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New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and its Region

Collected Papers
Volume XI

Editors:

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Katia Cytryn-Silverman
and Joseph (Joe) Uziel

Jerusalem 2017

Front cover: The Western Cardo, after restoration and preservation, beneath the houses of the Jewish Quarter (photo: J. Uziel)

Back cover: The exposure of the Western Cardo during the Jewish Quarter Excavations (photo courtesy of the Israel Exploration Society)

First division: Top: Prof. Benjamin Mazar explains the findings from the excavations at the corner of the Temple Mount to Moshe Dayan (Photographer unknown, courtesy of E. Mazar; Bottom: Prof. Benjamin Mazar's Excavations along the walls of the Temple Mount, 1968 (Photo: Y. Eisenstark, courtesy of the National Archive)

Second division: G. Steibel and B. Isaac study the Roman Milestone at Mile IX, between Jerusalem and Beit Guvrin (Photo: N. Szanton)

Third division: Top: Reconstruction of the kilns and production area of the Binyane Ha-'Umma potter's workshop for bricks and roof tiles of the Tenth Legion (Drawing: S. Kweller); Bottom: Reconstructed section of how the kiln for producing legionary bricks and tiles at Binyane Ha-'Umma was used (courtesy of the excavations of H. Goldfus and B. Arubas at Binyane Ha-'Umma, 1992, drawing: S. Kweller)

Forth division: "The Spring Tower" that fortifies the Gihon Spring in the City of David (Reconstructions: Y. Shmidov)

Fifth division: Pier of arched Crusader Hall, Street of the Chain (Photo: D. Dagan)

Sixth Divider: Top: The northern entrance to the theatre-like structure beneath Wilson's Arch (Photo: A. Peretz); Bottom: The southern pedestal of the theatre-like structure beneath Wilson's Arch (Photo: A. Peretz)

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Assessing Jerusalem in the Middle Bronze Age: A 2017 perspective¹

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Introduction

Close to two decades ago, I published a detailed summary, in Hebrew, of the archaeology of pre-Iron Age II Jerusalem (Maeir 2000).² At the time, it provided the most detailed and updated overview of the finds from these periods.

While much of the basic data related to in this publication has not changed, research and finds relating to two periods – the Middle Bronze Age (=MB)³ and the early Iron Age – have added substantial and, in some cases revolutionary, information and understanding on Jerusalem during those periods. Unfortunately though, since then, a detailed overview, taking into account all new research and discoveries in and around Jerusalem, is still a desideratum.⁴

In the present paper, I do not intend to present an updated review on the archaeology and history of all of pre-Iron II Jerusalem. Likewise, I will not deal with the early Iron Age.⁵ Rather, I will focus on an assessment of the archaeology and history of Jerusalem during the MB – ca. 1950 to 1500 BCE⁶ – in light of the important finds, and the various attempts to interpret these discoveries, which have appeared in the last two decades. The MB, the second urban period in the history of Canaan, has been extensively studied. In the last two decades or so, there have been important developments in the interpretation

of the historical, cultural and societal processes during this period, such as studies dealing with socio-cultural mechanisms, chronology, political structure, trade and cultural influences, and other issues (see, e.g., Burke 2008; 2014; Cline, Yasur-Landau and Goshen 2011; Cohen 2002; 2014; 2016; Maeir 2010; Marcus 2007; 2013; Uziel 2010; Yasur-Landau, Cline and Samet 2011; Yasur-Landau, Cline and Goshen 2014). As surveyed in Maeir 2000, MB remains have been known in Jerusalem and its surroundings since the very beginning of modern research of the city. However, as mentioned above, I do not intend to recap the survey. Rather, I will focus on new finds, interpretations and discussions. The primary developments in the study of MB Jerusalem relate to the fortifications of the city at the time, and to the suggested MB fortifications of the water system. While an initial assessment of the then new evidence on the appraisal around the Gihon Spring was already noted in Maeir 2000 (and subsequently in 2012), continuous excavations and finds, and ongoing discussions, require a reassessment.

The Extent and Dating of the MB Settlement

Finds dating to the MB from the City of David⁷ have been known for many years (for summaries, see, e.g. Maeir 2000; 2012; Reich

2011), and there is no doubt that there was settlement activity on site during this period, commencing in the late MB I or Transitional MB I/II, and lasting until the end of the period (Eisenberg 2012). Most scholars accept that Jerusalem is mentioned in both the earlier and later groups of the Egyptian Execration texts (dating to the 12th and 13th Egyptian Dynasties; see Maeir 2000: 50, n. 68; Maeir 2012: 178), which would dovetail nicely with the archaeological remains. Na'aman's (1992; followed recently by Ussishkin 2017a; 2017b; see Ben-Dor Evian, 2017) suggestion that the toponym *3wš3mm* should not be identified as Jerusalem has not been accepted by most scholars (e.g. Rainey and Notley 2006: 52; Bieberstein 2017: 36; cf. Köszeghy 2015: 41-42). The majority of the MB finds from Jerusalem derive from the eastern slope of the City of David, and will be discussed below. Prior to that, additional finds, even if much more limited from the City of David and its immediate surroundings are worthy of mention. A small amount of MB pottery was found in E. Mazar's (2006; 2007) excavations on the City of David summit. Similarly, a negligible amount of sherds and a scarab reported from the "Temple Mount Sifting Project" (Barkay and Devira 2012) are of note as well (see Geva and de Groot 2017: 35-37). If one accepts that these fills do derive from the Temple Mount area, then this can be seen as an indication that there was little activity on the Temple Mount during the MB. Alternatively, if one claims (and see Geva and de Groot 2017: 35-37) that not all these earth fills derive from the Temple Mount, but from other areas in Jerusalem, this has less relevance for the study of the MB in

the City of David. In any case, the relative lack of finds from these two locations indicate that even if one accepts that MB Jerusalem was fortified (and see discussion below), it was of a relatively small size – limited to the City of David – and perhaps to its eastern slope (contra Finkelstein, Koch and Lipschits 2011).

The City's Fortifications

What has changed in the last decade or so is not the question of whether or not there was settlement in Jerusalem during the MB, but rather, what was the character of the site. Previously, based on both Kenyon's (Kenyon 1974; Franken and Steiner 1990; Steiner 2001) and Shiloh's (1984; de Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012) excavations, the existence of a MB city wall on the eastern side of the City of David was accepted by (more or less) all. This consensus has been challenged in recent years. By and large, the debate on the fortifications of MB Jerusalem, and from this, understanding the character of the site at the time, is based on finds from the last decade and half, their understanding, and accordingly, how previous discoveries are understood.

Shiloh (1984) long ago suggested that a substantial section of the MB wall had been discovered approximately 150m south of the Gihon Spring, on the eastern slope of the City of David. The full publication of these finds appeared in 2012 (de Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012). Three phases from the MB were associated with this wall (Strata 17a; 17b; 18) all dating to the MB II. Both Shiloh (1984) and de Groot and Bernick-Greenberg (2012) believed that this wall was part of the

fortifications of the City of David during this time.

Reich and Shukron's (e.g., Reich 2011; Reich and Shukron 2004; 2010; 2011) extensive excavations in and around the Gihon Spring area, on the eastern slope of the City of David, and more recently, Uziel and Szanton's (e.g. Uziel, Shukron and Szanton 2013; Uziel and Szanton 2015; Regev *et al.* 2017) continued work in this area, has provided the new archaeological data for this discussion. Reich and Shukron's excavations revealed impressive fortifications and related features (channels and pools) in the vicinity of the Gihon Spring. According to their interpretation (e.g., Reich 2011; Reich and Shukron 2004; 2010; 2011), there were two stages of construction during the MB.

In the first stage, the Gihon Spring was surrounded by a monumental tower, ca. 16X16 m in size, built of megalithic, "Cyclopean" stones. Leading from this tower up the slope to the west, was a similarly monumental corridor, constructed of two parallel walls (also made of megalithic stones). The northern wall (W. 108) was abutted by the wall (W. NB) that Kenyon had excavated, which was assumed to be the city wall. It should be noted that a continuation of Wall NB (or Wall 3 in the final publication – Steiner 2001) was not found to the south of the corridor. Contemporary to the building of the tower and the corridor, an overflow channel, Channel II, was constructed.

In the second stage, part of the corridor went out of use (the western side), and an underground cavity, the so-called Warren's Gallery was quarried out. In addition, Tunnel III was cut from Channel

II, leading to two new features – the rectangular "Rockcut Basin" and within it, a rounded basin. All these elements were dated by Reich and Shukron to the MB, not based on MB levels and surfaces relating to these features, but rather based on the MB pottery that was found at the base of, or between the stones of these features, as well as the masonry style – which is similar to other MB fortifications in the Central Hills region (e.g., Shechem [Campbell 2002] and Hebron [Chadwick 2005; Eisenberg 2011; Eisenberg and Ben-Shlomo 2016; in press]; in general, Burke 2008: 82).

Based on Reich and Shukron's finds and interpretations, it is quite clear that a very large fortification, surrounding the spring, was built during the MB. On the other hand, due to the fact that there was no continuation of a wall along the same line of Kenyon's Wall NB to the south of the features discovered surrounding the spring, it was not possible to trace the MB city wall in this area. Accordingly, Reich and Shukron (2010) suggested that perhaps the MB walls discovered by Kenyon (Wall NB) and in Shiloh's Area E (Shiloh 1984; de Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012) were not part of the city wall, but served as retaining walls, and that the actual city wall was located somewhere else on the eastern slope of the City of David. In any case, these finds around the Gihon Spring implied that Jerusalem was a fortified site during the MB, and could be seen as the capital of one of the small city states in the Central Hills region during this period.

E. Mazar (2006) suggested a variation on the location of the MB wall, claiming that it should be located further down the eastern slope, along the

line of the wall excavated by Reich and Shukron in Area J. Mazar also suggested that the MB fortification surrounded a more limited area in the City of David, and did not include the summit, where she claimed to have found the “Palace of David” (which in itself is highly debated). However, Reich and Shukron (2008; Reich 2011: 266–268) clearly demonstrated that this wall dates to the Iron IIB and is not connected to the MB. In recent years though, the accepted understanding that Jerusalem was fortified during the MB has been questioned. David Ussishkin (2017a; 2017b) questions the very dating of the MB fortifications. He posits that based on the overall evidence from the eastern slope of the City of David, one cannot accept without reservations that the line of the fortifications discovered by Kenyon and Shiloh served as fortifications. Instead, he suggests that these walls served, at most, as terrace walls. Similarly, he has reservations on the MB dating of the tower and related features around the Gihon Spring, preferring an Iron II dating for its founding. More recently, Regev *et al.* (2017) conducted Carbon 14 dating of the sediment layers that were deposited beneath and outside of the tower surrounding the Gihon Spring. The radiometric dating provided a conclusive Iron II dating for these layers. Accordingly, Regev *et al.* suggested two possible interpretations: 1) Either the tower was in fact built only during the Iron II; or 2) the tower was originally constructed during the MB, but went through substantial reconstruction during the Iron II – and the sediments that were dated are from this rebuilding (see as well Gadot and Uziel 2017).

Needless to say, since their publication, Ussishkin’s and Regev *et al.*’s studies have been the subject of much debate.⁸ Thus, for example, Reich claimed that the finds from around and within the tower and parallel walls are clearly MB, and one cannot date these features to the Iron II only (Reich in press; see as well Gadot and Uziel 2017; Bieberstein 2017: 36). Similarly, Reich suggested that the Carbon 14 Iron II dating of the sediments outside of the tower are due to the fact that the dated sediments were deposited up against the tower during the Iron II, but this does not date the original construction during the MB. Ussishkin (2017b), in addition to claiming that MB Jerusalem was not fortified, raised a similar possibility regarding the fortifications at Hebron as well – suggesting that perhaps they also do not date to the MB, but to the Iron II. This though is hard to accept as there is ample evidence at Hebron for the MB dating, both in the earlier and the more recent excavations (Chadwick 2005; Eisenberg 2011; Eisenberg and Ben-Shlomo 2016; in press). The similarity between the “Cyclopean” architecture in Jerusalem, Hebron, Shechem, and other sites in the Central Hills, which is very different from the architecture seen at other Iron Age sites in this region, is a strong argument for the MB dating of the fortifications at these sites (see as well Eisenberg and de Groot 2001).

The Rural Hinterland

Having discussed the archaeological remains in the City of David itself, a brief review of some recent MB finds from the vicinity of Jerusalem is called for, finds that add to the understanding of the settlement matrix around Jerusalem at the time.

Quite a number of MB rural sites have been discovered in the vicinity of Jerusalem, many of which were mentioned in the previous survey (Maier 2000; for general overviews, see Eisenberg and de Groot 2001; Faust 2006). This includes a site to the north of the city in the neighborhood of Pisgat Ze'ev (Seligman 1993), and the village sites discovered in western Jerusalem, in the Rephaim Valley, in the area of modern-day Manahat and the Jerusalem municipal zoo (e.g., Edelstein, Milevski and Aurant 1998; Eisenberg 1993b). A particularly fascinating find that was not covered in Maier 2000 (but briefly mentioned in Maier 2012: 178, n. 5) comes from the ancient tell next to Bittir/Kh. el-Yahud (ancient *Betar*), just a few km south of Jerusalem. While only mentioned briefly in the Israeli press and an unpublished lecture (Magen, Batz and Shapiro 2008; see Batz 2017), the excavators claim to have found remains of an impressive MB fortification, suggesting that it was a fortified site of the period. If so, this might be interpreted either as a small fortified polity, or perhaps, an outlying fortification of a neighboring polity (such as Jerusalem). The existence of fortified sites of various sizes during the MB, and the possibility that small fortified sites might be associated with larger polities has been suggested in the past (e.g. Burke 2008). While a detailed publication on these interesting remains has yet to appear (Batz 2017), and further judgement on the site, its dating, interpretation and significance, must await more comprehensive publication of the remains, its impressive nature is quite clear as seen in several visits that I conducted to the site.

Quite close to this fortified site, another MB site has been recently reported. Ein Mor (2011) excavated a temple, located on the southern bank of the Refaim Valley, not far from the village of Walajeh. The temple is a small version of the so-called "Syrian Temple" (e.g. Mazar 1992), well-known from the MB Southern Levant, in both urban and rural settings. The temple most probably served the MB inhabitants of the region (perhaps at nearby Bittir or other villages in the Refaim Valley region) and is quite similar to an apparent temple discovered at nearby Manahat, on the northern side of the Rephaim Valley (e.g. Eisenberg 1993). To this we can add a small rural MB site that was recently reported just to the north of Jerusalem, near Tell el-Ful (Greenhut and Adawi 2010).

Several MB tombs, and in fact cemeteries, have been reported in recent years. A large cemetery was excavated at the site of the "Holy Land" project in SW Jerusalem (Milevski, Greenhut and Agha 2010). This cemetery, located on a ridge high above and to the north of the Refaim Valley, may have served as a burial ground for the inhabitants of the villages in the Refaim Valley (and see Kisilevitz *et al.* 2017). An additional burial, dating to the EB IV and the MB was found in the Rephaim Valley (Weksler-Bdolah 2017), just a few hundred meters to the west of the Rephaim Valley site excavated by Eisenberg (1993). Additional evidence of burials was found at Moza, just west of Jerusalem (Greenhut and de Groot 2009: 216-217). And finally, adding to the burials already known in the immediate vicinity of the City of David (see Maier 2000: 46-49), an additional tomb was recently reported by Y. Baruch (2009), located

just to the south of the City of David in the village of Silwan.

These and other MB settlement and burial sites in the vicinity of Jerusalem,⁹ indicate the existence of a dense web of rural sites around MB Jerusalem. As discussed above, Jerusalem was most likely a fortified city at the time (despite the reservations that have been raised recently as to its status). Thus, it can be understood as being the fortified capital of a small city state, surrounded by a rural settlement pattern (consisting of villages, cemeteries, rural temples and perhaps small fortified positions) – the rural hinterland of the Jerusalem City State during the MB.¹⁰ As similar patterns are known throughout the Southern Levant during the MB (e.g. Cohen 2014; 2016), and in particular in the Central Hills area (such as at Shechem, Shiloh, and Hebron), I see no reason to deny that such a situation existed in and around Jerusalem at the time.

Discussion

The recent questions on the MB dating of the fortifications of the City of David, are, without a doubt, far from settled. Valid questions have been raised. Nevertheless, based on the amount of MB finds in the City of David, the type of fortifications (Cyclopean), and the web of rural sites around the city, I believe that the argument that Jerusalem was a fortified city during the MB is a cogent and is the most likely scenario. Even if the exact line of this fortification has not been defined, its existence is highly probable. Nevertheless, due to the questions that have been raised, additional research on the dating of the various features is warranted,

and hopefully, in the future, additional evidence relating to this will be discovered.

Based on the assumption that Jerusalem was fortified during the MB, the broader picture that emerges can be assessed. In addition to Jerusalem, there are other fortified sites in the Central Hills, such as Shechem, Beit Zur, Hebron, and recently, Bittir as well [see above]). These sites highlight the state formation processes that began during this period and continued throughout the Late Bronze Age. The most logical scenario to explain the evidence of a web of rural sites around MB Jerusalem, is that Jerusalem served as the central polity in this region with a rural hinterland in its vicinity.¹¹

The extent of the Jerusalem Polity's territory, particularly during the MB II is of interest. While such a reconstruction is hardly simple, one can suggest a possible territorial extent. Southwards, Hebron was the closest major site, while northwards, Shiloh would be the nearest large site (and perhaps Gibeon as well, to the northwest). Eastwards, Jericho was most likely the nearest neighboring polity, while Gezer and Beth Shemesh would be the closest neighboring polities to the west. Accordingly, the territory of the Jerusalem polity would be in the region between these sites.

The formation of these city-states, such as Jerusalem, during this period, and their control of the surrounding countryside, laid the foundation for the political and social structures which continued to influence the region during the following periods. Although it has been argued that there was a cessation of settlement in Jerusalem following the 17th century BCE (e.g., Steiner 2001: 22; Franken

1989; 1992) due to the limited finds from the late MB II and early LB in the City of David, the pottery from Shiloh's excavations (Eisenberg 2012) and the tombs dating to this period from the close vicinity of Jerusalem, makes this hard to accept. There is no reason to assume that the many advantages to the location of a settlement in Jerusalem, which were utilized throughout most periods from the 3rd Millennium BCE and onwards, would not be utilized at a time when the settlement in the Land of Israel was at one of its all-time peaks (prior to the Classical periods), and most of the ecological niches throughout the country were quite intensively utilized (e.g., Broshi and Gophna 1986).

Finally, the cultural continuity between the end of the MB and the beginning of the Late Bronze Age should be stressed. There does not seem to be evidence of destruction in the late MB levels in the City of David (de Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012), and similarly, this continuity is seen particularly in the *Dominus Flevit* tomb (Saller 1964; see as well Cahill 2003: 26). Although many sites in the Southern Levant were destroyed during the transition between these two periods, this was not the case at all sites, and other processes occurred during this time frame as well (e.g., Maeir 2010: 165-175). It appears that Jerusalem and its region can be seen as one of the areas in which continuity was a major facet during this transition.¹²

Endnotes

- 1 I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me to present at the interesting meeting, to Joe Uziel and Yuval Gadot for their input and comments on the article, and more specifically, to Joe – and his state-of-the-art *noodging* – for pushing me to submit the paper on time for publication.
- 2 An abridged and partially updated version of this chapter appeared in English about a decade later (Maeir 2012).
- 3 Note the period divisions used below: MB I (=MB IIA) and MB II (MB IIB–C).
- 4 Various overviews of the archaeology of Jerusalem (and specifically of the pre-Iron II periods) that appeared between 2000 and 2017 have not filled this lacuna (e.g., Eisenberg and de Groot 2001; Steiner 2001: 7–41; Vaughn and Killebrew 2003; Kafafi and Schick 2007; Keel 2007; Mazar 2007; Reich 2011; de Groot 2012; de Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012; Galor and Avni 2012; Galor and Bloehord 2013; Köszeghy 2015; Bieberstein 2017; Faust, Baruch and Schwartz 2017). In most cases, the studies are rather general in character; and even where they purport to provide comprehensive surveys (e.g., Kafafi and Schick 2007; Köszeghy 2015; Bieberstein 2017; Faust 2017; Greener 2017), they in fact do not relate to all the up-to-date finds and discussions in the last few years. One of the recurring problems in some of the recent summaries on the archaeology of Jerusalem, is that substantial portions of recent research and discussion, which has been published in Hebrew, is not always referred to (perhaps due to a lack of knowledge of Hebrew; e.g., Kafafi and Schick 2007; Köszeghy 2015; Bieberstein 2017).
- 5 For recent reviews, and different opinions (and there, further bibliography), on the archaeology of early Iron Age Jerusalem, see, e.g., Finkelstein 2011; Köszeghy 2015; Pioske 2015; Bieberstein 2017; Faust 2017; Sergi 2017.
- 6 The chronology of the MB is still highly debated. For recent discussions and different views, see, e.g., Bietak *et al.* 2009; Kutschera *et al.* 2012; Marcus 2013; Burke 2014; Yasur-Landau, Cline and Goshen 2014; Höflmayer *et al.* 2016; Höflmayer and Cohen 2017.
- 7 The term "City of David" is the oft-used modern term for the southeastern hill of Jerusalem, which is the location of the ancient settlement up until the Iron Age II. This term will be used throughout the current paper.
- 8 Greener (2017: 25) notes the debate but does not take a stand on the issue.
- 9 For a summary of other MB sites and cemeteries around Jerusalem, see Maeir 2000: 46–49; 2012: 175–179.
- 10 The concentration of MB rural sites in the Refaim Valley might hint to the fact that this area serves as

- the "breadbasket" of Jerusalem during this period, similarly to the role suggested during the Iron Age and Persian Periods (e.g. Gadot 2015).
- 11 Boas-Vedder's (2001) attempt to estimate the extent, and the labor required for the building of the MB wall of Jerusalem is quite speculative in general, and in addition does not take into account the fortifications around the Gihon Spring (see as well Burke 2008: 151).
- 12 It should be reiterated that claims (e.g., Franken and Steiner 1992; Steiner 1996) that during the Late Bronze Age there wasn't a substantial settlement in the City of David and it should not be identified as Urusalim of the el Amarna texts are without basis, especially in light of the cuneiform fragment recently reported from Jerusalem (Mazar *et al.* 2010; see now as well Feldstein 2017).

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