

meat cooker made of metal or clay (1 Sam 2:14). The *salahat* was the dish or large bowl in which a family cooked and/or ate its meal daily (2 Kgs 21:13; 2 Chr 35:13; Prov 19:24, 26:15). There were no bowls for individual servings.

A *salahit* was a small ceramic bowl for salt (2 Kgs 2:20). In traditional Cypriot rural homes, a small clay pot with salt hung from the ceiling, thereby keeping the salt dry and available. A *ṣappaḥat* was a closed container, such as a flask, used to hold water (1 Sam 26:11–12) or a small oil juglet (1 Kgs 17:12, 14, 16). *Sēpel* described a bowl used to serve dairy products (Judg 5:25) or water (Judg 6:38).

[See also Cooking; Domestic Architecture, Bronze and Iron Age; and Jordan Valley.]

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Gloria Anne London

#### CITIES, VILLAGES, AND TOWNS, BRONZE AND IRON AGE

From prehistoric times to the present, people have tended to live in settlements of various forms. Initially, people lived in small villages, which gradually grew in size and density. From the Early Bronze Age onward large segments of the population also lived in towns and cities, and in most periods there was a wide spectrum of settlement types. The various types of settlement differed from one another through time and in space. This article will discuss the various types of settlements that existed in ancient Israel during the Bronze and, mainly, Iron Ages. After a short introduction, it will briefly describe the development of settlement through time, from the Early Bronze Age to the Persian period. This will be followed by a more systematic study of the settlements of the Iron Age II.

Notably, although villages and rural settlements were the most common living arrangements in the land of Israel during the Bronze and Iron Ages, "tell-minded" (Ahlstrom, 1982, p. 25) modern scholarship tended to concentrate on excavating towns; and the study of the rural sector received relatively little scholarly attention. By contrast, this entry will expand on the discussion of this neglected settlement sector.

**Definitions.** Defining "cities" and "villages" is a complex endeavor. Usually, and this is especially relevant for biblical Israel, urban centers were much larger and more crowded than their rural

counterparts. Their inhabitants were of diverse backgrounds and occupations, and not all of them were engaged in agriculture. Social stratification is evident in practically all such sites, along with public buildings and royal construction activities (palaces, city walls, storehouses, water system, etc.). These urban settlements served as political and economic centers for the villages that surrounded them and probably, during most periods, as centers of tax collection and places of refuge in times of need.

Compared with the definition of a city, the definition of a village is more difficult. Among geographers there is some controversy over the question of whether to use a functional definition, enabling an integrative perception of the village as a closed system of residence and land use, or to refer to the nature of the landscape and space. According to the first type of definition, a village is a functional unit, economically and socially—it is a community of people with a central occupation. The second definition, which refers to the nature of the landscape and surroundings without attributing any importance to the essence of the human activity in this space, seems less relevant for the ancient world. This is in line with the view that rural settlements are characterized by a landscape of primary production. Some scholars solve the question of the definition of rural settlements by elimination: the village is a settlement that is not a town and, as a result, has the following characteristics: limited area, low population density, homogeneity of lifestyle, proper internal relations, and the absence of a distinct class division. One may also assume that the character of the village, being a relatively isolated and closed place, was more conservative. These features are indeed opposed to the characteristics of the city, but this is a case of stressing certain criteria that exist in both forms of settlement.

Several scholars believe that the distinction between “town” and “village” is modern and has no grounds in the periods before the Industrial Revolution, when cities were largely rural and the lifestyle of their residents was similar to that of villagers. However, during the Bronze and Iron Ages, there

were apparently clear differences, both qualitative (e.g., socioeconomic stratification) and quantitative (e.g., size and density), between towns and villages. Those differences partly resulted from the different economic and social processes that took place in these two settlement sectors. In urban settlements the involvement of the state accelerated the processes of change in the traditional society and increased the proportion of nonproductive residents in the population (soldiers, officials, day laborers of various types, service providers, etc.). As a result, the way of life in the city and the village became different. The differences between the two forms of settlement are implied also by their different locations in the settlement hierarchy of the period: most of the rural settlements discussed here were very small villages and farms, and only a few were large villages.

**Biblical Terminology.** There are no special words for “city” and “village” in biblical Hebrew. The term *kfar* in biblical Hebrew (unlike modern Hebrew) is part of the settlement’s name, like in Arabic, and is not a designation of the type of settlement. The term *ir*, however, which is usually translated as a city or a town (and this is also its meaning in modern Hebrew), actually means “a settlement”—any settlement, villages included. On the basis of the biblical text, and especially Leviticus 25:29–31, it seems as if the Bible distinguishes between settlements—towns and villages alike—and *haserim*. The latter is a place of habitation but is not a settlement, and the term seems to refer to farmsteads, a form of habitation which was very common in the Iron Age II, and to settlement sites of seminomads.

**A Brief History of Settlement.** Villages were the basic nucleus of human habitations since earliest times. From the first appearance of villages in prehistoric times until the emergence of towns and cities in the Early Bronze Age, villages were the only form of human settlement; and even afterward rural settlements (comprised of villages, hamlets, and farmsteads) were the most common type of human habitation.

Cities first appeared in ancient Israel around the transition to the third millennium B.C.E. (Early

Bronze Age). These first cities usually lie at the bottom of the tells, and in most cases not much is known for certain about their planning. Cities from this period existed, for example, at Megiddo, Beit Yerach, Jericho, and 'Ai; but the most notable example where the city plan can be discussed is Arad. The Early-Bronze cities were gradually destroyed and abandoned toward the end of the millennium, and by the last two centuries of this millennium (Middle Bronze Age I) Cisjordan was devoid of any urban settlement.

**Middle and Late Bronze Age.** Urbanization resumed in the twentieth or nineteenth century B.C.E. (Middle Bronze Age II, 1950–1550 B.C.E.). New cities emerged throughout the country, with an emphasis on the lower regions—for example, at Dan, Hazor, Yavneh, Tell el-Ajul, and Tel Batash. Port cities were built for the first time—for example, at Dor, Acco, Jaffa, and Yavneh-Yam. The largest Middle Bronze--Age urban center was Hazor, which was apparently part of the Syrian system of city-states. Many sites were surrounded with massive earthworks and incorporated public buildings, palaces, and the like. Many scholars believe that the large cities were city-states that ruled their surroundings and that the country was divided by those cities into small polities.

The cities were usually accompanied by a dense hinterland. On the basis of the archaeological evidence, several types of Middle Bronze--Age villages were identified. Generally speaking, the villages on the highlands boasted large and spacious courtyard buildings; and while shrines were usually unearthed, these were smaller than the dwellings (e.g., Nahal Rephaim, Manahat, and perhaps Givat Sharett). It seems that those were autonomous villages, and the inhabitants were able to maintain most of their surpluses. Most of the villages on the lowlands and valleys had much smaller houses (of both the courtyard and row-house types), and in some of them large temples were unearthed (e.g., Kfar Rupin, Tel Kitan, and Tell el-Hayyat). It appears that those villages were owned by the crown or by the temple. The surpluses of the village, therefore, were taken away, leaving the settlers with a relatively

low economic status. Most of the villages were nucleated.

While most characteristics of Middle Bronze--Age culture continued during the Late Bronze Age (1550–1200 B.C.E.), this was accompanied by a great demographic decrease. The number of towns declined, and they became smaller in size. Furthermore, hardly any settlement was fortified at the time (since the region was an Egyptian colony, the latter characteristic can probably be attributed to Egyptian policy). According to Egyptian sources (most notably the Amarna letters), many of the cities served as city-states (e.g., Megiddo, Shechem, Jerusalem, Gezer, and Lachish), which divided the country among them. A few cities, however, served as Egyptian strongholds, where Egyptian officials and armies were stationed (Beth-Shean, Jaffa, and Gaza).

The number of excavated Late Bronze--Age villages declined even more dramatically, probably as part of the general demographic decline. It seems that while some villages clearly existed, relatively larger segments of the population were concentrated in central settlements at the time.

**The Iron Age I.** Further urban decline occurred during the Iron Age I (1200–985). The Egyptian domination over Canaan vanished, and many Canaanite centers were destroyed or abandoned. Some of the older towns, however, continued to exist or were resettled, especially in the northern valleys, for example, at Megiddo (more limited continuation was observed in the trough valley, between the Shephelah and the Hebron hill country, e.g., Tel Beit Mirsim, Tel 'Eton, and Beth-Shemesh). A new wave of urbanization took place in the southern Coastal Plain as a result of the arrival of the Sea Peoples (mainly the Philistines). The latter founded some new cities, or built new settlements on top of existing Canaanite centers—for example, in Ekron, Gath (Tel es-Safi/Tel Zafit), Ashdod, and Ashkelon—covering relatively large areas.

As far as rural settlements are concerned, the situation is different. From the thirteenth century onward, hundreds of villages were established in the highlands, many of which were excavated over the years, for example, Giloh, Shiloh, Khirbet Raddana,

‘Ai, ‘Izbet Sarta, Mount Ebal, the Bull site, Karmiel, and Khirbet Zaakuka. The new sites are usually associated with Israelite settlement. The villages were usually small, less than 2.5 acres (1 ha), and composed of a small number of structures, many of which belong to the archetype of the four-room house. The villages were usually nucleated but unfortified, although in some cases the houses were built one adjoining the other, hence creating a form of enclosure. Villages also existed in other parts of the country (e.g., in the valleys, Tel Qiri), but a notable decline was observed in most parts of Philistia and the Shephelah, where the rural sector practically disappeared (a rural site was excavated in Qubur al-Walayida); and it has been suggested that the Philistines conducted a policy of forced urbanization.

**The Iron Age II.** Urbanization in many parts of the country was resumed on a larger scale only in tandem with the formation processes of the Israelite state(s) during the transition to the Iron Age II. Indeed, drastic changes in settlement patterns, especially in the highlands, occurred at this time. Most villages were abandoned or destroyed (e.g., Giloh, Shiloh, Khirbet Raddana, ‘Ai, ‘Izbet Sarta, Mount Ebal, the Bull site, Karmiel, and Khirbet Zaakuka), and a few grew in size and became towns and cities in the Iron Age II (e.g., Tell en-Naşbeh [Mizpah], Bethel, and Dan). Some decline was also observed in other parts of the country, but more rural settlements continued to exist in the low regions (e.g., Tel Qiri); a few were even established at the time (e.g., Nir David).

It seems as if the movement of population from the countryside to central settlements was the result of a complex process. Many settlements throughout the country were abandoned because of security problems that characterized the transition from the Iron I to the Iron II, while some others might have been abandoned as a result of a policy of forced settlement.

Villages were beginning to reestablish only during the ninth (in Israel) and eighth (in Judah) centuries B.C.E. Among the new (excavated) villages were Khirbet Rosh Zayit, Khirbet Jemein, and Beit Arye in the

Kingdom of Israel, as well as Khirbet Jarish and the villages below the forts at Khirbet Abu et-Twein, Khirbet El-Id, Arad, and Khirbet Uza in Judah. Also, from the eighth century B.C.E. onward farmsteads were established throughout the country, and many were excavated in the vicinity of Jerusalem (e.g., Nahal Zimri, the French Hill, Pisgat Zeev A), in the Hebron hill country, and on Samaria’s western foothills.

***The end of the Iron Age and the Persian period.***

The Assyrian and (mainly) the Babylonian campaigns brought about large-scale destruction and population decline, and the number and size of settlements declined dramatically. Settlement in the northern part of the land of Israel declined under Assyrian rule. In the south of the country, beyond the Assyrian provinces, the seventh century B.C.E. was the peak of settlement in general, and of rural settlements in particular, until its abrupt end in the sixth century B.C.E. The almost complete lack of continuity in rural settlement from the Iron Age to the Persian period exhibits the devastation brought about by conquests, destruction, and exiles of the Mesopotamian superpowers. It also discredits the assumption that Judah was not devastated by the Babylonians and that most of the population—that of the rural sector—continued its life as before.

In the Persian period urbanization concentrated in the Coastal Plain, and even rural settlement was limited; it seems that Persian-period society should be viewed as a postcollapse society. The small number of excavated sites limits the ability to discuss the characteristics of the period’s rural population but also seems to reflect the fact that the latter was fairly small when compared to the Iron Age. The situation was somewhat better in the north of the country than in the south; since this area was destroyed more than a century earlier, the recovery was also earlier. On the whole, however, the information on the Persian period is very limited. Real, large-scale urbanization reemerged only in the Hellenistic period.

**Iron Age–II Settlement.** The Iron Age II, especially the eighth–seventh centuries B.C.E., is the most

appropriate to be titled as the “biblical period,” and furthermore, this period has received a great deal of scholarly attention, both because of the interest of scholars in this time period and because the period was a demographic peak in which more sites existed than ever before. And because the Iron Age II usually constitutes the upper strata on the tells, large-scale exposure, impossible for other periods, is possible for this period. This is, therefore, the period on which there is better information than on any other, and the one most appropriate for an expanded discussion here. Many settlements were established at the time throughout the country, and excavations have uncovered various types of cities and a complex settlement hierarchy—from capitals through administrative and regional centers of different sizes to small field towns, villages, hamlets, and farmsteads.

**Settlement hierarchy.** The most important cities of the period were Samaria and Jerusalem, the capitals of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, respectively. Also of significant size were several Philistine centers such as Ekron, Gath, and Ashkelon. Jerusalem covered some 220 to 250 acres (90–100 ha, including extramural neighborhoods), larger than any other site in ancient Israel during the Bronze and Iron Ages. These large cities included large public buildings, along with residential neighborhoods. It has been suggested that the public part of the settlement (in Jerusalem and Samaria) was segregated from the residential areas by an inner wall, hence creating a sort of inner city.

Second in the hierarchy were administrative cities. Perhaps the best example of such cities was Megiddo in the Kingdom of Israel, in which almost only public buildings were unearthed. Most administrative cities, however, included also a significant residential component; and it appears that Hazor in Israel and Beersheba in Judah belong to this category. These settlements served as local centers or regional capitals in the various regions or districts, filling royal functions there.

Third in the hierarchy were field towns, like Tell Beit Mirsim in the Kingdom of Judah. Those were local centers, serving mainly for residence, with

relatively few royal or stately functions. Still, a royal presence was clearly evident in such settlements, at least in the form of fortifications and probably storage facilities and governor’s residences, in contrast to settlement further down the hierarchy.

An interesting example of an urban settlement that changed its character through time is Tell en-Naşbeh (biblical Mizpah). The city was originally a field town, with very little importance. At some point during the Iron II, the city changed its character, without being destroyed: a new massive city wall was built, enlarging its area, and new, better-built structures were constructed in the new belt that was attached to the city and perhaps in its center. It is likely that this should be attributed to the events described in 1 Kings 15:17–22, and this is why a small field town became an administrative center.

Excavations have revealed clear evidence for socioeconomic stratification in all cities. Most of the population lived in small houses, which probably contained small nuclear families. The wealthy and some high officials were better off and lived in large four-room houses (probably as extended families). In some settlements a form of a middle class is also identified. Palaces, which were identified in several cities, represent the upper part of the socioeconomic continuum; and this is where the royal family and the highest officials lived.

Further down the hierarchy came large villages or townships, like Deir el-Mir or Khirbet Bannat Bar in western Samaria. These were very large settlements, covering a few hectares, but not densely settled; and there is no evidence for royal or state involvement. In addition, the size of houses and the nature and organization of production suggest that it belonged to the rural sector. Such large villages were probably more prevalent in Israel than in Judah.

Then came smaller villages and hamlets, such as Khirbet Jarish in Judah and Beit Areyh, Khirbet Jemein, and Khirbet Malta in Israel (where they were more common). These settlements do not exhibit a significant degree of socioeconomic stratification and appear to reveal a high degree of

cooperation, probably based on common descent (lineage, *mishpahah*). The vast majority of the villages were nucleated and even bounded by a wall. Only a few were dispersed (mainly those built below forts).

At the bottom of the hierarchy were farmsteads (the biblical *haserim*), isolated structures located within the agricultural area that were not part of a settlement. An examination of the villages and farmsteads that characterized the period of the Monarchy allows some generalizations, and one can differentiate between a few types of rural settlements.

1. Most of the excavated villages (e.g., Khirbet Jemein, Beit Arye, Khirbet Jarish, Khirbet Rosh Zayit, and Khirbet Malta) were typical Israelite (or Judahite). The villages were nucleated and typically surrounded by a boundary wall. The dwellings in these villages were usually large four-room houses, quite uniform in construction, plan, and size, which seem to have been inhabited by large, extended families (the biblical *bet av*). A relatively high standard of living is indicated not only by the large size of the dwellings but also by the existence of a boundary wall around all these villages and the presence of large industrial areas for agricultural production as well as storage facilities. The evidence indicates that the inhabitants were able to keep at least some of their surpluses, and these should be interpreted as autonomous/communal villages, populated by large kinship groups (the biblical *mishpahah*)—in some cases the entire village was inhabited by such a unit, while in others a few such units inhabited the village.
2. A few villages (e.g., Nir David and Tel Qiri) seem to deviate from this model. Houses were very small and not of the four-room type. The villages did not exhibit any evidence of planning and lacked boundary walls. The population of these villages lived on a lower standard. Apparently, the population was Canaanite (despite being located within the Kingdom of Israel),

and the inhabitants probably worked the lands that belonged to the crown or to rich people in the region's urban centers even before it became part of the Kingdom of Israel. For them, nothing changed when the region became part of the Kingdom of Israel.

3. In Judah, a few villages were unearthed below the forts at Khirbet Abu et-Twein, Khirbet El-Id, Arad, and Khirbet Uza. These villages lacked all the characteristics of the Israelite villages—the houses were not uniform, and the villages lacked organized industrial areas and boundary walls—and their establishment seems to have been a result of the existence of the forts. It appears that the latter attracted some people who settled in the small hamlets nearby, but the population did not form a real community.
4. Most highland farmsteads share some similarities—most houses were very large, just like those in the highland villages, and seem to have been inhabited by an extended family. The farmsteads were situated in the agricultural plot of the farms, amid terraces and agricultural installations. The highland farmsteads can be further subdivided into two groups: the farms around Jerusalem and the rest of the farms. Most of the farmsteads were built as part of a complex, and the farmhouse was part of a walled compound, which included a yard and a few additional buildings/rooms; the farmhouses in the vicinity of Jerusalem, by contrast, were built in an open area and not within a walled complex or a compound. Walled compounds had two main advantages: they could serve defensive purposes and as animal pens. It seems that the area around Jerusalem, in which hundreds of farmsteads existed, was so intensively settled that no room was left for herding. In addition, the dense network of farmsteads and settlements around Jerusalem lowered the risk of low-level security problems. Hence, the two reasons for building a farmstead as part of a compound were irrelevant in the Jerusalem area, and no walled compounds were therefore built.

5. Many farmsteads were surveyed and excavated over the years on the ecologically inferior area of Samaria's foothills. The origin of the settlers is debated, some viewing them as Israelites who settled there in the eighth century B.C.E. because of settlement pressure at the time, while others view them as refugees from Samaria. It seems, however, that while some of the settlers might have been Israelites, many of them came from the Coastal Plain and others were exiles from Mesopotamia. The region flourished from the late eighth century B.C.E. onward as part of the prosperity of the Coastal Plain under Assyrian and Persian rule. A unique feature of this settlement phenomenon is that it continued uninterrupted until the mid-second century B.C.E. (i.e., the Hasmonean revolt).

**City planning.** According to Yigal Shiloh's seminal study, the basic outline of the Israelite "town plan is clear: alongside the line of fortifications there is a belt of buildings bordered on the inner side by a ring road, running parallel to the fortifications, and separating these structures from the 'core' of the city. The core itself was divided into many blocks of residential units of the four-room house type and its subtypes" (Shiloh, 1978, pp. 37–38). This basic observation can be supplemented with additional insights into the period's settlement planning.

Apparently, the outer belt was intersected by small alleys, separating the various houses and leading to the city wall, therefore enabling free access to the wall and to its casemate rooms (when these existed). While some components of this plan can be found throughout the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, it is more typical of the Kingdom of Judah. In most cities in the Kingdom of Israel (and probably also Philistia) a different planning prevailed. Here, the city wall was accompanied by a road, and only inside this street were buildings built, divided into *insulae* by smaller streets.

Accessibility to the city wall seems to have been a major factor in Iron-Age town planning. A besieged city which fell to the enemy suffered a horrible fate, and both types of planning enabled the defenders

easy and quick access to the city walls: through the small alleys in the "Judahite" plan and from practically any place in the "Israelite" plan.

Another difference between Judah and Israel lies in the fact that most towns which were built according to the latter plan were surrounded by a solid wall, while the "Judahite" plan was usually accompanied by a casemate wall. The alleys constructed in Judahite towns allowed the authorities access not only to the top of the wall but also to some casemates, which could have been used for storage. The principle of accessibility to the city wall was adhered to in both plans, and it is likely that the adoption of different plans was due to space considerations. Larger cities could afford a massive wall and a street that ran along it. Smaller towns, in which space was scarce, tried to save as much area as possible; casemate walls were therefore built, and the ring road was located inside the outer belt of houses (therefore reducing the space it consumed).

Another characteristic of the Iron-Age city was a public quarter near the city gate. The impressive gate was usually accompanied by an open square, and near or around it were public structures, palaces, and additional public buildings, as can be seen in Beersheba, Beth-Shemesh, Kinrot, Jerusalem, and Gezer.

Furthermore, cosmological principles also exerted an influence on Israelite construction on all levels, from dwellings to cities. It seems that as part of their complex cosmology the Israelites regarded the east as the most auspicious direction and the west as the most inauspicious one (like many other societies). Accordingly, they directed their structures in an easterly orientation whenever this was possible, and when this was not the case they, at least, attempted to avoid the west. This was manifested also in city gates, and about 75 percent of these faced, roughly, the east. Following an easterly orientation for dwellings in towns was difficult and was carried out in the following manner: (1) public buildings were adjacent to most of the Iron-II city gates and (2) most city gates were oriented to the east.

The result was that no dwellings were built in the eastern part of the outer belt, and no dwellings

in this belt were expected to face the west, therefore avoiding this inauspicious orientation. The same principle was followed also inside the ring road as in many cases houses were oriented toward small alleys (and avoided the main street when it was to their west). The eastern orientation seems, therefore, to have been a major principle of town planning, influencing the orientation not only of city gates but also of many dwellings and alleys.

The town of Beersheba can serve as a good example of a planned settlement in the Iron Age II. During the eighth century B.C.E. Beersheba (stratum II) was a small but well-planned administrative center in the Negev. Its gate was in the southeastern part of the wall, facing this direction. Inside the gate, a small square was located, surrounded by public buildings of various sorts. The city wall was accompanied by a belt of houses, which used its casemates as their backrooms, and a nicely built inner ring road that gave access to these houses. The outer belt of houses was intersected at various points by small corridors that connected the ring road with the casemate walls, enabling easy access to the wall and to some of its casemates. The inner part of the town, its core, was divided by smaller streets which cut through it, creating blocks of houses. The eastern part of the outer belt of structures (near the gate) was composed of public buildings and did not include any dwellings. The dwellings in this belt, therefore, were oriented to the south, east, and north but not to the west. Houses in the inner blocks were oriented toward the ring road or toward smaller inner streets, usually avoiding the west. Adhering to the eastern orientation caused them, in some instances, to orient their backs to the main street and to face small alleys.

[See also Ashkelon; Beersheba; Dan; Domestic Architecture, Bronze and Iron Age; Ekron; Gath; Gezer; Hazor; Jericho; Jerusalem, Bronze and Iron Age; Lachish; Megiddo; Samaria/Sebaste; and Shechem.]

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### COASTAL PLAIN

Israel's coastal plain is a narrow strip of land, separating the Mediterranean from the hilly parts of the country (the Galilee, the Carmel range, Samaria, and the Shephelah). The coastal plain is composed of various soils, mainly alluvial and red soil (*hamra*), which are intersected by a number of sandstone (*kurkar*) ridges whose orientation is approximately north to south. These ridges make it difficult for the rivers and winter flooding in the wadis to reach the sea and, along with the sand dunes that tend to cover the beaches, are responsible for the fact that the wadis meander a great deal before reaching the Mediterranean. These sand dunes and *kurkar* ridges are also responsible for the severe drainage problems from which the coastal plain suffered in antiquity and for the ubiquity of marshes and swamps in various parts of the area, especially in the Sharon. The number of the *kurkar* ridges varies, and they are more numerous in the south than in the north (since, generally speaking, the coastal plain becomes wider as one goes south).

The northern coastal plain of modern Israel starts at Rosh Hanikra, where the Galilee meets the Mediterranean and there is no coastal strip whatsoever. To the north of this point lies the valley of Tyre (within modern Lebanon). The coastline in this region is not straight and is full of small coves. The most prominent settlement in this valley is, of course, Tyre, which is now connected to the landmass of Lebanon but was originally an island.

From Rosh Hanikra southward, toward Haifa, the coast is about 2.5 to 3.7 miles (4–6 km) wide.

The area is also known as the plain of Asher or the plain of Acco, and its southern part is sometimes called the valley of Zevulun. This coastal strip is intersected by a number of wadis, including Beit Ha'Emek, Ga'aton, Sha'al, Chziv, Betzet, and Na'aman (Ga'aton and Chziv are perennial streams). The major ancient mounds in this area are Kabri, Achziv, Acco, Tel Keysan, and Tell abu Hawwam.

From Haifa southward until the mound of Dor lies the Carmel coast. The coastal strip in this region is quite narrow, and it becomes wider as one goes south (reaching a width of some 1.2 miles [2 km]). The major wadis that intersect this region are Daliah, Me'arot, and Oren. The major ancient mounds in the Carmel coastal strip are Shikmona, Atlit, Tel Nami, and Dor.

From Dor to the Yarkon River lies the Sharon. It is intersected by a number of wadis, including Tanninim, Ada, Hadera, Alexander, and Poleg. There are not really large-scale mounds in this region, but there are many small tells that were occupied during (part of) the biblical period, including Tel Tanninim, Tel Zeror, Tel Hepher, Tel Poleg, Tel Michal, Tel Gerisa, Tel Qasile, and Tel Aphek. There are three, relatively complete, *kurkar* ridges in this zone, with valleys between them; and another large valley lies between the eastern *kurkar* ridge and the slopes of Samaria (also known as the trough valley).

From the Yarkon southward is the southern coastal plain, also known as Philistia. The region is intersected by the wadis Ayalon, Soreq, Lachish, Evtach, and Shikma. The major settlements in this region are Jaffa, Yavneh Yam, Ashdod, Tel Mor, Ashkelon, and Miqneh (Ekron). In this part of the coastal plain there are parts of five *kurkar* ridges, though they are not complete. The width of the sand dunes along the beaches is also larger than in the north, and the dunes actually block easy access to the sea in most of the area (Ashkelon being an exception). The plain is much wider in its southern part, and this area is also dryer, decreasing the seriousness of the drainage problems from which the northern part of the coastal plain suffers.