

The Canaanite and Judean Cities of Lachish, Israel: Preliminary Report of the Fourth Expedition, 2013–2017

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Ancient Lachish (Tell ed-Duweir) in southern Israel is a key site for understanding the Canaanite cultures of the Middle and Late Bronze Ages and the Kingdom of Judah in the Iron Age of the Levant. It has been intensively excavated since 1932 by a number of entities. This article presents the excavation results by the Fourth Expedition to Lachish in 2013–2017. Fieldwork focused on the site's northeastern corner, a neglected area believed to have been uninhabited in some periods. Excavation in the area, however, uncovered remains of successive fortifications and evidence of cultic activities. The new discoveries highlight the strong connection of the Bronze and Iron Age cities to the nearby valley, which supplied Lachish with water, mud, fertilized land, and a major road.¹

INTRODUCTION: THE SITE AND ITS RESEARCH HISTORY

Lachish was a key Canaanite city in the second millennium, the second most important city in the Kingdom of Judah in the Iron Age (after Jerusalem), and a major city in the Persian and Early Hellenistic eras. The city guards one of the routes from the coastal plain to Hebron and Jerusalem in the central hill country.² It is situated on the south bank of the Lachish River

¹ The Fourth Expedition to Lachish is cosponsored by the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Institute of Archaeology of Southern Adventist University and is under the direction of Yosef Garfinkel, Michael G. Hasel, and Martin G. Klingbeil. Consortium institutions include the Adventist Institute of Advanced Studies (Philippines), Helderberg College (South Africa), Oakland University (U.S.A.), Universidad Adventista de Bolivia (Bolivia), Virginia Commonwealth University (U.S.A.), and Seoul Jangsin University (Korea). The excavation work has been conducted in cooperation with the Israel Antiquities Authority, the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, and the Israel Exploration Society and is affiliated with the American Schools of Oriental Research. Israel Antiquities licenses G-5/2013, G-20/2014, G-56/2015, G-39/2016, and G-44/2017. Early, Middle, and Late Bronze Ages are abbreviated EBA, MBA, and LBA, respectively. All dates are BCE. All images are © The Fourth Expedition to Lachish.

² Dorsey 1991, map 1.

(Wadi Ghafir) at a protected location where the river bends and encircles the site on the east and north. The top of the large mound covers 7.5 ha. Today the site is administered by the Israel Nature and Parks Authority and is open to the public (figs. 1, 2).

Lachish is mentioned for the first time in an Egyptian papyrus from the reign of Amenhotep II (15th century) and in five letters from the Amarna archive, and in a similar letter (14th century) uncovered at Tell el-Hesi, located 10 km west of Lachish. Lachish is mentioned 24 times in the Bible, in the LBA as a Canaanite city and later as a fortified city in the Kingdom of Judah. In 701, during the reign of King Hezekiah, Lachish was conquered by the Assyrians under Sennacherib. This event is depicted on the famous relief uncovered at Nineveh by Layard in 1847.³ The city was rebuilt in the seventh century but destroyed again in 586 by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar.⁴ The first scholar to identify Tell ed-Duweir as Lachish was Albright,⁵ and this identification is universally accepted today. The site of Lachish has been extensively excavated by three different groups in the past and recently by our team and two others, one still working at the site.

In the First Expedition, 1932–38, British archaeologists undertook a large-scale project headed by James Leslie Starkey. After his tragic murder,⁶ the results of the excavation were faithfully published in four volumes by members of the team.⁷ This expedition delineated the main phases in the history of the site, which are still relevant today (table 1).

In the Second Expedition, 1966 and 1968, a small-scale project was directed on behalf of Tel Aviv University's Institute of Archaeology by Yohanan Aharoni, who excavated within and around the Persian-period Solar Shrine. A sequence of Levels I–VI was uncovered and documented there.⁸

In the Third Expedition, 1974–94, a large-scale project was directed by David Ussishkin on behalf of Tel

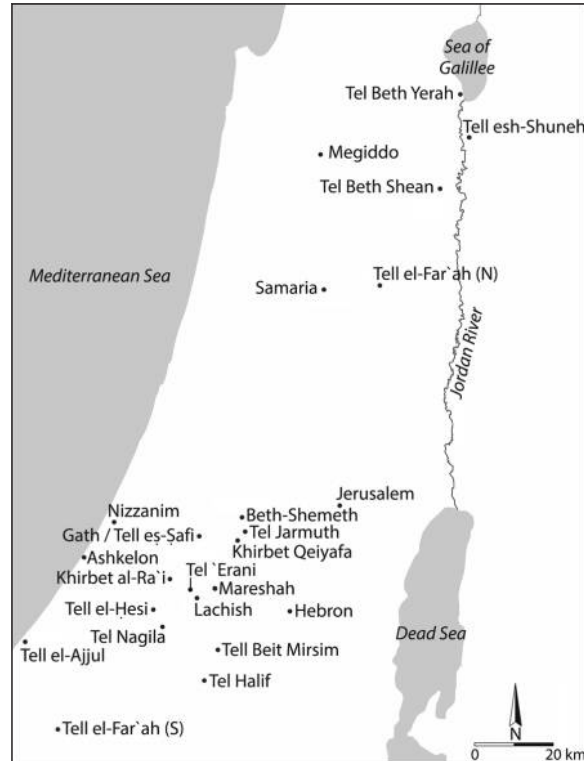


FIG. 1. Map of the southern Levant in the Bronze and Iron Ages (drawing by J. Rosenberg).

Aviv University's Institute of Archaeology. Canaanite remains from the MBA and LBA were uncovered,⁹ including a temple of Level VI (the Acropolis Temple). The siege ramp of Level III was identified in the southwestern corner of the site and properly excavated for the first time. Inside the city, opposite the Assyrian ramp, a counter-ramp constructed by the inhabitants of the city to hinder the attackers was uncovered. A trench revealing the occupational history of Lachish was dug on the western slope.

The Fourth Expedition was a new field project that took place in five seasons, 2013 to 2017.¹⁰ This article provides the first comprehensive preliminary account of the fieldwork, the major discoveries made, and how they change our perspective of the site and its relations with the surrounding landscape and resources. Other preliminary reports have focused on inscriptions, cultic paraphernalia, seals, and radiometric datings.¹¹

³Ussishkin 1982, 59–76.

⁴For a summary of the chronological aspects, see Ussishkin 2004, 76–93.

⁵Albright 1929, 3.

⁶Garfinkel 2016. Although the exact circumstances are unclear, it appears that, due to the dispute over the land of the tel and the expropriation of the site by the British Mandate authorities, the murder was carried out in revenge by local landowners.

⁷Torczyner 1938; Tufnell et al. 1940; Tufnell 1953; 1958.

⁸Aharoni 1975.

⁹Ussishkin 2004.

¹⁰Garfinkel et al. 2013.

¹¹Sass et al. 2015; Weissbein et al. 2016; Garfinkel et al. 2019a; Klingbeil et al. 2019.



FIG. 2. The vicinity of Tel Lachish and its relationship with the Lachish River (Wadi Ghafr) (after Ussishkin 2004, fig. 13.1).

A few articles devoted to the new Level VI temple have also been published.¹²

The Fifth Expedition, 2015–16, was undertaken as part of the development of the site as a national park. Saar Ganor of the Israel Antiquities Authority conducted excavations in the western gate area. Here a gate shrine of Level III, destroyed in the Assyrian assault, was found. An interesting discovery was a toilet installation constructed inside the shrine in its final phase, probably in order to deconsecrate it.¹³

The Sixth Expedition is an Austrian-Israeli expedition headed by Katharina Streit and Felix Höflmayer.

It is currently working at the site, focusing mainly on the dating of the MBA–LBA transition.¹⁴

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LACHISH

The first three expeditions established the stratigraphic sequence of Lachish (see table 1). Evidently, Lachish was a major site in the MBA (Levels VIII–IX), as attested by the impressive remains of the palace uncovered at the top of the mound. After the destruction of Level VIII (and a short-lived phase of squatters), the site was reestablished in the LBA. Little is known about Lachish in the 15th and 14th centuries (LB I–IIA) because of the limited exposure and meager remains of these levels.¹⁵ Levels VII and VI are dated to the 13th

¹² Weissbein et al. 2019; Garfinkel 2020.

¹³ Ganor and Kreimerman 2019.

¹⁴ Streit et al. 2018.

¹⁵ Ussishkin 2004, 57–60; Webster et al. 2019, 89–91.

TABLE 1. Archaeological chronology of Lachish. Level numbers are those of the first expedition; additional phases are unnumbered.

Level	Period	Major Architecture	Major Finds
I	Persian–Early Hellenistic	fortified city, central palace, Solar Shrine, burials	–
II	Iron IIC (ends 586 BCE)	fortified city, main gate, burials	Lachish letters, seal impressions
III	Iron IIB (ends 701 BCE)	fortified city, main gate, central palace, Assyrian siege ramp	Royal Judean (<i>lmlk</i>) storage jars
IV	Iron IIA	fortified city, main gate, central palace	–
V	Iron IIA	fortified city	cultic objects
Gap	–	–	–
VI	LB III/Iron IA (12th century)	Acropolis Temple, North-East Temple, fortress	cultic objects, inscriptions
VII	LB IIB (13th century)	buildings, Fosse Temple phase 3, burials	cultic objects, inscriptions
	LB I–IIA (15th–14th centuries)	Fosse Temple phases 2–1, domestic structures on the mound	cultic objects
VIII	MB IIC	mudbrick fortress and palace	–
IX	MB IIB	revetment	–
	EB III	–	Khirbet Kerak pottery
	EB I	village outside the tell	–
	Neolithic	–	flint in later fills

and early 12th centuries (LB IIB–Iron IA). Both represent flourishing semiautonomous Canaanite cities under the Egyptian hegemony over the region, and both ended in violent destruction.

After the destruction of Canaanite Lachish, the site lay desolate for at least 150 years.¹⁶ Level V was the first settlement to follow this occupation gap. Although remains of this level were reached by all three previous excavations, they were generally meager in nature. According to Ussishkin, “little is known about Lachish Level V. The remains of one house were found in the trench on the western edge of the mound, based on which it may be determined that the settlement was not surrounded by walls. Remains of structures were also found in the center of the mound, beneath the foundations of the Palace-Fort.”¹⁷ The limited pot-

tery assemblage found was typically Judean.¹⁸ Level V, therefore, presented an enigma. On the one hand, something must have changed in the geopolitical situation in the region to prompt the reconstruction of Lachish after its long abandonment. On the other hand, both the exact nature of the new settlement and its construction date were unknown. Answers to both of these uncertainties have far-reaching implications for understanding the political processes that took place in the region and particularly the state formation of the Kingdom of Judah and its relations with nearby Philistine cities. If Level V was already a fortified city in the early 10th century, the time of the biblical kings David and Solomon, this would attest to a meaningful kingdom in their days. On the other hand, if Level V was constructed only in the early ninth century as an unfortified village, this might mean that Judah was

¹⁶Ussishkin 2004, 72–77.

¹⁷Ussishkin 2014, 203.

¹⁸Zimhoni 2004, 1701–7.

not a powerful kingdom before the construction of Level IV.

Consequently, the dating of the earliest Iron Age fortifications has been intensely debated over the years. The various suggestions range from the early 10th century¹⁹ through the time of King Rehoboam in the late 10th century²⁰ and the early or mid ninth century²¹ and all the way to the late ninth (or early eighth) century, after the destruction of the nearby large Philistine city of Gath/Tell eš-Šafi.²² Nearly 250 years separate the earliest and latest proposed dates. Hence, one crucial objective of our excavations was to clarify the nature and construction date of Level V.

In Level IV, clearly Lachish had become a prominent Judean city. The city was constructed on a new plan surrounded by a 6 m thick wall, an imposing gate was built in the city's southwestern corner, and an impressive palatial complex occupied the summit. Level III follows the plan of Level IV (with some modifications), and the date of its destruction by the Assyrian king Sennacherib in the eighth century is firmly grounded in both Assyrian documents and the biblical tradition.²³ Level II was constructed after an occupation gap and appears to be less monumental in nature than Level III; Ussishkin assumed that the palatial complex was not reconstructed and parts of the site remained uninhabited during the Level II period.²⁴ The Level II city was destroyed in 586 by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.²⁵ The city was reconstructed as Level I in the Persian period (fifth century) and existed until its abandonment in the second century.²⁶ This brief survey highlights that the debate largely revolves around the understanding of Level V, which was the main target of our excavation project.

THE FOURTH EXPEDITION TO LACHISH

The debate regarding the development of the Kingdom of Judah and the accuracy of the biblical tradition

in this period is one of the central controversies in the current scholarship of the archaeology of the southern Levant. A solid bank of data for the early phases of the kingdom is crucial for understanding topics such as settlement patterns, demography, economy, and administration. A cardinal question is when the kingdom spread from Jerusalem in the hill country to the lower Shephelah in the southwest, as this fertile and densely occupied region became the backbone of the kingdom.

In order to answer these questions, our project design incorporated the following strategies:

(1) Focus on a major site in the Kingdom of Judah. A reliable date for the earliest Iron Age fortifications at Lachish would clarify when the Shephelah became Judean. As the site has been excavated by three earlier expeditions and is mentioned in a number of historical accounts, we had ample data on its history of occupation. Our goal was to investigate the earlier occupational history of the Iron Age, principally Level V, to establish how the kingdom expanded in the 10th century and later.

(2) Regional project. Over the last decade we have excavated three Iron Age sites in the Shephelah: Khirbet Qeiyafa (2007–13),²⁷ Lachish (2013–17),²⁸ and Khirbet al-Ra'i (2015–20).²⁹ In addition, an intensive survey was conducted at Socoh in 2010.³⁰ Each site contributed to the understanding of the early phases of the Kingdom of Judah, and together they enable us to present solid conclusions.

(3) Relative and absolute chronology. The settlement sequences of the three excavated sites were divided into units according to stratigraphy and pottery typology. This enabled the construction of a tight sequence of phases from the 13th to the end of the ninth century for the research area. The phases were radiometrically dated by numerous ¹⁴C samples.³¹

The northeastern corner of Lachish was chosen (figs. 3, 4) for several reasons. The proximity to the nearby valley, which supplies the city's water and agricultural land and where the main road in this region is found, indicates the special importance of this location

¹⁹ Tufnell 1953; Zukerman and Gitin 2016, 417. This date corresponds to the reigns of Kings David and Solomon.

²⁰ Aharoni 1975, 41; Yadin 1980, 22.

²¹ Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001, 274–76; Ussishkin 2004, 76–80; Katz and Faust 2014, 121–22.

²² Bunimovitz and Lederman 2011, 42–43; Sergi 2013, 230; Lehmann and Niemann 2014, 88–90.

²³ Tufnell 1953, 45, 48, 55–56, 95–97; Ussishkin 2004, 88–89.

²⁴ Ussishkin 2014, 373.

²⁵ Ussishkin 2004, 90–95.

²⁶ Ussishkin 2004, 96–97.

²⁷ Garfinkel and Ganor 2009; Garfinkel et al. 2014; 2016; 2018a; 2018b; Farhi 2016; Garfinkel 2017; Kang and Garfinkel 2018.

²⁸ Garfinkel et al. 2013; 2019a; 2019b; Weissbein et al. 2016; 2019; Klingbeil et al. 2019.

²⁹ Garfinkel and Ganor 2018; 2019; Garfinkel et al. 2019c.

³⁰ Hasel et al. 2017.

³¹ Garfinkel et al. 2019a.



FIG. 3. Aerial photograph of Lachish, taken from the northeastern corner, showing new excavation areas AA, BB, BC, and CC.

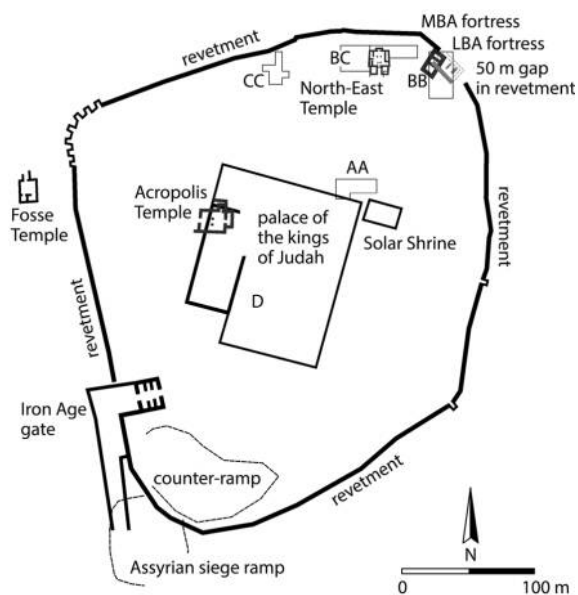


FIG. 4. Map of Lachish with previously excavated major features and the location of the new excavation areas (AA, BB, BC, and CC). The MBA remains include the city wall (revetment) and a mudbrick fortress. The LBA remains include the Fosse Temple, Acropolis Temple, North-East Temple, and a stone-built fortress. The Iron Age remains include the palace of the kings of Judah, the gate, the Assyrian ramp, and the counter-ramp. Remains of the Persian period, in addition to the Solar Shrine, were found on top of the Iron Age palace, city wall, and city gate (drawing by J. Rosenberg).

to the city's inhabitants. In addition, Aharoni's small-scale excavations in and around the Solar Shrine above the northeastern corner of Lachish had exposed the entire sequence from Level I to Level VI, with good preservation of the remains from Level V. Our Area AA was opened adjacent to Aharoni's excavation area to reestablish the same sequence to Level V. The British group in the 1930s had conducted limited excavations in the site's northeastern corner and reported a blocked Iron Age gate.³² The Iron Age gates of Levels IV–I are in the southwestern corner. We hoped to test whether this “blocked gate” could be earlier in date, perhaps even belonging to Level V. Area BB was opened to examine this question. And finally, when we conducted a foot survey around the site to inspect the various fortification lines and reexamined aerial photographs, both the survey and the photographs suggested remains that did not fit any of the previously known fortifications. Area CC was opened in order to date these remains.

SITE FORMATION PROCESSES

Before presenting the excavation results, observations on site formation processes at Lachish are necessary. These have badly damaged the archaeological remains in the northeastern corner of the site through three different types of erosion (fig. 5). Vertical erosion of the mound's slope has caused parts of the eastern

³²Tufnell 1953, pl. 11.3.

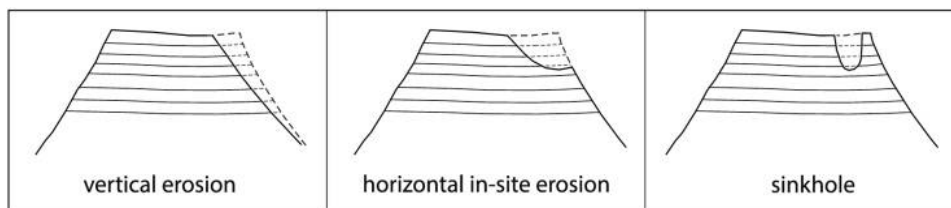


FIG. 5. Various types of erosion processes observed in the northeastern corner of Lachish (drawing by J. Rosenberg).

slope to wash away. The first expedition already observed evidence of this type of damage.³³ In our excavations of the LBA fortress in Area BB, only the western edge with three walls survived; the eastern part is missing. The Iron Age city walls of Levels I, II, and III–IV were poorly preserved or had disappeared altogether in this area. The Level IV cultic room in Area BB also lacks its eastern side. This erosion may have been caused by the river creating a new course and cutting into the side of the mound, removing sediment from its base and undermining its eastern slope. Horizontal erosion on the top of the site has caused, in the northeastern corner, a deep bowl-shaped depression, sloping downhill from southwest to northeast. When our group began excavation in Area BB in the lower part of the depression, it immediately became evident that remains of Level VI lay directly under the topsoil. Higher up the slope to the west, remains of successively later levels lay immediately under the topsoil: Level V after some 10 m, Level IV after another 10 m, and Level I in Area CC, the highest part of the northern slope. This suggests that the levels, which originally lay one on top of the other, eroded progressively toward the east. Our excavation pointed to erosion of a third, sinkhole type, by which levels were preserved on the edge of the site but had eroded away toward the site's interior and had reappeared farther toward the site's center. On the east side of the mound, nearly half of a Level VI Canaanite temple is missing, while some 20 or 30 m to the east, structures of Levels I and II were found with their western parts missing. There seems to have been a sinkhole effect that swallowed the archaeological levels around it.

What formation processes could have caused this depression? Schiffer has categorized formation processes within general parameters as natural (n-transforms)

and cultural (c-transforms),³⁴ and both have been suggested in the course of investigations at Lachish. Ussishkin suggested a cultural explanation: that the depression was created in the eighth century during Sennacherib's siege, when debris from the mound was needed to build the counter-ramp in the southeastern corner of the site.³⁵ The depression would have been deliberately created by the inhabitants so they could defend their city. However, the enormous distance (the greatest possible on the site) between the two areas would have posed a severe logistical challenge.

How deep was this depression? A test probe was excavated to a depth of about 2 m and proved to consist of almost entirely sterile soil, with hardly any pottery or other objects. In 2016 and 2017, two different geophysics teams, the first headed by Uri Basson and the second by Neta Wechsler,³⁶ were asked to perform ground-penetrating studies to determine if there was a deep anomaly here, perhaps an ancient water system. Both reported a deep depression in the lower part of the northeastern corner of the mound. Perhaps the only large tree growing on the site, in exactly this location, sent deep roots into this depression, enjoying a supply of water. In 2017, the area was tested once again with a mechanical backhoe to a depth of 6 m, but no architecture was found, and the sediment was completely sterile. This depression could be explained by a water system similar to those found at sites like Hazor, Gezer, and Megiddo. When the water system went out of use, the surrounding levels collapsed into it and created a large crater. The depression, whatever its original cause, created a challenging situation for excavating in Area BB, as many of the primary research

³³ Tufnell 1958, 44.

³⁴ Schiffer 1987, 1–23.

³⁵ Ussishkin 2004, 732.

³⁶ Uri Basson, GeoSence LTD, Even Yahuda, Israel; and Neta Wechsler, Department of Geosciences, Tel Aviv University.

questions relating to the northeastern corner of the site could not be addressed as we had hoped.

THE NEOLITHIC PERIOD AND THE EARLY BRONZE AGE

A few flint tools of the Neolithic era were found by our expedition in later fills. The EBA is not extensively known from previous expeditions to Lachish, which uncovered only sherds and did not excavate deep enough to reach settlement levels of this period, although the period is clearly represented at the site. The first expedition uncovered mass graves and evidence of cave habitation around the site,³⁷ while the third made some EB III finds related to walls in a small area near the palace of the kings of Judah and in the fills of the counter-ramp in Area R.³⁸ Our excavation in Area BB produced a few dozen EBA sherds, including typical thickened holemouth rims, platters, and Khirbet Kerak Ware.³⁹ The latter pottery group reflects population migration from the northern Near East to the Levant.⁴⁰ Seven sherds of this ware were documented by the first expedition and six by the third expedition.⁴¹ Petrographic examination of one sherd of Khirbet Kerak Ware suggested a northern origin.⁴² This ware occurs in large quantities at northern sites in Israel, most prominently Tel Beth Yerah, Tell esh-Shuneh, and Tel Beth Shean.⁴³ In the Lachish region, Khirbet Kerak Ware is mentioned in a preliminary report on the large EBA site of Tel 'Erani, some 5 km to the west.⁴⁴ Other sites in the Shephelah yielding this ware include Tel Jarmuth,⁴⁵ Nizzanim,⁴⁶ Gath/Tell eš-Šafi,⁴⁷ Tell el-Ḥesi,⁴⁸ and Tel Nagila.⁴⁹ The relatively large assemblage of this pottery group at Lachish extends the geographical distribution of this ware.

³⁷Tufnell 1958, 39–43.

³⁸Gophna and Blockman 2004, fig. 15.2–8; Ussishkin 2004, 44.

³⁹This pottery is currently under analysis and has not yet been published.

⁴⁰Greenberg et al. 2014, 198–99.

⁴¹Gophna and Blockman 2004, 881, table 15.1.

⁴²Zuckerman et al. 2009, 157.

⁴³Leonard 1992, pls. 13–19; Ziv-Esudri 2012, 255–63, pls. 31–33; Greenberg 2014, 76–84, fig. 3.47–51.

⁴⁴Brandl 1989, 363, fig. 6.1.

⁴⁵de Miroschedji 1993, 837.

⁴⁶Yekutieli and Gophna 1994, fig. 8.7, 8.

⁴⁷Shai et al. 2014, 30–32.

⁴⁸Fargo 1980, 26.

⁴⁹Paz and Uziel 2016, 182.

STRATIGRAPHIC SEQUENCE OF THE MIDDLE AND LATE BRONZE AGES AND THE IRON AGE “RETVEMENT”

The MBA remains at Lachish have not been extensively excavated. The first expedition uncovered mainly burials around the site and excavated part of the defensive system in the northeast.⁵⁰ The third expedition published a few impressive walls in the highest part of the site, which were understood as part of a palace.⁵¹ It is also assumed that the roughly geometric shape of the site was established in this period.⁵² In a single location on the western slope of the site, the first expedition noticed a hard surface that was understood as an MBA glacis or “defensive slope.”⁵³ This interpretation, however, is difficult to accept, as no superimposed layers of different sediments were observed here. This is in sharp contrast to the typical MBA glacis reported, for example, at Gezer, Shiloh, and Shechem.⁵⁴

Our work has contributed to the understanding of the MBA at the site by documenting two new defensive features: a city wall built of massive stones and a mudbrick fortress located in the northeastern corner, facing the valley. Lachish is entirely encircled by this impressive stone wall, including a prominent component dubbed the “retvetment” by the first expedition. They understood it to be part of the Iron Age fortifications, a mid-slope support for the mudbrick city wall located above. This dating had never been questioned and appears in all the reconstructions of Iron Age Lachish (fig. 6).⁵⁵ The earliest mention of the wall's date is in a letter dated 18 August 1932 sent by Starkey from London to H.-L. Vincent of the École Biblique in Jerusalem.⁵⁶ Starkey used the depiction of Lachish in the famous Assyrian relief to date the retvetment to 701. This dating was thus established in London before the excavations had even begun and was not based on stratigraphic observations.

Ussishkin accepted Starkey's dating and attempted to examine the relationship between the Iron Age

⁵⁰Tufnell 1958, 44–51, 62–67.

⁵¹Ussishkin 2004, 140–68.

⁵²Tufnell 1958, 45.

⁵³Tufnell 1958, 45–46.

⁵⁴Finkelstein et al. 1993, 41–43, fig. 3.9; Campbell 2002, 113–14; Seger 2013, 16–17, 52, fig. 3.12.

⁵⁵Tufnell 1953; Ussishkin 1982, fig. 9.

⁵⁶The letter is now in the expedition archive in the British Museum (Department of the Middle East, British Museum Correspondence Files 47–63, Lachish, Identification of).

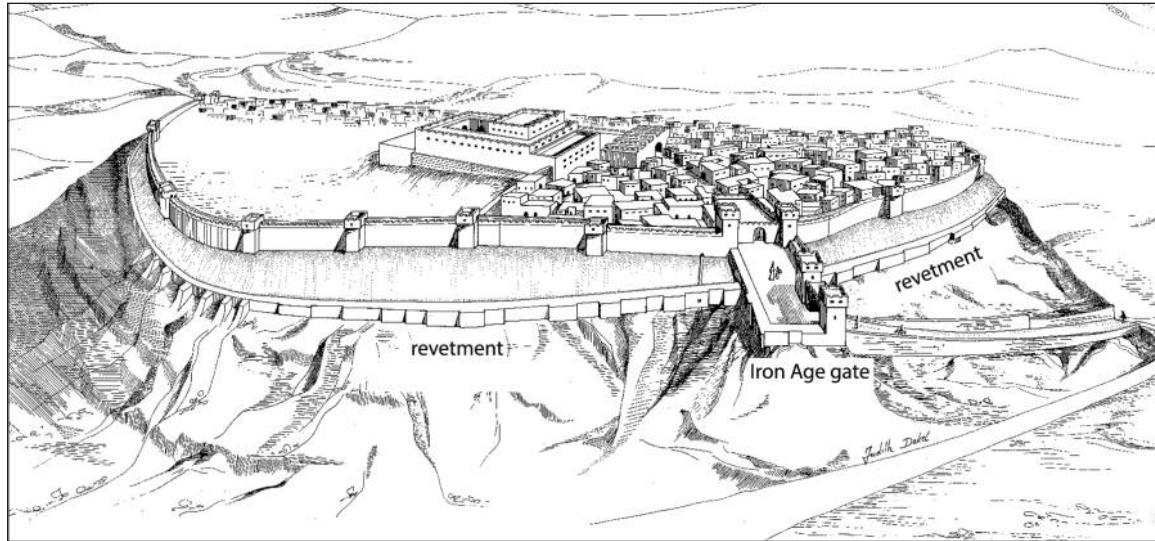


FIG. 6. A reconstruction of the Iron Age city of Levels IV–III with two city walls encircling the site (facing east). Two major changes should be made to this reconstruction. First, the massive lower stone-built wall (revetment) actually dates from the MBA. Second, the area between the north side of the Iron Age palace and the city wall was continuously inhabited in Levels IV–I (Ussishkin 1982, fig. 9; drawing by J. Dekel).

gate of Levels IV–III and the revetment. The Iron Age outer gate protrudes from the upper level of the mound down its western slope. Potentially, the revetment could have intersected with the northern and southern lateral walls of the protruding gate structure. However, in the northern location, the revetment was cut 3 m before it reached the gate, and so there is no direct stratigraphic connection between the two.⁵⁷ This is an obvious indication that a foundation trench of the gate cut the revetment, which hence must be an earlier construction.

In Area BB, we excavated MBA and LBA remains on both the eastern and the northern slopes. Clear stratigraphic sequences were observed on both slopes (table 2), and we describe them here before presenting the MBA fortress. Although the first expedition assigned most of the walls to the Iron Age, they actually date to the MBA and LBA. The first expedition excavated these walls from the outside and consequently did not expose any features abutting them from inside the city. We excavated these thick walls from the inside and thereby acquired reliable material for dating them.

On the eastern slope five phases were observed:

Phase 1. The stone revetment wall, which encircled the site, is built directly on bedrock. This was already noted by the first expedition and was confirmed by our

team. This is a solid wall, about 2.5 m thick and standing more than 3 m high. On the eastern slope there is a gap of some 50 m in this wall (see fig. 4). The southern⁵⁸ and northern⁵⁹ edges of the gap were uncovered by the first expedition and are both still visible today. After the gap, the revetment runs to the northeastern corner of the mound and turns westward. Although we did not excavate deep enough to obtain a direct dating of the revetment, the mudbrick fortress built on top of it is dated to the MB IIC by scarabs found there and C14 analysis, and hence the revetment below it must be earlier. We propose a date within the MB IIB when a palace was constructed on top of the mound.⁶⁰

Phase 2. At a certain stage, a stone wall was constructed at the northern edge of the gap, abutting the revetment at its southern end, preserved to a length of about 6 m (fig. 7, Wall BB2010). This addition was published by the first expedition as the “blocking of a gate.”⁶¹

Phase 3. Above the blocked gap and the original revetment, a massive mudbrick fortress was constructed. This fortress went out of use at the end of the MBA.

Phase 4. After a lapse of one or two centuries, massive construction took place in the northeastern corner

⁵⁸Tufnell 1953, pl. 11.5.

⁵⁹Tufnell 1953, pl. 11.3.

⁶⁰Tufnell 1958, 62–64; Ussishkin 2004, 55–56.

⁶¹Tufnell 1953, pl. 11.3.

⁵⁷Ussishkin 2004, 578.

TABLE 2. Middle Bronze Age and Late Bronze Age construction activities in Area BB.

Eastern Slope Construction [Phase no.]	Northern Slope Construction [Phase no.]	Date Assigned by the First Expedition (observations on the eastern slope only)	Date Assigned by the Fourth Expedition
solid thick stone wall, the revetment, which encircled the entire site (Wall BB2009) [1]	solid thick stone wall, the revetment (Wall BB1094), stone tower base (BB1173) and mudbrick superstructure (BB1174, BB1704, BB1705) [1]	Iron Age	MB IIB
solid relatively thin stone wall, 6 m long (Wall BB2010) [2]	not recognized	Iron Age (“blocking of a gate”)	MB IIC (retaining wall for the mudbrick fortress built above it)
burnt thick mudbrick walls [3]	not recognized	LBA	MB IIC (mudbrick fortress with three rooms)
local stone revetment wall BB2015 and whitish construction fill 3–4 m deep [4]	local stone revetment wall BB201 and whitish fills BB1088, BB1108, BB1109, BB1110, BB1122, BB1153, BB1702, 3–4 m deep [2]	not recognized	earliest LBA activities in this part of the site
thick stone wall, BB2008 [5]	buildings constructed on top of the fill, Wall BB1046 [3]	Iron Age	LBA (fortress in the east, buildings in the north)

of the site. Stone revetment walls were built on the east and north and 3–4 m of fill was introduced. This fill, composed of whitish sediment and large chunks of limestone, was apparently brought in from a nearby stone quarry. Level VII buildings were constructed on top of this fill.

Phase 5. A solid LBA stone wall, BB2008, was built on top of the MBA mudbrick fortress, and a new fortress was constructed.

On the northern slope, the following local sequence was observed:

Phase 1. The MB IIB revetment exposed on the eastern slope runs to the northeastern corner of the site, then turns to the west (Wall BB1094; see figs. 7–9). This corner had been exposed by the first expedition but had been buried by erosion products over the years. Today, the corner is covered by modern steps built by the Israel Nature and Parks Authority. After some 10 m, the wall widens on both north and south faces. This is a clear indication of a tower embedded in the city wall. A mudbrick superstructure (BB1174, BB1704, BB1705) was exposed on top of stone foun-

ation BB1173 (see figs. 8, 9). It is possible that this tower was used during the MB IIC.

Phase 2. During the LBA a local revetment wall (BB201) was built on top of the tower. Sediments BB1701 and BB1168 represent degraded mudbricks from the tower that were partially cut by Wall BB201. Various sediments, including whitish fills BB1122 and BB1702 were introduced to a depth of 3–4 m. (see figs. 8, 9). This fill contains mainly MBA and some LBA potsherds. The same type of fill was observed throughout the northeastern corner of the site.

Phase 3. Buildings of Level VII were constructed on top of the fill. On the slope, Wall BB1046 was exposed.

The revetment, running around all four sides of the mound, gave Lachish its typically geometric shape. Lachish can now be included among numerous sites that experienced the immense construction and earth-moving activities of the MBA.⁶² It has been argued that

⁶²Burke 2008, 47–84.

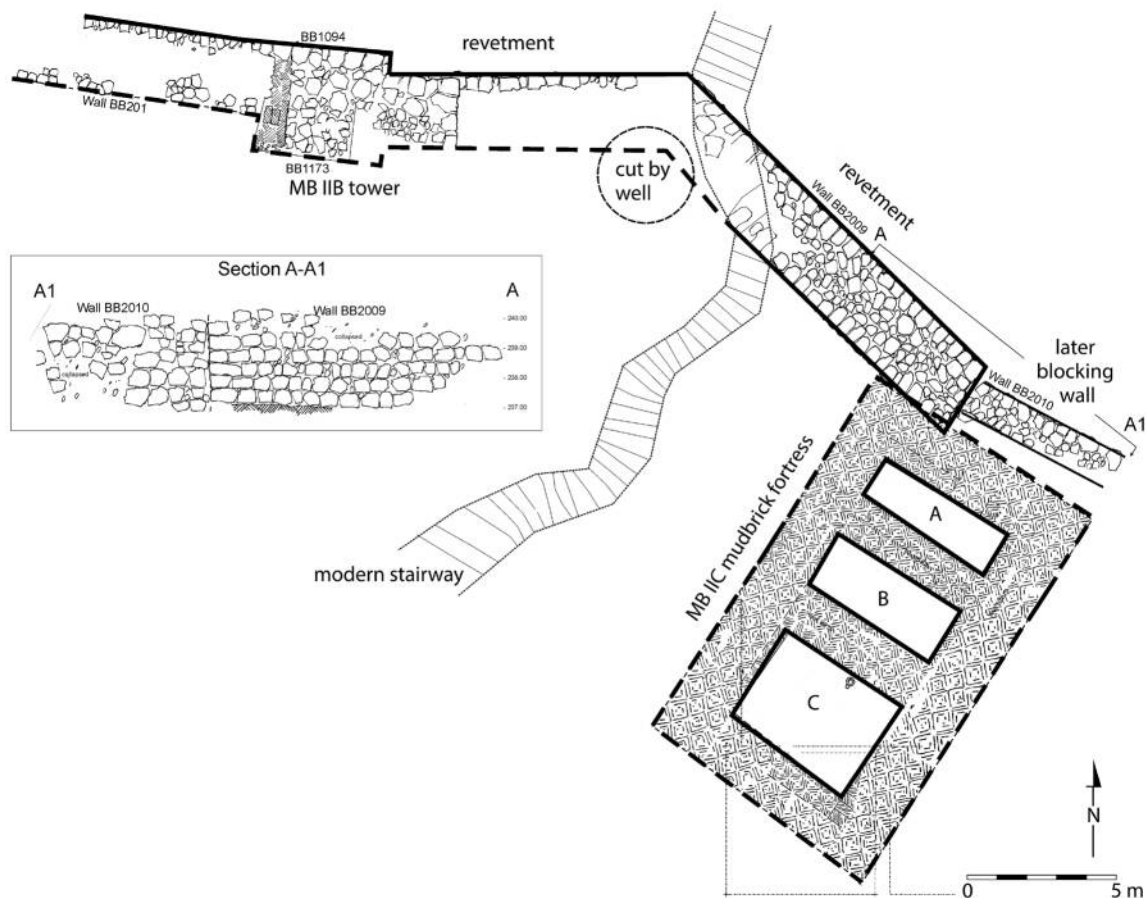


FIG. 7. The MBA remains in the northeastern corner of Lachish, on the eastern slope of Area BB. The earlier phase includes the MB IIB fortifications (revetment). The second construction was the addition of a smaller wall abutting the earlier fortifications (understood by the first expedition as the blockage of a gate). The third phase was the construction of the MB IIC mudbrick fortress; Rooms A, B, and C are marked (drawing by J. Rosenberg).

at times the monumental stone constructions were subterranean walls that supported fills on both sides.⁶³

The MB IIC Mudbrick Fortress

On the eastern slope, near the northeastern corner of the site, a mudbrick fortress was uncovered (see figs. 7, 10). Small parts of this fortress were uncovered by the first expedition and dated to the LBA.⁶⁴ The building measures approximately 8 x 14 m and has walls up to 3.5 m thick. It was destroyed by a violent conflagration that fired the bricks. The building has three rooms. The northeastern Room A contained very large quantities of burnt cereal grains, which were also found in the destruction debris, 50 cm above the

floor, indicating that some stored grain fell from a second story. The central Room B contained a large wooden post still standing upright on a stone base (online fig. 1).⁶⁵ A few storage jars were found in this room. The southwestern Room C was rich in special finds, including four scarabs, 31 clay sealings impressed with scarabs, 12 clay loomweights, an alabaster vessel, a limestone pot bellow, a bronze toggle pin, and a concentration of bone inlays (online fig. 2).⁶⁶ The scarabs and sealings are in both the local Canaanite MB IIC style and the Hyksos style. Radiometric samples from Room A yielded a date of the mid 16th century.⁶⁷ This date corresponds to the end of the Hyksos period, which, according to the traditional chronology, was the

⁶³ Ussishkin has written extensively on this; see, e.g., Ussishkin 1989.

⁶⁴ Tufnell 1958, pl. 11:2.

⁶⁵ See AJA Online for additional, online-only figures.

⁶⁶ The bone inlays were recently analyzed; see Silverberg et al. forthcoming.

⁶⁷ Garfinkel et al. 2019a, table 4.

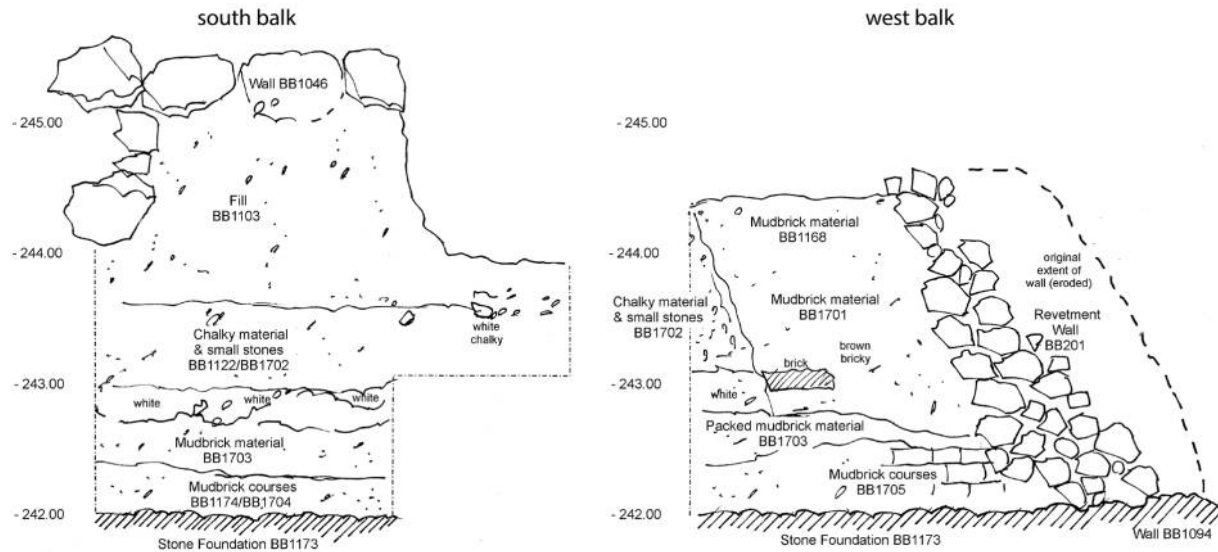


FIG. 8. Technical drawing of section through the accumulation on the northern slope of Area BB (cf. fig. 9) (drawing by J. Rosenberg).



FIG. 9. Excavated section through the accumulation on the northern slope of Area BB, facing west (cf. fig. 8): A, stone foundation of the MB IIB fortifications (the revetment); B, mudbrick superstructure of the MB IIB fortifications; C, LBA wall, constructed from small stones, supporting the fill behind it; D, fill, consisting of whitish sediment and chunks of limestone, that raised the northeastern corner of Lachish by 3–4 m and on which LBA structures of Level VII were constructed.

beginning of the Egyptian New Kingdom and Egyptian hegemony in Canaan.⁶⁸

The mudbrick fortress was built adjacent to the city wall (the revetment). Similar fortresses embedded in or near a city wall are known from the EBA and MBA.⁶⁹ The Lachish fortress is similar in plan to contemporary fortresses at Jericho, Gezer, and Ebla.⁷⁰ The location



FIG. 10. Aerial photograph of the MB IIC mudbrick fortress in Area BB (white sandbags secure the balks) with Rooms A, B, and C marked (cf. fig. 7).

of this fortress at the northern edge of the 50 m gap in the massive MBA fortification (see fig. 4) suggests that there was a gate in the northeastern corner of the site giving access from the valley into the city. The fortress was an imposing construction facing the valley and formed a striking landmark dominating the major road passing nearby.

The Pottery Assemblage and a Pot Bellow from the Fortress

The pottery assemblage from the fortress (fig. 11; table 3) is typical of the end of the MBA, resembling pottery uncovered elsewhere in the city and adjacent

⁶⁸Weinstein 1981, 1–10; Ward 1992, 62–63.

⁶⁹de Miroschedji 2018, fig. 21.

⁷⁰Matthiae 2001; Nigro et al. 2011, 573–77; Seger 2013, 37–60; de Miroschedji 2018, fig. 21.

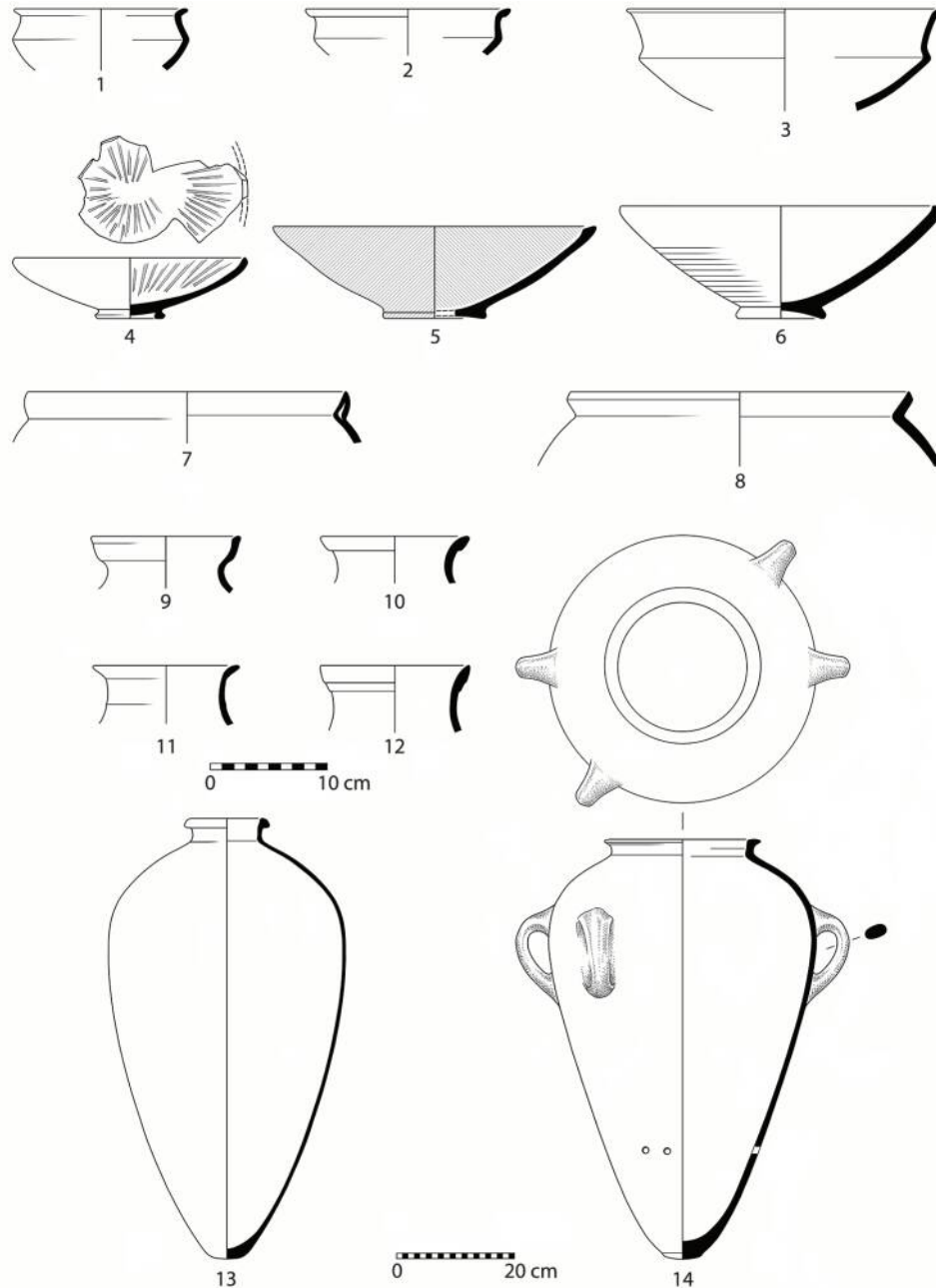


FIG. 11. Representative assemblage of MB IIC pottery (see table 3) from the destruction debris of the mudbrick fortress (drawing by O. Dubovsky).

cemeteries.⁷¹ The assemblage from the fortress consists mainly of bowls, cooking pots, and storage vessels. Its almost entire lack of tableware (jugs, juglets), decorated vessels, and fine ware is not unexpected in a building with defensive and administrative roles.⁷² The

bowls (43% of the assemblage) are of carinated and open types. The carinated bowls have an everted rim; the smaller ones have a sharp or rounded carination (see fig. 11, nos. 1, 2), whereas the larger ones have a long upraised rim and a sharp carination (see fig. 11, no. 3). Most of the open bowls have a simple inverted or everted rim, while some have a thickened rim (see

⁷¹ Tufnell 1958; Singer-Avitz 2004a; 2004b.

⁷² See Burke 2008, 85.

TABLE 3. Representative assemblage of MB IIC pottery from the destruction debris of the mudbrick fortress, drawn and numbered in figure 11.

No.	Locus	Basket	Vessel Type
1	BB4004	BB9007	small bowl, sharp carination
2	BB2610	BB7723	small bowl, sharp carination
3	BB2604	BB7552	large bowl, sharp carination
4	BB417	BB2179	open bowl, simple rim, washed red slip, horizontal burnish
5	BB2604	BB7558	open bowl, red slip
6	BB2610	BB7642	open bowl, simple rim
7	BB417	BB2170	cooking pot, folded rim and inner gutter
8	BB2610	BB7747	cooking pot, rectangular everted rim
9	BB2610	BB7561	storage jar, rim with inner gutter
10	BB2610	BB7743	storage jar, everted and thickened rim
11	BB2610	BB7739	storage jar, long neck, everted rim
12	BB2610	BB7740	storage jar, long neck, everted and thickened rim
13	BB2604	BB7551	pithos, short neck, hammer-head rim
14	BB2610	BB7646	pithos, wide neck, four handles and two holes

fig. 11, nos. 4–6).⁷³ They are generally shallow and lack any slip or burnish. The cooking pots (16%) are mainly of the rounded wheelmade type with a rectangular everted rim (see fig. 11, nos. 7, 8), some with an inner gutter. No handmade cooking pots were found.

Jars and pithoi (35% of the assemblage) were used for storage. The smaller jars have a long neck and a thickened everted rim, and the larger ones have a short neck (see fig. 11, nos. 9–12).⁷⁴ Most of the pithoi lack

⁷³Singer-Avitz 2004a, 914–15.

⁷⁴Singer-Avitz 2004a, 916, 918.

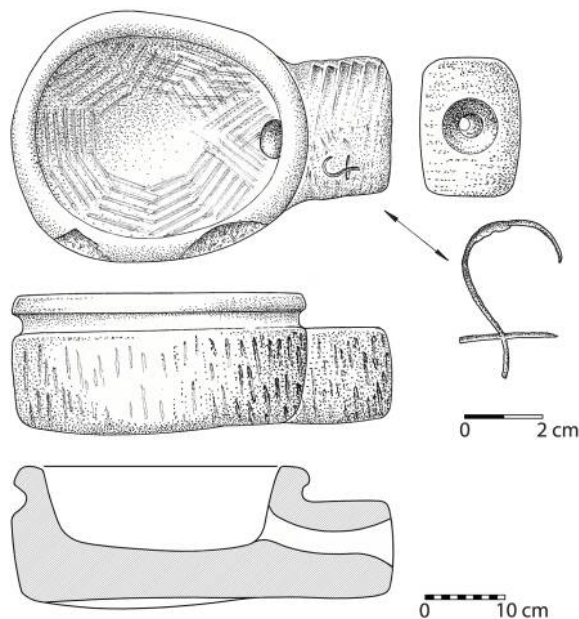


FIG. 12. A limestone pot bellow uncovered on the floor of Room C in the MB IIC fortress; incised with an Egyptian ankh symbol (drawing by O. Dubovsky).

handles and have a short neck, a rounded shoulder, and a body narrowing toward a flat base. The pithoi have a molded rim in thickened, ridged, or hammer-head form.⁷⁵ In most cases the opening is relatively narrow (see fig. 11, no. 13), similar to Type V in Bonfil's classification,⁷⁶ although two pithoi have a wider opening (see fig. 11, no. 14).

Another object from the fortress is a limestone pot bellow, a rare type, unearthed in Room C. It has an elliptical shape, a flattened base, and a rectangular spout and weighs 20 kg. It was carved out of a single block of soft limestone and bears an incised mark resembling the Egyptian ankh on the spout (fig. 12; online fig. 3). This type of artifact is termed a squat and straight-sided bellow or stone foot bellow, and is typical of the MB II.⁷⁷ A similar item dating from the end of the MBA was found by the third expedition to Lachish.⁷⁸ Similar stone pot bellows have been found at Tell Beit Mirsim, Serabit el-Khadim, and Enkomi.⁷⁹

⁷⁵See Singer-Avitz 2004a, 918, for parallels.

⁷⁶Bonfil 1992, 29–30.

⁷⁷Davey 1979, 110; Beit-Arieh 1985, 109; see Yahalom-Mack 2019 for further discussion of pot bellows.

⁷⁸Ussishkin 2014, 121.

⁷⁹Albright 1938, 53, pl. 40; Dikaios 1969, 43; Beit-Arieh 1985, 106, fig. 14.

The Scarabs from the Fortress

Four scarabs were found in Room C of the fortress.⁸⁰ Scarab BB7507 (Room C, floor locus BB2601, 1.8 x 1.2 x 0.6 cm; fig. 13, no. 1): This almost colorless quartz scarab belongs to the schematic typology of uninscribed hard-stone scarabs (including low-grade amethyst pieces) produced in the southern Levant by local artisans in the MB IIB/C.⁸¹ Such plain, schematic scarabs are a phenomenon of the southwestern Levant; they are never made of high-quality stones and never inscribed, and are mostly found in funerary contexts. Several Canaanite amethystine quartz scarabs were excavated at Lachish in 1932–38 by Starkey on behalf of the Wellcome-Marston Expedition,⁸² but few scarabs were produced from colorless quartz in Egypt and Canaan.⁸³ Lumps of quartz (rock crystal) have been excavated at the site,⁸⁴ perhaps pieces of stone for the production of beads and scarabs. The shape and engraving of the scarab are neat and bold, the surface marred by some chips and cracks. With its schematic profile of lunate to triangular head (head types A1–D8 following Keel's [1995, fig. 45] typology based on Tufnell 1984, 32, fig. 12), eyes not marked but frontally indented clypeus, V-shaped prothorax line, plain back, plain sides, plain, smooth base, longitudinal piercing, and translucent stone, it was originally mounted on a ring or other implement as jewelry to be worn in life and buried with the dead.

Scarab BB7687 (Room C, floor Locus BB2610, 1.8 x 1.3 x 0.7 cm; see fig. 13, no. 2): The carefully produced, slightly chipped (on base and sides) steatite bears traces of discolored, yellowish glazing.⁸⁵ The scarab is

longitudinally pierced. The head is trapezoidal, with marked eyes and a horn-like projection (head type D6 following Keel 1995, fig. 45). The smooth back is engraved with a nymphaea and two sprigs sprouting from the flower's receptacle—a design of Canaanite origin—and has side notches (humeral callosities at the outer edges of the elytra), all legs being chip-carved and notched to mimic hair (sides type d6 following Keel's 1995 typology of sides, fig. 69, based on Tufnell 1984, 37, fig. 14). Similar arrangements of nymphaea and twigs appear on the back of early MB IIB Canaanite specimens.⁸⁶ On the base, five columns of repeated signs crowd inside the one-line frame; these are Tufnell's Class 3C formulae of Canaanite origin, mostly appearing on MB IIB/Second Intermediate Period scarabs.⁸⁷ The center column, with two alternating *w3h* (𐎗 V29, "enduring") and *dd* (𐎠 R11, "stability") signs, is framed by two columns of five *nfr*-signs (𐎎 F35, "perfect"), and the outer columns show the *nr*^c-formula, a variable design of Canaanite origin inspired by Egyptian hieroglyphs⁸⁸ (the signs being here formally close to 𐎗 V30, 𐎗 D40, 𐎗 V16). Similar crowded designs (no register lines) with characteristically formed *w3h* and *n* "pseudo-hieroglyphs"⁸⁹ are present on Canaanite scarabs (late series) from Tell el-Ajjul⁹⁰ and Lachish.⁹¹ The scarab's back design suggests an early MB IIB Canaanite piece (even though

analysis by magnification). A yellow glaze coats many MB IIB Canaanite scarabs; see, e.g., the scarab at London, UCL Institute of Archaeology EV.1/18, excav. 1928–29 by Starkey and Petrie at Tell el-Far'ah, Tomb 550; see Petrie 1930, pl. 7 no. 29. Daphna Ben-Tor and Baruch Brandl confirmed this point; pers. comm. 2020.

⁸⁰ For twigs and nymphaea on early MB IIB Canaanite scarabs: Petrie 1925, pls. 9 no. 335, and 29 T24, though provenance and present location are unknown; London, UCL Institute of Archaeology EXII.6/8, excav. 1930–34 by Petrie at Tell el-Ajjul, from early MB IIB tomb 1406, Courtyard Cemetery; Petrie 1932, pl. 7 no. 103; see also Tufnell 1970, fig. 1 no. 18.

⁸¹ For a general discussion of this class of scarabs, see Tufnell 1984, 121; Ben-Tor 2007, 83–84, 165–66.

⁸² Tufnell 1984, 121; Keel 1995, 175–76; Ben-Tor 2007, 20–21, 83–84.

⁸³ Ben-Tor 2009.

⁸⁴ Cambridge, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology 38.910, excav. 1930–34 by Petrie at Tell el-Ajjul; Petrie 1934, pls. 6, 7, 69 no. 146; Keel 1997, 345, no. 706.

⁸⁵ A specimen excav. 1932–38 at Lachish by Starkey, Wellcome-Marston Expedition; Tufnell 1958, 104, pl. 30 no. 51.

⁸⁰ The scarabs were analyzed by Arlette David.

⁸¹ David 2019.

⁸² Bull and Dimand 1935, 44; Rowe 1936, pl. 11; Tufnell 1958, pls. 30, 34, 38; David 2019, 73–74.

⁸³ As noted by Tufnell 1984, 39, and Keel 1995, 142 sec. 363. Examples from Lachish, all excav. 1932–38 by Starkey, Wellcome-Marston Expedition: Israel Antiquities Authority 1934.2974, acq. 1934, see Rowe 1936, 103, pl. 11 no. 428; British Museum 2226.15785-7 from Cave 1552, and British Museum 6656.15426 from Cave 6027, see Magrill 2006, II-37 and II-48, respectively.

⁸⁴ E.g., British Museum 1980.1214.16608 from Pit 178; 1980.1214.16643; and 1980.1214.16602; all acq. 1980, excav. 1932–38 by Starkey, Wellcome-Marston Expedition; see Magrill 2006, III-60 and V-129, respectively.

⁸⁵ Thanks to Miriam Lavi, Head Conservator, Archaeology Conservation Laboratory, Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who examined the piece (surface



FIG. 13. Four scarabs from the destruction debris of the MB IIC mudbrick fortress: 1, Canaanite scarab BB7507; 2, Canaanite scarab BB7687; 3, Royal Hyksos scarab BB7688; 4, Canaanite scarab BB9092 (T. Rogovski).

its d6 sides and base pattern are more frequent in the late series).

It should be noted that the seal impressions found in close proximity do not correspond to the designs of scarabs BB7687 and BB7688. Nevertheless, the bronze toggle pin found in the MBA mudbrick fortress may be related to them; the practice of attaching mounted scarabs on toggle pins may have been part of southern Levantine costume or funerary ritual in the MB IIB/C.⁹²

Scarab BB7688 (Room C, floor locus BB2610, 2.2 x 1.5 x 1 cm; see fig. 13, no. 3): A steatite scarab with traces of greenish glazing, longitudinally pierced, with a small chip on its base. Of coarser workmanship, it presents a trapezoidal head with eyes (D3 type following Keel's 1995 typology) and possible horn, plain back, side notches, and grooved smooth legs (sides of Keel's type e5). The base is framed by a single line, and

the signs inside it are deeply and coarsely engraved, without register lines, in three columns. The text reads "perfect god" *ntr nfr* (the latter sign is garbled) *M3'ibr' di 'nh*, between two schematic *s3*-sign (V17 "protection")⁹³ or *sn*-sign (V7 loop of cord, "encircle, eternity") and *nfr* signs, thus "Perfect god, Maaibra, given life," in a frame made of hieroglyphs symbolizing protection/eternity and perfection.

This royal-name scarab (Ward's Group 2 in the sequence of Hyksos royal names),⁹⁴ written without cartouche, was clearly produced by a non-Egyptian artisan in the eastern Delta and imported into Lachish during the 15th Dynasty, when trade with the Hyksos flourished.⁹⁵ About 400 scarabs of this king have been preserved,⁹⁶ under either the prenomen *M3'ibr'*

⁹³ Ben-Tor 1997, 171–72; Keel 2004, 83.

⁹⁴ Ward 1984, 163–68.

⁹⁵ Ben-Tor 2010, 94.

⁹⁶ Ryholt 1997, 252–54, 366–76.

⁹² Keel 1995, 279; Panitz-Cohen et al. 2018, 138.

(Maaibra) or the nomen *Šši* (Sheshi);⁹⁷ interestingly, the formal typology of our scarab (D3/O/e5, following Keel's 1995 typology) is identical with the typology of a *Šši* scarab excavated by Petrie at Tell el-Ajjul in Tomb 491, also inscribed without cartouche or register lines.⁹⁸ A close parallel to our scarab belongs to the Basel Antikenmuseum (though with *nb ḥnh* "Lord of life" instead of the two *nfr*-signs, and erroneous *di nfr* instead of *di ḥnh* "given life").⁹⁹

Following Ward's sequence and Ben-Tor's argument, Maaibra reigned around 1600; the scarab offers a terminus post quem confirming the dating of the destruction of the mudbrick structure (1550). Despite the abundance of scarabs of this king, their find contexts remain unknown or unclear; our specimen offers a unique clearly contextualized exception.

Scarab BB9092 (Room C, Locus BB4010, 2.2 x 1.6 x 0.8 cm; see fig. 13, no. 4): A steatite scarab with traces of yellow glazing, longitudinally pierced. Its formal typology is not clearly distinguishable (head destroyed, pronotum marked, [plain?] back chipped, all-around grooved and notched e10 sides following Keel's 1995 typology). The base is framed by a single line, and its design, finely executed, merges the Class 5 cross pattern without horizontal branches with a convoluted pattern (Tufnell's Class 6B2b Convoluted, with a knot-like, central bar).¹⁰⁰ Parts of the design are hatched; the composition is not fully symmetrical. This is an MB II Canaanite piece.

LEVEL VII: MANIPULATING THE NORTHEASTERN CORNER OF THE SITE

The earlier part of the LBA at Lachish is not well known, and so far only meager remains of the late 16th to early 14th centuries have been found.¹⁰¹ This phase was not exposed in our excavations. It seems

⁹⁷ For a general discussion of these scarabs, see Tufnell 1984, 162–68, pls. 57–59; Ben-Tor 2007, 104–7, pls. 44–45; 2010, 98 fig. 6, 99 fig. 8.

⁹⁸ Jerusalem, Rockefeller Museum, Israel Antiquities Authority 35.3797, excav. 1930–34; Petrie 1934, pls. 4–5 no. 17; Keel 1997, 299 no. 578.

⁹⁹ Basel, Antikenmuseum, acq. 1977, doc. Müller 1954, no. 148; Hornung and Staehelin 1976, 220, no. 148, pl. 14.

¹⁰⁰ Tufnell 1984, 126. For the early series at Lachish, excav. 1932–38 by Starkey, Wellcome-Marston Expedition, see Tufnell 1958, 102–3, pl. 32 no. 111. For the late series in Tell el-Far'ah South, excav. Starkey and Petrie 1928–29, see Petrie 1930, pl. 7 no. 41.

¹⁰¹ Ussishkin 2004, 57–59; Webster et al. 2019, 89–91.

that Lachish's northeastern corner was reoccupied in Level VII, dating mainly to the 13th century.¹⁰² This level was reached only in Area BB, while in Areas AA, CC, and BC the excavations penetrated no farther than Level VI. The earliest Level VII activity in this area was the introduction of fill to raise the surface by 3–4 m above the earlier MBA remains. A large podium was created by walls on both sides of the northeastern corner. In the north, a revetment wall was built on top of the MBA city wall (see figs. 8, 9), while to the south another revetment was observed that cuts into the MBA mudbrick fortress and still stands to a height of about 3 m. All the sediment in the northeastern corner above the MBA remains and below the Level VII remains consisted of whitish sediment and large chunks of limestone (see table 2, eastern slope phase 4). This construction activity effected a drastic manipulation of the mound in this area, raising the city by 3–4 m in this location and creating a more imposing landscape above the valley.

Level VII Buildings

On the eastern slope, remains of three thick and solid stone walls were exposed (fig. 14; online fig. 4). The first, Wall BB2008, near the top of the site, runs north–south parallel to the slope over a length of 11 m. This wall was partly uncovered from its eastern side by the first expedition and was dated to the Iron Age.¹⁰³ We excavated this wall from its western side and uncovered floors abutting it from inside the city. Our new stratigraphic attribution of the wall, based on the elaborate Canaanite painted pottery vessels typical of the LBA, is Level VII. The north and south ends of this wall were cut by erosion. No thick wall abuts it from inside the site. The two other stone walls, Wall BB424 and Wall BB425, were located about 2 m lower on the slope. They run east–west, perpendicular to the upper wall; their preserved length was only about 2 m; and LBA debris abutted them from both sides. These three stone walls seem to be part of a single structure, an imposing fortress that was built here overlooking the valley. Granted, the two lower walls do not meet the upper wall, but, as all three walls are built in the same construction technique, are perpendicular to one another, and are dated to the LBA, we suggest that they are all remnants of the same fortress building. A rare

¹⁰² Garfinkel et al. 2019a, 708.

¹⁰³ Tufnell 1953, pl. 11.2.

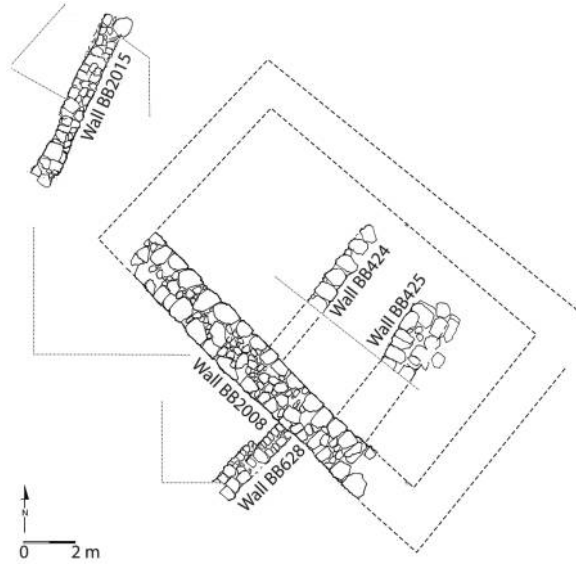


FIG. 14. Remains of the LBA stone fortress on the eastern slope. Most of the building had eroded away (drawing by J. Rosenberg).

Egyptian 18th Dynasty scarab made of dark diorite and set in a golden bezel was found in the topsoil near the fortress.¹⁰⁴

The LBA fortress was built on the slope, as was the MBA fortress, with its eastern side lower than its western side. The LBA stone fortress replaced the earlier mudbrick fortress described above. Unfortunately, nearly all of this structure had eroded away, and we uncovered only its western edge. It seems that the fortress continued in use in Level VI as well.

In the western section of Area BB, on top of the whitish fill, we uncovered segments of rooms and part of a pillared building in a narrow strip. The area was delineated by a modern visitors' walkway on the south and the mound's slope on the north. Thus, our understanding of the architecture here is quite limited and no complete building plans can be provided. The most impressive structure is a long pillared building with a row of three (or four) pillar bases running east-west, parallel to the slope. Two plaque figurines were found in the structure.¹⁰⁵ A similar building of Level VI was uncovered by the third expedition near the western edge of the site (Area S).¹⁰⁶ West of this building a few

TABLE 4. Representative assemblage of LBA imported Cypriot and Mycenaean pottery from various phases of Level VII, Area BB, drawn and numbered in figure 15.

No.	Locus	Basket	Vessel Type	Ware
1	BB205	BB1442	bowl	White Slip II
2	BB205	BB1441	bowl	White Slip II
3	BB152	BB1265	bowl	White Slip II
4	BB190	BB1360	bowl	White Slip II
5	BB221	BB1723	bowl	White Slip II
6	BB217	BB1563	bowl	Base Ring
7	BB190	BB1546	bowl	Base Ring
8	BB156	BB1227	jug	Base Ring
9	BB221	BB1711	jug	Base Ring
10	BB189	BB1466	jug	Base Ring II
11	BB217	BB1405	jug	Base Ring
12	BB217	BB1465	jug	Base Ring
13	BB205	BB1441	jug	Base Ring II
14	BB152	BB1420	jug	Base Ring
15	BB217	BB1419	bowl	White Shaved
16	BB190	BB1360	spindle bottle	Red Lustrous Wheelmade
17	BB217	BB1465	pyxis?	(Mycenaean)

walls of other structures were unearthed, but they do not form a coherent plan.

In the LBA strata below the Level VI temple, typical Canaanite pottery of the period was accompanied by imported pottery. The great majority was imported from Cyprus, while a few pieces came from Mycenaean Greece. The largest group within the Cypriot pottery assemblage is White Slip II Ware, followed closely by Base Ring Ware (table 4). Together they compose slightly more than 90% of the Cypriot assemblage. The White Slip pottery comprises only fragments of the so-called milk bowls (fig. 15, nos. 1–4), including a few examples of their typical wishbone handle (see fig. 15, no. 5). The Base Ring pottery includes fragments of bowls (see fig. 15, nos. 6, 7) and jugs (see fig. 15, nos. 8–14), sometimes decorated with white lines (Base Ring II; see fig. 15, nos. 10, 13). The rest of the Cypriot assemblage includes a few sherds of White Shaved juglets (see fig. 15, no. 15) and one base of a Red Lustrous Wheelmade spindle bottle (see fig. 15,

¹⁰⁴ Brandl et al. 2019.

¹⁰⁵ Weissbein et al. 2016, 41–47.

¹⁰⁶ Barkay and Ussishkin 2004, fig. 8.35.

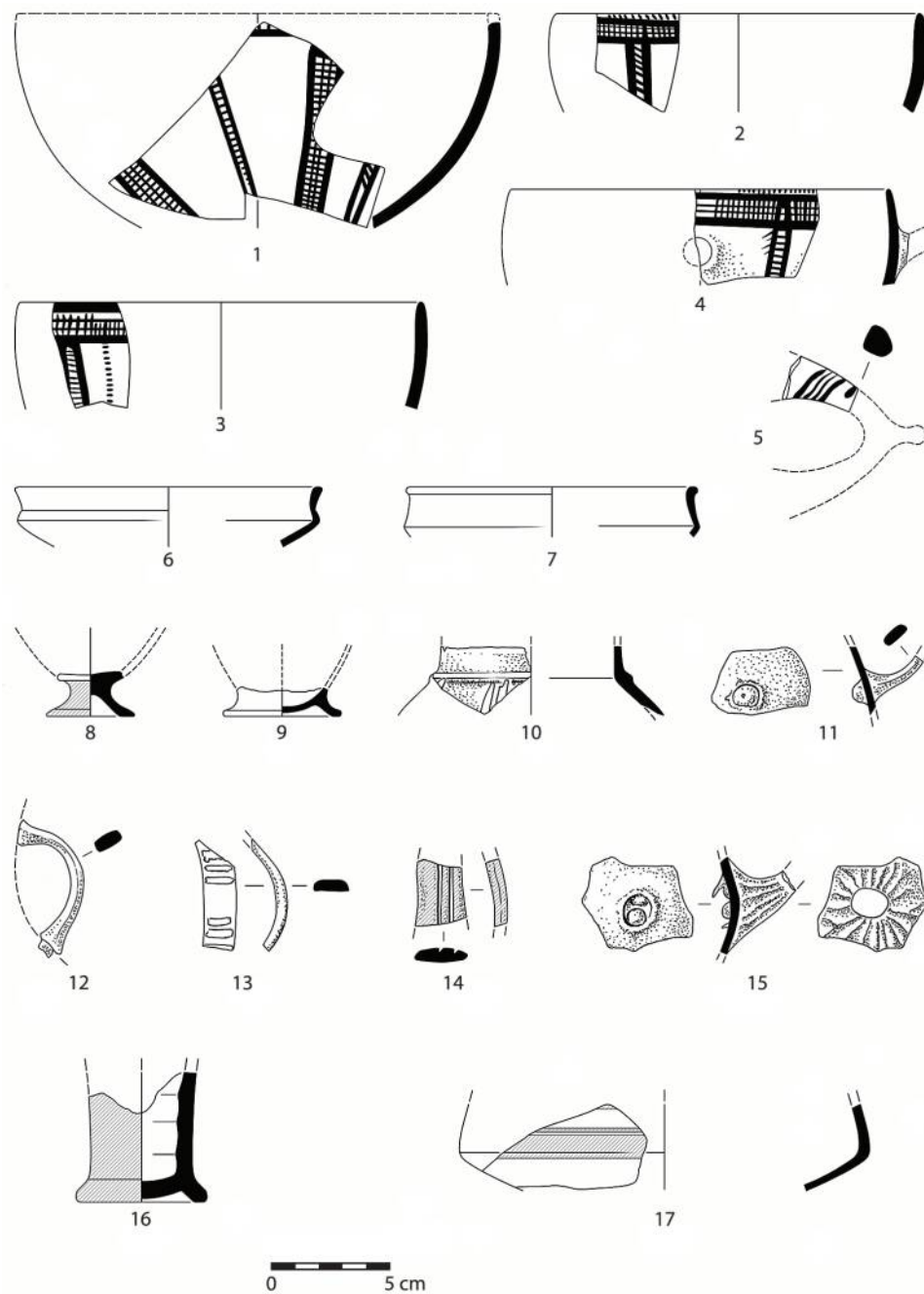


FIG. 15. Representative assemblage of LBA imported Cypriot and Mycenaean pottery (see table 4) from various phases of Level VII, Area BB (drawings by O. Dubovsky).

no. 16). These Cypriot imported wares are typical of the LB II assemblage in the southern Levant¹⁰⁷ and are well known from previous excavations at Lachish.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Gittlen 1981, 50–55; Artzy 2019, 342–44.

¹⁰⁸ Tufnell 1958, 196–208; Bunimovitz 2004.

The few Mycenaean sherds found are decorated with orange-red or black lines and seem to come from small closed vessels such as pyxides or piriform jugs (see fig. 15, no. 17).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Tufnell 1958, 211–14.

A unique find is a large gold pendant composed of two parts, a long cylindrical bead and a solid crescent inside the bead (online fig. 5). The crescent was a common motif in the jewelry tradition of the LBA and Iron Age.¹¹⁰ Gold and silver pendants composed of a crescent inside a tubular bead, through which a string could be passed for suspension, are known from various LBA and Iron I sites.¹¹¹ An identical amulet in silver from Hazor was published recently and, like the Lachish piece, is dated to the 13th century.¹¹² Radiometric dating from the western segment of Area BB indicates that Level VII was destroyed during the last quarter of the 13th century rather than around 1200.¹¹³

LEVEL VI: THE NORTH-EAST TEMPLE AND VARIOUS BUILDINGS

The chronology of Level VI, within the 12th century until ca. 1150, was established on the basis of C14 dating of grain found in Area BB.¹¹⁴ After the destruction of Level VII, there were significant changes in the city's layout, and in most areas there is no direct architectural continuity between Levels VII and VI. Although structures of both levels were built in the same orientation, hardly any walls or buildings were reused, suggesting that a significant change occurred in the city during the transition between the two levels.¹¹⁵

Two Canaanite temples were previously uncovered at Lachish: the Fosse Temple and the Acropolis Temple (see fig. 4).¹¹⁶ We discovered a third temple in the western section of Area BB, the North-East Temple, ascribed to Level VI. Only the western side of the building was partially preserved (see Site Formation Processes above); nevertheless, the preserved architecture follows the typical symmetrical plan of Canaanite temples, with two towers and two pillars on the facade

(fig. 16; online fig. 6). Such temples are known from Hazor, Megiddo, and elsewhere.¹¹⁷

The temple measures 19 m north–south x 16 m east–west, covering an area of about 304 m². It was apparently longer, but its northern part was lost to erosion as it was adjacent to the slope. However, from the temple's general plan and suggested parallels, we estimate that it continued no more than a few meters northward.¹¹⁸ The temple includes eight architectural units (see fig. 16[A–H]) in addition to an open courtyard in front of the structure, of which only two small sections were preserved.

The entrance (see fig. 16[A]) seems to have originally been flanked by two pillars. The western stone pillar base was found in its original location but about 20 cm above the floor. Another large stone that appears to be the eastern base was found nearby, lying on the western wall of the entrance. The two pillar bases were apparently moved from their original location, possibly by looters searching for foundation deposits. A similar disturbance was observed in the Acropolis Temple with regard to two large pillar bases found in its main hall.¹¹⁹ The entrance of the North-East Temple was located between two rectangular towers, of which only the western one was preserved, while the eastern one was destroyed by erosion.

Rich assemblages of pottery and metal objects were unearthed in the destruction debris of this building.¹²⁰ The impressive objects include two bronze smiting god figurines, a silver pendant engraved with a nude goddess holding lotus flowers, a bronze scepter, gold jewelry, bronze weapons, and a proto-Canaanite inscription (online fig. 7).¹²¹ Three bronze cauldrons, probably foundation deposits, were buried under the floor, a small cauldron in one location and two large cauldrons stacked in another (online fig. 8).

Remains of Level VI were found on the northern slope of Area BB on top of the Level VII pillared building. These buildings were destroyed in a heavy conflagration. Two storage jars on the floors were filled with thousands of seeds, cereals in one jar and lentils in the other, which provided samples for the

¹¹⁰For discussion of the motif, see Golani 2013, 67; Ilan 2014; for similar pendants from Beth-Shan, Beth-Shemesh, Lachish, and Tell el-Ajjul (with excavation details), see MacGovern 1985, 68–69, 129–30, fig. 66; for similar pendants from Hazor (with excavation details), see Spaer 2017, 623–25, figs. 17.7.1, 17.8.

¹¹¹For similar pendants from Akhziv and Tell el-Farah South (with excavation details), see Golani 2013, 159.

¹¹²For a similar pendant from Hazor (with excavation details), see Spaer 2017, fig. 17.8.1.

¹¹³Garfinkel et al. 2019a, 708; contra Ussishkin 2004, table 3.3.

¹¹⁴Garfinkel et al. 2019a, 697–702.

¹¹⁵Garfinkel et al. 2019b, 132–33.

¹¹⁶Tufnell et al. 1940; Ussishkin 2004, 215–67.

¹¹⁷Mazar 1992.

¹¹⁸Weissbein et al. 2019, 77–78.

¹¹⁹Ussishkin 2004, 224.

¹²⁰Weissbein et al. 2016, 48–51; 2019, 84–95; Garfinkel 2020.

¹²¹Sass et al. 2015.

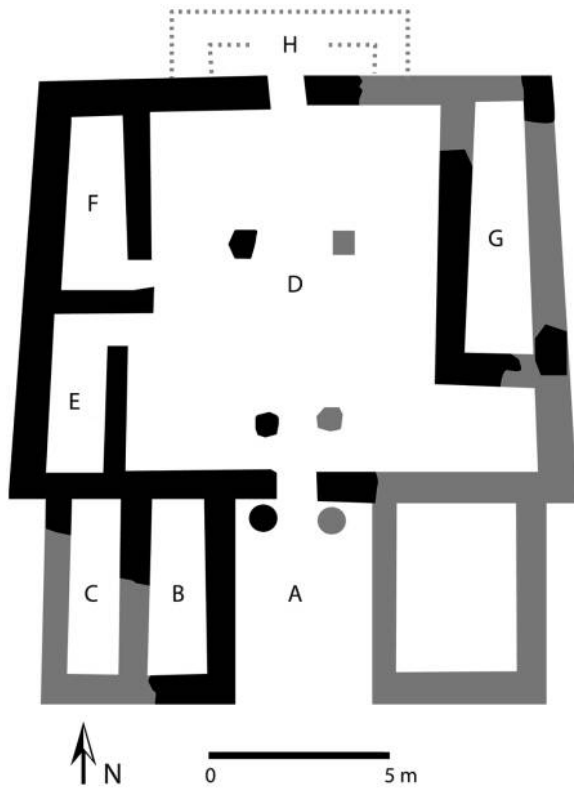


FIG. 16. Plan of the Level VI North-East Temple in Area BB. Excavated walls are shown in black; reconstructed walls, not preserved due to erosion, are shown in gray (drawing by I. Weissbein).

published radiometric dates.¹²² Two bronze axes were found under the floor, either as a foundation deposit or hidden there as the Level VI city was attacked in its last days of existence. Another bronze axe and a spearhead were found nearby in Area BC. Remains of Level VI were found in Areas AA and CC as well, but the penetration was not deep enough to provide meaningful exposure.

The Pottery of Level VI

The pottery assemblage of Level VI is well known from previous excavations at the site.¹²³ During the fourth expedition, most of the Level VI pottery was uncovered in the debris of the North-East Temple. It includes only local pottery and lacks Cypriot and Mycenaean imports, in contrast to earlier LBA levels at the site. Almost half of the assemblage consists of bowls of various types (table 5; figs. 17, 18). The

TABLE 5. Representative assemblage of pottery vessels uncovered in the Level VI North-East Temple, drawn and numbered in figure 18.

No.	Locus	Basket	Vessel Type
1	BB1062	BB5459	simple open bowl, rounded flaring wall
2	BB1068	BB5285	small open bowl, rounded carination, upright or slightly flaring upper part
3	BB1018	BB5235-2	open bowl, rounded flaring wall, everted rim
4	BB843	BB5591-2	small shallow open bowl, straight flaring wall
5	BB1568	BB6455	large open bowl, hammer-head rim
6	BB1091	BB6015	large carinated bowl, S-shaped profile
7	BB1069	BB5470	small carinated bowl, S-shaped profile
8	BB1081	BB5498	deep bowl, soft carination, slightly everted upper part
9	BB1185	BB5988-2	miniature carinated bowl
10	BB1568	BB6585-2	carinated bowl, hammer-head rim
11	BB1062	BB6003	carinated krater
12	BB1069	BB5326	decorated krater
13	BB171	BB1690-2	spouted krater
14	BB233	BB1580	cooking pot
15	BB1090	BB5588	dipper juglet
16	BB1185	BB5995	dipper juglet
17	BB1062	BB6008	globular juglet
18	BB 1018	BB5235-1	local imitation of Cypriot Base Ring jug
19	BB1084	BB5937	amphoriskos
20	BB1018	BB5111	pyxis
21	BB1018	BB5184	piriform jar
22	BB 1107	BB5594	biconical vessel
23	BB 244	BB1640	globular jar
24	BB 1018	BB5259	flask
25	BB 116	BB1170	flask
26	BB 1090	BB5542	storage jar
27	BB 1062	BB5273-1	storage jar
28	BB 1138	BB5763	cup-and-saucer vessel
29	BB 1125	BB5647	baking tray

¹²² Garfinkel et al. 2019a, 697–702.

¹²³ Tufnell 1958, 176–224; Clamer 2004; Yannai 2004.



FIG. 17. Representative assemblage of pottery vessels uncovered in the Level VI North-East Temple (C. Amit, Israel Antiquities Authority).

most common type is the simple open bowl with a rounded flaring wall and a plain, thickened, or slightly beveled rim (see fig. 18, no. 1). Other types are small open bowls with a rounded carination and an upright or slightly flaring upper part (see fig. 18, no. 2); open bowls with a rounded flaring wall and everted rim (see fig. 18, no. 3); small shallow open bowls with a straight flaring wall and a plain rim (see fig. 18, no. 4); large open bowls with a hammerhead rim (see fig. 18, no. 5); carinated bowls with an S-shaped profile, known as “cyma bowls” (see fig. 18, nos. 6, 7); deep bowls with soft carination and a slightly everted upper part (see fig. 18, no. 8); a miniature carinated bowl (see fig. 18, no. 9); and large carinated bowls with a hammerhead rim (see fig. 18, no. 10). Two bowls (see fig. 18, nos. 3, 4) are local imitations of an Egyptian type that can be seen as a *fossile directeur* of Level VI at Lachish.¹²⁴

Other open vessels include cooking pots (see fig. 18, no. 14) and various types of kraters, mostly large carinated kraters (see fig. 18, no. 11) but also a few decorated kraters (see fig. 18, no. 12) and one spouted krater (see fig. 18, no. 13). Additional vessels include one dome-shaped baking tray (see fig. 18, no. 29) and a few cup-and-saucer vessels (see fig. 18, no. 28). Closed vessels in the assemblage include dipper juglets (see fig. 18, nos. 15, 16), globular juglets (see fig. 18, no. 17), amphoriskoi (see fig. 18, no. 19), flasks (see fig. 18, nos. 24, 25), biconical vessels (see fig. 18, no. 22), and storage jars (see fig. 18, nos. 26, 27). Storage jars are the most frequent vessel class after bowls.

A few pyxides (see fig. 18, no. 20), one piriform jar (see fig. 18, no. 21), and probably the globular juglets are locally made imitations of Aegean pottery types. There are also some local imitations of the Cypriot Base Ring jug (*bilbil*) (see fig. 18, no. 18). Similar imitations of Aegean and Cypriot vessels are well known,

¹²⁴ Clamer 2004, 1289–99, type I.A.a; Yannai 2004, 1051–52, 1060, group B-26.

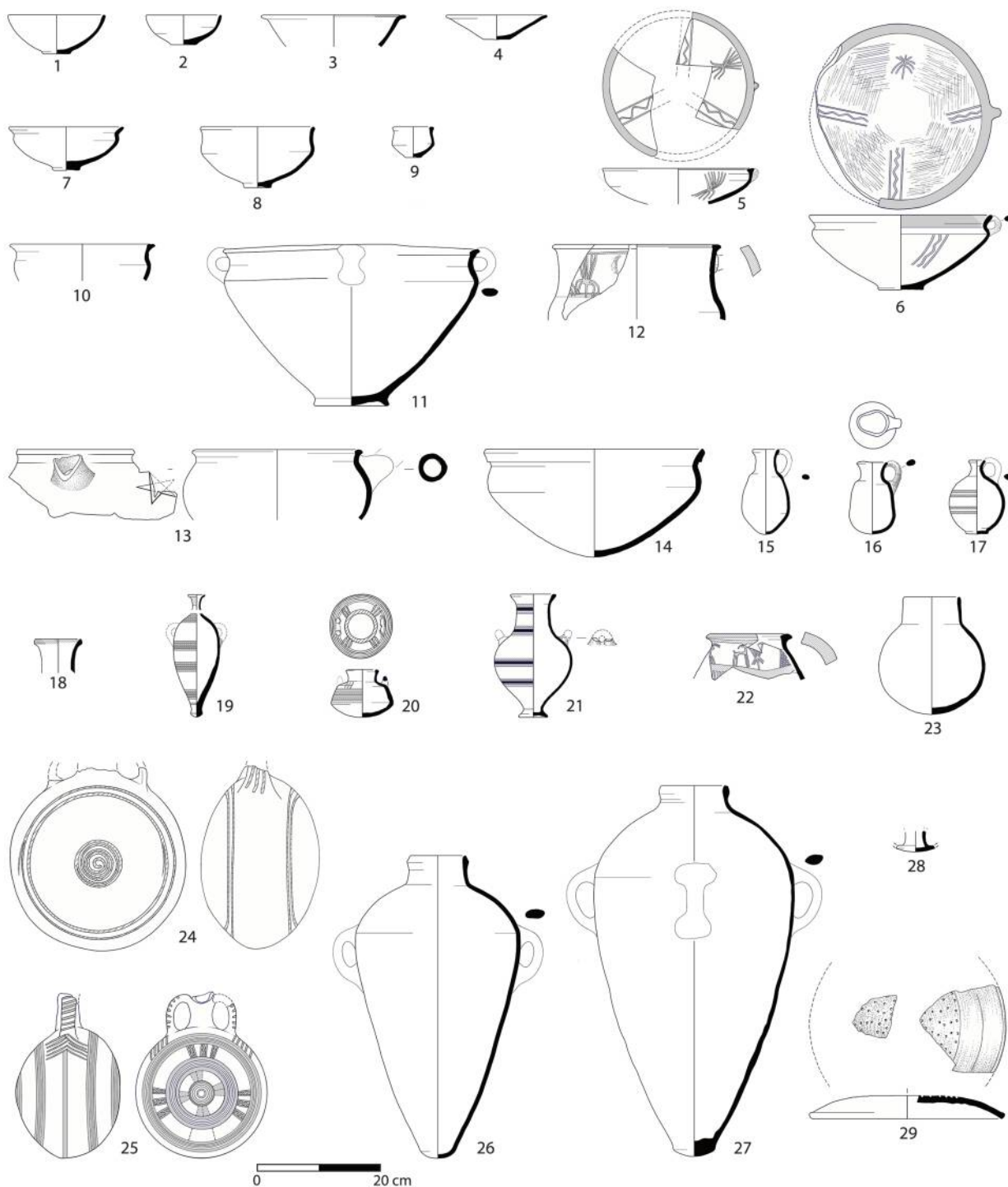


FIG. 18. Representative assemblage of pottery vessels (see table 5) uncovered in the Level VI North-East Temple (drawings generated by 3D scans, by A. Karasik, Israel Antiquities Authority).

especially from tombs around Lachish.¹²⁵ Egyptian influence is noted by one complete globular jar of Egyptian type (see fig. 18, no. 23)¹²⁶ and the bowls with flaring wall (see fig. 18, nos. 3, 4).

Levels VII and VI represent one of the most intensively discussed periods of archaeological research in the eastern Mediterranean.¹²⁷ In this period, the political system of the LBA collapsed, giving way (after a gap) to the rise of territorial kingdoms. In the particular case of the southern Levant, this process is evident in the retreat of the Egyptian empire from the Levant, the destruction of many of the Canaanite cities, the arrival of the Philistines and consolidation of their cities, and the small Israelite sites in the highlands.¹²⁸ Canaanite Lachish managed to overcome the destruction of Level VII in the last quarter of the 13th century and rebuilt the city as Level VI. This level, however, could not withstand further pressure, and the Canaanite era of Lachish ended with its destruction, followed by a long settlement gap.

LEVEL V: CITY WALL, BUILDINGS, AND OPEN AREAS

After the destruction of Level VI, Lachish was deserted and stood in ruins until it was rebuilt in the Iron Age (Level V). New excavations at the nearby site of Khirbet al-Ra'i have shown that the regional center moved 3 km to the west between the 12th and early 10th centuries.¹²⁹ The nature and construction date of Level V were among the main research questions our excavations at Lachish were intended to investigate, and we believed that the northeastern corner of the site had the highest potential for uncovering remains of this level. Significant Level V remains were indeed uncovered in Areas BB, BC, and CC (fig. 19).

Level V remains were also found in the eastern part of Area AA. Here an open area with two cooking installations (*tabuns*) and a stone-paved surface was uncovered (online fig. 9). Besides the pottery, special finds include an elongated cylindrical carved ivory object (online fig. 10), of the type sometimes carved with a pomegranate at the tip, a small game piece, an alabaster fragment, and a coral object. Many olive pits,

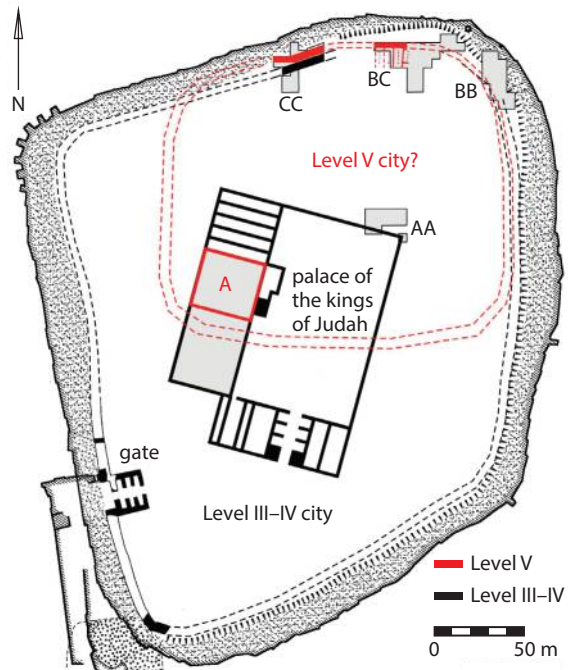


FIG. 19. Map of the Iron Age cities of Lachish. The first settlement, Level V, occupied only part of the site, with the earlier part of the palace of the kings of Judah (A). The later city of Levels IV–III spread over the entire mound. The palace of the kings of Judah was enlarged and became the most prominent structure of the kingdom in the entire region (drawing by J. Rosenberg).

which will enable radiometric dating of the level, were excavated here. The lack of architecture may be due to the building activities of Level IV, which disturbed and may have robbed the remains of Level V.

In Area BB, Level V was uncovered at the eastern edge of the area. Under a building of Level IV and above the remains of Level VI, we noticed an open area with thin, densely packed levels of sediment, deposited one on top of the other. Each of these levels was rich in ash, pottery sherds, and animal bones. This sort of accumulation is typical of open areas. The location right at the edge of the site suggests that this was part of a gate piazza.

Area CC City Walls

Excavation in this area began as a trench down the slope from the highest point of the mound, the center of the northern side (see fig. 3). Here the clearest stratigraphic sequence of fortifications from Levels I to VI was observed (figs. 20, 21). The upper three fortification systems were identified by both the first and the third expeditions in other excavation areas.

¹²⁵Tufnell 1958, 210–11, pls. 81, 82.

¹²⁶Martin 2011, 63–64.

¹²⁷See Cline 2014; Knapp and Manning 2016 with references.

¹²⁸See, e.g., Yasur-Landau 2010; Cline 2014; Kreimerman 2017; Burke 2018.

¹²⁹Garfinkel et al 2019a; 2019c.



FIG. 20. Aerial photograph of the Area CC fortifications, facing south: Level I stone city wall (2.5 m thick, Level II stone city wall (3.5 m thick), Levels IV–III mudbrick city wall (6 m thick), Level V stone city wall (3.5 m thick), Level VI debris of the unfortified city, and the MBA stone revetment (E. Aladjem, Israel Antiquities Authority).

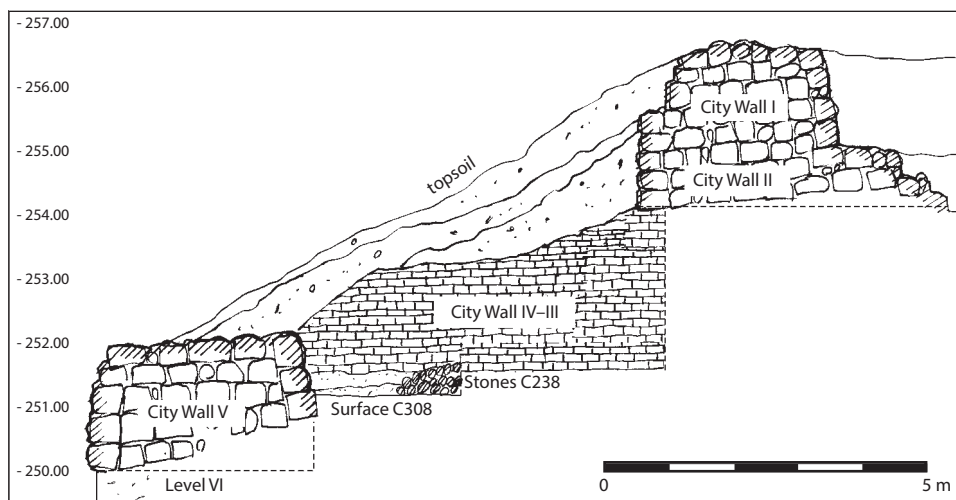


FIG. 21. Section through the northern slope of Lachish in Area CC (looking east), showing the succession of fortifications: top to bottom, Level I stone city wall, Level II stone city wall, Levels IV–III mudbrick city wall, and Level V stone city wall built on unfortified Level VI debris. Olive pits submitted for radiometric dating of Level V were collected from surface CC308 and the debris above it. These contexts were sealed by the thick mudbrick city wall of Levels IV–III and ran up to the Level V city wall (drawing by J. Rosenberg).

City Wall I: The fortification of Level I, a 2.5 m thick stone wall, was excavated over a length of 10 m. It was built directly on the Level II city wall.

City Wall II: The fortification of Level II, a 3.5 m thick stone wall, was excavated over a length of 10 m. It was built directly on the mudbrick city wall of Levels IV–III.

City Wall IV–III: The fortification of Levels IV–III, a 6 m thick mudbrick wall, was excavated over a length of some 30 m. In some parts the outer face of the wall was covered by white plaster.

City Wall V: The fortification of Level V, a 3.5 m thick stone wall, was exposed over a length of some 35 m. In one location a large rectangular stone created

a small window-like drain opening (online fig. 11). This city wall was discovered for the first time by our expedition. It is situated in a clear stratigraphic position below Level IV and above Level VI (see fig. 21). The floor running up to it from inside the city, Surface C308, was higher than the drain. It yielded olive pits that were radiometrically dated at Oxford University, yielding dates within the first half of the 10th century and in the last quarter of the 10th century (online fig. 12).¹³⁰

Remains of Level VI, including debris and occasional small segments of stone walls, were found under the city wall of Level V. No Level VI city wall was observed.

Farther down the slope, the remains of the MBA city wall, the revetment, can be seen (see fig. 20).

Area BC

After a segment of the Level V city wall was found in Area CC, we opened Area BC, where we uncovered additional remains of Level V, including a continued segment of the city wall and several pillared buildings abutting the wall from inside the city (fig. 22; online fig. 13). This type of building, with one row of pillars running along the long axis of the structure's interior, is typical of the Iron Age. Two major variations are known: a wider one, labeled the four-room house, and a narrower one, labeled the three-room house.¹³¹ Pillared buildings built abutting the city wall are well known from the Judean cities of Tell Beit Mirsim, Tell en-Naşbeh, Beth-Shemesh, Beersheba, and Khirbet Qeiyafa.¹³² They were built perpendicular to the city wall, parallel to one another and sharing a common outer wall. This condensed construction is an indication of central planning. At Lachish one nearly complete three-room house and segments of three others were excavated. These buildings went out of use when the much wider mudbrick city wall of Level IV was built above them. No destruction level was noticed in this area, suggesting that Level V went out of use when the new urban plan of Level IV was introduced.

The newly discovered stone-built city wall of Level V was not found by any of the three previous expedi-

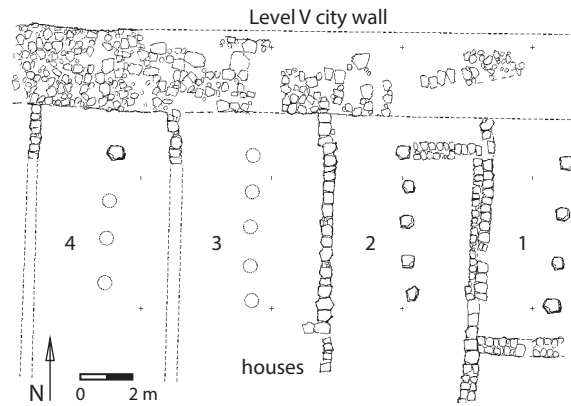


FIG. 22. Plan of the Level V remains in Area BC. The pillared buildings 1–4 initially abutted the city wall on the inside but were later covered by the city wall of Level IV (drawing by J. Rosenberg).

tions, which excavated in the west and south of the site. This implies that the city of Level V was small and occupied only part of the site, probably 3–4 ha (see fig. 19). Later, in Level IVb, the entire city (an area of 7.5 ha) was encircled by the 6 m thick mudbrick city wall. A similar situation is known from Hazor, where the first Iron Age city of Stratum X was confined to a limited area on the upper mound and only in Stratum VIII did the city spread over the entire mound.¹³³ In our reconstruction of the Level V city (see fig. 19), we have included, at a higher elevation, the earlier part of the palace of the kings of Judah, known as Palace A.¹³⁴ Dating this construction to Level V had already been suggested by earlier expeditions.¹³⁵ Another such prominent building at the highest point of a site was uncovered at Khirbet Qeiyafa, a fortified city of the early 10th century only 20 km north of Lachish.¹³⁶

The Pottery of Level V

The pottery assemblage, collected mainly from Areas AA and BC, includes bowls, kraters, cooking vessels (cooking pots, cooking jugs, baking tray), juglets, jugs, and storage jars (fig. 23; table 6).¹³⁷ The bowls are

¹³³ Yadin 1972, 135–46, 165, fig. 27; Ben-Ami 2012, 108–9.

¹³⁴ Portions of the palace of the kings of Judah are referred to as A, B, and C; see Ussishkin 2004, 772–73.

¹³⁵ Tufnell 1953, 53; Aharoni 1975, 41; contra Ussishkin 2004, 770–74.

¹³⁶ Garfinkel et al. 2016, 40–42, figs. 8–10; Garfinkel 2017, 11–12.

¹³⁷ In previous studies the pottery of Level V was presented together with that of Level IV; see Tufnell 1953; Zimhoni 2004, 1658.

¹³⁰ Garfinkel et al. 2019a, 708–9.

¹³¹ Shiloh 1970; Faust and Bunimovitz 2003.

¹³² Shiloh 1978; Garfinkel et al. 2016, 205–7, fig. 92. These cities were built with a casemate city wall. The fact that Lachish had a solid city wall indicates that in Level V it was already an important city in the Kingdom of Judah.

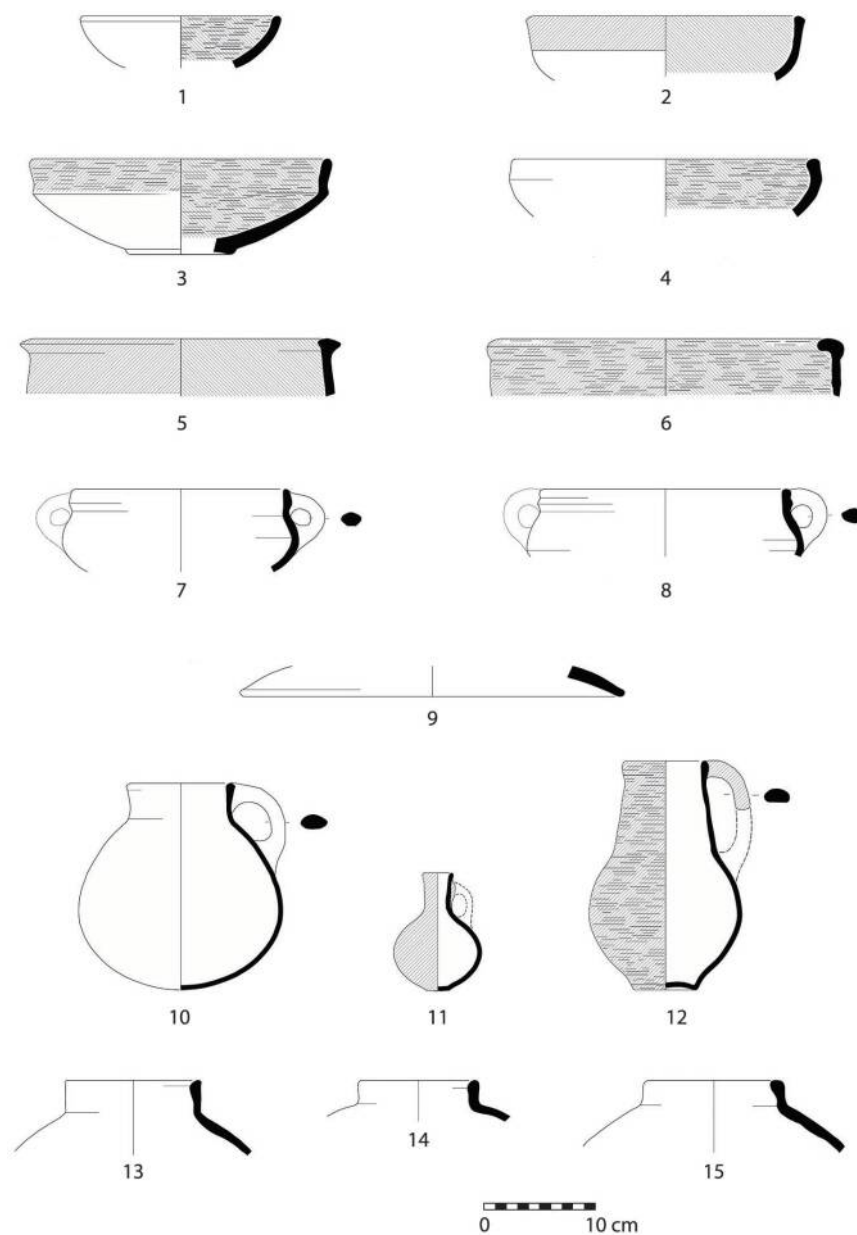


FIG. 23. Assemblage of pottery vessels (see table 6) uncovered in Level V (drawings generated by 3D scans, by O. Harush, Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem).

either rounded (see fig. 23, no. 1) or are carinated with simple rim (see fig. 23, nos. 2–4). The kraters mostly have an emphasized rim, a rounded hammerhead rim protruding outward (see fig. 23, no. 5) or inward (see fig. 23, no. 6). The cooking pots are open vessels with a shallow rounded body and two handles. They can be further categorized according to the rim shape, such as a simple rounded rim (see fig. 23, no. 7) or a grooved rim (see fig. 23, no. 8). One baking tray was found as well (see fig. 23, no. 9). The cooking jugs have

a medium-sized globular body, a straight neck, and a plain or slightly thickened and rounded rim (see fig. 23, no. 10).

Complete juglets and jugs are rare (see fig. 23, nos. 11, 12). Storage jars are represented by rim and body fragments. They can be further categorized according to the neck and rim: straight long neck (see fig. 23, no. 13), simple rim with straight short neck (see fig. 23, no. 14), and emphasized thickened rim (see fig. 23, no. 15).

TABLE 6. Assemblage of pottery vessels uncovered in Level V, drawn and numbered in figure 23.

No.	Locus	Basket	Vessel Type	Decoration
1	BC544	BC1096	rounded bowl	red slip, irregular hand burnish
2	BC406	BC924	carinated bowl	red slip
3	BC515	BC1028	carinated bowl	red slip, irregular hand burnish
4	BC637	BC1326	carinated bowl	red slip, irregular hand burnish
5	BC525	BC1103	krater	red slip
6	BC576	BC1303	krater	red slip, irregular hand burnish
7	AA476	AA4724	cooking pot	
8	AA466	AA4670	cooking pot	
9	BC401	BC917	baking tray	
10	BC595	BC1240	cooking jug	
11	BC517	BC1014	juglet	red slip
12	BC595	BC1126	jug	red slip, vertical irregular hand burnish
13	AA446	AA4591	storage jar	
14	AA465	AA4643	storage jar	
15	AA429	AA4551	storage jar	

The surface treatment is a combination of red slip and irregular hand burnish (online fig. 14). The red slip is very common and is sometimes burnished. This decoration appears mainly on bowls and kraters (both inside and outside the vessel). On jugs, the burnish is applied vertically (see fig. 23, no. 12). Red slip

and irregular hand burnish, which is rare at the early 10th-century (Iron IIA) sites of Khirbet Qeiyafa and Khirbet al-Ra'i, is common in Level V at Lachish and other contemporary sites in the region.¹³⁸

LEVEL IV: DOMESTIC BUILDINGS, STREET, CULTIC ROOM, AND CITY WALL

Remains of Level IV were found in all excavation areas, stratigraphically located above and built over Level V remains. The Level IV city witnessed a monumental expansion brought about by both the occupation of the entire site (7.5 ha) and the 6 m thickness of the mudbrick city wall.

Area AA

Level IV buildings in Area AA were found only in the eastern part of the area, as construction activities of Level III in the higher western part completely destroyed the underlying architecture of Level IV. At least three buildings were uncovered, built on terraces that account for the differences in elevation. Two phases were observed in each building. A well-preserved wide pebbled street of fine quality ran between the buildings; parts of this street were already excavated by the second expedition (fig. 24).¹³⁹ This is one of the most elaborate streets of this period found so far in Israel. A similar street was excavated west of the city gate at Gezer.¹⁴⁰

Building 400 was located in the northeastern part of the area. The walls AA340/347 and AA364 consisted of a stone socle foundation and a mudbrick superstructure that was expertly plastered. The walls were preserved to a height of 1.0–1.5 m and were about 0.5 m thick. We exposed three rooms: the elongated Room A on the northwest and parts of the smaller Rooms B and C on the southeast (see fig. 24). Two occupational phases of Building 400 were represented by two superimposed floors about 0.2–0.3 m apart.

Building 430 was west of Building 400 and east and north of the pebbled street. Only one room was excavated, as the northern part of the building was disturbed by a Level II pit that extended nearly 4 m across. Building 450 was southwest of Buildings 400 and 430

¹³⁸ Katz and Faust 2014, 120; Kang and Garfinkel 2018, 85–90.

¹³⁹ Aharoni 1975, pl. 59.

¹⁴⁰ S. Ortiz and S. Wolff, pers. comm. 2019.



FIG. 24. In the lower half, paved street in Area AA, constructed with small pebbles in Level IV and later covered with large flat stones in Level III; in the upper half, Rooms A, B, and C.

and built in the same orientation. Only its northern part was excavated, as its walls disappeared into the southern and western balks. Although renovations were carried out in each of the buildings of Area AA, the general layout changed little.

South of these buildings, we excavated the northern outer courtyard wall of the palace of the kings of Judah, running diagonally northwest–southeast. Parts of this wall had already been excavated by previous expedi-

tions, and we reexcavated the previously documented northeastern corner.¹⁴¹ The buildings of Levels IV to II in this area were all built in the same orientation as the palace courtyard, an indication of urban planning. The exposure of the houses and a street north of the palace clearly demonstrates that the area behind the

¹⁴¹ Aharoni 1975, pl. 59; Ussishkin 2004, fig. 14.4.

palace was not left empty, as suggested in previous reconstructions of Lachish (see fig. 6).

Area BB

In Area BB, the remains of Level IV were reached mainly in the eastern part of the area. Here a stone wall running northwest–southeast was constructed on top of the open area of Level V. The wall widens on both sides of its northern end, creating a T shape (Wall BB617, fig. 25; online fig. 15). The southern end, together with the rest of the building, was not preserved. On top of this wall, we uncovered the remains of a domestic-sized building, which contained a large four-horned clay altar and a chalice decorated with petals. From these cultic objects it seems that this was a cultic room, like the Level V room uncovered by the second expedition near the Solar Shrine.¹⁴² The clay altar has a rectangular outline and maximum dimensions of 30 x 33 cm and is 42 cm high (fig. 26). It is composed of two parts: a lower hollow body and a basin on top. The body has a small square opening in the middle of each side. A protruding band of clay was applied to the outside of the upper part of the body, a feature typical of limestone four-horned altars.¹⁴³ On each of the upper corners is a horn. The basin is covered by burn marks. The thick floor separating the basin from the body has a rounded hole about 8 cm in diameter in the center, perhaps for the evacuation of hot burnt materials. Four-horned altars made of clay are known from the Iron Age sites of Tel Rehov, Yavneh, and Hazor.¹⁴⁴

Areas CC and BC

In both areas CC and BC, new city wall was built on top of Level V remains. The excavated area was too small for us to clarify the exact nature of the Level IV remains here. In Area BC, the city wall was built over a row of Level V pillared buildings; the buildings had been dismantled and their stones used in the foundations of the Level IV city wall. This was not a destruction but a case of urban development. In Area BC, no houses were found abutting the new city wall; instead, we observed a wide, shallow depression running parallel to the inside of the city wall. This was apparently

a drainage system to drain away rainwater that would have damaged the mudbrick city wall.

The pottery of Level IV is currently under analysis, and we do not have a complete picture of it. The assemblage resembles that recently published from Level 3 at Beth-Shemesh, which includes bowls decorated with red slip and irregular hand burnish.¹⁴⁵ A clear distinguishing characteristic is the common hammerhead rim of bowls, which is rarely found in Level V and is later replaced by the Judean folded rim of Level III.

LEVEL III: DOMESTIC BUILDINGS NORTH OF THE PALACE

Level III maintained the plan of Level IV with the same orientation, although the new buildings were now built of stone. At this stage, the city of Lachish was in its prime. The Level III city was conquered and destroyed by Sennacherib at the end of the eighth century, and evidence of the battle and destruction is apparent through the site.

Area AA

Remains of Level III were found in both the western and eastern parts of Area AA (online fig. 16). In the western half, Building 350, a dwelling unit, was constructed on a high terrace, on the same orientation as the northern outer courtyard wall of the palace of the kings of Judah. Adjacent and parallel to the wall runs a street separating the palace from the rest of the city; the street testifies to the careful planning of the city in this area. Building 350 was constructed north of the street. A large part of this building was unearched, although its western part extended into the unexcavated area. Two phases were observed in the building that represent renovations carried out during its life span. The building, which contained six rooms, met its end in the Assyrian destruction. Large quantities of pottery vessels were found smashed on its floors and covered by collapsed burnt mudbricks. Among the pottery vessels uncovered were royal Judean *lmlk* (Hebrew “for/to the king”) storage jars. This type of four-handled jar, with a capacity of 45–50 liters, was extensively used by the kingdom for tax collection and distribution.¹⁴⁶ The handles were sometimes stamped with either a royal or a private seal bearing a Hebrew inscription. The royal seals bear one of the four city names *hbrn*

¹⁴² Aharoni 1975, 26–32; Zukerman 2012.

¹⁴³ Gitin 1989.

¹⁴⁴ Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2008; Zwickel 2010, pl. 27.1, 2; Ben-Ami 2012, 63, fig. 2.16.

¹⁴⁵ Bunimovitz et al. 2019, 85–93.

¹⁴⁶ Ussishkin 2004, 2133–47.



FIG. 25. The later remains on the eastern slope of Area BB on the edge of the mound, all in a fragmentary state of preservation: Level IV T-shaped wall BB617; Level II city wall sections BB420 and BB436 and gate leading down to the valley; Level I city wall section BB2503 (drawing by J. Rosenberg).

(Hebron), *zip*, *swkh* (Socoh) and *mmst*.¹⁴⁷ In our excavations, about 10 such handles were found, bearing the city names *hbrn*, *zip*, and *swkh*. The private seals bear personal names, probably those of high-ranking officials in the kingdom's service.¹⁴⁸

A complete juglet was found in Building 350, with a bulla (stamped clay sealing) found inside. The sediment around the juglet was immediately dry sifted, and

two more bullae were retrieved. All the sediment from this area was sent for wet sifting, from which a fourth bulla was retrieved (online fig. 17).¹⁴⁹ During Aharoni's excavations in 1968, a group of 17 bullae was found, also in a juglet,¹⁵⁰ however it dates from Level II. Our new group indicates that it was a common practice to keep bullae in juglets. While two of the new bullae are fragmentary, the other two, stamped with the same

¹⁴⁷ Lipschits et al. 2010, 11.

¹⁴⁸ Garfinkel 1984; 1985.

¹⁴⁹ Klingbeil et al. 2019.

¹⁵⁰ Aharoni 1975, pls. 20, 21.



FIG. 26. Clay four-horned altar from Level IVa in Area BB (restored by O. Cohen; T. Rogovski).

seal, are well preserved. The seal contains a Hebrew inscription with two names: *l'lyqm yhwzrh* (belonging to Eliakim [son of] Yehozarah). The iconographic design consists of two does or gazelles. The new bullae fit well into the patterns already observed for finds of this type. In the Kingdom of Judah, bullae have been found in the two major centers, here at Lachish and at Jerusalem.¹⁵¹

To the east of Building 350 was an open area followed by a cobbled street, built directly above the pebbled street of Level IV and attesting to urban continuity between Levels IV and III. Building 300, east of the cobbled street, was heavily disturbed by building activities and pits of Level II. Nevertheless, it was clear that it was destroyed in a fierce conflagration that yielded evidence of military destruction similar to that found in Building 350: ash, slingstones, arrowheads, and large quantities of pottery were found on the floors.

Area CC

In Area BB, remains of Level III were removed by erosion. However, to the west, in Area CC, evidence emerged for renovations of the Level IV city wall in this phase. A new tower was built on top of the Level V city wall, its foundation trench cutting into the earlier city wall. The outer face of the mudbrick wall was plastered. White plaster on the outer face of the Level III

city wall was also reported by the third expedition.¹⁵² Apparently, the city wall was renovated and plastered in preparation for the Assyrian assault by Sennacherib.

LEVEL II: CITY WALL, EASTERN GATE, DOMESTIC BUILDINGS

Ussishkin argued that after Sennacherib's campaign, the large palace lay in ruins throughout Level II and was not rebuilt.¹⁵³ It is now apparent, however, that Lachish was a major fortified city during this time, prior to the destruction by the Babylonians in 586. Is it likely then that the palace, the symbol of the Judean monarchy, was left in ruins? The new architecture uncovered in Area AA indicates that the private houses of Level II were built in relation to the palace's orientation, a possible indication that it was still functioning at that time. Similarly, the houses in Area CC show that all of the northern side of the site was used for construction up to the edge of the mound.

Area AA

In the eastern half of Area AA, significant remains of Level II included Buildings 200 and 250. Building 200 was found aligned with the northeastern corner of the palace of the kings of Judah, as was observed for the earlier buildings of Levels III and IV. The violent destruction of this level by the Babylonians in 586 was clearly reflected in the rich assemblages of pottery vessels, including large numbers of storage jars, and loomweights. A number of pits were dug from this level into earlier phases.

A special find was a storage jar full of metal objects found buried on its side under the floor. It was taken from the site with all of the surrounding sediment and was later excavated by Miriam Lavi in the conservation laboratory of the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Inside, Lavi found 10 densely packed tools, nine of iron and one of bronze (fig. 27). She also discovered that the handle of the storage jar was impressed with a simple undecorated seal bearing the inscription *lyrmyhw bn spnyhw* (belonging to Jeremiah, son of Şephaniah) (fig. 28). Interestingly, the same person is mentioned on two bullae excavated by Aharoni and assigned to Level II. These two bullae were impressed with a seal bearing

¹⁵¹ Garfinkel and Mendel-Geberovich 2020.

¹⁵² Ussishkin 2004, 710.

¹⁵³ Ussishkin 2004, 774.



FIG. 27. Storage jar full of metal tools found buried on its side under the floor of Building 200, Level II, Area AA.



FIG. 28. Close-up of the seal impression found on the storage jar in figure 27. The Hebrew inscription reads *lyrmyhw bn spnyhw* (belonging to Jeremiah, son of Şephaniah) (T. Rogovski).

the inscription *lyrmyhu bn spnyhu bn nby* (belonging to Jeremiah, son of Şephaniah, son of Nabi).¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Aharoni 1975, 19–22, pls. 20, 21; Avigad and Sass 1997, 207, no. 530. The Hebrew word *nby[a]* means prophet, and Aharoni (1975, 21–22) asked whether *bn nby* “son of Nabi” was the name of the grandfather of Jeremiah or, rather, a title: “at the end of the line there is room for an additional letter; . . . we may conjecture that *nby[a]*, ‘prophet’ was intended. This may be taken as a designation of the man’s or his family’s profession.” The same word *nby*, appearing after the personal name Isaiah on a bulla excavated in the Ophel area of Jerusalem, has been understood by Mazar (2019, 48–53) as the title *nby[a]*, and the person whose name appears on the bulla was identified as the

The presence of a jar and two sealings belonging to Jeremiah in a limited area of Lachish implies that this area was part of his house. As the city of Level II came under the Babylonian siege, he concealed his precious metal objects under the floor of his house, carefully packed in a storage jar. In order to indicate his right to the items, he employed a jar impressed by a seal bearing his name. Evidently, Jeremiah did not survive the siege or the deportation and never returned to retrieve the hidden objects.

Area BB

In Area BB, a segment of the Level II city wall was found running parallel to the eastern slope. Here we uncovered a simple gate in the city walls of Levels II and I (see fig. 25; online fig. 18). This new gate had no chambers or any other type of infrastructure; it is only an opening 3 m wide in the stone wall. This was evidently not an unofficial gate, as the city wall ends squarely on both sides of the opening, with good preservation of the large stones on the northern side. Remains of a road paved with flat stone slabs were found abutting the city wall from outside and abutting the southern, inner side of the gate. Thus, in addition to the large gate complex in the southwestern corner of the site, there was another simple gate in the north-eastern corner.

Area CC

In Area CC, the stone city wall of Level II was uncovered below the narrower Level I wall and above the thicker mudbrick wall of Levels III–IV (see figs. 20, 21). The Level II wall was 3.5 m thick. On the city side of the wall, we uncovered a floor rich in finds, including two storage jar handles with rosette impressions,¹⁵⁵ and the upper part of a pithos with a large clay stopper in its opening. The stopper, resembling artifacts defined as loomweights, is rounded with a central pierced hole. This location supports the notion that

biblical prophet Isaiah. The issue cannot be resolved here, but we note that *nby* can simply be a personal name, with no need to reconstruct a missing aleph, and that the mention of three generations on a seal is rare. Another rare phenomenon is several seals belonging to the same person, but it is attested by, e.g., the three seals of *Elyashiv* that Aharoni excavated at Arad (Aharoni 1981, 119–20, nos. 105–7; see also Avigad and Sass 1997, 73, nos. 70–72).

¹⁵⁵ On Judean administrative seals of this type, see Koch and Lipschits 2013.

some previously identified “loomweights” were actually used in beer production.¹⁵⁶

The Level II city of Lachish was a major administrative center of the Kingdom of Judah. It was encircled by a solid stone city wall, and all of the site was densely occupied, up to Area CC. In our excavations in Area AA, adjacent to the palace of the kings of Judah, large buildings were constructed parallel to the palace. In the same way, the first expedition found a line of rooms in the palace courtyard, abutting its eastern wall.¹⁵⁷ These constructions indicate that the palace area was in use during Level II.

Similar rebuilding during the seventh century has recently been noted at other sites in the Kingdom of Judah: Khirbet Qeiyafa, Socoh, and the recent large-scale salvage excavations east of Beth-Shemesh.¹⁵⁸ The notion that this area was resettled only at the end of the seventh century and for only a short time¹⁵⁹ is hence in need of revision.

LEVEL I

Remains of Level I were found in Areas AA, BB, and CC. In Area AA, the excavations revealed a pit, intruded into earlier Iron Age levels, containing a large upside-down pottery vessel of the type known as the basket-handle amphora.¹⁶⁰

Segments of the city wall of Level I were found in Area CC and in the eastern part of Area BB. The city wall of Level I had previously been exposed on the western and southern sides of the site, and now we have added the northern and eastern sides. In Area CC, three stratigraphic phases, all fortified, were observed in Level I, indicating that the city and its fortifications existed for a considerable time.

In the eastern section of Area BB, a segment of the Level I city wall was found directly on remains of Level IV. This is an exceptional situation, as the Level I city wall was generally built directly on the city wall of Level II. It is possible that the severe erosion observed on the eastern slope of the mound took place between the destruction of Level II and the construction of Level I.

¹⁵⁶ Gal 1989; Ebeling and Homan 2008, 57–60.

¹⁵⁷ Tufnell 1953, pl. 17.6.

¹⁵⁸ Hasel et al. 2017, 83; Weiss et al. 2017; Haddad et al. 2020.

¹⁵⁹ Bunimovitz and Lederman 2003, 20–23; Dagan 2011, 255.

¹⁶⁰ Wolff 2009.

DISCUSSION

The research goals of the Fourth Expedition to Lachish were accomplished as anticipated in five seasons. Part of the project’s research design involved stratigraphic and chronological questions, and we believed that the answers would be found in the northeastern corner of the site. This corner had not been intensively excavated in the past, and the meager data was taken as an indication that this part of the city was not always inhabited. This part of the site, however, is the closest to the nearby valley and enjoys easier access to various benefits: water from the Lachish River, clay for mud-bricks and pottery production, agricultural fields, and the main road in the region.

Three major aspects of the dominant role at Lachish of the site’s northeastern corner are summarized below: the location of the city gate, other important activities there over the course of the site’s long history, and the monumental architecture at Lachish as a means of promoting political power.

The Location of the Gate of the Bronze Age Cities

The only gates previously known at Lachish, dated to Levels IV–I and already uncovered by the first expedition, are located in the southwestern corner of the site. Ussishkin argued that this is the only suitable location for a gate at Lachish, suggesting that the Bronze Age gates too were most likely located nearby.¹⁶¹ Earlier excavators of Lachish, however, had argued that there was probably another gate in the northeastern corner.¹⁶² For several reasons, we believe that the gates of the Bronze Age cities were indeed located in this corner:

(1) The MBA city wall (the revetment) encircles the entire site, apart from a gap of some 50 m near the northeastern corner. This was where the first expedition noticed the “blocking of a gate” (see figs. 4, 7).¹⁶³

(2) The MBA and LBA fortresses could not have functioned without a gate nearby. During an emergency in the valley below, the guards could reach the valley in a few moments if a gate was located above. If the gate was in the southwestern corner, the guards would need to cross the entire city to reach the area.

¹⁶¹ Ussishkin 2014, 22, 227.

¹⁶² Tufnell 1953, 92; Aharoni 1975, 12.

¹⁶³ Tufnell 1953, pl. 11.3.

Placing a fortress in a commanding location without an adjacent gate makes no tactical sense.

(3) The location of the Level VI North-East Temple near a city gate may continue a tradition documented at Shechem and Ashkelon in the MBA¹⁶⁴ and followed by the Iron Age tradition of cult rooms near city gates.¹⁶⁵

(4) The small city of Level V did not extend to the southwestern corner of the site and hence must have had a gate somewhere in the northeastern corner. From this point, the palace-fort of the kings of Judah on the acropolis would have looked most impressive.

(5) A simple gate in the Level II city wall was unearthed in the northeastern corner.

The Importance of the Northeastern Corner of Lachish

Several new lines of evidence stress the importance of the northeastern corner of Lachish during its long history:

(1) MB IIB. In this phase, the massive revetment wall was constructed around the natural hill on which the EBA city had been built. The area between the hill and the wall was filled with sediment, creating a large podium and giving the site its geometric shape. This revetment is missing only near the northeastern corner. It is possible that parts of it were removed by erosion, but this is the only interruption in this wall, a strong indication of a gate here in this phase. We did not penetrate deep enough into this level to locate the gate.

(2) MB IIC. In this phase, an imposing mudbrick fortress was constructed in the northeastern corner of Lachish. The fortress was built to see and be seen. On the one hand, the city controlled the valley from this prominent location, and, on the other hand, anyone passing through would see this imposing military edifice. It was a marker of power and authority, signifying the ruler who resided here.

(3) LB II. The first action in this period was to import a fill, raising the entire northeastern corner of the site by 3–4 m, a project that manipulated the landscape and made the city even more impressive when observed from the valley. On top of this fill was built Level VII, including an imposing stone fortress constructed above the earlier MBA mudbrick for-

trass. Like the previous fortress, it served as a marker of power and authority to anyone traveling along the valley.

(4) Early Iron I. In Level VI, a temple was built on the northern side of the northeastern corner. On the eastern side of the corner, the LBA stone fortress seems to have remained in use. The entrance to the city was probably located between the two, with a large open piazza in between. When entering the city, people would notice, on the left (east), the fortress representing the power of the king, and, on the right (west), the temple representing the power of the gods. When raising their eyes to the upper city, they observed a mirror image in the higher part of the city: the palace of the king and the temple of the gods on the acropolis. In this way, the entire world order was present at the entrance to the Canaanite city of Lachish.

(5) Early Iron IIA. After a gap of some two centuries, the site was rebuilt as Level V in the late 10th or early ninth century. A solid stone-built city wall demonstrates that Level V was already a fortified city in this early period. The fortifications were visible to anyone passing by in the valley as a symbol of the new Iron Age Kingdom of Judah. Although we did not locate the city gate of this level, we did identify a large open area near the northeastern corner that could be part of a gate piazza.

(6) Late Iron IIA. In Level IV, a mudbrick wall 6 m thick encircled the entire site, and Lachish now became the second most important city, after Jerusalem, in the Kingdom of Judah. The city wall was not preserved in the northeastern corner, but the striking T-shaped end of a wall implies that there was a high-quality building here. The large building adjacent to the palace courtyard wall was built in the same orientation, suggesting that the monumental palace was already standing in the Iron IIA.

(7) Iron IIB. Most of the Level III remains had eroded away in the northeastern corner of the site. In Area CC, we uncovered remains of white plaster on the outer face of the mudbrick city wall. When the entire city wall was painted white, it must have been a most imposing sight from the valley. Despite the claim of previous expeditions that the northeastern part of the site was left unoccupied in Level III, we found a street and houses north of the palace courtyard. The bullae found here attest to residences of the elite in this location near the palace.

¹⁶⁴ Campbell 2002, 143–161; Stager 2008, 577.

¹⁶⁵ See, e.g., Blomquist 1999; Garfinkel et al. 2015; Garfinkel and Mumcuoglu 2016; Ganor and Kreimerman 2019.

(8) Iron IIC. The city of Level II occupied the entire mound and was encircled by a stone-built city wall 3.5 m thick. An elaborate gate was built on top of the Level III gate in the southwestern part of the site, and our expedition uncovered another, smaller gate in the northeastern corner. This was an ideal location for a city gate, and previous gates were probably located here during the Bronze and Iron Ages. Houses uncovered in Areas AA and CC indicate that the Level II city was a densely built-up urban center, occupying the entire site. As the houses adjacent to the palace courtyard wall continued to be built in the same orientation as the palace, it is unlikely that the palace of the kings of Judah would have been left in ruins. The palace was most likely restored after the destruction of Level III.¹⁶⁶

(9) The Persian–Early Hellenistic period. In this period Lachish was a major administrative city with a stone wall encircling the entire mound. The official area included a large palace (called by Aharoni the “residency”), built on top of the palace of the kings of Judah, and a nearby temple (the Solar Shrine). Both were monumental and elaborately constructed, with plastered floors and walls. A gate in the northeastern corner would place them in the main part of the city; otherwise, the Solar Shrine would be located at the far end of the city. In the Hellenistic era (third century), the nearby site of Mareshah became the dominant city of the area, and Lachish was abandoned and never resettled as a city.

The Role of Monumental Architecture at Lachish in Promoting Political Power

Public structures were built not only for functional purposes but also to symbolize and communicate the power and values of their builders to the population of the city and the neighboring villages as well as to passersby. One of the main factors that influence this perception of the structures is their location in the urban landscape.¹⁶⁷ At Lachish this is clearly seen in a number of structures, all conspicuous in the northeastern corner of the site: the revetment, the MBA mud-brick fortress, the artificial raising of the LBA city, the LBA stone fortress, the solid-stone city wall of Level V, and the white-plastered city wall of Levels IV–III. All these public constructions were built in a prominent

location to be visible to anyone traveling in the valley below Lachish. The monuments clearly convey a political message of power and authority.

In the Iron Age, a large building, the palace of the kings of Judah, was constructed at the top of the site. Judging by its especially thick walls, this was a very tall building. It was much larger than any other building in the Shephelah, an imposing structure in a commanding location overlooking the entire city and much of the surrounding region. It was a landmark symbolizing the Kingdom of Judah. Based on the orientation of the buildings of Levels IV–II around it, it was continually occupied and not left in ruins after the Assyrian campaign of Sennacherib.

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¹⁶⁶The third section of the palace of the kings of Judah, known as Palace C, was probably added in Level II; see supra n. 134.

¹⁶⁷Lawrence and Low 1990; Maran et al. 2006.

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