Tel Gezer is an ideal site to address current research paradigms. Located on one of the most important crossroads and mentioned in several historical texts, Gezer clearly was an important site in the history of ancient Palestine. Although previous excavations have revealed much of Gezer’s history, there are still many questions left unresolved that are key to reconstructing the history of ancient Palestine.

The research goal of the project is to investigate state formation and regional boundaries in the northern Shephelah by investigating the Iron Age cultural horizon at Tel Gezer. These broad research trends in Iron Age archaeology are being addressed by current research projects in the Shephelah (foothills) and southern coastal plain, specifically ethnic and political boundaries in the Judean Hills and the Philistine coastal plain. Tel Gezer is perfectly situated to address the regional geo-political dynamic between Judah and Philistia during the Iron Age. Gezer is a type-site with an excellent ceramic corpus from Iron Age horizons that will provide a well-sequenced database. This database will clarify current issues concerning the history of Gezer and also contribute to an understanding of state formation and boundaries in the northern Shephelah.

**Site Identification**

The ancient city of Gezer is identified as Tell Jezer (Tell Jazari, Tel Gezer). This site, roughly 30 acres in size and situated at 225 m above sea level, is located on the western flank of the Shephelah, overlooking the coastal plain of Israel. It is strategically located, situated near the junction where the Via Maris meets the trunk road leading to Jerusalem and its vicinity. The tell consists of two mounds with a saddle between them. The dozen or so inscribed boundary stones found surrounding the site verify the identification of the mound as Gezer, which is mentioned in several ancient sources, including the Tell el-Amarna letters and, of course, the Old Testament, where, among other references, it is listed as one of Solomon’s royal store cities (1 Kgs 9:15–17).
Gezer in History

Gezer is attested as an important city in biblical, Egyptian, and Assyrian sources, first appearing as a major Canaanite city-state through much of the second millennium B.C.E. The mound of Gezer was initially occupied around 3500 B.C.E., and the settlement continued to grow until it was a walled city during the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 2000–1500 B.C.E.), when major fortifications (gate, tower, glacis) were built and the "high place" was founded. The city was destroyed (ca. 1500 B.C.E.) and rebuilt during the Late Bronze Age, when it came under Egyptian hegemony, as evidenced by several palaces and residences. Gezer is mentioned in the annals of Thutmose III (ca. 1468 B.C.E.), the Amarna letters (fourteenth century B.C.E.), and Merneptah’s Victory Stela. Gezer is also mentioned in an inscription from a relief of Tiglath-pileser III (eighth century B.C.E.). Gezer became known as Gazara in the Hellenistic period and became an important city for the Hasmonean rulers.

Gezer in the Hebrew Bible

Gezer has an ambiguous history in the biblical text. Joshua defeated the king of Gezer who was part of a Canaanite coalition (Josh 10:33), yet Gezer remained in Canaanite hands throughout the period of the Judges (Josh 16:10; Judg 1:29), even though it formed the boundary for Ephraim’s tribal allotment (Josh 16:3) and was assigned as a Levitical city (Josh 21:21). David fought against the Philistines near Gezer (2 Sam 5:25; 1 Chr 20:4), and later Gezer was conquered by Egypt and given to Solomon as a dowry for his marriage to Pharaoh’s daughter. It finally came under Israelite control as Solomon fortified Gezer along with Jerusalem, Hazor, and Megiddo (1 Kgs 9:15–17).

Gezer: A History of Iron Age Research

The Iron Age strata at Gezer are well-known, particularly the results of the Hebrew Union College excavations in Field VII. While complete excavation reports of the Iron Age gate complex (Field III) and the 1984 excavations are lacking, several synthetic articles have been published. The Iron Age I period is represented by Strata XIII–XI. In Field VI on the acropolis, several subphases were excavated. A large public granary, threshing floor, and later two large courtyard houses were excavated. These strata were also found in Fields I and II. Strata X–IX (late eleventh–mid-tenth centuries B.C.E.) were defined as “two ephemeral ‘post-Philistine/pre-Solomonic’ phases” (Dever 1992, 1001). The excavators noted that these phases contained unburnished, thin, red slip pottery and poor architecture. The key stratum for the archaeology of Solomon is Stratum VIII. Most of this stratum is represented by the fortifications in Field III and a part of the city wall in Field II. The tenth-century stratum is scant in other excavation fields. This is perhaps due to removal or disturbance by later Hellenistic occupation, or it may indicate “that Gezer under Solomonic control was little more than a token administrative center” (Dever 1993b, 505). These phases were violently destroyed, a destruction that Dever associated with the campaigns of the Egyptian pharaoh mentioned in 1 Kgs 9:15–17. While the identification of this pharaoh as Siamun of the Twenty-First Dynasty and whether he had campaigns in Syria-Palestine is questioned, it has recently been revived with the evidence from Tel Dor and the work on stamp seal amulets of the Twenty-First Dynasty by Stefan Münger (2003).

Figure 2. Major Iron Age sites of the coastal plain, Shephelah, and hill country of Judah.
The first intensive exploration of Tel Gezer was conducted by R. A. S. Macalister during the years 1902–1905 and 1907–1909, under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF). Macalister published the results of these early excavations in three volumes (1912). Macalister excavated nearly 40 percent of the tel. Unfortunately, the methods of excavation were very primitive, as Macalister dug the site in strips and backfilled each trench. As a result of his excavations, he distinguished eight levels of occupation.

The next excavator at Gezer was Raymond-Charles Weill, known for his excavations in Jerusalem before and after World War I (1913–1914 and 1923–1924) under the patronage of Baron Rothschild. In 1914 and again in 1924, Weill excavated lands around Tel Gezer that had been acquired by Baron Rothschild. Not much was reported on these excavations until a recent publication by Aren Maeir (2004). In 1934, renewed excavations were conducted under the direction of Alan Rowe under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Society. This excavation was terminated after a short season. Only preliminary reports were produced, but the data from the excavation is available at the offices of the Palestine Exploration Fund and the Israel Antiquities Authority.

The American Gezer Project began in 1964 under the auspices of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and the Harvard Semitic Museum, with Nelson Glueck and Ernest Wright as advisors. William G. Dever led the Phase I excavations (1964–1971) of the HUC-Harvard excavations. Phase II was led by Joe D. Seger (1972–1974). These excavations distinguished twenty-one stratigraphic levels from the Late Chalcolithic to the Roman period. Currently, five large final report volumes have been produced (Dever, Lance, and Bullard 1986; and Seger, Lance, and Bullard 1988), with two more on the small finds and the Middle Bronze Age fortifications of Field IV in advanced stages of publication. Two additional seasons by Dever were conducted in 1984 and 1990.

The main results of Phase I were (1) redating the city defenses such as Macalister’s “inner wall,” “outer wall,” and the “Maccabean castle”; (2) dating the famous “high place”; (3) clarifying the Middle and Late Bronze Age domestic levels; and (4) illuminating the “Philistine” Iron Age I horizon. The objectives of the Phase II excavations were to investigate the city’s Iron Age and later stratigraphy and to expand investigations of the Middle Bronze Age southern gate in Field IV.

The current Tel Gezer Excavation project is a long-term project directed by Dr. Steven M. Ortiz of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Dr. Samuel Wolff of the Israel Antiquities Authority. The excavation is sponsored by the Tandy Institute for Archaeology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and receives financial support from a consortium of institutions: Ashland Theological Seminary, Clear Creek Bible College, Marian Eakins Archaeological Museum, Lancaster Bible College, Lycoming College, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, St. Mary’s University College, and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. The excavations are carried out within the Tel Gezer National Park and benefit from the cooperation of the National Parks Authority. The excavation project also receives support from Kibbutz Gezer and the Karmei Yosef Community Association. The project is affiliated with the American Schools of Oriental Research. The project consists of a field school where an average of sixty to ninety students and staff participate each season. To date, students and staff have come from the United States, Denmark, Canada, Korea, India, Palestinian Territories, and Israel.

The Iron Age II strata, Strata VIII–V, were excavated in Fields III and II (fortifications) and in Fields VI and VII (domestic structures). The major stratum of the Iron II is Stratum VI (early–mid-eighth century). Most notable are the excavations of Field VII, where a large domestic quarter was excavated (Gitin 1990). Other strata were either not excavated or were identified as ephemeral phases, such as stratum VII (ninth century B.C.E.) or stratum V of the late eighth–seventh centuries B.C.E.

Iron Age Gates and Casemate Wall

The archaeology of Solomon at Gezer was made famous by Yigael Yadin’s hypothesis that Solomon constructed gates of similar plan at Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer (1958), and the renewed HUC excavations of the Maccabean Castle confirmed the dating and identification of the six-chambered gate. Results of excavations are based on the work by John Holladay (1990) of the Phase I HUC excavations and the 1984 excavations by Dever (1984, 1990). These results are only available in preliminary reports. The gate was well-built according to the built-up method as defined by Ussishkin (1990), in which the foundations are built first and then filled, creating a podium upon which the city gate was built. It was constructed of large hewn limestone boulders with ashlar masonry at the entrance. The gate contains six chambers, or guardrooms, facing each other, three on each side. The gate has two towers attached to its outer face, with a casemate wall constructed with the gate complex. Each chamber contained plastered benches, and a large stone basin was in the first northern chamber. A plastered downspout drain was at the rear corner of the gate. A
well-designed water drainage system was installed shortly after the construction. The floor surface was raised and a central water channel 1 m in depth was cut running down the center of the street. This was covered with slabs. This gate was destroyed at the end of the tenth century and rebuilt as a four-chambered gate in the ninth century and used into the eighth century. The gate was reused in the Hellenistic period.

In addition to the casemate wall, Gezer had an outer wall. The wall consisted of a single wall line that varied between 1.25 and 1.6 m thick, with ashlar towers and bastions added to it (Dever 1986, 32 n. 25). The HUC excavation’s dating of the outer wall to the Late Bronze Age continues to be supported by the excavators (Dever 1986, 1990). The HUC excavation postulated that the six-chambered gate was inserted into a breach in the outer wall when several ashlar towers were added to the wall.

In the 1984 excavations, part of the casemate wall, gatehouse, outer wall, and auxiliary buildings to the west of the gate were excavated. Dever (1984, 1990) reaffirmed his dating of the gate and casemate but postulated that the outer wall had two separate construction phases (LB and Iron Age rebuilt). The two phases of the outer wall were again postulated in the 1990 excavations, during which a section of the outer wall was excavated on the north side of the tel. Dever (1993a) proposed that all components of the fortification system were built at the same time.

**Gezer Iron Age Debates**

A debate over the Iron Age at Gezer arose during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Several scholars challenged the outer wall conclusions of the HUC excavations: Kempinski (1972, 1976) and Kenyon (1977) in their reviews of *Gezer I* (Dever, Lance, and Wright 1970) and *Gezer II* (Dever 1974), followed a few years later by Zertal (1981), Finkelstein (1981), and Bunimovitz (1983). Most proposed that the outer wall dated to the Iron Age IIB, although Kenyon dated the wall to the Hellenistic period and Zertal to the post-Assyrian period. During the 1990s an issue of *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* focused on the archaeology of Solomon. While the archaeological data of the Iron Age was primarily discussed, the debate centered on methods and historical correlations. This was the foreshadowing of the “low chronology” proposal that came five years later.

While the issues and debates associated with Solomon at Gezer are complex, some summary observations are in order. Most scholars date the fortifications to the Iron Age period. Most note that the two wall lines (casemate and outer wall) as well as the two gates are an integrated system of defense. Scholars are divided as to whether there are two phases (tenth century and a later rebuilding during the ninth or eighth centuries B.C.E.) or only one. Dever attempted to answer the critics by conducting two single-season excavations in 1984 and 1990, but it is clear that these were not adequate to address the complex stratigraphic issues of Tel Gezer. These stratigraphic issues are compounded by later Hellenistic rebuilding and Macalister’s excavations.

**The New Tandy Excavations**

Our renewed excavations focus on the Iron Age levels of Tel Gezer, which will require us to excavate a large horizontal exposure on the south-central part of the tell, where a majority of the Iron Age strata have been revealed and/or excavated. The excavations are designed to unite the Iron Age architectural elements and cultural horizons of Field VII and Field III of the HUC excavations with our renewed excavations, thus allowing for optimal reconstruction of the growth and expansion of the Iron Age city as well as artifact distribution patterns.

Field E (east) encompasses an area west of the Iron Age gate complex (Field III of the HUC excavations). This area’s excavations seek to investigate the urbanization process of the Iron Age city. This field includes an east-west section of squares from the Iron Age gate to the west exposing the city fortification system and its relation to building activity built up against the city wall and an area north of the fortification wall where a series of large public buildings are located. Excavations in Field W (west), located west of Field E, are designed to explore the several Iron Age occupation horizons of the tell and to provide data from Iron Age domestic quarters to compare and contrast with the public buildings to the southeast in Field E. It also includes a north-south sondage (small test excavation) to investigate the relationship between the Iron Age wall and the “outer” wall.

During the course of the five excavation seasons completed thus far, we have uncovered nearly 300 m² of area. Our emphasis has concentrated on three sections of the ancient city, which will be the focus of the rest of this article: the fortification system, the administrative center, and the domestic quarter. Iron-
ically, while Gezer is well-known for its tenth-century B.C.E. city, our excavations have revealed only a limited exposure of the Solomonic city. There are eleven major strata, the most extensive being the tenth century, ninth century, eighth century, and Hellenistic. To date we have excavated these eleven strata, most corresponding with results of earlier excavations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preliminary Strata</th>
<th>Field E (formerly A)</th>
<th>Field W (formerly A-sondage and B)</th>
<th>HUC Excavations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>topsoil, modern excavation dumps</td>
<td>trenches, rock piles</td>
<td>trenches, rock piles, HUC dump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Macalister</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hellenistic</td>
<td>retaining walls, pottery kiln, reused IA walls</td>
<td>domestic buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>ceramic</td>
<td>ceramic, dog burials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Late Iron Age II</td>
<td>silo, pits, domestic str.</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>IA II (8th) Assyrian destruction</td>
<td>public: administrative buildings A–B; rebuilt fortification walls HUC: four-chambered gate</td>
<td>public: industrial building C; silo; rebuilt fortification walls; domestic: four-room house, street HUC: domestic buildings in Field VII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>9th</td>
<td>domestic: Units A–C</td>
<td>Unit D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>public: casemate city wall HUC: six-chambered gate; casemate fortification</td>
<td>fortifications: casemate city wall; Buildings 52136 and 52057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>IA I</td>
<td>destruction layer</td>
<td>destruction layer, walls, complete storage jars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>ceramic</td>
<td>ceramic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>LB</td>
<td>ceramic</td>
<td>pillared building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evidence of Macalister’s deep trenching was found in almost every square worked by the Tandy excavators. It is apparent that Macalister backfilled areas with a rocky matrix, leaving only the architectural features. This is particularly evident in the Hellenistic buildings.

The Hellenistic stratum yielded the remains of at least three buildings (Buildings A–C) and a rebuild of the city wall. An extensive architectural plan is achieved when these are joined to those of HUC and Macalister Field VII. No floors or fill layers were preserved from this stratum; Macalister removed them all, leaving behind only walls and a deep backfill. The Hellenistic pottery recovered from the Macalister fills, which occur throughout our excavation, has yet to be studied in detail. Nonetheless, datable finds from our excavations—such as stamped Rhodian amphora handles, a Tyrian lead weight of the Tanit series (Wolff and Finkielsztejn 2009), and a didrachm of Ptolemy VI—suggest a Hellenistic occupation from the end of the third century B.C.E. to 142 B.C.E.

Two ephemeral post–Iron Age phases were found, datable to the periods following the Iron II destruction. The lowest of these consisted of scattered architectural remains, including a silo and patches of a surface on which a stump-base lamp sat. The silo (preserved ca. 2 m high), which cut into the four-room house, contained pottery vessels and a zoomorphic vessel dating to the late eighth–seventh centuries B.C.E. (Stratum 5). The latest phase featured extensive pitting and at least three dog burials, which should probably be associated with fifteen dog burials discovered in Field VII.
Fortification System

The fortification system was designed around the ancient topography. Today most of the topography is difficult to discern due to the many hills and dumps of Macalister’s excavations, as well as the Hellenistic occupation. The site consists of two hills with a saddle in between. During the Middle Bronze Age, both hills were occupied, with the main southern entrance to the site from the south of the western hill (MB Gate System in Field IV of the HUC excavations). During the Iron Age, the entrance continued to the south but shifted to guard the low point of the site, when a gate system was built into the saddle as the engineers built up the saddle with a podium (see discussion above).

Iron Age Fortifications

The Iron Age gate complex has been completely excavated, so it is not possible to reexcavate the gate to address the debate over its dating. The only options for reexamining the dating is to open up the lower gate complex or to excavate to the east or west of the gate. The 1984 excavations already excavated probes in each of these areas. Based on the initial results and the goal to unite the domestic quarter and the public buildings, our project decided to open a large area west of the gate. The first season of excavations in 2006 concentrated on the line of the city wall. Since the city wall is connected to the gate, various occupational levels built up against the wall would provide a history of the uses of the gate complex. Field W was opened up in 2007 (originally Field B and Field A-sondage) with the goal of obtaining a complete stratigraphic picture from the Hellenistic occupation to the Middle Bronze Age. In addition, this field would also provide a cross-section of the fortification systems (both the inner and outer walls) and their relation to the public and domestic quarters. While the sondage from the line of the casemate city wall to the base of the tel was a labor-intensive process, it was key to defining the original topography of the site as well as the obstacles for the Iron Age builders. Two fortification systems were found in this field, part of the Middle Bronze Age glacis (see the “Middle Bronze II Rampart and Glacis” sidebar) as well as a complex Iron Age fortification system consisting of several subsurface components.

The Six-Chambered Gate

The results of the HUC excavations of the six-chambered gate are published only in preliminary articles. As stated earlier, the six-chambered gate was constructed in the tenth century with the built-up technique. This gate sits in the center of the saddle at the lowest point of the tel (also the weakest point to defend). The HUC excavation team noted this topographical feature but postulated that the gate was inserted into a breach in the “outer wall.” The gate is contemporary with the casemate wall, and no earlier wall line was found in the current Tandy excavations. Thus it is clear, based on the new excavation data, that there is no “gap” in an earlier wall system but that the gate and casemate were designed as an integrated fortification system (Dever et al. 1971; Holladay 1990). Holladay noted that the early fill was a continuation of late Philistine wares (e.g., streaky red slip) that he dated to the early tenth century B.C.E. This phenomenon was also found in the fill of a casemate (Dever’s Casemate 12) as well as in the fill among the retaining walls (see below).
The Middle Bronze Age fortification system is well-known, especially on the western hill, where the Hebrew Union College excavations have revealed a major tower and gate system. Middle Bronze Age fortifications have been found throughout the tell; they were also found in Field W of the Tandy excavations.

In Field W, an MBII glacis composed of small boulder-sized stones was uncovered. This feature extends down the slope, beginning about 5 m to the south of the Iron Age city wall, but well below the Iron Age fortifications. These stones were exposed for a length of 10 m from east to west and likely extend east and west of the current excavation area. This glacis continues 9 m down slope from its upper limit to its lowest exposed levels. The glacis slopes at circa 15 degrees but is steeper to the east. Near the highest part of the glacis and integrated into its steepest portion is a section of a wall more than 6 m long that extends eastward into the balk. This wall is preserved to a height of three courses of boulders and cobble-sized stones; its width remains undetermined, as it extends into the northern balk. The function of this wall is uncertain; it may have stabilized the glacis.

The stone glacis was founded on a rampart composed of dike and fill layers of alternating plaster and soil. Only the uppermost two layers in this sequence were excavated. The southern edge of the top plaster layer in the sequence (15–20 cm thick) meets the top stones of the glacis. The plaster extends east–west for at least 15 m, although its traces are more patchy toward the east, then continues northward from the glacis for at least 3 m as a flat plaster “cap” to this fortification system. A short wall section built of two courses and three rows of small unhewn boulders was uncovered above this plaster cap. Its function remains enigmatic. A small probe (1 x 1 m) into the sealed locus below the plastered cap yielded only MB II pottery, thus dating the entire structure to that period. This type of rampart construction had already been found at Gezer, although no other excavations had found a stone glacis associated with the dirt rampart. Perhaps a stone covering was needed at this part of the MB outer fortification, as it was located between the slope of the western hill and the descent of the central valley—a possible weak part that was exposed to erosion (Burke 2008, 52–56).

Casemate City Wall

The casemate system extends about 30 m west of the gate. Each of the two parallel walls are solidly built of large unhewn boulders each two rows wide, with central chinking stones and small boulders. Each measures about 1.5 m in width. The casemate rooms (ca. 5.0 x 1.5 m each) were separated from each other by divider walls (width ca. 1.5 m); all chambers excavated by us were devoid of finds, most likely having been removed by Macalister. The founding levels of the walls rise as the system moves upslope to the west. The nature of the wall system changes some 30 m west of the gate structure. It appears that the original wall was breached in antiquity and was rebuilt on a slightly different line and seemingly not as a casemate. The outer casemate wall disappears at this point—there is no clear end or corner. The broken western end of the outer casemate rests directly on top of an architectural feature that served as a retention system (see below) that should be understood as the construction phase of the foundations of the casemate system. The original length of this casemate system in its first phase from the gate westward cannot be determined with certainty.

The inner wall of the casemate system was breached about 30 m west of the gate and subsequently rebuilt, likely more than once. The extant rebuilds consist of a single wall of one to two rows of large boulders. A burnt yellow mudbrick construction fill was exposed beneath it; this fill layer also lies underneath nearby Iron II (eighth-century) construction. Thus, at least this section of the rebuild should be dated to this phase. Shifts in the inner wall line as well as earlier material observed under the stones in another section of the wall lead us to surmise that other rebuilds of this wall may well belong to additional Iron II phases between the casemate phase and the eighth-century phase. A later rebuild occurred in the Hellenistic period.

Iron IIA Glacis and Retaining Walls

A large stone glacis was built up against the outer side of the Iron Age city wall. This glacis extends from the western edge of the excavations almost 15 m eastward and approximately 10 m southward, with a 1.3 m drop in slope. At the southern edge of this glacis, the stones end in an uneven and erratic edge that drops vertically 1.6 m to the level of the MB II glacis below. This would appear to indicate that the stones of the Iron II glacis were robbed, either in antiquity or during Macalister’s excavation. The stones of this glacis are smaller than the stones of the MB II glacis.

The stones in the northern portion of the Iron II glacis merge into a system of retaining walls and crib walls that was exposed for roughly 25 m. The system includes nine crib walls, more or less evenly spaced, fronted by low retaining walls to the south. It angled upslope and supported a wall system above it. Similar walls were noted in earlier excavations at Gezer conducted in contemporaneous fills to the east and west of the six-chambered gate (see Dever 1986). Several storage-jar stoppers/plugs were excavated in the deep contemporary construction backfill within one of the “chambers” created by this system. One of these stoppers bore an Egyptian stamp typical of the so-called Early Iron Age Mass-Produced Seals (EIAMS) series dated by some scholars from the twelfth/eleventh to early tenth centuries B.C.E. and by others to the mid-tenth century B.C.E., thus dating both the upper glacis and retaining wall system to late Iron I or early Iron II. The crib and retaining walls of this unit were built into Iron Age I destruction debris.
Late Bronze–Iron Age I Occupation

One of the unexpected results of the sondage in Field W was the discovery of several occupational phases of the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age I. These phases were excavated immediately beneath the city wall and directly above the Middle Bronze Age glacis. This was unexpected, as the surface levels of the Late Bronze and Iron Age I buildings are above the surfaces of the Iron Age in Field E. This is easily explained: the levels in Field E are within the low part of the saddle, while this part of the excavation is upslope on the western hill.

Unfortunately, to date we have only a small exposure, and it is on the edge of the western slope where part of the southern face of structures was eroded. We uncovered a square-shaped pillared building measuring 10 × 11 m and dating to the Late Bronze Age. This building was found beneath the casemate wall and sitting on top of the MB glacis. This building would have been located on the edge of the western hill above the saddle to the east and overlooking the wadi/valley to the south. A destruction debris consisting of dark ash and fired mudbrick detritus was found nearly a meter in height in some areas. The pottery associated with this destruction consists of LB II pottery. In other parts of the excavations we discovered typical Late Bronze Pottery, including imports (Cypriote White Slip II Milk Bowls, Mycenaean LHIIIB, and Cypriote Base-Ring I and II). Above this LB pillared building and in excavation areas to the north were a series of foundation walls that are tentatively dated to Iron Age I (1200–1000 B.C.E.). This stratum was also destroyed. The destruction is tentatively dated to the Iron Age I solely on the form of the store jars. Speculation on placing these within historical events would lead to Merneptah’s campaign for the Late Bronze Age destruction and Pharaoh Siamun for the Iron Age I destruction campaign.

Summary

The Iron Age fortification system was first constructed in the tenth century B.C.E. (based on the HUC excavation results) and continued in use, albeit with rebuilds, until the eighth century, when it was destroyed by Tiglath-pileser III. There is no evidence that the fortification system was reused after this period, with the possible exception of reuse of walls during the Hellenistic period. The 1984 excavations also investigated the outer gatehouse and dated its original construction to the tenth century B.C.E.
Administrative Quarter

West of the city gate and north of the casemate city wall is an administrative area that changed character throughout the Iron Age period. Here the process of urbanization, growth, and reorganization of the Iron Age city is especially evident. The excavations have defined three major strata of the Iron Age city located in this area. Excavations have also identified a series of public buildings built up against the interior face of the casemate wall.

Stratum 8: Tenth-Century Buildings

The 1984 Dever excavations found evidence of two building complexes: guardrooms (built up against the western face of the six-chambered gate) and an administrative building to the west of these guardrooms (Palace 10000). Only a small excavation area (two 5 x 5 m excavation squares) in Field E and remnants of two building complexes in Field W can be associated with this stratum of previous excavations (Stratum VIII of the HUC, Phase 3 of the 1984 excavations). The two squares of Field E re-excavated test pits of the 1984 excavations. One of the features discovered was large, boulder-sized worked stone as well as tipped-over rectangular pillars over a meter in height. Based on these limited exposures, it is clear that the quarter west of the gate complex consisted of large public buildings. The guardrooms excavated in 1984 are still visible today, and they are comparable to the massive walls of the gate complex. They were constructed of well-hewn stone two or three courses in height and just over .5 m in thickness. The question is whether this is a single building as part of the "guardrooms" or one of several large public buildings similar to what was found in the eighth-century stratum (see below).

The HUC and 1984 excavations dated this stratum to the end of the tenth century, which they associate with Shishak's campaign. We also found pottery that is typical of the Iron Age II (red slip hand-burnished bowls, kraters), but this was only in fills, not from destruction on surfaces.

Most of the Iron Age was poorly preserved in Field W, due to later Hellenistic building activity and the early twentieth-century excavations by Macalister. Remnants of buildings were uncovered that are tentatively dated to Stratum 8. Two building complexes were discerned: one abutted the north face of the casemate wall (Building 52136), and a second building was located to its north (Building 52057). Building 52136 consists of a main room with two other rooms that abutted the city wall. The main room, 5 x 5 m, contained a cobbled surface with a tabun that had an entrance from the east. Nothing is known of the western part of this building, as it continues into an unexcavated area. Building 52057 was north and contained an installation. Unfortunately, no surfaces were preserved. The relationship between these two buildings and the structures excavated by previous excavations by the gate are unknown, as Field E has not been excavated to this stratum.

Stratum 7: Ninth-Century Buildings

The nature of the administrative quarter was drastically altered in the ninth century. The character of this part of the city changed from large administrative buildings to small domestic units. Above the large tenth-century administrative buildings and below Administrative Buildings A and B (see below) of the eighth century B.C.E. are three domestic com-
plexes. Only the southern parts of these units were excavated. It is clear that they continue to the north under the eighth-century occupation. Each of these units is built up against the north face of the casemate wall. While this stratum was identified in the 1984 excavations, the limited excavation exposure did not allow earlier excavations to discern its cultural horizon.

Three architectural complexes have thus far been defined: Complex C is next to and west of the area of the soldier’s barracks, followed by Complexes B and A as one proceeds west. Each complex is about 10 x 10 m in area. Each of the complexes was constructed by single-row walls averaging about 30 cm in width. The surfaces are beaten earth, with some cobble and flagstone areas. Not much is known about Architectural Complex C. Most of it has been disturbed, either in antiquity by the construction of Administrative Building A of Stratum 6 or by the excavations of Macalister and the several excavation probes of the 1984 excavations. It appears that it might be similar to Complex B to the west, in that it contains three rooms in the back abutting the casemate wall and a central courtyard to the north of these rooms.

Complex B was well-preserved in the western half, with evidence of a ninth-century destruction being found in several units. Three rooms are located in the rear, with a wall dividing these rooms from a courtyard to the north. Inside the courtyard were remains of a storage bin with several store jars. Room A of this complex contained several vessels as well as a gaming board.

Complex A consists of two parts separated by a central north-south wall. It is possible that these are two separate units. To the east is a unit that contains a central courtyard with a tabun (cooking oven) in the southwest corner. To the south are two rooms with a tabun also located in the eastern room. The western part of Architectural Complex A is another unit with a central courtyard with a niche in the north of the courtyard. This courtyard contained beaten-earth and stone-pavement surfaces. To the south is a long room, or perhaps also two rooms, as in the eastern part of this complex (an unexcavated Stratum 6 eighth-century wall obscures the plan). Remnants of a beaten-earth surface and a stone pavement were found in this courtyard. Ashdod ware as well as a conical weight were also found on this courtyard surface.

Stratum 6: Eighth-Century Building Complexes

During the eighth century, the city was rebuilt and the character of the area west of the gate changed from domestic structures to large administrative buildings. Some of the wall lines were reused, evidence that the builders were familiar with the earlier layout. This part of the Iron Age city now contained two large tripartite buildings and an industrial complex. The 1984 excavations noted the administrative nature of the horizon, but they had only small probes and Macalister’s plans to use for their reconstruction. What was previously called Palace 8000 (Dever 1984) is now recognized as two separate buildings. Most of the features in these squares were exposed on the surface or disturbed by Macalister, and the excavations merely allowed us to define the foundations of the walls and assist in redrawing the plan.
Administration Building A, measuring almost 15 x 15 m, can be seen on both Macalister’s plan and Dever’s 1984/1990 plan. It is a square, tripartite building with two rows of pillars in the center. There is a possible courtyard between this building and the “Soldiers’ Barracks” to the east, which abuts the western edge of the six-chambered gate.5

The walls of Building B were extensively disturbed by the Hellenistic structures and Macalister. Between the eastern and western enclosure walls is a 20 m² area. This building shares its eastern wall with Building A. It is bonded with the rebuilt fortification wall as well as the northern wall of the casemate wall. In addition, it is clear that this building, or at least several of its walls, belonged to an earlier phase, since the western and northern walls are bonded to walls of earlier phases. Within this area remnants of two north-south wall systems were defined. This building is also a tripartite building; in this case the long rooms run north-south. Our excavations have clarified Dever’s Palace 8000, which needs to be updated. The majority of the building is our Administration Building A, and the western part of Palace 8000 is a second public building. Just west of Building B and sharing a north-south wall is a third building: Industrial Complex C. This building was originally thought also to be a tripartite building, but its complete excavation and removal in the 2011 season clarified the stratigraphy. Most of the occupation layers and floors associated with these buildings had also been destroyed or disturbed by Hellenistic rebuilding or Macalister’s excavations. This building consists of two phases. In the original phase there was a central cobbled surface room with an olive press and stone-lined bin. This press went out of use when a north-south wall was built on top, dividing the room. While a majority of the surfaces were exposed by Macalister, a small section was undisturbed and contained a complete Iron Age II juglet lying on the floor.

**Domestic Quarter**

**Iron Age Four-Room House**

The four-room house consists of three long rooms (a central room flanked by parallel northern and southern rooms) separated by large limestone pillars (average dimensions 0.5 x 0.5 x 1.0 m), with a broadroom to the west that was subdivided into two smaller rooms by a transverse wall. The eastern and northern borders of the house remain unexcavated. The area of the house as a whole is estimated at 135 m², considerably larger than typical four-room houses found previously at Gezer and other urban sites. The building and its contents were sealed by burnt mudbrick destruction debris, testimony to a considerable conflagration. The portable finds from the building included basalt grinding stones, loomweights, and a sizeable ceramic assemblage, consisting primarily of restorable storage jars with lesser numbers of bowls, kraters, and cooking pots (no jugs). The juxtaposition in the same room (southern broadroom) of lamelek storage jars
(without the stamps), typical of Judean sites, and Phoenician torpedo-shaped storage jars, characteristic of coastal assemblages, clearly illustrates that Gezer straddled the geopolitical boundaries between these two zones. The ceramic assemblage and small glyptic finds date to the eighth century B.C.E. The destruction is attributed to Tiglath-pileser III’s campaign in 733 B.C.E. Evidence for a similarly dated destruction was found in the excavations in nearby Field VII.

Remains of a cobbled surface (ca. 6.5 m length and 3 m width exposed) were uncovered to the south of the four-room house, perhaps representing a portion of a street leading uphill from the Iron Age gateway toward the west. On this surface was a stone weight from an olive-press installation similar to one found in nearby Field VII.

**Stratum 5**

Built into the Assyrian destruction was a large 2 m deep silo with a complete Iron Age IIB torpedo store jar. Early excavations did not find any structures that date to this later period, with the exception of a potential Assyrian palace (Reich and Brandl 1985). This is probable, as Gezer is strategically located and its defeat was prominently recorded by Tiglath-pileser III. Evidence of this later Iron Age II occupation was found in Field W.

**Conclusion**

To date our major results are defining the major shifts in the city planning throughout the history of the Iron Age II. Iron Age Gezer was constructed as a well-designed city with a major fortification system that adjusted to the ancient topography. Inserted within the saddle was a major six-chambered gate with a casemate wall and an outer gate system. Next to the gate complex was an administrative quarter with public buildings. This building activity probably corresponds to the biblical tradition of Solomon fortifying Gezer, at least to a period where Judah was able to expand westward or down the foothills.
Figure 17 (right). Aerial of four-room house. Note that the northern rooms are unexcavated. Sky View Photography for the Tel Gezer Expedition.

Figure 18 (left). Stratum 6 Tiglath-pileser III destruction in the central room of the four-room house. Samuel Wolff for the Tel Gezer Expedition.

Figure 19 (right). Four-room house looking west. Note the previous HUC Field VII in background that contains domestic structures. Samuel Wolff for the Tel Gezer Expedition.
to the edge of the coastal plain. After the destruction of the Stratum 8 (HUC VIIA), the city was still operating but with a reduced footprint. The gate was reduced in size to a four-entryway gate, the public buildings went out of use, and the quarter became domestic. This city was also destroyed, most likely by the Arameans as they passed Gezer on their way to Gath, where current excavations by a Bar-Ilan team have found evidence of a major campaign by the Arameans against the Philistine city. Sometime during the eighth century B.C.E., Gezer was revived with a new city plan that rebuilt major public buildings (e.g., the tripartite buildings), an industrial complex, and a new enlarged four-room house. This expansion should be associated with Uzziah's westward expansion (Ortiz 2009; Zukerman and Shai 2006).

This see-saw effect of contraction and expansion of the borders throughout Judah's history is also discerned by other excavation projects currently in the field (e.g., Beth Shemesh, Khirbet Qeiyafa, Tell es-Safi). After the last Iron Age city was destroyed by Tiglath-pileser III, Gezer never regained its prominence, although perhaps an Assyrian administrative building was built on the top of the western hill (Reich and Brandl 1985).

While the excavations are still in their initial stages and the results are tentative, some conclusions can be drawn from the data—particularly the unfolding Iron Age city plan. It is apparent that the ancient Iron Age city was well-planned, consisting of three major distinct areas: (1) domestic quarters, (2) public buildings associated with the gate complex and auxiliary guardrooms, and (3) a fortification system. We have also determined that there are multiple architectural phases associated with the gate complex. While these were known in the Hebrew Union College excavations, the renewed excavations should provide a more detailed analysis of the history of the Iron Age city. Gezer's fortifications and city wall line define the city as an oval-shaped city plan. Although the text in 1 Kgs 9:16 implies that Gezer, along with Hazor and Megiddo, was an administrative city, it was probably a secondary administrative center during the mid-tenth century B.C.E.

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**Notes**

1. The exceptions are the six-chambered gate in Field III and the eastern part of Field VII. While the final excavation reports are not available, the results are well-established in various articles and reports. See Dever 1984, 1990, 1993a; Holladay 1990.

2. Ze'ev Herzog (1997, 217) has proposed that the tenth-century city was nothing more than a small fortress surrounded by a casemate wall.

3. While the current project proposes these historical correlations, the HUC excavation project also associated major strata with the Merneptah and Siamun campaigns, Strata XIV and IX, respectively (Dever et al. 1971; Dever 1986). Although some biblical scholars associate this last campaign with "Joshua's conquest," the biblical text implies only that the king of Gezer was involved with the campaign, not that the city was ever conquered (Josh 16:10; Judg 1:29).

4. Dever also postulates that this is the line of the outer wall that originally dated to the Late Bronze Age.

5. In an earlier preliminary report, Ortiz, Wolff, and Arbino (2011) indicated that a pottery kiln was associated with this building. After investigations in the 2011 season and restudy of Macalister's report (1912), it is now known to be from a later period, probably the Hellenistic.

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