

# Characteristics of Late Bronze Age Canaanite Cities in Palestine

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**Abstract.** This paper aims at discussing the characteristics of the Canaanite city during the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1550-1200 BC). The study of the term Canaan and the Canaanites, a historical background and the specific features of the Canaanite city are here presented. On the land of Canaan, scholars clearly disagree on specific borders; but it is understood that it includes most of the Mediterranean eastern coast and parts of the Levantine inland. The word Canaan appeared first in written documents dating to the eighteenth century BC. It is agreed that the Canaanites are known not only from the land which they inhabited, but also from the tongue they spoke (known as the Canaanite language). The characteristics of the Canaanite cities during the Late Bronze Age presented in this study are mostly deduced from the results of excavations at the sites of Tell el-Mutasallim (Megiddo) and Tell el Qedah/Tell Waqqas (Hazor). This paper presents a discussion of the type of fortifications, dwellings, temples and burials excavated at the Canaanite cities which belong to the Late Bronze Age. In addition, industry, trade and innovations are also studied. Consequently, it may be proposed that the Late Bronze Age Canaanite cities were poorly occupied, usually with a single palace, had a temple or more, contained domestic dwellings, craft installations, storage and refuse pits and Egyptian forts or residences of governors. The economy and social structure of people who lived in the Canaanite cities seemed to have been influenced by none Canaanite ethnic groups especially during the last phase of the Late Bronze Age.

## Introduction:

The invitation to write this paper under this topic came from my longtime friend Prof. Dr. Abdul Rahman Al Ansary, former Dean of the Faculty of Arts of King Sa'ud University. It may be argued that to define a Canaanite city; we should first have to know who the Canaanites were? This question has already been answered by K. Kenyon (1966) who claimed that "The Amalekites dwell in the land of Negeb; the Hittites, the Jebusites and the Amorites dwell in the hill country; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan. Both the Biblical account and archaeological evidence make it clear that when the Israelites entered into the Promised Land, they took possession of a land

already fully occupied".

This claim has been published forty years ago. From that time on, many archaeological excavations have been conducted either in Palestine or in Jordan revealing a lot of new information that added much more to our knowledge concerning the Canaanites. It may be suggested that, based on the excavated archaeological evidence, one can draw a reasonable picture as to the peoples who lived in Canaan and to their settlements. The purpose of this paper is to study the main features of the Canaanite cities dated to the Late Bronze Age and excavated in the southern part of the Levant.

### Land of Canaan:

In addition to the study presented by K. Kenyon, the terms Canaan and the Canaanites are discussed recently by other scholars such as Hackett (1997a; 1997b) and Schmitz (1992). Canaan is the land situated along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean which encompasses modern Lebanon, part of Syria and most of Palestine (Fig. 1). It is bordered by Wadi el-'Arish in the south, the Anti-Lebanon Mountain ranges in the north, the Mediterranean in the west and the Jordan River and the Dead Sea further south in the east (Hackett 1997a: 409). However, it must be mentioned that these boundaries changed over time and never had sharp limits or borders.

### The Name/Term Canaan:

The word Canaan first appeared in a text from Mari belonging to the eighteenth century



Fig. 1: A Map showing Major Canaanite Cities The Name/Term Canaan:

BC (Sasson 1984; Dossin 1973) It is spelled kn'n, but pronounced in several ways: in the Akkadian cuneiform: ki-na-ah-nu(m), ki- inanim, and mat ki-na-hi or mat ki-in-na-ah-hi, and in Egyptian it is spelled as k-3-n-'-n-3 or k-i-n-'-nw (Hackett 1997a: 408). Nevertheless, it has been claimed that if the word "Canaan" of Western Semitic origin, it may etymologically derive from the root kn' which means "to bend" (Schmitz 1992:828). Recently, it has been cited (Hackett 1997a:408) that the term ga-na-na(um) was mentioned in Ebla texts and dated to the third millennium BC, and may be identified as Canaan or Canaanite (Matthiae 1981; Archi et al 1993).

Furthermore, historical documents found at several sites in the Levant and Egypt shed more light on the term Canaan or Canaanite. The autobiographical text of the king Idrimi from Alalakh, which is dated to the fifteenth century BC, mentions "Ammia in the land of Canaan" (ANET, 557). However, it has been proposed that the name Ammia is to be identified with modern Ammiun near Tripoli (Schmitz 1992: 829). At Ugarit, an economic text dated to ca. 1200 BC bears a list of names of merchants belonging to different ethnic identities among which a Canaanite "kn'ny". This has been taken to suggest that Ugarit did not include itself in the Canaanite as part of Canaan (Rainy 1965).

According to the Egyptian literary sources, the earliest mention of the Canaanites is dated to the end of the fifteenth century BC in a text declaring that the pharaoh Amenophis II had deported Canaanites during his Asian campaign (ANET, 246). In addition, the Amarna letters dated to the fourteenth century BC and the Merneptah stele dated to the end of the thirteenth century BC list the name Canaan among others (ANET, 378).

The words Canaan and the Canaanites also occur frequently in Biblical narratives. Of course, such occurrences refer to the land that the Israelites conquered and to its inhabitants. Also, these terms make their appearance in the classical and Byzantine documents (Hackett 1997a:409).

### **Historical Background:**

The Canaanites are known not only from the land which they inhabited, but also they spoke one tongue known by scholars as a Canaanite language. Actually, it is still unknown exactly when they arrived in Canaan. However, it is well known by scholars that the beginning of the second millennium BC demarks a clear break in culture in the region they occupied. Thus, it has been proposed by archaeologists that the so-called Middle Bronze Age I is the period that witnessed the appearance of the Canaanites (Kenyon 1966). This period witnessed not only a major shift in economy but also the creation of fortified and large urban centers such as Tell el-Qedah (Hazor) (Fig. 2), Tell Mutasallim (Megiddo) (Fig. 3), Balata (Schechem), Tell el-Gazar (Gezer), Tell Beit Mirsim and Jericho. The surveys and excavations conducted especially in Palestine show that most of the Canaanite people lived during the Middle Bronze Age in large urban areas, towns and villages (Ilan

1998; Kempinski 1992; Dever 1987).

The transitional period between the Middle and the Late Bronze Ages in Canaan witnessed some destruction of some of the cities, especially those located in the hill country in the south where the principle centers of the Hyksos power was located (Bunimovitz 1998: 320). However, large urban sites such as Hazor, Megiddo, Schechem, Tell el- Far'ah North, Gezer and Tell Beit Mirsim continued to be settled or resettled during the Late Bronze Age. It has been claimed that the large centers of the Middle Bronze Age became smaller in size and less in number during the following period. The Late Bronze Age settlements were located mostly along the coast, in the valleys and along the trade routes.

The transition from the Middle Bronze to the Late Bronze has been explained as a gradual process of the economy and social life in Canaan and some of the destruction and abandonment of cities occurred as a result of socio-economic disturbances (Herzog 1997:164).

The Canaanite economy depended on a combination of agriculture and pastoralism. The rural pastoralists had close ties with the urban centers. This is due to the fact that pastoralists depended on the urban centers for their



**Fig. 2: An Aerial view of the city Hazor**



**Fig. 3: An Aerial view of the city Megiddo**

agricultural supplies and manufactured products. In the meantime, the urban centers obtained the animal products from the pastoralists. Based on the excavated archaeological material, it became clear that the Canaanites traded with Cyprus, Crete and the Aegean Islands (Leonard 1989).

Regarding the political situation during the Middle and the Late Bronze Ages, there is no indication of a true nation-state system. Moreover, so far no capital city of all Canaan has been mentioned in all documents referring to Canaan. Actually, and after the expulsion of the Hyksos from Egypt around 1550 BC, Canaan was subjected to many Egyptian military campaigns especially during the time of Thutmose III (ca. 1490-1436 BC). From that time till the end of the thirteenth century BC, Canaan became under the Egyptian control. Egyptian fortress sites and "governors' residences" were found in several regions (Kafafi 2002). Egypt lost control of Canaan around the middle of the twelfth century BC which allowed for the establishment of independent states in Palestine and Lebanon, and permitted the penetration into the area of other groups such as the Sea Peoples.

Since the aim of this paper is to present a study of the Late Bronze Age Canaanite city, we decided to limit our efforts to those excavated in Palestine.

### **Late Bronze Age Canaanite Cities:**

The archaeology of the Late Bronze Age Canaanite cities in Palestine is a puzzle for Archaeologists. This is due to the confrontation of the archaeological data with the historical literary sources. To explain, the Egyptian written sources such as the Thutmose III topographical lists list a number of cities that were either

attacked or captured by the New Kingdom pharaohs. Moreover, the Old Testament presents a description of the destroyed or plundered Canaanite cities by the Tribes of Israel. This gives the impression that there were many Canaanite urban centers existing during the Late Bronze Age period. Unfortunately, the archaeological fieldworks conducted in Palestine pointed to a retreat in the number of the cities and an increase of villages and towns compared to the preceding period. This has been attributed to two reasons: first Canaan had to pay from its resources for maintaining the Egyptian colonial administration and their control and protection of trade routes (Bienkowski 1989). Second, it has been assumed that this decline should be attributed to the political and economical changes which occurred as a result of Egyptian domination (Knapp 1992; 1989). We agree with Bunimowitz (1998: 326) that both hypotheses are complementing each other.

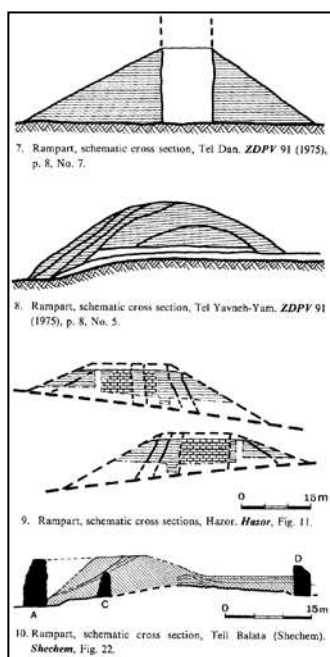
The Tell Amarna letters dated to the fourteenth century BC indicate that the land of Canaan was divided between major city-states (ANET). Archaeologists tried to reconstruct the spatial configuration of these city-states in Palestine and proposed that the distance separating between each off the other and its nearest peers is a range of 35 km. Also, the city-states had the same size of territories that reached approximately 1000 km<sup>2</sup> (Bunimowitz 1998: 326-328, Fig. 6). Moreover, the Late Bronze Age city-planning, urban structures and fortifications received careful discussions during the last decade (Kempinski 1992; Baumgarten 1992; Gonen 1992; Fritz 1990). In fact, some scholars argue that several Canaanites' city-states lack fortification systems (Gonen 1984).

Herzog cited (1997:164) that Bunimowitz assumed that the inhabitants of Canaan dropped



down from 137,000 during the MBIIB to 46,000 during the LBII. This claim shows a decrease of population which may have happened owing to some kind of natural catastrophe. These deductions which show a reduction in the number and population of Late Bronze Age urban centers present a vague picture about the nature of cities during the Late Bronze Age. This is due to the fact that they do not consider the internal structure of the city, whether the whole site was fully or partially occupied and whether the buildings were densely or sparsely built (Herzog 1997). In addition, scholars should take into consideration the towns and villages that were connected to a city and made up part of it. Thus, their population should be counted as part of the city population.

Unfortunately, only Megiddo and Hazor LB produced city-plans, while at other sites only a single structure was revealed. This may be due to the fact that there were not large Late Bronze Age areas exposed at the other sites or the remains belonging to this period disappeared



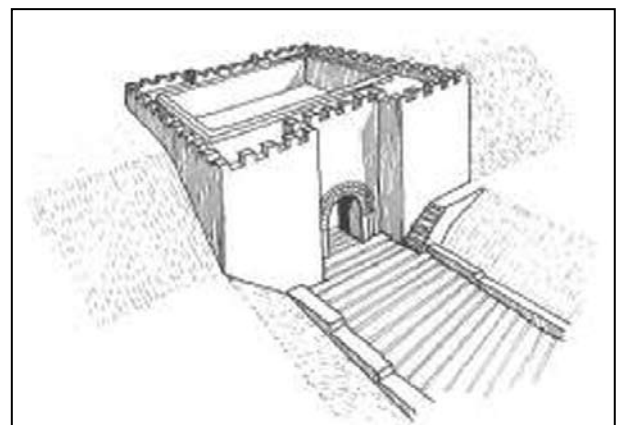
**Fig. 4: Examples of the Excavated Middle Bronze Age Glacis in Palestine (after Kempinski 1992a: Fig.22).**

for some reason. Thus, to present a study of the characteristics of the Canaanite cities during the Late Bronze Age our information is mostly deduced from the results of excavations at the sites of both Megiddo and Hazor. The results of the recently renewed excavations at both sites added a considerable amount of information about those two Canaanite cities (Ben-Tor 1995a; 1995b).

### Fortifications

The Middle Bronze Age period fortification system was based mostly on glacis system (Fig.4), which consists of very deep slope layers of beaten earth forming a rampart that was built directly on the outer surface of the city wall. This type of fortification continued to be in use at some of the Late Bronze Age urban centers such as Hazor.

At Hazor, the ramparts encircling parts of the Upper City and the Lower City were built in different techniques to fit the requirements of the topography of each area at the site. The western part of the uncovered rampart at Hazor is still standing up to approximately 15m in height; in the meantime, the northern glacis excavated in Area H is low.

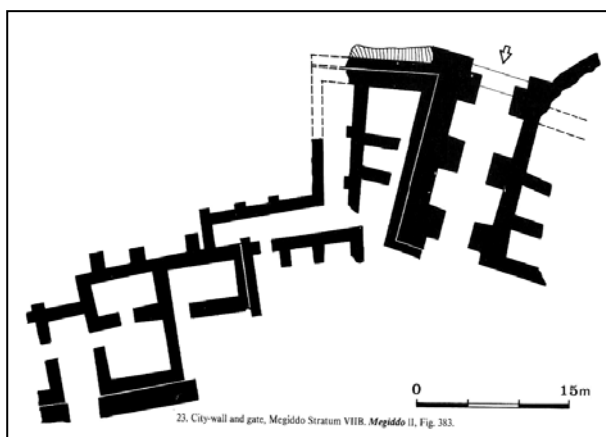


**Fig.5: Tel Dan, Middle Bronze Age City-gate, plan and reconstruction (after Israel Exploration Journal 34)**

The gates of the LB were also those that belonged to the MB. It has been recognized that in several cases those MB gates were restored and continued to be used during the LB. However, the MB gate of Tell Dan in the north of Palestine may be considered one of the best preserved of its period (Fig. 5).

At Megiddo a large gate, first built at the end of the MB (Stratum X), was retained in use all through the LB Age periods when its level was raised and lined with well-carved stone slabs (Figs. 6 and 7). It has been suggested that this gate had a ceremonial function rather than defensive. This is based on the fact that it is not connected with any towers and is not joined to a defensive wall (Gonen 1992:219).

It has been claimed that almost no new fortification styles appeared during the Late Bronze Age (Kempinski 1992a: 136; Gonen 1992: 218). The results of archaeological excavations proved that the new defense system that consists of forts and towers which appeared at the end of the Late Bronze Age and continued through the Iron Age must be attributed to the Egyptian rulers and not to the Canaanites. Few examples from the Middle Bronze Age forts such as Tell Mevorakh (Tell Mefrak) and Tell Masos



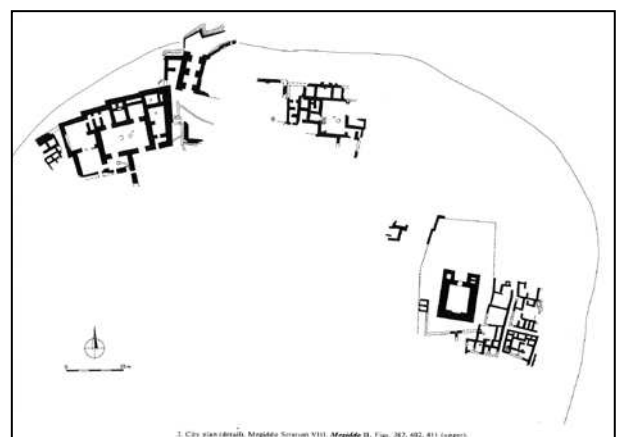
**Fig. 6: LBIII Megiddo gate (Stratum VIIB)**

(Tell Meshash) were recognized in Palestine. It seems that the purpose for building them was to protect the road that passed alongside them (Stern 1984).

Fortresses continued to be constructed during the LB. The best example of a LBI fortress excavated in Palestine has been revealed at Tell el-'Ajjul (ancient Gaza) and assigned to the time of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. It consists of a rectangular building and another fortified structure that extends from its northeastern side and both were constructed of mud-bricks. Other fortresses belonging to the LBII (Fort IV) and Iron I (Fort V) were also found at Tell el-'Ajjul (Kempinski 1974). The purpose for building these forts at this site may be explained as to guard the main coastal road that connected Sinai and the coast of Palestine (the Way of Horus).

In addition to forts, fortified towers were built. For example the excavations at Beth-Shaean (Beisan) yielded a tower dated to the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 12th centuries BC (Rowe 1930:Fig.2). It was built of mud-bricks and its façade was enriched with three decorative square columns.

To sum up, it is clear that the Late Bronze Age Canaanite fortification system did not witness



**Fig.7: LBII Megiddo Gate (Stratum VIII) (after Loud 1948:Fig. 383)**

new innovations, but exhibited a continuation of the Middle Bronze Age traditions.

### Dwellings

Generally speaking, Canaan witnessed during the MBI (ca. 2000-1800 BC) a reappearance of unfortified permanent villages which disappeared in the EBIV (ca. 2400/2350-2000 BC). These villages developed in the following periods into cities or urban centers of which some were fortified during the MB II and III and very few during the LB. Inside the enclosures houses were constructed and used for dwelling purposes; of those only a small number has been uncovered in the excavations (Gonen 1992:221).

Dwellings are usually divided into categories: houses inhabited by middle and low class societies, and those that were built for the high class and the rulers of the cities such as governors'

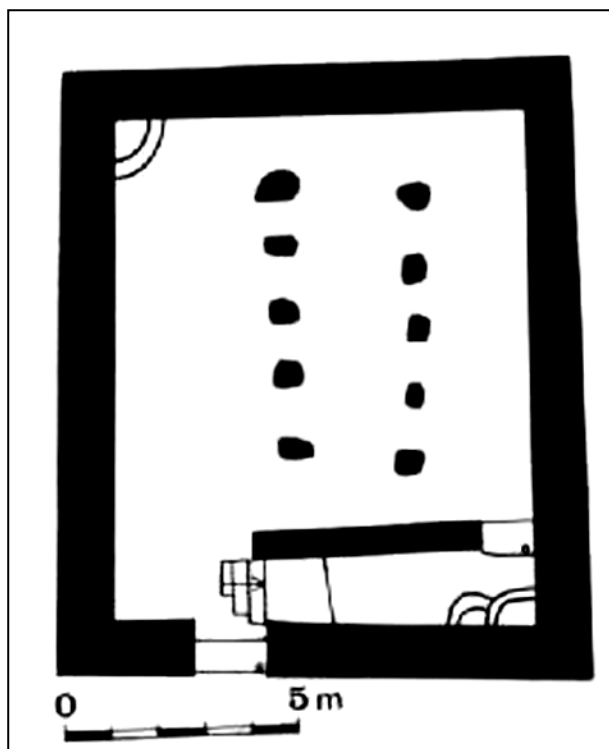


Fig. 8: Plan of a 14th century BC house excavated at Tell Batash (Timnah) (Mazar 1985: 67)

residences or palaces. Below we present a study for each type of these two structures.

### A. Houses:

Late Bronze Age houses and residences were excavated at few sites in Palestine such as Megiddo, Hazor, Tell Batash (Fig. 8) and Tell Abu Hawwam.

Megiddo seems to have never been destroyed at the end of the MBIII but was conquered by Thotmosis III in about 1479 BC. It has been decided that the MBIII houses continued in use during the beginning of the LB and are characterized by advances in the quality of building plans and techniques (Ben-Dov 1992:102). At the eastern side of the Tell a number of houses were excavated. It was obvious that they were built during the MB and remained in use during the LB. The excavators noticed that the inhabitants of these houses made internal house changes such as raising of floors, removing or adding partition walls and blocking doorways. However, changes in the Late Bronze Age structures are clear in the buildings excavated in Strata IX to VIIB (Herzog 1997: 165-169; Kempinski 1989: 124). Stratum IX which is assigned to the LBI (ca. 1550-1400 BC) yielded houses that were constructed during the MB. The houses unearthed in Stratum VIII belong to the LBII (ca. 1400-1300 BC). Uncovered on the eastern part of the Tell, they were separated by streets and were orderly built. The best example is the layout of Building 3002 measuring 15x16 m; it consists of a number of small rooms each measuring between 4x2 m and 3x2.5 m, and a large room at the west that surrounds an unroofed courtyard perhaps used as an air/light shaft than a real court (Kempinski 1989:124; fig. 40:11). Plastered, beaten earth and cobbled floors were remarked. The inner

circulation within the houses and the function of the rooms were difficult to decide. This is due to the bad preservation of the excavated walls (Gonen 1992: 222).

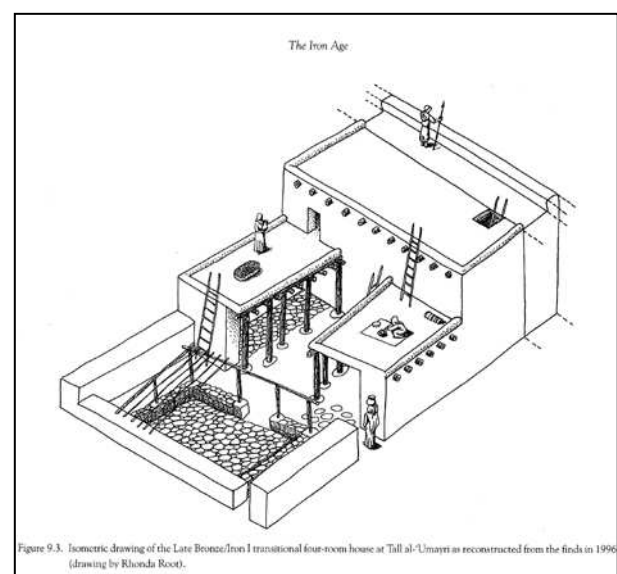
The LBIII at Megiddo is represented by Stratum VIIB; it yielded private houses of which one, number 2158, is considered to be reconstructable (Kempinski 1989: Plan 8). In addition, it has been suggested that the inhabitants return to the tradition of building three-flanked court-houses. Moreover, it seems the excavator had a hard time differentiating between the walls belonging to Phases VIIB and VIIA because the thin-walled houses were not built in order (Loud 1948: 409). However, a new house-plan which seems to originate in Stratum VIIB appeared in Stratum VIIA and is characterized by build up pillars facing a court or a central room. This type of what is called the pillared-houses (Fig.9) became popular during the end of the thirteenth and the twelfth centuries BC (Herr and Najjar 2001). Building 1812, uncovered in Area C-C, yielded an example of such type of houses. Also, more of this type was explored in Area B-B (Kempinski 1992:125).

To sum up, the houses excavated at Megiddo were simply built, the width of each wall does not exceed more than 0.75m, and constructed by using fieldstones as foundations and mud bricks for the superstructures. A house consists of several rooms arranged around a central courtyard. There is no evidence indicating that a house consisted of more than one story.

Hazor continued to be occupied from the MBII through the LB and witnessed an increase of population rather than decline which happened at the other cities. At the Upper City, floors and fragmentary walls dated to the LBI were found in Area A (Yadin 1973; 1970). More domestic

structures also were unearthed at the Lower City in Strata 2 (LBI); IB (LBII) and IA (LBIII). Unfortunately, no architectural remains dated to the LBI are published by the excavator of Hazor. Nevertheless, Area C at the site yielded a LBII/LBIII residential area where houses are clustered in irregular blocks. Building 6063 (Yadin 1970: Pl. XIa) which measures 5x5m consists of a square courtyard surrounded by several rooms on its four sides. Some of these rooms have no entrances indicating that they were used as probably service and store installations. Alongside the eastern wall of the courtyard a bench of undressed stones was built. In addition a silo was dug into the floor of the courtyard. Pottery pots and two upper stones of potters' wheel were also found in the courtyard and some of the rooms may indicate that part of the building have been used as a potters' workshop.

To conclude, at Hazor a residential house consisting of several rooms built surrounding a courtyard forms a block. These blocks are usually separated by irregular alleys. Again, the



**Fig. 9: A Pillared-House found at Tell 'Umayri (after Herr and Najjar 2001)**



plans of the LB houses found at both Megiddo and Hazor seem to be identical.

### B. Palaces:

It has first to be admitted that it is not easy to identify excavated buildings as palaces in Canaan due to the absence of written information. However, it has been claimed that there was a continuity of building palaces from the MB to the LB (Oren 1992:105). The political situation during the Late Bronze Age, characterized by the Egyptian domination over Canaan, would suggest that the cities with an Egyptian garrison may have a palace to accommodate the ruler and serve as an administrative center. Apparently, palaces should include offices, audience rooms, guard rooms, stables and store rooms. The palace should be well protected and easy to defend. The plans of the uncovered buildings that were often influenced by those recorded at neighboring cultures, their location in the city, and the quality of building materials, certain building techniques and the archaeological material to be excavated inside the houses are the factors which invite archaeologists to term a building a "palace". The dominant building plan of a palace consists of an unroofed central courtyard surrounded by rooms. Such buildings

were constructed of relatively thick walls made of mud brick on stone foundations. They were usually built very close to public buildings such as temples or city-gates. Two main types of palaces have been recognized in Canaan: the courtyard and the Egyptian-style residences.

The best examples of courtyard palaces found in Canaan have been uncovered at Megiddo. In Area AA the palace 4031, dated to the MBIII, was built in the area of the city-gate and continued in use during the LBI (Stratum IX) with little modifications. After the partial destruction of the site by Thotmosis III in ca. 1479 BC a new palace (Figs. 10a and 10b) (Stratum VIII, Building 2041) had been erected (Loud 1948: Fig. 382). The building of the Palace 2041 occupied a large area measuring 30x50 m (1500 m<sup>2</sup>), had thick walls ranging from 2 to 4m, lime plastered floors, and had drainage systems. The inner courtyard (3091) was connected to the other rooms by doors built into its walls. However, the rooms and courtyards built on the eastern side of the building had a special entrance in the south. The western side of the structure is taken to represent the luxurious wing. It has a forecourt with a monumental doorway in the northern wall with basal columns and piers. The entrance led to rooms, one of which may serve

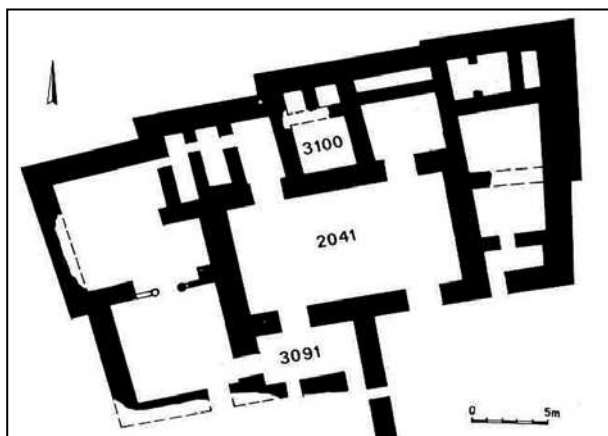


Fig. 10a: Palace, Megiddo Stratum VIII Palace.

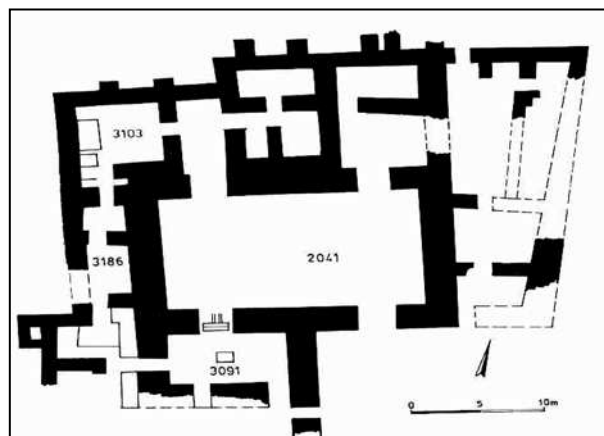


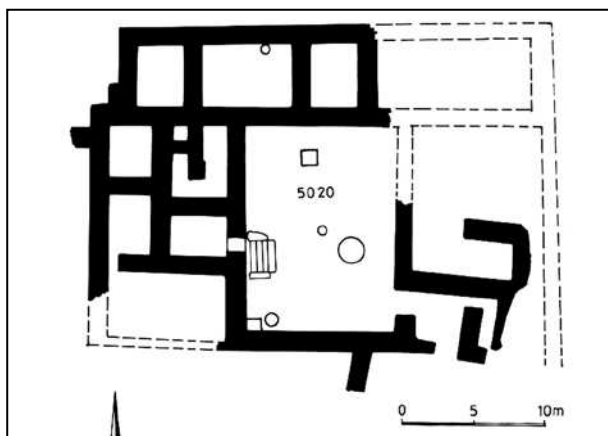
Fig. 10p: Megiddo Stratum VII B (Loud 1948: Fig. 382)

as the throne room. In the eastern courtyard an Egyptian lotus-shaped capital belonging to a column was excavated (Siegelmann 1976).

In addition, a hoard of gold vessels, ivory plaques, jewelry and ornamental objects were uncovered underneath the floor of Room (3100) located on the northern part of the palace (Oren 1992:108).

With some few changes such as floor levels and building a narrower northern wall instead of the destroyed one, the LBII (Stratum VIII) palace continued in use in the LBIII (Stratum VIIB) in its original plan. Moreover, the courtyards and the monumental doorway of the western wing were replaced by a number of small rooms. The corner room (3103) has a small raised platform and steps and has been identified as a household shrine.

During the beginning of the Iron Age (Stratum VIIA) three subterranean rooms were annexed to the building. A collection of unique ivory objects was encountered inside those rooms; on one of those the cartouche of Rameses III was recognized. Furthermore, additional places were also excavated at Megiddo such as the one (Building 5020) uncovered in Area DD, Stratum VIII, which has a large courtyard measuring



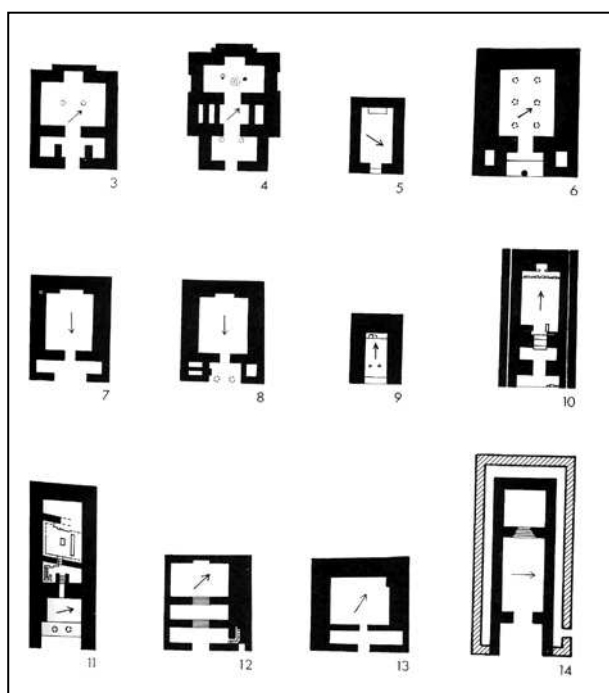
**Fig. 11: Palace, Megiddo Stratum VIII (Loud 1948: Fig. 41)**

11x15m with an offering table built on top of the beaten lime floor and stone storage facilities. It seems that the building also continued in use during the LBIII (thirteenth century BC). These typical palaces have been termed "courtyard palaces" and been uncovered at other sites in Palestine such as Tell el-'Ajjul (Petrie 1932).

During the thirteenth and twelfth centuries BC several buildings described as governors' residences were built within the Late Bronze Age cities in Canaan (Kafafi 2002). It has been proposed that such buildings were not built by the Canaanites and never reflected their needs; instead they served the strategic concerns of Egypt (Gonen 1992:221). In addition to the governor, these buildings housed the Egyptian officials and fulfilled military and administrative purposes.

The structures assigned to the governors' residences are square in plan, having corner doorways, and were built according to Egyptian architectural and construction traditions and styles. This type of palaces consists of a square courtyard, having sometimes a pillar in the center to carry the ceiling, surrounded by small chambers constructed of thick mud-brick walls and foundations. The palaces consisted of two stories or more connected to each other by a corner staircase. Similar structures were excavated at several sites in Palestine such as Tell el-Far'ah South, Tell el-Hesi, Tell Sera', Tell Jemmeh and Beth-Shean (Kafafi 2002; Oren 1985).

The recent renewed excavations at Hazor revealed a house which has been identified as a palace. The main construction of the building measures about 30 x 20m, and is built of thick mud brick walls (approximately 3m thick) on stone foundations. Two rounded basalt-stone



**Fig. 12: Temples:** 3) Hazor Str.3. 4) Hazor Str.1B. 5) Hazor 6) Tell Balata 7. Megiddo Temple 2048, Str. X. 8) Megiddo, Temple 2048 Str. VIII. 9+10) Tell Mardikh. 11) Tell mumbaqat 12) Alalakh Str. VII 13) Alalakh Str. VI. 14) Jerusalem? (Mazar 1992).

bases were found in front of this building, each measures 1.7m in diameter. Moreover a stone-paved courtyard was encountered in front of the house.

To conclude, remains of dwellings belonging either to private houses or palaces were excavated at the Canaanite sites in Palestine. Their way of constructing and the nature of finds excavated inside them indicate prosperity of life and social stratification in the Canaanite society.

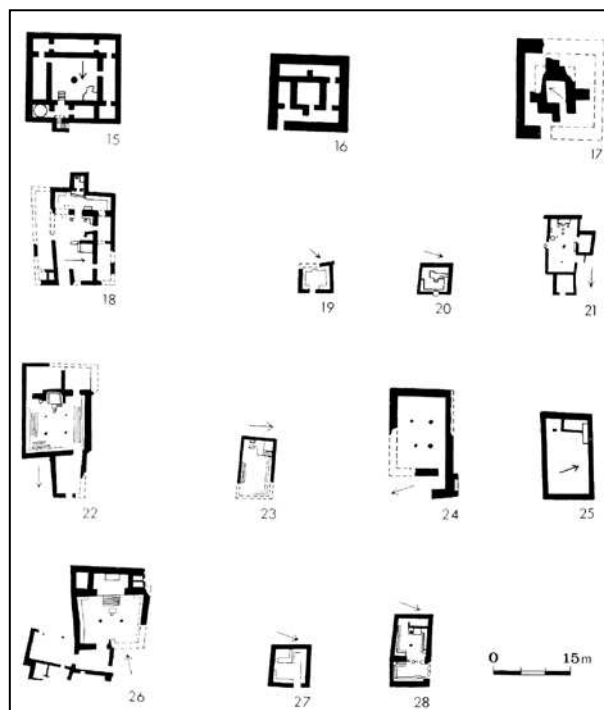
### Temples

A large number of Late Bronze Age temples have been unearthed in excavations conducted in Canaan (Figs. 12 and 13). They differ in plans, a reflection of the absence of uniformity which makes it too difficult to follow their development during the LB. However, our aim in this paper

is not to discuss all types of excavated temples in Canaan, but to show that temples played an important role in the Canaanite cities. Detailed studies of this subject are published by several archaeologists (Mazar 1992; Gonen 1992).

Despite the great number of temples and their diversities in plans, we unfortunately still lack information about the deities worshipped in them, the cults and the ritual practices and the status of the temples in the societies as the case was reflected, for example, at Ugarit. This is due to the absence of written texts and the scarcity of the excavated cult objects.

Nevertheless, Late Bronze Age temples are divided according to their plans and types of structuring into too many kinds such as Midgal/Migdol, square, Egyptian style, stelae (Gonen



**Fig. 13:** 15) Mt. Gerisim 16) Amman Airport. 17) Hazor Are F.18) Arad 19) Hazor Area C. 20) Tell Qasile Str. XII. 21) Lachich, Fosse Temple, Phase II. 22) Fosse Temple, Phase III. 23) Tel Mevorakh 24) Bet Shean Str. V. 25) Tell Abu Hawwam Str. IV. 26) Beth Shean Str. VI. 27) Tel Qasile Str. XI. 28) Tell Qasile Str. X. (Mazar 1992).

1992) or as open cult places, monumental symmetrical, temples with raised holy-of-holies, and temples with indirect entrances and irregular plans (Mazar 1992). Below we present some examples of these types:

The Migdol temples are built of thick walls and strong towers constructed along either side of the entrance which give the building the appearance of a fortress. This type first started in the MB and continued through the LB. The best examples of this type were encountered at Hazor, Megiddo and Shechem. At Area H in Hazor located in the Lower City the excavator encountered different temples dating from the MBII through the end of the LBIII (Yadin 1972). The most interesting of them is the so-called Breitraum type which is similar in plan to those excavated at Tell Mardikh and Alalakh in northern Syria (Gonen Fig. 7.5).

Examples of the square temple type were found at Hazor (no. 17) in Palestine and the Amman Airport (no. 16) in Jordan (Harding 1958). This type is characterized by a square central courtyard with a single entrance.

In Area C at Hazor (Stratum IA) a statue that formed part of a row of stelae (fig. 14) was uncovered (Yadin 1972:67-68). This represents an open cult place for practice during the 13th century BC.

## Burials



**Fig. 14: An Open Cult Place found at Hazor (after Yadin 1973)**

During the Late Bronze Age, the Canaanites buried their dead in different types of tombs such as the burial caves, pit graves, built tombs, jars and anthropoid coffins. Some of these burial practices are known from earlier periods while few others were introduced to Canaan by newcomers. The study of the Canaanite burial customs enriched our knowledge of their population and social development.

This custom of Burial caves was practiced in Canaan as early as the Early Bronze Age and became common in the Middle Bronze. However, examples dated to the Late Bronze were encountered at sites excavated mostly in the hilly area in Canaan such as at Kafr 'Ara, Jerusalem and Khirbet Rabud (Gonen 1992:241). Some of these burials are not close to any settlement, thus inviting scholars to argue that they belonged to none sedentary population. The burial offerings consisted mostly of locally manufactured pottery vessels in addition to some luxury objects such as imported pottery vessels, metal objects, jewelry and weapons.

In the coastal plain and the interior valley regions and during the LB people buried their dead in rectangular pits dug into the earth, and some of those were lined up with stone slabs. The idea of burying the dead in a pit may be explained as an Egyptian influence who thought there was a need to preserve the body for the new life. Examples of this type of burials were



**Fig. 15: Necklaces of Gold and Carnellian Beads from Deir el-Balah (after Gonen 1992)**



found at Tell el 'Ajjul, Tell el Far'ah South, Tell Zeror, Tell Abu Hawwam, and near Akko. During the LBIII pit burials spread in the interior valleys; similar ones were excavated at Tell es-Sa'idiyyeh on the eastern side of the Jordan Valley. Burial offerings were also registered from pit burials, but they contained more luxury objects than those of cave burials. This may suggest that the inhabitants of the Coastal Plain enjoyed a higher standard of life than those of the hilly areas.

Moreover, there are other types of burial that differ from the cave and pit burials in form and custom. They show that the body of the dead was buried either in a container such as a coffin or jar or in built tombs. Scholars claimed that these customs originated outside Canaan and first appeared during the end of the MB and the beginning of the LB.

### Industry and Trade

The study of the Canaanite industry and trade is deduced mainly from the written sources and the excavated objects. Nevertheless, the pictorial documents are also of great help. New warfare objects such as the light horse-drawn chariot and the long composite bow were invented during the LB by the Canaanites and brought to Egypt (Gonen 1992). It seems that the Canaanite craftsmen have excelled in the metalwork's, jewelry (Fig. 15) and textiles manufactures.

(after Gonen 1992) The economy of Canaan is no doubt based on agriculture as well as breeding livestock such as cattle, horses and donkeys. Copper ore, which is the only mineral of marketable value, is available at Wadi 'Araba region but there is no evidence that it was traded during most of the LB period. However, an

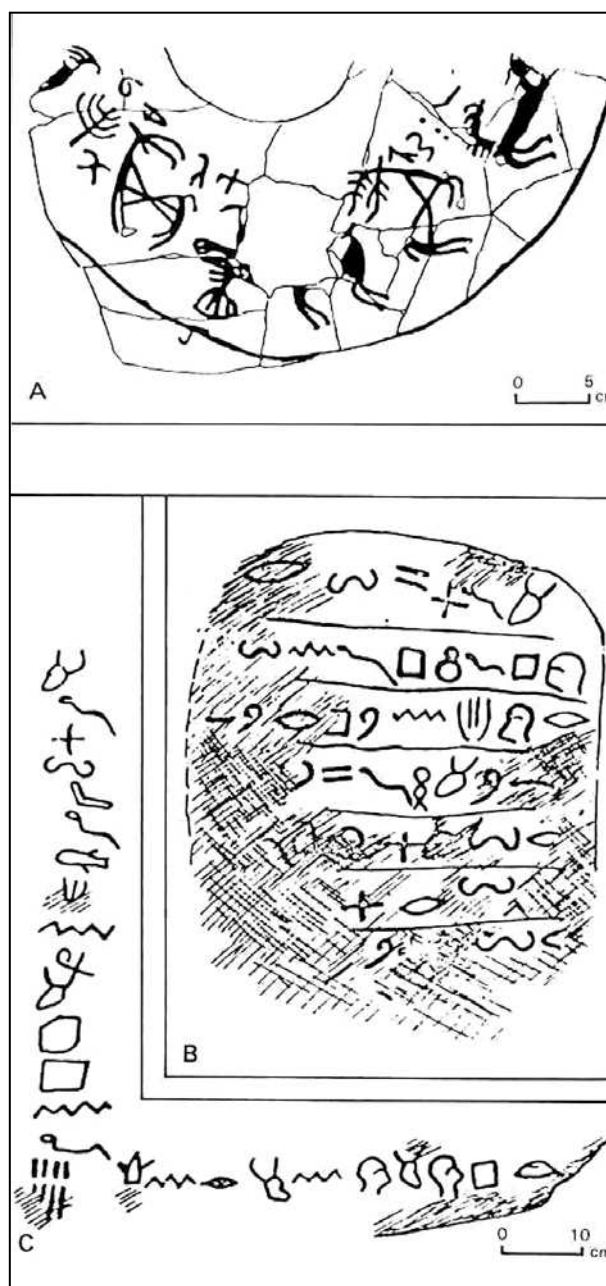


Fig. 16: Proto-Canaanite and Proto-Sinaitic Inscriptions from Lachish (A) and From Sinai (B, C) (after Gonen 1992)

Egyptian temple devoted to the god Hathor was excavated near the mines of Timna' and indicates the investment of copper mines at Wadi Araba region during the LBIII (Rothenberg 1973).

The Late Bronze Age is marked by an intensive international trade. Several of the Canaanite cities were located on trade routes and functioned as trade centers. The imported objects from

outside Canaan, especially from Cyprus and the Aegean World show the Canaanite far distance trade relationship. Canaan may export some of its agricultural surplus production such as the olive oil and wine to its surrounding regions. This is deduced from the wide distribution of the Canaanite storage jars excavated outside this area.

### **Canaanite Innovations**

During the Late Bronze Age Canaan witnessed innovations in two cultural aspects: art and writing (Fig. 16). As is known, the Akkadian cuneiform script was the international language (*lingua franca*) of diplomacy at the time. Documents written in the Akkadian script were encountered at Ta'anach and Megiddo. The one found at Megiddo is considered to be written by someone who is learning how to write in the Akkadian cuneiform script and indicates that a scribal school was founded at the site.

(after Gonen 1992) In addition, other scripts were used in Canaan such as the Egyptian hieroglyphic, Minoan linear script (Deir Alla tablets) and the Hittite hieroglyphic characters (a clay bulla found at Aphek) (Gonen 1992:250).

The Canaanites have also developed their own local script and two different alphabetical writing systems occurred. It seems that they have decided that there is no need any more for hundreds of cuneiform or hieroglyphic signs to write, and invented instead the alphabet. The earliest one is the so-called proto-Sinaitic dated to the 15th century BC and represented by a group of inscriptions that were found at Sarabit el-Khadim. It has been argued that the scribe was of a Canaanite origin and the number of the used characters is 27. The second is developed from the earlier script and titled the proto-

Canaanite in which the characters lost their pictographic style and became progressively linear.

As for art, it has been recognized that the Canaanite rulers did not use sculptured art for their buildings as those implemented by the kings of neighboring countries. This may explain the absence of monumental Canaanite art which reflects historical subjects or commemorates major events. An exception is presence of several ornamental and miniature arts and sculptures. Few examples of the monumental sculptures were encountered at the sites of Hazor and Beth Shean. However, it has been claimed that their subjects were religious because they were excavated in temple buildings such as at Area H temple in Hazor where a lion orthostat was carved on a basaltic stone which made up part of the temple wall. The other two orthostats of the same art of sculpture were also uncovered at Hazor. The lion and dog orthostat from Beth-shean may be considered the best representative of Canaanite artistic sculpture pieces.

In addition to the orthostats found at Hazor and Beth-shean, two small male basalt statues were unearthed at temple buildings at Hazor. The two representations exhibit a person who is seated in a calm and erect pose. Other artistic objects such as carved ivory pieces were excavated. The most valuable collection was found in Stratum VIIA at Megiddo.

### **Conclusion:**

To conclude, the LB Canaanite city as shown by archaeology is an entity different from that one described in the written --mainly biblical--resources. As mentioned above, major MBII Canaanite cities continued to be occupied during the LB. It has been argued that during

the LBI the Canaanite cities were mainly of non-urban nature and most of them continued to be settled during the LBII but with scattered remains. Furthermore, it seems that during the LBIII, which represents the final phase of the Late Bronze Age, the excavated archaeological material suggest that several sites served as administrative headquarters of Egyptian officials (Herzog 1997). Nevertheless, Hazor and Megiddo remained the most important Canaanite urban centers. Actually, in addition to the domestic houses encountered at the Canaanite cities, palaces were also found. Those palaces belonged not only to Egyptian governors, but also to local Canaanite rulers (Kafafi 2002).

However, based on the excavated

archaeological remains a Late Bronze Age Canaanite city is characterized by the followings:

- Poorly occupied sites.
- Usually with a single palace.
- Canaanite cities have a temple or more.
- Sporadic domestic dwellings.
- Contains craft installations, storage and refuse pits.
- Egyptian forts or governors' residence at some of LBIII Canaanite cities.
- The economy and social structure of people have been influenced by none Canaanite ethnic groups especially during the LBIII.

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**ملخص:** يهدف هذا البحث إلى إلقاء الضوء على ميزات ومواصفات المدينة الكنعانية خلال مرحلة العصر البرونزي الأخير (حوالي 1550-1200 ق.م). كما يتضمن مناقشة لمصطلحي «كنعان» و «الكنعانيون» ومقدمة تاريخية حول المدن الكنعانية. ويتضح من المعلومات المنشورة حول موضوع الدراسة أن الباحثين لا يتفقون على حدود بلاد كنعان، وإن كانت معظم تعريفاتهم لا تبتعد عن المنطقة المحاذية لشاطئ البحر المتوسط الشرقي وبعض أجزاء بلاد الشام الداخلية. ومن المعلوم لدى الدارسين، أن الكلمة «كنعان» قد ظهرت لأول مرة في النصوص المكتوبة، المؤرخة للقرن الثامن عشر قبل الميلاد. ومن المؤكد، أن الكنعانيين أعطوا إسمهم للأرض التي سكنوها ولغة التي تكلموا بها. ونعتمد في معظم معلوماتنا في هذا البحث، بشأن خصائص المدينة الكنعانية، على نتائج الحفريات التي جرت في مواقع في فلسطين، خاصة موقعي تل المتسلم، وتل القدح/تل وقاص. وتتركز المعلومات حول أشكال التحصينات والمسكن والمعابد وطرق الدفن؛ إضافة إلى دراسة الصناعات والتجارة والمكتشفات الأثرية الأخرى. ويستدل من دراستنا هذه أن المدن الكنعانية، خلال العصر البرونزي الأخير، تميزت بوجود قصر واحد للحاكم، ومعبد أو أكثر، ومسكن للناس، ومصانع ومخازن، وقصر للمندوب المصري في المدينة، وحفر للأنقاض والنفائيات. ويظهر أن الأقتصاد وطبيعة الحياة الاجتماعية في المدن الكنعانية تأثرت كثيراً بوجود أعراق وأجناس أخرى فيها غير الكنعانية، خاصة في المراحل الأخيرة من العصر البرونزي الأخير.

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