

# INTRODUCTION: GOALS, FIELD REPORT, AND ARCHIVES

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The Tel Miqne-Ekron Excavation and Publications Project is a joint American, Israeli, and Canadian interdisciplinary research program of the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, Jerusalem, and the Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem conducted for 14 seasons under the direction of Trude Dothan and Seymour Gitin between 1981 and 1996. The project was designed to investigate the political, cultural, and economic processes of interaction between the Philistines and Israelites in the Iron Age, ca. 1200–600 BCE. The evidence in support of the identification of Tel Miqne (Khirbet el-Muqanna<sup>6</sup>) as the Philistine capital city of Ekron appears in *Ekron* 8, together with a discussion of the city's historical importance, the history of the project, and a summary of the six major occupation periods from Middle Bronze Age II Stratum XI of the 17th/16th centuries through late Iron Age IIC Stratum IA of the early 6th century BCE.<sup>1</sup>

## GOALS OF THE 1994–1996 SEASONS

During the ninth season (1992) of excavation, a large monolithic threshold was found in the northernmost exposure of Field IV Lower (*Ekron* 9/1; *Ekron* 9/2; *Ekron* 9/3A–B). This major architectural feature of the 7th century BCE (Stratum I) prompted the northward extension of Field IV Lower into Field IV Upper. The explicit goal was to expose the nature of the building for which the Stratum I monolithic threshold served as the entrance. As the excavations progressed, a large monumental 7th century building was exposed. The architectural plan of and material culture recovered

from this building in the course of the 1994–1996 excavations resulted in its identification as Temple Complex 650.

Field IVNE/NW and Field VSE/SW in Field IV Upper are the northern extensions of Field IV Lower in the elite zone in the center of the lower city.<sup>2</sup> Excavations in this northern extension were initiated in 1994 with the explicit goal of creating a horizontal exposure of what appeared from surface finds in the southern part of the field to be a late Iron IIC monumental building. The main focus was to define the architectural plan of the building and determine its function, thereby establishing a basis for understanding its relationship to Iron IIC Temple Auxiliary Buildings 651–655 in Field IV Lower. In the three years of fieldwork from 1994–1996, a grid of 61 areas (squares) was laid out, comprising 1,800 square meters, of which 51 areas, comprising 1,450 square meters, were excavated, and 10 areas were partially exposed.<sup>3</sup>

Two strata dated to the Iron Age IC (11th/10th century BCE) and Iron Age IIC (7th century BCE) and three cultural horizons—Persian–Hellenistic, Roman–Byzantine, and Islamic—were identified. Given that there is no stratigraphic evidence nor material culture for occupation phases between Strata IV and I, a gap in occupation of 250 years existed between the 11th/10th

1. Gitin 2006a. For overall summaries of the results from all the fields of excavation, see *NEAEHL* 3: 1051–59; *NEAEHL* 5: 1952–58.

2. Field VSE/SW was opened in 1986–1987 with a probe on the Northwest Acropolis, in which Iron IIC, Roman, and Islamic elements were identified.

3. The 10 partially exposed areas are: IVNE.11, 27, 30, 31; VSE.64; and IVNW.11, 27, 30, 31, 43. Of the 51 excavated areas, sections were drawn for 42; the other nine areas (IVNE.15, IVNW.60, 78, 79, 111, 126, 142, VSE.12, VSW.12) were not drawn mainly because of insufficient depth or, in the case of IVNW.60, logistical issues; as for IVNW.72, only the east section was drawn (*Ekron* 10/2: grid plan and sections).

and 7th centuries, like that in Fields II, III, and IV Lower.<sup>4</sup>

The major phase, represented by a large Iron IIC public building (Temple Complex 650), was destroyed at the end of Stratum IB during the campaign of Neo-Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar in 604 BCE. This building, of which the general outline was clearly discernible, is one of the largest Iron Age monumental structures excavated thus far in Israel and Jordan. Remnants of a Persian–Hellenistic phase are represented by partially-excavated Building 850 that re-used some walls of Temple Complex 650. A large Roman–Byzantine villa/farmhouse, Building 950, with two phases, was built over Temple Complex 650. Post-dating these cultural horizons were an Islamic phase identifiable through ceramic evidence, a quarrying and robber phase, a modern kibbutz irrigation trench, and topsoil/agricultural field deposits.

However, faunal evidence supports the existence of a short sub-phase immediately after the evacuation of the site just prior to the Neo-Babylonian destruction.<sup>5</sup> The Ekronites were aware of the impending attack by the Babylonians, as attested by the Saqqarah Papyrus (or Adon Letter), in which military aid was requested from Ekron's patron, the Pharaoh of Egypt.<sup>6</sup> As no such aid was forthcoming, the Ekronites fled the city with the intention of returning after the Babylonians had left, as evidenced by the caches of silver and jewelry<sup>7</sup> and valuable agricultural tools<sup>8</sup> left behind. Their flight is also supported by the lack of human skeleton remains.

Field IV Upper provided data for examining the architectural plan, construction techniques, and function of an atypical Neo-Assyrian-style monumental building, the development of a primarily Iron IIC ceramic corpus, cultic practices, economic activity, and the impact of other cultures during the final phase of the history of the Philistines. This evidence, together with the data from Field IV Lower, is the basis for a comprehensive portrait of the Stratum I elite zone when Ekron was a Neo-Assyrian vassal city-state.

## FIELD REPORT AND ARCHIVES

The Tel Miqne-Ekron field reports are designed to enable the reader to reconstruct the excavations three-dimensionally. The data in the chapters, appendices, and indices present the stratigraphic context of each architectural element and artifact and a comprehensive understanding of the results within their historical setting. The available data include the narratives on occupational history presented in Chapter 2 in *Ekron* 10/1, and in *Ekron* 10/2, the sections, plans, and database with phasing charts and locus and material culture sample lists. In addition, the chapters on pottery and objects include references to their findspot by stratum, locus, and building/room unit.

In the Miqne recording system, a locus number begins with the number of the excavated area (square) followed by three digits, accommodating up to 999 excavated loci in each area. Some locus numbers are followed by letters (A–D), indicating a sub-division of the locus or an adjacent locus discovered after the next series of numbers had already been assigned that required a defining number (e.g., 60003B). A locus number followed by .1 indicates that the locus was dug to a depth of 10 cm consisting of surface make-up or fill immediately below the surface (e.g., 64008.1). This was intended to provide tight stratigraphic control of material culture relating to floors. Locus numbers are preceded by a defining word designation, for example, Wall, Surface, Debris, Fill, Pit, etc. Given the large size of the tell including two parts, an upper and a lower tell, a single grid was not used, since the grid numbers for an area (square) would have had too many digits and become overly cumbersome. Instead, the principle of an expanding grid was employed, which allowed for each excavation field to have its own grid divided into quadrants: northwest (NW), northeast (NE), southwest (SW), and southeast (SE). As a result, each quadrant has its own set of locus numbers, differentiated by the quadrant designation. For example, the locus number 61003 could appear in each field and each quadrant, distinguished by the field and quadrant prefix, as in IVNW.61003 and IVNE.61003. Pottery bucket numbers are also differentiated by field, quadrant, and area, so that, for example, pottery bucket 36 from Area 61 in

4. Gitin, Garfinkel, and Dothan 2017: 1.

5. See Chapter 14 for the faunal evidence.

6. Porten 1981: 41–45.

7. Gitin and Golani 2001.

8. For the agricultural cache, see *NEAEHL* 3: 1057.

the northeast quadrant in Field IV would be designated IVNE.61.36.<sup>9</sup>

Since the discussion of the occupational history and stratigraphy of Field IV Upper deals first with the northeast and then the northwest quadrant, the locus numbers were not prefixed by IVNE and IVNW unless the cited locus was in the other quadrant. This also applies to locus numbers cited on the plans, as it is clear in which quadrant the locus appears, and in the sections, since each has the full area description title (e.g., IVNE.47). In Appendix 1 and Indices A and B in *Ekron* 10/2, the areas are prefixed by the quadrant designation in the heading on each page. In the pottery

plate descriptions, the locus number is noted separately following the pottery bucket number that includes the field, quadrant, and area designations, and the same information is provided in the object chapters.

The excavation records in hard-copy and digital form, with a complete set of photos and negatives, are on file in the archives at the Albright Institute, 26 Salah ed-Din Street, Jerusalem. All the pottery, objects, and material culture and environmental samples from Field IV Upper have been turned over to the Israel Antiquities Authority for storage in the archival facility located in Beth-Shemesh.

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9. For a full discussion of the field methods and recording system, which were based on the Balk/Debris Layer Method, see Lance 1966; Seger 1971; Dever and Lance 1978; and *Gezer III* (HUC): 9–11. In its implementation, many of the fundamental aspects of the general Near Eastern “architectural” tradition were incorporated as a result of the ongoing methodological discussions between the two project directors.