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The Question of Israel: A Comparative Review of the Archaeology of Iron Age Palestine

Amber Skye Flynn
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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THE QUESTION OF ISRAEL: A COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF IRON AGE PALESTINE

2007

AMBER DYE FLYNN
THE QUESTION OF ISRAEL: A COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF IRON AGE PALESTINE

A Thesis
Submitted to the Department of Anthropology
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Honors Degree
Bachelor of Arts

AMBER SKYE FLYNN
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May 2007
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
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Reader and Professor of Anthropology

Date

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Tawny L. Holm Ph.D.
Reader and Associate Professor of Religious Studies
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Introduction

Thomas Davies notes that, in its early years, “Biblical archaeology was, in simplest terms, a search for realia. It was an attempt to ground the historical witness of the Bible in demonstrable historical reality” (2004). For decades, Levantine archaeologists and historians have pursued that search, drawing parallels between archaeological discoveries and Biblical stories. Found were the destructions stemming from the great King David’s military campaigns, the archaeological remains of the brutish Philistines, and the grand buildings commissioned by the wise King Solomon.

Recently, however, the historicity of the Biblical narrative has come under attack by Biblical scholars claiming the stories of a great Israelite monarchy united under such heroic kings as David and Solomon are little more than a broken people’s dream of a Golden Era to which they might some day aspire to rebuild (Thompson 1999). Leaking over into the field of Levantine archaeology, this doubt about the historicity of the United Monarchy period has been crystallized through the controversial theories of a charismatic archaeologist named Israel Finkelstein. The implications of this doubt have reached farther than the realms of religion and academia and into the volatile world of Middle Eastern politics. With the very question of Israel’s right to exist on the line, it is a debate set to rage for years to come.
Chapter 1

History of the Debate

Perhaps the most famous example of the attempt to ground the Bible in archaeological reality can be found at Megiddo, where, according to Israel Finkelstein, the archaeology of the 10th-9th centuries BCE was born, and where “it has remained tethered ever since the first results from the excavations began to emerge in the 1920’s” (1999). It was around this time that an archaeologist by the name of P.L.O. Guy and early reports of the Oriental Institute were attributing palace construction and pillared buildings found at the site to the building activities of King Solomon chronicled in I Kings 7:12 and 9:15-19 (Finkelstein 1996a).

Even after the date of these buildings was moved into a later period, the famous Israeli archaeologist Yigael Yadin was focusing on yet another monumental Megiddo find: a large gate with four entrances that divided the space into six chambers. After almost identical gates were uncovered at two other sites –Hazor and Gezer – Yadin used the Biblical testimony of I Kings 9:15 as proof that these gates were commissioned by King Solomon and must be dated to the United Monarchy period in the 10th century BCE (Yadin 1970, 1972). Unfortunately, this architecture has since been found to also date too late for this interpretation.

W. F. Albright has often been called the father of Biblical Archaeology. Though the discipline since his time, he is still responsible for much of the early and important contributions to the archaeology of the Levant. In his book, The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra: an historical survey, published in 1949, Albright also demonstrates his
belief in the historicity of the Bible and in the ability of archaeology to help support the
Biblical narrative. Although he did remain firmly rooted in the Bible, Albright strove to
view the text in the context of cultural, social, and political patterns and attempted to
delve past the religious message and propagandistic exaggerations of the Biblical writers
to reach the less obvious historical context he believed to be present.

It was Albright, along with Albrecht Alt, (1944) who first formulated the
“Philistine settlement Paradigm,” a theory that is still accepted today by a large portion of
Levantine archaeologists (Finkelstein 1995). This paradigm made the connection
between a ceramic type, known as Philistine Bichrome ware, which appears suddenly in
the southern part of Canaan sometime in the 12th century BCE, and inscriptions of
Ramesses III claiming to have subdued and settled a group known today as the Sea
Peoples in his 8th regnal year (1175 BCE). Albright and Alt claimed that Ramesses settled
these Sea Peoples in strongholds along the southern coastal plain of Canaan, accounting
for the sudden appearance of the new culture. This understanding of the arrival of the
Philistines in Canaan has constituted a foundation upon which the chronologies of
Levantine archaeology have, until recently, been built upon unchallenged.

Today, two separate chronologies are at war within this field. The first, more
traditional chronology is championed by Amihai Mazar and maintains the Albright/Alt
paradigm of Philistine settlement in the Levant. This chronology is rooted deeply within
the Biblical text and dates certain strata and archaeological content across the Levant to
the early 10th century BCE, interpreting them as evidence for the United Monarchy of
Saul, David, and Solomon.

The second chronology was recently advanced by Israel Finkelstein. Calling for a
direct interpretation of the archaeological evidence without Biblical input, Finkelstein’s
Low Chronology would push the dates of Mazar’s United Monarchy strata into the late 10th century BCE and reinterpret them as evidence for a period of state formation that took place separately in the northern and southern parts of the land, effectively undermining the accuracy of the biblical account of a United Monarchy.

The current study will focus on these two chronological systems for the Iron Age in Israel. This debate has reached far into the field of Levantine Archaeology, however, and a full review is too extensive for a paper of this size. The discussion will therefore be limited to the arguments and publications of the main champion of each chronological system: Amihai Mazar for the High Chronology, and Israel Finkelstein for the Low Chronology.

In reviewing these disparate viewpoints, two sites – Ashdod and Megiddo (Map 1) – will also be explored in an attempt to better understand each chronology. The expectations provided by each chronological system will be examined using the evidence provided by each site in an attempt to clarify the opposing views of this period painted by each system’s interpretation.
Ashdod's importance lies in its distinction as one of the first cities settled by the Philistines upon their arrival in Canaan. As a key point in the ongoing debate deals with the date of the Philistines' arrival in Canaan and the archaeological and ceramic record formed by the initial stage of Philistine settlement in the area, a close study of a site of this type's stratigraphy and ceramic assemblages is important for any review of this debate. Amihai Mazar was an area supervisor at Ashdod excavations early in his career and has since coauthored sections of the final reports for this site.

Megiddo is easily one of the most important sites in the Levant. It has been included here because much of the monumental architecture attributed to the United Monarchy was originally uncovered at the site and therefore it is central to our understanding of each chronology's impact on the stratigraphic chronology and the date of state formation in Israel. Megiddo has the added distinction of being currently excavated under the direction of Israel Finkelstein.

The ultimate goal of this research will be the production and clarification of questions requiring further research for a better understanding of the debated period as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the opposing arguments. This paper is in no way intended to prove or disprove a specific chronology nor to solve any of the problems surrounding the debate. This research will serve only to clarify the questions that need to be answered as the debate continues.

**The Debated Period**

As in the past, many of the archaeologists working in the Levant today remain interested in one of the most compelling and important eras in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible: the United and Divided Monarchies. These events fall within a 400-year period
that has, until recently, hung comfortably between two historical anchors: the settlement of the Philistine peoples sometime in the 12th century BCE, and the Assyrian invasion into northern Israel at the end of the 8th century BCE. As shown above, these periods have been the focus of the archaeology of Israel and Palestine since the beginning of archaeological exploration in the area, and yet they remain contested to this day because no further anchors have been established within the 400-year span, leaving room for interpretation, reinterpretation, and disagreement.

The Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel, and eventually all of Palestine other than Judah, between the years 732 – 701 BCE provides an end-point to the debate (Mazar 1990). The destruction levels of this conquest are well documented throughout the Levant and are agreed upon within the field, thus providing an excellent reference point capping the earlier, contested strata (Finkelstein 1996a).

The earlier of the two anchors, however, has recently fallen into question. Following the end of the Bronze Age, a group of invaders often called the Sea Peoples came into contact with the Egyptians during the eighth year of the reign of Ramesses III (c. 1135 BCE) and were settled by him following their defeat, as attested by two inscriptions listing his exploits as ruler (Finkelstein 1995).

The first of these inscriptions is found on the walls of Ramesses III’s mortuary temple and lists the Plst (Peleset, or Philistine) as one of seven groups of people defeated in land and sea battles (Mazar 1990). A papyrus also attributed to Ramesses III repeats this list, further elaborating on the outcome of the Sea Peoples’ defeat: “I settled them in strongholds, bound in my name” (Finkelstein 1995; Mazar 1990).

The initial identification of the Philistines as a specific group of the Sea Peoples can be attributed to William Albright (Finkelstein 1995). The archaeological evidence
for this identification exists in the form of the distinctive "Philistine" Monochrome (Fig. 1) and Bichrome (Fig. 2) ceramic varieties (Mycenaean IIIc ware). Unlike the imported Mycenaean IIIB ware, Mycenaean IIIc ware was made of clay found in the southern Levant and is therefore considered to have been produced by inhabitants of the area – accepted by most Levantine archaeologists to be the Philistines.

Similar pottery types have been found in Cyprus: "The great similarity between Mycenaean IIIC1b in Philistia and that in Cyprus, and its appearance in both areas in large quantities, imply settlements of migrants with common origins" (Mazar 1990). As further evidence of this connection, Mazar describes a type of free-standing hearth unknown in Canaan which was discovered at Tel Qasile and Tel Miqne (Ekron) during the Philistine occupation phases and which is also known from Aegean and Angolian areas as well as the Cyprus levels which date to this period (1990). This is further evidence for a parallel migration from the Aegean to Cyprus and the southern Levant. A tenuous agreement exists between Finkelstein and Mazar on the origin of the settlers (see Finkelstein 1995), however the identification of the Monochrome and Bichrome ceramic types as Philistine has reached consensus within the field.
In the 1980’s three major theories concerning the date of the Philistine settlements were put forward by various scholars in the field. A brief review of these will reveal the seeds from which today’s modern debate has grown. Finkelstein summarizes these positions in an article in Tel Aviv entitled “The Date of the Settlement of the Philistines in Canaan” (1995).

**High Chronology – Trude and Moshe Dothan**

This chronology accounted for the two distinctive ceramic types assigned to the Philistines by proposing that there were two waves of Sea Peoples. The Dothans believed the first wave to have been responsible for an early clash with Mernepta – an earlier Egyptian Pharaoh – and for introducing Monochrome ware into the area. The second wave consisted of the more traditionally-recognized invasion which was beaten back by Ramesses III in the eighth year of his reign (c. 1175 BCE) and ultimately settled in Canaan. They believed it was this later wave that produced the Bichrome ware.

This chronology was dismissed early on due to the lack of evidence for multiple waves in immigration into southern Canaan. Also, as will be discussed below, the Bichrome ware has been interpreted as a modified form of the original Monochrome ware with Canaanite and Egyptian influences, a process of modification that would have had to occur among the original immigrants rather than at a distant location preceding a second immigration wave. (Dothan & Dothan 1992; M. Dothan 1989, 1993; T. Dothan 1982, 1983, 1985, 1989)

**Middle Chronology – Amihai Mazar et al**

The Middle Chronology proposes that the Monochrome ware is indicative of the original – and only – invasion of the Philistine peoples who were put down and settled by Ramesses III in his eighth year. The Bichrome ware was later developed following
Canaanite and Egyptian influences on the migrants. Strata containing Bichrome ware are traditionally dated to the twelfth century BCE (Mazar 1985; Oren 1985; Singer 1985; Stager 1985).

This chronology is still widely accepted and is known today as the High Chronology due to its oppositional stance with Finkelstein’s Low Chronology. This position will be explored more thoroughly below.

Low Chronology – David Ussishkin

This chronology as originally presented by Ussishkin noted the complete lack of Philistine ceramics in the Ramesses III strata (VI) of Lachish, and concluded that there was no Philistine presence in Canaan until after that time. Ussishkin therefore dated the Monochrome Philistine pottery to the end of the twelfth century BCE (Ussishkin 1985, 1992). This third option was poorly supported and quickly forgotten in its initial presentation by Ussishkin, but has since been revisited to startling effect by Israel Finkelstein and now forms the basis for his chronological framework. It will also be more fully explored below.

The current champion of the traditional dating system (so called because until recently it was considered the standard chronology) is Amihai Mazar. In his book, *Archaeology in the Land of the Bible*, Mazar utilized this traditional system to provide a comprehensive review of the archaeology of Israel and Palestine from the early Neolithic
to the Babylonian period (10,000-586 BCE). Most of the dates found in site reports and publications relating to the archaeology of the Levant still use this basic dating system.

Amihai Mazar and the High Chronology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates (BCE)</th>
<th>Major Events</th>
<th>Major Diagnostic Ceramic Types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iron IA 1200 - 1150</td>
<td>Philistine Settlement in Southern Coastal Plain</td>
<td>Mycenaean IIIC:1b / Monochrome ware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron IB 1150 - 1000</td>
<td>Philistine Expansion Following Egyptian Withdrawal from Canaan</td>
<td>Philistine Bichrome ware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron IIA 1000 - 925</td>
<td>United Monarchy Period</td>
<td>Red slip and hand burnished ware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron IIB 925 - 720</td>
<td>Divided Monarchy Period</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron IIC 720 - 586</td>
<td>Assyrian Invasion</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 – The High Chronology

As mentioned above, the traditional High Chronology championed by Amihai Mazar is based on the claim of Ramesses III to have settled the Sea Peoples in the southern part of Canaan after defeating them during his reign. Mazar uses this claim, as well as the presence of Philistine strata containing Mycenaean IIIC Monochrome pottery "in a level succeeding the last Late Bronze level" (Mazar 1990) to date the settlement of the Philistines – and, by extension, strata containing the Monochrome ceramics – to the fifty years of the Iron IA period. The period following this, then, is characterized by the
Philistine expansion, along with their newly developed Bichrome ceramics, and is dated to the Iron IB, or 1150-1000 BCE.

According to Mazar’s chronology, the early years of the thirteenth century BCE saw the end of the Egyptian presence in Canaan. During the Iron IA period Ramesses III waged his war against the Sea Peoples and subsequently settled them in the southern coastal plain of that territory. Here the Philistines began their occupation of the area in the sites of Ashdod and Ekron (Tel Miqne) demonstrated by the presence of the distinctive Mycenaean IIIC Monochrome ware that typifies the earliest phase of Philistine occupation.

Mazar continues on to posit that this sudden influx of migrants may have contributed to the Egyptian loss of control in Canaan in the following period. The Iron IB period is characterized by the withdrawal of Egyptian influence from the area and the subsequent expansion of the Philistines, along with their newly developed Bichrome ceramics – influenced by the Egyptian and Canaanite trends of the time (Mazar 1990). Thus, strata containing Philistine Bichrome pottery are dated to this period – the second half of the twelfth and the eleventh centuries BCE, and those found above such strata are dated to the 10th century BCE (see also, Finkelstein 2005).

**Israel Finkelstein and the Low Chronology**

Finkelstein’s suggestion for a readjustment of the prevailing chronological system is based on the lack of Mycenaean IIIC Monochrome pottery in strata dated to the time of Ramesses III. The traditional view acknowledges this lack saying that the cultural divide between the Egyptians and Canaanites and the newly settled, militant Philistines was such that little to no cross-over has reached the archaeological record for such early
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates (BCE)</th>
<th>Major Events</th>
<th>Major Diagnostic Ceramic Types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1175</td>
<td>Philistine Settlement in Egypt by Ramesses III</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1135-1100</td>
<td>Initial Philistine Settlement along Southern Coastal Plain following Egyptian Withdrawal</td>
<td>Mycenaean IIIC:1b / Monochrome ware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1100-975</td>
<td>Philistine Expansion Beyond Pentapolis</td>
<td>Philistine Bichrome ware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>975-720</td>
<td>Development and Expansion of Israel and Judah</td>
<td>Red slip and hand burnished ware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>720-586</td>
<td>Assyrian Invasion</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 – The Low Chronology

periods (Finkelstein 1995). Immigrant groups may maintain their own distinct cultural traits, while close neighbors may continue their own traditions with almost no contact between the two. Clearly defined borders between two neighboring cultures due to ethnic, economic, or even ideological differences can be seen in various periods, even in a small country like Israel. (Mazar 1997)

Finkelstein, however, argues that not only has no Monochrome pottery been uncovered in any of the 20th Dynasty strata, but there is also “a significant and opposite ceramic distribution” in which Egyptian pottery “characteristic of all sites dated to the 20th Dynasty in the south has not been found in any Monochrome strata” (Finkelstein 1999; see also 1995). Citing these two facts, Finkelstein claims that archaeological evidence is lacking for dating the Monochrome strata to the same period as the 20th Dynasty strongholds. Instead, he suggests that the settlement of the Philistines in Canaan occurred after the Egyptians began their withdrawal. Rather than being forcibly settled there by the Egyptians and only later replacing them as the power in the area as the Egyptians pulled out, the Philistines did not settle in this region until the Egyptian retreat.
was in effect and actively replaced them as the power in the area during their initial settlement period (Finkelstein 1995).

To support this claim, Finkelstein suggests a different interpretation of the above-mentioned inscriptions attributed to Ramesses III. Having compared the inscriptions with the Biblical testimony and the remains of the Philistine cultures in Canaan, scholars thus far have equated the “strongholds, bound in my name” where Ramesses settles the Sea Peoples in southern Canaan. Finkelstein suggests, however, that these initial peoples were, in fact, settled in Egypt, where even Mazar agrees much of the battle took place in the Nile Delta (Mazar 1990). He then argues that a separate, later wave of migration must be responsible for the occupation of the Pentapolis in Canaan (Finkelstein 1995).

This interpretation of events would effectively “lower” all the dates associated with the Mycenaean IIIC varieties because the anchor would be moved from the first to the second half of the 12th century BCE, causing what Mazar refers to as a “wholesale lowering” of dates throughout the remainder of the strata (Mazar 1997). Finkelstein does this by setting the initial presence of the Monochrome pottery to around 1135 BCE following the Egyptian withdrawal from southern Canaan. This subsequently lowers the dates for the Bichrome era to the 11th and early 10th centuries BCE, which then pushes post-Bichrome strata from the 10th to the late 10th century BCE (Finkelstein 1996a).
The major effect Israel Finkelstein's new chronology has on our understanding of Levantine history deals with a group of architectural elements found in various strata throughout the Levant which has traditionally been attributed to the building activities of the Biblical figure of King Solomon. Mazar discusses these elements in his book,
however the best summary can be found in Finkelstein's article in *The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating* entitled "A Low Chronology Update."

The current historical reconstruction is based on numbers provided in the Biblical narrative (Finkelstein 2005). Mazar dates the reign of David to 1000-965 BCE, followed by his son, Solomon, who is responsible for beginning the monumental building activities in his kingdom (Mazar 1990). Finkelstein explains that it is this policy of monumental building which scholars following the traditional reconstruction feel can be traced through the archaeological record. He lists two major components of the monumental architecture attributed to Solomon:

- The six-chambered gates at Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer.
- Two palaces at Megiddo in a stratum dated by the traditional chronology to the 10th century and attributed to the reign of Solomon, according to Finkelstein, due to "the Biblical idea of a glamorous Solomonic empire. (Finkelstein 2005)"

In his book Mazar lists further elements he feels can be safely connected to the Biblical narrative. He first explores a number of Late Bronze Age temple structures that,

Figure 3 – Tri-partite Temples
although they date to the period preceding Solomon’s reign, are extremely reminiscent of the Biblical description of the great Temple built by Solomon in 1 Kings 5:16-6:38 and 1 Chronicles 4 (1995).

One of these temples (Figure 3: C) is attached to a palace displaying a \textit{bit-hilani} design – that is, including a “colonnaded entry porch” – which Mazar also feels matches the description of Solomon’s palace in 1 Kings 7:1-11. Mazar (2005) also draws a parallel between the \textit{bit-hilani} design and the reconstructed Palaces 6000 and 1723 from Megiddo (Fig 4, 5) – the same palaces mentioned by Finkelstein above. It is interesting to note, however, that the colonnaded entries for both palaces are hypothetical as they have been added as part of the reconstruction (see Fig 5).

Also as mentioned by Finkelstein, Mazar’s discussion includes the six-chambered (also known as four-entry) gates from Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer: “The city gates... were noted by Y. Yadin as the bold illustration of a centralized royal building operation attributable to Solomon on archaeological grounds as well as on the Biblical reference in 2 Kings 9:15-17”. Mazar includes the fact that the gates of Megiddo and Gezer are both accompanied by a casemate wall (a wall containing rooms for storage and strategic purposes). The
attribution of the casemate wall to the stratum of the gate at Megiddo, however, is somewhat shaky, as Mazar notes (2005).

Mazar’s attribution of much of this architecture to the United Monarchy is clearly based heavily on descriptions found within the Biblical narrative. He states, “The Bible is the only written source concerning the United Monarchy, and it is therefore the basis of any historical presentation of the period” (2005). Since the Biblical account provides us with specific dates for David and Solomon’s reign, the dates of these monumental strata become extremely important for an understanding of the presence or absence of a United Monarchy within the Levant. The dates ascribed to these strata, however, rely strongly on the dates ascribed to the strata they overlay, which in turn rely on the dates of the strata they overlay, etc. until you reach a stratum which can be dated independently – in this case, the strata containing Philistine ceramics.

Mazar’s High Chronology places the strata containing monumental architectural components at the beginning of the 10th century, attributing them to the building projects of King Solomon as attested to by the Biblical account. Finkelstein’s chronology, however, bumps the monumental strata into the latter half of the tenth century and attributes them to the later Divided Kingdoms period. Precisely how this is accomplished will be illustrated during the site-oriented portions of this paper.

This Biblically informed interpretation of events is one of Finkelstein’s major problems with the traditional chronology 1996a). In an article entitled “State Formation in Israel and Judah,” Finkelstein has taken the implications of his chronology to their eventual conclusion: the inability of the archaeology – as he feels – to support the theory of a grand United Monarchy in the early 10th century capable of producing the types of monumental architecture discussed above (42, see also: Finkelstein, “Alternative View”
Instead, his article lays out an over-arching, comparative review of the archaeology of the northern and southern portions of the Levant, showing rise of the northern and southern kingdoms in separate events during the 9th - 7th centuries BCE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates BCE</th>
<th>Agreed Upon Events</th>
<th>Traditional/High Chronology</th>
<th>Low Chronology</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1175</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strata containing Mycenaean IIIC:1b Monochrome ware</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1150</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1125</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strata containing Philistine Bichrome ware</td>
<td>Strata containing Mycenaean IIIC:1b / Philistine Monochrome ware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1100</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strata containing Philistine Bichrome ware</td>
<td>Strata containing Philistine Bichrome ware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1075</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strata overlaying Bichrome strata.</td>
<td>Strata overlaying Bichrome strata.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1050</td>
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<td>1025</td>
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<td>1000</td>
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<tr>
<td>975</td>
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<td>Strata overlaying Bichrome strata.</td>
<td>Strata overlaying Bichrome strata.</td>
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<tr>
<td>950</td>
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<tr>
<td>925</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strata overlaying Bichrome strata.</td>
<td>Strata overlaying Bichrome strata.</td>
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<tr>
<td>900</td>
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<td>Assyrian Invasion</td>
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Table 3 – Comparison of leading chronologies
Chapter 2

Ashdod

In the Bible, the site of Ashdod is identified as one of the five cities of the Philistine Pentapolis, along with Ashkelon, Ekron (Tel Miqne), Gath (Tel es-Safi), and Gaza. Ashdod is considered to be one of the most important Philistine sites by both sides of the Iron Age debate. Amihai Mazar served as an area supervisor during the excavations of the tel in the 1960s, and as co-author of the stratigraphy and architecture chapter of the most recently published volume of the site report (*Ashdod VI*), published in 2005. Finkelstein lists Ashdod as one of the two main sites at which the original Philistine Monochrome ware was originally discovered (1995).

*Ashdod VI* is the final in a series of reports following excavations of the tel during the 1960's. This volume covers the 1968 and 1969 field seasons of the Ashdod Excavation Project, which were funded by the Carnegie Museum and the Israel Antiquities Authority, and were directed by Dr. Moshe Dothan. This sixth volume focuses on excavation areas H and K, located on the western slope of the highest part of the tel. These areas are significant to this paper in two ways. First, these two adjoining areas provide “a complete settlement sequence spanning the Late Bronze through Hellenistic period” (Ben-Shlomo and Mazar 2005). Secondly, portions of excavations located on tel slopes are extremely informative as stratigraphic indicators. These two aspects of these areas should provide an understanding of the LB/Iron I transition, the period of the initial settlement of the Philistines.
The completion of the sixth edition was delayed by the death of Dr. Dothan. The result of its more recent publication has been a much more complete product. Previous volumes of the Ashdod report follow the general trend of early excavation reports in being little more than illustrated lists of ceramics and small finds, with no discussion of provenience beyond a general stratigraphic assignment. Only in recent years have the archaeological publications of the Levant begun to include discussions and interpretations. The sixth edition also holds the distinction of being co-authored by Amihai Mazar. Mazar's participation in the excavations at Ashdod, and the subsequent publications, makes Ashdod an excellent counterpoint to Megiddo, a site that has recently been the focus of Finkelstein and is currently undergoing excavation under his direction.

Site Expectations

The traditional view dictates that the Philistines were settled here by Ramesses III and provided with food and supplies following their defeat in his 8th regnal year. If this were the case, one would expect to find not only the new Philistine ceramics appearing suddenly in this stratum, one would also expect to find Egyptian ceramics, or perhaps Canaanite, specifically from large, food storage vessels provided by the Egyptians to their newly settled vassals.

The Low Chronology suggests that the Philistines settled by Ramesses III were settled in Egypt, nearer the Delta where much of the fighting took place. The settlements that developed later in Philistia were the result of a later wave of migrants moving in as the Egyptians moved out of the area. In this case, very little to no large, storage-type Egyptian ware would be found within the early Philistine strata, as they would have been
replacing the Egyptians as the power in the area, and as such they would not have been receiving food from them. Canaanite vessels may still be present, however.

The transition between the pre-Philistine, LBA strata and the initial Philistine, Iron I strata is extremely important, although it alone cannot answer the question of Philistine settlement. If the Egyptians were responsible for settling the Philistines they might have: 1) settled them in existing buildings, 2) built them new buildings with Egyptian characteristics, or 3) left them to build their own buildings, which then may have Philistine characteristics. If the Philistines settled themselves later they might have: 1) built their own buildings, which would show Philistine characteristics, or 2) settled in existing but abandoned buildings that would probably show signs of rebuilding or repair. These abandoned buildings may be of either Canaanite or Egyptian style, depending on the LBA occupation of the site.

If the terminal LBA stratum ends in a destruction, it could be due to Philistine invasion, but that is a big assumption. If there was a lapse in occupation, the Philistines could easily have been settled there by the Egyptians or chosen the spot themselves due to its lack of occupants.

Late Bronze Age (LBA)

Although Bronze Age strata were reached in only a few areas of the excavation, Mazar and Ben-Shlomo claim that enough evidence has been acquired to affirm the presence of “significant Late Bronze Age remains... under the Iron I settlement”.

Unfortunately, the largest section of LBA strata uncovered was in area G, an area published in volume V of the Ashdod report, which was unavailable for this research.
The LBA portions uncovered in this excavation are extremely limited and contain only one significant architectural element: a rectangular structure (L5148) with 1.75m x 3.9m inside dimensions. The floor of this structure was not reached, however a floor surface (L5070) just to the west of the structure was (Ben-Shlomo and Mazar 2005).

![Canaanite vessel rim](image)

Figure 6 – Canaanite vessel rim

The ceramic assemblage for the final LBA stratum (XIV) is limited, and most of the ceramics were discovered in an undefined area “north of the excavation” (Ben-Shlomo 2005a). The assemblage does, however, include a few pieces found within undisturbed loci associated with specific architectural elements. One such is a vessel rim (Fig. 6) found in the large rectangular structure, L5148 (Plan 1). The rim “represents the typical local [Canaanite] painted-pottery tradition of the Late Bronze Age II” (Ben-Shlomo 2005b).

![Chariot krater](image)

Figure 7 – Chariot krater fragment

Another ceramic find, a body sherd from an imported Mycenaean IIIB “chariot krater” (so called due to the chariot and rider motif used in the painted decoration), was discovered in the previous stratum (XV). Although this sherd (Fig. 7) was found in the undefined northern area, it is mentioned by Ben-
Shlomo due to the discovery of similar types elsewhere throughout the Levant. These “chariot kraters” have been found at sites such as Tel Dan and Bet Shemesh, and have been assigned a date in the 13th century BCE as a result of their context at these sites. We can thus date the final stratum (XIV) to post-13th century, a date that correlates with the Egyptian XIXth Dynasty, which lasted from 1580 through 1200 BE and included the reigns of Seti I, Ramesses II, and Merneptah (Yoyotte 1959).

Ben-Shlomo also discusses the presence of a number of Egyptian artifacts (published in Ashdod V), the most significant of which is an alabaster vessel with a cartouche. Although the name in the cartouche cannot be read due to its fragmentary nature, Dothan states “The weight of the evidence may imply the presence of an Egyptian official during the reign of the XIXth Dynasty” (2005a).

The Late Bronze Age strata (especially the final stratum, XIV) are thus interpreted as comprising a somewhat large settlement, probably Canaanite under Egyptian control, dating to the Egyptian XIXth Dynasty. The fate of this LB settlement is unclear from the site report. Certain sections do, however, suggest the LB city was violently destroyed. For example, in the introduction Dothan mentions the fact that the earliest phase of Iron I construction in area G (XIIIb) overlays “the debris of Late Bronze Age Stratum XIV” and goes on to discuss the poor preservation of “the Late Bronze Age destruction” in area H. Chapter 2, Dothan and Mazar’s discussion of stratigraphy and architectural elements, expands on the evidence in area H, contrasting “a lack of architectural continuity between strata XIV and XIII” with a further lack of expected evidence for a violent destruction in this area.
Iron I: XIII-XI

The Iron I strata represent the initial phase of Philistine settlement. These strata were more completely excavated in areas H and K than the preceding LBA strata, and are best exemplified in area H, where the Iron I consists of a "well-planned city comprising two blocks of structures facing a main street" (Ben-Shlomo and Mazar 2005). This general plan lasted peacefully into the main Iron I stratum, XII, where complete buildings and floor levels were protected by a large amount of accumulation that preserved some walls to a height of over a meter.

Figure 8 - Canaanite Storage Jars

The ceramic assemblage of the initial Iron I stratum, XIII, consists of both Philistine and Canaanite types. Canaanite ceramics include "plain hemispherical bowls, decorated kraters, open cooking pots, Canaanite storage jars, and lentoid flasks" and show evidence of Egyptian influence (Ben-Shlomo and Mazar 2005). Unfortunately, the majority of ceramics in stratum XIII were "found in the loose gray-brown soil fills between the walls" (Ben-Shlomo and Mazar 2005). This fill was attributed to this
stratum, rather than the following one, by the excavators, however the location of these ceramics within a fill must be considered.

Three different locations have provided examples of Canaanite pottery in situ within a documented locus rather than from fill rubble. The largest of these finds consists of a number of Canaanite storage jars (Fig. 8) found on the floor of room 5145 (Ben-Shlomo and Mazar 2005). These jars are described as “a sequel to the LB II Canaanite storage jar” (Ben-Shlomo 2005b) but they alone cannot stand as proof of a Canaanite presence in Ashdod during the Philistinie period.
Plan 2 – Ashdod Stratum XIII with arrows indicating areas discussed in this chapter
Two other vessels were uncovered in building 5381: an almost complete bowl (Fig. 9, 10) of a common Canaanite type, and an intact jug (Fig. 11) on the floor of the building with parallels in LB II assemblages (Ben-Shlomo 2005b).

The majority of the Philistine Monochrome (Myc. IIIC:1b) pottery in stratum XIII was also taken mostly from fills and "is represented mainly by small sherds" (Ben-Shlomo 2005a). The attribution of the fills to this stratum is supported, however, by the presence of Monochrome sherds in a well-preserved layer discovered by a probe into L5351b (Ben-Shlomo and Mazar 2005). Ben-Shlomo describes the stratum XIII Philistine Monochrome assemblage as poor and notes it is mixed with Bichrome ceramics. Those preserved at L5351b, however, do include examples of Monochrome ceramics, attesting to the early presence of Philistines during the initial Iron I phase (Ben-Shlomo 2005b).

"A larger, diversified assemblage of both Myc. IIIC:1 [Monochrome] and fully developed Bichrome pottery" is provided by stratum XII, an assemblage that, by stratum XI, is dominated by Bichrome ceramics (Ben-Shlomo 2005b). This pattern suggests that
both strata XIII and XII were deposited during an initial settlement phase that was followed by the more developed Bichrome phase in stratum XI.

<table>
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Table 4 – Comparative Chronology for Ashdod

Conclusions

Further excavations need to be done to determine the character of the LB city and its fate. The transition between the LB and Iron I strata is extremely important as it will provide us with a better understanding of the settlement of the Philistines in the area. If the Philistines were responsible for the destructions of the LB strata, it would most likely have happened during a later military wave rather than during their initial settlement by Ramesses. This, then, would support Finkelstein’s theories.

If the destructions took place years before the Philistine settlement (i.e., if there is a significant gap between the termination of the LB strata and the Iron I constructions),
perhaps the Philistines were settled there by the Egyptians due to the available nature of the site. However, it is equally possible that the Philistines would choose an abandoned location as a place to more easily establish an initial settlement in the area. Clearly the transition between these strata, although it cannot conclusively answer the many questions remaining, requires further study.

The initial Philistine settlement phases (strata XII and XIII) show a mixture of early (Monochrome) and locally developed (Bichrome) ceramic varieties. If this is true for all initial Philistine strata throughout the Pentapolis, this might support Finkelstein’s assertion that the Philistines were originally settled somewhere other than the southern coastal plain of Canaan.
Chapter 3
Megiddo

Megiddo is considered by many archaeologists to be one of the most important sites in the Levant. Baruch Halpern describes the location of Megiddo thus:

Canaan, it is often said, was the 'land bridge' between Asia and Africa, the highway linking Egypt and her southern trade sources with Phoenicia, Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and the East. Traffic across the bridge is impeded, however, by the range of mountains stretching from Mount Carmel on the coast in the north-west down to Mount Gilboa in the south-east, and from there down the spine of the country to southern Judah. Three passes carry traffic from the southern coastal plain across the mountain barrier... The Taanach pass is the longest and least efficient of the three... the Yoqneam pass is perhaps the most physically arduous. By contrast, the ancient road through the Wadi ‘Ara... emerges via a relatively gentle climb at the well-watered slopes of Tell el-Mutesellim, the mound of ancient Megiddo.” (2000)

With a ready water supply at the crossroads of travel and trade between Egypt and Mesopotamia, it is unsurprising that Megiddo has proven to be an important ancient site. It is also unsurprising that Megiddo has been the object of numerous archaeological expeditions beginning in the earliest days of Levantine archaeology. This review will focus on two of these expeditions: the Oriental Institute’s 1925-34 expedition led originally by Dr. Clarence C. Fisher, and later by P. L. O. Guy, and the ongoing research being conducted there by Israel Finkelstein of Tel Aviv University.

The Oriental Institute’s expedition gains its importance due to the discovery of the gate, the surrounding wall, and – perhaps most importantly – the pillared structures interpreted by that expedition as royal stables. These discoveries led the researchers to make a case for a Solomonic stratum at Megiddo, and that case is laid out in the published site reports resulting from the expedition.
This interpretation is contrasted by Israel Finkelstein’s alternate chronology. The current excavations at Megiddo have provided Finkelstein with an opportunity to not only reinterpret the findings of previous excavations, but also a chance to retest the archaeology surrounding many of the Solomonic arguments.

**Oriental Institute Excavations**

The earliest phase uncovered by the Oriental Institute expedition (stratum VI) was characterized as “Late Bronze traditions and Canaanitish cultures” (Lamon and Shipton 1939). Charred grain found in jars in two of the buildings, as well as charcoal on various floor levels suggest this settlement was destroyed by fire. This destruction was then followed by a period of inoccupation after which “Megiddo was resettled by a people with entirely new ideas sometime during the middle of the 11th century” (Lamon and Shipton 1939). This culturally separate stratum, V, consisted of a “peaceful agricultural settlement” (Lamon and Shipton 1939) and was also destroyed by a fierce conflagration, probably set off by an earthquake. The people of Stratum V brought with them “an entirely new class of pottery (Fig. 12, 13) which differed in both shape and fabric, its most distinguishing feature being a dark red irregularly hand-burnished wash” (Lamon and Shipton 1939).
It is unsurprising that this stratum would be interpreted as the arrival of the Israelite culture, appearing as it does directly following typical Canaanite strata and differing so strongly from the “Canaanite” assemblages. The authors of the report unflinchingly use the Biblical narrative as the historical source backing their interpretation of these strata. Indeed, the red slip and hand burnished ceramic type is considered even today to be the definitive Israelite marker, along with its associated archaeological assemblage.

The hand-burnished character of the characteristic “Israelite” red-slip pottery is replaced in Stratum IV with a more uniform, wheel-burnished technique, speaking to the development of more sophisticated production techniques. Along with the monumental architecture attributed to this stratum, this has helped support the assignment of Stratum IV to the United Monarchy era. Stratum IV boasts a sub-division consisting of an early, unfinished phase (IVB) and a later, more complete phase (IV proper) containing the famous “Solomonic” monumental architecture with a city plan that seems to have been “thoroughly and minutely planned before any construction was commenced” (Lamon and Shipton 1939).

Numerous elements of the two phases of construction led to the researchers’ interpretation that both were performed by the same group of individuals. One clue lay in the fact that both phases showed remarkably similar workmanship and construction technique. Another lay in the fact that certain of the earlier buildings – despite the fact that they lay slightly off the lines of the later plans – were incorporated into the final construction of the city, suggesting that they had been only recently built when the final plans commenced. To support this, a number of architectural elements suggest the Stratum IVB constructions were unfinished when the Stratum IV proper constructions were begun. As a final piece of evidence, identical mason’s marks were discovered in
both the early phase and in a specialized context in the later phase, which would suggest
the stone involved (a drain stone) would not have been salvaged from earlier construction (Lamon
and Shipton 1939).

One of the most important features of Stratum IV was the set of two “stable compounds” that dominated the upper mound during this period (Fig 14, 15). These compounds consisted of a series of units arranged in a row on each side of a central aisle along the length of the building. This central aisle was separated from the individual units by a solid barrier formed from manger structures (Fig. 16) and pillars used both for support and — as evidenced by holes cut in each pillar just above the corresponding manger — as a tethering point for the horses (Lamon and Shipton 1939). The barrier created by the pillars and mangers would have made it difficult to remove a single animal from its unit, requiring instead that all horses be removed at one end of the building. This set-up has suggested to the researchers that the stables were used to house military horses that would have been removed in groups from the compound (Lamon and Shipton 1939).
Another important Stratum IV structure was building 338 (Fig. 17), the remains of which consisted of a well-built “podium”-like foundation with a small projecting area that has been interpreted as a tower. Only the stone walls and fill of the building’s foundation survived to excavation, however these areas contained debris such as burned mud brick, suggesting the building was destroyed by fire (Lamon and Shipton 1939). The foundation was well constructed and consisted of three courses of hewn blocks of stone (Lamon and Shipton 1939), an architectural element that will become important below.

Another important aspect of this building is the discovery of an unstratified fragment of a stela dating to the campaign of Shoshenq that was discovered associated with the building (Lamon and Shipton 1939).

This will also be discussed further in the next section.
Making the case for a Solomonic Megiddo

Lamon and Shipton lay out a three-part argument in favor of assigning Stratum IV of Megiddo to the United Monarchy period, tying it specifically to King Solomon’s building projects. This argument covers the presence of military stables at the site, the construction of building 338 (the “podium building”), and includes a neat bit of circular reasoning concerning the unstratified Shoshenq stela fragment.

The arguments for both the stables and building 338 rely solely on the Biblical narrative. Lamon and Shipton call on the well-known 1 Kings account of Solomonic chariot cities to build a case for a Solomonic building program at Megiddo:

This is the account of the forced labor that King Solomon conscripted to build the house of the Lord and his own house, the Millo and the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer. (Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and captured Gezer and burned it down, had killed the Canaanites who lived in the city, and had given it as a dowry to his daughter, Solomon’s wife; so Solomon rebuilt Gezer). Lower Beth Horon, Baalath, and Tamar in the wilderness, within the land, as well as all of Solomon’s storage cities, the cities for his chariots, the cities for his cavalry, and whatever Solomon desired to build, in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion.” (1 Kings 9:15-19)

They also draw a parallel between the construction of building 338 and the Biblical description of the Temple in Jerusalem also found in 1 Kings: “The great court had three courses of dressed stone to one layer of cedar beams all around; so had the inner court of the house of the LORD, and the vestibule of the house” (1 Kings 7:12). Like the Biblical account, building 338
was constructed of three rows of hewn stone blocks (Fig 18, 19) and topped off with a layer of wood. The evidence for the latter consists of the significant blackening found on the upper course of stones – suggestive of a burned wood layer – and the fragments of cedar found near the foundation wall in one section of the building (Lamon and Shipton 1939).

Unfortunately neither of these arguments stands up to careful inspection. While both cases do seem to correspond to the Biblical account, this is in no way proof of either the historicity of that account, or a definite connection between the two. While it may be true that Solomon ordered stables built at Megiddo and buildings following the design of the Temple, it is equally likely that the authors of the Biblical narrative, constructing a myth during a much later period, worked the description of existing buildings into their narrative.

It is also interesting to note that the authors make mention of an alternate theory regarding the construction of the “podium” building saying: “Fisher noted similarities between the masonry of the podium building (338) at Megiddo and that of the Omri and Ahab buildings at Samaria and was inclined therefore to attribute the Megiddo structure to that period” (Lamon and Shipton 1939). This similarity between a Stratum IV building at Megiddo and later Divided Monarchy period buildings at other sites is extremely important to Finkelstein’s alternate chronology and will be discussed below.

The third piece of evidence, the Shoshenq stela, is provided in defense of the Solomonic date for building 338:

“if [building 338 belongs in the Omri and Ahab period], the unstratified fragment of the Sheshonk stela . . . which must be dated to about 930 B.C., would have to be attributed to Stratum V. But, since Stratum V could not have existed much beyond
1000 B.C. and in all probability was contemporary in its latter part with Saul... the Palestinian campaign of Sheshonk must have fallen within the period of Stratum IV. (Lamon and Shipton 1939)

No explanation is provided for why a cut-off for Stratum V is placed at 1000 BCE, however it is clear that a reliance on the Biblical narrative informs this argument as much as the previous three. Lamon and Shipton further weaken the argument by using the stela, only two paragraphs later, to support the date of Stratum IV: “From the evidence of our Sheshonk stela fragment... it follows naturally that Stratum IV was built before the period of Omri and Ahab.” Having placed the artifact within Stratum IV due to the probable time period of the stratum, they are now using it to prove that date.

Definite problems can be found with Lamon and Shipton’s Biblical-based interpretations. An interpretation based more exclusively on the archaeology, however, covers the basic patterns recognized by the researchers: the appearance of a set of cultural features in Stratum V that differs so strongly from those in the previous stratum does suggest the occupants would have consisted of a different cultural group. The evolution of the ceramic types into early stratum IV - gaining sophistication and more advanced burnishing techniques - along with the well-planned and executed construction of the city and monumental architecture later in the stratum may also be interpreted as the result of a forming state-level organizational system. Further evidence is required, however, in order to connect these conclusions with the Biblical narrative.

**Current Excavations at Megiddo**

The current excavations at Megiddo are being directed by Dr. Israel Finkelstein of Tel Aviv University. These excavations have been undertaken with the goal of utilizing
modern excavation methods to clarify not only the archaeological record at the tel itself, but also the relationship between Megiddo and the surrounding countryside. For the purposes of this paper, the strata corresponding to the Oriental Institute's Strata IV and V will be the focus as well as the comparisons and reinterpretations of the Institute's excavations and conclusions by the current staff. Of special interest will be Finkelstein's Low Chronology and the reinterpretations of the archaeology required to accommodate it.

An uninterrupted stratigraphic series containing the relevant strata was uncovered only in Area K, and therefore that area will form the focus of this section. The excavations in Area K were conducted to clarify earlier Oriental Institute excavations in this area (their area C). The modern excavations in the area consisted of four strata (I-IV) which have been correlated with the Oriental Institute's strata IVA-VIA (Lehmann, Killebrew, and Gadot 2000).

The base of local Stratum K4 (the Oriental Institute's "Canaanitish" Stratum VI, specifically VIA) was not reached during the 1996 excavations. The debris uncovered just below the Stratum VB floors, however, show evidence of destruction by a massive fire, corresponding with the fire destruction found by the Oriental Institute's excavations (Lehmann, Killebrew, and Gadot 2000). This stratum was dated to the latter part of the 12th century BCE by the OI due to the presence of a Ramesses VI statue base discovered within the stratum (Lamon and Shipton 1939). A radiocarbon sample taken from this level did provided a calibrated date of 1112-1102 BCE, somewhat corroborating the OI's conclusions; however this date range has only a 10% confidence. More likely is the calibrated date with 90% confidence that places Stratum K4/VIA within the second half of the 11th century BCE, neatly within the traditional chronology framework (Carmi and Segal 2000).
The appearance of the red slip and hand-burnished ware occurs within the K3/VB, corresponding to the sudden appearance of a different culture within the (chronological) beginning of Stratum V (Lehmann, Killebrew, and Gadot 2000). The current excavations have separated the initial appearance of this ceramic type from the latter part of Stratum V, placing the later Stratum VA and earliest, less complete Stratum IV phase (IVB) within a single stratigraphic phase: VA-IVB. This stratum, corresponding to the local Stratum K2, seems to have developed “without a catastrophic break” from the previous Stratum K3 (Lehmann, Killebrew, and Gadot 2000). The second, more complete Stratum IV phase – IVA – is represented in the current excavation’s local Stratum K1 and contains the “Solomonic” architecture and city wall, although only the wall is present within the confines of Finkelstein’s Area K (Lehmann, Killebrew, and Gadot 2000).

Conclusions

The current excavations have provided a clarification of the Oriental Institute’s work in the early part of the 20th century. Aside from minor changes in the division of the strata, no major changes have been made nor have any significant errors been found with the early archaeology (Finkelstein and Ussishkin 2000). Methods of interpretation have, however, undergone significant changes since the OI expedition.

Finkelstein and Iron Age Megiddo

The traditional interpretation of a “Solomonic” Megiddo, as presented by the OI publications and supported today by Amihai Mazar and the so-called “High” Chronology school of thought, is supported equally as well, archaeological speaking, as Israel Finkelstein’s “Low” Chronology alternative. The archaeological record speaks of the arrival of a new culture at Megiddo in Stratum V, as evidenced by the appearance of a
radically different ceramic type and the utilization of new construction materials and techniques. This culture established itself at Megiddo throughout the remainder of Stratum V and into Stratum IV before finally completing not only a well-planned and executed city design with monumental architectural elements (i.e. the city wall and "stable" buildings), but also the developed more advanced and technically superior versions of its hallmark ceramic (a finer red slip with a wheel-burnished finish).

Unfortunately, this series of events falls within the 400-year period resting between the Philistine and Assyrian chronological pillars. The traditional interpretation of the Philistine invasion period, illustrated below (Table 5), provides the necessary time between the arrival of the new culture into Canaan and the Assyrian invasion for the rise and fall of a Biblical-style United Monarchy, lending credence to the Biblical narrative.

<table>
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<tr>
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<td>1225-1150</td>
<td>VIIA</td>
<td>Egyptian control of Canaan</td>
<td>Egyptian and Canaanite</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 — Traditional/High chronology of Megiddo

This interpretation assigns the monumental Stratum IVA to the "Golden age" of Israel, interpreting the well-planned city construction to a Solomonic building program. This chronology is also supported by the most likely calibrated date for Stratum VIA which places this stratum in the late 11th century BCE rather than Finkelstein's suggestion of a 10th century BCE date.
Finkelstein's reinterpretation of the Philistine invasion pushes back the dates of each successive strata, squeezing closed the time period during which the United Monarchy would have flourished and leaving room enough only for the development of the more well-documented Northern and Southern kingdoms before the Assyrian invasions. This interpretation is also supported archaeologically, with the initial arrival

<table>
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<td>1100-1000</td>
<td>VIB</td>
<td>Philistine expansion following Egyptian withdrawal</td>
<td>Philistine Bichrome ware</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 – Low Chronology of Megiddo

of the new culture pushed back slightly and the rise of a state-level society in the north exemplified by the Stratum IVA architectural remains. It is also important to note that building 338, a Stratum IVA structure, has been interpreted as belonging to the same period as Divided Monarchy palaces in Syria, supporting Finkelstein's claim (Lamon and Shipton 1939).
Efforts are currently being made to clarify the 400-year period between the arrival of the Sea Peoples in Canaan and the Assyrian invasion. Finkelstein’s ongoing excavations at Megiddo are aimed at providing evidence for his Low Chronology while Amihai Mazar’s current excavations at Tel Rehov in northern Israel are an effort to provide further evidence for the Traditional Chronology. Although carbon dating techniques are relatively new to Levantine archaeology, they are also being employed by both sides of the debate.

The existence of extensive ceramic assemblages in the Levant, along with the ability to tie them into the well-known assemblages and chronologies of nearby areas such as Egypt, have delayed the use of other dating techniques such as C14 dating within the field of Levantine archaeology. The use of carbon dating techniques to support both sides of the debate provides another reason for this delay. The actual chronological differences between the two theories are extremely small – only about 25 to 50 years in most cases – that carbon dating alone cannot provide a definite victory for either chronological system; the date ranges provided by this technique are simply too general. It is still a useful technology, however, and when combined with other methods of archaeological investigation, carbon dating can provide valuable information.

The recent adoption of carbon dating is indicative of a more general trend toward more scientific, meticulous methodology with Levantine archaeology over the past few decades. Early excavations in the area, as with early excavations in other parts of the world, including North America, were far more destructive and produced much less
information than those employing modern methods. The goal of earlier excavations was the large-scale exposure of whatever stratum the researcher was interested in. In the rush to complete such large projects, much context was lost and much of the stratigraphic information was not recorded, leaving little more than lists of artifacts for future researchers to work from.

Modern research methods have greatly improved the preservation of information for future use. Excavations now focus on specific research goals with very limited areas undergoing excavation within a grid system. This allows the collection of detailed spatial and stratigraphic information for use during interpretation – an important improvement when considering that the question of the Philistine settlement in southern Canaan hangs on the understanding of complex stratigraphic contexts. Excavation within a grid system also allows general provenience information to be retained for ceramic assemblages. Due to the large quantities of ceramics uncovered at Levantine sites, specific provenience information is only recorded for complete vessels, or ceramics and other small finds discovered on a floor surface. Modern mapping techniques allow not only the recording of these specific proveniences, but also the creation of detailed plan maps which can reveal an over-all site plan from numerous small-scale excavation areas throughout a site. These modern techniques – along with careful record keeping – will ensure that information from today’s excavations will be available for future debates.

There are two very general projects that need to be completed within the field of Levantine archaeology in order to clarify the general chronology of the area. The first is a comprehensive ceramics review. To date, ceramics are being studied on a site-to-site basis with cross-site comparisons being performed for each separate study. If a comprehensive guide to the ceramics found in the Levant were created it would not only
facilitate these cross-site comparisons, it would also provide researchers with a resource for understanding more general patterns of ceramic distribution.

Perhaps more urgently needed is a general review of the archaeology itself. Until recently, the majority of archaeological interpretation has been biased by the use of the Biblical narrative as a comprehensive historical text. The accuracy of this claim has come under debate, however (see Thompson 1999), and this necessitates a revisiting of archaeological interpretations working under this assumption. A large-scale review of the archaeology of the region could provide a more accurate picture of the patterns of cultural development based on evidence such as architectural and ceramic characteristics. Such a review would be invaluable, for example, in clearing up the complications created by attempts to correlate the monumental architecture at sites such as Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer with the Biblical narrative. Free from this restrictive and complicating factor a clearer view of the history of the Levant would emerge. Comparison to the Biblical narrative could take place following the completion of this review, providing a better understanding of the relationship between the archaeology and the Bible.

A number of more specific research goals must also be achieved in order to work toward a solution for the current debate. The most pressing of these, according to this researcher, is the need for further excavations into the transitional Late Bronze/Early Iron Age strata at the Philistine Pentapolis and related sites along the southern coastal plain of modern Israel. These excavations must be geared toward understanding the relationship between the final Egyptian withdrawal from Canaan and the settlement of the Philistines in the area. This period is the crucial pivot upon which both chronologies balance their arguments. Evidence of Philistines being settled in Canaan during continued Egyptian
control would greatly bolster the Traditional Chronology’s arguments, while the continued lack of such evidence provides fodder for the Low Chronology camp.

Not only are the relationships between Philistine and Egyptian strata in Canaan important, the appearance of the Philistine Bichrome ware in Israel must also be clarified. The earliest Philistine strata uncovered so far at Ashdod contain both Monochrome and Bichrome ceramics. Strata containing only Monochrome varieties would suggest the southern coastal plain of Canaan was the original settlement location of the Philistine invaders. The lack of these strata, however, suggests the Philistines had settled elsewhere long enough to produce the Canaanite and Egyptian influenced Bichrome ware before settling in Canaan. Further investigations at Pentapolis sites would also clarify this issue.

Finkelstein’s Low Chronology suggests Ramesses III settled the Philistines near the Delta in Egypt following his battles with them. The settlements in Canaan, he claims, occurred later, and can be dated after the Egyptian loss of power in the area. If this is the case, evidence would remain for Philistine occupation of sites near the Nile Delta. Surveys and excavations in this area would provide valuable information about the location of the Philistines and other Sea Peoples following their battles with Ramesses III.

Beyond the specific debate-related investigations such as the Philistine invasion and the “Solomonic” monumental architecture, research must also be performed into the ramifications of Finkelstein’s suggested chronology. In his 1999 article “State Formation in Israel and Judah: A Contrast in Context, a Contrast in Trajectory,” Finkelstein lays out a series of eight “problems” in Levantine archaeology to which he feels his chronology provides solutions. An in-depth investigation into the actual effect his chronology would have on these issues is in order. If Finkelstein’s chronology is to be accepted it must
provide a working interpretation for hundreds of sites throughout modern day Israel, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and the Palestinian Territories. Research must be done into how the Low Chronology would affect the standing interpretations of these sites and of the history of the Levant in general.

The archaeology of the Levant, despite its extensive history, remains a field of research with an unending supply of questions to be answered. Research to this point has taken place in an extremely piecemeal fashion and the future calls for a more collaborative approach. Modern technology provides for the large-scale sharing and organization of information, and this is precisely what Levantine archaeology requires. As specific questions – such as the precise circumstances surrounding the arrival of the Philistines in Canaan – are answered, a more general view of the patterns of the area must also be developed.
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