Megiddo

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by
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Brief History of Megiddo

Tel Megiddo, the Neo-Assyrian Empire site also known as Magiddu, Tell el-Mutesllim “Mound of the Governor” Hazor and Beer Sheba (c732-609 BCE,) became an important city before being destroyed. Through excavation, it is said to have been inhabited from 7000 - 5000 to 350 BCE[1], until it was abandoned. Megiddo was settled as early as the pre-pottery Neolithic period which ran from 8300-5500 B.C.E. It was in the early bronze age that it became a large unfortified settlement as a mound 100 feet above the Jezreel Valley.

Geography

Northern Israel near Kibbutz Megiddo overlooking the Jezreel Valley, guards the Wadi Ara (Via Maris) – the most important ancient Levantine trade route from Egypt to the Fertile Crescent along the Palestinian Mediterranean coastal plain.

Megiddo and the Jezreel Valley. Courtesy Photo Companion to the Bible, Joshua

[1] Wikpedia, Tel Megiddo

Time Period

In the Bronze age, it was an important Canaanite city-state. In the Iron Age, it became a royal city in the Kingdom of Israel under King Solomon. The Egyptians ruled this area for about Three Hundred Years until they were outed during the time of Rameses VI.

Significance of the Area

It was located on the major trade route known for its historical, geographical, and theological importance because it was strategically placed at the northern end of the Wadi Aa. It has a rich history because it guarded the western branch of a narrow trade route of the Fertile Crescent area. It was a place of many battles and was also a place known for worship with large altars. As a tel that has many layers, (20 strata) important archaeology has been found in the area since the 1920's and 1930's by several archaeologists giving us an important look into the lives of the Bronze and Iron Age.

A place of Worship

During early archaeological digs, surrounded by massive city walls, three impressive temples (4040, 5192,5269) were found which dates to the Early Bronze Age.[23] Also found was a huge altar with seven steps to the top. Large amounts of bones and pottery were found inside. Houses called broad houses were very popular at this time and were rectangular in shape made of clay.

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[2] The Anchor Bible page 668 – Stratigraphy and Chronology made by Kenyon (1958), Thompson (1970), Dunayevsky and Kempinski (1973), Kempinski (1989), and Brandfon (1977) massive walls found in Strata XVIII-XV.

[3] Zondervan Essential Atlas of the Bible – it was also said in the ANET, 237 of the conquest that a scribe once said, "the capturing of Megiddo is like the capturing of a thousand towns."

▲ *Megiddo: sacrificial altar (25 feet in diameter) from the Early Bronze Age*

Importance in Bible Times

Thutmose III

In 1457 BC in the beginning of his reign, Thutmose III defeated the King of Kadesh. Because he was able to defeat him at Megiddo, he was able to take control of most of the Southern Levant.[4]

Monarchy – David and Solomon

David was said to have consolidated his territory by taking control of Jezreel, Harod valley – Megiddo, Taanach, Ibleam, and Beth Shan**.** 2 Samuel 8 speaks of David's great victories taking over the land and subduing the kings of that time. After many wars with the Ammonites and the Arameans, he also fought with the Philistines and won in this region. (1 Chron 18:1)[5]

Much have been discovered from Solomon's reign at Megiddo. Archaeologist, Yigael Yadin[6] identified a large pillar hall from the Iron Age as Solomon's Stables. Solomon also fortified the trade route that passed through Israel – The International highway, by building large gates at the

[4]Zondervan Essential Atlas of the Bible, Historical Section: Exodus and Conquest, page 44-45
[5] Zondervan Essential Atlas of the Bible, Historical Section: The United Monarchy: David and Solomon, page 70
[6] Twenty Years in Megiddo, by Nathan Steinmeyer, Biblical Archaeology Society 11/19/21

three strategic cities of Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer which are also known as the six-chambered Solomonic gates.

Divided Kingdom – The end of Assyria the Battle of the King of Judah and The Egyptian King Neco II

Throughout the generations Israel continued to win strategic battles at Megiddo. King Josiah of Judah was able to conquer the last Assyrian ruler, Ashur-uballit who joined forces with Egyptian King Neco II who was defeated at Megiddo. (2 Kings 23:29-30)[7]

Radiocarbon

Megiddo is a large mound and still an active dig site. Matthew Adams, co-director of The Megiddo Expedition[8] have been digging there for twenty years. He says the importance of the Megiddo site is due to it being the place where many important archaeological standard practices took place. He prizes the use of radiocarbon technology being used even though it had been around for 75 years, Israel Finkelstein made it standard to use it throughout the tel which has been instrumental in dating the pottery, and other artifacts found there.

Who lived at Megiddo?

Because it was under the rule of the Egyptians for three hundred years, first under the rule of the Pharaoh, Thutmose III, I am going to say that the Egyptians were responsible for the building and the habitation of this area for many of years. This would see logical since the Egyptians were known to build elaborate structures that took many years to build during these times. Manual

[7] Zondervan Essential Atlas of the Bible, Historical Section: Judah Alone, page 88-89

[8] Twenty Years in Megiddo, by Nathan Steinmeyer, Biblical Archaeology Society 11/19/21 – Israel Finkelstein, co - director of the Megiddo excavation made it a mission during the expedition to do the high-resolution sampling throughout the Strata making it a standard practice in excavation.

labor performed by slaves have built many of their temples and homes dedicated to the Pharaoh ruling at that time.[9] In the article, Noah Weiner tries t determine who he thinks lived in the Levant at this time. The unearthing of Megiddo's Great Temple of Early Bronze IB (ca.3000 B.C.E.), found in EB I Levant, is said to be the only (singlest) edifice that is such a monumental structure and "ranks among the largest structures of its time in the Near East." In an additional article by Matthew J. Adams[10] he said. "the discovery of this monument provides new evidence for the rise of social and political complexity in the region." With every new excavation, the importance and this area as a world super power during this era continues to emerge and shed new light of the highly sophisticated inhabitants that built and dwelt there." Many ceramics and lithics, which gives a glimpse into cultic activity at the Great Temple. Israel Finkelstein[11], explains that it was between two groups of people migrating into the Levant at this time - The Philistines locally made monochrome vessels, and the bichrome pottery (dated possibly the late Iron Age), dated in the Late Bronze Age and the 20th Dynasty Egyptian pottery, found by Singer in the late 1980's (1988-1989), indicates the time of the end of the Egyptians time in Canaan during the time of Ramesses VI, were all found in the tight stratigraphy at Megiddo which gives us another level of the tel's importance. He stated, "the Sea Peoples," better known to us as the Philistines, even though it is possible that other groups that were also described as the Sea Peoples, not just the Philistines were there alongside of the Egyptians.

In Conclusion, Megiddo was not just strategically placed on a very important road (the Via Maris) and surrounded by the Jezreel Valley and Hazor, but it is a tel of great significance to the

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[9] Early Bronze Age: Megiddo's Great Temple and the Birth of Urban Culture in the Levant by Noah Wiener, November 14, 2021 Biblical Archelogy Society at a glance.

[10] The Great Temple of Early Bronze I Megiddo, By Matthew J. Adams, Israel Finkelstein, and David Ussiskin, American Journal of Archaeology Vol. 118, No.2 (April 2014), pp.285-305

[11] Finkelstein, Israel, et al. "NEW EVIDENCE ON THE LATE BRONZE/IRON I TRANSITION AT MEGIDDO:

land of Israel, and to the scholarly world of archeology. One of the most excavated sites in the Levant, it has shaped the way we see the ancient world, the culture, the people of the land, as well as the land itself, as it continues to expand our knowledge of the Bronze and Iron ages. Most importantly, we have evidence of people, places and times of long ago that is fictious, but real proof, that the Bible itself is not just a story, but God once had His hand in revealing Himself through a people we have come to know through ancient Judaism, to let us know that God spoke to a people, delivered them from the bondage of the Egyptians and bought them out into a land of milk and honey – The land of Canaan.

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