

## ***Connecting Khirbet Qeiyafa to the Proper Israelite King: Sauline Stronghold or Davidic Fortress***

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The notion of a United Monarchy of Israel has been a hotly debated topic since at least the 1980s, especially since the archaeological record did not seem to reflect a vast kingdom that many presume to have existed, perhaps rivaling that of an empire, if the biblical account is accurate. This has called into question whether a Davidic dynasty ever existed, and whether a historical David ever lived. The archaeological evidence that has been excavated between the 1990s and 2010s has counteracted many of these criticisms, and one of the key sites that has contributed to the silencing of the critics is Khirbet Qeiyafa, a military outpost on the western fringe of the Shephelah designed to deter Philistine advances into Judah. Yosef Garfinkel has argued that the site was occupied exclusively during the Iron Age IIa, which equates to the reign of David. Lily Singer-Avitz has countered that Qeiyafa was inhabited instead during the Iron Age Ib, which equates to the reign of Saul. The matter to resolve here is whether the short-lived site of Khirbet Qeiyafa was occupied during Saul's reign, during David's reign, or spanned both reigns.

KEYWORDS: Khirbet Qeiyafa, King David, United Monarchy of Israel, Iron Age, archaeology

### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

As one Israeli archaeologist pointed out, revisionistic historians and some archaeologists joined forces to decry the reality of the biblical

descriptions of the United Monarchy.<sup>1</sup> They founded this alliance on the minimalistic presupposition that it is a socially and politically motivated construct of much later periods.<sup>2</sup> Subsequent excavations, however, have provided tangible evidence to rebut these claims. One of the most important ancient sites in Israel that bolsters the historicity of the United Monarchy is known by its Arabic name: Khirbet Qeiyafa. Since no archaeological evidence derived from excavations in Judah or Israel before the twenty-first century was attributable specifically to King David, including those at Jerusalem, Qeiyafa burst onto the scene in 2008 when the *New York Times* published a story on its connection to this elusive but enigmatic king.

Unbeknownst to many enthusiasts of biblical studies, a debate arose in the early 2010s between Qeiyafa's director of excavations, Yosef Garfinkel, and an accomplished ceramicist from Tel Aviv University named Lily Singer-Avitz, over the timing of Qeiyafa's occupation. Garfinkel insisted that the site was occupied during the Iron Age IIa, while Singer-Avitz contended that the Iron Age Ib is the proper period for its inhabitation. She correctly observed that the crucial point for understanding the history of Iron IIa is the nature of the dividing line between these two phases.<sup>3</sup> As for Qeiyafa, Garfinkel et al. rightly noted that the actual point of contention is whether its occupation should be placed extremely late in Iron Ib or extremely early in Iron IIa.<sup>4</sup>

The debate is far from pointless,<sup>5</sup> as the dispute probably amounts to the difference between an occupation during Saul's reign and one

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1. Amihai Mazar, "Archaeology and the Biblical Narrative: The Case of the United Monarchy," in *One God—One Cult—One Nation: Archaeological and Biblical Perspectives*, ed. Reinhard G. Kratz and Hermann Spieckermann, BZAW 405 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 29.

2. Ian Sharon, Ayelet Gilboa, A. J. Timothy Jull, and Elisabetta Boaretto, "Report on the First Stage of the Iron Age Dating Project in Israel: Supporting a Low Chronology," *Radiocarbon* 49/1 (2007): 2.

3. Ze'ev Herzog and Lily Singer-Avitz, "Redefining the Centre: The Emergence of State in Judah," *Tel Aviv* 31 (2004): 209–44.

4. Yosef Garfinkel, Igor Kreimerman, and Peter Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa: A Fortified City in Judah from the Time of King David* (Jerusalem: IES and Hebrew University, 2016), 139.

5. Finkelstein and Fantalkin uttered the incomprehensible statement that Qeiyafa has no bearing on the debate over Iron-Age chronology (Israel Finkelstein and Alexander Fantalkin, "Khirbet Qeiyafa: An Unsensational Archaeological and Historical

during David's reign.<sup>6</sup> This is true because Iron Ib dates from *ca.* 1130–1000 BC, while Iron Iia dates from *ca.* 1000–841 BC, according to the present writer's archaeological periodization.<sup>7</sup> The date chosen for the year of transition from Iron I to Iron II should be no surprise, since 1000 bc long has been viewed as the conventional date for this event.<sup>8</sup> Other dates for the transition have been proposed, such as 980 BC,<sup>9</sup> 960 BC,<sup>10</sup> and 920 BC,<sup>11</sup> but systematically disproving these positions goes beyond the scope of the present work.

Interpretation," *Tel Aviv* 39 [2012]: 41). This assertion could not be further from the truth, as the very publication of their own article bears out, let alone those by Finkelstein that have followed.

6. One scholar criticized Garfinkel as being Bible-centric and factually unsound, essentially for calling Qeiyafa a Davidic site and connecting it with David's rule (Hermann Michael Niemann, "Comments and Questions about the Interpretation of Khirbet Qeiyafa: Talking with Yosef Garfinkel," *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 23 [2017]: 256), so not everyone is willing to connect the site to a biblical monarch.

7. Several scholars have suggested that Iron Age Iia should be divided into three subphases: (1) the late eleventh–early tenth centuries BC, (2) the second half of the tenth–early ninth centuries BC, (3) the middle and late ninth century BC (Yosef Garfinkel, Kyle H. Keimer, Saar Ganor, Christopher Rollston, and David Ben-Shlomo, "Khirbet al-Ra'i in the Judean Shephelah: The 2015–2019 Excavation Seasons," *Strata* 37 (2019): 46.

8. Amihai Mazar and Christopher Bronk Ramsey, "14C Dates and the Iron Age Chronology of Israel: A Response," *Radiocarbon* 50/2 (2008): 105; Hoo-Goo Kang and Yosef Garfinkel, *Khirbet Qeiyafa Vol. 6: Excavation Report 2007–2013* (Jerusalem: IES and Khirbet Qeiyafa Expedition, 2018), 114.

9. A. Mazar and Ramsey, "14C Dates and the Iron Age," 107; Amihai Mazar, "The Debate over the Chronology of the Iron Age in the Southern Levant: Its History, the Current Situation, and a Suggested Resolution," in *The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating: Archaeology, Text, and Science*, eds. Thomas E. Levy and Thomas Higham (London: Equinox, 2005), 16; Amihai Mazar, Hendrik J. Bruins, Nava Panitz-Cohen, and Johannes van der Plicht, "Stratigraphy, Archaeological Context, Pottery and Radiocarbon Dates," in *Bible and Radiocarbon Dating*, 212.

10. Lorenzo Nigro, "An Absolute Iron Age Chronology of the Levant and the Mediterranean," in *Overcoming Catastrophes: Essays on Disastrous Agents Characterization and Resilience Strategies in Pre-classical Southern Levant*, ed. Lorenzo Nigro, ROSPAT 11 (Rome: La Sapienza, 2014), 264.

11. Israel Finkelstein and Eli Piasetzky, "Radiocarbon Dating the Iron Age in the Levant: A Bayesian Model for Six Ceramic Phases and Six Transitions," *Antiquity* 84 (2010): 381.

Moreover, archaeology's conventional periodization stresses that Iron IIa includes the tenth century BC, most of which falls within biblical history's United Monarchy, although after the publication of the pottery from Jezreel and Tel Rehov, Iron-IIa material culture was understood to last well into the ninth century BC.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, calibrated radiocarbon dates for the destruction levels of sites at the end of Iron Age I—such as Megiddo VIa, Yoqne'am (Jokneam) XII, Tel Keisan 9, and Tell Qasile X—have provided chronological ranges from *ca.* 1050–930 BC, or *ca.* 1043–996 BC in the case of Tel Hadar.<sup>13</sup>

The dispute also is relevant because of the known regnal dates of the first Israelite kings. Biblical chronology intimates that Saul reigned over Israel from *ca.* 1049–1009 BC, while David reigned over all of Israel (i.e., beyond ruling Judah from Hebron) from *ca.* 1002–969 BC.<sup>14</sup> Qeiyafa's occupation should be attributed to one of these two kings, notwithstanding the short rule of Eshbaal/Ishbosheth from 1005–1002 BC.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the goal of the present work is to determine whether the site of Khirbet Qeiyafa was occupied during Iron Age Ib (within Saul's reign over Israel) or Iron Age IIa (within David's reign over Israel), which will clarify the picture of how this ancient site fits within the history of the United Monarchy.

12. Amihai Mazar, "The Iron Age Chronology Debate: Is the Gap Narrowing? Another Viewpoint," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 74/2 (2011): 106, citing Israel Finkelstein, "The Archaeology of the United Monarchy: An Alternative View," *Levant* 28 (1996): 177–87, and citing A. Mazar, "The Debate over the Chronology," 15–30.

13. A. Mazar, "The Iron Age Chronology Debate," 106, 108. Mazar established the dating-range for Tel Hadar's destruction by using the calculations of Finkelstein and Piasezky, "Radiocarbon Dating the Iron Age," 374–85.

14. The date of 969 BC for the death of David is based on a conjectured length of two years for a coregency between David and Solomon. The idea of a coregency derives from a natural reading of 1 Kgs 1:39–43 and 1 Chr 23:1, taking David's appointment of Solomon to the throne as indicating that Solomon's accession occurred while David remained alive (Rodger C. Young, "Tables of Reign Lengths from the Hebrew Court Records," *JETS* 48/2 [2005]: 227, 246; Andrew E. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul: A Biblical Chronology* [St. Louis: Concordia, 2011], 122–23). At least one biblical scholar is not convinced that a coregency of any length transpired between David and Solomon (Todd Bolen, "The Date of the Davidic Covenant and Its Implications for Messianic Psalms" [unpublished paper read at the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, 22 November 2019], 2).

15. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 115–17.

The first step toward solving the dispute is to introduce the site and identify the residents' ethnicity as Israelite. The second step is to identify the site with the biblical toponym of *Shaaraim* (literally "Dual Gates") of 1 Sam 17:52. The third step is to discuss the destruction of the site. The fourth step is to date the site's foundation and destruction as precisely as possible. The fifth step is to refine the site's dating by interacting with biblical chronology. The sixth and final step is to review the results of the study and offer several concluding thoughts about what was gleaned.

### THE SITE AND ITS RESIDENTS' ETHNICITY

Before discussing the site of Khirbet Qeiyafa, its geopolitical context must be established. The population centers in the highlands, mostly Israelite, reached their peak in Iron Age I, with settlements that included Shiloh, Jerusalem, Khirbat Za'akuka, Giloh, Beth-Zur, and Hebron, among others. The Shephelah of this time was populated only sparsely, but a small string of Canaanite settlements between the Israelites in the highlands and the Philistines on the coastal plain included Tell Beit Mirsim, Tel Eton, Tel Yarmouth, and Beth-Shemesh.<sup>16</sup>

Into this context, Qeiyafa was built in the Shephelah, either at the end of Iron Ib or the outset of Iron IIa. One estimate for the population of Judah and Benjamin during Iron IIa, which includes the Shephelah, is about 20,000 people.<sup>17</sup> The site is located thirty km southwest of Jerusalem, in the western part of the upper Shephelah, on the summit of a hill that borders the Elah Valley on the north.<sup>18</sup> At this point in its course, the Elah Valley runs due east to west. Almost immediately to the west of the Qeiyafan fortress is a ridge consisting of hills that stand parallel to the Elah Valley as it veers south to north for a short distance.

16. Avraham Faust, "A Social Archaeology of the Kingdom of Judah: Tenth–Sixth Centuries BCE," in *The Social Archaeology of the Levant: From Prehistory to the Present*, eds. Assaf Yasur-Landau, Eric H. Cline, and Yorke M. Rowan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 338.

17. Eilat Mazar, "The Fortified Enclosure Dated to the Early Iron Age IIa1–2: The 'Far House' (2 Sam 15:17)," in *The Ophel Excavations to the South of the Temple Mount 2009–2013: Final Reports Volume II*, ed. Eilat Mazar (Jerusalem: Shoham, 2018), 315, 323.

18. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 36.

On the northern end of this ridge and the western side of the valley is Azekah, a city that the Canaanites occupied during the Late Bronze Age (hereinafter LBA) and the Judahites occupied during the heart of Iron IIa and throughout Iron IIb,<sup>19</sup> suggesting that Azekah was unoccupied while the Israelites inhabited the fortress at Qeiyafa. Excavations of 2012 at Azekah revealed the remains of a destruction layer dating to the LBA IIb, the most prominent period in the occupational sequence, having been exposed in almost every excavational area at the site.<sup>20</sup>

Qeiyafa, constructed on bedrock and surrounded by a megalithic (large-sized stone) wall, is a mere 2.3-hectare site, which is why 25% of the site (5,000 m<sup>2</sup>) was excavated in only seven seasons of work.<sup>21</sup> Qeiyafa's urban planning included an administrative building on the top of the hill, the defensive wall constructed with a casemate design, and a belt of houses abutting and including the rectangular, casemate chambers. Such urban planning for the tenth century BC is unknown at any Canaanite or Philistine site, though it is typical for Judahite cities.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the meager size of the site, the brevity of its occupation, and the concise length of the excavations performed, Qeiyafa has yielded some amazing material. The site produced three inscriptions, datable to the end of the eleventh century or the beginning of the tenth century BC,<sup>23</sup> which provide rich insight into the literary characteristics of

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19. Oded Lipschits, Yuval Gadot, and Manfred Oeming, "Tel Azekah 113 Years After: Preliminary Evaluation of the Renewed Excavations at the Site," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 75/4 (2012): 200, 205.

20. Sabine Kleiman, Ido Koch, Lyndelle Webster, Vanessa Linares, Karl Berendt, Omer Sergi, Manfred Oeming, Yuval Gadot, and Oded Lipschits, "Late Bronze Age Azekah—An Almost Forgotten Story," in *The Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages of Southern Canaan*, eds. Aren M. Maeir, Itzhaq Shai, and Chris McKinny; Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2019), 37; Lipschits, Gadot, and Oeming, "Tel Azekah 113 Years After," 200.

21. Yosef Garfinkel and Saar Ganor, "Site Location and Setting and History of Research," in *Khirbet Qeiyafa Vol. 1: Excavation Report 2007–2008*, eds. Yosef Garfinkel and Saar Ganor; Jerusalem: IES and Hebrew University, 2009), 25; Yosef Garfinkel, Saar Ganor, and Michael G. Hasel, *In the Footsteps of King David: Revelations from an Ancient Biblical City* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2018), 39.

22. Yosef Garfinkel, Katharina Streit, Saar Ganor, and Michael G. Hasel, "State Formation in Judah: Biblical Tradition, Modern Historical Theories, and Radiometric Dates at Khirbet Qeiyafa," *Radiocarbon* 54/3–4 (2012): 359–360.

23. Yosef Garfinkel, Mitka R. Golub, Haggai Misgav, and Saar Ganor, "The 'Išba'al

Hebrew during this formative time in the early history of the monarchy.<sup>24</sup> The site's most famous inscription, the Khirbet Qeiyafa Ostrakon,<sup>25</sup> was incised dextrograde (written from left to right), before the direction of alphabetic writing was standardized as sinistrograde (written from right to left).<sup>26</sup>

The excavators judged the site to be Judahite for numerous reasons.<sup>27</sup> First, Qeiyafa is located within Judah's tribal allotment, a full day's walk from Jerusalem. Second, the unique civic planning at Qeiyafa is typical for Judah of the tenth century BC. The characteristics of

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Inscription from Khirbet Qeiyafa," *BASOR* 373 (2015): 217; Ada Yardeni, *The National Hebrew Script Up To The Babylonian Exile* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2018), 70–72; Ada Yardeni, *The Book of Hebrew Script: History, Palaeography, Script Styles, Calligraphy & Design* (Jerusalem: Carta, [1997] 2010), 4.

24. For a thorough treatment of the literary characteristics of epigraphical Hebrew during the patriarchal period, see Douglas Petrovich, *The World's Oldest Alphabet: Hebrew as the Language of the Proto-Consonantal Script* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2016).

25. Haggai Misgav, Yosef Garfinkel, and Saar Ganor, "The Ostrakon," in *Khirbet Qeiyafa Vol. 1*, 243–57; Ada Yardeni, "Further Observations on the Ostrakon," in *Khirbet Qeiyafa Vol. 1*, 259–60; Alan Millard, "The Ostrakon from the Days of David Found at Khirbet Qeiyafa," *Tyndale Bulletin* 62/1 (2011): 1–14; Yardeni, *National Hebrew Script*, 42.

26. Douglas Petrovich, "The Ophel Pithos Inscription: Its Dating, Language, Translation, and Script," *Palestine Excavation Quarterly* 147/2 (2015): 131.

27. Maeir has agreed that the site is Judahite (Aren M. Maeir, "Khirbet Qeiyafa in its Regional Context: A View From Philistine Gath," in *Khirbet Qeiyafa in the Shephelah: Papers Presented at a Colloquium of the Swiss Society for Ancient Near Eastern Studies Held at the University of Bern, September 6, 2014*, eds. Silvia Schroer and Stefan Münger (Fribourg/Göttingen: Academic Press/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 62, 65. Na'aman made a meager attempt to persuade the scholarly world that Qeiyafa is not a Judahite city. For example, he argued that Qeiyafa was located in the Shephelah and thus too far from the center of a spawning kingdom, and that Judah's newness as a kingdom would prohibit it from building a powerful stronghold, which exceeded its own central government in strength and wealth (Nadav Na'aman, "Was Khirbet Qeiyafa a Judahite City? The Case against It," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 17 [2017]: 2–3). Qeiyafa actually was a small outpost with fortifications that paled in comparison to Jerusalem's city wall, glacis, and Large Stone Structure that Eilat Mazar equated with David's palace (Eilat Mazar, *The Palace of King David: Excavations at the Summit of the City of David, Preliminary Report of Seasons 2005–2007* [Jerusalem: Shoham Academic, 2009]). Moreover, if Qeiyafa was built by Saul, and not David, then it was founded before a Judahite kingdom even existed, while under the auspices of a unified Israel. It would be surprising if Na'aman's weak arguments and poorly supported thesis gains any traction among ancient Near Eastern scholars.



houses (1) constructed around the city's inner perimeter, (2) attached to the casemate wall, and (3) with the casemates incorporated as innermost rooms of homes is observed exclusively at Qeiyafa and four other Judahite sites of the 10th century bc: Beth-Shemesh, Tell en-Nasbeh, Tell Beit Mirsim, and Beersheba.<sup>28</sup>

Third, no pig bones were found at Qeiyafa, which are common at nearby Philistine sites such as Gath and Ekron.<sup>29</sup> Pigs were unclean animals that the Israelites were forbidden to eat (Lev 11:1–8). Fourth, large ceramic bowls used as baking trays, unattested at Philistine sites, were found in nearly every Qeiyafan home. The tray was placed on the fire, and foods were baked on top of it, a technique that the Philistines did not practice.<sup>30</sup>

Fifth, the inscriptions uncovered at Qeiyafa clearly were written in Hebrew.<sup>31</sup> As Haggai Misgav pointed out, for instance, the Qeiyafa Ostrakon contains an expression that is unique to Hebrew and Moabite: “You must not” (Exod 20:4–5, 7, 13–15, 16–17). However, there are

28. Garfinkel, Streit, Ganor, and Hasel, “State Formation in Judah,” 361; Garfinkel, Ganor, and Hasel, *Footsteps of King David*, 47, 88.

29. Maeir considered it safe to assume that Gath served as the primary polity in the region, particularly during Iron I and early Iron IIa (Maeir, “Khirbet Qeiyafa in its Regional Context,” 66). Pigs appear only in small number, if at all, in Canaanite centers and rural areas within the lowlands during Iron Age I (Lidar Sapir-Hen, Guy Bar-Oz, Yuval Gadot, and Israel Finkelstein, “Pig Husbandry in Iron Age Israel and Judah: New Insights Regarding the Origin of the ‘Taboo’,” *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 129/1 [2013]: 1; Lidar Sapir-Hen, “Food, Pork Consumption, and Identity in Ancient Israel,” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 82/1 [2019]: 55).

30. Garfinkel et al., “State Formation in Judah,” 361; Garfinkel, Ganor, and Hasel, *Footsteps of King David*, 47. For more on Qeiyafa's baking trays, see Kang and Garfinkel, *Khirbet Qeiyafa Vol. 6*, 36–37.

31. This not only is the conclusion of the present writer but of other scholars (Haggai Misgav, Yosef Garfinkel, and Saar Ganor, “The Ostrakon,” in *Khirbet Qeiyafa Vol. 1*, 254; Gershon Galil, “The Hebrew Inscription from Khirbet Qeiyafa/Neta'im: Script, Language, Literature and History,” *Ugarit Forschungen* 41 [2009] [2010]: 193–242). Yet not everyone agrees that the inscriptions definitively were composed in Hebrew. Regarding the Qeiyafa Ostrakon, for example, two scholars suggested that it was written in Hebrew or Canaanite (Alan Millard, “The Ostrakon from the Days of David Found at Khirbet Qeiyafa,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 62/1 [2011]: 1, 12; Émile Puech, “L'ostrakon de Khirbet Qeiyafa et les débuts de la royauté en Israël,” *Revue Biblique* 117/2 [2010]: 184), while another scholar argued that it can be accepted as northwestern Semitic but not distinctively Hebrew (Christopher Rollston, “The Khirbet Qeiyafa Ostrakon: Methodological Musings and Caveats,” *Tel Aviv* 38 [2011]: 67, 69).



no features that define the language of the ostrakon as Moabite, the location of whose people in Transjordan makes a Moabite inscription within the western side of the Shephelah—itsself located to the west of the Central Mountain Spine—effectively implausible.<sup>32</sup>

Sixth, the three cultic rooms uncovered in the 2010–11 seasons do not bear any of the anthropomorphic or zoomorphic imagery characteristic of Canaanite and Philistine cultic activity. The Mother Goddess figurine typical in Canaanite homes also is absent at Qeiyafa. The Israelite occupants seemingly were careful to observe the Mosaic Law’s ban on fashioning graven images (Deut 4:15–23).<sup>33</sup> Faust agreed with the excavators that Qeiyafa was connected to the emerging polity in the Judahite highlands,<sup>34</sup> and there is no viable reason to doubt that it was Israelite.<sup>35</sup>

#### IDENTIFICATION OF THE SITE

Qeiyafa’s identification with a specific biblical site should be considered beyond reasonable doubt, although inscriptional verification is lacking. Typically, the criterion used to identify a site securely is a reference to its ancient name on an inscription found at the site (e.g., Ekron and Gibeon).<sup>36</sup> On rare occasions, such as with Qeiyafa, the

32. Garfinkel et al., “State Formation in Judah,” 361; Garfinkel, Ganor, and Hasel, *Footsteps of King David*, 159–65.

33. Garfinkel et al., “State Formation in Judah,” 361; Garfinkel, Ganor, and Hasel, *Footsteps of King David*, 47.

34. Faust, “A Social Archaeology,” 339.

35. Finkelstein and Fantalkin would not rule out identifying Qeiyafa’s residents as a lowlands, late-Canaanite people (Finkelstein and Fantalkin, “Khirbet Qeiyafa: An Un-sensational,” 49), but they provided no compelling evidence and offered no substantive rebuttals to the evidence that the excavators presented for the Israelite identity of the inhabitants.

36. The Ekron Royal Dedicatory Inscription mentions the “ruler of Ekron” who built a temple for his patroness deity, Ptgyh (Seymour Gitin, “Temple Complex 650 at Ekron. The Impact of Multi-Cultural Influences on Philistine Cult in the Late Iron Age,” in *Temple Building and Temple Cult: Architecture and Cultic Paraphernalia of Temples in the Levant (2.–1. Mill. B.C.E.)*, eds. Jens Kamlah and Henrike Michelau, *Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 41 [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012], 238; Shmuel Ahituv, *Echoes from the Past: Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from the Biblical World* [Jerusalem: Carta, 2008], 335–38). Jar handles on pottery at Gibeon that are connected

biblical, archaeological, toponymic, and topographical data conspire to settle the issue without requiring inscriptional assistance.

The identification of Qeiyafa begins with the battle precipitated by David's clash with Goliath.<sup>37</sup> The narrative states that "the Philistines assembled their armies for battle, so they were gathered *near Socoh, which belongs to Judah, because they camped between Socoh and Azekah, by the Extremity of Wailings*" (1 Sam 17:1).<sup>38</sup> The Philistines advanced up the Elah Valley to a place near the Israelite city of Socoh,<sup>39</sup> which is slightly further to the east than Qeiyafa. They established their camp between the two cities, on the hill that is directly south of Qeiyafa.

The text provides further clarification about the exact location of the conflict: "Saul and the men of Israel also were gathered and camped by the Elah Valley, and they organized for battle in order to encounter the Philistines" (1 Sam 17:2). The mention of the Philistines first in the narrative implies that they were the aggressors by initiating the conflict with the Sauline kingdom, and the identification of the Elah Valley clarifies the battleground as the low-lying pass that descends westward from the Central Mountain Spine through the Shephelah and continues onto the Philistine Plain, before disappearing into the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>40</sup>

The next piece of evidence, which clarifies the location to an even greater extent, is found in 1 Sam 17:20: "Now David arose in the

to a complex winemaking industry often feature the city's toponym inscribed on them (James B. Pritchard, *Gibeon: Where the Sun Stood Still* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962], 46–47, figs. 17–20; Ahituv, *Echoes from the Past*, 139).

37. Na'aman is among the latest scholars to consider the battle between David and Goliath to be a wholly legendary account (Na'aman, "Was Khirbet Qeiyafa a Judahite City?," 6).

38. The translation offered here, and for all biblical citations throughout the article, is that of the present writer.

39. Socoh was located precisely at the border between the Philistine Plain and the Judahite Shephelah, on the line of east-west hills that formed the southern border of the Elah Valley, and it would have served as a key fortified city at a crucial point along this border (Michael G. Hasel and Yosef Garfinkel, "Chapter 1: Name, Location, History of Research and Historical Context," in *Socoh of the Judean Shephelah: The 2010 Survey*, eds. Michael G. Hasel, Yosef Garfinkel, and Shifra Weiss [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2017], 21).

40. Barry J. Beitzel, *The Moody Atlas of the Bible* (Chicago: Moody, 2009), 61 (map 18).

morning and left the flock with an attendant, and he took provisions and went as Jesse had instructed him. Then he arrived at the circular encampment, as the army was going out for battle, as they shouted with a war cry.” David arrived after one day’s hike from Bethlehem, just as the army was leaving their camp. The word used here for the Israelite headquarters denotes a circular camp. Levin correctly referred to this as a round-shaped military installation,<sup>41</sup> which Saul constructed to overlook one of the main roads into the Judahite hills.

Still more elucidation appears near the end of the chapter, where “the men of Israel and Judah stood up and shouted in triumph, and they pursued the Philistines as far as the valley and to the gates of Ekron.<sup>42</sup> So the slain from among the Philistines fell along the road of Dual Gates and as far as Gath and Ekron” (1 Sam 17:52).<sup>43</sup> The point along the Elah

41. Yigal Levin, “The Identification of Khirbet Qeiyafa: A New Suggestion,” *BA-SOR* 367 (2012): 82–83.

42. When the chase ended, the Israelites plundered the abandoned Philistine camp (1 Sam 17:53), and David’s trophies consisted of Goliath’s head (1 Sam 17:54), which David brought to Jerusalem, and Goliath’s weapons, which the victor placed in his own tent (Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel* [NAC; Chicago: Moody, 1996], 197). Bergen suggested that David took his tent with him. However, given that David had no need to sleep overnight on his journey from Bethlehem to Qeiyafa, and that Qeiyafa was a walled fortress with houses, the tent here almost certainly refers to his own tent in Bethlehem (just 9 km south of Jerusalem). This is the only tent mentioned in 1 Samuel 17, which reinforces the notion that Saul and his army camped within the safe confines of Qeiyafa’s walls, not in unprotected tents along the Elah Valley. Perhaps the main reason why the Philistines did not invade the Israelite encampment over the forty days of entrenchment (1 Sam 17:16) before David challenged Goliath is that the militarily unimpressive Israelites were lodging within a well-fortified stronghold, which cannot be the case if they were living in tents.

43. Levin translated, “the road *to* Shaaraim,” arguing that roads usually are named for the destination, never for the point of origin (Levin, “Identification of Khirbet Qeiyafa,” 78). Three fundamental problems plague Levin’s proposal. First, there is no ל-prefix added to “Dual Gates” (= Shaaraim), or a directional-ן suffix, so taking this as a destination is unjustified linguistically. Second, the author already named the destination to where the Philistines traveled: Gath and Ekron. Further damaging to Levin’s point, Ekron is not even located on the road that winds through the Elah Valley, but rather sits on the Great Trunk Road (the later Via Maris), much closer to the Sorek Valley than the Elah Valley. Third, the biblical author’s point is not to name the road, let alone its point of origin or destination. His point is to use the construct state to employ a simple genitival relationship: the road directly relates to the fortress of Dual Gates. In strategic terms, this is the road that Dual Gates guarded, and the Philistines fled westward from that point on the road (down the Elah Valley), followed that road to Gath, then (some of them) diverted northward onto the Great Trunk Road in hopes of reaching Ekron safely.

Valley where the Israelites began slaughtering the Philistines was Dual Gates, a toponym derived from שַׁעֲרַיִם (“Shaaraim”), a Hebrew word that refers to a walled city with two access gates. The presence of these gates implies the existence of a defensive wall around the site plus two distinctive entrances.

The only site located adjacent to a position between Socoh and Azekah is Khirbet Qeiyafa, with no other options in their proximity, walled or unwalled.<sup>44</sup> Plus, Qeiyafa featured a casemate city wall and two gates, which is extremely rare in the southern Levant at this time. Moreover, 1 Sam 17:3 states that “the Philistines stood on the mountain on one side, while the Israelites stood on the mountain on the other side, with the valley between them.”

Qeiyafa is located on top of the ridge along the northern side of the Elah Valley, making it the ideal candidate for the Dual Gates of 1 Sam 17:52. In 1985, Barry Beitzel drew the position of the Israelite encampment in the exact spot of Qeiyafa’s location,<sup>45</sup> long before Garfinkel’s excavations of 2007–2013.<sup>46</sup> The Philistine camp undoubtedly was located on the high ridge immediately to the south of Qeiyafa and across the valley, just as 1 Sam 17:1 notes that they gathered “near Socoh”

44. Levin argued unpersuasively that Qeiyafa cannot be the Dual Gates of 1 Sam 17:52 (Levin, “Identification of Khirbet Qeiyafa,” 78–81). His objection is based almost entirely on the lack of LBA remains at Qeiyafa, assuming that the Shaaraim of Josh 15:36 must have been occupied in Joshua’s day. Not only may one name be common to multiple sites, as biblical toponyms regularly were used for various sites (e.g., Beth-Horon, Aijalon, Aroer, Beth-Shemesh), but an inspired (scribal) textual update during the time of Qeiyafa’s occupation around 1000 BC may account for the addition of Dual Gates (i.e., Qeiyafa) in Joshua’s text, especially given that the declared fourteen cities of Josh 15:33–36 actually add up to fifteen. For persuasive examples of scribal textual updating, see Michael A. Grisanti, “Inspiration, Inerrancy, and the OT Canon: The Place of Textual Updating in an Inerrant View of Scripture,” *JETS* 44/4 (2001): 577–98. McKinny, who also has refused to connect Qeiyafa with the site mentioned in 1 Sam 17:52, argued that the biblical site should be identified with nearby Tell esh-Shari’ah (Charles Christopher McKinny, “A Historical Geography of the Administrative Division of Judah: The Town Lists of Judah and Benjamin in Joshua 15:21–62 and 18:21–28” [Ph.D. diss., Bar Ilan University, 2016], 182), which preserves the ancient toponym. In a personal communication with the present writer, however, he conceded that the site’s name may have shifted from Qeiyafa to esh-Shari’ah when the former was abandoned and the latter was occupied, as they are located in close proximity.

45. Barry J. Beitzel, *The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 115 (Map 42).

46. Garfinkel et al., “The ’Išba’al Inscription,” 218.

and camped “between Socoh and Azekah.” Their positioning there was precipitated by the existence and occupation of Qeiyafa, whose troops they intended to provoke into a battle to the death. All of this evidence validates Garfinkel’s assertion that Qeiyafa is the Dual Gates of the biblical narrative.<sup>47</sup>

#### DESTRUCTION OF THE SITE

Qeiyafa’s fortress of the Iron Age was destroyed suddenly,<sup>48</sup> as indicated by the numerous artifacts uncovered on the floors of every building.<sup>49</sup> Altogether, thousands of pottery vessels, hundreds of stone tools and utensils, and dozens of metal objects (including those made of iron)<sup>50</sup> were excavated in the debris. As a result, Garfinkel et al. noted that excavations at Qeiyafa produced an extremely rich material cultural assemblage dating to the late eleventh to early tenth century BC.<sup>51</sup>

Finkelstein et al. objected to a destruction any earlier than about halfway through the tenth century BC (once using the dates 956–42 BC), but even they conceded that (1) the 95.4% probability range is as broad as 1019–921 BC, and (2) the Egyptian glyptic seal D4483 with a relatively narrow dating range can date back as far as 980/960 BC.<sup>52</sup> Ultimately, they provided no compelling evidence whatsoever to refute the claim of the excavators that Qeiyafa’s destruction dates to no later than the first quarter of the tenth century BC.

The fleeing inhabitants left many ceramic vessels and other artifacts on the floors, in some cases over 100 per building, as well as metal

47. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 191.

48. Garfinkel et al., “State Formation in Judah,” 360.

49. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 46.

50. Alla Rabinovich, Naama Yahalom-Mack, Yosef Garfinkel, Saar Ganor, and Michael G. Hasel, “The Metal Assemblage from Early Iron Age IIA Khirbet Qeiyafa and Its Implications for the Inception of Iron Production and Use,” *BASOR* 382 (2019): 89–110.

51. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 46, 48; Garfinkel et al., “State Formation in Judah,” 360; Garfinkel et al., “The ’Išba‘al Inscription,” 218; Garfinkel and Ganor, “Site Location and Setting,” 33.

52. Alexander Fantalkin and Israel Finkelstein, “The Date of Abandonment and Territorial Affiliation of Khirbet Qeiyafa: An Update,” *Tel Aviv* 44/1 (2017): 53–55.

objects that mostly consisted of weapons. This array of weaponry supports the claim that Qeiyafa was a military outpost, designed to provide advanced warning of Philistine incursions up the Elah Valley toward the Central Benjamin Plateau and Judah's heartland. As for the pottery, encountering intact vessels was extremely rare for the excavators, and finding all of a broken vessel's fragments in the same spot was even rarer.<sup>53</sup>

This picture of the site after its destruction suggests that the inhabitants abandoned it hastily, possibly due to an imminent threat or looming attack. Scattered fragments of pottery, stone vessels, and cultic objects were discovered inside storage jars, and others in drainage channels or in corners of rooms, suggesting that they were hidden deliberately,<sup>54</sup> probably so the assailing invaders would not find them within the fortress.

Since no trace of burning or a black layer of ash was observed anywhere on the site, except near cooking installations, Qeiyafa seemingly was not destroyed by conflagration, the typical fate of a conquered city in antiquity. Moreover, no projectiles, concentrations of arrowheads, or human remains indicating violent death were uncovered.<sup>55</sup> With all of this data in hand, a reasonable reconstruction of the events surrounding Qeiyafa's downfall can be offered.

The Israelite inhabitants witnessed an enormous army approaching, almost certainly a combined Philistine assault force advancing up the Elah Valley from the west, causing them to conclude that they could not protect themselves indefinitely within the outpost. They concealed their metal objects, grabbed the lightest and most valuable items they could carry, and fled eastward up the valley toward the Central Benjamin Plateau.<sup>56</sup>

If the inhabitants indeed intended to flee from the invading army, they probably hid some valuables because they expected to retrieve them after eventually returning to the fortress. They would have escaped through the southern gate and followed the Elah Valley toward Judah's core. The invading army presumably entered the fortress unopposed,

53. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 94.

54. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 96.

55. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 96.

56. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 96.

looted all of the valuable goods in view, then wreaked havoc on the remaining items, especially within the cultic areas, smashing all of the pottery, stone vessels, and cultic objects in view.<sup>57</sup>

Determining why the invaders did not burn the outpost is difficult, though perhaps they prioritized pursuing the displaced residents up the valley instead, who probably were in plain view from the perch of Qeiyafa's position. Either way, the conquerors may have looted the site and confiscated Qeiyafa's organic resources. Alternatively, perhaps they invaded the site during the rainy season, which would lead to conditions too wet for the city to be set ablaze. What is certain is the great speed and violence of the conquest. The site was not resettled for over 600 years.<sup>58</sup>

#### DATING OF THE SITE

Khirbet Qeiyafa was inhabited during various periods: Late Chalcolithic, Middle Bronze, Iron, Late Persian–Early Hellenistic, Early Roman, and Late Roman–Byzantine.<sup>59</sup> The residents of the Iron-Age (Qeiyafa IV), the main occupational phase,<sup>60</sup> inhabited the site extremely briefly:<sup>61</sup> less than one generation and for about twenty to thirty years, according to Garfinkel et al.<sup>62</sup> Finkelstein and Piasezky theorized that Qeiyafa was occupied for over fifty years, and possibly up to 135 years (*ca.* 1050–915 BC),<sup>63</sup> but this conclusion (1) simply does not match the data, and (2) obviously was construed to defend their misguided preference for downdating the advent of Iron IIa.

The excavators' conviction is based mostly on how the settlement existed during only one phase, with no signs of repairs or superimposed

57. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 96.

58. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 96.

59. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 36; Garfinkel et al., "The 'Išba'al Inscription," 218.

60. Garfinkel et al., "The 'Išba'al Inscription," 218.

61. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 137.

62. Garfinkel et al., "State Formation in Judah," 366.

63. Israel Finkelstein and Eli Piasezky, "Khirbet Qeiyafa: Absolute Chronology," *Tel Aviv* 37/1 (2010): 84, 86.



(i.e., subsequent) floors. Moreover, when they dug test-pits under the floors, they found pottery of the Middle Bronze Age and Late Chalcolithic Period, not the Iron Age.<sup>64</sup> Three useful means of dating Qeiyafa's short-lived occupation are (1) lexical information related to the Ishbaal Inscription, (2) ceramic typology, and (3) radiocarbon evidence.

1. *Dating by Lexical Information Related to the Ishbaal Inscription.* Garfinkel et al. noted that the Ishbaal Inscription, which they excavated in the 2012 season,<sup>65</sup> hints at the dating of Qeiyafa to Israel's early monarchy.<sup>66</sup> The Bible mentions a man by this name only twice (1 Chr 8:33; 9:39), although most translations spell his name *Eshbaal*, due to the Masoretes' choice of the *e*-class vowel under the *aleph*, since *ish* ("man") was converted into a compound word, with the addition of the Baal theophoric. In fact, he is King Saul's son, known both as Eshbaal (in 1 Chronicles) and Ishbosheth (in 2 Samuel).<sup>67</sup> The Ishbaal/Eshbaal of the inscription is an entirely different man than Saul's royal heir, unless Saul also was called Servant-of-Ashtoreth (see below).<sup>68</sup>

The inscription, written sinistroid, was found in Area C, Building C11, Room B, Locus C6968. Building C11 is elongated in shape, a typical tripartite Levantine house, having been divided into three architectural units: Rooms A (the small entryway), B (the central and largest room), and C (the innermost room, consisting of one rectangular casemate of the defensive wall). The inscribed jar, incised before firing,

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64. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 136–37.

65. Garfinkel et al., "The 'Išba'al Inscription," 218.

66. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 170, 172.

67. The sanitizing of pagan theophoric names in the Bible, such as Baal, reflects a negative attitude toward the chief Canaanite deity of this era. In this case, the biblical author replaced Baal with Bosheth (Ishbosheth = Man of Shame). Other examples exist, such as the sanitizing of Gideon's pagan names: Jerubbaal in Judg 6:32 and Jerubesheth in 2 Sam 11:21 (Garfinkel et al., "The 'Išba'al Inscription," 230).

68. After all, one could argue, Saul never demonstrated faithfulness to the God of Israel, and this could explain why the Philistines placed Saul's weapons inside the temple of Ashtoreth after his death (1 Sam 31:10). Moreover, with the excavators' statement that Ishbaal's central room was the largest one on site, this could be explained by its owner being the son of the King Saul, who obviously would have experienced many benefits as an heir to the throne.

came from the destruction debris immediately above the floor, in the northeastern corner of Room B, just to the left of the room's entryway.<sup>69</sup>

Since no partition walls appeared in Room B, it may have been an open courtyard. Garfinkel et al. referred to this room as the largest one on the site that the archaeological team uncovered, with walls similar in size to those of the city wall.<sup>70</sup> The decipherment of letters 5–14 (plus four proposed letters after letter 14) yields the translation, “Ishbaal, the son of Eved[-]A[shtoreth],” or “Man-of-Baal, the son of Servant[-of-]A[shtoreth].”<sup>71</sup>

Garfinkel et al. suggested to read the father's name as Beda,<sup>72</sup> which is unattested in ancient sources, but Yardeni insightfully preferred the theophoric name, “Servant-of-Ashtoreth.” This well-attested Phoenician name often omits the initial  $\text{ʔ}$ , including with other names beginning with “servant,” which would be true of Servant-of-Ashtoreth here.<sup>73</sup> This reading requires the conjecture of four letters— $\text{ר, ת, ש, ו}$ , and  $\text{ה}$ —after letter 14. Her assertion, although conjectural, may be justified by the absence of the potsherd that originally joined to the left of the last extant potsherd with writing on it, thus creating a lacuna in the inscription.<sup>74</sup>

Letters 1–4 are fragmentary, and Garfinkel identified them as (1)  $\text{ב}$ , (2)  $\text{ב}$  or  $\text{פ}$ ; (3)  $\text{ר}$  or  $\text{ק}$ ; and (4)  $\text{ת}$  ( $k$   $b/p$   $r/q$   $t$ ). Curiously, he ignored Yardeni's reconstruction of letters 1–4, which is  $\text{כפרת}$  ( $kprt$ ).<sup>75</sup> He instead

69. Garfinkel et al., “The 'Išba'al Inscription,” 218, 220, 222.

70. Garfinkel et al., “The 'Išba'al Inscription,” 220.

71. Adapted from Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 172; Garfinkel et al., “The 'Išba'al Inscription,” 223; Yardeni, *National Hebrew Script*, 48.

72. Garfinkel et al., “The 'Išba'al Inscription,” 223.

73. Yardeni, *National Hebrew Script*, 48.

74. The first consonant in the word “Ashtoreth,” the guttural  $\text{ʔ}$ , would be the last letter visible on the inscription. The only problem with conjecturing four more letters after this guttural is that there would be a noticeable and unexpected gap between the  $\text{ʔ}$  and the second letter in “Ashtoreth” (before the surface of the potsherd is broken off), which diminishes the attractiveness of the conjecture. One could address this critique by suggesting that the word “Ashtoreth” was abbreviated to its initial consonant. Otherwise, the gap would have to be taken as anomalous.

75. See Yardeni's drawing (Fig. 17) in Garfinkel et al., “The 'Išba'al Inscription,” 227, as well as Yardeni, *National Hebrew Script*, 47 (Fig. 35).

opted to read them either as חלקת (*hlqt*) or כברת (*kbri*).<sup>76</sup> Usually archaeologists entrust the decipherment of inscriptions to epigraphers, which would have been wise to do here, as Yardeni's reconstruction and transcription almost certainly are correct. However, the proper rendering of these letters almost certainly has not been achieved until now.

A better way to read the four fragmentary letters is to combine the inseparable preposition כ (*kap*) "according to, as" with the participle פרת "fruit-bearing."<sup>77</sup> This reading qualifies as one of the two options that the excavational team suggested for the intention of these letters: information about the contents of the jar or its function.<sup>78</sup> Yardeni rightly stated that jar inscriptions usually note the owner's name or the contents and/or capacity of the vessel.<sup>79</sup> In this case, the inscription's first Hebrew word alludes to the jar's contents, without indicating the type of food.

The text of Gen 49:22 uses this participle to refer to Joseph as a bearer of fruit. In the Ishbaal Inscription, which in like manner reads, "[according to the fruit-bearing of] Man-of-Baal, the son of Servant[-of-]A[shtoreth]," the potter probably intended to signal that the contents of the large storage jar were generated by the successful agricultural efforts of the producer, most likely the homeowner of Building C11 before Qeiyafa was abandoned and destroyed.

A biblical text featuring Saul's son of the same name, King Eshbaal, may provide further insight into the jar's contents. The two sons of Rimmon the Beerothite went to the king's house to murder him during the heat of the day, while he was asleep. They entered the middle of the building—which probably signifies the central room of a tripartite house—as if to take wheat, but then proceeded into the innermost room and killed the king by stabbing him in the abdomen (2 Sam 4:1–6).

76. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 172. The former option produces the word "plot," while the latter yields the word "distance."

77. The כ (*kap*) preposition's inseparableness is crucial for this inscription, because short, straight vertical lines, acting as word dividers, appear between all of the separable words (Garfinkel et al., "The 'Išba'al Inscription," 223). The כ (*kap*) preposition and the participle meaning "fruit-bearing" are not separated by such a divider, confirming the longstanding grammatical understanding that Hebrew's כ-preposition is an inseparable preposition.

78. Garfinkel et al., "The 'Išba'al Inscription," 223.

79. Yardeni, *National Hebrew Script*, 9.

In the king's house, the central room contained wheat, which evidently could be obtained by anyone who remained in the king's favor. People probably acquired this communal wheat to bake bread. In the same way, the central room of the tripartite house at Qeiyafa may have contained communal wheat for the taking, which was offered in honor of Servant-of-Ashtoreth's son, Man-of-Baal, whose agricultural fruitfulness was celebrated on the outside of the vessel.

These parallels between the Ishbaal Inscription and King Eshbaal circumstantially support the dating of the site to Saul's lifetime. The name *Eshbaal/Ishbaal* does not appear on any of the hundreds of inscriptions or on the 1,000+ seals and seal impressions known from the ninth–sixth centuries BC in ancient Israel and Judah. Any personal name with the Baal-element disappeared from the biblical text and general use in Judah, just as with Samuel's censoring of the name *Eshbaal* by replacing it with *Ishbosheth*, strongly suggesting that the Ishbaal Inscription was composed in the second half of the eleventh century or early in the tenth century BC.<sup>80</sup>

2. *Dating by Ceramic Typology.* An even more precise means of dating the site is through ceramic typology. The likelihood is high that most pottery from the destruction debris of a site was produced shortly before its destruction, since the duration of pottery's usefulness in antiquity was brief. Garfinkel et al. noted that vessels typically lasted less than six years, especially cooking pots, although storage jars lasted up to twenty years. The excavators have contended that Qeiyafa's destruction reflects pottery *exclusively* from Iron IIa.<sup>81</sup>

This leads to the dispute over the correct periodization for Qeiyafa's ceramic repertoire, as Garfinkel's team placed the occupation in Iron IIa only, while Singer-Avitz was adamant about dating the pottery and Qeiyafa's occupation to the end of Iron I. Garfinkel et al. stated that judging by the presence of vessel forms that appear in Iron IIa but not in Iron I, Qeiyafa's ceramic assemblage belongs to early Iron IIa, with forms that overall are slightly later than Megiddo VIa, Tell Qasile X, and Ekron IV, while contemporary with or slightly earlier than Arad

80. Garfinkel et al., "The 'Išba'al Inscription," 230.

81. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 143. For more on Qeiyafa's cooking pots and storage jars, see Kang and Garfinkel, *Khirbet Qeiyafa Vol. 6*, 33–36, 52–55.

XII and Beersheba VII.<sup>82</sup> The excavators and Singer-Avitz agreed that Level V at Lachish, Stratum IVa at Tel Batash, and Level III at Tel Zayit are later than Qeiyafa's Stratum IV.<sup>83</sup>

Singer-Avitz has argued that Qeiyafa possesses ceramic types that began in—or predominantly were used during—Iron I. She noted that the assemblage is different than those retrieved from nearby Iron-I sites in the Shephelah (Tel Batash, Tell eš-Šafi, and Ekron) or on the coastal plain (Ashdod and Tell Qasile), emphasizing that the ceramic assemblage from Stratum 4 at Beth-Shemesh provides the best parallel to Qeiyafa's repertoire.<sup>84</sup>

The excavators of Beth-Shemesh expressed the same opinion, stating that Qeiyafa's pottery is contemporary with Beth-Shemesh Level 4, which closes the late-Iron-I sequence at the site.<sup>85</sup> In both assemblages, there are deeply-carinated kraters in the LBA tradition, elongated storage jars with small, flat bases, cooking pots with flattened rims, and a relative dearth of hand-burnishing. Conversely, the typical ceramic types of Iron IIa are totally or virtually absent from both sites.<sup>86</sup>

The subsequent analysis treats the five types of ceramic evidence that Garfinkel used to conclude that the site belongs to Iron IIa, rather than Iron Ib: (1) irregular hand-burnishing on red-slipped ware, (2) large, deep, carinated kraters with everted rims, (3) two types of elongated storage jars, (4) black juglets, and (5) Cypro-Phoenician barrel juglets.

a. *Irregular hand-burnishing on red-slipped ware.* During Iron I, Canaanite material culture was dominant, but the tenth century BC

82. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 142.

83. Garfinkel and Ganor, "Site Location and Setting," 146; Lily Singer-Avitz, "The Relative Chronology of Khirbet Qeiyafa," *Tel Aviv* 37 (2010): 82.

84. Singer-Avitz, "Relative Chronology of Khirbet Qeiyafa," 81. With all of the strong ceramic parallels between Qeiyafa and other Judahite sites, in addition to the similar monumental architectural style with casemate walls found at Qeiyafa and Jerusalem (i.e. from Eilat Mazar's Ophel excavations), it is difficult to understand why Niemann suggested that Qeiyafa is a micro-polity: a comparatively independent settlement (Niemann, "Comments and Questions," 256).

85. P. Kyle McCarter, Shlomo Bunimovitz, and Zvi Lederman, "An Archaic Ba[set ayin after a] Inscription from Tel Beth-Shemesh," *Tel Aviv* 38 (2011): 189, as cited in Finkelstein and Fantalkin, "Khirbet Qeiyafa: An Unsensational," 41.

86. Singer-Avitz, "Relative Chronology of Khirbet Qeiyafa," 81.

experienced a considerable change in the material culture, notably the appearance of hand-burnished, red-slipped ware. This transformation is detectable in many parts of the region at roughly the same time, perhaps reflecting geo-political developments of that century, notably the Israelite monarchy's rise to prominence.<sup>87</sup>

The surface treatment on pottery known as irregular hand-burnishing on red-slipped ware (mainly on bowls and kraters) is the most diagnostic feature of the ceramic assemblages of Iron IIa in Judah's highlands, the Shephelah, and the southern coastal plain,<sup>88</sup> having been excavated in the following strata: Tel Batash IV, Lachish V, and Beer-sheba VII.<sup>89</sup> The term "slipped" means that a vessel's surface was coated with a liquid that altered its color for beautification, while "burnishing" denotes that the vessel was polished with a hard but smooth tool, such as a stone or shell, to create a glossy and evenly-glazed surface.

These features are almost totally absent from Qeiyafa's rich assemblage.<sup>90</sup> As Singer-Avitz pointed out from the initial excavation report, red-slipped ware appears only sporadically, and irregular hand-burnishing is even rarer, having been observed on only fifteen of the 19,623 potsherds (.076%) excavated from 2007–2008.<sup>91</sup> She contrasted

87. A. Mazar, "Archaeology and the Biblical Narrative," 33.

88. Lily Singer-Avitz, "Khirbet Qeiyafa: Late Iron Age I in Spite of It All," *Israel Exploration Journal* 62/2 (2012): 178. This surface treatment was applied to vessels used for food consumption, and not to vessels used for cooking or storage (Kang and Garfinkel, *Khirbet Qeiyafa Vol. 6*, 85).

89. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 140. For examples of ceramic analysis for these sites that are rich in red-slipped ware with irregular hand-burnishing, see Orna Zimhoni, "The Pottery of Levels V and IV and Its Archaeological and Chronological Implications," in *The Renewed Archaeological Excavations at Lachish (1973–1994): Volume IV*, eds. David Ussishkin and Jared L. Miller, Tel Aviv University Monograph Series 22 (Tel Aviv: Emery and Claire Yass Publications in Archaeology, 2004), 1643–788; Amihai Mazar and Nava Panitz-Cohen, eds., *Timnah (Tel Batash) II: The Finds from the First Millennium BCE*, vol. 1: *Text*, Qedem 42 (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 2001), 10–185; Lily Singer-Avitz, "Pottery from Strata VII–IV: The Iron IIa Period," in *Beer-Sheba III: The Early Iron IIa Enclosed Settlement and the Late Iron IIa–Iron IIb Cities*, eds. Ze'ev Herzog and Lily Avitz-Singer, Tel Aviv University Monograph Series 33 (Tel Aviv: Emery and Claire Yass Publications in Archaeology, 2016), 482–582.

90. Singer-Avitz, "Khirbet Qeiyafa: in Spite of It All," 178; Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 140.

91. Garfinkel and Ganor, "Site Location and Setting," 119, 146; Hoo-Goo Kang,

this with how hand-burnished, red-slipped vessels comprise 58% of the entire registered ceramics corpus in Stratum IV at Tel Batash and 46% of the pottery in Stratum VII at Tel Beersheba.<sup>92</sup>

After Qeiyafa's excavations had concluded, Kang provided a complete statistical analysis, noting that Singer-Avitz's earlier calculation incorporates all vessel types, whereas the other sites she cited based their percentages only on bowls. Yet on the final excavation report's calculation of bowls, Kang attributed irregular hand-burnishing to only 4.1% of red-slipped pottery for all rounded bowls from Qeiyafa,<sup>93</sup> and 3.64% on rounded and carinated bowls together.<sup>94</sup> While this ratio is better for the excavators' view than Singer-Avitz's .076%, the percentage nonetheless is exceedingly small and compromises the view that the site is exclusively or predominantly Iron IIa.

Garfinkel et al. suggested that the rare appearance of irregular hand-burnishing on red-slipped ware at Qeiyafa reflects an early chronological phase of Iron IIa.<sup>95</sup> In harmony with this, Kang conceded that the hand-burnishing of red-slipped ware in "patterned" geometric shapes—as seen on the interiors of bowls at Tel Batash IV, Lachish IV, and Tel Zayit Local Level III—is completely absent at Qeiyafa, which caused him to conclude that this treatment seemingly began only after Qeiyafa's abandonment, most likely in the second half of the tenth century BC.<sup>96</sup>

Considering the exceedingly low percentage of this ceramic type at Qeiyafa, it would be more logical if the majority of the occupation dates to terminal Iron Ib, while the tail end continued into Iron IIa. After all, the ceramic assemblage at Qeiyafa is similar to that at sites of late

"The Dating of the Pottery Assemblage of Khirbet Qeiyafa: An Archaeological, Quantitative and Typological Discussion," *Israel Exploration Journal* 65/1 (2015): 38.

92. A. Mazar and Panitz-Cohen, *Timnah (Tel Batash) II*, 149; Singer-Avitz, "Khirbet Qeiyafa: in Spite of It All," 179.

93. Kang, "Dating of the Pottery Assemblage," 38–39.

94. Kang and Garfinkel, *Khirbet Qeiyafa Vol. 6*, 87–88.

95. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 140; Yosef Garfinkel and Hoo-Goo Kang, "The Relative and Absolute Chronology of Khirbet Qeiyafa: Very Late Iron Age I or Very Early Iron Age IIa?," *Israel Exploration Journal* 61/2 (2011): 176.

96. Kang, "Dating of the Pottery Assemblage," 39.



Iron Ib, where red-slipped, hand-burnished ware has been noticed, but in extremely low percentages.<sup>97</sup>

For example, in Strata IX–VIII at Tel Beersheba and at the single-phase site of Khirbet Raddana, only a handful of red-slipped body sherds has been found.<sup>98</sup> Therefore, Garfinkel’s and Kang’s claim that the rarity of irregular hand-burnishing on red-slipped ware at Khirbet Qeiyafa reflects an early chronological phase of Iron IIA *exclusively* is unacceptable.<sup>99</sup> If this actually were the case, the percentage of hand-burnished, red-slipped ware would be much higher than 3.64% or 4.1%, instead being in the vicinity of 50%.

b. *Large, deep, carinated kraters with everted rims.* Garfinkel and Kang not only remarked that the large, deep, carinated krater with an everted rim appears at sites of Iron IIA (Stratum IX at Tell Qasile and Stratum IVb at Tel Batash), but they conceded that it is common at sites of Iron I.<sup>100</sup> According to them, however, the large number of kraters at Tel Batash does not support the claim of Singer-Avitz that they are earlier, residual sherds, because this krater clearly is not exclusive to either of the two phases under discussion.<sup>101</sup>

While Singer-Avitz agreed that this type of krater is part of Iron-IIa assemblages, such as those from Qasile IX and Batash IVb, she contended that most of the krater sherds found at Qeiyafa are not of this type, with only two potsherds from carinated kraters with everted rims. The predominant krater type at Qeiyafa has appeared in strata dating to the LBA and continued in use at Iron-I sites such as Tel Batash (Stratum V), Beth-Shemesh (Strata 6–4), Tell eš-Šafi (Stratum A-4), Ekron (Stratum Va), and Tel Qasile (Strata XII–X), while conversely

97. Singer-Avitz, “Relative Chronology of Khirbet Qeiyafa,” 80n2; Singer-Avitz, “Khirbet Qeiyafa: in Spite of It All,” 179.

98. Singer-Avitz, “Khirbet Qeiyafa: in Spite of It All,” 179; Herzog and Singer-Avitz, “Redefining the Centre,” 210; Zvi Lederman, “An Early Iron Age Village at Khirbet Raddana: The Excavations of Joseph A. Callaway” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1999), 74.

99. Singer-Avitz, “Khirbet Qeiyafa: in Spite of It All,” 179, citing Garfinkel and Kang, “Relative and Absolute Chronology,” 176.

100. Garfinkel and Kang, “Relative and Absolute Chronology,” 176.

101. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 141, citing Singer-Avitz, “Relative Chronology of Khirbet Qeiyafa,” 80.

the form is not found in strata of Iron IIa.<sup>102</sup> Just as with the irregularly hand-burnished, red-slipped ware, the evidence from carinated kraters with everted rims does not point to an occupation exclusive to Iron IIa at Qeiyafa, but rather to a terminal phase of Iron Ib, with a carryover into incipient Iron IIa.

c. *Two types of elongated storage jars.* Garfinkel and Ganor attributed two types of storage jars to Iron IIa: (1) elongated storage jars with rounded shoulders and narrow, flat bases, and (2) a storage jar with an inwardly slanted neck and simple rim, resembling pre-*LMLK* jars (with *LMLK* being a designation for “belonging to the king”).<sup>103</sup>

Elongated storage jars are well known in strata from Iron I and Iron IIa. Some types from the LBA and Iron I have a flat base, a later version of the stump-base or bulging-base storage jar of the LBA, but all in contexts no later than Iron I. They were found in Stratum V at Tel Batash, Stratum 4 at Beth-Shemesh, Stratum VIIa at Ekron, Stratum XII at Ashdod, and Stratum III at Tel Mor: all strata dating to Iron I. Storage jars of Iron IIa have a rounded base, and to Singer-Avitz’s knowledge no storage jars with a flat base are attested anywhere throughout Iron IIa.<sup>104</sup>

Apart from one jar with a round bottom, all of the published storage jars from Qeiyafa have a flat base.<sup>105</sup> Garfinkel et al. rebutted that a storage jar with a flat base was reported from Stratum IV at Tel Batash IV, an Iron IIa context.<sup>106</sup> Singer-Avitz countered that they based their case on a single sherd of a storage jar with a flat base. Given that the Batash potsherd is the only one found at any other site in a stratum of Iron IIa, she considered it to be intrusive.<sup>107</sup>

102. Singer-Avitz, “Khirbet Qeiyafa: in Spite of It All,” 179; Singer-Avitz, “Relative Chronology of Khirbet Qeiyafa,” 80–81. See the latter for further references.

103. Garfinkel and Ganor, “Site Location and Setting,” (1) Figs. 6.23; 6.24: 1–5, 10–15; (2) Fig. 6.24: 9.

104. Singer-Avitz, “Relative Chronology of Khirbet Qeiyafa,” 81; Singer-Avitz, “Khirbet Qeiyafa: in Spite of It All,” 180.

105. Singer-Avitz, “Relative Chronology of Khirbet Qeiyafa,” 81, citing Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, Figs. 6.23; 6.24: 10, 12–15. The sole example with a round base is Fig. 6.24: 11.

106. Garfinkel and Kang, “Relative and Absolute Chronology,” 166–67; Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 141.

107. Singer-Avitz, “Khirbet Qeiyafa: in Spite of It All,” 180.

Since Qeiyafa was not occupied after the earliest part of Iron IIa, its round-bottomed jar probably was not intrusive, due to the improbability of someone from a later phase of the Iron Age depositing fragmented pottery at this abandoned site.<sup>108</sup> Nonetheless, the point stands that the overwhelming predominance of flat-bottomed storage jars at Qeiyafa, a style that is virtually unknown in Iron IIa, signals that the site was occupied primarily during Iron Ib.

Qeiyafa produced a potsherd from one storage jar with an inwardly slanted neck and a simple rim, similar to the pre-*LMLK* and *LMLK* jars.<sup>109</sup> Hundreds of *LMLK* jars were manufactured under royal, Judahite supervision during the reign of Hezekiah (716/5–687/6 BC) and contained products that Judahites presented to him as taxation, probably before Sennacherib's invasion of 701 BC, in order to amass enough tribute to pay the demanding Neo-Assyrian king.<sup>110</sup> Pre-*LMLK* jars, made in the same style but lacking the inscription, were produced at least as early as the late ninth century BC, and both pre-*LMLK* and *LMLK* jars were made at workshops in the Shephelah.<sup>111</sup>

According to Garfinkel et al., the pre-*LMLK* jar from Qeiyafa may indicate that this ceramic tradition dates back almost two centuries earlier in the region than previously thought.<sup>112</sup> Singer-Avitz found it difficult to accept this assertion, instead attributing it to a later occupation at the site or its vicinity.<sup>113</sup> Garfinkel et al. explained that the potsherd was excavated from a secure context (Locus B285, the floor of Building B1), insisting that this jar belongs to Qeiyafa IV.<sup>114</sup>

108. Kang refused to call this potsherd intrusive because its locus was in a layer of debris and ash that was covered by the floor of Stratum III. Although the excavators admitted that several sherds in this locus may be intrusive, Kang argued that intrusive pottery would date to the following phase, not the previous one (Kang, "Dating of the Pottery Assemblage," 41).

109. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, Fig. 6.24: 9.

110. Yardeni, *National Hebrew Script*, 9.

111. Itzhaq Shai and Aren M. Maeir, "Pre-*lmlk* Jars: A New Class of Iron Age IIa Storage Jars," *Tel Aviv* 30 (2003): 108–9; Kang, "Dating of the Pottery Assemblage," 42.

112. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 135.

113. Singer-Avitz, "Relative Chronology of Khirbet Qeiyafa," 82.

114. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 141.

While they concluded that this ceramic type was manufactured early in Iron Age IIa, there is no known continuous manufacturing tradition from the beginning of the tenth century BC until late in the ninth century BC, a period of almost 200 years. Without any known examples dating to Iron IIa, there is no more reason to assign this storage jar to the beginning of the tenth century BC (Iron IIa) than to the end of the eleventh century BC (Iron Ib). The jar with an inwardly slanted neck and simple rim thus is non-diagnostic for Iron IIa, so it contributes nothing to the debate.

d. *Black juglets*. By the end of the excavation, the team uncovered a total of four fragments of wheel-made, black-slipped juglets (diagnostic for Iron II), so they concluded that the stratum dates to Iron IIa.<sup>115</sup> As Gilboa argued, such vessels do not occur before their respective early-Iron-IIa horizons in both the north (Israel) and the south (Judah).<sup>116</sup> Contrary to the claim that black juglets have not been reported within contexts of Iron I, Singer-Avitz remarked that a similar black juglet was found in Room 469 of Stratum 4 at Beth-Shemesh, one in Pit 383 of Stratum XII at Hazor, and a solitary one in several tombs that do not contain pottery diagnostic for Iron I.<sup>117</sup>

The presence of fragments of four black juglets at Qeiyafa is not strong enough evidence to assign the entire stratum to Iron IIa, even if there are no parallels from contexts dating to Iron I. Yet the force behind Singer-Avitz's position is limited, given that only one or two black juglets are attested at a few scattered sites for this period. Therefore, Qeiyafa's black juglets seemingly reflect the occupation of the site at the very outset of Iron IIa, but the fact that only four were found implies that the site was occupied extremely briefly during Iron IIa.

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115. Garfinkel and Kang, "Relative and Absolute Chronology," 177; Ruth Amiran, *Ancient Pottery of the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: Masada, 1969), 256, 259, 263; Kang, "Dating of the Pottery Assemblage," 42. For more on Qeiyafa's black juglets, see Kang and Garfinkel, *Khirbet Qeiyafa Vol. 6*, 47–48.

116. Ayelet Gilboa, "Cypriot Barrel Juglets at Khirbet Qeiyafa and other Sites in the Levant: Cultural Aspects and Chronological Implications," *Tel Aviv* 39 (2012): 144.

117. Lily Singer-Avitz, "Khirbet Qeiyafa: Late Iron Age I in Spite of It All—Once Again," *Israel Exploration Journal* 66/2 (2016): 238; Singer-Avitz, "Khirbet Qeiyafa: in Spite of It All," 180; Elihu Grant and G. Ernest Wright, *Ain Shemesh Excavations (Palestine)*, vol. 4: *Pottery* (Haverford: Haverford College, 1938), pl. LXI: 36. The earlier excavations (Haverford expedition) referred to this level as Stratum III, which parallels Strata 6–4 of the later Tel Aviv expedition.

e. *Cypro-Phoenician barrel juglets*. Lastly, Garfinkel et al. argued that the discovery of two Cypro-Phoenician barrel juglets at Qeiyafa, which first appear in Iron IIa, ties Stratum IV's material culture to this period, rather than to Iron I.<sup>118</sup> They based this argument on Ayelet Gilboa's 2012 published article in which she used the Cypro-Phoenician barrel juglets to draw a comparison between Qeiyafa and northern Israel, Phoenicia, and Cyprus.<sup>119</sup>

For Gilboa, the presence of this miniature barrel juglet demonstrates that the Qeiyafan assemblage cannot parallel the Iron Age I as currently defined in Phoenicia and northern Israel, although she conceded that the decision to place Qeiyafa's juglets within Iron-IIa cannot be made based on the juglets alone, but on the rest of the ceramic assemblage.<sup>120</sup>

Singer-Avitz replied that in general, Cypriot imports appear in contexts of late Iron I in Phoenicia and Israel, and that Gilboa's conclusion is based mainly on pottery from tombs, whose dates are formulated by synchronizations with occupational strata. Among the locations that Gilboa mentioned is Azor, whose burial tombs include pottery from Iron I and Iron IIa. In many of the tombs she cited, small lentoid flasks were found, a ceramic type that is quite common in northern Israel and Phoenicia during Iron I but rarely occurs early in Iron IIa. At Megiddo, Tell Qasile, and Tel Batash, these flasks appear frequently in Iron I, but they are absent in Iron IIa. This evidence caused Singer-Avitz to conclude that the (probably "familial") tombs Gilboa cited began to be used as early as Iron I and remained in use during Iron IIa, meaning that Cypriot barrel juglets found in them could date equally plausibly to late Iron Ib or early Iron IIa.<sup>121</sup>

While Singer-Avitz's point is well taken, her argument would be far more convincing if Cypro-Phoenician barrel juglets had been found in stratified contexts dating to Iron I at the sites where the pan-stratified tombs produced barrel juglets, or at any other sites, for that matter. Gilboa concluded that the ceramic assemblage of Stratum IV's destruction

118. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 142.

119. Gilboa, "Cypriot Barrel Juglets," 133–49; Singer-Avitz, "Khirbet Qeiyafa: in Spite of It All," 182.

120. Gilboa, "Cypriot Barrel Juglets," 144.

121. Singer-Avitz, "Khirbet Qeiyafa: in Spite of It All," 182–83.

at Tel Batash hovers around the Iron Ib–IIa transition, adding that Qeiyafa’s juglets establish a concrete link between the site’s *moment of destruction* and the early Iron Age IIa.<sup>122</sup>

While it remains theoretically possible that the imported barrel juglets were present in the Levant during the final phase of Iron I, the preponderance of evidence suggests that they surfaced only at the outset of Iron IIa. If Qeiyafa’s occupation straddled both sides of the transition from Iron I to Iron II, the presence of the barrel juglet during the site’s abandonment and destruction confirms that Qeiyafa fell shortly after the outset of Iron IIa, which seems to be the case.

f. *Final remarks on ceramic evidence.* Ultimately, Garfinkel et al. are correct that pottery unique to Iron IIa is present at the site, thus reflecting occupation during that phase, while Singer-Avitz is correct that ceramic forms predominantly found in contexts of Iron Ib betray an occupation at the end of that phase. Conversely, they both erred by declaring the invalidity of each other’s position. Garfinkel should have admitted that the majority of the ceramic repertoire represents forms of Iron I, while Singer Avitz should have affirmed that the small number of ceramic finds dating to Iron IIa signals that the site’s occupation continued into the initial years of Iron II.

The irony of Singer-Avitz’s position is that while attempting to pull Qeiyafa out of the Davidic period, she compromised even further the view of Israel Finkelstein, her colleague at Tel Aviv University who has argued that the lack of monumental architecture in Judah and its environs is grounds for denying the historicity of the United Monarchy. Dating Qeiyafa’s monumental architecture to the beginning of Iron IIa around 1000 BC would have been damaging enough for Finkelstein, considering that he has attributed its origin to 920 BC, but her dating of the pottery to Iron I puts the establishment of an organized Israelite state into the eleventh century BC, which harmonizes with the time of Saul’s reign and proves extremely damaging to Finkelstein’s position.

Garfinkel should have argued that Qeiyafa’s ceramic assemblage *at the time of its destruction* strictly belongs to the beginning of Iron IIa. Instead, he stated that the ceramic assemblage can provide the site’s approximate foundation date only by proving that certain forms found in secure contexts of the same level were not produced simultaneously.

122. Gilboa, “Cypriot Barrel Juglets,” 144.

He also suggested that his opponents must prove that the manufacturing of these vessels ceased before the first vessels of Iron IIa appeared.<sup>123</sup>

Yet Garfinkel erred in one small but crucial matter: proving a site's approximate date of foundation does not require that certain ceramic forms in secure contexts were produced *only* in the earlier of two consecutive archaeological periods. The only requirement is that pottery forms of the earlier period *were* found within that occupational stratum. In fact, Qeiyafa's overall ceramic assemblage best parallels Beth-Shemesh 4 (a stratum of Iron I), with its deeply-carinated kraters of the LBA tradition, elongated storage jars with small, flat bases, cooking pots with flattened rims, and the virtual absence of irregular hand-burnishing. Therefore, Garfinkel incorrectly argued that those attributing Qeiyafa's foundation to Iron Ib have to identify vessels unique to Iron I.

The results of the ceramic analysis confirm that three of Garfinkel's lines of evidence prove that the site's final years and destruction layer do belong to Iron IIa: (1) the presence of irregular hand-burnishing on red-slipped ware, (2) fragments of four black juglets, and (3) two Cypro-Phoenician barrel juglets. Conversely, three lines of his own evidence actually refute his thesis that Qeiyafa dates exclusively to Iron IIa: (1) the exceedingly small percentage of irregularly hand-burnished, red-slipped ware, (2) deeply-carinated kraters with everted rims, and (3) the overwhelming preponderance of elongated storage jars with a flat base.

Gilboa wisely concluded that Qeiyafa IV hovers around the Iron Ib–IIa transition, correctly adding that the site's moment of destruction can be attributed to early in Iron IIa. Even Kang, Garfinkel's ceramicist, acknowledged that typologically speaking, Qeiyafa's ceramic assemblage belongs to the transition between Iron I and Iron II.<sup>124</sup> Singer-Avitz insightfully noted that the idea of a "transitional period" is false nomenclature,<sup>125</sup> as this would add improperly to the valid number of archaeological periods already established. Nonetheless, ceramic evidence argues compellingly that the site was founded near the end of Iron Ib and destroyed extremely early in Iron IIa.

123. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 142.

124. Kang, "Dating of the Pottery Assemblage," 45.

125. Singer-Avitz, "Khirbet Qeiyafa: Late Iron Age I—Once Again," 238. A preferable term might be a "transitional stage" between two archaeological periods.



3. *Dating by Radiocarbon Evidence.* While ceramic evidence is a vital means of dating a site, it provides only relative dating. An important means of establishing absolute dates, at least going back to the offset of *ca.* 1400 BC,<sup>126</sup> is radiocarbon evidence. Organic material in the form of twenty-eight samples taken from seventeen olive pits that were found in the destruction layer provides hard evidence for the dating of Qeiyafa's demise. These olive pits derive from Storage Jar C11747 in Building C10, having been excavated near the southern city gate in 2012 and taken from a well-controlled context (i.e., a closed container, which minimizes the risk of contamination).<sup>127</sup>

126. A crucial problem arises when matching any <sup>14</sup>C samples to archaeological/historical dating before *ca.* 1400 BC. With Manfred Bietak's excavations at Avaris (Egypt's Nile Delta), he reported that before this time, a sharp rise (or offset) exists of up to 100–150 years, as well as in preceding centuries, making organic material seem far older than it is (Manfred Bietak and Felix Höflmayer, "Introduction: High and Low Chronology," in *The Synchronisation of Civilizations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Second Millennium B.C. III: Proceedings of the SCIEM 2000—2nd EuroConference: Vienna, 28th of May—1st of June 2003*", eds. Manfred Bietak and Ernst Czerny [Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007], 20). This anomaly also appears at locations beyond Egypt, such as the eastern Mediterranean and the Jordan Rift Valley, including Jericho of the LBA I (City IV), which was destroyed under Joshua in 1406 BC (Douglas Petrovich, "The Dating of Hazor's Destruction in Joshua 11 by Way of Biblical, Archaeological, and Epigraphical Evidence," *JETS* 51/3 [2008]: 490, 495, 500). Radiocarbon dates for its destruction, taken from cereal samples, provide a range of 1561–1524 BC, which is 120–60 years too early (Hendrik J. Bruins and Johannes van der Plicht, "Tell Es-Sultan (Jericho): Radiocarbon Results of Short-Lived Cereal and Multiyear Charcoal Samples From the End of the Middle Bronze Age," *Radiocarbon* 37/2 [1995]: 213–20). The same <sup>14</sup>C anomaly at Jericho occurs at the end of the Early Bronze Age, where the radiocarbon dates are 150–300 years older than conventional archaeological dating allows (Hendrik J. Bruins, "Early Bronze Jericho: High Precision <sup>14</sup>C Dates of Short-Lived Palaeobotanic Remains," *Radiocarbon* 40/2 [1998]: 621). Subsequently, many sites have displayed this <sup>14</sup>C anomaly: Jericho, Khirbet al-Batrawy, Tell Abu-el-Kharaz, etc. (Manfred Bietak, "Antagonisms in Historical and Radiocarbon Chronology," in *Radiocarbon and the Chronologies of Ancient Egypt*, eds. Andrew J. Shortland and C. Bronk Ramsey [Oxford: Oxbow, 2013], 95). Therefore, radiocarbon dating of organic material from the ancient Near East before the offset of 1400 BC should not be trusted as being fully accurate in terms of absolute dating. Moreover, the length of the offset increases with each prior century.

127. Yosef Garfinkel, Katharina Streit, Saar Ganor, and Paula J. Reimer, "King David's City at Khirbet Qeiyafa: Results of the Second Radiocarbon Dating Project," *Radiocarbon* 57/5 (2015): 883.

There is a 95.4% probability that the samples date from 1011–921 BC, and a 68.2% probability that they date from 1006–961 BC.<sup>128</sup> When this data set is combined with that of a radiometric measurement of ten burned olive pits, a calculation of the city’s destruction is placed at 1006–970 BC, also with a 68.2% probability.<sup>129</sup> The median date for this confined range is 988 BC, the significance of which is that in 2019 Garfinkel et al. assigned Qeiyafa’s destruction range from 1020–970 BC with a 95.4% probability and 1012–990 BC with a 68.2% probability.<sup>130</sup>

As for the earliest attested date for organic material found at Qeiyafa IV, the excavators found numerous samples throughout the site, some of which address this question. Most of the samples taken record probable date-ranges that fit best within the first quarter of the tenth century BC (e.g., Qeiyafa 5, 6, 7, 10), which indeed justifies Garfinkel’s conclusion that the site was inhabited for at least some portion of David’s reign in that century, but several samples fit best overall in the last two decades of the 11th century BC. For example, the olive pit designated Qeiyafa 3 (year taken: 2008), excavated in Locus 214 from Area B, dates to 1211–1011 BC with a 95.4% probability and to 1130–1046 BC with a 59.6% probability.<sup>131</sup>

For another example, the burnt olive pit designated Qeiyafa 1b (year taken: 2008), acquired from a fireplace in the casemate of Building II and part of Locus 214, dates to 1132–974 BC with an 88.6% probability and to 1114–1014 BC with a 68.2% probability.<sup>132</sup> For a final example, the olive pit designated Qeiyafa 9 (year taken: 2009),

128. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 152, 154, 155.

129. Garfinkel et al., “The ”Išba‘al Inscription,” 220, 222.

130. Yosef Garfinkel, Michael G. Hasel, Martin G. Klingbeil, Hoo-Goo Kang, Gwanghyun Choi, Sang-Yeup Chang, Soonhwa Hong, Saar Ganor, Igor Kreimerman, and Christopher Bronk Ramsey, “Lachish Fortifications and State Formation in the Biblical Kingdom of Judah in Light of Radiometric Datings,” *Radiocarbon* 61/3 (2019): 708.

131. Garfinkel and Ganor, “Site Location and Setting,” 35–38; Garfinkel et al., “State Formation in Judah,” 363. When Garfinkel et al. reproduced these results in the latter publication, they incorrectly listed the narrower range as 1130–1146 BC, undoubtedly an accidental mistake.

132. Garfinkel et al., “State Formation in Judah,” 363.

excavated in Locus 383 from Area B, dates to 1126–922 BC with a 95.4% probability and to 1056–974 BC with a 53% probability.<sup>133</sup>

Given that David became King of Israel only in 1002 BC, Qeiyafa 3's date-range suggests that the site was occupied for some length of time before David ruled the nation, as the chance is greater than 95% that the olive was taken from its tree by 1011 BC. This supports the idea that the site was founded during Saul's reign (1049–1009 BC).<sup>134</sup> While the probability is almost 60% that Qeiyafa 3 dates to before 1046 BC, this possibility is hardly binding. If so, it roughly would triple Qeiyafa's length of occupation, which Garfinkel justifiably limited twenty to thirty years.

While the chance is greater than 88.6% that Qeiyafa 1b dates before 974 BC, the median date for this range is 1053 BC, and the probability is over 68% that it dates to a time no later than 1014 BC. This strongly suggests that Qeiyafa 1b also dates to the last couple of decades of the eleventh century BC. Qeiyafa 9 certainly could date to the tenth century BC, as the chance is over 95% that it dates before 922 BC and 53% that it dates before 974 BC. Yet given that the median date of its 53%-probability range is 1015 BC, the chance is far greater that it also dates to a time late in Saul's reign, rather than Eshbaal's or David's reign. Since the site was not destroyed by fire, Finkelstein and Piasezky correctly remarked that the charred remains of this olive pit could have originated from a fireplace that was active at any time during the site's history.<sup>135</sup>

The results of the radiocarbon evidence of these three samples favor the site's foundation during Iron Ib, about two decades or so before David's accession over Israel. This suggestion should not draw opposition from the excavators, as Garfinkel et al. stated openly that the radiometric data from Qeiyafa clearly indicate that the process of state formation and urbanization is visible in Judah as early as the late

133. Garfinkel et al., "State Formation in Judah," 363; Garfinkel et al., "Lachish Fortifications," 705.

134. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 114–15.

135. Israel Finkelstein and Eli Piasezky, "Radiocarbon Dating Khirbet Qeiyafa and the Iron I–IIA Phases in the Shephelah: Methodological Comments and a Bayesian Model," *Radiocarbon* 57/5 (2015): 892.

eleventh century BC.<sup>136</sup> This dating is about as precise as science can provide, which leaves the need to compare it to biblical chronology.

Before proceeding to that topic, a final note must be added regarding Finkelstein's criticism of Garfinkel's dating methods, namely that for Finkelstein the correct method is to date a single, one-period site only in the context of determinations from layers at neighboring sites that are arranged in a sequential order.<sup>137</sup> Garfinkel has addressed many of Finkelstein's criticisms elsewhere regarding chronological issues,<sup>138</sup> but the above criticism can be evaluated here as possessing two fatal flaws.

First, while comparing Qeiyafa to contemporary sites is useful in many ways, there is no guarantee whatsoever that a given occupational phase at any of these other sites aligns perfectly with the timing of Qeiyafa's foundation and destruction, so dating Qeiyafa's occupation by introducing chronological data obtained from other sites is methodologically dubious. Second, the dates provided by radiocarbon evidence are calculated with absolute dating, not with relative dating, so evidence of this nature cannot be enhanced with any confidence by using 14C dates obtained from other sites, as if it were ceramic evidence that provides only relative dating.

#### IMPACT OF THE SITE'S DATING ON BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY

A chronology of Saul's reign includes the following:<sup>139</sup> (1) his accession to the throne in *ca.* 1049 BC, based more on Acts 13:21 than on the typical reading of 1 Sam 13:1,<sup>140</sup> (2) the birth of his son, Eshbaal/Ishbosheth, in *ca.* 1045 BC, (3) his Philistine campaign in *ca.* 1021

136. Garfinkel et al., "State Formation in Judah," 363, 367. Between 2008 and 2010, the excavators examined ten Iron-Age samples that were found throughout the excavated areas on the tel and displayed a fairly tight clustering of dates. See also Garfinkel, Ganor, and Hasel, *Footsteps of King David*, 17.

137. Finkelstein and Piasezky, "Radiocarbon Dating Khirbet Qeiyafa," 892.

138. Garfinkel, Kreimerman, and Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, 150–56; Garfinkel et al., "King David's City at Khirbet Qeiyafa," 883–89.

139. Based on Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 114–15.

140. For a more sensible reading of 1 Sam 13:1, see Douglas Petrovich, "Solving the Textual Problem in 1 Samuel 13:1 with the Aid of Epigraphy, Not Textual Emendation," forthcoming.

BC, (4) an Ammonite campaign in *ca.* 1020 BC, (5) David's defeat of Goliath in the Elah Valley, just below and to the south of Dual Gates, in *ca.* 1019 BC, (6) David's escape from Saul's court in *ca.* 1015 BC, and (7) Saul's death in *ca.* 1009 BC.

A chronology of David's reign includes the following:<sup>141</sup> (1) his accession to the Judahite throne at Hebron in *ca.* 1009 BC, (2) Abner's crowning of Eshbaal/Ishbosheth in *ca.* 1005 BC, (3) the assassination of Eshbaal/Ishbosheth in *ca.* 1002 BC, (4) David's accession to the Israelite throne and his conquest of Jerusalem in *ca.* 1002 BC, (5) his earlier Philistine war and the outset of his Ammonite war in *ca.* 998 BC, (6) the siege and conquest of Rabbah from *ca.* 997–996 BC, (7) a three-year famine from *ca.* 996–993 BC, and (8) his later Philistine wars from *ca.* 990–985 BC.

Based on the findings discussed in the present study, a subsequent chronological chain of events includes the following: (1) Saul experienced a victory over the Philistines (*ca.* 1021 BC), which allowed him to construct an outpost in the Shephelah to protect his western flank from Philistine incursion via the Elah Valley. (2) Saul built the outpost at Qeiyafa (*ca.* 1021–1019 BC), which the occupants and/or biblical author dubbed both Dual Gates and a circular encampment.

(3) In spring of *ca.* 1019 BC, the Philistines—having waited to exact their revenge, and having felt threatened by the existence of the new Israelite fortress at Qeiyafa—marched up the Elah Valley and gathered their armies near Socoh, establishing their camp between Socoh and Azekah. They ascended to the top of the hill on the opposite side of the valley from Dual Gates, a hilltop that was perched above the place that the Israelites later called Extremity of Wailings. Goliath began taunting the Israelite army, but forty-plus days later David killed him in mortal combat.

(4) In *ca.* 1002 BC, Saul's son Eshbaal was killed while king, which led to David's coronation over all of Israel. David soon overtook Jerusalem and moved the seat of his rule there from Hebron. (5) The transfer of power from the Benjamite dynasty of Saul to the Judahite dynasty of David initiated the Iron Age Ib–IIa transition, beginning sometime from *ca.* 1002–1000 BC. This dating fits the recent radiocarbon evidence, as Qeiyafa's Stratum IV and al-Ra'i's Level VII demonstrate that the Iron Age IIa started as early as the very end of the

141. Based on Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 116–23.

eleventh century BC or the very beginning of the tenth century BC.<sup>142</sup> (6) David began the earlier Philistine wars of his reign in *ca.* 998 BC. Having suppressed the Philistines temporarily, he turned his attention to the Ammonites in Transjordan, which eventually emboldened the Philistines to attack Israel from the west.

(7) David's troops besieged and conquered Rabbah from *ca.* 997–996 BC (2 Sam 11:1). (8) A famine gripped Israel following these events, which persisted from *ca.* 996–993 BC. (9) After a period of relative peace with the Israelites, the Philistines invaded and destroyed the Israelite outpost at Qeiyafa in *ca.* 990 BC, possibly while David's army fought in another theater. This suggested date fits well with the excavators' dating of Qeiyafa's destruction to *ca.* 1012–990 BC with a 68.2% probability, based on radiocarbon evidence. The Israelites fled before the Philistines reached the site, and the resultant Philistine destruction fell short of conflagration. (10) David retaliated, initiating his later Philistine wars, which lasted from *ca.* 990–985 BC.

The suggestion here that Qeiyafa's Stratum IV was occupied from *ca.* 1021–990 BC fits extremely well with the radiocarbon and ceramic evidence, which the excavators used to date the site's occupation to *ca.* 1015–975 BC.<sup>143</sup> Evidence from biblical history and chronology sometimes serves to refine broader dates provided by historical studies and scientific methods.

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Thanks to the seven years of excavations and fieldwork by the Khirbet Qeiyafa Archaeological Project, this enormously important site has revealed the existence of an organized kingdom known as Israel's United Monarchy. The task here was to determine whether the site was occupied during Iron Age Ib (i.e. within Saul's reign), as Lily Singer-Avitz has argued, or during Iron Age IIa (i.e. within David's reign), which Yosef Garfinkel has contended.

Evidence from excavated inscriptions, ceramic typology, and radiocarbon data combine to demonstrate unanimously that the site was occupied both before and after the transition from Iron Ib to Iron IIa.

142. Garfinkel et al., "Lachish Fortifications," 708.

143. Garfinkel and Ganor, "Site Location and Setting," 33.

The Khirbet Qeiyafa Ostrakon, inscribed dextrograde, was composed in Hebrew early in the monarchy, before the directional standardization that led to writing exclusively sinistrograde. Qeiyafa's Ishbaal Inscription—conversely inscribed sinistrograde, which attests to this era's freedom of direction for horizontal writing—had to be composed extremely early in the monarchy, before the Baal-element was censored from usage in Judah (tenth century BC?).

Regarding Garfinkel's and Singer-Avitz's debate, their actual success was restricted to demonstrating that the site yielded pottery during the period of their own preference. The exceedingly small percentage of irregularly hand-burnished red-slipped ware, deeply-carinated kraters with everted rims, the elongated storage jars with flat bases, and cooking pots with flattened rims testify to manufacturing late in Iron Ib. Conversely, the presence of a minute amount of irregular hand-burnishing on red-slipped ware, the fragments of four black juglets, and the two Cypro-Phoenician barrel juglets attest to ceramic production at the very outset of Iron IIa.

The radiocarbon evidence—consisting of olive pits taken from various locations at the site, and from both random moments in the site's occupation and the time of its destruction—confirms the conclusion drawn from the pottery: the site straddled both sides of the Iron I–II transition. The organic samples point to the site's construction by *ca.* 1015 BC and its destruction by *ca.* 988 BC. This fits well with biblical chronology, which allows for the construction of the site from *ca.* 1021–1019 BC and its destruction in *ca.* 990 BC.

One vital contribution of this study is the settling of the debate as to when the transition from Iron I to Iron II transpired. The evidence from Qeiyafa renders unviable all of the proposed views that place the beginning of Iron IIa after the conventional date of 1000 BC, including 980 BC, 960 BC, and 920 BC. After all, since the radiocarbon evidence has shown that the site's destruction occurred by about 990–988 BC, and since ceramic forms unknown before Iron IIa appear at the site before its destruction, the dawning of Iron IIa must have preceded the destruction date with enough time for those ceramic forms to be present and in use at Qeiyafa.

Therefore, the military outpost of Khirbet Qeiyafa on the western fringe of Israel's holdings in the Shephelah was constructed during Saul's reign and in use when David fought Goliath. The site was



occupied for about the last ten years of Saul's kingship, the four years that Israel was without a king, the three years that Saul's son Eshbaal ruled, and about the first twelve years of David's reign over Israel.

With the suppression of the Philistines under David by 985 BC or shortly after, Qeiyafa no longer served any purpose, especially with the eventual reoccupation of Azekah, so the Judahites never rebuilt Dual Gates. During Qeiyafa's brief floruit, however, its monumental architecture, fortified casemate walls with two gates, and administrative building atop the tel served admirably as a testament to the military might, governmental structure, and tactical capabilities of Israel's United Monarchy, even before David ascended the throne over Israel.