

Was Khirbet Qeiyafa a Judahite City? The Case against It

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INTRODUCTION

Khirbet Qeiyafa is located on top of a hill that closes the Elah Valley on its northern side, in the western margin of the Upper Shephelah, about 12 kilometers east of Tell eṣ-Ṣafī (Gath of the Philistines). The archaeological expedition headed by Yosef Garfinkel and Saar Ganor conducted seven excavation seasons there (2007–13), in the course of which it uncovered a considerable part of the ancient city. The results of the excavation were published and proliferated in various venues.¹ The site, which is dated to the first half of the 10th century BCE, attracted the attention of scholars and the public due to its exceptional nature within the framework of the early Iron Age and, in particular, because its excavators attributed its construction to King David and presented it as a key site for establishing the scope and nature of the United Monarchy.²

Several articles that contested the conclusions of the excavators and suggested different interpretations of the results of the excavation appeared in the course of time (Na'aman 2010a; Koch 2012: 54–56; Finkelstein and Fantalkin 2012; Lehmann and Niemann 2014: 85–86; Lederman and Bunimovitz 2014: 66–70). Yet to date, the discussion was mainly one-sided because the excavators possessed all the concrete data of the excavation and made remarkable efforts to present the results

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¹ Namely, in two detailed archaeological reports (Garfinkel and Ganor 2009; Garfinkel, Ganor and Hasel 2014), in a Hebrew book that presents the excavation's results and the excavators' interpretation (Garfinkel, Ganor and Hasel 2012), in a book that carries the title *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa* and presents the debate over the nature and political affiliation of the site and its excavators' viewpoint on all the disputed issues (Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016), and in a series of articles in professional and semi-popular journals (Garfinkel and Ganor 2008; Garfinkel, Ganor and Hasel 2010; Garfinkel 2011: 50–53; Garfinkel and Kang 2011; Garfinkel et al. 2012; 2015b; Garfinkel, Ganor and Mumcuoglu 2015).

² Maeir (2012a: 22–25), Faust (2013: 213–14), Mazar (2014: 361–64) and Pioske (2015) supported the identification of Khirbet Qeiyafa as a Judahite site.

of the excavation through their own prism. Indeed, the picture they presented of the historicity of the biblical account of the time of the United Monarchy fascinated both the media, which enthusiastically reported the results of the excavation and broadly cited the excavators' interpretation of the findings, and the broader public, gladly embraced evidence that supports the "correctness" of the biblical history of David, the golden age of Israel's history.

Now, after the great majority of the findings from the site have been published, we can re-examine the excavators' conclusions regarding the close ties retained between the early Iron city unearthed at Khirbet Qeiyafa and the Kingdom of Judah. My article concentrates on these conclusions and carefully examines the arguments the excavators presented regarding the site's political, ethnic, and cultural affiliation and its place within the contemporaneous political system of south Canaan. The discussion focuses on the new book of Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg (2016) that presents the debate over the relations of Khirbet Qeiyafa to the highlands of Judah and the political and cultural identity of its inhabitants. Since this book presents in great detail the views of the site's excavators and uses an extreme polemical tone toward other views expressed in the debate, re-examining the conclusions presented therein offers an ideal opportunity for cracking what might be called the "riddle of Khirbet Qeiyafa."

THE DETACHMENT OF KHIRBET QEYAF A FROM ITS NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

To introduce the discussion, I want to emphasize what may seem self-evident; namely, that when a site located in a certain region is excavated, the natural assumption is that it belongs to that region, unless there are good reasons to suggest that this is not the case. Yet, although Khirbet Qeiyafa is located in the midst of the Shephelah, from the beginning of the excavations its excavators associated it with the highlands rather than the region where it is located. The city was constructed in the Elah Valley, far away from the Judean highlands, in a region whose topographical and environmental constituents completely differ from those of the highlands and which during thousand of years before its foundation comprised part of the territories of the Canaanite city-states located in the Shephelah. The city was established at the beginning of the 10th century BCE, at a time close to the emergence of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. Its fortifications are by far stronger than and its internal organization by far superior to other contemporaneous sites located in the highlands, including Jerusalem. Yet despite this evidence, its excavators linked it to the hill country and suggested that at the time of King David, it was a stronghold of the Kingdom of Judah dominated by the king whose seat was in Jerusalem.

Even a quick glance at this conclusion indicates how problematic it is. The phenomenon of building a fortified stronghold outside the kingdom's borders is known from the dominating ancient Near Eastern empires and from strong,

organized, and fully developed kingdoms—but not from recently-emerged kingdoms. Empires were used to establish centres of government in the periphery of their conquered territories and in the lands of their vassal kingdoms in order to intensify their control over the territories under their power. Thus, for example, after it conquered the Land of Canaan, Egypt established six or seven centres of government in the occupied territories (Helck 1971: 246–55; Na’aman 2000: 125–38, 252–53; Morris 2005: 57–67, 74–82). And Assyria established a series of government centres and fortresses in the peripheral areas of the empire.³ Likewise, the establishment of centres of government outside of the kingdom’s territory is known from the histories of strong and well-organized kingdoms that have expanded their territories to the areas of their neighbours. Two illuminating examples of this practice are known from the histories of the Omride and Jehuic dynasties. According to the inscription of Mesha, King of Moab, after Omri conquered Moab he and his heirs controlled the occupied territories by means of three centres erected in strategic locations (Medeba, Ataroth, and Jahaz) (Na’aman 2007: 152–54; Finkelstein and Lipschits 2010, with earlier literature). And at the time of Jeroboam II (ca. 786–746), the Israelite ruler built and controlled a commercial station at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, located on the desert road (Darb el-Ghaza) that led from Philistia to the Red Sea (Finkelstein 2013a; Na’aman 2013a, with earlier literature).

As opposed to the historical reality of these empires and strong kingdoms, when Khirbet Qeiyafa was erected there was no well-established, strong kingdom in the highlands, as the kingdoms of Israel and Judah had just emerged and began instituting their control over the highland regions. The archaeological excavations held in Jerusalem indicate that in the early tenth century BCE, it was a small highland stronghold; and the surveys conducted in the Judean highlands show that it was then sparsely inhabited (Finkelstein and Magen 1993; Ofer 1994; Mazar 1994; Finkelstein 1999; 2001; 2003; Lehmann 2003, with earlier literature). The assumption that the Kingdom of Judah in the early stage of its growth was able to erect and uphold a powerful stronghold, by far stronger and wealthier than its own centre of government, has no parallel in world history and indeed seems highly unlikely.

Israel Finkelstein and Alexander Fantalkin (2012: 63–68; Fantalkin and Finkelstein 2017) presented an alternative to the Judahite origin hypothesis. According to their suggestion, Khirbet Qeiyafa was a stronghold of the dynasty of Saul, whose centres of power were located in Gibeon and Bethel and which ruled the entire hill country up to the Jezreel Valley. Notably, the Kingdom of Saul in the two scholars’ version differed in time and all internal constituents from the kingdom known to

³ For the fortresses and centres of government that Assyria erected in the territories of its Levantine vassal kingdoms, see Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz 2001; Na’aman 2001.

us from the biblical account. According to their reconstruction, Saul's kingdom was a northern Israelite polity that antedated Jeroboam I's kingdom and governed all the highland territories on both sides of the Jordan, including the district of Benjamin. The Saulides ruled in parallel to the reign of David and Solomon, whose territory encompassed only the Judean highlands and Jerusalem.⁴ Hence, in contrast to the biblical idea of a United Monarchy, the two scholars reconstruct two rival kingdoms under the domination of the royal houses of Saul and David. During the early years of King Rehoboam, Solomon's heir, Pharaoh Shishak (ca. 945–924), terminated the kingdom that Saul established and destroyed both Gibeon—the kingdom's capital—and Khirbet Qeiyafa, the kingdom's stronghold in the Shephelah.

The many obvious weaknesses of this historical reconstruction lie beyond the scope of this article. Suffice it to emphasize that the assumption that Khirbet Qeiyafa was an Israelite stronghold under the domination of the Saulides is no different from the assumption that it was a Judahite stronghold established by King David. Both assumptions suffer from the same basic weakness and both contradict all that we know about the relations between centre and periphery in the history of other ancient kingdoms.

How should we explain the fact that scholars avoid connecting Khirbet Qeiyafa to the region where it belongs and preferred linking it to the remote highland region? Which exceptional artifacts were discovered on the site that obliged searching for its builders *outside* the region where it is located? Khirbet Qeiyafa is indeed an outstanding site, differing in its strength, internal organization, and material culture from all other contemporaneous sites located in south Canaan—including Tell eṣ-Ṣafī (Gath of the Philistines), its close neighbour. However, do these exceptional characteristics justify searching for the solution to the site's riddle in the highlands, from whose settlements it differs even more than from its neighbours? Rather, should we not search for the riddle's solution within the region in which it is located? I will address these questions in the discussion that follows.

THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH AND THE DISTRICT OF THE SHEPHELAH

The discussion below seeks to answer the question, when did the Shephelah become Judahite, such that it might be called the "Shephelah of Judah"? To clarify this issue, we must examine the historical reality in the region from the establishment of the Philistine kingdoms in south Canaan (the late twelfth century BCE) to Judah's establishment of its domination in the Shephelah following the destruction of the city of Gath (in the last third of the 9th century BCE).

⁴ For this exceptional reconstruction of Saul's reign and the scope of his kingdom, see Finkelstein 2006; 2011; 2013b: 37–61.

The territory of the Shephelah was distributed in the Late Bronze Age between three medium-sized Canaanite kingdoms (Gezer, Gath, and Lachish) and several small kingdom located near their borders.⁵ Two Philistine kingdoms grew strong in the Shephelah after the collapse of the system of Canaanite kingdoms: Ekron (Tel Miqne) and Gath (Tell eṣ-Ṣafi). The scope of the Kingdom of Gath before the destruction of Ekron and Khirbet Qeiyafa must have been limited, as these strong cities blocked its expansion northward and eastward. The areas east and south east of Gath, in the region formerly controlled by the Kingdom of Lachish, were sparsely populated in Iron Ib–early Iron IIa, and most of the settlements were located in the easternmost Shephelah (Tel Beth-Shemesh, Tel Yarmouth, Tell Beit Mirsim, and Tel ‘Eton) (Faust and Katz 2011). Whoever constructed the fortified city at Khirbet Qeiyafa took advantage of the settlement gap, fortified the place with strong walls, settled inhabitants within the walls, and turned it for about half a century into a powerful centre that dominated the surrounding region. Following the destruction of the powerful city at Khirbet Qeiyafa and the roughly contemporaneous destruction of the city of Ekron that governed vast territories in the northern Shephelah,⁶ Gath became the most powerful kingdom in the Shephelah and expanded in the north and east up to the eastern margins of the Shephelah.

Of particular relevance to this issue is the biblical outlook of the border zone that separated the inhabitants of the hill country from those of the Shephelah at the time of the United Monarchy. Evidence for the borders might be sought in the stories of David’s flight from Saul, when he tried to find shelter in places located at the margins of the latter’s kingdom. The Book of Samuel relates that following his escape from Saul, David found shelter in the Adullam cave—near the outskirts of the highlands (1 Sam 22:1), yet outside the Land of Judah (v. 5). Another story relates how the lords of Keilah, a town that suffered from Philistine raids, invited David and his band to stay in the place and defend it from the plunderers (1 Sam 23:4–15). Like Adullam, Keilah is also presented as a town located outside the confines of Judah (v. 4: “But David’s men said to him: ‘Behold, we are afraid here in Judah; how much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?’”).⁷ After his victory in the battle of Michmash, Saul pursued the running Philistines up to Aijalon (1 Sam 14:31); and following his victory in the Valley of Rephaim, David pursued the retreating Philistines up to Gezer (2 Sam 5:25). According to the David

⁵ For the controversy over the number and scope of Canaanite kingdoms located in the Shephelah in the Late Bronze Age, see Na’aman 2011; Finkelstein 2015, with earlier literature.

⁶ For the destruction of Tel Miqne (Ekron) in the early Iron Age IIA, see Bunimovitz and Lederman 2006: 420–24; Dothan and Gitin 2008: 1953–55; Mazar 2008: 94–95; Finkelstein and Piasezky 2015: 892–94.

⁷ For the latest discussion of the Keilah episode, see Na’aman 2010b.

and Saul story-cycle, David was forced to run out of the Land of Judah and found shelter in the court of Achish, King of Gath. The latter settled him in Ziklag, a town located in the southernmost margins of the Shephelah, not far away from the Negeb of Judah (1 Sam 27:1–6, 10; cf. Josh 15:31). Evidently, thus, the authors of the stories conceived a political-territorial picture according to which the Israelite presence reached the eastern margins of the Shephelah—up to the line between the mountain feet and the towns of Aijalon, Adullam, and Keilah—whereas the Kingdom of Gath dominated all the areas west of it.

The David and Goliath episode, according to which Saul expanded his territory westward and fought the Philistines in the Valley of Elah, in the midst of the Shephelah, does not accord well with the territorial picture drawn above. A detailed discussion of this episode, regarding which many works have already been written,⁸ lies beyond the scope of this article. Suffice is to say that not only is the battle account wholly legendary, but many scholars suggested that the original account actually related the victory of Elhanan of Bethlehem over Goliath of Gath (2 Sam 21:19). Later, the episode was shifted from Elhanan to another Bethlehemite hero, David, and a late author composed the heroic story of the battle between David and Goliath (1 Sam 17) (Pákozdy 1956; Dempster 1992; Dietrich 2012: 87–88).⁹ The story's late composition date and its legendary nature might explain why the arena in which the episode took place is located farther west than all other places in which the encounters between Israelites and Philistines took place according to the David and Saul story-cycle.

Reconstruction of the following development in the history of the Shephelah depends on our evaluation of the authenticity of the account of David's victories over Israel's neighbours (2 Sam 8:1–14). I support the opinion of scholars who suggested that this account is a late historiographic work that uses the style of a chronicle in order to depict David as a great conqueror, similar to other great ancient Near Eastern kings, and that David's conquests were modeled after the victories gained by a number of foreign kings (Na'aman 2002; Fischer 2006; Edenburg 2010, with earlier literature). An analysis of the short, schematic account of David's victory over the Philistines (2 Sam 8:1a: "After this David defeated the Philistines and subdued them") supports this conclusion. First, during the monarchical period, Philistia was divided among several

⁸ For the vast literature written on the story of David and Goliath, see Galling 1966; de Vries 1973; Barthélemy et al. 1986; Rofé 1987; Auld and Ho 1992; Ehrlich 1992; Dietrich 1996; 2012; Isser 2003; Yadin 2004; Beck 2006; Van Seters 2009: 135–62, with earlier literature.

⁹ The author of the book of Chronicles borrowed the place name [E]phes Dammim from the David and Goliath story (1 Sam 17:1) and inserted it to his account of the battle of Eleazar the son of Dodo against the Philistines (1 Chr 11:12–13), thereby completing a missing detail in the early source available to him (2 Sam 23:9–19).

kingdoms, and the available extra-biblical sources indicate that each Philistine kingdom held its own policy and not always cooperated with its neighbours. The archaeological research also shows the utter differences in size and political power of the Philistine kingdoms along the axis of time (Finkelstein 2007b: 520–21; Niemann 2013: 249–54). Evidently, thus, a political-territorial entity called “Philistines” that operated in unison and which David subdued is literary and ideological and does not reflect the ancient reality. Second, the text does not relate what happened to the Philistines after their ostensible subjugation, whereas the historical and archaeological research show that in these years, Philistine Gath became the strongest kingdom in south Canaan. No wonder that most scholars who dealt with the early history of Israel avoided using the account of 2 Sam 8:1–14 for their historical reconstruction and treated it as late historiographical work that does not reflect the ancient reality.¹⁰

Following the destruction of Ekron and Khirbet Qeiyafa in about the mid-tenth century BCE, the Kingdom of Gath gained much power and controlled all or nearly the entire Shephelah district. Memory of its central position is preserved in the story-cycles of Saul, David and Solomon, where the king of Gath appears as the main power in the territory west of the hill country. A full expression of Gath’s power is reflected in the excavations conducted at Tell eṣ-Ṣafī, which show that since the mid-tenth century, the city substantially expanded (the site’s area is about 45–50 hectares) and flourished. This great, prosperous city lasted from the mid-tenth to the third quarter of the 9th century BCE, when it was utterly destroyed (Maier 2012a: 26–49; Maier 2012b; Shai and Maier 2012; Maier, Hitchcock and Kolska-Horwitz 2013: 23–25). The ruler who destroyed the city is Hazael, King of Aram, who first conquered and subjugated the Kingdom of Israel, then besieged Gath and conquered it, and finally campaigned to Jerusalem and received the tribute of Jehoash, King of Judah (2 Kgs 12:18b–19).

The extent of the territory that the Kingdom of Gath controlled in the eastern Shephelah is controversial. Some scholars suggested that Gath expanded up to the mountain feet and that the Kingdom of Judah established its settlements in the Shephelah only after the destruction of Gath (Fantalkin and Finkelstein 2006: 30–31; Fantalkin 2008: 30–35; Bunimovitz and Lederman 2011a: 42–43; Lehmann and Niemann 2014; Sergi 2013: 230–32, 239–41). Others suggested that the King of Gath dominated most of the Shephelah, but the Kingdom of Judah began expanding westward as early as the late tenth or early ninth century BCE and founded some settlements in the area west of the hill country, including the cities of Lachish and

¹⁰ Even today, some scholars treat the biblical account of 2 Sam 8:1–14 as if it were an original chronicle and describe the history of the United Monarchy in the way it is related in chapter 8. See recently Galil 2013; 2014: 84–86, 100.

Libnah (see 2 Kgs 8:22b) (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001: 274–75; Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2004: 229; Na’aman 2013b: 252–55; Faust 2013: 209–14; Ussishkin 2014: 14–15). Yet, assuming that Judah gained some areas in the eastern Shephelah before Gath’s destruction (note 2 Kgs 8:22b; Na’aman 2013b: 254–55), it expanded further westward only after the city was utterly destroyed in the last third of the 9th century BCE.¹¹ The kings of Judah took advantage of the vacuum created after the destruction, expanded westward, and began settling the occupied territories; thus, in the second half of the 8th century, the Shephelah became the most densely populated and prosperous district of the kingdom.

This short examination of the history of the Shephelah in the early monarchical period, which demonstrates that it became the “Shephelah of Judah” no earlier than the late ninth century BCE, comprises an important key for evaluating the political position of the fortified city built at Khirbet Qeiyafa in the first half of the 10th century BCE and serves as the departure point for the discussion in the next section.

ANACHRONISMS AS A MEANS TO PROVE THE JUDAHITE IDENTITY OF KHIRBET QEYyAFA

A plain reading of the Khirbet Qeiyafa excavators’ discussions reveals, surprisingly, the large number of anachronisms presented there. These anachronisms serve them as foundation courses on which they established their claim that it was the King of Judah who constructed the city discovered at Khirbet Qeiyafa. Let me present some examples:

(1) Garfinkel and Ganor (2008: 122) entitled their article that summarizes the results of the first two excavation seasons, “Khirbet Qeiyafa—an Early Iron Age Fortified City on the Border between Judaea and Philistia.” Since then, the excavators consistently presented Khirbet Qeiyafa as a site located on the border between Philistia and Judah. Thus, for example, at the beginning of the book *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, they wrote as follows (Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 29): “Geographically, the site is located in the region known as the Judean Shephelah, that is, the lowlands of Judah.” Some pages later (Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 34), they declared: “Khirbet Qeiyafa is located on the border between Judah and Philistia and could therefore be associated with either of these entities.” This presentation of Khirbet Qeiyafa, a site constructed in the first half of the 10th century BCE, is wholly anachronistic. For a thousand years, from the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age to the early Iron Age, a clear-cut political-cultural border separated the kingdoms located in the highland from those located in the Shephelah, and this border did not change when Khirbet Qeiyafa was erected. As demon-

¹¹ It goes with saying that the list of fortified cities that the Chronicler attributed its construction to King Rehoboam (2 Chr 11:5–10) is alien to the political-territorial reality of the Kingdom of Judah in the late 10th century BCE.

strated above, the Kingdom of Judah expanded to the district of Shephelah—including the Elah Valley—only after Hazael destroyed Gath in the last third of the 9th century BCE; and only from this time onward can we speak of the “Shephelah of Judah.” Presenting Khirbet Qeiyafa—a site destroyed around the mid-tenth century BCE, about 150 years before Judah expanded to the Shephelah—as a city located on the Judah-Philistia border is anachronistic. Such a representation presents the reality of the first half of the 10th century in light of the reality that first developed in the region long after its destruction.

(2) The site’s excavators claimed that the integration of private houses within strong casemate walls is known only from Judahite sites, including Tell Beit Mirsim, Tel Beth-Shemesh, and Tel Beersheba (Garfinkel and Ganor 2009: 4; Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 183, 205). Hence, the appearance of this phenomenon in Khirbet Qeiyafa indicates the site’s ascription to the Kingdom of Judah. However, the integration of strong casemate walls and private buildings in the above-mentioned three cities took place in the 8th century BCE, about 150 years after the destruction and abandonment of Khirbet Qeiyafa. A late fortification system might adopt and imitate an earlier system of fortification, but in no way can we draw conclusions regarding the early reality on the basis of the late. Establishing the affiliation of tenth-century Khirbet Qeiyafa to the Kingdom of Judah on the basis of the reality that emerged about 150 years later is wholly anachronistic.

Fantalkin (2008; see Faust and Bunimovitz 2008; Yezerksi 2013: 50–54, 66–72; Lehmann and Niemann 2014: 79) observed that the method of burying the dead in rock-cut tombs was first practiced in the Shephelah in the Late Bronze Age and adopted in the Kingdom of Judah in the late ninth or early eighth century BCE. It is not impossible that the Judahite building technique of integrating strong casemate walls with private buildings was also borrowed from the early Iron Age Shephelah. Be it as it may, the urbanism that is revealed in late period cannot be used for investigating the state of urbanism that prevailed during a much earlier period.

(3) Another case in point is the suggestion that the many (693) finger impressions on storage jar handles discovered at Khirbet Qeiyafa comprise the first chain in a long series of impressions on storage jars in the Kingdom of Judah and indicate that the site is Judahite (Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 184; Kang and Garfinkel 2015: 193–202). Impression on jar handles in Judah began only in the late eighth century BCE,¹² so that a long gap of about 250 years exists between the finger impression on jar handles at Khirbet Qeiyafa and in the Kingdom of Judah. This long chronological gap, alongside the fact that the early and late impression on jar

¹² For recent studies of the *lmk* seal impressions, see Lipschits, Sergi and Koch 2010; 2011; Ussishkin 2011; Lipschits 2012: Article 4; Na’aman 2016b.

handles were made in different regions and in entirely different forms (finger impression as against royal seal impression) indicates that the Judahite system developed independently of the early system. Once again, the claim of the site's excavators that the imagined continuity between the early and late impression on jar handles indicates the ascription of Khirbet Qeiyafa to the Kingdom of Judah is anachronistic.

(4) Additional anachronisms are reflected in the discussion of the metal artifacts discovered at Khirbet Qeiyafa (Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 184–85, 201–2). Many iron tools have been discovered in the site's excavation, and the excavators tried to establish a connection between the site and the Kingdom of Judah by claiming that Iron artifacts were discovered in Judahite sites located in the Beersheba Valley and in the district of Benjamin. However, in the first half of the 10th century BCE, when Khirbet Qeiyafa was erected, none of the sites they mention was included in the Kingdom of Judah. Bethel, Ai, and Khirbet Raddana are located in the southernmost margins of Mount Ephraim; following the division of the monarchy, they were integrated into the Kingdom of Israel. Arad (Stratum XII) and Tell Beersheba (Stratum VII) were included at that time in the tribal polity of Tel Masos (Finkelstein and Fantalkin 2012: 24–28, with earlier literature). The Kingdom of Judah expanded to the Valley of Beersheba and built its centres there only after the collapse of the Tel Masos polity, probably in the early ninth century BCE. The description of Bethel, Ai, Khirbet Raddana, Arad, and Tel Beersheba as Judahite towns in the first half of the 10th century is anachronistic. Hence, the discovery of iron artifacts in these sites does not establish a connection between Khirbet Qeiyafa and the Kingdom of Judah.

(5) Anachronism as a way to prove the Judahite identity of Khirbet Qeiyafa is also reflected in the excavators' claim that the ostrakon discovered there was written in Hebrew (Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 160–70, 185–86). Joseph Naveh (1982: 65–78) demonstrated that the early Hebrew script was formed only in the 9th century, probably in order to write documents in the Hebrew language that was developing earlier as an independent dialect.¹³ Indeed, the inscribed inscription written on pithos fragments discovered in the excavations of the Ophel and dated to the early Iron IIA was still written in the proto-Canaanite script (Mazar, Ben-Shlomo and Aḥituv 2013). One may suggest, of course, that Hebrew was first written in the proto-Canaanite script and only later in the Hebrew script. Yet, to date, no epigraphic evidence has shown that in the first half of the 10th century the Hebrew language detached from the Canaanite one and developed as an independent dialect.

¹³ Finkelstein and Sass (2013: 164–66) suggested that the writing in Hebrew began only at the stage that archaeologists call late Iron IIA; that is, the first half of the 9th century BCE.

Decipherment of the ostrakon involves enormous difficulties, probably due to the Canaanite dialect in which it was written. Moreover, except for a few words (whose interpretation is controversial), the ostrakon remained entirely nontangible.¹⁴ Its publishers read the first line [ת]א ועבד תעש, and translated it “do not do and work/make [. . .].” In light of the assumed appearance of the verb ‘šb, they suggested that the inscription was written in Hebrew (Misgav, Garfinkel and Ganor 2009: 254; Ahituv 2009: 130), and this claim was accepted in the *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa* book (Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 157–69). Yet Alan Millard (2011) suggested that the text includes several personal names and read the first line as [ל]א ועבד-עש, that is, two personal names each with a theophoric element.¹⁵ Matthieu Richelle (2015) recently discussed the first two lines of the ostrakon, suggesting that both include a series of personal names and that line 1 be read as אלת-עשתר עבד-אל.

Against this background, we may examine the claim that the Ostrakon was written in the Hebrew dialect.¹⁶ As already noted, this claim rests only on the assumed appearance of the verb ‘šb in the first line, which is faulty for three reasons. First, not only is this reading uncertain (indeed, a different decipherment was suggested for this line), but even if the verb ‘šb appears in the inscription, it probably belonged to the Canaanite dialect in which this Shephelah inscription was written.¹⁷ Unfortunately, the lexicon of the Canaanite language remains almost entirely unknown, so this claim cannot be verified. Second, in many cases we can establish the language in which an inscription was written on the basis of a single or few words, provided that the said dialect was in use at this period. In the case under discussion, however, no certainty exists that the Hebrew language already developed as an independent dialect. Third, the assumption that early evidence of the Hebrew language appears at a site located in the Shephelah, far away from highlands of Judah, is unlikely. Clearly, thus, the use of the obscure ostrakon from Khirbet Qeiyafa to prove the antiquity of the Hebrew language and the Judahite identity of the site is also anachronistic.

In sum, all the evidence the site’s excavators presented regarding architecture (casemate walls that integrate private houses), metallurgy (use of iron), administration (impressed jars

¹⁴ For scholars’ discussions of the enigmatic ostrakon, see Misgav, Garfinkel and Ganor 2009; Yardeni 2009: 259–60; Shea 2009; Puech 2010; Rollston 2011; Galil 2009; Misgav 2011; Demsky 2012.

¹⁵ Millard (2011: 8–9) observed that the verb ‘mš is known in several biblical personal names (Ye‘ish [Gen 36:5, etc.], Ye‘ush [1 Chr 1:35, etc.], Yo‘ash [1 Chr 7:8, etc.]) in the sense of “to help.” He translated the name אלת-עש to mean “(the goddess) Ellat helped.”

¹⁶ For a detailed criticism, see Rollston 2011. Millard (2016: 271) recently suggested that the ostrakon “has no peculiarly Hebrew words; the lines may hold nothing more than a list of names.”

¹⁷ In my article on Khirbet Qeiyafa I suggested that the inscription was written in the Canaanite dialect (Na’aman 2010a: 514 and n. 8).

in the administration of the kingdom), and writing (Hebrew) in an effort to establish connection between Khirbet Qeiyafa and the Kingdom of Judah rest on erroneous historical and cultural conceptions. They refer repeatedly to the territorial scope, the administration, and the culture of the 9th–8th Judahite monarchy as if representing the state of affairs existing many years before. Through this methodology, they anachronistically describe Judah of the first half of the 10th century according to the contours of an institute of monarchy of a much later period.

KHIRBET QEYAFAS AS A LINK BETWEEN THE EARLY AND LATE JUDAHITE MONARCHY

Alongside the frequent use of anachronisms, Khirbet Qeiyafa's excavators offer a series of discussions that ostensibly examine the city's political and cultural affiliation, but in fact present it as a place whose Judahite identity was proven beyond reasonable doubt. In light of these discussions, the findings from Khirbet Qeiyafa, which are known only from this site and are alien to the reality of Jerusalem and the Judean and Benjamin highlands, are used to describe the urbanism in the Kingdom of Judah in the first half of the 10th century BCE.

To illustrate the way these pseudo-discussions are presented, I cite the following passage from *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa* (Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 33–34):

Following the excavation of the heavily fortified city of Khirbet Qeiyafa, with its classical Judean characteristics, it was evident that urbanism and state formation started in the region of Judah at the end of the eleventh century BCE, in the time of King David. Khirbet Qeiyafa is located on the border between Judah and Philistia and could therefore be associated with either of these entities. If this was a Judean site, fortified cities were built in early tenth-century Judah and David and Solomon were not shepherds living in tents. Furthermore, David was indeed a significant king who built fortified cities in strategic border locations. This situation accords with the biblical tradition. [. . .]

However, if Khirbet Qeiyafa was not a Judean city, one can suggest that even if David was a historical figure (given the Tel Dan stele), and even if the transition from Iron Age I to Iron Age II began at the end of the eleventh century BCE (given the dating of Khirbet Qeiyafa), there was still no kingdom in Judah in the tenth century BCE. At this point the ethnic and political affiliation of the population of Khirbet Qeiyafa becomes a very important matter, and a fierce debate on this aspect developed.

This passage appears in the opening of the book, before the presentation of the findings uncovered at the site and before comparing them to the findings discovered in the highland sites. Ostensibly, the excavators posed a dilemma regarding the

political and cultural affiliation of Khirbet Qeiyafa; but in reality, they establish the site's affiliation already in the first sentence (“[f]ollowing the excavation of the heavily fortified city of Khirbet Qeiyafa, with its classical Judean characteristics, it was evident that urbanism and state formation started in the region of Judah at the end of the 11th century BCE, in the time of King David”). The description of what was “evident” in this sentence is intended to leave no doubts in the minds of the readers that it was David who constructed the fortified city. Putting forward the data in this manner presents the alternative option according to which Judah was not yet a state as a highly unlikely scenario. Moreover, the excavators openly declare that the proof of the existence of a state in Judah is based on the results of the excavation at Khirbet Qeiyafa. Thus, Khirbet Qeiyafa is presented as an embodiment of the reality in the Judean highlands, and the urbanism in the highlands is presented through the prism of the fortified city constructed in the Shephelah.

Another example of this kind of a biased presentation appears in the Hebrew book, which connects as an established fact the findings from Khirbet Qeiyafa to the site's Judahite political and cultural identity. After discussing the chronology of the Iron Age stratum, the excavators suggest that, “we found evidence for the existence of a fortified city in the late eleventh–early tenth century BCE in Judah [. . .]. Clearly, the transition from a rural to an urban society and the establishment of the Kingdom of Judah took place already at the time of King David. By no means can one claim that the process began hundreds of years later” (Garfinkel, Ganor and Hasel 2012: 105). As in the previous example, the excavators first identified Khirbet Qeiyafa as a Judahite city (“we found evidence for the existence of a fortified city . . . in Judah”), and this “fact” serves as the basis for establishing the development of urbanism in the Judean highlands at the time of David, and by inference, assuming that it was David who built the fortified city.

Within the limited scope of this article, I will present only one more example that illustrates the way the site's excavators present Khirbet Qeiyafa and the Kingdom of Judah under David as identical twins (Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 220):

This is where the excavations of Khirbet Qeiyafa come in. They contribute archaeological data on urbanism and state formation processes, showing that they started in the early tenth century BCE in Judah. Khirbet Qeiyafa is thus situated at the crucial point where the transition from proto-history to history takes place. In other words, biblical history starts with David, and Khirbet Qeiyafa with its fortifications, administration and writing is the archaeological testimony to this process.

In a chapter entitled, “Was Judah a state in the late eleventh/early tenth centuries BCE?”, the excavators present a new claim according to which there was direct continuity in urban-

ism between tenth and eighth century BCE Kingdom of Judah (Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 213–17). The claim of continuity rests on the assumption that the findings from Khirbet Qeiyafa reflect the urbanism in the Kingdom of Judah in the first half of the 10th century BCE. To prove this notion, the chapter first presents nine criteria that are widely accepted in the sociological research and whose presence proves the existence of a state. Indeed, these criteria fit the state of urbanism in Khirbet Qeiyafa but are alien to the contemporaneous urbanism in Jerusalem and the highlands of Judah and Benjamin. The authors follow this description with a discussion of the urbanism in the eighth-century Kingdom of Judah, which fits well these nine criteria. In light of the comparison between the urbanism of the first half of the 10th century BCE, which rests entirely on the findings from Khirbet Qeiyafa and that of the eighth-century Judahite sites, the excavators drew the following conclusions (Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 216–17):

From the above survey, it can be seen that the area of Judah in the late eleventh/early tenth centuries BCE displays some first appearances of the main characteristics of the state of Judah in the eighth century BCE. Most evidently, we may speak of the public construction works that took place at Khirbet Qeiyafa. The construction of the city from scratch [. . .] is evidence for a centralized authority that could coerce the execution of such works. Not only were such works executed, but the construction of the public building, perhaps a palace, in the centre of the site demonstrates that this authority communicated power through architecture, just as the Judean monarchy did in later periods. [. . .]

As we have seen, many characteristics of the Judean state of the eighth century BCE already existed in the late eleventh/early tenth centuries BCE, while others were beginning to appear in this period. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to conclude, from purely archaeological point of view, that the region under discussion was already part of a rising state, the state of Judah.

The “proof” for the direct continuity from the first half of the tenth-century to the eighth-century Kingdom of Judah rests on the assumption that Khirbet Qeiyafa represents the urbanism in Judah at the time of King David. This imagined early Judahite kingdom is then compared to the kingdom that emerged 150–200 years later, and this comparison comprises the basis for the claim of direct continuity between the early and late Judahite kingdom.

Many other examples can demonstrate how the site’s excavators reconstruct the urbanism developed in the Judean highlands in the first half of the 10th century BCE on the basis of Khirbet Qeiyafa’s excavations, and then rely on this imagined urbanism as a foundation for the proposed continuity between the 10th and 8th centuries BCE; but no more exam-

ples are needed to make my point clear. Common to all these reconstructions is a disregard for the real state of urbanism as discovered in the excavations and surveys conducted in Jerusalem and other highland sites and the application of the findings of Khirbet Qeiyafa as a chain that combines the early and late Kingdom of Judah.

One of the most surprising facts that awaits readers of the extensive literature written on Khirbet Qeiyafa is the absence of the city of Jerusalem, the seat of King David and the assumed capital city of Qeiyafa, from these publications. The excavators were so convinced that the former was a Judahite site that they avoid discussing the connections between the findings unearthed in the site and those discovered in the excavations of Jerusalem. Ostensibly, one might suggest that in light of the poor preservation of the remains of tenth century BCE Jerusalem, we can establish the state of urbanism and economy of the kingdom by exploring the situation in its periphery. Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman developed this methodological assertion, called “a view from the border,” in the course of their excavations at Tel Beth-Shemesh (2008; 2009: 125–29; 2016: 42–50, with earlier literature; cf. Finkelstein 2001; 2003; Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2004). The two scholars deduced from the urbanism uncovered at the excavations of Beth-Shemesh and other urban centres in the periphery of Judah regarding the state of urbanism in Jerusalem in the late tenth and ninth centuries BCE. Although Khirbet Qeiyafa’s excavators did not mention this methodological approach, they applied it in their publications. However, successful application of this methodology requires first the provision of unequivocal evidence that Khirbet Qeiyafa indeed was built and maintained by the Kingdom of Judah; and furthermore, an examination of several sites—not only one—that developed at that time in the kingdom’s periphery. Needless to say, the site’s excavators fulfilled none of these conditions.

Another subject of note is the way the site’s excavators use the biblical chronology. On the basis of radiometric dating of 28 short-lived samples, they establish that the city was built ca. 1000 BCE and endured in the first third of the 10th century BCE (Garfinkel et al. 2015b: 883–87; Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 146–54). Basing themselves on these dates, they repeatedly claim that the city was built in the time of King David and attribute its construction to him.

The synchronism between David’s reign and the radiometric dating of Khirbet Qeiyafa rests on the biblical chronology according to which David ruled for forty years and was followed by Solomon, who also ruled for forty years. On the basis of the regnal years of the kings of Judah and Israel as related in the Book of Kings, the commonly agreed dating of the division of the monarchy is ca. 930 BCE. When counting backward from this date, David’s rise to power is dated to the late 11th century BCE. This analysis comprises the basis of the claim that David’s reign fits the radiometric dates of Khirbet Qeiyafa.

Yet, is the throne tenure attributed to David and Solomon in the biblical tradition reliable, and does it rest on ancient sources? To answer this question, we must present the throne tenure attributed to all the four kings who ruled Israel in the time of the United Monarchy. The author of the books of Samuel and Kings attributed to Saul two years of reign (1 Sam 13:1); to Ishbaal (Ishboshet) his son two years (2 Sam 2:10); to David forty years (2 Sam 5:4) and to Solomon forty years (1 Kgs 11:42). In light of these data, clearly the chronology of the four kings is ideological and does not rest on an ancient source (contra Kreuzer 1996). The author who worked his sources of the early history of Israel obtained no data regarding the length of reigns of the early Israelite kings and established their years of reign in order to convey an ideological message about the legitimacy of the royal houses of Saul and David. Thus, we may conclude that no data exists to enable establishment of the years of David's reign in Jerusalem. No matter whether we accept the radiometric dates of Khirbet Qeiyafa's excavators (Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 146–54) or the revised radiometric dates suggested by other scholars (Finkelstein and Piasezky 2015), the chronological relations of the fortified city constructed at Khirbet Qeiyafa vis-à-vis the reigns of the kings who ruled then in the highlands remain unknown.

KHIRBET QEYAFAS AS AN URBAN CENTRE IN THE SHEPHELAH

Khirbet Qeiyafa was excavated on a large scale in the course of seven excavation seasons, so a considerable part of the ancient city was uncovered. As a result, we have a lot of material for discussion of the site and its economic and cultural relations with neighbouring regions.

Petrographic analysis of the plain pottery uncovered in the excavation indicated that most of the vessels were produced in the vicinity of the site. This finding confirmed the close connection of the city to the region in which it is located (Ben-Shlomo 2009; 2016; Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 74, 76). In a recently published article, the site's excavators suggested that baking trays discovered in nearly every building in the place are unknown at Philistine sites, which indicates the Judahite origin of its inhabitants (Garfinkel et al. 2015b: 882). Bunimovitz and Lederman (2016: 194, 204), however, dismissed this claim and observed that baking trays appear throughout the country, including the sites of Tel Qasile, Tel Batash, and Tel Beth-Shemesh. Indeed, in their new book, the site's excavators omitted the claim of the baking trays' highlands origin and suggested that most of the pottery uncovered in the site was made of clay that characterizes the Elah Valley (Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 74).

Hundreds of jars whose handles are marked by finger impressions were discovered at the site and deserve our attention. The petrographic analysis demonstrates that most of these jars were produced in the vicinity of the site. Kang and Garfinkel (2015: 200–202; cf. Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg

2016: 184) suggested that the systematic finger impression indicates royal ownership and reflects a well-organized local administration. They further observed that at least ten jars have been discovered in each building unit unearthed at the site, and that other vessels (bowls, jugs, cooking pots, and baking trays) were uncovered in each of these units (Kang and Garfinkel 2015: 200–201). The unity of pottery distribution in the buildings hints at the existence of a central administrative apparatus that organized the circulation of commodities among the local inhabitants who lived near the city walls and defended the city.

How does the data concerning the finger-impressed jars correspond with the assumption that Khirbet Qeiyafa was a Judahite stronghold, or according to the rival hypothesis, an Israelite stronghold? To clarify the question, we may compare the distribution of the assemblage of finger-impressed jars discovered at Khirbet Qeiyafa to that of the Judahite *mlk* and rosette seal impressions stamped on jars that are dated to the 8th and 7th centuries BCE. The petrographic analysis demonstrated that all the *mlk* and rosette jars (except for few jars manufactured in the area of Jerusalem) were produced in a single workshop in the Shephelah and thence distributed to sites located throughout the kingdom (Mommsen, Perlman and Yellin 1984: 89–113; Yellin and Cahill 2004: 191–213). Examination of the Judahite jars' distribution indicates that in the early stage, before Sennacherib's campaign to Judah (701 BCE), more than half of the jars (378 out of 674 seal impressions) were brought to Lachish—the major Judahite city in the Shephelah, which played a central role in the preparation for the impending Assyrian campaign against Judah—but many jars were brought to Jerusalem and Ramat Raḥel (135 seal impressions) (Lipschits, Sergi and Koch 2011: 11–12). In the period after the Assyrian campaign, about two third of the *mlk* seal impressions (273 out of 396) were discovered in Jerusalem and Ramat Raḥel (Lipschits, Sergi and Koch 2011: 15–16). Also, more than half of the rosette seal impressions (128 out of 224) were discovered in Jerusalem and Ramat Raḥel (Lipschits, Sergi and Koch 2011: 20–21; Koch and Lipschits 2013).

Scholars agree that the jars uncovered in Jerusalem and Ramat Raḥel were first filled in local or regional wineries and olive oil extraction sites and then brought to the capital as tribute to the king and his court and to the Assyrian officials located at Ramat Raḥel. If Khirbet Qeiyafa was indeed a Judahite stronghold, or alternately an Israelite stronghold, we may expect that some of the finger-impressed jars would be discovered in the centres of government in the highlands. However, finger-impressed jars were discovered neither in Jerusalem nor in the Benjamin highland sites.¹⁸ The absence of these jars from the highland centres indicates that Khirbet Qeiyafa was subordinate to the centre of government neither in Jerusalem nor in Benjamin; moreover, it neither paid tribute to

¹⁸ On the absence of jars with finger-prints on their handle in the highlands, see Kang and Garfinkel 2015: 190–92.

nor conducted commercial relations with these settlements.¹⁹ This conclusion corresponds also with the absence of collared-rim store jars, broadly distributed in the highlands during the Iron I, from the pottery assemblage discovered at Khirbet Qeiyafa. In addition, the frequent appearance of silos for storing grain in the highland sites as against their absence at Khirbet Qeiyafa, where jars were mainly used for storing the grain, reveals the agricultural difference between the two regions.

The excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa indicate that the city conducted manifold commercial contacts with various regions within the Land of Canaan and beyond. Four Philistine hearths were discovered in two buildings excavated at the site (Freikman and Garfinkel 2014: 197, 199, 201, 217, 219; Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 178–79).²⁰ Several vessels of the painted Ashdod Ware, which according to the petrographic analysis were produced in the Philistine coast, were also unearthed at the site (Ben-Shlomo 2009: 165; Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 74, 78–79, 81, 200–201). Finger-impressed jar handles were discovered in the Shephelah and the Canaanite northern valleys (for the jars' distribution, see Kang and Garfinkel 2015: 190–92). The petrographic analysis indicates that the origin of the Black Juglets unearthed at the site is from Transjordan (Cohen-Weinberger and Panitz-Cohen 2014; Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 74); and that the origin of the imported barrel Juglets is from Cyprus (Gilboa 2012; Gilboa and Waiman-Barak 2014; Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 74, 82, 201). The origin of the basalt slabs unearthed at the site is from the Galilee (Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 74–76, 201); and the copper that was used for manufacture of the bronze tools was transferred from the Arabah (Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 82, 201). Various imported findings (alabaster vessels and faience amulets) of Egyptian origin (Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 82–83, 201) and scarabs and stamp amulets of local production (Klingbeil 2016; Schroer 2016) were discovered as well.

These data show the wide scope of Khirbet Qeiyafa's commercial relations, which encompassed the Shephelah, Philistia, the northern valleys, the Galilee, the Arabah, as well as some neighbouring countries. Yet, one region is missing in this panoramic list: the highlands. Not one single artifact discovered in Khirbet Qeiyafa is confirmed to have been brought from the highlands of Judah and Benjamin; and no artifact uncovered in Jerusalem was definitely brought from Khirbet Qeiyafa. These indications, all of which rest on the discussions of the site's excavators, demonstrate that the inhabitants of Khirbet Qeiyafa

¹⁹ From the distribution of jars with finger-prints on their handles, we can deduce that Khirbet Qeiyafa maintained economic relations with the Canaanite cities in the northern valleys and with the neighbouring Shephelah cities. See Ben-Shlomo 2009: 165; Kang and Garfinkel 2015: 190–92 and n. 7.

²⁰ For a recent discussion of the origin of the Philistine hearth, see Maeir and Hitchcock 2011; Maeir, Hitchcock and Kolska Horwitz 2013: 7–8, 17.

held no connection with the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the neighbouring regions. Rather, their contacts were held only with the inhabitants of the lowland and with kingdoms located outside of the Land of Canaan. This conclusion contradicts the claim of the site's excavators that Khirbet Qeiyafa was a Judahite stronghold and corroborates the site's local Shephelah nature. Moreover, these findings show that Khirbet Qeiyafa was an independent city that held extensive commercial relations with other near and far regions.²¹ Thus, the solution to the "riddle of Khirbet Qeiyafa" should be sought in the region in which the site is located, not in the highland city of Jerusalem.

I already discussed the five line alphabetic ostrakon discovered at Khirbet Qeiyafa. In addition to the ostrakon, another inscription inscribed on a jar was discovered in the site and carries the name אִשְׁבֶּעַל (Garfinkel et al. 2015a). The two inscriptions are written in the proto-Canaanite script, in which most of the inscriptions discovered in south Canaan were inscribed. Most of the Iron I-IIA inscriptions discovered to date in Palestine were unearthed in south Canaan and in the Beth-Shean valley, whereas inscriptions are rare in the highlands (for the list of inscriptions and their possible date, see Finkelstein and Sass 2013, with earlier literature). An inscription inscribed on a pithos fragment was recently discovered in the excavations of the Ophel and dated to the early Iron IIA. It contains seven letters and comprises the only inscription discovered to date in the Judean highlands (Mazar, Ben-Shlomo and Ahituv 2013). Clearly, thus, the two inscriptions from Khirbet Qeiyafa are part of the relatively large corpus of alphabetic inscriptions discovered in south Canaan in the period between the end of the Late Bronze and the Iron IIA. They demonstrate once again the local nature of the findings unearthed in the site.²²

DID THE CULT PRACTICED AT KHIRBET QEYAF A REFLECT THE CULT PRACTICED IN JUDAH?

Three cult rooms located within multi-room building units were discovered in the course of Khirbet Qeiyafa's excavations (Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 84–94).

1. A room that contains the richest cultic assemblage (Room G in Building 10C) was uncovered in a sixteen-room building. It includes a bench made of field stones, two standing stones, an offering table, an installation that was possibly used for deposit of offerings, and a rich assemblage of cultic artifacts

²¹ The ancient name of Khirbet Qeiyafa remains unknown. For a dismissal of its identification with biblical Shaaraim (Josh 15:36; 1 Sam 17:52), see Na'aman 2008.

²² Finkelstein and Sass (2013: 183) titled the chapter that discusses the distribution of the alphabetic inscriptions, "Core area of the alphabet: the Shephelah/Philistia, ca. 1300–900."

including two shrine models—one made of clay and the other of stone (Freikman and Garfinkel 2014: 195–210; Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 88–94).

2. A second cult room (Room G in Building C3) was located in an eight-room building and included a bench made of field stones, two standing stones, an offering table, a stone basin, a small altar, and other small artifacts (Freikman and Garfinkel 2014: 174–82; Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 85–88).
3. A third cult room (Room J in Building D200) was discovered in an eleven-room building, and included a bench made of field stones, a standing stone, an offering table, and small artifacts—including three iron swords (Hasel 2014: 304–6; Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 88).

All three rooms were built in the midst of a multi-room building, in a location that enabled the participation of a limited number of people in the cult held therein. A number of elements are common to all three rooms, including a bench, standing stones, an offering table, and cultic installations. No offering altar for sacrifices was discovered in any of the rooms, and it is possible that the site's major temple (probably accessible to the wider audience) was not discovered in the excavations.

The assumption that the site belongs to the Kingdom of Judah underlies all discussions of the cult rooms. Hence, the excavators consider the findings discovered there reflections of the cult that was prevalent in the Kingdom of Judah at the time of the United Monarchy. Thus, for example, in an article that discusses Khirbet Qeiyafa's cult rooms, one chapter is titled, "Organization of the administration and cult at the establishment of the Kingdom of Judah" (Garfinkel, Ganor and Mumcuoglu 2015: 12–13). A Hebrew book that presents the results of the site's excavations introduced the discussion of the cult by the title "the cult in Judah before the erection of Solomon's temple" (Garfinkel, Ganor and Hasel 2012: 133). Moreover, in *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa*, Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg (2016: 211–12) first emphasize the paucity of data available for studying the cult in Judah and then suggest that this situation changed recently due to the excavations conducted at Tel Moša and Khirbet Qeiyafa. The discovery of the Tel Moša temple indeed contributes much to the study of the cult in Judah in the 9th century BCE (Kisilevitz 2015). But did the discovery of the three cult rooms at Khirbet Qeiyafa contribute to a better understanding of the cult held in Judah in the first half of the 10th century?

To date, no cult place similar to the three cult rooms unearthed at Khirbet Qeiyafa was discovered in Jerusalem or the Judean and Benjamin highlands. It is difficult to compare the sacred places discovered at Tel Moša and Khirbet Qeiyafa, as the first is a temple constructed in the 9th century and the

latter are cult rooms built in the first half of the 10th century. Yet, no evidence exists that any significant artifact discovered in the Khirbet Qeiyafa's cult rooms originated in the hill country. Stone pillars have been discovered throughout the Syro-Palestinian area and are not associated with a specific region. The site's excavators compared the cultic vessels discovered there with artifacts distributed all over Palestine, but fail to demonstrate similarities to artifacts discovered in a site located in the highlands. Thus for example, the twin-cup pottery libation vessels discovered in two of the cult rooms have parallels in Tel Qiri in the Jezreel Valley and in Khirbet al-Mudayna and Tell Deir 'Alla in Transjordan, but have no parallel in artifacts discovered in the highlands (Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 89–90). Moreover, the three Philistine hearths discovered in the two adjacent rooms of the cult room uncovered in Building 10C (Freikman and Garfinkel 2014: 199) probably served for cooking the meals offered to the local god. They indicate that the cult held at the site is connected to the coastal and Shephelah regions and not to the highlands. The excavators' claim that the cult rooms unearthed at Khirbet Qeiyafa reflect the contemporaneous cult held in the Kingdom of Judah is based only on their belief in the site's Judahite identity, but lacks concrete support from what was discovered in the cult rooms themselves.

The site's excavators present the absence of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines at Khirbet Qeiyafa as against their frequent appearance in contemporaneous sites in the northern valleys (Jezreel and Beth-Shean) and in Philistia as evidence of the site's Judahite character (Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 212–13).²³ Indeed, figurines were common in Philistia and the northern valleys, comprising the inheritance of the former Canaanite culture in these regions.²⁴ Yet they were rare in the entire hill country, not only in Judah. The absence of figurines undeniably differentiates Khirbet Qeiyafa from other sites in south Canaan. It raises the question, what conclusion about the cult practiced at the site should be drawn from their absence? Unfortunately, this question cannot be answered with certitude, as a hot debate is raging among scholars on the function of figurines in the cult practiced in the ancient Near East, and in particular in the Levant (for recent discussions of the Judahite figurines, see Kletter 1996; Moorey 2003: 47–68; Wilson 2012; Ben-Shlomo and Darby 2014; Darby 2014; Dolansky 2016).²⁵

²³ A single figurine was discovered at Khirbet Qeiyafa and was published by Garfinkel, Ganor and Hasel 2012: 163–64. Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg (2016: 212) mention it in passim in the *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa* book.

²⁴ See, for example, the rich assemblage of cultic objects recently discovered at Tel Rehov (Mazar 2015).

²⁵ An article written by J. Nicholas Postgate (1994: 176–84) on Mesopotamian figurines—in which he compared the archaeological data, on the one hand, and the textual evidence that enables understanding of the figurines' function, on the other—illustrates well the

Recently, I published an article that discussed the absence of figurines at Ḥorvat ‘Uza as against their presence at other sites in the Beersheba Valley (Na’aman 2016a). There, I suggested that their absence indicates the existence of an aniconic tradition in the cult of YHWH among the Kenites who lived in this region. However, this conclusion was supported by the unprecedented number of Yahwistic names appearing in the corpus of personal names extracted from the inscriptions discovered at the site. In contrast, no data from Khirbet Qeiyafa might help explain the absence of figurines. Be the explanation for the absence of figurines at Khirbet Qeiyafa as it may, the fact that figurines appear neither at Khirbet Qeiyafa nor in the highland regions does not imply a close connection between these sites. To verify such connections scholars must present concrete evidence that ties together the two regions; to date, the excavators failed to present such evidence.

While Khirbet Qeiyafa’s excavators emphasized the aniconic nature of the findings from the site, they ignored the zoomorphic figures that appear on the shrine models discovered in the cult rooms and the anthropomorphic figures that appear on the scarabs discovered there (Klingbeil 2016). Three models were uncovered in the cult rooms—two of clay and one of stone (Garfinkel and Mumcuoglu 2013: 136–44; 2015: 45–53, 110–14; Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 84–94). Shrine models were not discovered in the Judean and Benjamin highlands and belong to the local Canaanite inheritance in the Shephelah. They first appeared in the Middle Bronze Age, and the height of their popularity was in the Late Bronze and Iron I.²⁶

A closed clay shrine model with an entrance in one of its sides was discovered in a room located in Building 4C. Above its entrance was a broken figurine, probably of a bird as can be deduced from comparison to the model discovered in Building 10C (Garfinkel, Ganor and Hasel 2012: 150–51, and an unnumbered photograph). A clay shrine model of a temple whose entrance was carefully designed was discovered in the cult room of Building 10C. Two crouching lions were fashioned at the two sides of the entrance, and three broken birds were designed in the upper side of the model (Garfinkel, Ganor and Hasel 2012: 150–53 and unnumbered photograph; Garfinkel and Mumcuoglu 2015: 110–14; Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 92–93). A good parallel to a bird placed

complexity of the problem. Whereas in Mesopotamia we have original documents that enable comparison between the two sets of data, no similar data exists regarding the Levant. Only archaeological evidence and the biblical text (with the plethora of problems involved in the latter’s use in historical and cultic research) assist a determination of the figurines’ function.

²⁶ For the catalogue of the temple models discovered in Syria, the Levant, and Cyprus in the Late Bronze and Iron Age, see Bretschneider 1991: 101–43. For the iconography of the models discovered in Palestine, see Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 154–64; Uehlinger 1997: 106–9, 114–16; Doak 2015: 101–9, 128–30; Mazar 2015: 36–38.

above the entrance appears in a shrine model discovered in Transjordan (Ilfie 1945: 91–92 and pl. 21; Weinberg 1978: 38) and in a shrine model whose origin is unknown (Bretschneider 1991: 234). Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger (1998: 163, 325; Uehlinger 1997: 115) suggest that the bird, probably a dove, represents a goddess to whom the bird was consecrated. And M. Justin Walker (2016: 317–20) conclude her discussion of the dove in Palestinian iconography thus: “[W]e can confidently assert an inherent connection between *most* dove representations and the divine (with *most* of the ‘divine’ pieces indicating a more specific association with *female* deities).” The combination of bird figurines and lion reliefs depicted on the Khirbet Qeiyafa shrine model probably indicates that this shrine represents the temple of the great goddess of south Canaan.²⁷ In light of the appearance of two model shrines in one cult room, the site’s excavators suggested that one represents the male god and the other the female goddess. In the excavators’ words (Garfinkel, Ganor and Mumcuoglu 2013: 13): “the shrine models from Khirbet Qeiyafa represents side by side the God of Israel and a fertility Goddess.” If this is indeed the case, the stone model might represent Ba‘al/Dagan, the chief god of south Canaan in the Late Bronze and Iron Age.

Another key issue here involves the similarities Garfinkel and Madelene Mumcuoglu (2013; 2015: 74–87, 166–82) suggested between the two model shrines discovered in Building 10C and the biblical descriptions of Solomon’s palace and temple (1 Kgs 6–7; 2 Chr 3–4). Attempts to find parallels between the difficult-to-comprehend biblical descriptions of the palace and temple and the buildings and artifacts discovered in the Syrian-Palestinian arena were made since the beginning of modern archaeological research, and many works have been written in an effort to reconstruct the two Jerusalemite buildings.²⁸ The parallels the two scholars drew between some terms mentioned in the description of the palace and temple and the two model shrines from Khirbet Qeiyafa enrich the discussion of this subject and are worth examining in detail, but this issue lies beyond the limited scope of this article.

In most discussions, the two scholars avoid drawing concrete historical conclusions from the comparison they made between the iconographic representation of the two model shrines and the biblical literary description, but toward the end of the discussion they moved one step forward and suggested the following conclusion (Garfinkel and Mumcuoglu 2013: 156):

²⁷ Various artifacts discovered in south Canaan and dated to the Late Bronze and Iron I reflects the goddess cult. See Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 97–108; Yasur-Landau 2001; Ben-Shlomo 2010: 32–38.

²⁸ For the vast literature written on the Jerusalem palace and temple, in addition to the biblical commentaries, see Busink 1970: 618–46; Hurowitz 1992; Zwickel 1999; McCormick 2002; Keel 2007: 247–330; Blum 2012.

From the Khirbet Qeiyafa stone model we can glean that the text described architectural elements that were known in the region and during that period, thus strengthening the historicity of this particular biblical tradition. This suggests that the ruling elite in Judah displayed its power through the use of prestige artifacts and the construction of elaborate architecture as early as the tenth century BCE.

Not only are the comparisons the authors make between the literary descriptions in Kings and Chronicles and the model shrines from Khirbet Qeiyafa indecisive by nature, but also scholars are highly conflicted regarding both when the biblical description in Chapters 6–7 was composed and whether it is a unified work or one compiled in stages.²⁹ Moreover, there are significant differences between the MT and LXX of the descriptions of Solomon's temple, which indicate the highly complex genesis of the text transmitted in the MT. Finally, architectural elements might endure continuously for hundreds of years, so that lines of similarities between iconographical elements and literary text do not necessarily reflect the time in which the building referred to in the text was erected. The dating of the construction of the palace and temple described in 1 Kgs 6–7 might be established only by discussion of the city's development in light of the archaeological and historical evidence, on the one hand, and the growth of the biblical text, on the other; the shrine models discovered at Khirbet Qeiyafa could not help clarify this dilemma.

BETWEEN PHILISTIA AND THE HIGHLANDS: THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF KHIRBET QEYAF A

The careful investigation of the results of the excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa did not disclose significant elements that connect it to Jerusalem, the Judean highlands, or the district of Benjamin. On the contrary, the plain pottery unearthed at the site was made locally, and the extensive commercial contacts the site held encompassed the lowland regions and beyond, but not the highlands. Moreover, artifacts whose assumed origin is at Khirbet Qeiyafa were not discovered in any of the highland sites, including Jerusalem. Finally, Khirbet Qeiyafa's town plan, strength of fortification, extensive commercial relations, and prosperity have no parallel in sites located in the highlands in the first half of 10th century BCE.

Instead of drawing parallels between objects discovered at Khirbet Qeiyafa and contemporaneous objects unearthed in the highlands, the site's excavators pointed out parallels between elements unearthed at the site and similar elements discovered in ninth-eighth century BCE Judahite sites. On the basis of these comparisons, they concluded that Khirbet

²⁹ Peter Dubovský (2015) published recently a book in which he discussed in detail all the biblical references to the Jerusalem temple, the account of the temple building included, and suggested that the text of 1 Kgs 6–7 has developed in four stages.

Qeiyafa belonged to the Kingdom of Judah and reflects the early tenth-century BCE urbanism in the highlands. They further suggested that there is a direct continuity between the material culture of the time of the United Monarchy and that of the Kingdom of Judah that developed many years after. Needless to say, the inhabitants of Judah might have adopted at a later point elements that originated earlier on in the Shephelah, outside the boundaries of the Kingdom of Judah; these elements' late presence in Judah is in no way indicative of their antiquity in the kingdom. The assumed antiquity of these elements in the Kingdom of Judah is anachronistic, as it rests only on comparisons made between early tenth-century BCE Khirbet Qeiyafa and ninth-eighth century Judahite sites. Likewise, the presentation of early tenth-century Khirbet Qeiyafa as a site located in the Judahite Shephelah is wholly anachronistic. Judah expanded to the Shephelah only in the late ninth century and only from that time onward can we speak on the Shephelah of Judah. All the available evidence indicates that Khirbet Qeiyafa is in no way connected to the highlands and to the emergence of the monarchical institution in Judah or Israel. Rather, it should be viewed as a city that developed in the framework of the region wherein it is located. In light of these conclusions, we must examine the city constructed there in an effort to explain its unique characteristics.

As noted above, the petrographic investigation demonstrates that the plain pottery of the site was produced in the Shephelah, mostly in its immediate neighborhood. Part of the less common findings also connect the site to the Shephelah and the Philistine coast. Among these are the alphabetic inscriptions, the local Canaanite iconography (lions and doves), the Philistine Hearths, and the Ashdod Painted Ware. Philistine painted ware is missing at the site because it was constructed after the cessation of its production, when the Ashdod Painted Ware began taking its place. The absence of pig bones is common to Khirbet Qeiyafa and many other Iron I-IIA sites, including Tel Beth-Shemesh, its northwestern neighbour.³⁰ The avoidance of pork meat is typical to sites whose inhabitants originated from the pastoral-nomadic population and from the Canaanite cities and villages.³¹ Pig bones appear in large quantities only in major Philistine cities such as Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath, Ekron, and Tel Batash; their absence from Khirbet Qeiyafa indicates that it was not a Philistine city.³²

The archaeological reports of Khirbet Qeiyafa indicate that the city has some characteristics that are unknown in other Shephelah and Philistia sites. These elements include its strong

³⁰ For the Canaanite nature of Beth-Shemesh in the Iron Age I, see Bunimovitz and Lederman 2008; 2011b.

³¹ For the absence of pig bones in the Levant in the early Iron Age, with the exception of the Philistine urban centres, see Bunimovitz and Lederman 2009: 123–24; Lev-Tov, Porter and Routledge 2011: 73, 83–84; Sapir-Hen et al. 2013.

³² Regarding pigs of European origin that were brought to Canaan in the early Iron Age, see Meiri et al. 2013.

fortification, its town plan in which private buildings are integrated within the casemate wall, and its centre of government that was built in the middle of the city (for the city plan, see Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 48–72). Casemate walls were discovered in east-Jordanian and west-Jordanian highland sites, but none of them matches the strength and symmetrical plan of the Khirbet Qeiyafa's fortifications.³³ The integration of private houses within the casemate wall is also known from some other sites, but the combination of strong fortifications integrated with private buildings, a symmetrical town plan, and involvement of the central government in all aspects of urban life is not known from other sites. These three elements single out Khirbet Qeiyafa from all the cities known in the Land of Canaan in this period.

Another distinctive element of Khirbet Qeiyafa's findings is the absence of figurines, by which it differs from other contemporaneous Shephelah and Philistine sites. Yet given both the scholarly debate over the cultic function of the figurines and the appearance of zoomorphic figures in two of the shrine models alongside anthropomorphic figures that appear on the scarabs, it is difficult to draw conclusions from the absence of figurines on the religion and cult held at the site.

Khirbet ed-Dawwara, a fortified stronghold located in the desert fringe of the hill country of Benjamin, about 1.5 km. southeast of the village of Mukhmas, is the only site whose general outlines and wall strength is somewhat similar to that of Khirbet Qeiyafa. Finkelstein excavated the site in the years 1985–86, and in 1990 published a comprehensive report of the excavation.³⁴ In the report he emphasized the singularity of the site—the only one among the highland settlements that was surrounded by a massive 2–3 m. wall with a second narrow wall passing on its internal side, and poorly constructed two- to four-room buildings erected near it. The site was built on virgin soil and had only one occupational phase, which indicates that it did not last long. No trace of conquest and destruction was detected in the buildings, so the site was probably abandoned. Finkelstein observed that the pottery unearthed there belongs to the late Iron I and early Iron IIA age and initially dated it to the second half of the 11th and the 10th century BCE (Finkelstein 1990: 195; 1993: 333). Later, he corrected the date and suggested that the site was settled in the first and second thirds of the 10th century and then abandoned (Finkelstein and Piasezky 2006: 58; Finkelstein 2007a: 110–11). Khirbet Qeiyafa's excavators noted that all the above-mentioned elements are common to the two sites, and in line with all other

³³ For the casemate walls discovered in Iron Age I–IIA in the Palestinian highlands and Transjordanian sites, see Na'aman 2010a: 509–10; Finkelstein and Fantalkin 2012: 42–43; Finkelstein and Lipschits 2011: 143–45; Finkelstein 2013b: 39–41; Porter 2013: 57–67, 74–82; Lehmann and Niemann 2014: 78.

³⁴ For the publication of the results of the archaeological excavations at Khirbet ed-Dawwara, see Finkelstein 1990; 1993.

discussions, they suggested that “both mark the beginning of a new period in the history of Judah” (Garfinkel, Kreimerman and Zilberg 2016: 203).

However, Khirbet ed-Dawwara has several additional characteristics that make it unique among all other highland sites. Among them is the small number of silos for grain and grinding stones and the absence of sickle blades, which usually mark the subsistence economy of a site. Its location near the road that descends from the district of Benjamin to Jericho indicates that it was built to guard the nearby route. Moreover, a fragment of a lion-headed rhyton, an artifact known mainly from Philistine sites, was discovered in the excavations (Finkelstein 1990: 191–92).³⁵ In light of the site’s exceptional nature I suggested, with all due caution, that it was a Philistines stronghold, at which a Philistine garrison was set in order to supervise the conquered Benjaminite settlements on its west and the road to the Jordan Valley on its east (Na’aman 2012). According to this hypothesis, Khirbet ed-Dawwara was connected to the Shephelah and Philistine region and not to the settlements established then in the hill country.

In sum, many elements uncovered in Khirbet Qeiyafa connect it to the region wherein it is located, but other elements distance it from the Philistine sites of south Canaan. In my opinion, the thesis posed in my earlier article (Na’aman 2010a), according to which Khirbet Qeiyafa reflects a short-term revival of the Canaanite groups that remained in the Shephelah in the early 10th century BCE, still provides the best solution for the unique combination of elements discovered at the site.³⁶ The destruction of Khirbet Qeiyafa and the eastward expansion of Gath brought to an end this south Canaanite enclave. From this point onward, the Philistines became Judah’s western neighbours; and this neighborhood, with no additional separating political-cultural Canaanite groups, is reflected in the story-cycles of Saul, David and Solomon (see 1 Kgs 2:39–40).

³⁵ A small fragment of a lion-headed rhyton was recently discovered in the City of David excavations (Mazar and Karlin 2015).

³⁶ The term “Canaanites” is used in my article in a Political-cultural (rather than ethnic) sense. The Late Bronze Age settled populations of Canaan identified themselves in relation to the city-state to which they belonged and not by the term “Canaanites,” which was mainly used by the inhabitants of foreign kingdoms (Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, Mitanni, Hatti, Alalakh, and Ugarit). The same is true of the Canaanite settlements of the Shephelah in Iron I who did not belong to one of the neighbouring Philistine kingdoms. Hence, the recent article of Maeir and Hitchcock (2016), which dismisses the claim of a “Canaanite enclave” in the Shephelah in Iron I on the ground that they could not identify “Canaanite” self-consciousness among these inhabitants of this region and in conjunction blurred the political-cultural differences between the inhabitants of this “enclave” and those of the neighbouring Philistine Kingdoms and the Judean hill country, is based, in my opinion, on erroneous assumptions.

The unresolved question thus far is, how should we explain the unique characteristics of the fortified city constructed at Khirbet Qeiyafa? The city was founded about 150 years after the collapse of the system of the Canaanite kingdoms in south Canaan and the establishment of the Philistine centres in this region. At the period in which it was built, the regime in the region had already stabilized. Thus, speculation about the arrival of new migrants from the north or west who might have brought with them new ideas of city planning and techniques of building construction must be avoided. We should remember that our knowledge of the material culture in the land depends on what was discovered so far in the excavations, but a possibility always exists that the available picture is incomplete and other pieces of the puzzle will be discovered in the future. Khirbet Qeiyafa is the best example for this claim, since until its excavation no similar early Iron Age city was known. In light of the current knowledge, we should steer clear of speculations on the origin of the city plan and heavy fortifications unearthed in the excavations, and wait patiently until new evidence emerges that solves the site's riddle. Until then, we must make do with the available data, link the site to the area in which it is located, and avoid raising unfound speculations about its connections with the Judean and Benjamin highlands and its place in the history of the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel at the time of the United Monarchy.

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