

MEGIDDO

Tel Megiddo is a twenty-five acre site located in the fertile Valley of Jezreel (Esdraelon), about 20 miles southeast of Haifa. In ancient times, this city guarded the pass through the Carmel Ridge (Megiddo Pass). It was located on the Via Maris (“way to the sea”), a famous trade route connecting Egypt to Damascus and Mesopotamia. Archaeological excavations suggest that Megiddo was an occupied settlement by 4000 B.C. Some suggest that it was inhabited as early as 7000 B.C.

Thutmose III, the pharaoh of Egypt, fought a battle at Megiddo about 1468 B.C. The record of this war was preserved on the walls of the temple at Karnak in honor of the god Amon-Re, who was credited for the victory (*ANET*, 234-38). Egypt maintained a great influence over Canaan during this period, and Megiddo was a vassal city-state to Egypt.

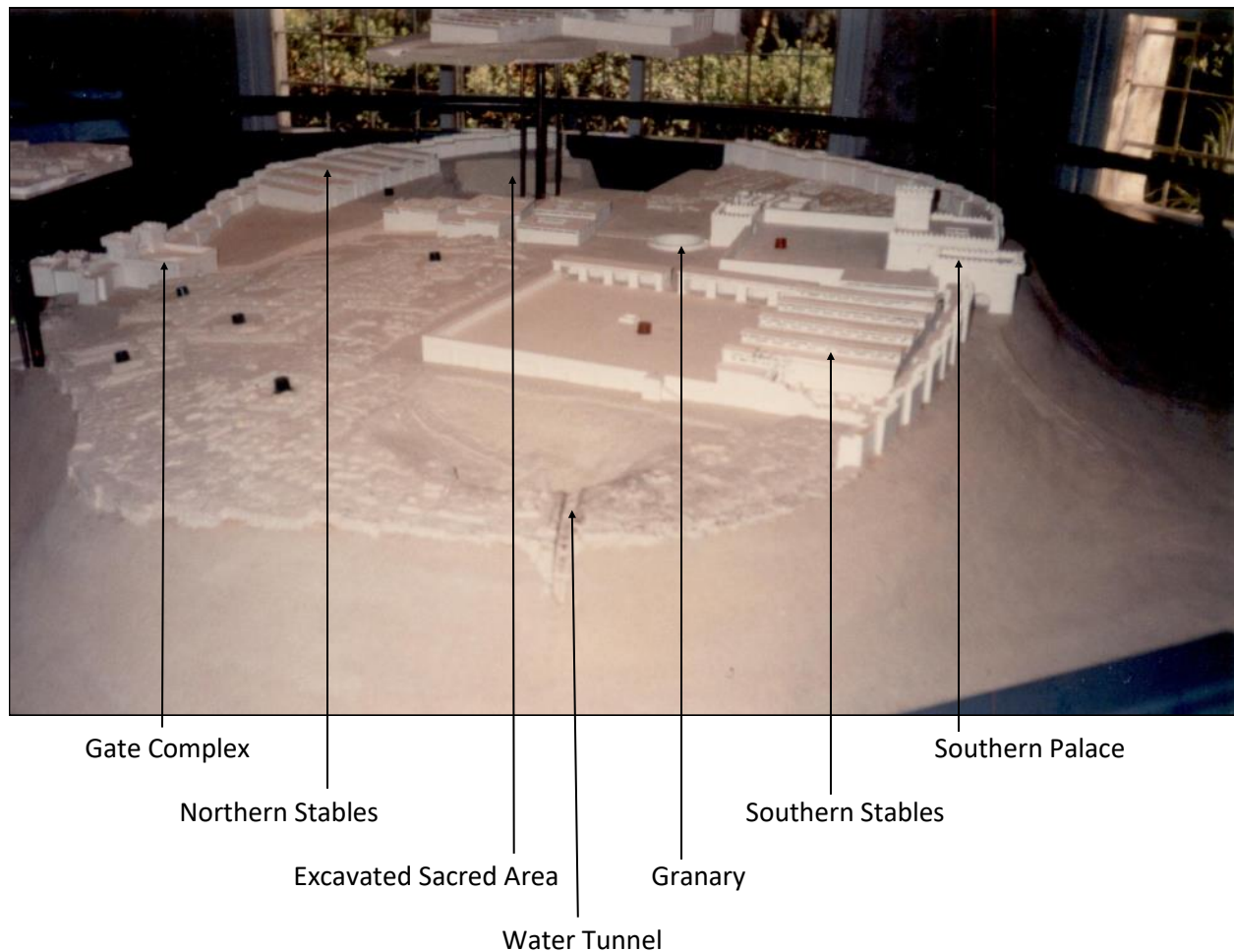
Megiddo is one of the cities that Joshua and the Israelites defeated in the northern campaign of the conquest of Canaan about 1400-1380 B.C. (Josh. 12:21). In the Amarna Letters, which also date to the fourteenth century B.C., the king of Megiddo requested help from Egypt to fight off the city’s enemies (*ANET*, 485). After the allotment of the land, the tribe of Manasseh did not drive out the people of Megiddo; the Canaanites still lived there (Judg. 1:27). The Israelites, under the military leadership of Barak and the prophetic guidance of Deborah, were victorious over the Canaanites at Tanaach by the waters of Megiddo—the Kishon River (Judg. 5:19). Nevertheless, Megiddo remained a Canaanite city.

At some point, perhaps during the reign of David, Israel gained control over Megiddo. Later, Solomon refortified the city, along with Gezer and Hazor (1 Kings 9:15). These cities were strategically located throughout Israel (north, central, south). It is likely that they were the cities where Solomon’s chariots and horses were kept, along with Jerusalem (1 Kings 9:22; 10:26; 2 Chron. 1:14; 9:25).

In the military campaign of 925 B.C., Pharaoh Shishak (Sheshonk) destroyed Megiddo (see *ANET*, 263-64). However, the city was later rebuilt during the reign of Ahab, the king of Israel (874-853 B.C.). Megiddo is mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament in regard to the death of important kings. In the ninth century B.C., Ahaziah, king of Israel, was shot by Jehu at Ibleam, and he fled to Megiddo where he died (2 Kings 9:27). Josiah, king of Judah, who attempted to cut off the northward march of the Egyptian army at the Megiddo Pass, was mortally wounded there by Pharaoh Neco in 609 B.C. Neco was going to help the Assyrians fight against the Babylonians (2 Kings 23:29-30; 2 Chron. 35:20-24). Because of all the blood that was shed there, Megiddo was proverbial as a place of weeping (Zech. 12:11).

While the name Megiddo does not appear in the New Testament, Armageddon is found once (Rev. 16:16). In Hebrew, *har* means “hill” or “mountain,” so “Armageddon” refers to the “hill” or “mountain of Megiddo.” The city was built on a tel or mound, but not on a mountain. For this reason, some see the descriptive name Armageddon as exaggeration. Since many battles took place in the plain below Megiddo, it is used in Revelation as a symbolic site for a great battle. Premillennialists interpret the language literally, expecting a cataclysmic battle to take place at Megiddo at the end of time. This understanding, however, is a misreading of the text and does not mesh with the plain teaching of the rest of the New Testament. It is important to notice that, in the context, (1) “three evil spirits that looked like frogs . . . came out of the mouth of the dragon, . . . beast, and . . . false prophet” (Rev. 16:13); (2) these spirits gathered the kings of the earth together at Armageddon (Rev. 16:16); and (3) no battle ever took place, only judgment from God (Rev. 16:17-21; see 19:19, 20; 20:7-10).

Model of Tel Megiddo



**Some of the structures differed during the times of Solomon and of Ahab.*



Gate of Megiddo from Late Bronze Period (1550-1150 B.C.)



The Northern Stables האדרוות הצפוניות

במסגרת ומצאו שני מכלולים ארכיטקטוניים דומים, השייכים לאותה תקופה (המאה ה-9 או ה-8 לפנה"ס) – האחד כאן והשני בשוליו הדרומיים של החל. חלק מן החוקרים רואים במקום אר- מחסנים או שווקים, הדעה הרווחת רואה בהם אדרוות סוסים.

Architectural complexes dating from the same period (9th or 8th c. B.C.) and of similar design were found near the northern and southern edges of the mound. Through the years they were variously interpreted as stables, storehouses or marketplaces. Recent research seems to corroborate their identification as horse-stables.

כל אדרוה מחולקת על ידי שני טורים של עמודים ואבנים, שהוצבו לסירוגין כשליש ימנית/אורך מקבילות הימנית המערבית שימשה ככל הנראה כעבודות היסערה בעוד שביתות המגורים יחד הוססים

Each stable is divided into three parallel units by two rows of alternating pillars and troughs. The central unit was apparently an open passage and working area, while the two aisles served as stalls.





Archaeologists dug a section out of Tel Megiddo, like cutting a slice out of a pie. This excavation exposed the sacred area where temples had been built over many centuries, often one on top of another. In addition, a round altar was uncovered—the largest open-air altar discovered in Israel. It is made of small stones, and seven steps lead up to its top.





Other sacred objects found at Megiddo include small stone altars, likely used for burning incense (above). Originally, these both had four horns, one on each corner, which may have held an incense bowl. The iron stand (left) held a basin and was probably used for burning incense or pouring out libations. The sides feature either a deity and worshiper or a king and his subject. (The altars and stand are on display at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.)

Such altars and stands were used by people in their own homes as well as by priests at public shrines. The Old Testament frequently speaks of people offering incense to foreign gods, an act which angered the Lord (1 Kings 3:3; 11:8; 2 Kings 16:4; 17:11).



Four-horned Altar (10th Century B.C.)



House-shaped Offering Stand (1300-1200 B.C.)



El, Canaanite Creator Deity (1400-1200 B.C.)

Artifacts from Megiddo
Oriental Institute Museum / University of Chicago



Ivory Female Sphinx (1300-1200 B.C.)



Bronze Sacrificial Tongs from Megiddo (Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem)

Several key elements were involved in withstanding a siege. Ancient cities had to have strong fortifications (a strong wall, gate, towers), a protected water supply (accessible within the city), and plenty of grain. Near the center of Tel Megiddo is a public grain silo dating from the reign of King Jeroboam II (8th century B.C.). While some citizens had private grain storages, cities also had public silos (as is the case here).

Even though the people were evil during this time, God allowed them to prosper. Israel took back territory that had been controlled by Aram (Syria) to the north. After Jeroboam II died, however, the punishments predicted by the prophets began to be fulfilled. Ultimately, the northern kingdom was taken captive by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.



Grain Silo (8th Century B.C.)

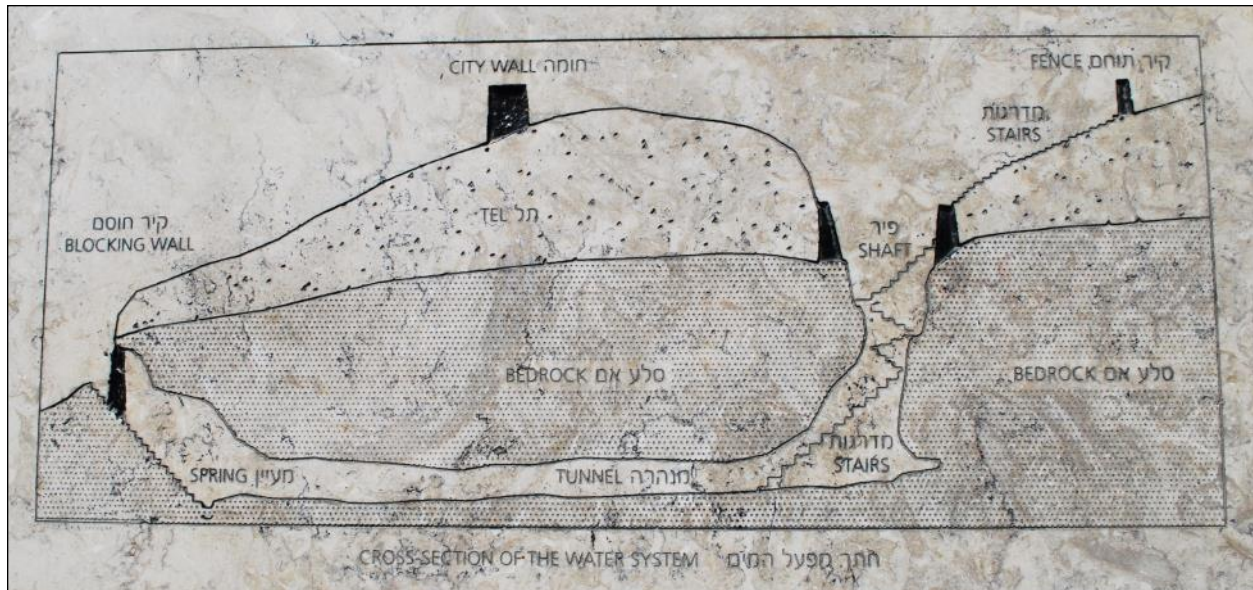






Much controversy has surrounded the identification of the stables at Megiddo. Some have argued that they were storehouses or marketplaces, but this does not account for the evidence. While the stables were originally dated to the reign of Solomon (970-930 B.C.), many today place them in the time of Ahab (874-853 B.C.). Several stone feeding/watering troughs have been found at the stables, along with pillars for tethering the horses. Those featured below are on display at the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem.





An elaborate water tunnel was dug to allow access to a spring at the southwest base of Tel Megiddo, enabling the city to withstand a siege. The photographs below illustrate the descent through the shaft by the stairs (115 feet deep), the tunnel itself (210 feet long and 10 feet high), and the spring at the end of the tunnel. The spring was concealed on the outside of the mound to prevent enemies from gaining access to it.





Narrow Plain with the Carmel Mountains in the Background (West of Megiddo)



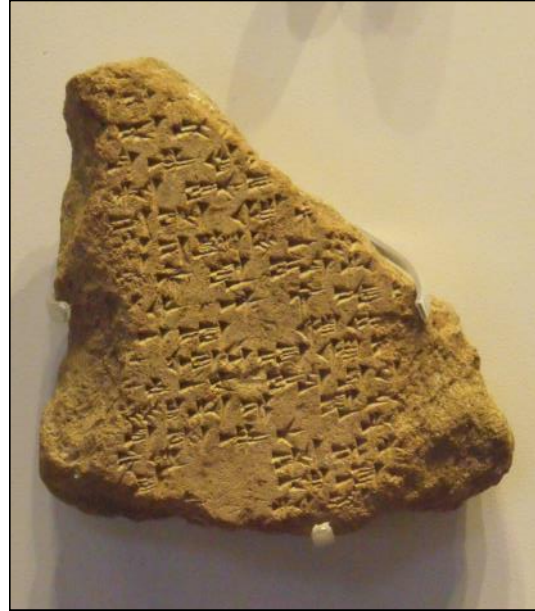
The Fertile Valley of Jezreel (East of Megiddo)

As previously noted, the Valley of Jezreel (Esdraelon), to the east of Megiddo, was the site of many battles. Megiddo itself was located just north of a narrow pass through the Carmel Mountains, which was a strategic place to stop an army from advancing. This is what Josiah unsuccessfully attempted to do when Pharaoh Neco was leading his Egyptian troops through the Megiddo Pass en route to Carchemish to aid the Assyrians in 609 B.C. (2 Kings 23:29-30; 2 Chron. 35:20-24).



Copy of Seal from Megiddo
“(Belonging) to Shema, Servant of Jeroboam”
8th Century B.C.
(Israel Museum, Jerusalem)

Fragment of Gilgamesh Epic from Megiddo
14th Century B.C.
(Israel Museum)



Monumental Column Capital from Megiddo
10th-8th Century B.C.
(Oriental Institute Museum)

Zoomorphic Vessel from Megiddo
1200-1025 B.C.
(Oriental Institute Museum)

