The biblical Song of Deborah: its control. A possible echo of these battles may be found in the springs and fertile soil at its foot made Megiddo a desirable place for world's centers of culture and power – Egypt and Mesopotamia. The Way of the Sea), an international trade route that linked the ancient lands of Egypt and Mesopotamia with the West and provided access to trade goods from the Mediterranean. Megiddo was a strategic location for controlling these trade routes. The site was occupied from the Neolithic period to the modern era, with significant developments during the biblical period. During the biblical period, Megiddo was one of the most important sites in Israel and the region, serving as a major military center and a hub for trade and commerce. After the biblical period, Megiddo continued to be inhabited and played a role in the history of the region, becoming a center of activity and a site of conflict in later periods. The identification of the site and the history of the people who lived there are important for understanding the history of the region and the development of the modern world.

The Canaanite Period: Megiddo was a powerful city-state during the Canaanite period, from the 2nd millennium BCE to the 1st millennium BCE. During this time, the city was known for its impressive architecture and its role in regional politics. Megiddo was a center of trade and commerce, and its location at the intersection of major trade routes made it a hub for trade and communication. The city was also a center of religious worship, with several temples and other religious structures.

The Biblical Period: Megiddo was a significant site during the biblical period, from the 10th century BCE to the 1st century BCE. The city was a center of military activity, with several battles fought near the site, including the Battle of Armageddon in the New Testament. Megiddo was also a center of religious worship, with several temples and other religious structures.

17. The Assyrian Quarter: This is one of Megiddo's two stable complexes dating from the period of the Israelite kings. It includes five lengthwise structures that opened onto a large training ground, with a square trench in the center. Each structure was divided into three lengthwise units separated by rows of stone pillars flanking troughs. The excavators discovered bit-marks of horses on the structures, as well as hooves, probably to tether animals. Each structure featured a central hall with a thickly plastered floor. The horses would pass through this hall to side rooms with stone-lined floors. One of the five stables has been reconstructed.

18. The Assyrian Palaces: North of the path are remains of palaces – administrative structures that served the Assyrian governor during the period when Megiddo was the capital city of an Assyrian district. The northern of the two palaces was built before the southern one; the elaborate construction of the latter reveals Assyrian building techniques. The plan of both structures resembles palaces in Assyria, albeit on a smaller scale. Before descending into the water system, you can visit the 'gallery,' to the reign of King Solomon in the tenth century BCE, while others attribute it to the reign of Abah in the ninth century BCE. There are 187 steps down to the water system, and 77 steps up to the entrance pavilion. Visitors to the system are guided by a docent through the rich history of the site, revealing the importance of water and the role it played in the city's development. The reconstructed stables are a great example of the city's past, and visitors are encouraged to explore the different structures and learn about the history of the site.
Welcome to Megiddo National Park

World Heritage Site

Tel Megiddo National Park was officially declared a national park in 1966. In 2005, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) inscribed Tel Megiddo as a World Heritage Site, together with the biblical tell of Hazor and Beer Sheva.

The Canaanite Period

Megiddo flourished as an urban center beginning in the Early Canaanite period (the Bronze Age), in the late fourth millennium BCE, as attested by the impressive remains of a monumental temple. The site was a powerful Canaanite city-state and thus earned mention in several Egyptian documents.

During the reign of the Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose III (the fifteenth century BCE), Megiddo belonged to an alliance of Canaanite cities that rebelled against Egypt, under the protection of the Kingdom of Mitanni. The annals of Thutmose describe the battle that took place in the valley of Megiddo, in which the Egyptian army defeated the rebels, plundering hundreds of chariots, thousands of horses, and large quantities of grain. The arrival of the Egyptian army through the narrow Arunah Pass (Wadi Ara) was also documented. After the battle, the Egyptians besieged Megiddo for seven months until they conquered it.

Among the fourteenth-century BCE El-Amarna Letters—a remnant of a Late Bronze Age international archive discovered in Egypt—were six letters sent by King Biridg of Megiddo, at that time an Egyptian vassal, to Pharaoh. In them, Biridg reports on the taxes he paid to the pharaoh and complains about harassment by the king of Shechem. TheCanaanite city of Megiddo was destroyed in the second half of the twelfth century BCE.

The Israelite Period

The books of Joshua and Judges mention Megiddo as one of the Canaanite cities that the tribe of Manasseh was unable to take over (Joshua 17:11-13). Judges 1:27 also mentions the city of Canaan in which Canaanite kings Joshua defeated (Joshua 12:21). The Bible also describes King Solomon’s building of Megiddo, which is mentioned in the account of the Jews and the last days of Solomon. The building of the temple in Jerusalem, the construction of the city of Megiddo, and the construction of a temple in the temple in Jerusalem are all described in the Bible.

In the second half of the tenth century BCE, Pharaoh Shishak led a major military campaign through Canaan (1 Kings 14:25-26). Megiddo appears in the Bible in the proclamation of the king of Megiddo in the temple in Jerusalem. The fragment discovered of a stela he erected at Megiddo is additional significant evidence of Shishak’s campaign.

One opinion holds that King Solomon built a large city at Megiddo with two palaces with ashlar (dressed-stone) walls. According to another view, these structures were built in the ninth century BCE by a king of the Israelite dynasty of Omri. During the eighth century BCE, Israelite Megiddo reached the height of its prosperity. Impressive remains from this period include fortifications, stables and a water system.

During this period Megiddo was the arena for the struggle between the kings of Judah and Israel. Near Megiddo, the Israelite King Jehu slew King Ahaziah of Judah after Ahaziah fled “by the way of the garden-house” (2 Kings 9:27).

In 732 BCE, the Assyrian King Tiglath Pileser III captured the city and made it the capital of an Assyrian district that included Galilee and the northern valleys. At the end of the seventh century, when the Assyrian Empire was in decline, the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho took over the site and fortified it. King Josiah of Judah was killed at Megiddo (2 Kings 23:29-30).

Final Days

Megiddo ceased the stage history after the Israelite period. During the Persian period only a few structures stood on the mound, and with the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE, the city was abandoned. At the beginning of the third century BCE, the inhabitants of Magdiddo moved to Kfar ‘Ummay, southwest of Tel Megiddo. Later, the Latin Roman legion which protected the city of Megiddo was stationed there. Megiddo is usually identified as Armageddon of the New Testament book of Revelation 16:16, the scene of John’s apocalyptic vision of the battle between the forces of good and evil, to be followed by God’s reign on earth. Inspiration for this vision seems to have been drawn from the prophet Zechariah, who describes such a battle in the “valley of Megiddon” (Zechariah 12:11).

In 1918, during World War I, another battle took place at Megiddo, led by General Edmund Allenby in his efforts to control the Jordan Valley and the Ottoman Turkish forces. Like Thutmose III before him, Allenby marched through the Arunah Pass (Wadi Ara). He took the Turkish soldiers by surprise and won the day following the great victory. Allenby took the title “Lord of Megiddo.”

Identification of the Site and the History of Research

Although the name Megiddo was not preserved in extra-biblical texts, the biblical citations of the name alongside the names of cities in the Jordan Valley helped identify it as one of the major archaeological mounds in that vicinity. The fourteenth-century Jewish traveler Euston-Haparchi proposed in his book Kaffar ‘Ummay that Megiddo be identified as the ruins of the Roman city of Beroea, about 400 miles southwest of Tell el-Mutesellim at the entrance to Wadi Ara. Numerous eighteenth-century scholars agreed with him. In the mid-nineteenth century, the American Bible scholar Edward Robinson was the first to propose that Tell el-Mutesellim was in fact Megiddo.

From 1903 to 1905, Gottlieb Schumacher led the archaeological expedition at Megiddo under the auspices of the German Society for Oriental Research. He dug a wide north-south trench on the mound, uncovering the remains of a palace and magnificent tombs from the second millennium BCE.

In 1925, excavations were renewed at Tel Megiddo by the University of Chicago’s Institute of Oriental Research, generously supported by John Rockefeller. The expedition had planned to expose the entire site, stratum after stratum, down to bedrock. When they realized that their ambitious plan would take years to complete and after ‘stripping’ the mound of all later remains down to the bedrock stratum, the excavators decided to focus on four major areas. The Chicago excavation, led in turn by Clarence Fisher, P.L.O. Guy and Gordon Loud, was interrupted in 1959 by the outbreak of World War II. Excavations were renewed only after the establishment of the State of Israel. Many of the splendid buildings seen at Megiddo today were excavated by the members of the Chicago expedition. They also built the complex that today serves as the national park’s entrance pavilion, planted the many trees and even built a tennis court, which can still be seen.

From 1960 to 1971, Yigal Yadin excavated for five short seasons at Megiddo on behalf of the Israel Department of Antiquity and the Israel Institute of Archaeology. Since 1992, the excavations at Megiddo have been conducted, under the direction of Israel Finkelstein and David Ussishkin, by Tel Aviv University’s Institute of Archaeology, in the goal of the current expedition is to clarify Megiddo’s complex stratigraphy and chronology.

Touring Route

Entrance pavilion

In the entrance pavilion, built in the 1920s, visitors can view a 10-minute film on Megiddo’s history and a display about the excavations.

The doorways to the display, which provides explanations about Megiddo and its sites, is in the form of an ancient gate, which represents Megiddo in the Canaanite period. One room contains a large model of the mound. The pavilion also houses a shop offering books, maps and souvenirs, as well as a snack bar and restaurant.

1. Reservoir

The impressive staircase you see here descends from the israelite period city gate (4) to a plastered pool. The source of the water is still not entirely clear.

2. The Canaanite city gate

Flanked by four chambers, the gate was built during the Late Canaanite period (the Late Bronze Age). At that time, the city was not fortified, which meant that the...
4. The Israelite gate – As time went on, the Israelite monarchy became more stable and the city expanded. The Israelites built the first Israelite gate ('Gate of Kish'), which was located on the southern side of the city. The gate was a ceremonial rather than defensive – it served as the entrance to the palace complex of that period. During its last phase, when ovens were built in its chambers, the gate probably served as a kind of service wing of the palace. The gate went out of use after the palace was burned at the end of the Late Canaanite period.

5. The 'lesser Canaanite palace' – At the time of the Israelite monarchy, the city once again attained importance and was extensively built up and fortified by the Israelite kings. Here you can see remains of the city gate from that time, which was incorporated into the fortifications. A two-chambered outer gate was situated at the top of a ramp that ascended to the city from the north. The inner gate you see here had six chambers and was connected to the outer gate by an L-shaped plaza. Some scholars believe this structure was merely the foundation of the inner gate. A staircase descended from the outer gate to the reservoir (1). Scholars once attributed the gate to King Solomon. However, Megiddo’s present-day excavators believe it was built later, during the reign of Jehoram in the eighth century BCE. The western part of the inner gate was removed during the excavation. The remaining, eastern part of the gate was built of ashlars. The central chamber has not yet been excavated. Continue eastward; about 30 meters along the path you will come to the corner of the courtyard of the ‘lesser Canaanite palace.’

6. The northern stables – Two stable complexes were found at Megiddo – one on the northeastern part of the mound and one in the southwest. They reveal Megiddo’s importance as a cavalry base or a center for commerce in horses. The construction of the stable-city is attributed to one of the Israelite kings, perhaps Jeroboam II, in the eighth century BCE or to King Ahab, in the ninth century BCE. Some scholars believe that the stables were used for other purposes – as storehouses, markets, or army barracks. On the left, part of a stable can be seen, including pillar mangers and stables. This northern part of the complex included 33 stables, the southern part was removed by the Chicago expedition to reach the level of the Early Canaanite period (the Early Bronze Age). The Tel Aviv University expedition completed the excavation of the stables and uncovered an impressive portion of the southern facade of the northernmost stables, which is slated for conservation and reconstruction. Additional stables were discovered on the southern part of the mound (18). The stable walls were built of mudbrick on a foundation of ashlar, some of which were probably robbed from the ruined northern palace (7). The large number of stables attests to a strong city government at the time they were built and to Megiddo’s status as a major chariot city.

7. The northern palace ('Palace 6000') – Beneath the northern stable complex lay the remains of a square building featuring thick ashlar walls, dating to the Israelite period II. It is similar in size and character to the central building of the contemporaneous southern palace. Megiddo’s excavators therefore assume it was also built in the center of a large square courtyard surrounded by walls or rooms. The precise plan is difficult to reconstruct. However, its facade probably faced south with a row of rooms in the northern and western sides with plastered floors. Yigal Yadin suggested that the building was a palace from the time of King Solomon, based, among other things, on the descriptions of Solomon’s impressive building projects in the book of 1 Kings. However, some scholars now date the palace to the time of King Ahab.

8. The northern observation point – The Jezreel Valley stretches at the foot of this observation area. To the northeast is the Carmel Range; to the northeast and east are Nazareth, Mount Tabor, the Hill of Moreh and the Gilead Mountains, to the southeast, the city of Jenin and the mountains of Samaria; and to the south, the city of Umm el-Fahm. On clear days, the mountains of Gilead appear on the eastern horizon.

9. The temple area – The deep trench visible from the observation point was dug by the Chicago expedition. In the far section of the trench, opposite the observation point, the mound’s numerous strata can be seen – more than 20 cities – excavated down to bedrock. Remains found in a depression in the bedrock go back as far as the Neolithic period. Finds from the Early Canaanite period indicate the presence of a large un-walled settlement that stretched eastward toward the present-day road at the foot of the mound.

Below, you can see Megiddo’s cultic area from the fourth millennium BCE to the beginning of the Israelite period. In the Early Canaanite period, a series of temples was built here continuously, one atop the other. The earliest, dating from the Early Canaanite period IB, was a double-room structure with an enclosed courtyard. Paving stones discovered in the courtyard bore inscribed Egyptian-style motifs, among them depictions of humans and animals.

Another temple from later in this period is the most monumental structure of its time known in the Levant. Impressive, finely finished basalt offering tables were sunk into its floor. Its four-meter thick walls reveal the importance of the site as early as at the end of the fourth millennium BCE. This temple illustrates the process of urbanization underway in Canaan at the close of the fourth millennium BCE.

At the end of the Early Canaanite period (3100 BCE), three more temples were built over the earlier ones. They were of the megalomaniac type, consisting of an open entrance area leading to a large room whose roof was supported by two columns. A circular altar, eight meters in diameter, preceded the three temples, continued in use. Seven steps led to the top of this altar, which survived to its full height and is clearly visible at the back of the largest of the three temples. Numerous animal bones were found at the base of the altar.

At the beginning of the Middle Canaanite period rites were performed in the open area. At the end of that period, the fortress-like ‘Tower Temple’ (dismantled by the Chicago expedition) was built over the remains of the above-mentioned three temples. Featuring thick walls and an entrance flanked by a pair of towers, the ‘Tower Temple’ continued in use until the end of the Israelite period I.

With the complete destruction of the Canaanite city in the Israelite period I, cultic practices ceased in the temple area after over 2,000 years. Return to the ‘northern palace junction’ and turn left.

10. Burial chamber (the ‘Aegaeon Tomb’) – A large hole in the ground at the left of the path marks the location of the ‘Aegaeon Tomb’. This impressive arched-roofed structure, partially built of ashlar, was preserved in its entirety. The sign presents an artist’s rendering of the tomb’s facade. Comparing it to similar structures throughout the Levant and Greece, the excavators deduced it was a burial structure. However, since it was found empty, both its purpose and its date are difficult to determine. It is unclear whether the structure stood on the surface or was built underground and therefore it is difficult to ascribe it to a particular stratum. Even today, after more than a century of excavation, the tomb, controversy persists over its dating – to either the Late Canaanite or the Israelite period I. Efforts have been made in recent years to conserve the building and prevent its collapse. A number of upright stone slabs were found near the structure; the one on the left, on a large stone base, has recently been rebuilt.

Follow the path until you reach the public granary (15) and the southern palace (14), to which you will return. Turn left toward the eastern palace and the southern observation point.

11. Administrative structure from the Israelite period – To the left of the path is an opulent complex near the city wall dating to the Israelite period, which served as either a palace or administrative building. Its walls were made of fieldstones, with only the corners dressed for structural reasons. Few of the walls have survived, however the excavations unearthed seven proto-ionic capitals. Such capitals, depicting a stylized date palm, were typical of public buildings in the Israelite period.

12. Southern observation point – The shaded southern observation point overlooks the outlet of the ‘Iron Valley’ to the Jezreel Valley and illustrates the strategic importance of Megiddo. You may be gazing at the very battlefield where the army of Thutmose III clashed with the Canaanites. The pillar you see here, with its message of peace in four languages, was installed to commemorate the visit to Megiddo by Pope Paul VI in January 1964. The stones seen here were dismantled from the southern palace (14). They reveal incised masons’ marks identical to those found in the palace of the Israelite kings in Samaria, thus dating Megiddo’s palaces to the ninth century BCE.

13. Dwelling – Two rows of three monolithic pillars each are vestiges of a dwelling from the Israelite period. The building was planned as a ‘four-room house,’ which was typical of sites from the Israelite period. The plan featured three parallel spaces with a fourth space perpendicular to them. The side spaces were used for storage, the middle was an open courtyard and the fourth space was the dwelling area. A small industrial zone near the dwelling was dated to the eleventh and tenth centuries BCE.

Retrace your steps to the southern palace and the public granary.

14. The southern palace – Nothing is left of the palace now except the courtyard and the gate you see here, the remains having been dismantled by the Chicago expedition to reach earlier strata. The plan of the southern palace resembles that of the northern palace (7). Near its outer gate, Schumacher discovered the seal with the inscription ‘Shemai, servant of Aroobam, son of Aroobam, servant of Jeroboam II, this is the seal of an Israelite king, discovered to date.’ Unfortunately, the original seal was lost, leaving only a drawing. The palace has been dated to the tenth century BCE, with some scholars dating it later to the ninth century BCE and the reign of Ahab.

15. Public granary – The structure before you is a huge silo, 7 meters deep and 11 meters in diameter. Its walls are lined with field stones. Two staircases lead to the bottom, which was paved with...