

Introduction

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“Whoever commands the sea, commands the trade; whosoever commands the trade of the world commands the riches of the world, and consequently the world itself.”¹

The sea and seafaring have always fascinated mankind. Rapid travel by water enabled extensive long-distance trade and also new cultural discoveries. But great dangers such as storms and rough seas were also associated with shipping. However, as the pottery finds from Jerusalem indicate, the economy of Judah was predominantly local for most of the Iron Age, with little evidence of imports.² After all, Jerusalem and the small Judaeian hill country lay inland and thus farther away from the large coastal cities of southern Israel/Palestine such as Gaza, Ashkelon and Ashdod, as well as the trade routes on the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, the kings and the elites of Judah needed the ports of the coast in order to obtain high-value luxury goods (e.g., perfumes, ointments) and building materials (e.g., cedarwood). However, since Jerusalem and its environs were a rather humble region for much of the Iron Age, the prosperity of the coastal cities aroused resentment and led to cultural and religious demarcation tendencies in Judah that can be reconstructed well from biblical literature.³

During the early Iron Age, the emergence of a new material culture, characterized by strong Aegean and Cypriot affinities, left its traces on the coast. Particularly characteristic in this regard is the appearance of locally made monochrome Helladic IIIC-style pottery types. The allochthonous influence on the new pottery repertoire (and other artifacts) was in older research approaches associated with large waves of immigration from the Aegean-Cypriot area and the arrival of warlike colonizers, the Philistines.⁴ Today, however, it is widely accepted that southwestern Israel/Palestine was shaped over a long period of time by continuous (not only sea-borne but also land-borne) immigration of rather small groups of people. Recent studies show that the coastal area functioned as a contact zone that enabled the nonviolent interaction, mixing, and entanglement of diverse, ethnically, socially, and culturally inhomogeneous migrant groups with

* My thanks go to Gunnar Lehmann for providing me with the geographical map of southern Israel/Palestine.

¹ Sir Walter Raleigh (1552–1618). Cf. RALEIGH 1964:325.

² BEN-SHLOMO 2017; 2018; 2019.

³ E.g., Neh 13:23–24; Zech 9:5–7. Cf. NIEMANN 2002:82–89; 2013:258–264.

⁴ See, e.g., MACALISTER 1914; ALT 1944; ALBRIGHT 1975.

the local Semitic population.⁵ As a result, there was a dynamic change of the material culture of the coast, the remains of which are now referred to as “Philistine culture.”

According to the biblical Books of Judges and Samuel, which, however, do not date to the early Iron Age, the Philistines were perceived as a threat in Judah from the very beginning.⁶ But as Aren M. Maeir demonstrates in the book’s first contribution, the relationship between coast and highlands was considerably more complex. In his essay Maeir discusses the importance of Tell es-Safi/Gath in Iron Age I and Iron Age IIA as an important intermediate trading post and place of cultural exchange between Jerusalem and the west, i.e., the coast. After presenting and analyzing the archaeological evidence for imports from Phoenicia, Cyprus, and elsewhere, the author is able to show that Jerusalem’s near and far relations appear to have been connected to or passed through the southern Coastal Plain. Moreover, he demonstrates that Gath exerted a great influence on Jerusalem and Judah until its destruction by Hazael of Damascus in the second half of the 9th century BCE.

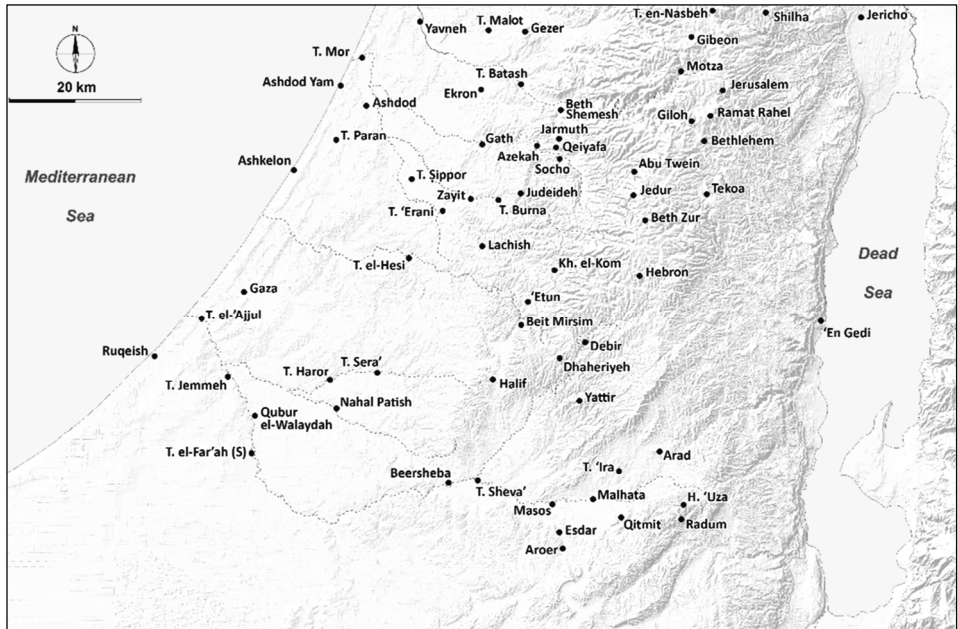


Fig. 1: Map of southern Israel/Palestine (© Gunnar Lehmann).

Following are two contributions by David Ben-Shlomo and Jesse Michael Millek, which are also dedicated to the southern Coastal Plain. David Ben-Shlomo studies the early Iron Age material culture of the coast and provides a detailed analysis of Philistine Bichrome Pottery, figurines, and also Late Philistine Decorated Ware (LPDW). On the

⁵ E.g., HITCHCOCK/MAEIR 2013; MAEIR 2018; STOCKHAMMER 2018; HAGEMEYER in press.

⁶ On the portrayal of the Philistines in the biblical texts on the emergence of the monarchy in Israel/Judah, see now KOCH 2020.

basis of the finds discussed, the author is able to (re-)construct the complexity of the economic, cultural, and social interactions between the coastal cities and the Judaeen hill country for the period in question. Important preconditions for the developments in Judah and Philistia during Iron Age I and IIA are analyzed in the contribution by Jesse Michael Millek on the question of how severely the larger settlements and cities in the Levant were affected by destruction at the end of the Late Bronze Age. The aim of the study is furthermore to investigate the impact of destruction on the cessation or near cessation of southern Levant's trade with Cyprus and Mycenaean Greece in the late 14th and 13th centuries BCE, as visible in the archaeological record.

After considering the southern Coastal Plain, the next two essays by Hermann Michael Niemann as well as Christian Locatell, Joe Uziel and Itzhaq Shai turn to the Judaeen mountains. Hermann Michael Niemann discusses the development of the territory of the Davidic kings from the 10th to the early 6th century BCE, especially possible expansion attempts towards the coast. Niemann develops the hypothesis that the Davidides were essentially city kings who could only extend their territory beyond the highlands with direct or indirect help from outside. The significance of the Judaeen border in Iron Age II is studied by Christian Locatell, Joe Uziel and Itzhaq Shai, who contrast Tel Burna and Jerusalem in a comparative analysis. The authors present an up-to-date synthesis of the archaeological finds from Tel Burna and reconstruct the administration, economy, agriculture and infrastructure of this border town. In addition, the interaction of Tel Burna with the capital Jerusalem is elaborated.

Two case studies concerning the archaeology of Jerusalem are contributed by Dieter Vieweger and Jennifer Zimni as well as Yuval Gadot. Vieweger and Zimni present the new results of the German excavations on the southwestern slope of Mount Zion. The excavated remains, which (possibly) date from the Iron Age II to the Middle Ages, reveal the strong changes in importance and function to which the investigated area was exposed. While in the early Roman and Byzantine periods wealthy inhabitants settled on the southwestern slope, the area seems to have served as an industrial quarter in the early Islamic period. In the following essay Yuval Gadot examines the influence and significance of Manasseh of Judah's rule on archaeologically verifiable building activity in Jerusalem and its environs under the conditions of the *pax assyriaca*, hitherto attributed at least in part to his predecessor Hezekiah. Gadot demonstrates that highly specialized land exploitation, erection of monumental landmarks, and construction of gardens and irrigation systems are expressions of a selective adaptation of aspects of Assyrian culture by Judaeen elites in the first half of the 7th century BCE.

The last three contributions of the volume by Benedikt Hensel, Tilmann Gaitzsch and Manfred Oeming are devoted to the field of Biblical Studies. The essay by Benedikt Hensel deals with the Ark narrative of 1 Sam *4:1b–7:1 / 2 Sam 6* and the relations of the Philistine coast, Assyria and Judah reflected therein. A new historical contextualization and literary-historical classification is presented, leading to the identification of the Ark narrative as an anti-Assyrian account intended to legitimize Jerusalem as the new cultic center of "Israel" after 722 and 701 BCE, while opposing the influence of the southern Coastal Plain on Judah during the same period. The following contribution by Tilmann Gaitzsch examines the conceptual history of the term *taršīš* in the Hebrew Bible with a focus on the Book of Isaiah. The author is able to outline that *taršīš* initially

denoted an area of the western Mediterranean and was eventually used as a cipher for distant regions of the world. At the same time, a connection between the environment of the texts and those distant regions is postulated, expressed in the hope that YHWH worshippers will one day return to Jerusalem from there as well.

With regard to the reconstruction of Jerusalem's relationship to the coast, biblical texts such as Neh 13:23–24 and Zech 9:5–7 have increasingly come into focus in recent years.⁷ In this respect, in the last contribution of the volume, Manfred Oeming gives a new approach to Neh 13:23–24 and the “language of Ashdod/Ashdodite” mentioned there. He identifies strong connections of Ashdod to the Greek world and proposes a post-chronistic dating of Neh 13:23–24 as an expression of the *Kulturkampf* of the conservative Judaeen circles against an incipient Hellenization in Jerusalem and Judah in the early 2nd century BCE.

Overall, this book aims to open up new and multi-layered perspectives on Jerusalem's complex and dynamic relations with the west in the Iron Age and the Persian periods. Despite the multidisciplinary and diversity of the individual contributions, the breadth of this multifaceted topic can only be barely touched upon here. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the reader will be inspired to further scientific work and that important desiderata for future research can be identified.

Now, however, it is time to set out, travel westward, and finally head for the ports of the Mediterranean!

List of Figures

Fig. 1: Map of southern Israel/Palestine (© Gunnar Lehmann).

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⁷ E.g., BERLEJUNG 2021; HAGEMeyer 2021.

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