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The Level VI North-East Temple at Tel Lachish

Itamar Weissbein¹, Yosef Garfinkel¹, Michael G. Hasel², Martin G. Klingbeil², Baruch Brandl³ and Hadas Misgav¹

During the recent excavations at Tel Lachish a previously unknown Canaanite temple of the 12th century BCE was uncovered in the north-eastern corner of the mound. This article describes its possible place in the urban fabric of the city, the plan of the temple and its parallels, and some of the more special finds that were found in it. Based on the temple's plan and the finds and installations uncovered in it, we wish to offer a glimpse into the cults that were associated with the temple, as well as a reconstruction of the temple's life cycle.

Keywords Lachish, Canaanite cult, temple, figurines, crisis architecture

Introduction

The Canaanite culture, which dominated the 2nd millennium BCE in the Near East, created most of the prominent tells in the Mediterranean climatic zones of the region and the simple alphabetic writing system that was the forerunner of many of the alphabetic writing systems in use today in large parts of the world. The cult of the Canaanites was preserved in the memory of the biblical writers and was perceived as the antithesis to the ideal monotheism and aniconic cult that they advocated. For this reason any new Canaanite temple attracts much interest among scholars engaged with the 'Archaeology of Cult' (see, for example, Kamlah 2012; Kyriakidis 2007; Mazar 1992; Renfrew 1985; Verhoeven 2002) as well as biblical scholars (see, for example, Alpert Nakhai 2001; Keel and Uehlinger 1998; Smith 2001; Zevit 2001). Over the years Middle and Late Bronze Age temples have been uncovered at a number of sites, but they are quite rare in the archaeological record. In this article we present a new temple uncovered in recent years at Tel Lachish (Figs 1–2).

During 2013–2017 renewed excavations were conducted at the site of Tel Lachish (Tell ed-Duweir) by The Fourth Expedition to Lachish, under the co-direction of Yosef Garfinkel of the Institute of Archaeology,

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Michael G. Hasel and Martin G. Klingbeil of the Institute of Archaeology, Southern Adventist University, USA (Garfinkel *et al.* 2013).¹ One of the main finds uncovered by this expedition is a Canaanite temple attributed to Level VI, representing the last Canaanite city at Lachish, that existed during most of the 12th century BCE until around 1130 BCE, when the city was destroyed in a large conflagration followed by lengthy abandonment until the foundation of the Judean city of Level V. The temple was found in Area BB in the north-eastern corner of the mound — hence the name given to it here, The North-East Temple.

The temple plan

The North-East Temple is a free-standing structure that faces the northern slope of the mound. Over the years, the northern edge of the temple has been completely eroded by this slope. Moreover, in this area of the site there is also a moderate slope to the east that has significantly damaged the eastern half of the building. While on the temple's western edge the walls are sometimes preserved to a height of 1.2 m,

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¹The Fourth Expedition to Lachish was conducted in 2013–2017 with a team of about 110 staff and volunteers each season from more than 18 different countries and from the following consortium institutions: The Adventist Institute of Advanced Studies (Philippines), Helderberg College (South Africa), Oakland University (USA, Jon Carroll and Michael Pytlik), Seoul Jangsin University (Korea, Hoo-Goo Kang), Universidad Adventista de Bolivia (Bolivia), and Virginia Commonwealth University (USA, Jon Waybright). The excavation work was carried out in cooperation with the Israel Antiquities Authority, the National Parks Authority and the Israel Exploration Society, and is affiliated with the American Schools of Oriental Research.

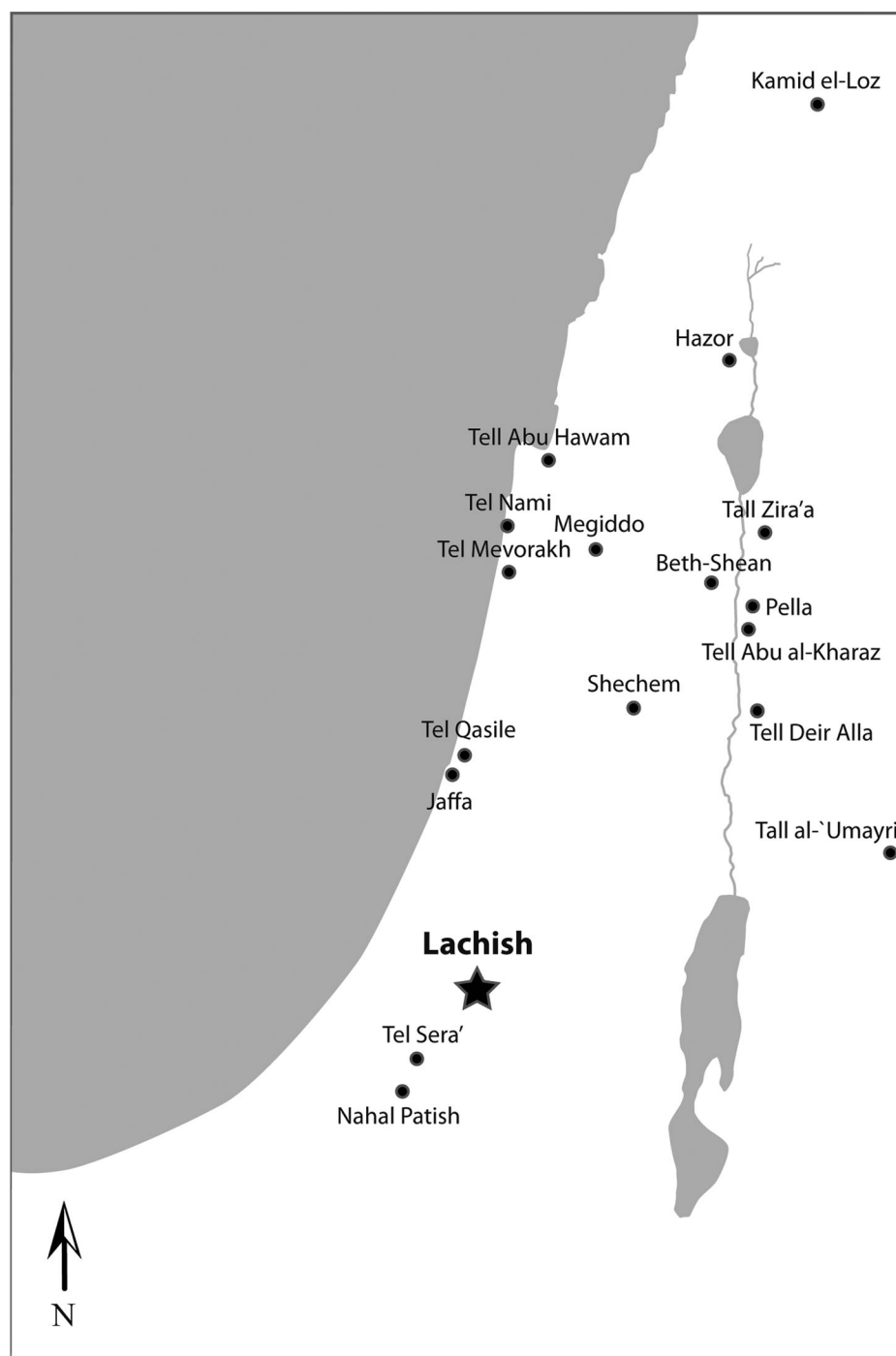


Figure 1 General map of the southern Levant with the location of Lachish and other sites in which Late Bronze Age and Iron Age I temples have been found.

in its eastern half some walls are known only from their foundations, while others are completely eroded. These northern and eastern slopes have caused the building to subside towards the north-east, as clearly shown by the temple's floors and walls (Figs 3–6). Figure 7 presents a section through Room D, the main hall of the temple. Due to severe erosion processes, all the later five levels known throughout the site had been completely removed in

this part of the mound, except for a line of pillars of a Level V (Iron Age IIA) building that was built on top of the temple's western wall. Immediately under the current topsoil a destruction debris layer, of c. 70–80 cm depth, had accumulated above the temple floor. Excavations under this floor uncovered remains of Level VII, dated to the 13th century BCE.

The North-East Temple (as it is currently preserved) is 19 m long (north to south) and 16 m wide (east to

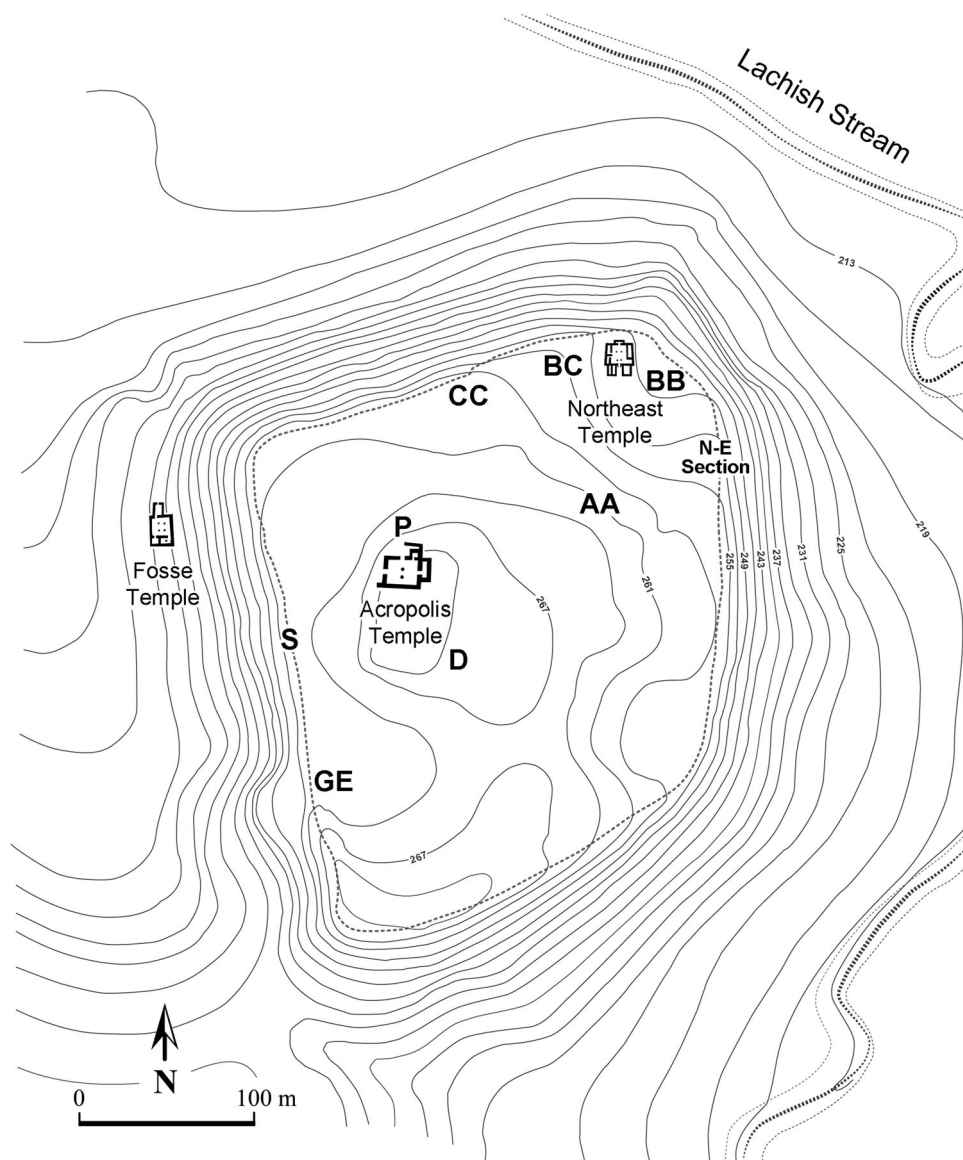


Figure 2 Plan of Tel Lachish showing the excavation areas mentioned in the text and the three Canaanite temples uncovered at the site.

west), covering an area of about 304 m². Apparently, the building was originally longer, but since its northern part has been eroded by the slope of the mound, it is impossible to determine by how much. Based on the general plan of the temple and its suggested parallels, one can estimate that it did not continue for more than a few metres.

The temple includes eight architectural units (A–H) in addition to an open courtyard in front of the structure, a courtyard of which only two small segments were preserved due to later disturbances.

Unit A (the entrance space)

Unit A seems to be an open area (or a portico) located in front of the main entrance to the temple and to the east of Rooms B and C ('the tower'). In the south, this

unit was probably integrated with the front courtyard, which was not clearly preserved in this area. To the north of Unit A, a large stone (L. BB1190) was used as a step leading down to the threshold (L. BB1170) of the main entrance of the temple, the only known entrance to the building. The threshold itself consists of a single large, flat stone. The entrance seems to have originally been flanked by two pillars. The western stone pillar base (L. BB840) was found, possibly close to its original location, west of the stone step but about 20 cm above the floor, while another large stone that appears to be the eastern pillar base (L. BB836) was found nearby, lying on the western wall of the entrance. The two pillar bases were apparently moved from their original place during the last phase of the temple's life or after its destruction, possibly



Figure 3 General view of the North-East Temple, looking east (Courtesy of the Fourth Expedition to Lachish).

by looters searching for foundation deposits. A similar phenomenon was observed in the Acropolis Temple with regard to two large pillar bases found in its main hall (Ussishkin 2004d: 224). The entrance to

the North-East Temple itself was found obstructed by a low pile of medium-sized fieldstones; a blockage that was apparently also executed during the last phase of the building's life (see discussion below).



Figure 4 Aerial photograph of the North-East Temple at the end of the 2016 season (Courtesy of the Fourth Expedition to Lachish).

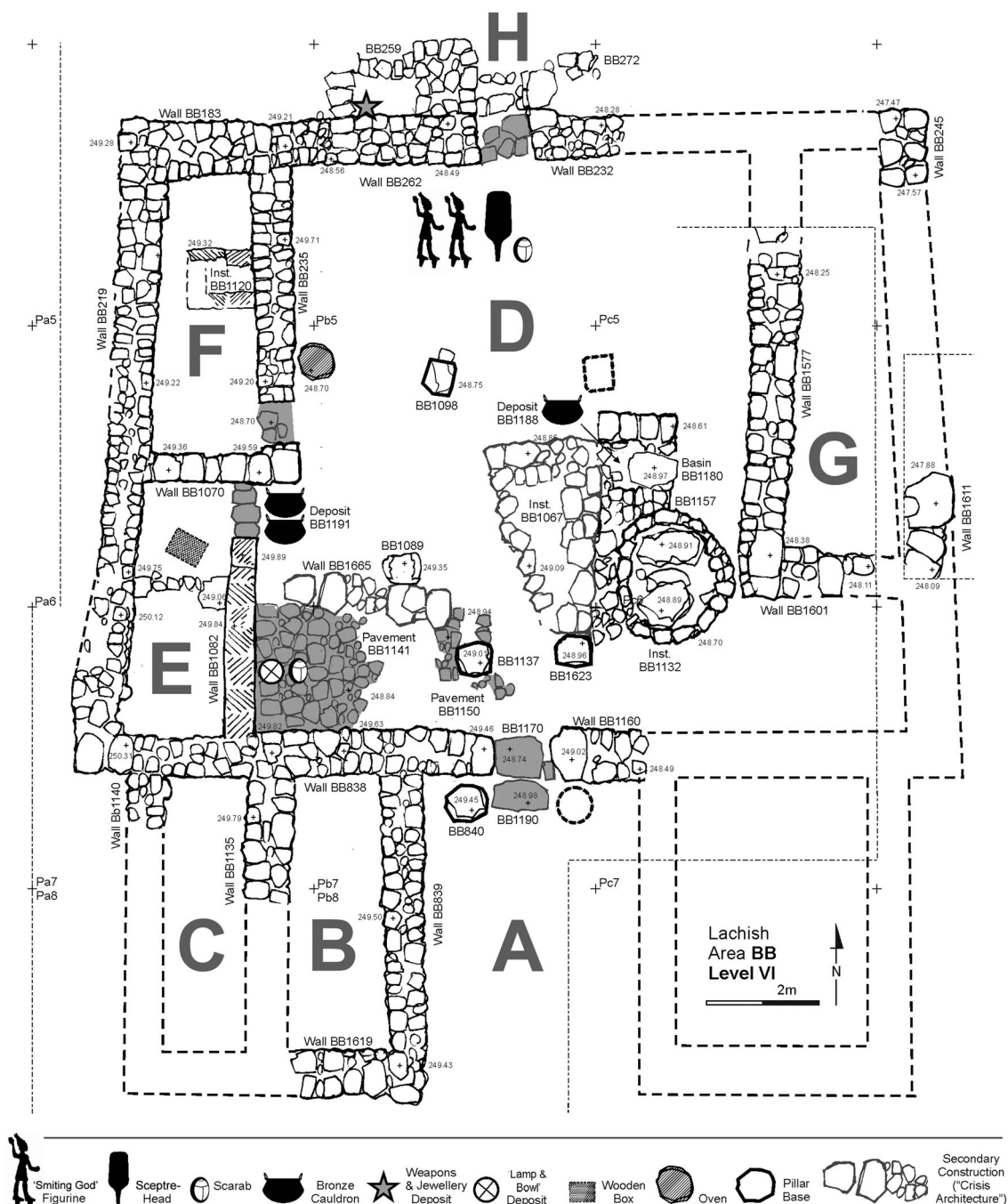


Figure 5 Plan of the North-East Temple (by J. Rosenberg).

Rooms B and C ('the tower')

To the west of the entrance the remains of two narrow rooms (B and C), that together form a single rectangular unit, were uncovered. Based on parallels that will be discussed below, this unit seems to be the foundation of a staircase tower. It seems likely that in the past there was a second such tower to the east of the temple's entrance, a tower of which nothing was preserved due to the general erosion of the eastern side of the building. The south-western part of the tower

was completely destroyed by a series of later pits dating from the Persian period (Level I), and only a small segment of packed earth floor was preserved in Room B. Below the floor level, the tower was characterized by a construction fill very rich in pottery sherds.

Room D (the main hall)

The entrance led to the main hall of the temple (D), a large room that was bordered by two side rooms to the

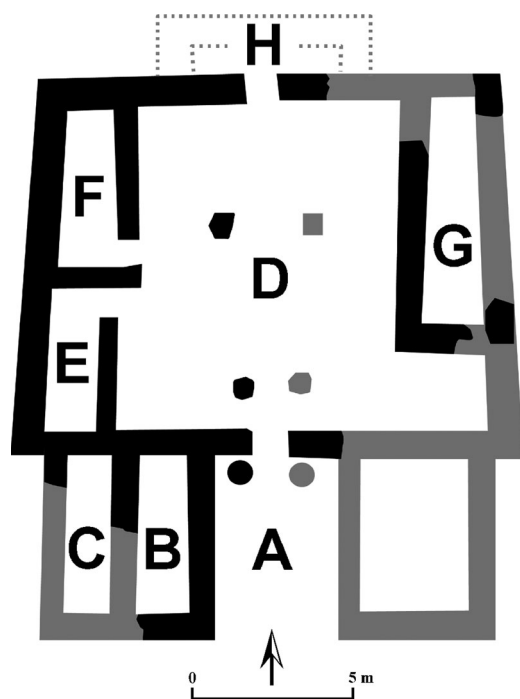


Figure 6 Schematic plan of the North-East Temple.

west (E, F), at least one side room on the east (G) and a room or niche in the north (H). The general layout of the main hall is that of a long room, in which the southern part is slightly wider than the northern part. The roof of the hall was supported by pillars, of which three bases were found, two in the south

and one in the north-west. There was probably a fourth pillar in the north-east.

In the eastern part of the hall was a stone platform (L. BB1157), 4 m long, 1.5 m wide and about 20 cm high (one course). On the northern part of the platform, a large stone basin (L. BB1180) was found lying upside down and slightly tilted towards the east. In the south-west, the platform abuts an installation (L. BB1132) that consists of a circle of stones (2.2 × 2.4 m), found with several large stones lying inside. The two uppermost stones seem to have been originally used as 'standing stones' (*maššebot*), while the two stones on which they are now lying perhaps formed an offering table in front of them (Fig. 8). The two 'standing stones' are elongated, natural, unhewn stones. The northern stone is the larger of the two, 60 cm wide and 90 cm long, while the southern one is also 60 cm wide and only 70 cm long.

In the south-western part of the hall a segment of stone pavement was preserved. This pavement may have originally covered the entire southern part of the hall. In the north, remains of a simple packed earth floor were observed, while in the east no floor was preserved because of the general erosion of this area. All the floors were found covered with debris of collapsed mudbricks.

In the centre of the hall a rectangular mudbrick installation (L. BB1054) covered with remains of white plaster was found. The installation was 1.6 m long, 1 m wide and about 20 cm high. The installation



Figure 7 A section through Room D, the main hall of the temple (looking west). Level VI temple is found immediately under the current topsoil (Courtesy of the Fourth Expedition to Lachish).



Figure 8 Standing stones as found fallen inside a circle of stones (scale = 30 cm) (Courtesy of the Fourth Expedition to Lachish).

clearly sealed beneath it the north-western pillar base, as well as a black ash sediment that may represent the remains of the wooden pillar and broken vessels that were lying on the temple's floor. The pattern of deposition suggests that the installation was originally located on the roof of the building and collapsed on the floor together with the ceiling during the temple's destruction. It appears that this installation was a platform (an altar?) used for ceremonies performed on the roof of the temple, to which the staircase tower led (see below).

Several features uncovered in the main hall represent a secondary phase of construction that seems to reflect a crisis state preceding the destruction of the temple (see below). The first of these elements is an installation (L. BB1067) built beside the western side of the stone platform and the standing stones. The remains of a few storage jars discovered in the centre of this installation and beside its walls, may indicate that it was used for storage. The second feature is a partition wall (L. BB1665), separating the south-western corner of the hall from its northern part. These two elements are characterized by their crude construction, which consists of relatively large fieldstones placed in an irregular manner. Finally, a clay oven (L. BB1993) was found beside the western wall of the hall.

Room E (the granary)

Room E is located to the south-west of the hall (D) and is divided into a northern and a southern area by a single row of stones in the middle of the room. This row of stones seems to be the base of a partition wall, or fence, that may have been made of wood. The entrance to the room was from the north-east and led to its northern area, which seems to have served as the main activity area in the room. Here a large wooden box (65 cm long, 55 cm wide and 22 cm tall) filled



Figure 9 The remains of a large wooden box (65 cm long, 55 cm wide and 22 cm tall) filled with charred seeds, from Room E (scale = 20 cm) (Courtesy of the Fourth Expedition to Lachish).

with charred seeds was uncovered with a few bowls (Fig. 9). The southern part of the room, on the other hand, was almost devoid of finds and contained only a thick layer of organic material that seems to indicate that this area was used for storing grain.

Room F (the storage room)

Room F is a side room that is located to the west of the hall (D) and north of Room E. The finds in this room include a variety of pottery vessels and concentrations of charred seeds. The manner in which the seeds were organized attests that they were once contained in sacks. Based on the finds, it seems that Room F was used mainly for storage.

Room G

On the eastern side of the hall (D) was an additional side room. Only parts of its wall-foundations were preserved, while the floor was not preserved at all.

Room H (the holy of holies):

To the north of the main hall (D) was the entrance to a northern unit, which was designated Room H. Due to the proximity to the northern slope of the mound, only piles of collapsed stone, probably representing some of the walls of this unit, were found to the north of the entrance. Because of this, we could not clarify the plan and nature of this unit, which may have been a room, or merely a niche. Since Room H is located in the innermost part of the structure and on its central axis, directly opposite the main entrance, we suggest that it served as the temple's holy of holies and was its main focus of ritual activity. Further evidence of the importance of Room H is expressed by the special finds that were placed near its entrance, within the northern

part of the main hall. These finds include two ‘smiting god’ figurines, a cultic sceptre head, a variety of beads and a scarab. In addition, a rich foundation deposit, consisting of weapons and jewellery, was discovered in the wall west of the entrance to the room.

The courtyard:

To the south of the structure was an open courtyard. As we know from other Levantine temples, the courtyard of a temple was an important locus of ritual activity, usually in relation to an altar and additional installations that may have stood there. Unfortunately, in contrast to the structure of the temple, which was not disturbed by later construction, the courtyard was damaged by several pits that, according to the pottery found in them, seem to date from the Persian period (Level I). Due to these later disturbances, as well as erosion, only two small segments of the courtyard’s floor were preserved. Noteworthy finds uncovered on the courtyard floor in Square Pa8 include two fragments of ‘cup-and-saucers’, the large base of a goblet or chalice and a fragment of a clay mask.

Discussion of the temple’s plan

In comparison to the plan of other temples of the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age I, the North-East Temple of Lachish is modest in its dimensions and can be defined as medium-sized. Most of the medium-sized temples of this period belong to a type defined by Mazar as ‘Temples with Indirect Entrances and Irregular Plans’ (Mazar 1992: 177–82),² while the large temples in the region usually belong to a type known as the ‘Syrian Temple’, and especially its local variant known as the ‘Tower Temple’ (*migdal*) (Mazar 1992: 164–73).³ Despite its dimensions, the plan of the North-East Temple seems to be significantly inspired by that of the ‘Tower Temple’, with which it shares several key features: a symmetrical plan with a direct entrance, a central long-room hall that ends with a defined holy of holies, and the possible pair of pillars beside the entrance and pair of towers in the front. As mentioned above, the left-hand tower, the only one preserved, is a staircase tower, like the left-hand tower of the temple at Megiddo (Loud 1948: fig. 247), possibly that at Shechem (Wright 2002: Ill. 62) and at Hazor’s

Orthostat Temple (Ben-Tor *et al.* 1989: 245, plan XXXIX) and Building 7050 (Ben-Tor *et al.* 2017b: 98, plan 4.16). A significant difference between the North-East Temple and the typical ‘Tower Temple’ (apart from its general dimensions and the thickness of its walls) is the presence of side rooms. This can, in a way, be compared to the much larger Building 7050 at Hazor. However, the presence of side rooms in that structure is one of the main points that has fuelled the dispute over its characterization as a temple or a ceremonial palace (Ben-Tor 2017; Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg 2007; Zuckerman 2012: 114; 2017). It is possible that the addition of side rooms to a temple with ‘Syrian’ characteristics is a precursor of Iron Age temples like the temple of Motza (Kisilevitz 2015: 151, fig. 1) and the biblical Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem (Garfinkel and Mumcuoglu 2016: 175–76). One could also compare the North-East Temple to the 11th-century Southern Temple of Beth-Shean Stratum V (Mullins 2012: 145, fig. 13; Rowe 1940: pl. X), a temple with a fairly symmetrical plan, a direct entrance and a long central hall with smaller side rooms on both sides.

The plan of the North-East Temple should be more specifically examined in comparison to the Acropolis Temple, its contemporary cultic neighbour in Lachish Level VI. The Acropolis Temple too has a large main hall with a defined holy of holies. Two smaller side rooms are located in its northern side (the southern side was not excavated). One of the side rooms was used for storage and the other seems to have been used for secondary cult (Ussishkin 2004d: 251–55) and possibly as an antechamber to the temple (Kempinski 1978; Ussishkin 2004d: 253). Ussishkin suggested that the main entrance to the Acropolis Temple was through an antechamber in the west, on the central axis of the hall and directly opposite the entrance to the holy of holies (Ussishkin 2004d: 216–21, fig. 6.4). Yannai, however, rejected the possibility of an entrance in the west and suggested an entrance from one of the sides of the main hall (Yannai 1996: 171–72, 176). In our understanding, it is possible that the Acropolis Temple had an entrance in the west. However, the proposed paved antechamber cannot be accepted, because the paved area, interpreted as the floor of the antechamber, continues north beyond the line of the wall that encloses the main hall on the north (Ussishkin 1978: fig. 3, pl. 3.4). Thus, this wall cannot close another unit to the west of the hall (the proposed antechamber). If we are right, the two temples of Lachish share a symmetrical plan, side rooms and a direct entrance to the main hall.

²For example the temples of Tel Mevorakh (Strata XI–X), Tell Qasile (Stratum X) and the Fosse Temple of Lachish.

³‘Tower Temples’ were found at Shechem, Megiddo and Pella, as well as Hazor (Area H and the Northern and Southern Temples and possibly also Building 7050 in Area A).



Figure 10 The two 'smiting god' figurines: 1. figurine A; 2. figurine B (photographs by T. Rogovski).

Selected finds

A number of special artefacts were found in the North-East Temple, especially on the floor of the northern part of the main hall (D) and in three deposits.

'Smiting god' figurines

Figurine A: maximum length: 10 cm | Figurine B: maximum length: 8.5 cm.

Two figurines (Figurines A–B) were uncovered on the floor of the northern part of the main hall (D), close to the entrance to the holy of holies (H). They are made of bronze with remains of a silver coating, especially on their faces. Both figurines represent a male figure in a marching stance with his right hand raised. In Figurine A (Fig. 10:1) this arm was preserved; it holds a weapon that seems to be a mace or club that is attached to the figure's forehead. Both figurines wear a short kilt and a tall hat. Figurine A's hat seems to be flat-topped, while Figurine B (Fig. 10:2) has a conical hat that recalls the White Crown of Upper Egypt. Below their feet are pegs that were used to attach the figurines to wooden stands, as attested by the remains of wood found on the pegs of Figurine B. Adhering to the left arm and chest of Figurine A is a piece of silver (1.5 cm long, 1 cm wide) that seems to be a small pendant with its



Figure 11 The two sides of the sceptre-head (photographs by T. Rogovski).

top rolled into a suspension loop, probably worn by the figurine as a necklace. In addition, two beads were found adhering to the body of this figurine and a few more beads were found scattered near it, all possibly part of a necklace, or necklaces, that once adorned the figurines.

Those two figurines belong to a well-known type, the so-called 'smiting god',⁴ which is known mainly throughout the Levant during the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age I. It is important to note that the vast majority of 'smiting god' figurines deriving from good contexts in excavations were uncovered in relation to temples, for example at Byblos (Seeden 1980: 92–95), Ugarit (Negbi 1976: 133), Kamid el-Loz (Metzger 1993: Taf. 18:1–2, 19:1, 22:1–2), Megiddo (Negbi 1976: no. 1360–61), Beth-Shean (Rowe 1940: 89, pl. LA:4) and Pella (Bourke 2012: 178, fig. 12:4), in addition to Lachish's Fosse Temple I (Tufnell *et al.* 1940: pl. 26.31). Hence, 'smiting god' figurines are a ritual element that is characteristic of public cult in temples.

⁴'Smiting god' (Collon 1972); 'Male warriors in smiting pose' (Negbi 1976); 'Standing armed figures' (Seeden 1980).

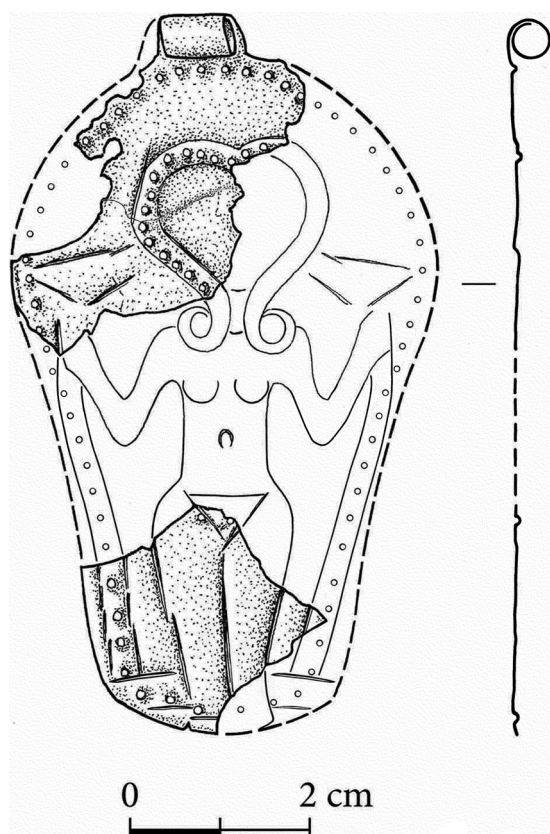


Figure 12 Three pieces of a pear-shaped silver sheet pendant depicting a nude goddess with a Hathor coiffure who holds two stems of lotus flowers or papyrus (drawing by O. Dobovsky).

The deities represented by the ‘smiting god’ figurines are commonly identified with two Canaanite gods, Baal or Resheph. Both of these are known from literary and iconographic sources as gods of warlike nature and appearance, although it is impossible to identify our figurines with either due to the lack of clear attributes (Cornelius 1994; Negbi 1976: 30–31).

Ritual sceptre-head

Maximum length: 11.2 cm. Plaque: length: 8 cm | width: 3.4–4.4 cm | thickness: 0.1 cm. Peg: length: 3.2 cm | width: 0.7–1.2 cm | thickness: 0.3 cm.

Next to the figurines was found a bronze sceptre-head consisting of a rectangular plaque and a broken peg made in one piece (Fig. 11). There are remains of a silver coating on one side of the plaque, which is probably the object’s front. This side is also decorated with a schematic decoration of unclear nature, consisting of a number of incised lines and circular depressions. The only certain parallel is from Hazor, where such a sceptre was found inside a shrine model in Area C (Tadmor

1989; Yadin *et al.* 1960: 104–06, 109, 117–18). Notably, a statue found in the temple of Megiddo depicts a seated god holding a miniature sceptre, which is remarkably similar to the sceptre-head from Lachish in both its proportions and, to a certain extent, its decoration (Loud 1948: 159, pls 237–38; Negbi 1976: 50, 172). This statue supplements our understanding of how those sceptres were once held and how they were perceived as attributes of gods.

Pear-shaped silver pendant

Upper part of pendant: maximum length: 3.2 cm | maximum width: 3.4 cm. Lower part of pendant: maximum length: 2.5 cm | maximum width: 2.8 cm. Estimated overall measurements: maximum length: ~7 cm | maximum width: ~4.5–5 cm.

Three pieces of a silver sheet pendant were uncovered together in the eastern part of the main hall, beside the north-eastern side of the stone platform. As previously described (Weissbein *et al.* 2016), the three pieces originated from a single pendant in the shape of an inverted pear bearing a depiction of a nude goddess with a Hathor coiffure, who holds two stems of lotus flowers or papyrus (Fig. 12).

Foundation deposit of weapons and jewellery

A deposit was found in the foundation of one of the walls of the holy of holies (H), in the northern part of the temple. The deposit includes beads of gold and carnelian, four gold earrings, a bronze arrowhead (10 cm long), a bronze dagger (14 cm long) and a bronze axe head (13.3 cm long) (Fig. 13). The deposit was originally wrapped in a bundle of cloth; remains of which can still be seen on the dagger and on one of the earrings. The deposit was probably placed here as part of a ceremony which accompanied the laying of the temple’s foundations.

The most noteworthy find in the deposit is the axe head, because of the simple decoration, depicting a standing bird with outstretched wings, that was engraved on the front of the blade after the axe was made. This kind of decoration is rare on axes, as is clear, for example, from the catalogue of axes compiled by Miron (1992), which includes 331 axes of various types from the Chalcolithic period to the Iron Age I, only seven of which were decorated. An interesting parallel is an axe found in a 13th-century temple at Beth-Shean (Level VII). This axe, though of a very different type, bears a decoration recalling that of the Lachish axe, although it is less clear. Rowe (1940: 76, pls XXXII:2, XLIXA:5) described it as a ‘crescent-shaped device with legs (?)’, while Miron



Figure 13 Weapons and jewellery that were found together in a deposit beside the holy of holies: 1. beads; 2. earrings; 3. arrowhead; 4. dagger; 5. axe head (photographs by T. Rogovski). Note the remains of cloth on one of the earrings and the dagger.

(1992: 89) and Bonn (1993: 208–09) suggested that it represents a bird. Based on the axe from Lachish, the second interpretation seems preferable. It is worth noting that the axe from Beth-Shean was found in a fairly similar context to that of the axe from Lachish; deposited below the floor of the holy of holies of a temple (James and McGovern 1993: 208–09, fig. 155:6; Rowe 1940: 6–9).

Birds (usually identified as doves) are well-known attributes of goddesses, as seen in various representations throughout the 2nd millennium BCE (and later), for example on plaque figurines (Ben-Arieh 1983; Cornelius 2008: 127, cat. 5.13; Woolley 1955: pl. LIV:O; Ziffer 1998: 37*–38*, 44*, figs 52a–c, 54b) and cylinder seals (Cornelius 2008: 31, cat. 2.3, figs 41, 44; Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 29–31; Ward 1910: figs 913, 926; Ziffer 1998: 44*–45*, figs 24*, 57–59). These can be added to a much wider range of bird depictions in the iconography of this period on figurines, zoomorphic vessels and cultic stands. Such artefacts are frequently found in association with temples, for example at Nahariya (Dothan 1956: 15, 22; Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 31; Ziffer

1998: 43*), Megiddo (Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 31; Loud 1948: pl. 245:18–19), Beth-Shean (Mullins 2012: 144–51; Rowe 1940: pls XIV:1–3, XVI:1, 3, 8, XX:7–9, 11–19, XXI:8, 12, XXII:15) and Tell Qasile (Mazar 1980: 96–100, 106–07). Hence, it seems reasonable to suggest that the bird (dove?) on the axe from Lachish (and probably also that from Beth-Shean) is a symbolic representation of a goddess that was worshipped in the temple. Engraving the goddess's attribute on the axe seems to mark it as an offering dedicated to this deity. The use of an axe may indicate that she was a warlike goddess, perhaps 'Anat or Astarte, who was possibly perceived as the consort of the main male deity of the temple, the 'smiting god' (Cornelius 2008: 92–94).

Bronze cauldrons

Upper cauldron in pit L. BB1191: height (without handles): 20.3 cm | maximum diameter: 50.7 × 46 cm. Lower cauldron in pit L. BB1191: height: 23 cm | maximum diameter: 55 × 45 cm. Cauldron in pit L. BB1188: height: 21 cm | maximum diameter: 40 × 36 cm.



Figure 14 Two bronze cauldrons that were deposited one on top of the other in deposit L. BB1191, in front of the entrance to Room E (photographs by T. Rogovski).

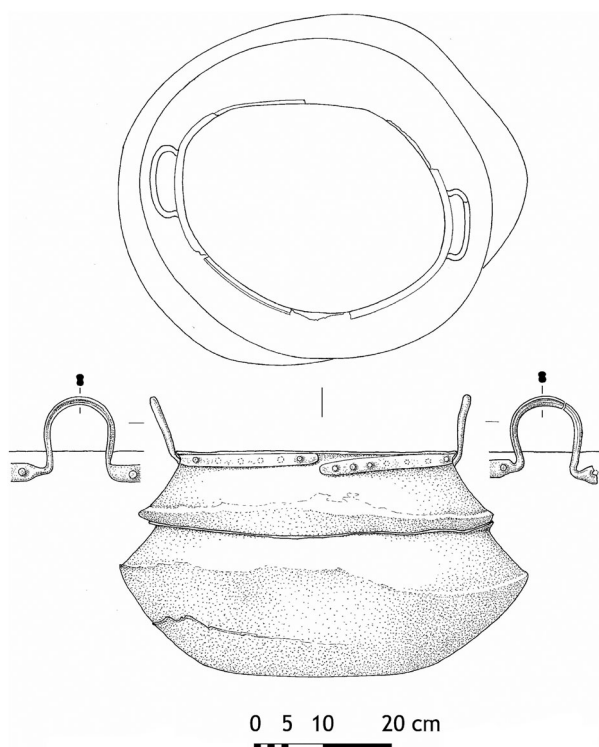


Figure 15 Two bronze cauldrons that were deposited one on top of the other in deposit L. BB1191, in front of the entrance to Room E (drawing by O. Dobovsky).

Three large bronze cauldrons were found in two deposits inside the temple. Two of the cauldrons were deposited one on top of the other in a pit (L. BB1191) in front of the entrance to Room E (Figs 14–15), while the third was found deposited upside down in a pit (L. BB1188) below a large

stone basin (L. BB1180) that sits on top of the northern part of the stone platform (L. BB1157). Because of the similar nature of the two deposits, it seems that they were deposited simultaneously in the early stages of the temple's life. Traces of soot observed on the outer faces of the cauldrons indicate that they were used before their deposition. The layout of the deposits, especially the two cauldrons in deposit L. BB1191, perhaps corresponds to some extent with the simple 'lamp and bowl' deposits known in this period at various sites, including Lachish itself (Bunimovitz and Zimhoni 2004). Because of the public and cultic nature of the structure, the basic deposit of pottery vessels was replaced here by large bronze cauldrons that expressed a much greater investment.

Two of the cauldrons clearly belong to the same type. They have a slightly oval body, round base, a carination in the centre of the body, a flaring rim and a pair of vertical loop handles that rise above the rim. The lower parts of the handles continue as long flattened bands that encircle the body of the cauldron below the rim. The bands, and hence the handles, were riveted to the sides of the cauldrons. The third cauldron, which has remains of similar bands, seems to belong to the same type but, because it was somewhat crushed under the upper cauldron of deposit L. BB1191, it is not clear if it had handles as well.

The discovery of three large bronze cauldrons in one structure is unique. To date, only two other complete cauldrons are known from the Late Bronze Age and



Figure 16 Fragment of a clay mask (photographs by T. Rogovski).

Iron Age I southern Levant. One cauldron was found in a tomb at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh dated to the later part of the 13th or the 12th century BCE (Pritchard 1968: 100; 1980: 14, 28–29, figs 4:14, 48:2–3) and a second was found in the Tell Jatt metal hoard dated to the 11th century BCE (Artzy 2006: 31, 57, fig. 2.3:1, pl. 5:1). In addition, handles that may have originated from such cauldrons were found at a few other sites, such as Gezer (Dever 1986: pl. 60) and Beth-Shean (Yahalom-Mack 2007: 614–18, fig. 9.6). The cauldron from Tell es-Sa'idiyeh is almost identical to the cauldrons from Lachish; it has the same shape and handles and additionally is almost the same size as the top cauldron of deposit L. BB1191. Based mainly on the lack of clear parallels in Cyprus or the Aegean, it has been suggested that the cauldron from Tell es-Sa'idiyeh was made locally in the Levant (Artzy 2006: 22–23; Gershuny 1985: 14–15; Negbi 1990; Pritchard 1968: 103; 1980: 14).⁵ If so, it seems reasonable that the cauldrons from Lachish as well were locally made, perhaps even in the same workshop. The cauldron from Tell Jatt, which lead isotope analysis has clearly shown was made in the

southern Levant (Artzy 2006: 57), differs from the Lachish and the Tell es-Sa'idiyeh cauldrons in the manner in which the handles were attached. However, it shares the same carinated body and simple flaring rim, features that may recall the typical Canaanite cooking pot of this period.

Clay mask

Maximum length: 6 cm | maximum width 6 cm | average thickness: 1.5 cm | maximum thickness (at nose): 3 cm.

A fragment of a clay mask retaining the nose, left cheek and part of the upper lip was found in Square Pa8 on the surface of the temple's courtyard (Fig. 16). In the upper part of the sherd is a semi-circular hole that may represent the lower part of the left eye. The bottom of the sherd is broken below the upper lip in a way that makes it unclear whether the mouth was open or closed. Since the mask was shaped in a mould, its frontal surface is smooth while its back is relatively rough and 'wavy', with four depressions that appear to be finger marks. The nostrils were pierced and the eyes (and possibly the mouth) were cut after the mask was removed from the mould.

⁵For cauldrons from Cyprus and the Aegean see Catling (1964) and Matthäus (1980; 1985).



Figure 17 Faience ring decorated with a schematic depiction of the Egyptian goddess Hathor (photographs by T. Rogovski).

This mask joins eight known anthropomorphic masks from the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age I southern Levant: two from Hazor, 14th century BCE (Yadin *et al.* 1958: 138, pl. CLXIII; Yadin *et al.* 1960: 101, 115, pl. CLXXXIII); one from Tell Abu Hawam, 14th or 13th century BCE (Artzy 2008: 1554); two from Tel Burna, 13th century BCE (Shai *et al.* 2015: 127, fig. 8:6–7); one from Gezer (Macalister 1912: 234, fig. 383);⁶ one from Tell Qasile, 11th century BCE (Mazar 1980: 84–85, fig. 21); and one from Tel Rekhesh, attributed to the Iron Age I (Paz *et al.* 2010: 31, fig. 8a). With the exception of the mask from Tel Rekhesh, which is red slipped and depicts the face of a bearded man, clearly inspired by Phoenician masks (Averett 2015; Culican 1975–1976; Stern 1976), the masks belong to a type that seems unique to the southern Levant (Averett 2015: 10; Nys 1995: 21–22). This ‘Canaanite’ type is characterized by unslipped clay and an absence of facial expression or facial hair. A possible continuation of this type of mask may be seen in a number of Iron Age masks found at Beersheba, Beth-Shemesh and Khirbet er-Ras (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2016b: 599; Kletter 2007). These too have no facial hair but some are covered with a thick white wash, in contrast to the Phoenician and Cypriot masks of that period (Averett 2015; Culican 1975–1976; Markoe 1990).

⁶The mask from Gezer was attributed by Macalister to the ‘Second Semitic Period’, which corresponds roughly to the later part of the Middle Bronze Age II (Seger 2013: table 1.1). However, based on the parallels it seems reasonable that this mask too should be dated to the Late Bronze Age.

In ‘Canaanite’-type masks (like that from Lachish) the nose is usually solid rather than hollow and consequently does not allow the intake of a human nose behind it, as is the case for real masks. In addition, the masks are usually too small for an adult head. Therefore, it seems that these ‘masks’ were displayed in a different way, possibly hung on portable objects used in ceremonies, or on non-portable objects within the temple compound (Kletter 2007: 190; Nys 1995: 30–31; Yadin 1972: 74). Such a use may be seen on Middle Bronze Age Syrian seals, where anthropomorphic masks (?) are depicted hanging on poles beside seated deities (Bernett and Keel 1998: 22–25, abb. 17–25), and it also recalls the later Roman *oscilla* (Taylor 2005: 84–86, 93).

The mask from Lachish was found in a clear cultic context, like the masks from Tell Qasile, Tel Burna and Hazor (Area D). The masks from Tel Burna were found in a large open courtyard used for cultic activity (Shai *et al.* 2015). The mask from Hazor Area D was found buried in a large pit that was also attributed to an open cultic courtyard, which Zuckerman suggested was related to funerary rituals (Zuckerman 2012: 107–08). The mask from Tell Qasile was also found in a clear cultic context, in the back room of the temple of Stratum XI (Mazar 1980: 23–24). It is therefore clear that clay masks played a role in Canaanite cult during the 14th–12th centuries BCE, perhaps especially in connection with rituals that took place in open cult sites and temple courtyards, which might indicate that the cult associated with masks was performed by the general public, and thus more popular than the restricted and official rituals undertaken inside the temples. Masks are also known in Late Bronze Age Syria, especially at Tell Munbaqa, where they were usually found in domestic or industrial contexts; perhaps relating to the cult of household-gods or ancestors (Stein 2018: 205–07). Following the Canaanite cultic use of masks, masks also start to appear on the Phoenician coast and in Cyprus in relation to temples in the 12th and 11th centuries BCE. There they continue until the 4th century BCE; during this long period masks were transferred from temples to tombs (Averett 2015: 3–8; Culican 1975–1976: 57, 67; Kletter 2007: 192; Nys 1995: 19–20). The connection that was made in following centuries between masks and burials may indicate, in retrospect, that the earlier Late Bronze Age Canaanite masks too were associated in some way with the cult of the dead, or minor deities relating to them, and were used as a secondary cult in temples, alongside the worship of the main deity of the temple.

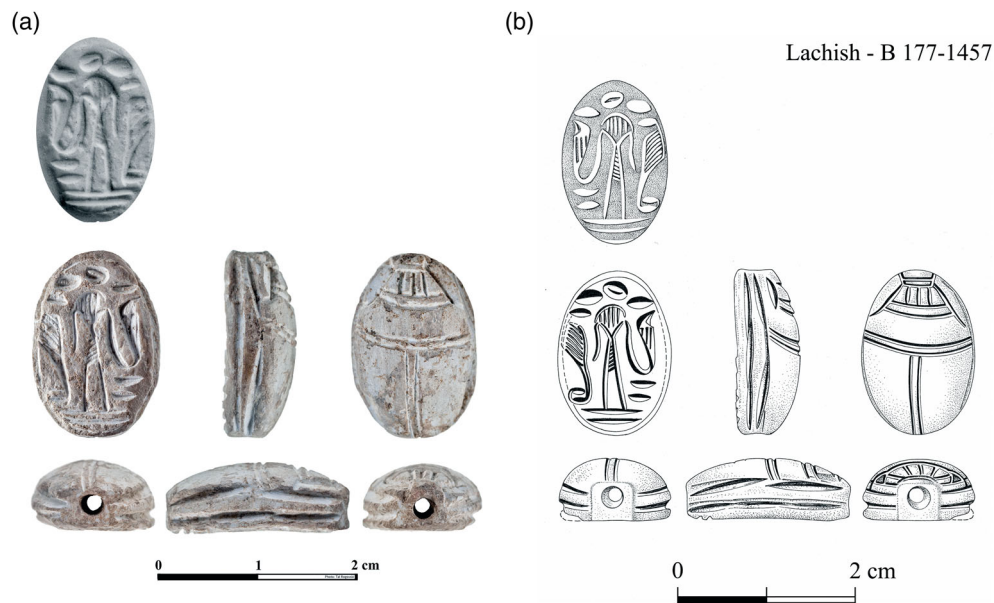


Figure 18 (a) Photograph and modern imprint of Scarab BB1457, found in the northern part of the main hall near the entrance to the holy of holies (photographs by T. Rogovski). (b) Drawing of Scarab BB1457 and its imprint (drawing by O. Dobovsky).

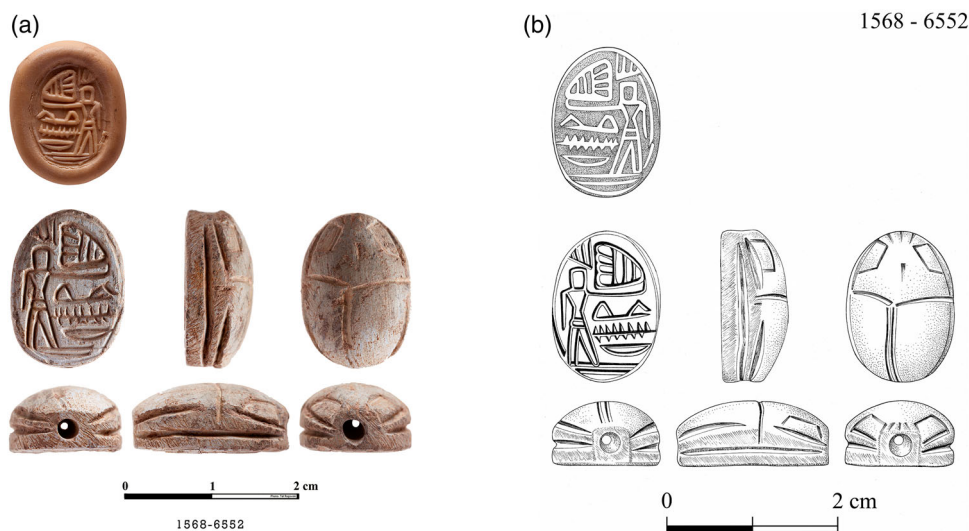


Figure 19 (a) Photograph and modern imprint of Scarab BB6552, found together with a 'lamp and bowl' deposit (photographs by T. Rogovski). (b) Drawing of Scarab BB6552 and its imprint (drawing by O. Dobovsky).

Faience rings

Diameter: 2.2 cm. Bezel: length: 1.5 cm | width: 1 cm | thickness: 0.3 cm. Hoop: width: 0.5 × 0.3 cm.

Two faience rings were found together on the floor of the main hall with five glass beads. The position in which the beads were uncovered indicates that they belonged to a single necklace, into which one of the rings may have been incorporated as a kind of pendant. One of the rings is complete and has a bezel that bears a worn engraved decoration depicting a schematic image of the Egyptian goddess Hathor flanked by

two *uraeus* serpents (Fig. 17). This type of decoration was defined by Schroer as 'Hathor fetish' (Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 28; Schroer 1989: 140–53). The material from which the rings are made, as well as the decoration on the complete ring, points to their Egyptian origin (Nicholson and Peltenburg 2000: 175–79, 182–84; Ogden 1982: 124–25, figs 7.3–6).

Scarabs

Two Early Ramesside Scarabs were found in the temple.

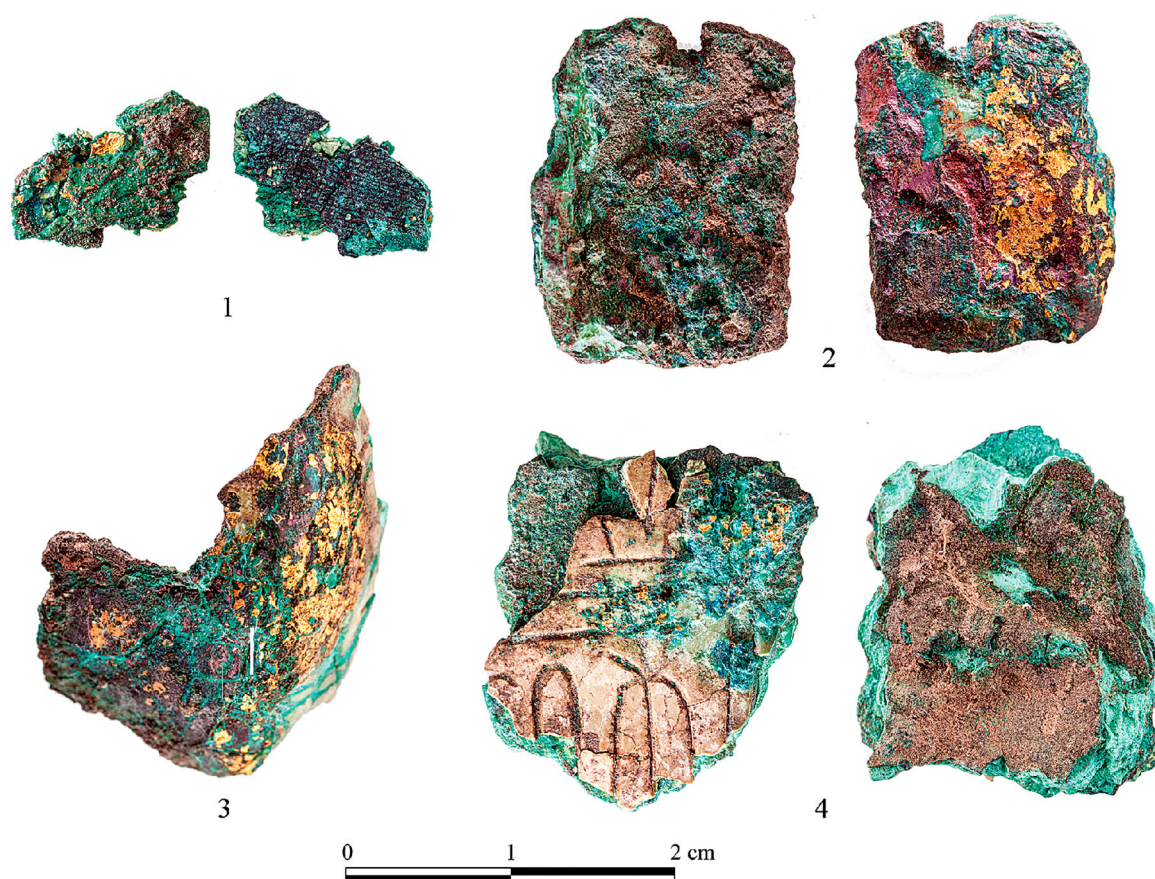


Figure 20 Four pieces of the gilded bronze situla including one piece that bears an engraved hieroglyphic inscription (photographs by T. Rogovski).

Scarab BB1457 (Fig. 18)

Length 18.5 mm | Width 12 mm | Height 7.25 mm.

A scarab that was found in a sounding in front of the entrance of the holy of holies (Fig. 5). The floor level in

this sounding is sloping between 248.38 and 248.34, while the bottom elevation is 248.32. The scarab might, therefore, have been lying on the temple's floor, or in the floor's makeup that consists of Level VII debris.

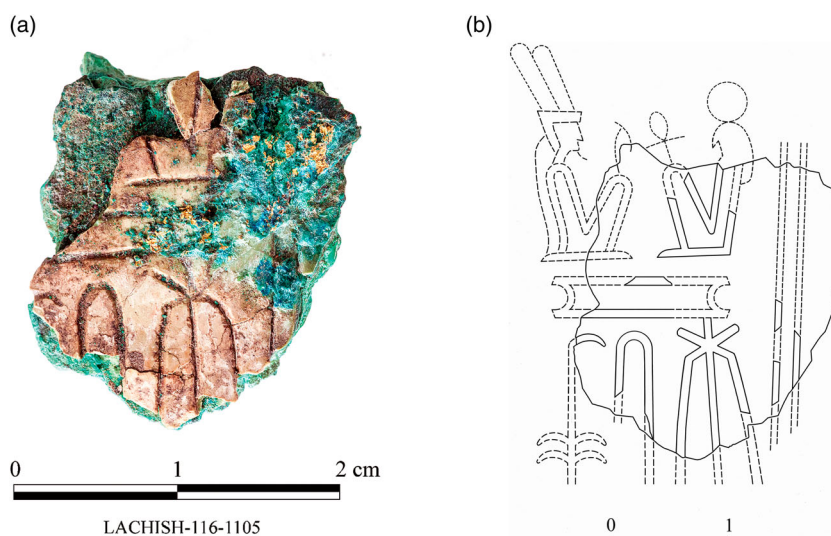


Figure 21 The inscription engraved on the outside of the gilded bronze situla (photograph by T. Rogovski, and drawing by H. Misgav).

The original colour of this glazed steatite scarab, most probably blue, has faded to white. The engraved motif on its base includes two components: the central figure is a solar deity with a human body and falcon's head. The deity is wearing a kilt, and a sun disc is above its head. In one hand it holds an 'uraeus' or cobra, above which is also a sun disc, while the other hand is hanging down along its body. Usually this deity is identified with the sun god Re. Under the 'uraeus' are two short horizontal lines, one above the other, that seem, on the basis of parallels, to be part of the epithet 'the lord of two lands' (= Egypt). The secondary component, depicted behind the sun god Re, is a larger erected 'uraeus' whose tail is curling; above its head, whose neck has been erased, is also a sun disk. The larger 'uraeus' serves, perhaps, as the determinative of 'Edjo' the goddess of Lower Egypt. There is only one known parallel to the complete motif, and it is was found in a 12th century context in Gezer (Brandl 1986: 250, fig. 1:6, pl. 1:6), therefore this scarab, as its parallel, should be identified as locally-made. On the basis of their head features the scarabs should be dated to the 19th Dynasty (13th century BCE).

Scarab BB6552 (Fig. 19)

Length 18.5 mm | Width 13.5 mm | Height 8 mm.

The scarab was found next to the upper bowl of a 'lamp and bowl' deposit that was placed into the mud-brick debris in the south-western corner of the main hall (Figs 5, 25, see below).

The original colour of this glazed steatite scarab, most probably green, has faded to yellowish-greenish. The engraved motif on its base includes two components: the mayor component shows a very schematic standing human male figure, with a degenerated three 'vertical horned' element above the head. His left arm is stretched to the right holding, horizontally, a bent, short-stem of an over-sized lotus flower directed towards the figure's face. The secondary component, located under the figure's stretched hand, is a column of three hieroglyphic signs, a later derivative of the Middle Bronze Age ANRA scarabs (Richards 2001). The schematic figure, with the huge lotus flower directed to its face and the element above its head, seems to imitate the Nile god Hapi with a clump of papyrus above his head (Matouk 1977: 320 [no. 23]). A scarab from Tell el-Hesi (Keel 2013: 652–53 [No. 7] — with previous bibliography) seems to represent the Egyptian proto-type. Nine parallel scarabs and one impressed sealing are known from Canaan, including a scarab from the British excavations at Lachish (Murray 1953: 363, 368, pls 43–

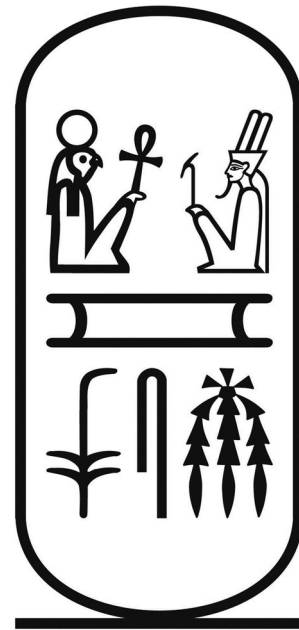


Figure 22 A cartouche of Rameses II with his fifth name (von Beckerath 1984: 238, E10).

43A: 24). No such scarabs are known outside Canaan, therefore the entire group with that degenerated motif should be identified as locally-made. The scarab, as well as its parallels, should be dated on the basis of their head features to the 19th Dynasty (13th century BCE).

Gilded bronze situla

In the northern part of the main hall (D) five pieces of bronze with remains of gold coating were found (Figs 20–21). Four of the pieces were found together next to pieces of gold leaf in the debris on the floor, while the fifth piece was found in an upper layer of debris about 40 cm above the floor. Those pieces seem to originate from a single small vessel of Egyptian origin, probably a small situla. One of the pieces bears an engraved hieroglyphic inscription. The situla was made in a typical Egyptian technology that included layers of cloth (represented by its negative marks) and gesso, laid in order to attach a very thin gold leaf to the bronze vessel (Aston *et al.* 2000: 22; Belis 2004: 1302–03; Lucas 1948: 8–9, 265; Ogden 2000: 160, 164). As is known from Egypt, objects made in this way were usually decorated by engraving the decoration in the soft gesso layer, which was then covered by a thin gold leaf that sank into the engraved lines. In our situla too the hieroglyphic inscription was engraved into the gesso layer, which is now only partly gilded. Two other pieces that are carinated, and so probably originated from the lower part of the vessel, are also covered by a



Figure 23 A Canaanite inscription incised on a storage jar before firing (photograph by T. Rogovski).

layer of gesso engraved with simple designs and gilded. It is possible that the pieces of gold leaf found in close vicinity to the situla's fragments were once part of the gold coating of this object.

The remains of the engraved hieroglyphic inscription contain five signs encircled by a cartouche. Most of the signs are fragmentary and eroded by the corrosion of the copper alloy. The right border line of the cartouche can be seen in the lower right corner of the object, and next to it are probably the remains of the left border line of a second cartouche.

The inscription contains three lines. The most complete sign, which should be read as *ms*, is the furthest to the right in the lower line. The sign next to it is the phonetic completion *s*, which usually follows the *ms* sign. Consequently, the inscription should be read from right to left. The third sign is the *sw* sign. The three signs together create the sequence *ms-sw*. Together with a *mr* sign above, this combination of signs can fit only Rameses II or Rameses VII. However, the upper sign on the right is part of an anthropomorphic figure, possibly a god. Since the figure sits facing into the cartouche, it clearly cannot be Rameses VII's name. The proposed reconstruction fits the fifth name of Rameses II (Figs 21–22; von Beckerath 1984: 238, E10): *ra-ms-s(w) mry-ynn*.

This manner of writing is known on royal monuments like the commemorative stelae of Nahr el-Kalb and the inscriptions that record the Battle of Qadesh (KRI II: 1, 3, 148 etc.), as well as on private monuments of civil and royal administrations.⁷ The

corpus of Egyptian inscriptions from Canaanite sites which are dated to Rameses II includes administrative ostraca and royal monumental inscriptions that were found in the Egyptian stronghold of Beth-Shean,⁸ as well as at sites along the *Via Maris*⁹ such as Jaffa, Ashdod and south of Gaza, thus representing the Egyptian military presence along the trade routes. Up to now, only two other inscriptions written on small luxury artefacts from the time of Rameses II have been discovered in clear archaeological contexts. The first is a glass inlay, bearing the same cartouche as the Lachish situla, found at Ashdod in a courtyard building dated to the Iron Age II (Giveon 1978). The second inscription is a ritual faience plaque dedicated to Rameses II and the goddess Isis and found at Tel Aphek in an Iron Age II stratum (Barag 1993). Because the inscription refers to the Egyptian city of Dendera, this plaque apparently, as Weinstein argues (1981: 19–20), originated in a foundation deposit in a temple in this city and was brought to Aphek at a later date.

As can be seen from these examples, the appearance of the name of Rameses II on a precious object made of costly material can hardly be used for dating a certain feature to a precise historical period. It is therefore plausible, that the situla under discussion was brought to Lachish after the reign of Rameses II, or that it was kept in the city from the 13th century until the final destruction of the city in the mid to late 12th century.

Alphabetic inscription

Maximum length: 8.6 cm | maximum width: 8.6 cm | maximum thickness: 0.7 cm.

In the north-western part of the main hall (D) of the temple an inscription was uncovered, incised, with a well-trained hand, into the shoulder of a storage jar before firing (Fig. 23). This is the first inscription in the Canaanite script to be discovered in a Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age I context in more than 30 years. The previous one, from the same site, was the Lachish bowl fragment unearthed in 1983 (Ussishkin 1983: 115, 155–57). The new inscription is intact at the top and broken on the right and possibly also at the bottom. On the left, judging by the middle line, the text could be complete, but since the other lines are of unequal length this is not certain. The remains comprise nine letters in three lines, with three letters in each line and no word dividers.

⁷See for example Louvre E.25980.

⁸Penn. 29-107-958.

⁹See for example IAA 1972.562–565; Hecht Museum H-845.



Figure 24 The pottery assemblage uncovered in the North-East Temple (photograph by C. Amit).

Boldly incised before firing, the letters are perfectly clear. The sign on the bottom left is of uncertain reading, as this irregular rectangle with a horizontal line underneath does not resemble any known letter. The letter on bottom right is largely broken away. The inscription was read and comprehensively discussed by Sass (*et al.* 2015), whose reading of the text is:

First line from right to left: *pe, kap, lamed*

Second line from right to left: *samek, pe, resh*

Third line from right to left: *X, pe, X*

In the middle line the sequence *spr*, ‘to count, to recount, document, account, scribe’, can plausibly be read. But *sgr*, ‘to close, closing device, enclosure’, cannot be ruled out, as the middle letter here can be understood as either *pe* or *gimel*. Either would indicate that the writing runs from right to left, in the line in question at any rate. Nonetheless, the text is too fragmentary to make either of these a certainty; moreover, as word division is not marked, the three letters might belong to two adjacent words.

We thus regard this fragmentary text as otherwise undecipherable, with the result that palaeography is the principal contribution here. The main element in this respect is the letter *samek*, which is composed of three horizontal lines joined in their middle by a vertical line. This is the earliest secure occurrence of the

letter, which was hitherto unidentified in any Late or Middle Bronze Age inscription. The later Iron Age *samek* seems not to have changed for several centuries, as the later occurrences of this letter are very similar to the Lachish shape.

A text incised on a storage jar before firing would be expected to mention a personal name, title, or institution and/or place-name, all referring to either the origin of the jar’s contents or its destination. The contents themselves and/or their weight or volume could be stated as well. Which of these are likely to figure in our inscription? And what does *spr*, if correctly read, signify in such a context? The text, with its short and fragmentary nature and lack of word dividers, cannot provide answers.

The cultic context of the inscription should also be noted. In the Fosse Temple III of Lachish another Canaanite inscription was found, the famous painted jar known as the Lachish Ewer, which bears a dedicatory inscription to the goddess Elat (Tufnell 1958: 130; Tufnell *et al.* 1940: 47–54, pls LI.287, LX.3). Perhaps the inscription under discussion was also of such a dedicatory nature.

The pottery assemblage

The pottery assemblage of the North-East Temple (Fig. 24) is typical of Level VI at Lachish, well known from previous excavations at the site (Clamer 2004; Tufnell 1958: 176–224; Ussishkin 2004g;

Yannai 2004). It lacks imports and includes only local pottery, which can be divided into three general groups: local Canaanite pottery types; local imitation of Aegean pottery types; and local imitations of Egyptian pottery types ('Egyptianized'). The first group forms the vast majority of the assemblage and includes various types of bowls, kraters, cooking pots, juglets, jugs, flasks, amphoriskoi, storage jars and biconical vessels, as well as a few fragments of baking trays, 'cup-and-saucers' and goblets or chalices. The two other groups are represented by a limited number of types and a small number of examples. Imitations of Aegean types include a few pyxides and globular juglets and one piriform jar. Imitations of Egyptian pottery include one complete globular jar and a fragment of a second one, and open bowls with flaring rims. Bowls of this type can be seen as *fossiles directeurs* of Level VI at Lachish, as they appear for the first time in this level, and in Areas P and S they are the most common type of bowl (Clamer 2004: 1289, 1299, type I.A.a; Yannai 2004: 1051–52, 1060, group B-26).¹⁰ In the North-East Temple these bowls are not as common but seem to appear in significant numbers.

Discussion

Ritual activity in the Temple

The plan of the temple indicates that the main object of worship was once placed in the innermost room (H), which most probably served as the holy of holies. Because the room is almost completely eroded, its sanctity is evident only in the special finds that were placed in front of its entrance, and the foundation deposit of jewellery and weapons deposited in one of its walls. The main deity of the temple may have been a warlike god, perhaps Resheph or Baal, as represented by the two 'smiting god' figurines. The figurines were placed just outside the entrance to the holy of holies. They do not, therefore, seem to have been the actual cult idol venerated as the deity itself, but rather votive offerings dedicated to him and made in his image. The cult idol was most probably placed within the holy of holies (Cornelius 1994: 132; Negbi 1976: 2; Seeden 1980: 152).

The sceptre found beside the figurines seems to be an attribute of the warlike god. Alongside the main cult of this god, it is possible that his consort was

worshipped as a side cult, a goddess that appears on the silver pendant and also seems to be represented by her attribute, the bird (dove?), engraved on the axe head found in the foundation deposit in the holy of holies. The faience ring with the depiction of Hathor may also be related to the cult of this goddess.

The main cultic activity probably took place in the temple's courtyard in front of the main entrance, an area which wide segments of the community would have been permitted to enter, while access to the temple structure itself was restricted to a handful of priests who conducted the rituals (prior to the crisis phase described below). Unfortunately, almost nothing of the courtyard has been preserved. The clay mask found within it may be related to some subsidiary cult practised there, perhaps the cult of the dead or minor deities.

Alongside the holy of holies at the northern end of the building, there was a minor focus of cult activity in the south-eastern side of the main hall. This was marked by two standing stones (*maṣṣebot*) and an adjoining stone platform on which a large stone basin was placed. The minor status of the standing stones is reflected by their location away from the central axis of the building which points to the holy of holies, the major focus of cult and where the main deity of the temple 'dwells'.

It is a reasonable assumption that the activity associated with these cultic features included food and liquid offerings, placed on the platform and/or on the flat stones in front of the standing stones (an offering table). The stone basin possibly held liquids with which the standing stones were anointed, a practice known from several ancient texts in which oil, wine, or sometimes blood, were used in this manner, for example the description of the *Zukru* festival at Emar (Cohen 2007: 331–33; Fleming 1992: 75–79) and the biblical traditions about Jacob in Bethel (Gen. 28:18; 35:13) and Moses at the foot of Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:4–8). Standing stones are associated with basins at other sites as well, such as Gezer (Dever 2014), Hazor (Ben-Ami 2006; Ben-Tor *et al.* 2017a: 45–54), Tell el-Hayyat (Falconer and Fall 2006: 91–93) and Timna (Avner 2014).

The minor status of the standing stones raises the possibility that they were associated with the cult of minor deities or (deified?) ancestors. These were possibly perceived as mediators between the worshippers and the great deity of the temple who dwelled in the holy of holies. A possible parallel to such a cult can be found in the Ugaritic epic of 'Aqhat, which describes the duty of a son to place a standing stone in the temple in dedication to an ancestral deity

¹⁰This may relate to a growing Egyptian influence in Lachish at the time of Level VI, as can also be seen in other features of the material culture such as the anthropoid coffins (Tufnell 1958: 131–32, 248–49, pl. 45:1–3, pl. 46), hieratic inscriptions on local bowls (Sweeney 2004; Tufnell 1958: 132, pl. 47:1–5), Egyptian-style architecture in the Acropolis Temple (Ussishkin 2004d: 261–67) and dietary habits (Koch 2014).

named Ilib, perhaps a patron god of the extended family or clan and/or a deified ancestor (KTU 1.17.I.27; Lewis 2008: 69–70; Pardee 2003b: 344; Schloen 2001: 343–45).¹¹ Ilib is also known from lists of gods and ritual texts as a recipient of sacrifices in the temple of Baal, one of Ugarit's main temples (Lewis 2008: 73; Pardee 2002: 29–33; van der Toorn 1993), and the name Ilib appears in a Canaanite inscription found in Area S, Level VI at Lachish (Cross 1984; Lemaire 2004: 1597; Puech 1986–1987: 21). In addition, two stelae, found in relation to the temple of Dagan in Ugarit, bear inscriptions that mention mortuary sacrifices, possibly as part of the cult of the dead for members of the royal family (RS 6.021; RS 6.028; Lewis 2014: 71; Pardee 2002: 123–25). This practice can be compared to the later Iron Age standing stones (stelae) from northern Syria that bear inscriptions and visual representations connecting them to the cult of the dead (Graesser 1972: 39–40). Especially remarkable is the stele of Katumuwa (KTMW), which was found at Zincirli in a small room beside a shrine (Sanders 2013; Struble and Rimmer Herrmann 2009; Suriano 2014).

Additional focal points of ritual activity seem to be associated with the mudbrick installation L. BB1054, which was apparently a platform (an altar?) that stood on the roof of the temple before collapsing during the temple's destruction. The rituals performed on the temple's roof would have been visible throughout the rural surroundings of Lachish. The roof may have been used during specific agricultural festivals, as known for example at Ugarit, where the king sacrificed on the roof of the Temple of El (RS 1.003: 50–55; Pardee 2002: 57, 65) during the New Year Festival, and on the roof of the temple of Baal during the annual celebration of the grape harvest (KTU 1.41: 50–55; Levine et al. 2003).¹² Other ancient Near Eastern texts too describe cultic activity on roofs, for instance in Emar (Fleming 1992: 210) and in Hittite Anatolia (Singer 2002: 12, 25–27, 85–86), as well as the Hebrew Bible (2 Kgs 23:12; Jer. 32:29; Zeph. 1:5). Archaeologically, the main evidence for activity on temple roofs is the remains of staircases identified in various temples, especially the monumental ones found in the two temples on the acropolis of Ugarit (Callot 2011: figs 38, 67; Yon 2006: 109–10), as well as those uncovered in the temples of Megiddo (Loud 1948: figs 247, 250), Shechem (Campbell 2002: 147)

and Hazor (Ben-Tor et al. 2017b: 98; Zuckerman 2012: 106). Staircases are also known in smaller temples, such as the Hurrian Temple of Ugarit (Yon 2006: 49) and the temple at Tall Zira'a (Vieweger and Häser 2017: 159, fig. 1.52). We have suggested above that the North-East Temple too had such a staircase tower (Rooms B and C).

The life cycle of the Temple

Below the North-East Temple, the remains of what seems to have been a large public building (or buildings) of Level VII were uncovered. This structure shows clear signs of destruction by fire, a destruction observed in other parts of the site and the adjacent Fosse Temple III as well (Ussishkin 2004a: 60–61). This earlier structure had a different plan from that of the later Level VI temple, and it seems to have been different in nature. In the soundings excavated below the temple, we observed that the walls of Level VI 'floated' above the remains of Level VII or cut and disturbed them, and that in no spot did a wall of Level VI stand directly on top of a Level VII wall. Hence, there is a clear discontinuity between the two levels. Between the remains of Level VII and the temple, no earlier phase of Level VI was found. It consequently seems reasonable to suggest that the temple was constructed in the early days of Level VI, at the beginning of the 12th century BCE, and stood for several decades until the destruction in the second half of the 12th century.

During construction of the North-East Temple, three foundation deposits were buried within the building. The first is the deposit of jewellery and weapons that was placed at an early stage of construction in the foundation of one of the walls of the holy of holies. The other two deposits consist of three large bronze cauldrons placed in pits, which may have been deposited as part of a dedication ceremony that included a feast in which the cauldrons were used.

After the dedication of the temple, one would suppose that a cultic routine was established and continued through most of the temple's life. However, because of the dramatic nature of the temple's last days, this main phase in the life of the temple is less apparent in the archaeological record. To this phase we can probably attribute most of the special finds: the two 'smiting god' figurines, the sceptre-head, the clay mask, and perhaps also some of the more special types of pottery vessels such as pyxides, piri-form jugs, 'cup-and-saucers' and amphoriskoi.

Before the destruction of the temple, signs of crisis can be seen in its architecture and finds. In this phase, an installation (L. BB1067) and a partition

¹¹ *nsb skn ilibh - bqds ztr 'mh'* — 'someone to raise up the stela of his personal god, in the sanctuary the votive emblem of his clan' (KTU 1.17.I.27; Pardee 2003b: 344).

¹² See also the cultic activity performed on a roof by King Kirta in 'The Kirta Epic' (KTU 1.14 II 20–22, 27; Pardee 2003a: 334).



Figure 25: The 'lamp and bowl' deposit as it was found in the south-western corner of the main hall (D), looking west (scale = 10 cm) (Courtesy of the Fourth Expedition to Lachish).

wall (W. BB1665) were carelessly built in the centre of the main hall, thus interrupting the central axis of the building and disturbing its original symmetry (Fig. 5). To this we should probably also add the low heap of stones that was found partly obstructing the main entrance to the temple. Architectural alterations of a similarly crude nature have been observed at various sites, seen as markers of crisis they are termed 'crisis architecture' by Driessen (1995). These additions mark partial or complete changes in the function of the structure, probably as a reaction to a crisis. An example of this can be seen in the last phase of the Orthostat Temple in Area H at Hazor, where Zuckerman (2007) has defined as 'crisis architecture' a number of 'flimsy' added partition walls that obstruct the temple's doorways and holy of holies, as well as installations ('silos') that were constructed in the temple's inner hall. Zuckerman saw these alterations as markers of a profound change in the status and function of the temple during the crisis that preceded the final destruction of Canaanite Hazor (Zuckerman 2007: 17–24).

The North-East Temple of Lachish provides other indications of crisis in the numbers of restorable vessels and their spatial distribution. This seems to indicate domestic rather than cultic activity in the

temple before the destruction. The majority of the assemblage consists of a large number of storage jars and bowls, together with a number of cooking pots and kraters. The storage jars were found mainly in the storage room (F) and the main hall (D). There they were uncovered in relation to installation L. BB1067 and beside the western walls of the hall, especially near an oven (L. BB1993) which was probably also built in this phase and attests to its domestic nature. A large grinding stone placed beside the northern face of the partition wall (W. BB1665), as well as other grinding stones found throughout the structure, also relate to this domestic activity. In addition, the few 'cup-and-saucers' uncovered, which are usually seen as cultic vessels (Uziel and Gadot 2010), were all found already chopped for secondary use as stoppers. No restorable examples were found of other typical cultic vessels such as offering stands and chalices.

Throughout the crisis phase, the ritual activity of the temple seems to have continued, although it was now limited to the holy of holies and its immediate vicinity, as evident from the concentration of special finds in the north of the main hall. These finds include the figurines, the sceptre, the situla and remains of gold leaf and beads, and the few bowls that were found next to them.

The crisis phase observed in the North-East Temple corresponds well with earlier observations from Ussishkin's excavation of the 'Pillared Building' in Area S. The excavators suggested that this structure had two phases: in the first phase, during most of Level VI, it was used for an official function of some kind, and in the second phase the building was used for domestic purposes. Barkay and Ussishkin (2004: 358, 361) have suggested that the latter phase represents a crisis state before the destruction, in which refugees from the countryside flocked into the city to take refuge from the approaching threat. The crisis phase in the 'Pillared Building' was represented by a number of ovens, the nature of the pottery assemblage and skeletons of a woman and children (Barkay and Ussishkin 2004: 353–61; Smith 2004).

The finds from the North-East Temple strengthen the interpretation of Barkay and Ussishkin with regard to Area S. It seems that the last phase of the North-East Temple too represents this crisis state — a phase in which the cultic activity was no longer conducted in the usual manner and the temple was also used for domestic functions such as food preparation and storage, possibly by refugees who fled to Canaanite Lachish on the eve of its final destruction.

After the destruction, the final activity in relation to the temple took place. This activity is marked by a 'lamp and bowl' deposit that was placed into the mudbrick debris in the south-western corner of the main hall (Fig. 25). A scarab was found in that mudbrick debris very close to the upper bowl (Fig. 19 — see above). The deposit was clearly left after the destruction, because it was found above the floor rather than below it, as is typical of this type of deposit. In addition, all four vessels that make up the deposit (three bowls and a lamp) were found intact and without soot marks, in marked contrast to all the other pottery vessels found in the temple, which were broken and usually blackened by the fire of the temple's destruction. No later living phases were uncovered above the great majority of the temple in general, and above the deposit in particular. Moreover, the deposit's vessels are of types that are well known in Level VI and do not appear in Level V of the Iron Age IIA, which was established after about two centuries of abandonment. Moreover, these 'lamp and bowl' deposits are known in Lachish only in Levels VII and VI of the latter part of the Late Bronze Age and do not appear in Level V; in general, deposits of this type tend not to continue after the Iron Age I (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2016a: 215–23; Bunimovitz and Zimhoni 1993; 2004; DePietro 2012: 99–122).¹³ Consequently, it seems that the deposition did not originate from a later organized floor level, but was simply dug into the debris of the destroyed temple a relatively short time after the destruction of the Canaanite city. It is reasonable to suggest that this activity was executed by survivors who remembered the temple and deliberately chose to bury the deposit in its ruins as an offering. By this act, they may have wished to pay the temple their last respects and, in turn, mark the termination of the ritual activity associated with it (Ussishkin 1970; Zuckerman 2007).

No later activity above the temple was detected, except for a line of pillars in a Level V building that was built on top of the temple's western wall. The eastern part of this Iron Age IIA building was probably built on top of the temple, but it has eroded over time with the eastern half of the temple. As mentioned above, unlike the temple itself, which was mostly not disturbed by later construction, the courtyard as well as part of the tower were damaged by a

series of later pits, the latest pottery from which dates from the Persian period (Level I).

The North-East Temple in context

In ancient societies the common belief was that there are various supernatural beings, such as gods and spirits, in the world. From this basic belief, religion was developed as the social and cultural institution whose aim was to manage and organize the interaction of human societies with these transcendent beings. This interaction was expressed by various actions, which included a variety of rituals and customs that are generally referred to as 'cult' (Renfrew 1985: 11–12, 16; Spiro 1966: 95–97; Wiggermann 1995). The locus of cult could be in various places in the landscape in relation to elements that were perceived as markers of liminal spaces between the human and metaphysical worlds. These places could be natural sites such as mountains, rocks, caves, water sources or trees;¹⁴ they could also be artificial sites such as temples, shrines, cult rooms, altars and standing stones, they could even be portable objects such as figurines and amulets (Hundley 2013: 131–32; Renfrew 1985: 16–17, 20).

The most prominent cult sites in ancient Near Eastern societies were temples, buildings which were perceived as the earthly abode of gods. These anthropogenic monuments marked a sacred liminal space located in the heart of the human world, they therefore tended to be located at a key point in the landscape, and served as centres for public ritual activity (Hundley 2013: 3, 118–19, 131–32).

Throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages, temples in the Levant were often built in the same locations as earlier temples, creating a sequence of several temples that preserved the sanctity of a specific point in the landscape for centuries. Examples can be found at Megiddo (Dunayevsky and Kempinski 1973), Beth-Shean (Mullins 2012), Pella (Bourke 2012), Hazor (Zuckerman 2012) and Alalakh (Woolley 1955: 33–90).

Temples were usually located in prominent places that could be seen from afar. Such places might be the highest point in the city, as at Ebla, Emar, Alalakh, Ugarit, Hazor and Megiddo, or a commanding location at the edge of the city, close to the slope of the mound, as at Emar and Munbaqa, where the temples overlook the Euphrates Valley (Hundley 2013: 107–8, 114), and Hazor, where the Orthostat

¹³An exceptional later appearance of a 'lamp and bowl' deposit was uncovered recently in an Iron Age IIA stratum at Azekah (Lipschitz et al. 2018: 96).

¹⁴See, for example, cult sites in Hittite Anatolia (Ökse 2011: 219–20), in Minoan Crete (Peatfield 2009: 251–53), in the ancient Greek culture (Pedley 2005: 39) and in Palestinian Arab traditions (Canaan 1927: 3, 6–7, 63).

Temple overlooks the Hula Valley (Zuckerman 2012: 105–07).

Over the years, temples of the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age I have been uncovered at about 18 sites in the southern Levant (Fig. 1). At most of those sites only one temple is known in each stratum, although in a few cases two temples were found together, one beside the other (Beth-Shean V; Kamid el-Loz T1, T2; Tell Qasile XI–X). Pairs of temples are also known in the north, as in the acropolis temples of Ugarit and Emar. In the southern Levant it is only at Hazor, and now also at Lachish, that more than one temple has been found in different locations at the site during the same phase. This is possibly the result of limited exposure of Late Bronze Age and Iron Age I strata. It should be noted, however, that at Megiddo, where large areas of the relevant strata were exposed, no more than one definite temple was found in each stratum.

The locations of multiple temples in the urban planning of ancient Levantine cities, as well as their plans, may possibly point to the relative status of the various temples in the cultic hierarchy of the city. One can learn about such a possible hierarchy of temples at a Late Bronze Age Levantine city from the example of Ugarit, where four Late Bronze Age temples are known. On the city's acropolis stood two monumental temples with identical symmetrical plans, the Temple of Baal and the Temple of Dagan (Yon 2006: 106–10, 113–14). Their size and prime location in the landscape, which was visible throughout the city of Ugarit and its vicinity, clearly attest to their status as the main temples of the city. On the edge of the mound, and next to the palace and one of the city gates, was another temple known as the Hurrian Temple (Yon 2006: 49, fig. 25).¹⁵ To a certain extent this temple resembles the temples of the Acropolis in its symmetrical plan, but it is significantly smaller. This temple's prime location, beside a gate plaza and the palace, as well as its rich finds, attest to its royal character, although it is secondary to the larger temples of the Acropolis. The fourth temple at Ugarit is the Temple of the Rhytons (Yon 1996; 2006: 82–83, figs 47–48), which is located in the heart of a city block that also includes residential buildings. It is a small temple with a plan that can be attributed to Mazar's group of 'temples with indirect entrance and irregular plans' (Mazar 1992: 177–82). This small temple seems to be a good example of a small neighbourhood

shrine or meeting place for cultic activity, perhaps a *marziḥu* as suggested by Yon (1996). This shrine possibly served an extended family living in this part of the city. It seems reasonable to assume that it was built not by the state, but by a local (family/community) initiative.

A fairly similar hierarchy can be seen at Late Bronze Age Hazor, where the Acropolis was dominated by Building 7050 as part of a large royal ceremonial precinct that also included the Northern Temple for a time (during Stratum XIV) and was most probably built close to the administrative palace of Hazor (Ben-Tor 2017; Ben-Tor *et al.* 2017b: 136, plan 4.39; Zuckerman 2012: 114; 2017). In the lower city two other temples were uncovered, the Orthostat Temple in Area H and the Stele Temple in Area C. The Orthostat Temple was a monumental temple with a symmetrical plan, smaller than Building 7050, which stood on the edge of the mound and looked north towards the Hula Valley. The temple's architecture and finds show that it was a state temple serving as one of the city's main centres of worship (Zuckerman 2012: 105–07, 117, 122). The actual context of the Orthostat Temple in the urban planning of the city is not yet known, but we might suggest that this temple, like the Hurrian Temple of Ugarit and perhaps also the North-East Temple of Lachish (see below), was situated in relation to a gate complex.¹⁶ The Stelae Temple, on the other hand, was a small one-room temple, built on the fringe of a cramped residential quarter (Zuckerman 2012: 102–03, 122). This temple was probably a low-ranking neighbourhood shrine, like the Temple of the Rhytons at Ugarit, rather than an official state temple like the Orthostat Temple and the ceremonial precinct on the acropolis. As such, and in view of its finds, it has been suggested that the Stelae Temple was related to an ancestor cult (Ornan 2012: 12–13).

The recently discovered North-East Temple joins the two previously known temples of Canaanite Lachish: the Fosse Temple and the Acropolis Temple (Fig. 2). The three stages (I–III) of the Fosse Temple cover a period of about three centuries, from the 15th century BCE to its destruction at the end of the

¹⁵Also known as the Royal or Palatial Temple, and 'the temple with the Mitannian axe'.

¹⁶To the east of the Orthostat Temple is a fold of land, currently occupied by a dirt road. It is possible that this fold hints at the location of the city's northern gate. Furthermore, the entrance to the temple's courtyard in Stratum 1B (Late Bronze Age II) is from the east, perhaps pointing to a gate plaza east of the temple.
13th or the early 12th century BCE together with Level VII on the mound (Koch 2017; Tufnell *et al.* 1940). During its time no other temple is known in Lachish, although the exposures of the relevant

levels on the mound are extremely limited. The Acropolis Temple was built in Level VI of the 12th century BCE, after the final destruction of the Fosse Temple (Clamer 2004; Ussishkin 2004d). The North-East Temple, contemporary with the Acropolis Temple, was also constructed in Level VI. These two temples of Level VI were new monuments in the city, built on top of earlier public buildings of Level VII. Buildings that were different in their plan and nature to the later temples (Ussishkin 2004c: fig. 5.7). This is in clear contrast to the well-known phenomenon of long continuity of sacred places, discussed above. The construction of two new temples represents a significant change in cultic activity at the time of Level VI, when compared with the previous Late Bronze Age levels at the site. This change is also reflected in the fact that the Fosse Temple, which had accompanied the city for about 300 years, was destroyed together with the city of Level VII and was not rebuilt in the time of Level VI. Such a shift may represent some ideological change that perhaps stems from a change in the population of the city and especially in its ruling elite.

As mentioned above, the existence of multiple temples in the same level, as now known from Lachish VI, is very rare in the southern Levant. The locations of the two temples of Lachish VI in the urban planning of the city, as well as their plan, are possible indicators of their status in the city's cultic hierarchy. Although Lachish has been excavated by a number of expeditions since the 1930s, the exposure of Level VI is still quite limited. It includes mainly the remains of the Acropolis Temple and perhaps some poor remains of a palace in Area P at the top of the mound (Ussishkin 2004f), some large storage buildings in Area D at the southern edge of the acropolis (Tufnell 1953: 77–78; Ussishkin 2004b: 282, 302–05) and a public structure known as the 'pillared building' in Area S at the western edge of the site (Barkay and Ussishkin 2004: 353–61). Additional fragmentary remains of Level VI were found in a deep, narrow probe carried out by Ussishkin in Area GE under the Iron Age gate (Ussishkin 2004f: 624–31), under the Persian-Hellenistic Solar Shrine, where Aharoni's expedition found some remains of possible domestic structures (Aharoni 1975: 12, pl. 61) and in the North-East Section, about 50 metres south-west of the North-East Temple, where Level VI was first defined by Starkey's expedition (Tufnell 1958: 49). The Fourth Expedition to Lachish found significant remains of Level VI in Area BB and the adjacent Area BC.

These few known remains of Level VI, together with the site's topography, allow us to make some observations regarding the general place of the two known temples of the city in the urban fabric. The remains in Areas P and D seem to represent the official, royal area of the city that included the Acropolis Temple; a temple that stood at the highest point of the mound and was perhaps joined there by the city's palace (Ussishkin 2004a: 63; Yannai 1996: 178). Because of its location, as well as its size and elaborate design, it was clearly the main royal temple of the city, like the large temples on the acropolises of Hazor and Ugarit.

The North-East Temple was located to the east of the acropolis, on the edge of the slope of the north-eastern corner of the mound and oriented toward the north. Although this is the lowest point on the mound's plateau, it commands a very prominent spot in the landscape, overlooking the city's rural surroundings and the main road that passes by the Lachish stream (Wadi Jhafr) below. Cult activities that took place in the temple, such as the smoke of sacrifices and perhaps also rituals performed on the temple's roof, would have been clearly visible from afar. The location of the North-East Temple, as well as its organized plan and small size compared to the Acropolis Temple, seem to signify its secondary status and recall royal temples of secondary status such as the Orthostat Temple at Hazor and the Hurrian Temple at Ugarit.

The North-East Temple is located beside a natural spur which allows convenient access up to the mound from the Lachish stream. Its location beside the spur may imply that the temple was originally incorporated into a city gate complex here. Ussishkin believed that the Late Bronze Age gate of Lachish was in the south-western part of the mound, in the same location as the Iron Age II gates, an assumption that led him to interpret the fragmentary Level VI remains in Area GE as part of the Late Bronze Age gate (Ussishkin 2004a: 75; 2004e: 504; 2004f: 626, 631). However, the Iron Age II gate complex is founded mostly on an artificial fill supported by a massive revetment wall constructed in that period (Ussishkin 2004e: 508–12). In contrast, the spur in the north-eastern corner is part of the natural hill and so could have served as the original way up to the city prior to the construction of the artificial Iron Age gate ramp. This assumption is strengthened by the fact that before the excavation of the Iron Age gate in the 1930s the local Arab farmers used to go up to the mound by the north-eastern corner, which

Tufnell described as ‘the natural approach’ to the mound (Tufnell 1958: 291, pl. 1:2, 89).

The suggested gate complex in the north-eastern corner seems to have included, in addition to the temple, a fort, whose fragmentary remains were uncovered about 30 metres south-east of the temple. The fort and the temple may have delimited a gate plaza that constituted the main entrance to the city and one of its central public spaces. From it, a main road probably led up to the royal area of the acropolis. If this was the case, the ritual activity in the temple may have been related in some way to the commercial and legal activities that characterized gates at that time, as well as providing a ‘ritual response’ to the gate as a liminal space (Blomquist 1999: 15–19; May 2014). The possible location of the temple in one of the city’s main public spaces also indicates that it was an official ‘royal’ temple (in contrast to smaller neighbourhood shrines), albeit secondary to the Acropolis Temple. This location, beside a gate and a plaza, recalls the Hurrian Temple of Ugarit. Unfortunately, the massive erosion in Area BB did not leave any remains of Level VI between the fort and the temple that could clearly attest to the existence of such a gate.

The North-East Temple and the Acropolis Temple may share some general features in their plan (see above), but there are several significant differences between them. The Acropolis Temple includes several elements that gave it a certain Egyptian appearance: two large columns in the centre of the main hall, three smaller octagonal columns, painted plaster decorating the walls and a raised holy of holies approached by a stone staircase (Mazar 1992: 176–77; Ussishkin 2004d: 261). In addition, the Acropolis Temple was incorporated into a larger building complex. The North-East Temple, in contrast, was apparently a free-standing structure and its design lacks clear Egyptian elements, seeming rather to derive from the local Canaanite style of the ‘Tower Temple’. These differences may arise from the different nature of the two temples: the Acropolis Temple as the main temple of the city, associated with the palace and members of the city’s ruling elite who imitated customs of their Egyptian patrons; and, on the other hand, the North-East Temple, although most probably a royal temple as well but of secondary status, served lower levels of the local society in the city and possibly its rural surroundings, as its location in the lower city on the edge of the mound overlooking the city’s territory may indicate.

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