bronze Age. Virtually every criterion used to identify Canaanite culture is present at Gezer. It was the quintessential Canaanite city-state in the Bronze Age.

The end of the Bronze Age was a hazardous time and as with so many other sites in the region, Gezer experienced a volatile introduction to the Iron Age. The Early Iron Age also saw the introduction of new ethnic elements to the region. The first to interact with Gezer were the Philistines; a new ethnic element to the Levant. They likely originated somewhere in the Aegean world. They brought to their new homeland a foreign way of life which clearly differentiated them from their new Canaanite neighbors.

The Philistines brought with them new culinary practices which were executed in new ceramic types, and they performed religious rituals in Aegean style cultic vessels such as ring *kernoi* and *rhyta*. The presence of some of these material markers of Philistine ethnic boundaries at Gezer indicate the city was home to at least some Philistines.

During the early Iron Age the Philistines were definitely one ethnic component at Gezer. It is unclear how many Philistines occupied Gezer, it seems they were a minority, though likely dominant politically. The Canaanites were the other ethnic component at Gezer in the early Iron Age. There was continuity between the Bronze Age and Iron Age. The descendents of the Bronze Age Canaanite inhabitants continued to live in the Iron Age city, alongside the newcomers. The continued interaction between the Canaanites and Philistines resulted in the Philistines undergoing a process of acculturation. The Philistines adopted cultural traits of the Canaanites, such as their language and some of their ceramic forms, and shifted their ethnic boundaries. Thus, the Philistines maintained a unique identity, separate from others around them, even though they began to appear more like their neighbors.

The latter half of the Iron Age at Gezer saw the introduction of still another ethnic entity to the site, that of the Israelites. The Israelites most likely began as a mixed group of settlers, almost certainly including Canaanites, who occupied the highlands of southern Levant in the early Iron Age. They shared a religious paradigm and an aggressive common enemy in the Philistines which tied early Israel together as an ethnic entity by the beginning of the Iron Age II ca. 1000 B.C.E. Such religious beliefs, recognized as distinctive both by Israel and its neighbors, set Israel apart. Certain religious and



ideological convictions unique to the Israelites manifested themselves materially.

Archaeologists have long associated certain material cultural artifacts with the Israelites and declared them ethnic markers. Many of these material features, including collared-rim *pithoi*, utilitarian, undecorated ceramic assemblages with Late Bronze Canaanite prototypes, stone-lined silos, and agricultural terraces, were all likely widely utilized by Israelites. Such material remains are helpful for cultural and especially socio-economic identification of sites, yet they cannot be consistently relied upon to identify Israelite ethnicity.

At Gezer, the city politically passed into the hands of the Israelites after it was targeted by the Egyptian Pharaoh Siamun. Gezer was rebuilt and fortified in the tenth century, likely by the Israelites. The city's ethnic composition was likely still a mixture, though not with Canaanites and Philistines but with Canaanites and Israelites. However, it seems as though the ethnic majority steadily shifted in favor of the Israelites over the course of several centuries. The destruction of the city by Tiglath-Pileser III sealed much of the city in a destruction layer revealing to archaeologists that at the time the city possessed a number of elements ethnically sensitive to Israelites such as four-room houses. The evidence suggests the Canaanite population gradually disappeared likely either intermarrying with the Israelites or eventually adopting Israelite ethnic identities themselves. Either way, when the Assyrians took the city it was a thoroughly Israelite place. However, it maintained an Israelite affinity even under Assyrian control. Some Assyrian officials and soldiers preserved imperial control over the city; they probably never constituted an ethnic majority, even in the depopulated city. After a brief time

again under the Judean kings, the city was destroyed by the Neo-Babylonians and abandoned for nearly a century.

The historical and archaeological data allows for the reconstruction of the ethnic history of Gezer. It reveals both continuity and change. There was remarkable continuity and resilience from the Canaanite population. Throughout the Bronze Age the city was a leader among other Canaanite city-states. In the Iron Age the city's Canaanite population persisted, their material culture evolving from earlier periods, despite the introduction of new ethnic elements. The Philistine incursion was certainly an ethnic change not only at Gezer but in the region. Despite the presence of Philistines at the site, the Canaanites endured and even exerted influence over the Philistine culture contributing to the acculturation of the Philistines.

Only in the Iron Age II did the Canaanite presence at the site gradually disappear. After the city passed into the hands of the Israelites the city gained an Israelite character. Given the similarities between Israelites and Canaanites and the nature of ethnicity it is plausible many of the Canaanites became, or came to self-identify as, Israelites. Intermarriage in particular seems a likely avenue through which Canaanites could become Israelite.

The ethnic change at Gezer is seen most clearly in the cases of the Philistines and Assyrians. Both maintained an ethnic minority at the site during their political dominance of it. The city's ethnic majority did change between Canaanite and Israelite during the Israelite's political dominance of the city, but that change is less clearly

demarcated in the historical and archaeological sources than those of the Philistines and Assyrians.

Ethnicity in the ancient world is a complicated and occasionally polarizing subject. Gezer offers an interesting look into the phenomenon and how it developed over a long period of time. It reveals there were multiple ethnicities that negotiated ethnic boundaries in close proximity, some persisting for long periods of time while others stayed for a comparatively short time. As more research is conducted on the site and excavation results are published this ethnic history of Gezer will be amended and improved to bring further clarity to modern understandings of ethnic identity in the ancient world.

## Bibliography

- Agassiz, Louis. "The Diversity of Origin of the Human Race." *Christian Examiner* 49 (July, September, November 1850): 110-145.
- Albright, W.F. "The Gezer Calendar." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 92 (December 1943): 16-26.
- Anthony, David W. "Migration in Archaeology: The Baby and the Bathwater." *American Anthropologist* 92 (December 1990): 895-914.
- Banks, Marcus. *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Barth, Fredrik. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1969.
- Ben Shlomo, David, Itzhaq Shai, and Aren M. Maeir. "Late Philistine Decorated Ware ("Ashdod Ware"): Typology, Chronology, and Production Centers." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 335 (August 2004): 1-35.
- Ben-Shlomo, David, Itzhaq Shai, Alexander Zukerman and Aren M. Maeir. "Cooking Identifies: Aegean-Style Cooking Jugs and Cultural Interaction in Iron Age Philistia and Neighboring Regions." *American Journal of Archaeology* 112 (April 2008): 225-246.
- Bentley, G. Carter. "Ethnicity and Practice." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29 (January 1987): 24-55.
- Bernal, Martin. *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987.
- Blakely, Jeffrey A. and Fred L. Norton Jr. "On Site Identifications Old and New: The Example of Tell el-Hesi." *Near Eastern Archaeology* 64 (March-June 2001): 24-36.
- Bloch-Smith, Elizabeth. "Israelite Ethnicity in Iron I: Archaeology Preserves What is Remembered and What Is Forgotten in Israel's History." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122 (Autumn 2003): 401-425.
- Bloch-Smith, Elizabeth, and Beth Albert Nakhai. "A Landscape Comes to Life: The Iron I." *Near Eastern Archaeology* 62 (1999): 62-92, 101-27.

- Blumenbach, Johann Friedrich. "On the Natural Variety of Mankind." In *Slavery, Abolition, and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*, edited by Peter J. Kitson, 200-213. London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Bourriau, Janine. "The Second Intermediate Period." In Shaw, 170-206.
- Breasted, James Henry. *The Nineteenth Dynasty*. Vol. 3 of *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents from the Earliest of Times to the Persian Conquest*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906.
- Breasted, James Henry. *The Twenty-Second Dynasty*. Vol. 4 of *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents from the Earliest of Times to the Persian Conquest*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906.
- Bromley, Yulian. "The Term *Ethnos* and its Definition." In *Soviet Ethnology and Anthropology Today*. Edited by Yulian Bromley, 71-72. The Hague: Mouton, 1974.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.
- Bunimovitz, Shlomo, and Avraham Faust. "Chronological Separation, Geographical Segregation, or Ethnic Demarcation? Ethnography and the Iron Age Low Chronology." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 322 (May 2001): 1-10.
- Bunimovitz, Shlomo, and Zvi Lederman. "Canaanite Resistance: The Philistines and Beth-Shemesh – A Case Study from Iron Age I." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 364 (2011): 37-51.
- . "The Early Israelite Monarchy in the Sorek Valley: Tel Beth-Shemesh and Tel Batash (Timnah) in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Centuries BCE." In "*I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Times:*" *Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday*. Vol. 2. Edited by Aren Maeir and Pierre de Miroschedji, 407-427. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006.
- Campbell, Edward F., Jr. "The Amarna Letters and the Amarna Period." *The Biblical Archaeologist* 23 (February 1960): 1-22.
- Clifford, Richard J. "Phoenician Religion." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 279 (August 1990): 55-64.

- Cohen, Abner. *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.
- . *Two-Dimensional Man: An Essay on the Anthropology of Power and Symbolism in Complex Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.
- Cohen, Susen. “The Middle Bronze Age 1550-1200 B.C.” Lecture, Tel Gezer Dig House, Newe Shalom, Israel, June 14, 2011.
- Cole, Dennis. “Historical Geography of Ancient Israel.” Lecture, Tel Gezer Dig House, Newe Shalom, Israel, June 13, 2011.
- Darwin, Charles. *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1896.
- . *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1864.
- von Dassow, Eva. “Canaanite in Cuneiform.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 124 (October-December 2004): 641-674.
- Dever, William G. “Archaeology, Ideology, and the Quest for an ‘Ancient’ or ‘Biblical’ Israel.” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 61 (March 1998): 39-52.
- . “Archaeological Sources for the History of Palestine: The Middle Bronze Age: The Zenith of the Urban Canaanite Era.” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 50 (September 1987): 148-177.
- . “Ceramics, Ethnicity, and the Question of Israel’s Origin.” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 58 (December 1995): 200-213.
- . *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- . “Excavations at Gezer.” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 30 (May 1967): 47-62.
- . “Further Evidence on the Date of the Outer Wall at Gezer.” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 289 (February 1993): 33-54.
- . *Gezer II: Report of the 1967-70 Seasons in Fields I and II*. Jerusalem: Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, 1974.

- . “Religion and Cult in the Levant: The Archaeological Data.” In *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader*. Edited by Suzanne Richard, 383-390. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003.
- . *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003.
- Dever, William G., H. Darrell Lance, and G. Ernest Wright. *Gezer I: Preliminary Report of the 1964-66 Seasons*. Vol. 1. Jerusalem: Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, 1970.
- Dever, William G., H. Darrell Lance, Reuben G. Bullard, Dan P. Cole, and Joe D. Seger. *Gezer II: Report of the 1967-70 Seasons in Fields I and II*. Vol. 2. Jerusalem: Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, 1970.
- Dever, William G., H. Darrell Lance, and Reuben G. Bullard. *Gezer IV: The 1969-1971 Seasons in Field VI, the “Acropolis.”* Vol. 1. Jerusalem: Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, 1986.
- Dever, William G., H. Darrell Lance, Reuben G. Bullard, Dan P. Cole, Anita M. Furshpan, John S. Holladay Jr., Joe D. Seger, and Robert B. Wright. “Further Excavations at Gezer, 1967-1971.” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 34 (December 1971): 93-132.
- Dickinson, Oliver. *The Aegean Bronze Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Dothan, Trude. “The Arrival of the Sea Peoples: Cultural Diversity in Early Iron Age Canaan.” In *Recent Excavations in Israel: Studies in Iron Age Archaeology*. Edited by Seymour Gitin and William G. Dever, 1-14. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 1989.
- . *The Philistines and Their Material Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.
- Dothan, Trude, and Moshe Dothan. *People of the Sea: The Search for the Philistines*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992.
- Dothan, Trude, and Alexander Zuckerman. “A Preliminary Study of the Mycenaean IIC:1 Pottery Assemblages from Tel Migne-Ekron and Ashdod.” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 333 (2004): 1-54.

- Drews, Robert. *The End of the Bronze Age: Changes in Warfare and the Catastrophe CA. 1200 B.C.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- . “Medinet Habu: Ox carts, Ships, and Migration Theories.” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 59 (July 2000): 161-190.
- Douglas, Mary. “The Abominations of Leviticus.” In *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, 42-58. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Emberling, Geoff. “Ethnicity in Complex Societies: Archaeological Perspectives.” *Journal of Archaeological Research* 5 (December 1997): 295-344.
- Esse, Douglas L. “The Collared Pithos at Megiddo: Ceramic Distribution and Ethnicity.” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 51 (1992): 81-103.
- Faust, Avraham and Shlomo Bunimovitz. “The Four Room House: Embodying Iron Age Israelite Society.” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66 (2003): 22-31.
- Faust, Avraham, and Justin Lev-Tov. “The Constitution of Philistine Identity: Ethnic Dynamics in Twelfth to Tenth Century Philistia.” *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 30 (2011): 13-31.
- Finkelstein, Israel. 1988. *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*. Translated by D. SALTZ. Jerusalem, Israel Exploration Society.
- . “Ethnicity and Origin of the Iron I Settlers in the Highlands of Canaan: Can the Real Israel Stand up?” *Biblical Archaeologist* 59: 198-212.
- . “On Archaeological Methods and Historical Considerations: Iron Age II Gezer and Samaria.” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 277/278 (February-May 1990): 109-119.
- . “When and How Did the Israelites Emerge?” In *The Quest for the Historical Israel: Debating Archaeology and the History of Early Israel*, Edited by Brian B. Schmidt, 73-83. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007.
- Finkelstein, Israel, and Neil Asher Silberman. *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology’s New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001.
- Fritz, Volkmar. “The Complex of Traditions in Judges 4 and 5 and the Religion of Pre-State Israel.” In “*I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Times:*” *Archaeological and*



*Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday*. Vol. 2. Edited by Aren Maeir and Pierre de Miroschedji, 689-698. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006.

Gilboa, Ayelet, Anat Cohen-Weinberger, and Yuval Goren. "Philistine Bichrome Pottery: The View from the Northern Canaanite Coast." In *"I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Times:" Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday*. Vol. 1. Edited by Aren Maeir and Pierre de Miroschedji, 303-334. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006.

Gitin, Seymour. *Gezer III: A Ceramic Typology of the Late Iron II, Persian and Hellenistic Periods at Tell Gezer*. Jerusalem: Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, 1990.

Gitin, Seymour, and Trude Dothan. "The Rise and Fall of Ekron of the Philistines: Recent Excavations at an Urban Border Site." *The Biblical Archaeologist* 50 (December 1987): 197-222.

Globe, Alexander. "The Literary Structure and Unity of the Song of Deborah." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93 (1974): 493-512.

Gobineau, Arther de. *The Inequality of Human Races*. Translated by Adrian Collins. London: William Heinemann, 1915.

Gossett, Thomas F. *Race: The History of an Idea in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997

Gould, Stephen Jay. *The Mismeasure of Man*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996.

Graesser, Carl F. "Standing Stones in Ancient Palestine." *The Biblical Archaeologist* 35 (May 1972): 33-63.

Halpern, Baruch. "The Resourceful Israelite Historian: The Song of Deborah and Israelite Historiography." *Harvard Theological Review* 76 (1983): 379-401.

Hamblin, William J. *Warfare in the Ancient Near East to 1600 BC: Holy Warriors at the Dawn of History*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Hannaford, Ivan. *Race: The History of an Idea in the West*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Hasel, Michael G. "Israel in the Merneptah Stela." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 296 (1994): 45-61.

- Hesse, Brian. "Pig Lovers and Pig Haters: Patterns of Palestinian Pork Production." *Journal of Ethnobiology* 10 (1990): 195-225.
- Holladay, John S. Jr. "Red Slip, Burnish, and the Solomonic Gateway at Gezer." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 277/2778 (February-May 1990): 23-70.
- Holland, T.A. "Appendix C: A Figurine Plaque From Gezer." In *Gezer II: Report of the 1967-70 Seasons in Fields I and II*. Jerusalem: Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, 1974.
- Humboldt, Alexander von. *Cosmos: A Sketch of A Physical Description of the Universe*. Translated by E.C. Otte. New York: Harper Brothers Publishing, 1866.
- Hunt, Joel H., and William M. Schniedewind. *A Primer on Ugaritic: Language, Culture, and Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Ilan, David. "The Middle Bronze Age," *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader*. Edited by Suzanne Richard, 331-342. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003.
- Isaac, Benjamin. *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Japhet, Sara. *I and II Chronicles: A Commentary*. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1993.
- Joffe, Alexander H. "The Rise of Secondary States in the Iron Age Levant." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 45 (2002): 425-67.
- Johnson, Matthew. *Archaeological Theory*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1999.
- Jones, William. "Discourse III" In *Discourses Delivered Before the Asiatic Society: And Miscellaneous Papers, on the Religion, Poetry, Literature, Etc. of the Nations of India*. Edited by James Elmes, 20-37. London: W.N Carpenter, 1824.
- Kamp, Kathryn A., and Norman Yoffee. "Ethnicity in Ancient Western Asia during the Early Second Millennium B.C.: Archaeological Assessments and Ethnoarchaeological Perspectives." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 237 (Winter 1980): 85-104.
- Killebrew, Ann E. *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity: An Archaeological Study of Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, and Early Israel 1300-1100 B.C.E*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005.

- Kelle, Brad E. "What's in a Name? Neo-Assyrian Designations for the Northern Kingdom and Their Implications for Israelite History and Biblical Interpretation." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121 (Winter 2002): 639-66.
- Kletter, Raz. "Can a Proto-Israelite Please Stand Up? Notes on Ethnicity of Iron Age Israel and Judah." In *"I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Times: Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday"*. Vol. 2. Edited by Aren Maeir and Pierre de Miroschedji, 573-586. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006.
- . "Pots and Politics: Material Remains of Late Iron Age Judah in Relation to Its Political Borders." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 314 (May, 1999): 19-54.
- Kramer, Carol. "Ceramic Ethnoarchaeology." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 14 (1985): 77-102.
- Lance, H. Darrell. "Gezer in the Land and in History." *The Biblical Archaeologist* 30 (May 1967): 33-47.
- Leonard, Albert Jr. "Archaeological Sources for the History of Palestine: The Late Bronze Age." *The Biblical Archaeologist* 52 (March 1989): 4-39.
- Levy, Thomas E. ed. *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*. New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1995.
- Macalister, R.A.S. *Bible Side-Lights From the Mound of Gezer: A Record of Excavation and Discovery in Palestine*. Hodder and Stoughton, London: 1907.
- . *The Excavation of Gezer 1902-1905 and 1907-1909*. Vol. 1. London: John Murray, 1911.
- . *The Excavation of Gezer 1902-1905 and 1907-1909*. Vol. 2. London: John Murray, 1912.
- . *The Excavation of Gezer 1902-1905 and 1907-1909*. Vol. 3. London: John Murray, 1912.
- . *The Philistines: Their History and Civilization*. London: Oxford University Press, 1913.
- Maeir, Aren. "Excavations at Tel es-Safi – Overview Spring 2011." Lecture, Tel Gezer Dig House, Newe Shalom, Israel, June 20, 2011.

- Maeir, Aren M., Stegan J. Wimmer, Alexander Zukerman, and Aaron Demsky. "A Late Iron I/Early Iron II Old Canaanite Inscription from Tell es-Safi/Gath, Israel: Paleography, Dating, and Historical-Cultural Significance." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 351 (August 2008): 39-71.
- Matthews, Victor H. "El-Amarna Texts." In *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader*. Edited by Suzanne Richard, 357-359. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003.
- Mazar, Amihai. *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000 – 586 B.C.E.* New York: Doubleday, 1990.
- . "The Israelite Settlement," in *The Quest for the Historical Israel: Debating Archaeology and the History of Early Israel*, edited by Brian B. Schmidt, 85-98. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007.
- Miller, Robert D. II. "Identifying Earliest Israel." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 333 (February 2004): 55-68.
- Mitchell, Eric. "Survey Methods – A Case Study of Tel Gezer." Lecture, Tel Gezer Dig House, Newe Shalom, Israel, June 21, 2011.
- Mitchell, Eric, and Jason Zan. "Southwestern Students Find Ancient Inscription in Tel Gezer, Israel," Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, <http://www.swbts.edu/campusnews/story.cfm?id=2C98015B-0467-8083-6010AB46F06CC1F1> (accessed June 26, 2012).
- Moran, William L. *The Amarna Letters*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.
- Mullins, Robert. "The Late Bronze Age." Lecture, Field School Lectures from The Tel Gezer Project, Newe Shalom, Israel, June 28, 2011.
- Mykytiuk, Lawrence J. *Identifying Biblical Persons in Northwest Semitic Inscriptions of 1200-539 B.C.E.* Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004.
- Myśliwiec, Karol. *The Twilight of Ancient Egypt*. Translated by David Lorton. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000.
- Na'aman, Nadav. "Four Notes on the Size of Late Bronze Age Canaan." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 313 (February 1999): 31-37.
- . "Ḫabiru and Hebrews: The Transfer of a Social Term to the Literary Sphere." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 45 (October 1986): 271-288.

- Naveh, Joseph. "Achish-Ikausu in the Light of the Ekron Inscription." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 310 (May 1998): 35-37.
- Ortiz, Steven, and Samuel Wolff. "Guarding the Border to Jerusalem: The Iron Age City of Gezer." *Near Eastern Archaeology* 75 (March 2012): 4-19.
- . *Tel Gezer 2006: 2006 Season Excavation Summary Report*. Fort Worth: TX: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006.
- Raban, Avner. "The Philistines in the Western Jezreel Valley." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 284 (November 1991): 17-27.
- Rainey, Anson F. "The Biblical Shephelah of Judah." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 251 (Summer 1983): 1-22.
- . "Who is a Canaanite? A Review of the Textual Evidence." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 304 (November 1996): 1-15.
- Rainey, Anson F. and Steven R. Notley. *Carta's New Century Handbook and Atlas of the Bible*. Jerusalem: CARTA Jerusalem, 2007.
- Redfield, Robert, Ralph Linton, and Melville J. Herskovits. "Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation." *American Anthropologist* 38 (January-March 1936): 149-152.
- Redford, Donald B. *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Redmount, Carol. "Ethnicity, Pottery, and the Hyksos at Tell El-Makhuta in the Egyptian Delta." *The Biblical Archaeologist* 58 (December 1995): 182-190.
- Rendsburg, Gary A. "Semitic Languages (with Special References to the Levant)." In *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader*, Edited by Suzanne Richard, 71-73. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005.
- Ross, Allen P. *Introducing Biblical Hebrew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001.
- Ross, James F. "Gezer in the Tell el-Amarna Letters." *The Biblical Archaeologist* 30 (May 1967): 62-70.
- Rudolph, Willhelm. "Problems of the Books of Chronicles." *Vetus Testamentum* 4 (October 1954): 401-409.

- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Anti-Semite and Jew*. Translated by George J. Becker. New York: Schocken Books Inc., 1948.
- Schmidt, Brian B. "Neo-Assyrian and Syro-Palestinian Texts I: The Moabite Stone." In *The Ancient Near East: Historical Sources in Translation*. Edited by Mark William Chavalas, 312-313. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2006.
- Seger, Joe D. *Gezer V: The Field I Caves*. Jerusalem: Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, 1988.
- . "Reflections on the Gold Hoard from Gezer." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 221 (February 1976): 133-140.
- Seters, John van. "The Terms 'Amorite' and 'Hittite' in the Old Testament." *Vetus Testamentum* 22 (January 1972): 64-81.
- Shai, Itzhaq. "The Political Organization of the Philistines." In *"I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Times:" Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday*. Vol. 1. Edited by Aren Maeir and Pierre de Miroschedji, 347-359. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006.
- . "Understanding Philistine Migration: City Names and Their Implications." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 354 (2009): 15-27.
- Shaw, Ian. ed. *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Shaw, Ian. "Egypt and the Outside World." In Shaw, 308-323.
- Singer, Itamar. "Merneptah's Campaign to Canaan and the Egyptian Occupation of the Southern Coastal Plain of Palestine in the Ramesside Period." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 269 (February 1988): 1-10.
- Smith, Patricia. "People of the Holy Land from Prehistory to the Recent Past." In Levy, 58-75.
- Stiebing, William H. Jr. *Ancient Near Eastern History and Culture*. New York: Pearson Education Inc., 2009.

- Stone, Bryan Jack. "The Philistines and Acculturation: Culture Change and Ethnic Continuity in the Iron Age." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 298 (May 1995): 7-32.
- Stuckey, Johanna H. "The Great Goddesses of the Levant." *Journal for the Society of the Study of Egyptian Antiquities* 30 (2003): 127-157.
- Uziel, Joe. "Middle Bronze Age Ramparts: Functional and Symbolic Structures." *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 142 (2010): 24-30.
- Weiss, Harvey. "Archaeology in Syria." *American Journal of Archaeology* 101 (January 1997): 97-148.
- Yasur-Landau, Assaf. *The Philistines and Aegean Migration at the End of the Late Bronze Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Young, Crawford. "The Temple of Ethnicity." *World Politics* 35 (July 1983): 652-662.
- Yunker, Randall. "The Iron Age in the Southern Levant." In *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader*. Edited by Suzanne Richards, 367-82. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003.
- Yurco, Frank J. "Merenptah's Canaanite Campaign," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 23 (1986): 189-215.