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THE SETTLEMENT HISTORY OF JERUSALEM IN THE EIGHTH AND SEVENTH CENTURIES BC

BY

Israel FINKELSTEIN

Institute of Archaeology
Tel Aviv University
TEL AVIV 69978 IL
fink2@post.tau.ac.il

SUMMARY

In this rejoinder to a recent article by Nadav Na'aman, I suggest that: A) The expansion of Jerusalem to the southwestern hill and the settlement prosperity in the Judahite countryside did not start before the middle of the 8th century and reached their peak in the last third of that century; B) The population growth in Jerusalem and Judah was so dramatic that it can be explained only on the background of the incorporation of the kingdom into the Assyrian world economy and the wave of refugees that came from the Northern Kingdom; C) There is no evidence for a demographic decrease in Jerusalem in the late 7th century B.C.

SOMMAIRE

Dans cette réponse à un récent article de Nadav Na'aman, je propose que: 1 – L'expansion de Jérusalem sur la colline sud-ouest et la prospérité des installations de la campagne judéenne ne commencent pas avant le milieu du VIII^e s. et atteignent leur maximum au dernier tiers de ce siècle; 2 – L'accroissement de la population à Jérusalem et en Juda a été si forte que cela ne peut s'expliquer que sur l'arrière-fond aussi bien de l'intégration du royaume dans le monde économique assyrien, que de la vague des réfugiés du Royaume du Nord; 3 – Il n'y a pas de preuve d'un déclin démographique à Jérusalem à la fin du VII^e s.





Nadav Na'aman recently published a comprehensive article on the history of Jerusalem in the Iron II¹. Na'aman opposes the archaeological and historical reconstruction Silberman and I have suggested, according to which the demographic growth of Jerusalem was a rapid process which took place in the second half of the 8th century B.C. We proposed that this process was an outcome of the incorporation of Judah into the Assyrian economy starting in the days of Ahaz and of the torrent of refugees that flooded into Judah from the southern part of Israel after it was taken over by Assyria in 722-720 B.C.². The main points in Na'aman's theory are:

1. The expansion from the City of David to the southwestern hill (the Jewish and Armenian Quarters) was a gradual process which started as early as the 9th century B.C.
2. Jerusalem's population growth stemmed first and foremost from economic possibilities that opened up to Judah in the course of the 8th century B.C., and later from the influx of refugees from the Shephelah after the Sennacherib devastation of the region in 701 B.C.
3. In the second half of the 7th century B.C. the population of Jerusalem decreased; when the geo-political tensions eased, many of the refugees returned to their hometowns in the Shephelah.

These two concepts—Na'aman's, and Silberman's and mine—are at odds not only in detail but also in method. They represent two different approaches to the reconstruction of the history of ancient Israel in biblical times. Na'aman's view of the history of Jerusalem is based, primarily, on his interpretation of the textual evidence—biblical and extra-biblical—rejecting the archaeological evidence if it negates what he reads in the texts. I would argue that the textual material, important as it may be, leaves many gaps in our knowledge and a broad area for interpretation; I, therefore, reconstruct the history of Jerusalem primarily according to the archaeological material and only then do I turn to the textual data. In what follows I wish to clarify why the latter method is preferable.

¹ N. NA'AMAN, "When and How Did Jerusalem Become a Great City? The Rise of Jerusalem as Judah's Premier City in the Eighth-Seventh Centuries B.C.E.," *BASOR* 347 (2007) 21-56.

² I. FINKELSTEIN and N.A. SILBERMAN, *David and Solomon: In Search of the Bible's Sacred Kings and the Roots of the Western Tradition* (New York, 2006) 121-149; idem, "Temple and Dynasty: Hezekiah, the Remaking of Judah and the Rise of the Pan-Israelite Ideology," *JSOT* 30 (2006) 259-285.





WHEN DID JERUSALEM EXPAND TO THE SOUTHWESTERN HILL?

The key to resolving this question is the date of two Judahite pottery assemblages, which were best defined at Lachish. The first, of Level IV, represents the later phase of the Iron IIA³, while the second, of Level III, characterizes the destruction layers caused in the course of the Sennacherib campaign in 701 B.C.⁴

Na'aman is correct in arguing that the assemblage of Lachish III was probably dominant during a meaningful part of the 8th century B.C. *before* the Sennacherib campaign; this is evident from the fact that at Arad it appears in three strata (X-VIII), the latest of which (VIII) came to an end in 701 B.C.⁵ And it probably continued into the early part of the 7th century⁶. The dating of the Lachish IV assemblage (and its parallels, such as Beer-sheba V and Arad XI) to the mid- to second-half of the 9th century B.C. has recently been refined and confirmed by ¹⁴C results from Stratum IV at Tell es-Safi in the Shephelah. The nine measurements from this stratum⁷ provide an average uncalibrated date of 2707±27, which translates into a calibrated range of 895-820 B.C. Historically, it seems safe to assume that the destruction of this stratum was inflicted by Hazael king of Damascus sometime in the second half of the 9th century⁸, after his accession in 842 B.C. The combination of the ¹⁴C results and the historical argument restricts the date of destruction of Tell es-Safi IV to 842-820 B.C.⁹

³ A. MAZAR and N. PANITZ-COHEN, *Tinnah (Tel Batash) II: The Finds from the First Millennium BCE, Text* (Qedem 42; Jerusalem, 2001) 273-276; Z. HERZOG and L. SINGER-AVITZ, "Redefining the Centre: The Emergence of State in Judah", *Tel Aviv* 31 (2004) 209-244.

⁴ For a detailed discussion of the two assemblages see O. ZIMHONI, *Studies in the Iron Age Pottery of Israel: Typological, Archaeological and Chronological Aspects* (Tel Aviv, 1997); idem, "The Pottery of Levels V and IV and its Archaeological and Chronological Implications", in D. Ussishkin, *The Renewed Archaeological Excavations at Lachish (1973-1994)* (Monograph Series of the Institute of Archaeology 22; Tel Aviv, 2004) 1643-1788; idem, "The Pottery of Levels III and II", in Ussishkin *The Renewed Archaeological Excavations at Lachish*, pp. 1789-1899.

⁵ L. SINGER-AVITZ, "Arad: The Iron Age Pottery Assemblages", *Tel Aviv* 29 (2002) 159-180.

⁶ Already I. FINKELSTEIN, "The Archaeology of the Days of Manasseh", in M.D. Coogan, J. Cheryl Exum and L.E. Stager (eds.), *Scripture and Other Artifacts Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philip J. King* (Louisville, 1994) 169-187.

⁷ I. SHARON, A. GILBOA, T.A.J. JULL and E. BOARETTO, "Report on the First Stage of the Iron Age Dating Project in Israel: Supporting A Low Chronology", *Radiocarbon* 49 (2007) 39, 44.

⁸ A. MAEIR, "The Historical Background and Dating of Amos VI 2: An Archaeological Perspective from Tell es-Safi/Gath", *Vetus Testamentum* 54 (2004) 319-334.

⁹ I. FINKELSTEIN and E. PIASETZKY, "Radiocarbon Dating and Philistine Chronology", *Egypt and the Levant* 17 (2007) 74-82.





The crucial question for this discussion is the date of *transition* from the assemblage of Lachish IV to that of Lachish III. Many scholars have placed it in the first half of the 8th century¹⁰, while Fantalkin and I suggested dating it to ca. 800 B.C.¹¹. Seven measurements from the destruction of Beth-shemesh 3—a stratum which features transitional Iron IIA/Iron IIB pottery forms—provided an average ¹⁴C date of 2505±30¹². Due to the nature of the calibration curve, this translates into a broad 1 σ absolute date of 766-745 B.C. (10.5%); 688-664 (10.4%) and 647-551 (47.2%). The two latter can be eliminated because they postdate the historical date for the Lachish III assemblage (701 B.C.)¹³. In any event, Beth-shemesh 3 shows that the Lachish III assemblage cannot predate the 760s B.C. In other words, the Lachish IV pottery may have still been in use in the early 8th century B.C.

Regarding the southwestern hill in Jerusalem, Na'aman asserts that:

“Keeping in mind that only a small part of the Western Hill has been excavated, it is possible that the settlement began in areas that have not yet been unearthed. Moreover, the continued habitation of Jerusalem over thousands of years, the strength of its settlement in the eighth-seventh centuries, and the continued occupation of the site until the destruction in 587/586, mean that pottery vessels from the early stages settlement had scattered in all directions and are therefore absent from the site's destruction stratum. We must also keep in mind that even in the excavations in the City of David, very little pottery from Iron Age I-IIA has been found, though there is no doubt that the city was inhabited, if partially. Finally, Avigad and Geva ... reported that four building stages preceded the construction of the Broad Wall; and isolated early Iron Age II sherds were found scattered in the Western Hill ... Thus, settlement of the Western Hill might have begun as early as the late ninth century B.C.E. ...”¹⁴.

¹⁰ For instance Zimhoni, *Studies in the Iron Age Pottery*, pp. 172-173; D. USSISHKIN, “A Synopsis of the Stratigraphical, Chronological and Historical Issues”, Ussishkin, *The Renewed Archaeological Excavations at Lachish*, p. 83.

¹¹ A. FANTALKIN and I. FINKELSTEIN, “The Sheshonq I Campaign and the 8th Century BCE Earthquake: More on the Archaeology and History of the South in the Iron I-IIA”, *Tel Aviv* 33 (2006) 22-24.

¹² For this stratum and its pottery see S. BUNIMOVITZ and Z. LEDERMAN, “The Early Israelite Monarchy in the Sorek Valley: Tel Beth-Shemesh and Tel Batash (Timnah) in the 10th and 9th Centuries BCE”, in A.M. Maeir and P. de Miroschedji (eds.), *I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Times*: *Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar* (Winona Lake, 2006) 419-420; for the ¹⁴C dates see Sharon *et al.* “Report on the First Stage of the Iron Age Dating Project”, pp. 40, 44.

¹³ Finkelstein and Piasezky, “Radiocarbon Dating and Philistine Chronology”.

¹⁴ Na'aman, “When and How Did Jerusalem Become a Great City?”, p. 27.





None of these arguments withstands scrutiny:

A. *Only a small part of the Western Hill has been excavated.* This is not so. Large parts of the southwestern hill were investigated – in the Jewish Quarter, the Armenian Quarter, the Citadel and Mount Zion – and none produced Iron IIA finds¹⁵. It can no longer be argued that future excavations may reveal the desired finds; after 40 years of thorough excavation, the burden of proof rests on whoever argues against these facts.

B. *The Iron IIA pottery was scattered and disappeared.* Pottery does not vanish. Every dig of a multi-period site reveals sherds of the early phases of activity in its later assemblages. They find their way there in brick material, fills, etc. At Megiddo, for instance, Early Bronze I sherds are found even in Stratum IVA of the Iron IIB. Moreover, in a multi-period site, sherds of all periods of activity can in most cases be found even in a surface survey. The idea that the Iron IIA sherds vanished negates all that we know about field archaeology and must be rejected¹⁶.

C. *In the City of David, too, only a limited amount of Iron I-IIA pottery could be found.* Indeed, even in this case of a small and poor settlement, the early pottery is present. It did not vanish.

D. *Four settlement phases predate the construction of the late 8th century city-wall*¹⁷. These are phases in the growth of the settlement on the southwestern hill, not real strata, and therefore this argument is meaningless. The four phases could have developed during 40 years of activity, but also in 10 years. Since the city-wall was built at the very end of the 8th century B.C., between the death of Sargon II and the Sennacherib campaign (below), even a longer period of habitation represented by the four phases would not necessarily predate the mid-8th century B.C.¹⁸.

¹⁵ See map in H. GEVA, “General Introduction to the Excavations in the Jewish Quarter”, in H. Geva (ed.), *Jewish Quarter Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem Conducted by Nahman Avigad, 1969-1982, Vol. I. Architecture and Stratigraphy: Areas A, W and X-2* (Jerusalem, 2000) 25.

¹⁶ Na’aman’s example from Tel Mique-Ekron (“When and How Did Jerusalem Become a Great City?”, p. 26) does not apply to our case. Pottery from the earliest occupation level of the lower city there has not yet been published and hence one cannot discuss its precise foundation date.

¹⁷ N. AVIGAD and H. GEVA, “Area A – Stratigraphy and Architecture, Iron Age II Strata 9-7”, in Geva (ed.), *Jewish Quarter Excavations I*, pp. 72-73, Plan 2.1.

¹⁸ The absence of *LMLK* seal impressions in the phases which predate the construction of the city wall (Na’aman, “When and How Did Jerusalem Become a Great City?”, pp. 47-48) does not contribute to the dating of the first occupation on the southwestern hill: A) The *LMLK* impressions seem to have appeared only in the late 8th century B.C.; B) The phases which precede the city wall were uncovered in a limited area; in such a case the negative evidence is dubious.





E. A few Iron IIA finds were retrieved in the Jewish Quarter. The publication speaks about a few sherds from the Middle Bronze and the Iron IIA. The excavators unanimously argued that there was no settlement activity on the southwestern hill in these periods, and I presume that for the Middle Bronze Age Na'aman would agree. These sherds found their way to the southwestern hill with fill debris, or as a result of agricultural activity of people who lived in the City of David¹⁹. A good parallel can be found in the archaeology of Jerusalem in the Persian period. There is a consensus among scholars that at that time the settlement was small and poor, and that it was restricted to the City of David²⁰. Still, a few Persian period sherds and coins found their way to the southwestern hill; they were probably brought there during work in the fields or in fill debris that was deposited in the course of the great building activities of the Hasmoneans and Herod the Great²¹.

To make a long story short, the southwestern hill was not inhabited during the 9th century and this probably holds true also for the early 8th century B.C.

Na'aman expands his view regarding the growth of Jerusalem to the entire land of Judah:

“The picture of the kingdom of Judah experiencing dramatic growth at the end of the eighth century should be replaced with one of a steady, slow growth during the ninth, and a momentum of settlement, construction and development during the eighth century”²².

This statement, too, is negated by the archaeological finds. Though a few centers in the Upper Shephelah and Beer-sheba Valley reveal early signs of public building activity in the Lachish IV phase in the history of the Southern Kingdom²³, the number of settlements in Judah remained limited and the population scarce; and there is no sign of economic prosperity. Archaeological surveys have recorded only 34 Iron IIA sites in the highlands south of Jerusalem and 21 sites in the Shephelah. This

¹⁹ A. De GROOT, H. GEVA and I. YEZERSKI, “Iron Age II Pottery”, in H. Geva (ed.), *Jewish Quarter Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem Conducted by Nahman Avigad, 1969-1982, Vol. II: The Finds from Areas A, W and X-2: Final Report* (Jerusalem, 2003) 16; Avigad and Geva, “Area A – Stratigraphy and Architecture”, p. 81.

²⁰ Summary in I. FINKELSTEIN, “Jerusalem in the Persian (and Early Hellenistic) Period and the Wall of Nehemiah”, *JSOT* (in press).

²¹ H. GEVA, “Summary and Discussion of Findings from Areas A, W and X-2”, in Geva (ed.), *Jewish Quarter Excavations II*, p. 525.

²² Na'aman, “When and How Did Jerusalem Become a Great City?”, p. 47.

²³ I. FINKELSTEIN, “The Rise of Jerusalem and Judah: The Missing Link”, *Levant* 33 (2001) 105-115.





was the situation ca. 800 B.C., if not somewhat later. In the late eighth century the number of sites grew to 122 in the highlands south of Jerusalem and 276 in the Shephelah²⁴. Even if one were to claim that a few sites from the Lachish IV phase have not been detected for this or that reason, and that the 8th century sites are easier to trace, the picture is clear: the “great leap forward” in Judah began and accelerated during the 8th century, not earlier.

But how can we pinpoint this commencement of prosperity, during the 8th century B.C., in Jerusalem in particular and Judah in general. There are no minute ceramic differences within the Lachish III phase (because there are no destruction layers in Judah except for those inflicted by Sennacherib in 701 B.C.), so the only clue archaeology can offer is the ¹⁴C results for Beth-shemesh 3, which places the upper limit of the Lachish III pottery no earlier than 765 B.C. (see above). For a more accurate date one needs to turn to historical considerations. Judah is located in a remote corner of the Levant, with no economic resources such as ore, and far from the harbors and the international road of the coastal plain. Therefore, in contrast to the Northern Kingdom, in the early phase of its history Judah remained a tribal society, with limited population and almost no real urban centers. Judah could not have taken a meaningful step forward before it was directly incorporated as a vassal state into the global economy of the Assyrian empire. Only then could it begin to profit from the Assyrian-led Arabian trade and its demand for olive oil, and only as a result of this would its capital begin to develop into a real metropolis. Hence, contra Na’aman, there is no economic reason for a significant demographic growth in Judah and Jerusalem before the 730s B.C.²⁵.

²⁴ A. OFER, “‘All the Hill Country of Judah’: From a Settlement Fringe to a Prosperous Monarchy”, in I. Finkelstein and N. Na’aman (eds.), *From Nomadism to Monarchy Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel* (Jerusalem, 1994) 104-105; Y. DAGAN, *The Shephelah During the Period of the Monarchy in Light of Archaeological Excavations and Surveys*. (M.A. thesis; Tel Aviv, 1992, Hebrew).

²⁵ “When and How Did Jerusalem Become a Great City?”, p. 27. Na’aman’s assertion that Judah remained outside the borders of the Assyrian empire (ibid, p. 46) may be correct politically and administratively, but certainly not economically. It seems that in his emphasis on the days of Hezekiah (rather than Ahaz) Na’aman was caught – against his method – in the ideological line of the Deuteronomistic Historian.

This is the place to stress that I agree with Na’aman (ibid, pp. 30-31) that Hezekiah did not try to involve Judah in the territories north of Judah. This confirms with my view that the pan-Israelite idea emerged only after the arrival of Israelite refugees in Judah. At that time this ideology addressed the situation within Judah. Only in the late 7th century, in the days of Josiah and after the withdrawal of Assyria, did the pan-Israelite ideology receive its territorial aspect, which addressed the question of the territories of the





DID REFUGEES FROM ISRAEL COME TO JUDAH?

Na'aman rejects the proposal that the dramatic demographic growth in Jerusalem and Judah in the late 8th century resulted from the movement of refugees from the territory of the Northern Kingdom after it was taken over by Assyria²⁶. First, Na'aman claims that in the Ancient Near East clear understandings existed between states, and even more so between empires and vassal states, about repatriating refugees to their homelands. He further argues that the Assyrian interest must have been to prevent a mass departure of refugees from the territory of vanquished Israel. Second, Na'aman argues that there is no evidence – textual or archaeological – for such a population movement.

Regarding the issue of repatriation of refugees, most if not all of the examples cited by Na'aman are not relevant to our case. Some of them concern the second millennium B.C., and most of them do not deal with war refugees who fled their homes, but rather with problematic elements (some of them individuals), who endangered the interests of empires. Na'aman argues that empires could control their borders and hence could have prevented mass movements of people; this is partly true (depending on the landscape), but our case deals with people who fled during war, before the situation stabilized. In any event, Na'aman agrees that “there is evidence of refugees moving into the empire from outside... There are some testimonies to the movement of refugees from the territory of the empire into Shubria and Urartu, two kingdoms to the north of Assyria”²⁷. Moreover, the Assyrian sources mention “the flight of inhabitants upon the arrival of the Assyrian army, but such flights usually occurred in mountainous regions and frontiers...”²⁸. This is exactly the case under discussion – refugees fleeing from the advancing Assyrian army in a mountainous, frontier area. Na'aman finds it possible that “an unknown number of inhabitants from Israel fled to Judah immediately after the Assyrian conquest, but after a while, when conditions stabilized and the anxieties abated, no doubt most of them returned

then long-destroyed northern kingdom. Even at that time it was not fulfilled on the ground (N. NA'AMAN, “The Kingdom of Judah under Josiah”, *Tel Aviv* 18 [1991] 3-71).

²⁶ M. BROSHI, “The Expansion of Jerusalem in the Reigns of Hezekiah and Manasseh”, *IEJ* 24 (1974) 21-26; W.M. SCHNIEDEWIND, “Jerusalem, the Late Judaeon Monarchy and the Composition of the Biblical Texts”, in A.G. Vaughn and A.E. Killebrew (eds.), *Jerusalem in the Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period* (Atlanta, 2003), 94-95; Finkelstein and Silberman, “Temple and Dynasty”.

²⁷ Na'aman, “When and How Did Jerusalem Become a Great City?”, p. 34.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 36.





to their homes and communities, and only a few remained in Judah”²⁹; we do not argue about the very notion of escape, then, but rather about the number of people who fled.

Na’aman brings in two cases in order to demonstrate the problems caused by the escape of people from one country to another: the Apiru and the settlement of the Sea Peoples, both in the second millennium B.C.³⁰. I find it difficult to understand how the phenomenon of the Apiru – gangs of uprooted elements who engaged in robbery and extortion and thus endangered the interests of the great powers – relates to the settlement of thousands of war refugees in Jerusalem and in the smaller towns and villages of Judah in the late 8th century. And what is the relevance of the great crisis that took place in the entire eastern Mediterranean at the end of the Late Bronze Age for understanding a strictly local event – the movement of refugees from southern Samaria to Judah, a distance of several kilometers?³¹

Na’aman rightly points to the differences between Israel and Judah and questions whether the latter would have been willing to accept a large number of refugees that could have destabilized it. But at that time Judah experienced its early steps toward full statehood and did not have the power and means to prevent such a movement. A fully organized and well-administered state in Judah is an *outcome* of the processes that took place in the late 8th century B.C.³²

Na’aman claims that there is no clue in the Bible for a torrent of refugees that came to Judah from the territory of vanquished Israel. In fact, Schniedewind pointed out just such clues³³, but Na’aman rejects them all, some with no convincing reason³⁴. In addition, both Schniedewind

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Historical comparisons should be sought in similar circumstances, time and location. The examples presented by Na’aman deviate from this rule in two of these factors, if not in all of them. I would mention a comparison which fits both the location and the circumstances, though not the time: the flooding of the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan with Palestinian refugees in 1948.

³² I agree with Na’aman that Israel and Judah were very different entities (I. FINKELSTEIN, “State Formation in Israel and Judah, A Contrast in Context, A Contrast in Trajectory”, *NEA* 62 [1999] 35-52). One may ask, then, what could have been the advantages for Israelite villagers to flee to the south. The answer is that in pre-Deuteronomistic times the two kingdoms also had much in common (e.g., in their cult) and that we are dealing with similar landscapes and subsistence base of highlands horticulture. One can further argue that there were lineage connections between clans in southern Israel and northern Judah.

³³ W.M. SCHNIEDEWIND, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge, 2004) 94-95.

³⁴ Na’aman, “When and How Did Jerusalem Become a Great City?”, pp. 36-37.





and Silberman and I proposed that a change in the demographic structure of Judah, from a strictly Judahite society to a mixed Judahite-Israelite population, may explain how and why northern texts found their way into the biblical codex. I refer to materials such as the Jacob cycle, the Exodus story, the “Book of Saviors” in Judges, the Saul cycle, the Elijah-Elishah cycle and northern prophetic works. And why dismiss the theory that Deuteronomistic ideas originated in the north?³⁵ In any event, Na’aman in the same breath speaks of “thousands of refugees” that came to Jerusalem from the Shephelah following the Sennacherib devastation there³⁶; the evidence in the Bible for this movement of people, if it exists at all, is far weaker than that for Israelites who settled in Judah.

Na’aman raises a list of archaeological arguments against the idea of Israelite refugees in Judah³⁷:

A. *There is no clue for northern elements (Baal names and names ending with ‘yahu’) in private names mentioned in the epigraphic corpus from Judah.* The problem is that we know about such northern elements in private names first and foremost from the Samaria ostraca, which date to the first half of the 8th century, and from the Kuntillet Ajrud inscriptions, which also predate the last third of the 8th century³⁸. The only names in the epigraphic corpus from Judah that can safely be dated to the first half of the 8th century are “Shebnayau servant of ‘Uzziyau” and “Abiyau servant of ‘Uzziyau”; all three, including the name of the king of Judah, end with the northern ‘yau’³⁹. Names ending with ‘yahu’ appear in Judah as early as the late 8th century, mainly in private names on *LMLK* storage jars, but the bulk of the epigraphic material from the Southern Kingdom dates to the late 7th and early 6th centuries. Three additional comments are in place here: 1) Private names on *LMLK* storage jars and on seals and seal impressions belonged to high officials in the administration of Judah and one may wonder if

³⁵ For instance, E.W. Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition* (Oxford, 1967).

³⁶ “When and How Did Jerusalem Become a Great City?”, p. 40.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³⁸ Contra L. Singer-Avitz, “The Date of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud”, *Tel Aviv* 33 (2006) 196-228.

³⁹ N. Avigad and B. Sass, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals* (Jerusalem, 1997) 50-51. Ostrakon 69 from Arad, which carries “...yahu” names, was attributed by the excavators to Stratum X, which dates to the mid-8th century (Singer-Avitz “Arad: The Iron Age Pottery Assemblages”, pp. 159-180). Yet, the stratigraphy of Arad is very problematic and it is doubtful if one can build an argument on a single find from this site. The Tel Dan inscription from the second half of the 9th century mentions [Ahaz]yahu King of Judah.





refugees that came from rural parts of southern Israel could have climbed to the top echelons of the Judahite bureaucracy in the short period of less than 20 years. 2) The time that passed between the early 8th and late 7th century could have seen changes in the language and/or writing in Judah. 3) Regarding the corpus of names of the late 7th/early 6th centuries, one can assume that descendants of Israelite families had already taken Judahite names, or written their name in a Judahite form.

B. *No influence of north Israelite material culture can be traced in late 8th century Judah.* This is not so. Judahite olive-oil production was industrialized in the late 8th century⁴⁰, probably as a result of adaptation of technology that had been popular in the Northern Kingdom before its demise⁴¹. Singer-Avitz pointed out northern elements in the pottery of late 8th century Beer-sheba⁴². Square bone seals which were popular in 8th century Israel appear in Judah in the 7th century and the same holds true for limestone cosmetic bowls⁴³. Alertness to this issue will undoubtedly yield other examples in the future. In any event, it is doubtful if one could anticipate tracing many characteristic Israelite finds in late 8th century Judah: 1) As far as I can judge most refugees that came to Judah originated from the southern part of Israel. The pottery of this region is similar to that which characterizes Judah and one can safely assume that this is also the case regarding other elements of the material culture. 2) If most refugees indeed originated from the rural sector, they did not bring with them prestige items – those items that could have distinguished them from their fellow Judahites. 3) “National” or regional characteristics in the material culture of the southern Levant appear mainly in the 7th century B.C.⁴⁴.

C. Regarding the evidence for settlement and demographic depletion in southern Samaria in the Iron II/Persian period transition, depletion that was caused in my view by the movement of refugees to Judah dur-

⁴⁰ H. EITAN-KATZ, *Specialized Economy of Judah in the 8th-7th Centuries BCE* (MA thesis; Tel Aviv, 1995, Hebrew).

⁴¹ On the northern devices see D. EITAM, “Olive Oil Production during the Biblical Period”, in M. Heltzer and D. Eitam (eds.), *Olive Oil in Antiquity: Israel and Neighbouring Countries from Neolithic to Early Arab Period* (Haifa, 1987) 23-27.

⁴² L. SINGER-AVITZ, “Beersheba – A Gateway Community in Southern Arabian Long-Distance Trade in the Eight Century B.C.E.”, *Tel Aviv* 26 (1999) 12.

⁴³ B. BRANDL, “Two Stamped Jar Handles”, in I. Finkelstein, D. Ussishkin and B. Halpern (eds.), *Megiddo IV: The 1998-2002 Seasons* (Tel Aviv, 2006) 427-428 and personal communication.

⁴⁴ E. STERN, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible Vol. II: The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods (732-332 B.C.E.)* (New York, 2001) 130-215, 237-294; for Judah see R. KLETTER, “Pots and Politics: Material Remains of Late Iron Age Judah in Relation to its Political Borders”, *BASOR* 314 (1999) 19-54.





ing the Assyrian take-over, Na'aman argues that *similar processes can be traced in other parts of the highlands, for instance in northern Samaria and Judah*. Concerning northern Samaria, Na'aman bases his argument on Zertal's interpretation of the results of his survey of this region. Yet, Zertal's calculations are founded on a few pottery forms which he dated to the 7th century⁴⁵; yet, most of these are present in the 8th century, too. Therefore, his main, if not only, criterion is the appearance of the "wedge-shaped decorated bowl," which he proposed associating with Mesopotamian deportees who were settled by the Assyrians in the territory of conquered Israel⁴⁶. Without dealing with the validity of this identification, I would only note that the appearance or lack of a single pottery form in survey sites – many of which yielded a limited number of sherds – may be random and therefore misleading. The numbers given by Zertal are therefore questionable. The straightforward evidence that emerges from his survey in northern Samaria indicates that (to differ from southern Samaria) the region did not experience a dramatic decrease in the number of sites between the late Iron II and the Persian period⁴⁷. Moreover, in the Shechem syncline, for instance, a certain increase in the number of sites has been recorded⁴⁸. In the entire region there was a decrease in the built-up area (which represents population), but it was mild relative to what emerges from the survey in southern Samaria. Na'aman's comparison of the situation in southern Samaria to that in Judah is irrelevant, because we all agree that Judah suffered a major settlement and demographic crisis as a result of the Babylonian destruction. Evidently, the highlands territory to the north of Judah did not suffer such devastation.

Beyond these details remains the simple riddle, which Na'aman fails to resolve: What brought about the dramatic population growth in Jerusalem and Judah in the 8th century? Even if one accepts—only for the sake of argument—his proposal that this growth started in the early 8th century, the numbers do not fit what we know about natural demographic growth in the ancient world. The latter cannot explain an increase from ca. 1,000 to 10,000 people in Jerusalem; the growth from

⁴⁵ A. ZERTAL, "The Province of Samaria (Assyrian Samerina) in the Late Iron Age (Iron Age III)", in O. Lipschits and J. Blenkinsopp (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (Winona Lake, 2003) 396.

⁴⁶ A. ZERTAL, "The Wedge-Shaped Decorated Bowl and the Origin of the Samaritans", *BASOR* 276 (1989) 77-84.

⁴⁷ For details see Finkelstein and Silberman, "Temple and Dynasty", pp. 267-268.

⁴⁸ A. ZERTAL, *The Manasseh Hill Country Survey, The Shechem Syncline* (Haifa, 1992, Hebrew) 54-56.





34 small Iron IIA settlements to 122 larger Iron IIB (8th century) settlements in the highlands of Judah; and the increase from 21 Iron IIA to 275 or more Iron IIB settlements in the Shephelah⁴⁹. In short, if we are not contemplating the arrival of extra-terrestrials, we are dealing with refugees.

Na'aman proposes that a torrent of “thousands of refugees” arrived in Jerusalem from all over the kingdom of Judah (that is, mainly from the Shephelah) as a result of the Sennacherib devastation in 701 B.C.⁵⁰. But this hypothesis does not explain the growth of the Judahite capital in the second half of the 8th century. Had we accepted this theory, we should have continued the same line of thought and date the construction of the huge city-wall unearthed in the southwestern hill to the early 7th century, when Judah was an obedient vassal of Assyria. Needless to say, this is unacceptable. The Jerusalem city-wall could have been built only in the short period of time between Sargon II's death on the battlefield in 705 and Sennacherib's campaign in 701 B.C. Only then could Judah have undertaken such a bold step against Assyrian suzerainty.

WAS THERE A DEMOGRAPHIC DECREASE IN JERUSALEM AND JUDAH IN
THE SECOND HALF OF THE 7TH CENTURY B.C.?

Na'aman argues that in the 7th century, “the kingdom of Judah had fewer settlements, a smaller population, and reduced economic capacity compared with the flourishing, densely populated kingdom it had been at the end of the eighth century, on the eve of Sennacherib's campaign”⁵¹. This observation, central to his reconstruction of the history of Jerusalem and Judah in late monarchic times, is correct for the Shephelah and wrong for all other parts of the southern kingdom – the Beer-sheba Valley, the Judean Desert, the highlands and Jerusalem and its environs.

In speaking about the 7th century, Na'aman refers to its later part. His discussion of the settlement shrinkage at that time is based on the differences between the pottery assemblages of Lachish III and Lachish II⁵². It seems that the former was still dominant at the beginning of the 7th

⁴⁹ Ofer “All the Hill Country of Judah”, pp. 104-105 for the highlands; Dagan, *The Shephelah During the Period of the Monarchy* for the Shephelah.

⁵⁰ Na'aman, “When and How Did Jerusalem Become a Great City?”, p. 40.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Zimhoni, “The Pottery of Levels III and II”.





century⁵³, but with no destruction layers during the 7th century, it is difficult to fix the date of transition between the two horizons. Still, it seems reasonable to place it around the middle of that century.

A study of the settlement processes that took place in late-monarchic Judah calls for a regional approach, according to the classical geographical niches of the kingdom; in biblical terms these are the Shephelah, the Negeb (Beer-sheba Valley), the desert (Judean desert), the hill country and, of course, Jerusalem and its environs.

There can be no doubt that the Shephelah experienced a severe crisis as a result of the Sennacherib assault in 701 B.C.; from both settlement and demographic perspectives the Shephelah, which had been taken from Judah and given to the Philistine cities as a result of the campaign, did not recover even when it was returned to Judahite hands, probably in the days of Manasseh in the first half of the 7th century⁵⁴; in fact, it did not recover until the fall of Judah in the early 6th century. The archaeological survey indicates a decrease from ca. 275 sites in the 8th century to 85 in the late 7th century; the over all built-up area, which can be translated into population estimates, shrank to about one third of what it had been in the late 8th century⁵⁵. The settlement crisis in the Shephelah is manifested mainly in the rural sector, but can also be traced in some urban sites: Excavations show that towns such as Tell Beit-Mirsim, Beth-shemesh, Tel Halif and Tell Eitun were abandoned before the appearance of the Lachish II pottery assemblage.

The situation in the Beer-sheba Valley is utterly different. Most large sites – such as Tel Ira, Tel Malhata and Aroer – flourished in both the 8th and 7th centuries⁵⁶. Only Tel Beer-sheba was abandoned in the late 8th century. But other sites, such as the forts of Tel Masos and Horvat Uza, were established in the 7th century. It seems, therefore, that the Judahite Negeb, which was also hit by Sennacherib in 701 B.C., recovered during the 7th century. A certain rearrangement of the settlement system, but no crisis similar to the one inflicted on the Shephelah, can be detected.

⁵³ Finkelstein, “The Archaeology of the Days of Manasseh”; I. FINKELSTEIN and N. NA’AMAN, “The Judahite Shephelah in the Late 8th and Early 7th Centuries BCE”, *Tel Aviv* 31 (2004) 60-79.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Y. DAGAN, “Results of the Survey: Settlement Patterns in the Lachish Region”, in D. Ussishkin, *The Renewed Archaeological Excavations at Lachish (1973-1994)* (Tel Aviv, 2004) 2681-2682.

⁵⁶ Singer-Avitz, “Beersheba – A Gateway Community”, pp. 56-57; Y. THAREANI-SUSSELY, “The ‘Archaeology of the Days of Manasseh’ Reconsidered in Light of the Evidence from the Beersheba Valley”, *PEQ* 139 (2007) 69-77.





The Judean Desert experienced a settlement expansion in the 7th century. In fact, all sites – both along the coast of the Dead Sea (including En Gedi) and in the Buqeah – were established in the second half of the 7th century⁵⁷.

The situation in the hill country is more complex. The most detailed study of the settlement processes that took place in the highlands to the south of Jerusalem was conducted by Ofer. He proposed that the settlement system in this area reached its peak prosperity in the late 8th century and that a certain decline took place in the 7th century: Though the number of settlements did not change significantly, the total built-up area—that is, population—shrank by about one third⁵⁸. Ofer sought the reason for this decline in the Sennacherib campaign, which in his view also affected the southern hill country.

This observation is based on very shaky ground: First, the idea about Sennacherib destructions in the highlands is a speculation based on excavation at a single site—Khirbet Rabud south of Hebron⁵⁹—where the evidence comes from a very limited probe⁶⁰. In any event, Khirbet Rabud was inhabited in the 7th century too⁶¹. Second, most other excavated sites in the southern highlands reveal uninterrupted settlement continuity from the 8th to the 7th centuries. Third, Ofer's built-up area calculations include contested variables⁶². Fourth, Ofer inflated the number of 8th century sites by speculating (with no real basis) that some of the 7th century sites were established a short time before Sennacherib's campaign. Fifth, there is no evidence—in the Bible or in the Assyrian records—that Sennacherib attacked the southern hill country.

In the highlands to the north of Jerusalem, as well as in the vicinity of the capital, settlement activity intensified in the 7th century. This is clear in the case of central sites, such as Tell en-Nasbeh and Gibeon, which

⁵⁷ L.E. STAGER, "Farming in the Judean Desert", *BASOR* 221 (1976) 145-58; P. BAR-ADON, *Excavations in the Judean Desert* (Atiqot 9; Jerusalem, 1989, Hebrew).

⁵⁸ Ofer, "All the Hill Country of Judah", p. 106.

⁵⁹ A. OFER, *The Highland of Judah during the Biblical Period* (Ph.D. thesis; Tel Aviv, 1993, Hebrew) Part 4: 15.

⁶⁰ M. KOCHAVI, "Khirbet Rabud = Debir", *Tel Aviv* 1 (1974) 13.

⁶¹ Ofer admits that his theory is based on a single site and vague evidence. Of other sites he says that they were "expected to have been destroyed in the course of the Sennacherib campaign". Ofer summarizes that "for the time being it is preferable to hypothesize that the highlands of Judah experienced a considerable though not total devastation in the course of the Sennacherib campaign" (Ofer, *The Highlands of Judah*, Part 4: 15).

⁶² For instance, Finkelstein, "The Archaeology of the Days of Manasseh", p. 175.





reached their peak prosperity at that time, as well as in the case of the system of farms that developed around Jerusalem⁶³.

As for Jerusalem, the theory on demographic decline in the 7th century is based on two locations: the abandonment of the 'quarter' on the eastern slope of the City of David and the desertion of isolated houses (possibly farms) which seem to have been located to the north of the Iron Age city-wall, in today's Christian Quarter⁶⁴. The City of David and the intra-mural parts of the southwestern hill do not exhibit a consequential demographic decline⁶⁵. In any event, even if there was a certain weakening of settlement activity in the city, it was compensated by the meaningful growth in the rural sector around it⁶⁶.

CONCLUSION

In the case of Jerusalem and Judah in the 8th and 7th centuries B.C., archaeology speaks loud and clear: A) The expansion of the city to the southwestern hill and the settlement prosperity in the Judahite countryside did not start before the middle of the 8th century and reached their peak in the last third of that century. B) The population growth in Jerusalem and Judah was so dramatic that it cannot be explained as representing a gradual, natural growth. Remote, mountainous Judah does not offer any economic advantage that could have attracted people from neighboring regions. Therefore, the only way to interpret the demographic transformation of Judah is on the background of the incorporation of the kingdom into the Assyrian world economy and the wave of refugees that came from the Northern Kingdom after the Assyrian take-

⁶³ A. FAUST, "The Impact of Jerusalem's Expansion in the Late Iron Age on the Forms of Rural Settlement in Its Vicinity", *Cathedra* 84 (1997) 53-62 (Hebrew); N. FEIG, "The Environs of Jerusalem in the Iron Age II" in S. Ahituv and A. Mazar (eds.), *The History of Jerusalem, The Biblical Period* (Jerusalem, 2000, Hebrew) 387-409.

⁶⁴ D. ARIEL and A. De GROOT, "The Iron Age Extramural Occupation at the City of David and Additional Observations on the Siloam Channel", in D.T. Ariel (ed.), *Excavations at the City of David 1978-1985 Directed by Yigal Shiloh V: Extramural Areas* (Qedem 40; Jerusalem, 2000) 164; H. GEVA, "Western Jerusalem at the End of the First Temple Period in Light of the Excavations in the Jewish Quarter", in A.G. Vaughn and A.E. Killebrew (eds.), *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology, The First Temple Period* (Atlanta, 2003) 207-208.

⁶⁵ Geva, "Summary and Discussion", p. 522.

⁶⁶ Na'aman ("When and How Did Jerusalem Become a Great City?", p. 42-43) brings the biblical numbers of deportees from Jerusalem in the early 6th century as supporting evidence that at that time the population of the city was already depleted. The opposite is true; assuming that the numbers in Kings and Jeremiah refer to the ruling elite – the groups which were deported by the Babylonians – a number of a few thousands attests to a large and prosperous city.





over. The results of the archaeological surveys and information about the places where the Assyrians settled deportees from Mesopotamia⁶⁷ seem to indicate that the Israelite refugees who settled in Judah originated mainly from southern Samaria.

Whoever argues that the population explosion in Jerusalem was the result of a torrent of refugees who arrived from the Shephelah following the Sennacherib devastation in 701 B.C. and that these refugees returned to their hometowns a while later⁶⁸ faces three problems: First, this means that the city-wall unearthed in the southwestern hill was built in the days of Manasseh, with Assyrian consent. Second, such a claim disconnects the growth in Jerusalem from that in the entire territory of Judah because there can be no doubt that the Shephelah reached its peak prosperity *before* the Sennacherib campaign. Such a theory, even if possible archaeologically (the pottery of Lachish III continued to dominate the Judahite repertoire in the early 7th century), is untenable historically. Third, if this had been the case, we would have seen a settlement recovery in the Shephelah during the 7th century.

⁶⁷ Finkelstein and Silberman, "Temple and Dynasty", p. 268.

⁶⁸ Na'aman, "When and How Did Jerusalem Become a Great City?", p. 40.

