CHAPTER 6

"For Yahweh is Destroying the Philistines …" (Jer 47:4): On the Historical Background of Jeremiah 47:1–7

Felix Hagemeyer

1 Introduction

The Philistines,[1] who lived west of Jerusalem and the Judean hill country, play a prominent role among the nations in the Hebrew Bible. In the *narrative worlds* of the books of Judges, Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, "early Israel" is permanently at war with the coastal dwellers, who are portrayed as prototypical foreigners and arch-enemies.[2] However, the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel,

1 Cf. also section 3.1. A comprehensive discussion of the Philistine culture would go far beyond the scope of this chapter. For a more comprehensive discussion, see e.g., P.W. Stockhammer, "Rethinking Philistia as a Contact Zone", in I. Shai/J.R. Chadwick et al. (ed.), *Tell it in Gath: Studies in the History and Archaeology of Israel. Essays in Honor of Aren M. Maeir on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday* (ÄAT 90; Wiesbaden: Zaphon, 2018), 375–84; A.M. Maeir/L.A. Hitchcock, "The Appearance, Formation and Transformation of Philistine Culture: New Perspectives and New Finds", in P.M. Fischer/T. Bürge (ed.), *"Sea Peoples" Up-To-Date: New Research on Transformations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the 13th–11th Centuries BCE. Proceedings of the ESF-Workshop held at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, 3–4 November 2014* (Contributions to the Chronology of the Eastern Mediterranean 35; Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2017) 149–62; A.M. Maeir, "Like Frogs out of a Pond: Identity Formation in Early Iron Age Philistia and Beyond", in I. Koch/O. Lipschits/O. Sergi (ed.), *From Nomadism to Monarchy? Revisiting the Early Iron Age Southern Levant* (Mosaics 3; University Park: Eisenbrauns, 2023), 201–8; F. Hagemeyer "'Sie kamen, sahen, siegten […]?': Die Migration der Philister nach Israel/Palästina und die Herausbildung ihrer Kultur in der frühen Eisenzeit", in N. Nebes/I. Gerlach (ed.), *Migration und Kulturtransfer: Zur kulturellen Interaktion im Vorderen Orient und Nordostafrika im 2. und 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (Sabaica et Æthiopica 1; Wiebaden: Harrassowitz, 2023), 45–75. Cf. also the chapters in F. Hagemeyer (ed.), *Jerusalem and the Coastal Plain in the Iron Age and Persian Periods: New Studies on Jerusalem's Relations with the Southern Coastal Plain of Israel/Palestine (c. 1200–300 BCE). Research on Israel and Aram in Biblical Times IV* (ORA 46; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022).

2 E.g., in the stories of the books of Samuel the Philistines are the only foreign nation that succeeds in capturing the Ark of the Covenant in a war with the Israelites (1 Sam 4:1–22). On the significance and literary function of the Philistines in the books of Samuel, using the example of the Ark narrative (1 Sam 4–6 and 2 Sam 6), see B. Hensel, "The Ark Narrative(s) of 1 Sam *4:1b–7:1 / 2 Sam 6* between Philistia, Jerusalem, and Assyria: A New Approach for a Historical Contextualization and Literary-Historical Classification", in F. Hagemeyer (ed.),

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which deal with the later "history of Israel" – the last years of the kingdom of Judah and the Babylonian exile – show little interest in the Philistines.[3] It is noteworthy, though, that in the context of the Jeremianic oracles against the nations (Jer 46–51), we find a text (Jer^{MT} 47:1–7 = Jer^{G} 29:1–7)[4] that deals with the coastal plain and the inhabitants of Ashkelon and Gaza.

The following chapter will examine the question of why a separate oracle in the Book of Jeremiah is dedicated to the Philistines. In addition, the historical and literary background of the text will be analysed.

2 Observations on the Text of Jeremiah 47:1–7

After an introductory verse, the oracle of Jer 47:1–7 turns against the Philistines with a word of judgement (vv. 2–5) and concludes with a poem (vv. 6–7) about the "sword of Yahweh" (חרב ליהוה, Jer 47:6a).[5]

Jerusalem and the Coastal Plain in the Iron Age and Persian Periods: New Studies on Jerusalem's Relations with the Southern Coastal Plain of Israel/Palestine (*c. 1200–300 BCE*). *Research on Israel and Aram in Biblical Times IV* (ORA 46; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 161–91. Cf. also B. Hensel, "Die Philister in der gegenwärtigen historischen Forschung und ihre Rolle in den Samuelbüchern: Neue historische, kulturgeschichtliche und literarhistorische Erwägungen – mit einem Seitenblick auf 1 Sam *4–6 und 2 Sam *5–6", in K. Soennecken/P. Leiverkus et al. (ed.), *Durch die Zeiten – Through the Ages: Festschrift für Dieter Vieweger – Essays in Honour of Dieter Vieweger* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2023), 147–67. But, see F. Hagemeyer, *Aschdod und Jerusalem: Eine archäologische und exegetische Untersuchung zu den Beziehungen von südpalästinischer Küstenebene und judäischem Bergland* (ORA 53; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023), 172–91 for a different historical interpretation of 1 Sam 5:1–6:18.

3 In the Book of Ezekiel, the gentilicium פלשתי (in its plural form פלשתים) is mentioned only in Ezek 16:27, 57; 25:25–26. In Jeremiah, apart from Jer 47, the Philistines are referred to only in Jer 25:20.

4 On the positioning and order of the oracles against the Nations in Jer^{MT} and Jer^{G}, and the differences between the Greek and the Masoretic text, see E. Peels, "From Egypt to Babylon, or from Elam to Moab? Queries Concerning the Order of the Oracles against the Nations in the Book of Jeremiah", in H. Bezzel/U. Becker/M. de Jong (ed.), *Prophecy and Foreign Nations: Aspects of the Role of the "Nations" in the Books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel* (FAT II 135; Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 59–75. Cf. also, C.J. Sharp, *Jeremiah 26–52* (IECOT; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2022) 34–36.

5 On the structure of the text, see, e.g., W. Werner, *Das Buch Jeremia: Kapitel 25,15–52* (NSKAT 19/2; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2003), 160; E. Peels, "'Before Pharaoh seized Gaza': A Reappraisal of the Date, Function, and Purpose of the Superscription of Jeremiah 47", *VT* 63 (2013) 308–22, on pp. 309–10. Jack R. Lundbom points to a break indicated by a *setumah* after v. 5 in M^{L} and M^{P}. In his view, this could indicate that Jer 47:6–7 was not originally connected to Jer 47:2–5. However, a *setumah* is found neither in 2QJer nor in M^{A} for the passage in question. Cf. J.R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 21B; New York: Doubleday, 2004), 230.

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The introduction in Jer 47:1 declares the text to be a word of Yahweh communicated to Jeremiah. Remarkable is the phrase בטרם יכה פרעה את־עזה (v. 1b), according to which the oracle was given to the prophet "before Pharaoh seized Gaza."[6] First, this presupposes a military threat to the Philistine coast from Egypt and thus from the south. Second, a contextual reference is made to the word of judgement against Egypt in Jer 46.[7]

Vv. 2–3 unfold a military threat from the north (מצפון, Jer 47:2a). With regard to geography, this alludes to a conquest of Philistia by Babylonia (and not by Egypt as in Jer 47:1). Jer 47:2, introduced by the messenger formula כה אמר יהוה, compares the imagined invasion of the Babylonian army with a catastrophic flood (שׁטף qal). Wilhelm Rudolph has already pointed out that the description in v. 2 was probably understood by the ancient recipients as an allusion to the rainfall period in Palestine and the associated floods.[8]

In Jer 47:3a, the frequent use of terms from the field of military cavalry is notable. The approach of the Babylonian chariots is illustrated by the enumeration of acoustic signals, such as the stamping of horses' hooves (שׁעטת פרסות).[9] V. 3b metaphorically describes the fear that the Babylonian army causes on the southern Levantine coast: the Philistine fathers are so afraid that their arms (literally: hands) become limp (רפיון ידים) and they can no longer care for their children.[10]

In Jer 47:4, Philistia (כל־פלשתים) is mentioned for the first time as the destination of the army coming from the north. In addition, Yahweh is emphasised as the agent of the imminent destruction by the allusion to the motif of the Day of Yahweh (על־היום הבא, "the day that is coming", v. 4a). V. 4b connects the Philistines with the Phoenician coast as the "last helpers" (עזר qal) of Sidon and Tyre.[11] The clause refers to the close economic and, to a certain extent,

6 For the historical background of the heading, see section 4.2.

7 On Egypt, see Gad Barnea's chapter in this volume.

8 On this, see W. Rudolph, *Jeremia* (HAT 1/12; Tübingen; Mohr Siebeck, ³1968), 277. Cf. also H.-J. Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52* (HAT 1/12,2; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), on p. 670; G. Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25* (HThKAT; Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 2005), 494.

9 Georg Fischer (Fischer, *Jeremia*, 494) refers to parallel phrases in Ezek 26:10–11, where Nebuchadnezzar's attack on Tyre is described. For William L. Holladay, the sound of battle is evidently the sound of war. Cf. W.L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah: Chapters 26–52* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress), 336.

10 This motif is also found in Jer 6:24; 50:43; Jes 13:7–8; Zeph 3:16 and 2 Sam 4:1. See Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 272; B. Huwyler, *Jeremia und die Völker: Untersuchungen zu den Völkersprüchen in Jeremia 46–49* (FAT 20; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 136.

11 The text of Jer^{G} 29:4 reads καὶ ἀφανιῶ τὴν Τύρον καὶ τὴν Σιδῶνα καὶ πάντας τοὺς καταλοίπους τῆς βοηθείας, which presupposes not only the annihilation of the Philistines, but also the destruction (ἀφανιῶ) of Sidon and Tyre by the army approaching from the north.

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political relations between Phoenicia and Philistia in antiquity.[12] The foreignness of the coastal dwellers is emphasised by the writer of Jer 47:4 by mentioning the island of Caphtor (כפתור, Jer 47:4b) as their point of origin.[13] In recent research, there is a broad consensus that Caphtor can be identified with Crete or at least an island in the Aegean.[14] Moreover, Crete and the Aegean Islands are considered important, but not exclusive, points of origin for Philistine groups.[15]

According to Jer 47:5, the Philistines react to the destruction of the coastal strip with various mourning rites, the shaving of hair (קרחה, literally: baldness), silence (דמה niph.) and ritualised self-harm (גדד hitpol.). According to Carolyn C. Sharp, the author of the verse possessed "cultural knowledge of Philistine ritual praxis."[16] However, the acts of mourning described cannot be regarded as exclusively Philistine rites, much rather, they were widespread throughout the ancient Near East.[17]

Two rhetorical questions (v. 5b and v. 6a) provide transition from the word of judgement against the Philistines (Jer 47:2–5) to the poetic conclusion of the oracle (Jer 47:6–7), which is structured as a dialogue between two anonymous speakers. The first speaker calls upon the personified "sword of Yahweh" (חרב ליהוה, Jer 47:6a),[18] a "mythological prop" (Hermann-Josef Stipp),[19] to end the murder and killing in the coastal plain. In v. 7, a second speaker replies that this proves impossible in view of the divine command (צוה piel) to destroy the city of Ashkelon and the Philistine coast.[20]

12 Growing economic and cultural ties between the northern (Phoenicia) and southern Levantine coast (Philistia) can be demonstrated for the Iron Age IIB – C by the increased export of Phoenician pottery to southern Israel/southern Palestine. Phoenician pottery is found not only in coastal cities such as Ashdod and Ashkelon, but also in the Judean mountains. Cf. Hagemeyer, *Aschdod und Jerusalem*, 75 fn. 409.

13 Cf. also Amos 9:7.

14 Caphtor is usually understood as the designation for Crete due to its similarity to the Akkadian terms *Kaptāru/a* or *Kaptūru* as well as the Egyptian term *Kftjw/K*[*a*]*-f-tú*. Cf., e.g., Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52*, 238; Stipp, *Jeremia 27–52*, 47; Hagemeyer, "'Sie kamen, sahen, siegten […]?'", 54 with further references in fn. 36.

15 For more details, see section 3.1.

16 C.J. Sharp, *Jeremiah 26–52*, 317, 328.

17 E.g., R.G. Kratz, "Trauer", in A. Berlejung/C. Frevel (ed.), *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe zum Alten und Neuen Testament* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft; ^{4}2015) 429–30; M. Leonard-Fleckmann. "Mourning: I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament" in C.M. Furey/B. Matz et al. (ed.), *EBR* 19, (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2021), 1307–9.

18 Cf. Jer 50:35–38; Ez 21:6–22.

19 Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 672 (German original: "mythologisches Requisit").

20 Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 669.

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3 The Philistines and the Coastal Cities of Ashkelon and Gaza

3.1 *Some Remarks on the Philistines*

In Jer 47:1–7, the Philistines[21] symbolise a "foreign nation" that is depicted in the Hebrew Bible as "the ultimate other" in contrast to Israel.[22] In biblical literature, the coastal dwellers are portrayed within the framework of a "theology of alterity" by focussing on individual Philistine cities (e.g., Ashkelon and Gaza in Jer 47 or Ashdod in 1 Sam 5:1–6:18; Neh 13:23–24). This theology is made fruitful for a variety of identity discourses in Israel/Judah.[23]

Based on archaeological finds, a distinct "Philistine culture"[24] can be identified during the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age (late 12th and early 11th century BCE). This period was characterised by numerous demographic, political, social and economic upheavals in the Levant and throughout the Mediterranean region.[25] In Palestine, Egyptian dominance

21 It is unlikely that the early Iron Age dwellers of the Palestinian coastal plain identified themselves as "Philistines", but rather as inhabitants of their respective settlements (e.g., as Ashkelonites, Gazites, etc.). For an etymological analysis of the foreign appellation "Philistine/s", see T. Schneider, "The Philistine Language: New Etymologies and the Name 'David'", *UF* 43 (2012) 569–80, on pp. 570–1. On the multifaceted and nested identities in early Iron Age Israel/Palestine, cf. A.M. Maeir, "Philistine and Israelite Identities: Some Comparative Thoughts", *WO* 49 (2019) 151–61, on pp. 153–6.

22 Regarding the portrayal of the Philistines as "the ultimate other" in the context of the Hebrew Bible, see the detailed discussion in Hagemeyer, *Aschdod und Jerusalem*, 151–278 and esp. 287–91. Cf. also H.M. Niemann, "Nachbarn und Gegner, Konkurrenten und Verwandte Judas: Die Philister zwischen Geographie und Ökonomie, Geschichte und Theologie", in U. Hübner/E.A. Knauf (ed.), *Kein Land für sich allein: Studien zum Kulturkontakt in Kanaan, Israel/Palästina und Ebirnâri für Manfred Weippert zum 65. Geburtstag* (OBO 186; Freiburg (Switzerland): Universitätsverlag/Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 70–91; H.M. Niemann, "Neighbors and Foes, Rivals and Kin: Philistines, Shepheleans, Judeans between Geography and Economy, History and Theology", in A.E. Killebrew/G. Lehmann (ed.), *The Philistines and other "Sea Peoples" in Text and Archaeology* (ABS 15; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2013), 243–64.

23 On the significance of the Philistines and the city of Ashdod for a biblical theology of alterity, see Hagemeyer, *Aschdod und Jerusalem*, 287–91.

24 In this chapter, "Philistine culture" is used as a collective term for all early Iron Age artefacts found on the Levantine coast and its hinterland, reflecting a mix of both Palestinian and allochthonous influences from Cyprus, Crete and mainland Greece. However, the "Philistine culture" was by no means uniform, but was characterised by numerous regionalisms. For more detail and references, see Hagemeyer, "'Sie kamen, sahen, siegten […]?'", 56–64.

25 These far-reaching changes were triggered by climate change, Egypt's increasing loss of power, the collapse of the Hittite Empire and the Mycenaean palatial administration, to name a few factors. Cf. M.H. Wiener, "Causes of Complex Systems Collapse in the Aegean, Eastern Mediterranean, Anatolia and Italy at the End of the Bronze Age", in

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FIGURE 6.1 Philistine Bichrome pottery
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gradually declined, and many (but not all) of the local city-states experienced a steady decline. At the same time, a new material culture, characterised by strong Aegean and Cypriot affinities, left its traces on the coast. Particularly characteristic is the appearance of locally made monochrome pottery (so-called "Philistine 1 Pottery"), that is similar but not identical to Late Helladic IIIC-style pottery types from other areas of the eastern Mediterranean.[26]

P.M. Fischer/T. Bürge (ed.), *"Sea Peoples" Up-To-Date: New Research on Transformations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the 13th–11th Centuries BCE. Proceedings of the ESF-Workshop held at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, 3–4 November 2014* (Contributions to the Chronology of the Eastern Mediterranean 35; Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2017) 43–74. On social developments in the Aegean during the 12th century BCE, see A. Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines and Aegean Migration at the End of the Late Bronze Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2010), 34–96.

26 A.M. Maeir, "Insights from the Philistine 'Symbol-Scape' on Philistine Origins and Social Structure", in G. Guarducci/N. Laneri/S. Valentini (ed.), *Archaeology of Symbols: ICAS 1: Proceedings of the First International Conference on the Archaeology of Symbols* (Material Religion in Antiquity 3; Oxford: Oxbow, 2024) 229–38, on p. 231. For more detail, see P.A. Mountjoy, *Decorated Pottery in Cyprus and Philistia in 12th Century BC: Cypriot IIIC and Philistine IIIC*, vols. 1–2, (Contributions to the Chronology of the Eastern Mediterranean 36, Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2018).

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The monochrome Philistine pottery was soon replaced by bichrome ware ("Philistine 2 Pottery").

Until the mid-1990s, it was assumed that the Philistines (and other Sea Peoples) occupied and colonised the Levantine coastal plain in a more or less uniform conquest at the beginning of the Iron Age.[27] It was hypothesised that the colonisers were of Aegean origin and their (mainly) Aegean culture was assimilated over time by local influences.[28] The theses of R. A. Stewart Macalister (1870–1950) were seminal for the theory of a military colonisation of Palestine from the Aegean.[29] Other early scholars, such as Albrecht Alt (1883–1956)[30] and William F. Albright (1891–1971),[31] were also inspired by the martial depiction of the Philistines and Sea Peoples on the reliefs in the mortuary temple of Ramses III (1184–1153 BCE) in *Medīnet Hābū* and by texts in the Hebrew Bible, e.g., the story of the looting of the Ark (1 Sam 4–6).[32]

Although the theory outlined above is still defended, at least in part, in some recent studies,[33] the archaeological data obtained in recent decades show that there was rather little destruction in the Levantine cities during the transition from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age.[34] A precise analysis of Philistine pot-

27 E.g., T. Dothan, *The Philistines and Their Material Culture* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1982); A. Yasur-Landau, *Aegean Migration*.

28 Maeir, "Frogs", 202. For a summary of the state of research until the mid-1990s, see I. Singer, "Egyptians, Canaanites and Philistines in the Period of the Emergence of Israel", in I. Finkelstein/N. Na'aman (ed.), *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1994), 282–338.

29 R.A.S. Macalister, *The Philistines: Their History and Civilization* (The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy; London: The British Academy/Oxford: Oxford University, 1914).

30 E.g., A. Alt, "Ägyptische Tempel in Palästina und die Landnahme der Philister", *ZDPV* 67 (1944), 1–20.

31 W.F. Albright, "Syria, the Philistines and Phoenicia", in I.E.S. Edwards/C.J. Gadd et al. (ed.), *Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. II/2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, ^{3}1975) 507–36.

32 For references, see fn. 2.

33 See, most recently, A. Faust, "The Bible, Archaeology, and the Practice of Circumcision in Israelite and Philistine Societies", *JBL* 134 (2015) 273–90; A. Faust, "The 'Philistine Tomb' at Tel 'Eton: Culture Contact, Colonialism, and Local Responses in Iron Age Shephelah, Israel", *Journal of Anthropological Research* 71 (2015) 195–230.

34 Regarding the archaeological data, see J.M. Millek, "Sea Peoples, Philistines, and the Destruction of Cities: A Critical Examination of Destruction Layers 'Caused' by the 'Sea Peoples'", in P.M. Fischer/T. Bürge (ed.), *"Sea Peoples" Up-To-Date: New Research on Transformations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the 13th–11th Centuries BCE. Proceedings of the ESF-Workshop held at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, 3–4 November 2014* (Contributions to the Chronology of the Eastern Mediterranean 35; Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2017) 113–40; J.M. Millek, "Just What did They Destroy? The Sea Peoples and the End of the Late Bronze Age", in J. Kamlah/A. Lichtenberger (ed.), *The Mediterranean Sea and the Southern Levant: Archaeological*

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tery implies that this ware was not exclusively Aegean in character. Rather, we are dealing with archaeological finds in which various influences from Cyprus, Crete and mainland Greece were combined with local Levantine elements. Therefore, the Levantine coastal plain functioned for a longer period as "a complex and multifaceted mosaic" (Aren M. Maeir)[35] that enabled the (mostly) nonviolent interaction, mixing, and entanglement of diverse, ethnically, socially, and culturally inhomogeneous migrant groups with the local Semitic population.[36] As a result of this multifaceted entanglement processes, the "Philistine culture"[37] emerged in the early Iron Age.

3.2 *Ashkelon in the 7th–4th Century BCE*

As the previous analysis has shown, the Philistine city of Ashkelon represents an important point of reference for the oracle of Jer 47:1–7. The text probably alludes to the destruction of the harbour city by the Babylonian army towards the end of the 7th century BCE (see below).

The archaeological exploration of the *tell* of Ashkelon began as early as 1815, when Lady Hester Stanhope (1776–1839) initiated the first excavation with the permission of the Sublime Porte.[38] The first scientific excavation on behalf

and Historical Perspectives from Bronze Age to Medieval Times (ADPV 48; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2021), 59–98. Cf. also Hagemeyer, "'Sie kamen, sahen, siegten […]?'", 52–3. In addition, very few weapons have been found that can be linked to the Philistines. For references, see Maeir, "Frogs", 204.

35 Maeir, "Philistine 'Symbol-Scape'", 236.

36 E.g., A.M. Maeir, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson (Jud. 16:20): Reassessing the Martial Nature of the Philistines – Archaeological Evidence vs. Ideological Image?", in Ł. Niesiołowski-Spanò/M. Węcowski (ed.), *Change, Continuity, and Connectivity: North-Eastern Mediterranean at the Turn of the Bronze Age and in the Early Iron Age* (Philippika 118; Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden. 2018), 158–68; P.W. Stockhammer, "Philistia as a Contact Zone", 375–84; Hagemeyer "'Sie kamen, sahen, siegten […]?'", 45–75. More recently, Ido Koch has disputed the significance of migration processes for the development of Philistine culture and emphasised the importance of social and economic regionalisation phenomena for its emergence. On this, see I. Koch, "Early Philistia Revisited and Revised", in O. Lipschits/Y. Gadot/M. Adams (ed.), *Rethinking Israel: Studies in the History and Archaeology of Ancient Israel in Honor of Israel Finkelstein* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2017), 189–205. However, recent DNA samples from Ashkelon indicate that there were indeed (smaller) waves of immigration from southern Europe to the Levantine coastal plain during the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age. Cf. M. Feldman/D.M. Master et al., "Ancient DNA Sheds Light on the Genetic Origins of Early Iron Age Philistines", *Science Advances* 5 (2019) eaax0061, https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aax0061.

37 For the meaning and use of the term "Philistine culture", see fn. 24.

38 On the early exploration of ancient Ashkelon, see J.D. Schloen, "Early Explorations", in L.E. Stager/J.D. Schloen/D.M. Master (ed.) *Ashkelon I: Introduction and Overview*

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of the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) was conducted between 1920–1922 and directed by John Garstang (1876–1956) and William J. Phythian-Adams (1888–1967).[39] Modern excavations were carried out on a large scale from 1985–2016 by the *Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon*, directed by Lawrence E. Stager and Daniel M. Master (co-director from 2007).

Following its integration into the Neo-Assyrian Empire (in the late 8th century BCE), Ashkelon was able to maintain its status as an important hub for long-distance trade in the eastern Mediterranean. In the 7th century BCE, the city was protected by massive mudbrick fortifications.[40] Portions of the fortification from the period immediately before the Neo-Babylonian conquest in 604/3 BCE have been uncovered on the *North Tell* (North Slope, Grid 2, Phase 6).[41]

The remains excavated on the *South Tell* bear witness to Ashkelon's economic importance on the eve of the Babylonian destruction. A winery (*Building 776*)[42] with four wine presses, plastered mudbrick walls and sandstone ashlar foundations (Grid 38, Phase 14) is attested in Grid 38.[43] The winery had two sub-phases. In the more recent sub-phase, high-quality East Greek

(*1985–2006*) (Final Reports of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon 1; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 143–52.

39 J. David Schloen discusses the results of the British and Israeli excavations at Ashkelon in the 20th century. Cf. J.D. Schloen, "British and Israeli Excavations", in L.E. Stager/J.D. Schloen/D.M. Master (ed.) *Ashkelon I: Introduction and Overview* (*1985–2006*) (Final Reports of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon 1; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 153–63.

40 The fortifications were originally built in the Middle Bronze Age and were reinforced in the 9th and 8th centuries BCE (North Slope, Grid 2, Phase 8–7). Cf. R.J. Voss/L.E. Stager et al., "The North Tell of Ashkelon in the Bronze and Iron Age", in L.E. Stager/J.D. Schloen/R.J. Voss (ed.), *Ashkelon 6: The Middle Bronze Age Ramparts and Gates of the North Slope and Later Fortifications* (Final Reports of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon 6; University Park: Eisenbrauns, 2018) 25–101; Fig. 2.107–2.116.

41 Voss/Stager et al., "North Tell of Ashkelon", 101, Fig. 2.117–2.118.

42 More wine presses have been unearthed in Grid 51 (Master, "Nebuchadnezzar", 84). Apparently, the production of wine was of significant economic importance in late Iron Age Ashkelon.

43 On architecture and stratigraphy, see L.E. Stager/D.M. Master/J.D. Schloen (ed.), *Ashkelon 3: The Seventh Century BC* (Final Reports of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon 3; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 17–26 with Fig. 2.1–2.23. According to Lawrence E. Stager, the use of ashlar masonry and the central location of the winery in the city centre indicate that the building was a royal installation under the supervision of the king of Ashkelon, a client of the Egyptian Pharaoh (cf. L.E. Stager, "Ashkelon on the Eve of Destruction in 604 B. C.", in L.E. Stager/D.M. Master/J.D. Schloen (ed.), *Ashkelon 3: The Seventh Century BC* (Final Reports of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon 3; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011) 3–11, on p. 5). Recent studies by Daniel M. Master suggest that the facility may not

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ware and numerous precious artefacts were unearthed. The objects, including a faience statue of Bes, a bronze statue of Osiris, and a decorated bronze votive offering table as well as seven bronze *situlae*,[44] represent Egyptian imports and imply increased economic (and cultural) contacts between Ashkelon and Egypt in the late 7th century BCE.[45]

The remains of an approx. 500 sqm marketplace in the area of Grid 50 (Phase 7) date from the same period.[46] The ensemble comprised streets with drainage systems and several buildings. A house with business premises (*Building 406*) and an administrative building (*Building 234*) were excavated.[47] For *Building 406*, the function of individual business units could be determined more precisely. Finds of fat-bellied wine jars, a jug, a juglet and a wine decanter

have been a single building complex, but several long, narrow production facilities. On this, see D.M. Master, "Nebuchadnezzar at Ashkelon", *HeBAI* 7 (2018) 79–92, on p. 84.

44 For a detailed discussion of the Egyptian bronze finds, see L. Bell, "A Collection of Egyptian Bronzes" in L.E. Stager/D.M. Master/J.D. Schloen (ed.), *Ashkelon 3: The Seventh Century BC* (Final Reports of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon 3; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 397–420. A hoard with numerous bronze objects, including 26 bronze statuettes of Egyptian deities, also dates from the 7th century BCE (cf. Stager, "Eve of Destruction", 10). For this hoard, cf. J.H. Iliffe, "A Hoard of Bronzes from Ascalon, c. Fourth Century B.C.", *QDAP* 5 (1935) 61–8.

45 C. Uehlinger, "Bildquellen und 'Geschichte Israels': Grundsätzliche Überlegungen und Fallbeispiele", in C. Hardmeier (ed.), *Steine – Bilder – Texte: Historische Evidenz außerbiblischer und biblischer Quellen* (ABG 5; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2001) 25–77, on p. 65. According to Christoph Uehlinger, however, no conclusions can be drawn from the Egyptian finds in Ashkelon regarding the situation in other cities on the Palestinian coastal plain. Angelika Berlejung (personal communication, 25 April 2024) identifies the bronze artefacts as votive offerings that were stored in Ashkelon for resale. In her opinion, however, such valuable trade goods collected in a single hoard do not indicate that the cult in Ashkelon during the late 7th century BCE was characterised by Egyptian influences. Bernd Schipper argues differently, for whom the finds do not represent trade goods, but rather point to the existence of an Egyptian enclave in Ashkelon with its own shrine. Cf. B. Schipper, "Egypt and the Kingdom of Judah under Josiah and Jehoiakim", *TA* 37 (2010) 200–26, on p. 207.

46 Stager/Master/Schloen (ed.), *Ashkelon 3*, 37–49 with Fig. 3.8–3.20. At about the same time, a zone of commercial exchange was established in the area of Grid 51, as suggested by numerous finds (e.g., gold, weights, scales, and various imported vessels). Cf. Master, "Nebuchadnezzar", 90.

47 On *Building 234*, see Stager, "Eve of Destruction", 8. Cf. also A. Fantalkin, "Why Did Nebuchadnezzar II Destroy Ashkelon in Kislev 604 B.C.E.?", in I. Finkelstein/N. Na'aman (ed.), *The Fire Signals of Lachish: Studies in the Archaeology and History of Israel in the Late Bronze Age, Iron Age, and Persian Period in Honor Of David Ussishkin* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011) 87–111, on pp. 89–90.

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prove that a wine shop (*Room 375*) existed here.[48] The cuts of meat (e.g., two complete forelegs of beef) found in another room of the building indicate that this shop (*Room 431*) was the workplace of a butcher.[49]

Probably the most dramatic event in the history of ancient Ashkelon was the conquest of the city by Nebuchadnezzar II. The Babylonian Chronicle (BM 21946, lines 15–20) reports on a campaign in the Levant during the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (604/3 BCE).[50] According to the account, the king set out in the month of Sivan (l. 15) and marched victoriously through the *land of Ḫatti* until the month of Kislev. The local kings surrendered (l. 17) and only Ashkelon (l. 18–20) had to be conquered by military means. The city was turned into "a heap of rubble" (l. 20). The large-scale destruction of Ashkelon described in the historical source was archaeologically proven in the area of the winery (*Building 776*, Grid 38, Phase 14) and in the area of the marketplace (Grid 50, Phase 7).[51]

Perhaps Ashkelon was devastated because the city had been an important Egyptian outpost with a garrison of mainly Greek mercenaries (Alexander Fantalkin).[52] However, the Babylonian king may also have intended to prevent or at least hinder long-distance trade via the Mediterranean, as he was unable to control the existing sea routes. Or Nebuchadnezzar II wanted to demonstrate his military power in the border region with Egypt right at the beginning of his reign (Daniel M. Master).[53]

48 Stager, "Eve of Destruction", 7. Ostracon Ashkelon 1.5 was found in front of the shop. Based on the adjective אדם ("red"), which can be read in l. 2 of the inscription, the ostracon could have been a receipt or assignment of quantities of wine. Cf. F.M. Cross, "Inscriptions in Phoenician and Other Scripts", in L.E. Stager/J.D. Schloen/D.M. Master (ed.), *Ashkelon I: Introduction and Overview* (1985–2006) (Final Reports of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon 1; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008) 333–72, on pp. 341–2; Fig. 1.75.

49 Stager, "Eve of Destruction", 8.

50 For a concise reassessment of Nebuchadnezzar's military achievements in the Levant, see A. Fantalkin, "In Defense of Nebuchadnezzar II the Warrior", *AoF* 44 (2017) 201–8, on pp. 202–5.

51 L.E. Stager/J.D. Schloen et al., "Stratigraphic Overview", in L.E. Stager/J.D. Schloen/D.M. Master (ed.), *Ashkelon 1: Introduction and Overview (1985–2006)* (Final Reports of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon 1; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008) 215–323, on pp. 279, 312.

52 Fantalkin, "Kislev 604 B.C.E.", 88, 93–103. Cf. also Fantalkin, "Nebuchadnezzar II", 202–3. Alexander Fantalkin interprets the East Greek ware found in Ashkelon as the personal property of Greek mercenaries. In addition, he associates the personal names recorded in the two ostraca Ashkelon 1.14 (Cross, "Inscriptions", 348–9) and Ashkelon 3.3 (Cross, "Inscriptions", 367) with two mercenaries in Egyptian service. According to Daniel M. Master, East Greek Ware reached the southern Levant and Ashkelon in the course of Ionian commercial expansion (cf. Master, "Nebuchadnezzar", 91).

53 Master, "Nebuchadnezzar", 92.

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FIGURE 6.2 Excavation director Lawrence E. Stager examining the destruction debris in the marketplace
COURTESY OF THE LEON LEVY EXPEDITION TO ASHKELON

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Ashkelon was rebuilt relatively soon after its destruction in 604/3 BCE.[54] Local coins[55] and imported pottery from Greece (e.g., Black- and Red-Figured Ware) and Italy (e.g., Italic Red-Figured Ware) testify to the fact that the city regained great economic importance in Persian and early Hellenistic times.[56]

On the *South Tell* (Grid 38, Phase 13), a lavish building with different rooms grouped around a central courtyard was excavated and dated to the first part of the 5th century.[57] After a period of decline, at least three *insulae* or housing blocks (Grid 38, Phase 10) were built. In another part of the *South Tell* (Grid 50, Phases 6), an early Persian period warehouse was discovered.[58] In the later part of the 5th century BCE, this building went out of use and the area functioned as a cemetery for dogs.[59]

54 On the archaeology and history of Ashkelon in Persian times, see F. Hagemeyer, "Melting Pot, Salad Bowl, Contact Zone? The Southern Coastal Plain of Israel/Palestine in the 5th–4th Century BCE", in L.C. Jonker/A. Berlejung/I. Cornelius (ed.), *Multilingualism in Ancient Contexts: Perspectives from Ancient Near Eastern and Early Christian Contexts*, (Stellenbosch: African Sun Media, 2021), 94–109, on pp. 97–100 (with further references).

55 Besides the imitation of Greek tetradrachmae, so-called Philisto-Arabian Coins were also produced. The term "Philisto-Arabian Coins" refers to coins minted on behalf of satraps, governors, local rulers, nomadic tribes or independent cities in the southern provinces of the Achaemenid Empire. On the Persian coinage from Ashkelon, cf. H. Gitler/O. Tal, *The Coinage of Philistia of the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BC: A Study of the Earliest Coins of Palestine* (Collezioni Numismatiche 6; Milan: Ennerre, 2006), 96–113; Pl. X–XVII. For some new identifications of some Persian period Philistian coins, see H. Gitler/O. Tal, "Reclassifying Persian-Period Philistian Coins: Some New Identifications", *Israel Numismatic Research* 11 (2016), 11–22.

56 Cf. Hagemeyer, "Melting Pot", 99 with fn. 18 (with further literature).

57 Stager/Schloen et al., "Stratigraphic Overview", 283; Fig. 15.60; Hagemeyer, "Melting Pot", 98. In the area of Grid 57, a building temporarily used as a workshop (Phase 6) was excavated (Stager/Schloen et al., "Stratigraphic Overview", 319; Fig. 15.98). The workshop was eventually abandoned (Phase 5). In the late Achaemenid period a new building was erected, which partly follows the ground plan of the older building (Phase 4). Cf. Stager/Schloen et al., "Stratigraphic Overview", 320–1; Fig. 15.99–15.100.

58 Stager/Schloen et al., "Stratigraphic Overview", 313–14; Fig. 15.94.

59 Lawrence E. Stager interprets the dog cemetery as a sacred site for a Phoenician healing cult. However, a corresponding temple has not yet been excavated. Cf. L.E. Stager, "Dogs and Healing in Phoenician Ashkelon", in L.E. Stager/J.D. Schloen/D.M. Master (ed.), *Ashkelon 1: Introduction and Overview (1985–2006)* (Final Reports of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon 1; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 565–68. For an archaeozoological study of the more than 1000 dog skeletons from the Persian period identified in Ashkelon, see P. Wapnish/B. Hesse, "The Ashkelon Dog Burials: Data and Interpretations", in L.E. Stager/J.D. Schloen/D.M. Master (ed.), *Ashkelon 1: Introduction and Overview (1985–2006)* (Final Reports of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon 1; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 541–64. Towards the end of the Persian period or at the beginning of the Hellenistic era, another extensive seaside warehouse complex was established in the Grid 50 excavation area (Stager/Schloen et al., "Stratigraphic Overview", 317; Fig. 15.97).

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Pseudo-Scylax reports that Ashkelon became "a city of the Tyrians" during the 4th century BCE and served as headquarters of a Tyrian governor (Ps.-Scyl. 1.104). Towards the end of the 4th century BCE, the city belonged to the Ptolemaic Empire. In the early 3rd century BCE, Ashkelon was destroyed and subsequently abandoned, probably in the course of the First Syrian War (274–271 BCE).[60]

3.3 *Gaza in the 7th–4th Century BCE*

The Philistine city of Gaza, which is mentioned in Jer 47:1, 5, can probably be identified with *Tell Ḥarūbe*.[61] This archaeological site, which has been inhabited almost continuously since the Middle Bronze Age, is located in the north-eastern district of modern Gaza, c. 3–3.5 km east of the Mediterranean coast. The ancient city was located at the start and end point of the trade caravans to the Arabian Peninsula, so that *Tell Ḥarūbe* was of great importance for trade, especially but not exclusively in spices and incense.[62]

60 According to Kathleen J. Birney, the destruction can be dated to the time of the First Syrian War, primarily on the basis of coin finds. Two coins of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (r. 283/2–46 BCE) dated to 275/4–1 BCE and 274–1 BCE were found *in situ* in the destruction debris of Grid 38, Phase 10. Cf. K.J. Birney, *Ashkelon 9: The Hellenistic Period* (Final Reports of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon 9; University Park: Eisenbrauns, 2022), 3. On the two coins, see D.T. Ariel, "Coins", in K.J. Birney, *Ashkelon 9: The Hellenistic Period* (Final Reports of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon 9; University Park: Eisenbrauns, 2022), 373–432, on p. 408 cat. nos. 101 and 104.

61 On this identification, see J.-B. Humbert, "À Gaza, une archéologie abandonee: 1994–2012", in J. Kamlah/A. Lichtenberger (ed.), *The Mediterranean Sea and the Southern Levant: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives from Bronze Age to Medieval Times* (ADPV 48; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2021), 186; M. Sadeq, "An Overview of Iron Age Gaza in Light of the Archaeological Evidence", in J.R. Spencer/R.A. Mullins/A.J. Brody (ed.), *Material Culture Matters: Essays on the Archaeology of the Southern Levant in Honor of Seymour Gitin* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 241. Cf. also Y. Levin, "Gaza", in D.C. Allison Jr./C. Helmer et al. (ed.), *EBR* 9 (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2014) 1046–57, on p. 1046.

62 On the economic and cultural relations between the Southern Levant and Northern Arabia in the Iron Age, see J.M. Tebes, "Trade and Nomads: The Commercial Relations between the Negev, Edom, and the Mediterranean in the Late Iron Age", *Journal of the Serbian Archaeological Society* 22 (2006) 45–62; J.M. Tebes, "The Southern Levant and Northern Arabia in the Iron Age", in K. Radner/N. Moeller/D.T. Potts (ed.), *Oxford History of the Ancient Near East, Vol. V: The Age of Persia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023) 231–98. Cf. also C.B. David, "The Negev Highlands – A Corridor for the Copper and Incense Trade during Nonconsecutive Periods between the Chalcolithic and Roman Periods", in E. Ben-Yosef/I.W.N. Jones (ed.), *"And in Length of Days Understanding" (Job 12:12): Essays on Archaeology in the Eastern Mediterranean and Beyond in Honor of Thomas E. Levy*, vol. 2 (Interdisciplinary Contributions to Archaeology; Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023) 1227–54.

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The archaeological exploration of the *tell* began as early as 1659 with Chevalier Laurent d'Arvieux (1635–1702). The French nobleman tried to find and excavate the Temple of Dagon mentioned in the Book of Judges (Judg 16:23–30) but was unsuccessful.[63] Since the 20th century, research into the ancient settlement has hardly been possible due to the extensive medieval and modern building activity and the difficult political situation. William J. Phythian-Adams was only able to examine small areas of *Tell Ḥarūbe* in 1922. Five different fortifications were identified in the course of his investigation.[64] More recent surveys were carried out on a very small scale under the direction of Joanne Clarke, Louise Steel and Moain Sadeq in the 1990s.[65] Of greater significance was the archaeological exploration of *el-Blaḫiye* (Anthedon), just 3 km south of *Tell Ḥarūbe* on the Mediterranean coast. The excavations at the harbour of ancient Gaza (see below) were carried out between 1995 and 2012 under the direction of Jean-Baptiste Humbert and Moain Sadeq.[66]

In terms of historical development, Gaza was transformed into an Assyrian vassal kingdom in the late 8th century BCE. After the death of Ashurbanipal (669–631 BCE), the city and its surrounding area came under Egyptian control during the reign of Psamtik I (664–610 BCE).[67] Towards the end of the 7th century, Gaza was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar II. A Babylonian vassal may have ruled the city until the early 6th century BCE. At least in Prism EŞ 7834[68] an anonymous king of Gaza (LUGAL *ša* KUR.*ḫa-az-z*[a-ti], c. vii* (vi′), l. 24′) is

63 M. Sadeq, "Iron Age Gaza", 241. On Dagon, see now Hagemeyer "'Sie kamen, sahen, siegten […]?'", 56–7. Cf. also J.P. Emanuel, "'Dagon Our God': Iron I Philistine Cult in Text and Archaeology", *JANER* 16 (2016) 22–66; L. Feliu, "Dagon: I. Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible/Old Testament", in D.C. Allison Jr./H.-J. Klauck et al. (ed.), *EBR* 6, (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2013), 2–3.

64 On the results, see W.J. Phythian-Adams, "Reports on the Soundings at Gaza, etc.", *PEQFS* 55 (1923) 11–17; W.J. Phythian-Adams, "Second Report on the Soundings at Gaza", *PEQFS* 55 (1923) 18–30; W.J. Phythian-Adams, "The Problem of 'Deserted Gaza'", *PEQFS* 55 (1923) 30–6.

65 J. Clarke/L. Steel/M. Sadeq, "Gaza Research Project: 1998 Survey of the Old City of Gaza", *Levant* 36 (2004) 31–6.

66 On the results, see Humbert, "Gaza", 185–244.

67 On the history and archaeology of Gaza in the Iron Age, see A. Ovadiah, "Gaza", in E. Stern (ed.) *NEAEHL* 2 (Jerusalem: The Israel Exploration Society & Carta, 1993) 464–7; M. Sadeq, "Iron Age Gaza", 239–53.

68 *Editio princeps*: E. Unger, *Babylon: Die heilige Stadt nach der Beschreibung der Babylonier* (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1931), 35–6, 282–94; Pl. 52–6. Cf. also the new edition with commentary and translation in R. Da Riva, "Nebuchadnezzar II's Prism (EŞ 7834): A new Edition", *ZA* 103 (2013), 196–229, on pp. 208–21; Fig. 1–12.

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mentioned in a list of Syro-Palestinian client rulers (c. vii* (vi′), l. 23′–29′).[69] Only a few years later, the city was subjugated by Necho II (610–595 BCE) or Psamtik II (595–589 BCE).[70]

With regard to archaeological finds, no architectural structures are known for *Tell Ḥarūbe* that date with certainty from the 8th–6th century BCE. In *el-Blaḫiye* (Anthedon), a section of a massive mudbrick wall/rampart (I Zone sud – Niv. I/7) was uncovered in the area of the *ville haute* (Chantier A [= Field A]).[71] The fortification was built in the middle of the 8th century BCE and was reinforced towards the end of the 8th century BCE.[72]

Persian rule over Gaza began with the conquest of the Neo-Babylonian Empire by Cyrus II in 539 BCE.[73] According to H. Jacob Katzenstein, a Persian garrison was stationed in the city and the area belonged to the Fifth Persian Satrapy.[74] Siegfried Mittmann and others consider it plausible that the Persians handed Gaza over to the Arabs or rather Qedar. As the start and end point of the trade caravans to Northern Arabia, the city enjoyed tax and customs exemption.[75] Gaza was finally conquered by Alexander the Great in 332 BCE from the hands of the Persian commander Batis (Arr. *Exped. Alex.* 2.25.4, Curt. 4.6.7–25, Jos. *Ant.* 11.320).[76]

There is archaeological evidence for the use of local coins beginning in the middle of the 5th century BCE, which may have been minted directly in *Tell Ḥarūbe*.[77] It is possible that the most recent wall uncovered on the *tell* by William J. Phythian Adams dates from the late Persian period and was built in

69 For a discussion of Prism EŞ 7834, c. vii* (vi′), l. 23′–29, see Hagemeyer, *Aschdod und Jerusalem*, 218–19 with further literature cited in fn. 296–305.

70 See section 4.2 for more detail and references.

71 Humbert, "Gaza", 195–8; Figs. 6–7.

72 Humbert, "Gaza", 198.

73 On the literary sources dealing with the history of Gaza in the Persian period, see H.J. Katzenstein, "Gaza in the Persian Period", *Transeu* 1 (1989) 67–86.

74 Katzenstein, "Gaza in the Persian Period", 70–1, 79. Cf. also Gitler/Tal, *Coinage of Philistia*, 41 for further literature.

75 S. Mittmann, "Die Küste Palästinas bei Herodot", *ZDPV* 99 (1983) 130–40, on pp. 136–9. For a similar position, cf. Ovadiah, "Gaza", 464; Y. Levin, "The Southern Frontier of Yehud and the Creation of Idumea", in Y. Levin (ed.), *A Time of Change: Judah and its Neighbours in the Persian and Early Hellenistic Period* (LSTS 65; London: T & T Clark, 2007), 239–52, on pp. 248–49.

76 Josephus calls Batis by the name "Babemesis". Quintus Curtius Rufus refers to the city commander as "Betis".

77 On the Persian coins from Gaza, see Gitler/Tal, *Coinage of Philistia*, 114–45; Pl. XVIII–XXXII. Cf. also L. Mildenberg, "Gaza Mint Authorities in Persian Time: Preliminary Studies of the Local Coinage in the Fifth Persian Satrapy, Part 4", *Transeu* 2 (1990) 137–46, on pp. 139–40.

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preparation for an invasion by Alexander the Great.[78] In *el-Blaḫiye* (Anthedon), residential buildings (with two sub-phases) from the (late) 6th–5th century BCE (I Zone sud – Niv. I/6 a and Niv. I/6 b) have been discovered in the area of the *ville haute* (Chantier A [= Field A).[79] The houses were built from unfired, standardised mud bricks (40 × 40 × 12 cm) on weak foundations. In addition to local pottery, numerous imports (Attic, East Greek and Cypriot ware) have been identified.[80] After a hiatus in settlement, new dwellings made of small fieldstones were erected during the 4th–3rd century BCE (I Zone sud – Niv. I/5).[81]

In the *ville basse*, almost exclusively architecture from the Hellenistic-Roman period has been excavated to date. Only in Chantier F (= Field F), the remains of a large harbour warehouse from the 5th–4th century BCE (II Zone North – Niv. II/29) have been partially uncovered. For this building, mud bricks with the same dimensions as those excavated in the *ville haute* (40 × 40 × 12 cm) were used (see above for *ville haute*).[82] The archaeological finds therefore point to a planned expansion of *el-Blaḫiye* (Anthedon) in Persian times, as Gaza/*Tell Ḥarūbe* apparently required a larger port during this period.

4 Historical and Literary-historical Considerations

4.1 *The Core of the Oracle* (*Jer 47:2–7*)

Jer 47:2–7 (or at least Jer 47:2–5) is usually identified as the literary core of the oracle against the Philistines. In addition, the verses are frequently attributed to the authorship of the prophet Jeremiah. For John Bright, the "exceedingly vivid" character of the text speaks in favour of its historical authenticity and Jeremianic origin.[83] Eris Peels argues similarly, interpreting Jer 47:2–7 (with the exception of the clause concerning Sidon and Tyre in v. 4a) as a text written

78 Gitler/Tal, *Coinage of Philistia*, 41; M. Sadeq, "Iron Age Gaza", 241.

79 Humbert, "Gaza", 193–5; Fig. 4–5.

80 J.-B. Humbert/M. Sadeq, "Fouilles de Blakhiyah – Anthédon", in J.-B. Humbert (ed.), *Gaza Méditerranéenne: Histoire et archéologie en Palestine*, (Paris: Errance, 2000), 105–20, on pp. 105–6, 112–17. Cf. also Gitler/Tal, *Coinage of Philistia*, 41–2.

81 Humbert, "Gaza", 193.

82 Humbert, "Gaza", 237–40; Fig. 36.

83 J. Bright, *Jeremiah: A new Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 21; New York: Doubleday, 1965), 311. William L. Holladay (Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 336), Beat Huwyler (Huwyler, *Jeremia*, 140) and Jack R. Lundbom (Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52*, 231) attribute (at least) Jer 47:2–5 to the authorship of Jeremiah.

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by Jeremiah due to the thematic, stylistic and rhetorical similarities with Jer 4–6 and Jer 46.[84] According to Werner H. Schmidt, Jeremiah wrote the oracle, which implies a literary relationship with Isaianic texts and the idea that Yahweh is the driving force behind developments in world history. The literary motif of the threat posed by an enemy from the north and the "lively, evocative style with an element of lament" also point to Jeremiah's authorship.[85]

On the basis of the preceding historical and archaeological analysis (see above), it can be considered fairly certain that in Jer 47:4–5 and Jer 47:7 the author explicitly refers to the destruction of Ashkelon in 604/3 BCE.[86] In the same vein, Lawrence E. Stager[87] interprets Jer 47:4–5 as a reflection of Nebuchadnezzar II's military campaign against Ashkelon. In his opinion, the oracle appeals to Jehoiakim of Judah (608–598 BCE) to prevent the Judean king from the consequences of an anti-Babylonian and pro-Egyptian policy. Hermann-Josef Stipp[88] holds the view that the oracle was composed on the occasion of the Babylonian destruction of Ashkelon as a warning to the Judean elites not to secede from the supremacy of Nebuchadnezzar II. Although Jack R. Lundbom[89] and Beat Huwyler[90] opt in favour of a compilation of Jer 47:2–7 before 604/3 BCE, they likewise contextualise the oracle in the period of the Babylonian threat to the Levant during the last years of the 7th century BCE.

84 Peels, "Pharaoh", 311.

85 W.H. Schmidt, *Das Buch Jeremia: Kapitel 21–52* (ATD 21; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 292. Ernst Kutsch identifies Jer 47:2, 3b, 4aα.b as the basic layer of the oracle, in which the annihilation of the Philistines by an enemy from the north is announced. This basic layer has undergone several expansions. Jer 47:6–7 represents the first addition, which was added after 604 BCE to emphasise the fulfilment of the words of Jer 47:2, 3b, 4aα.b. After the campaign of Pharaoh Apries/Hophra (589–70 BCE) against Sidon and a naval operation against Tyre reported by Herodotus (Hdt. II.161), a later redactor added the verses Jer 47:1b, 3a, 4aβ.γ, (5), which refer to an Egyptian advance into the Levant. For more detail, see E. Kutsch, "'… denn Jahwe vernichtet die Philister': Erwägungen zu Jer 47,1–7", in J. Jeremias/L. Perlitt (ed.), *Die Botschaft und die Boten: Festschrift für Hans Walter Wolff zum 70. Geburtstag* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1981), 253–67.

86 Abraham Malamat argues differently, arguing that the text refers to the alleged invasion of Palestine by the Scythians c. 609 BCE, as mentioned in Herodotus (Hdt. I.105). Cf. A. Malamat, "The Historical Setting of Two Biblical Prophecies on the Nations", *IEJ* 1 (1950–1951), 149–59, on pp. 155–158.

87 Stager, "Eve of Destruction", 4.

88 Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 673. Cf. also Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 257; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 312; Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 337.

89 Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52*, 234, 242.

90 Huwyler, *Jeremia*, 141.

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4.2 *The Heading of the Oracle* (*Jer 47:1*)

Previous scholarship has paid greater attention to the fact that Jer 47:1 presupposes a conquest of Philistia (or at least the city of Gaza) by Egypt and not by Babylonia. According to Eric Peels, the phrase בטרם יכה פרעה את־עזה, ("before Pharaoh seized Gaza", v. 1b) most likely refers to the conquest of Gaza from Babylonian hands by Pharaoh Necho II (610–595 BCE) in 601/0 BCE.[91] H. Jacob Katzenstein argues similarly, concluding from Jer 47:1, references in Herodotus (Hdt. II.159) and the Babylonian Chronicle (on the Babylonian campaign of the year 604/3 BCE)[92] that Gaza had been a Neo-Babylonian vassal since the end of the 7th century BCE. After the retreat of the Babylonian army from Egypt, the city would have been reoccupied by Egyptian troops in 601/0 BCE.[93] In fact, Herodotus (Hdt. II.159) mentions a conquest of the city of Καδυτις by Necho II after the Pharaoh had defeated the Syrians, who are usually identified with the Babylonians, at Μαγδωλος. While Καδυτις is generally equated with Gaza, more recent research identifies Μαγδωλος with the Egyptian border town of Migdol and less frequently with Megiddo.[94]

However, it is also conceivable that the note in Jer 47:1b points to an earlier or later Egyptian conquest of Gaza. A reference to a capture of the coastal city by Psamtik I (664–610 BCE) is a possible option. At least in Ostracon Karnak LS 462.4 and also in Herodotus (Hdt. II.157) a campaign of this Pharaoh against Ashdod (north of Gaza) is attested for the year 635 BCE.[95] Necho II could have occupied Gaza as early as 609 BCE, either after the Battle of Haran or immediately after the conflict with Josiah of Judah (2 Kgs 23:29–30;

91 Peels, "Pharaoh", 314. Cf. also B. Schipper, *Israel und Ägypten in der Königszeit: Die kulturellen Kontakte von Salomo bis zum Fall Jerusalems* (OBO 170; Freiburg (Switzerland): Universitätsverlag/Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 240 fn. 260; A.M. Wilson-Wright, *Jeremiah's Egypt: Prophetic Reflections on the Saite Period* (ANEM 30; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2023), 24.

92 On this, see section 3.2.

93 H.J. Katzenstein, "Gaza in the Neo-Babylonian Period (626–539 B.C.E.)", *Transeu* 7 (1994) 35–49, on p. 43. Abraham Malamat (cf. Malamat, "Historical Setting", 155–8) considers a conquest of Gaza by Psamtik I (664–10 BCE) or Necho II (610–595 BCE). Eric Peels (cf. Peels, "Pharaoh", 311–20) offers an overview of other historical possibilities for identifying the Pharaoh in question.

94 H.J. Katzenstein, "Before Pharaoh Conquered Gaza (Jeremiah XLVII 1)", *VT* 33 (1983) 249–51, on p. 249; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52*, 233; Huwyler, *Jeremia*, 143. Cf. also Fantalkin, "Nebuchadnezzar II", 204–5 with fn. 11. In older research, Μαγδωλος was equated with Megiddo and Καδυτις with Kadesh on the Orontes. Cf., e.g., P. Volz, *Der Prophet Jeremia* (KAT 10; Leipzig/Erlangen: Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1922), 398; Malamat, "Historical Setting", 154 fn. 16; Kutsch, "Philister", 257.

95 On the campaign against Ashdod in 635 BCE, see Hagemeyer, *Aschdod und Jerusalem*, 103, 109–10.

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2 Chr 35:20–24).[96] It is also possible, albeit unlikely, that the city was successfully besieged in 605 BCE during the retreat of the Egyptian army after the defeat at the Battle of Carchemish.[97] However, Jer 47:1b could as well refer to the expedition of Psamtik II (595–589 BC) to Syro-Palestine in 592 BCE.[98] Or, like Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, one might think of a very late event, in particular the well-attested capture of Gaza by Ptolemy I Soter (367/6–283/2 BCE) in 312 BCE (Diod. 19.80–86; Jos. C. Ap. 1.22; Plut. Demetr. 5).[99]

With regard to the various historical scenarios, Beat Huwyler has already recognised that there are no clear indications, such as the name of Pharaoh, to link the note in Jer 47:1b to a specific event.[100] The interpretation is further complicated by the fact that the Alexandrian text of Jer^{G} 29:1 (= Jer^{MT} 47:1) consists only of the phrase ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀλλοφύλους ("concerning/against the Philistines") and apparently knows nothing of an Egyptian conquest of Gaza.[101]

96 Huwyler, *Jeremia*, 143.

97 E.g., Malamat, "Historical Setting", 155 fn. 17; Kutsch, "Philister", 257. However, Jer 47:1 could also allude to a conquest of Gaza by Pharaoh Apries/Hophra (589–70 BCE), who may have taken the city on the march after his campaign against Sidon and Tyre (Hdt. II.161). Cf. Peels, "Pharaoh", 315.

98 In the opinion of Bernd Schipper, this endeavour mentioned in Papyrus Rylands 9 was a deliberate demonstration of pharaonic power intended to emphasise Egypt's claim to Syro-Palestine vis-à-vis Babylonia. Cf. B. Schipper, *Israel und Ägypten*, 242–4. For a similar view, see D. Kahn, "Some Remarks on the Foreign Policy of Psammetichus II in the Levant (595–589 B.C.)", *JEH* 1 (2008) 139–57, on pp. 148–53. Cf. also Wilson-Wright, *Jeremiah's Egypt*, 26–7 (with further references).

99 P.-M. Bogaert, "Relecture et déplacement de l'oracle contre les Philistines: Pour une datation de la rédaction longue (*TM*) du livre de Jérémie", in Institut catholique de Paris, Département des études bibliques (ed.), *La vie de la Parole: De l'Ancient au Nouveau Testament: Études d'exégèse et d'herméneutique bibliques offertes à Pierre Grelot professeur à l'institut Catholique de Paris* (Paris : Declée, 1987), 146. According to Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, the mention of Tyre and Sidon in v. 4 refers to the change in the political system from aristocratic rule to republics (Tyre: 274 BCE; Sidon: 262/1 BCE).

100 Huwyler, *Jeremia*, 145. Werner H. Schmidt makes a similar argument. Cf. Schmidt, *Jeremia 21–52*, 291.

101 This fact has already led scholars such as Wolfgang Werner (Werner, *Jeremia*, 159) to assume that Jer^{MT} 47:1b represents a secondary addendum. See also Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 311. According to Beat Huwyler (Huwyler, *Jeremia*, 149), the clause concerning Gaza in Jer^{MT} 47:1 was added because later literati saw the Egyptians as the successors of the Babylonians with regard to the execution of the divine will. For the opinion that Jer^{G} 29:1 has preserved the original text, see H.-J. Stipp, *Das masoretische und alexandrinische Sondergut des Jeremiabuches: Textgeschichtlicher Rang, Eigenarten, Triebkräfte* (OBO 136; Freiburg (Switzerland): Universitätsverlag/Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 74.

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5 Concluding Discussion

The oracle of Jer 47 seems to be a largely consistent text that portrays the Philistines as "foreigners" and "ultimate others" in contrast to Israel/Judah.[102] Perhaps the author of the basic textual layer possessed very vague knowledge of the early Iron Age Philistine culture. His reference to the island of Caphtor (Jer 47:4b) could be understood as a distant memory of allochthonous influences from the west that reached the Levantine coastal plain at the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age.

However, the oracle's point of reference is not to be found in the early Iron Age, but in the late 7th century BCE. Undoubtedly, Jer 47:2–7 reflects the Neo-Babylonian destruction of Ashkelon. It should be emphasised that the described suffering of the coastal dwellers is not connected with negative actions towards Judah and the Judeans.[103] In contrast to other oracles directed against the Philistine coast, e.g., Amos 1:6–8 and Zeph 2:4–6,[104] the writer takes a (largely) unbiased stance. The text is characterised neither by clearly nationalistic or xenophobic tendencies nor by malicious joy in view of the destruction of Ashkelon and Gaza. Nor is the author (in contrast to the scribe of e.g., Zeph 2:7)[105] interested in the economic potential of the coastal cities, which is well attested archaeologically for both the late Iron Age and the Persian period.

In the *narrative world* of the oracle, the Philistine coastal plain seems to serve as a generic object of projection to illustrate the agency of Yahweh throughout the world, including the Mediterranean coast. The neutral and to some extent distanced attitude towards the coastal dwellers could indicate that Jer 47:(1a.)2–7 was written several years after the events of 604/3 BCE, probably during the Babylonian exile (at the earliest). The purpose of the composition may have been to supplement an older, perhaps pre-exilic collection (Jer *46–51) with a reference to the traditional arch-enemies of Israel/Judah.

As far as the note in Jer 47:1b about the conquest of Gaza is concerned, two possibilities are envisaged: First, the clause may have been part of the basic text of the oracle or a very early addition. Second, the verse was inserted as a very late addendum. Regarding the first option, the note probably refers to

102 The linking of Jer 47:2–5 and Jer 47:6–7 by means of the rhetorical questions centred in v. 5 and v. 6a does not reveal any literary break. Therefore, the poem of Jer 47:6–7 probably already belonged to the basic layer of Jer *47.

103 For this observation, see Huwyler, *Jeremia*, 142. Georg Fischer takes the opposite view. In his opinion, the author of Jer 47:1–7 assumed that the Philistines' misconduct vis-à-vis Judah was well known. Cf. Fischer, *Jeremia*, 497.

104 See most recently Hagemeyer, *Aschdod und Jerusalem*, 220–5, 231–9.

105 On Zeph 2:7 and its historical background, see Hagemeyer, *Aschdod und Jerusalem*, 238–9.

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a conquest of Gaza by Necho II (probably in 601/0 BCE) or Psamtik II (in 592 BCE). We would deal with the same time horizon (i.e., "around 600 BCE") that serves as the frame of reference for the following verses. If this is the case, the author has supplemented the traditional literary motif of an "enemy from the north" with the concept of an "enemy from the south." The military activity of the Egyptians would thus have been presented as part of the divine plan to destroy the Philistine coast.

As far as the second possibility is concerned, Jer 47:1b was added very late, perhaps in early Hellenistic times. It is quite possible that a redactor felt the need to update the oracle after the conquest of Gaza by Ptolemy I Soter in 312 BCE. During the Ptolemaic period, when the memory of the conquest of Ashkelon in 604/3 BCE had already faded, the idea of a threat to Syro-Palestine from Babylonia was probably no longer plausible. The editor thus adapted the scenario originally presented in Jer 47 to the current political conditions of his time.[106] In any case, by referring to an anonymous Pharaoh, the scribe has deliberately obscured the historical background of the verse in question. A precise interpretation of Jer 47:1b is therefore virtually impossible.

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106 The absence of any mention of Gaza in the Alexandrian text of Jer^{G} 29:1 (= Jer^{MT} 47:1) may argue in favour of a very late addition. The Greek version was probably composed using an older, non-Masoretic Hebrew *Vorlage*.

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