CULT IN THE IRON AGE I–IIA
IN THE LAND OF ISRAEL

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In my paper I will present some general ideas concerning cult in the Iron Age I period in the southern Levant. The main focus will be on religion in the territory which later was called Israel and Judah. The religion of the Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, Arameans and Phoenicians are not the focus of this paper.[1] The archaeology of the Iron Age I period has been highly debated in the last 30 years with a completely new view of the historical events emerging.[2] Nevertheless, relatively little attention has been placed on the religious changes from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age. These dramatic changes cannot be discussed though without some general remarks on the history of Israel during that period, including the social and economic changes.

Thesis 1: *The end of the Late Bronze Age was a transition period starting about 1250 BCE and ending at some sites not before ca. 1000 BCE, during the Kingship of David and Salomon.*

Nearly all Late Bronze Age towns in the country were originally located along main trade routes. Most of them were abandoned at the end of the Late Bronze Age or at least became much smaller during the Iron Age I. Hundreds of new settlements were built during the Iron Age I in Galilee, the central hills region and the Negev. Generally, those villages were relatively small (not more than 30 houses). Some Late Bronze Age towns like Jerusalem or Keila survived as city states until the end of the Iron Age I.

The changes that occurred during the last centuries of the 2nd millennium BCE were enormous. Instead of relatively large city states, between about 1250 and 1000 BCE, in Galilee, the central hill region and the Negev a tribal system developed. David and Solomon were the first ones to unify those tribes into a territorial state with a central leader. There were severe changes not only in the architecture of the towns and villages, but also in the society and—as a consequence—also in the religion of the people living during the Iron Age I period.

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[1] Cf. for the religion of those areas see D. Elkowicz, *Tempel und Kultplätze der Philister und der Völker des Ostjordanlandes. Eine Untersuchung zur Bau- und zur Kultgeschichte während der Eisenzeit* (Münster, forthcoming); G. E. Markoe, *Peoples of the Past: Phoenicians* (London, 2000).

[2] Cf. e.g. I. Finkelstein, *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement* (Jerusalem, 1988).

Thesis 2: *The end of the Late Bronze Age period is characterized by the break-down of an economic and social system not only in Canaan, but also in the whole eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea.*

There are definitely several reasons for those changes. A weather catastrophe, which affected the whole area, was one of the main reasons for this breakdown.[3] Even in a country like Albania, more than 2000km in the west of Palestine, an abandonment of sites at the time of 1200 BCE can be observed.[4] A famine crisis of the 13th century BCE affected the whole eastern part of the Mediterranean region. The water level at the Dead Sea fell at that period, as newer researches have shown, to nearly the same height as today.[5] The Sea Peoples, but also some Anatolian tribes and people from other origins, tried to find new areas to settle down. The models we still use today for the Palestinian society during the Iron Age I period are too simple to reconstruct the general changes in that period in the whole eastern Mediterranean area. New settlers entered the area of Palestine; others had to leave the country because of the pressure of the new settlers. Therefore we have to assume that the population changed dramatically during that period.

The new settlers of Iron Age I included: (1) inhabitants of former cities abandoned at the end of the Late Bronze Age; (2) people living in the coastal areas (and maybe the Jordan valley) driven away by the Philistine settlement;[6] (3) people from several parts of Anatolia and the Syria, who lost their homes during the famine in the eastern Mediterranean in the 13th century BCE; (4) a small number of nomads, mainly from eastern Jordan, driven away by Bedouin attacks;[7] (5) an even smaller number of people who had emigrated to Egypt at the end of the 12th century BCE in order to survive the famine, and who returned back to Palestine later. All of them had differrent religious traditions.

The hill country was ideal for the new settlers. This area was nearly unsettled during the Late Bronze Age, there was more humidity than in the coastal area or in the Jordan valley, and it was far away from the international roads, where well armed soldiers could pass. The main income of these people was completely different from that of the Late Bronze Age period. While the Late Bronze Age cities had a distribution of labor and were dependent on trade activities and highly were specialized, the settlements in the hill country region were rather poor, and at least in the beginning conducted very little agriculture, mainly herded flocks. Since the international trade broke down at the end of the Late Bronze Age, also the possibilities to ascertain the income for a family changed dramatically during that period. This certainly also had some influence on the religion of these people.

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[3] W. Zwickel, "Hungersnöte in der südlichen Levante vom 14. Jh. v.Chr. bis zum 1. Jh. n. Chr.", *FS Oren*, forthcoming.

[4] The financing of a research trip to Albania, which I undertook in the year 2008 together with Dr. R. Kletter, was funded by the Landesexzellenzcluster Archaeoscience of the Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz.

[5] C. Migowski, *Untersuchungen laminierter holozäner Sedimente aus dem Toten Meer: Rekonstruktion von Paläoklima und –seizmizität* (Potsdam, 2004).

[6] Cf. W. Zwickel, "Die Landnahme in Juda", *UF* 25 (1993), pp. 473–491.

[7] R. Neu, *Von der Anarchie zum Staat. Entwicklungsgeschichte ISRAELS vom Nomadentum zur Monarchie im Spiegel der Ethnosoziologie* (Neukirchen, 1992), pp. 111–117.

Thesis 3: *At first, the new settlers who settled in the hill country region, the Galilee and the Negev were mostly independent. They had few connections to other settlements. In the course of the time, neighboring sites established clans and later tribes. People of neighboring sites married each other, a regional trade was established, and neighboring sites helped each other in military activities when any enemies tried to fight against them. During the Iron Age I period, a tribal system in the Land of Israel and Judah was established with judges as their leaders.*

In early times some tribes helped each other in military campaigns, but there was no pressure that every tribe had to be part of a military activity (cf. Judg 4–5 with some tribes who did not participate at that battle). Likely, the first campaign with all tribes was organized by Saul (1 Sam 11). With Saul and especially David a new era in the Northern kingdom started: Now the country formed by 9 separated tribes (except of Judah, Simeon and Levi) started to be a military organization headed by a king.

Thesis 4: *The city states of the Late Bronze Age were well developed centers with a sophisticated society. The settlers of Iron Age I period, as well as the territorial state of the Iron Age II period, were largely economically autonomous. The changes from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age mainly affected the economic and social system.*

Pottery items[8] as well as ivory items[9] or metallurgy products[10] clearly demonstrate the highly developed craftsmanship in the Late Bronze Age period. There were also intensive trade activities with other countries in the Mediterranean area.[11] Both the trade activities and the craftsmanship came to an end at the end of the Late Bronze Age.

Thesis 5: *All Late Bronze Age cities had at least one temple. Temples (and palaces) were necessary parts of each city state and even smaller settlements in Palestine. The temples of the Late Bronze Age were closely connected to political power; the king or ruler was probably responsible for cultic stability, while the city gods guaranteed the stability of the kingdom or political power.*

For the Late Bronze Age there are several buildings, which certainly can be interpreted as temples.[12] The following list presents all those buildings:

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[8] R. Amiran, *Ancient Pottery of the Holy Land from its Beginnings in the Neolithic Period to the End of the Iron Age* (Jerusalem, 1969), pp. 124–190.

[9] H. A. Liebowitz, "Late Bronze II Ivory Work in Palestine: Evidence of a Cultural Highpoint", *BASOR* 265 (1987), pp. 3–24; E. Fischer, *Ägyptische und ägyptisierende Elfenbeine aus Megiddo und Lachisch. Inschriftenfunde, Flaschen, Löffel* (AOAT 47; Münster, 2007).

[10] O. Negbi, *Canaanite Gods in Metal: An Archaeological Study of Ancient Syro-Palestinian Figurines* (Tel Aviv, 1976).

[11] A. Leonard, Jr., *An Index to the Late Bronze Age Aegean Pottery from Syria-Palestine* (Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology 114; Jonsered, 1994); Ü. Yalçın et al. (eds.), *Das Schiff von Uluburun. Welthandel vor 3000 Jahren* (Bochum, 2005).

[12] For a detailed description of every temple, cf. W. Zwickel, *Der Tempelkult in Kanaan und Israel. Studien zur Kultgeschichte Palästinas von der Mittelbronzezeit bis zum Untergang Judas* (FAT 10;Tübingen, 1994), pp. 75–203.

Tel Musa/Tell Kittan, Stratum III (LB IA)
Hazor, Area A, Stratum XV and XVI (LB I)
Hazor, Area C, Stratum 1B and 1A (LB IIA)
Hazor, Cult Place, Area F, Stratum 1B and 1A (LB I–II, early Iron Age I)
Hazor, Area H, Stratum 2, 1B and 1A (LB I–II, early Iron Age IA)
Tell Balata/Sichem, Stratum XIV–XII (LB IB–II, early Iron Age IA)
Megiddo, Area B–B, Strata IX, VIII, VIIB/A (LB I–II, early Iron Age IA)
Tell Der Alla (LB II)
Lachish Fosse Temple I–III (LB I–II, early Iron Age IA)
Lachish, Acropolis Temple (LB II, early Iron Age IA)
Tel Mubarak/Tell Mevorakh, Stratum XI and X (LB I–IIA)
Tell Abu Hawam, Temple 50 and 30 (LB I–II, early Iron Age IA)
Bet-Shean, Stratum R3 (LB I)
Bet-Shean, Strata IX, VI, VI (LB I–II, Iron Age I)
Jaffa, Lion Temple (LB II)

While there is very often discussions whether buildings of earlier or later periods may be interpreted as temples, Late Bronze Age temples are easily identified as such. Mostly, they are built up with strong walls (so called Migdal temples). They normally have rich cultic finds and installations like podiums or niches. Most of the temples were found in the main cities like Megiddo, Lachish, Hazor or Bet-Shean. But also small sites like Tell Mevorakh had a sanctuary, which most likely served the people on the road leading up to the north (as a highway-sanctuary).

Thesis 6: *All temples of the Late Bronze Age were abandoned at the end of this period or in the early years of Iron Age I. This was at least sometimes not a "sudden death", but a slow process associated with the end of the city states. Only at a few sites, the temples continued to be used in early Iron Age I. But even those temples ceased to exist in the course of Iron Age I.*

The following list presents those temples which still existed according to archaeological reports in the early Iron Age (with an absolute date of 1200 BCE as the starting point for the end of the Late Bronze Age):

Hazor, Cult Place, Area F, Stratum 1B and 1A (LB I–II, early years of Iron Age IA)
Hazor, Area H, Stratum 2, 1B and 1A (LB I–II, early years of Iron Age IA)
Tell Balata/Sichem, Stratum XIV–XII (LB IB–II, early Iron Age IA)
Megiddo, Area B–B, Strata IX, VIII, VIIB/A (LB I–II, early Iron Age IA)
Tell Der Alla (early years of Iron Age IA)
Lachish Fosse Temple I–III (LB I–II, early years of Iron Age IA)
Lachish, Acropolis Temple (LB II, early years of Iron Age IA)
Tell Abu Hawam, Temple 50 and 30 (LB I–II, early years of Iron Age IA)
Bet-Shean, Strata IX, VI, VI (LB I–II, Iron Age I)

But there is still no general agreement about the end of the Late Bronze Age. Generally, the year 1200 BCE is used in the handbooks. Clearly, the Canaanite society did not come to a sudden end. The decline of the city state society, which is identical with the Late Bronze Age society, lasted at least until about 1160 BCE, at some places even longer. Every city state should be considered separately and had its own specific history and development. Lachish came to an end about 1160 BCE or even

some decades later; Megiddo VIIA was not destroyed before about 1140 BCE, if a pedestal bearing the cartouche of Ramesses VI can be attributed to this stratum. The layout of the city changed completely in Stratum VI. Most likely, Megiddo survived as a Canaanite city state at least to the second part of the 12th century BCE. Also in Shechem the Migdal Temple existed until the middle of the 12th century BCE. Unfortunately, we know nothing concrete about the history of Megiddo or Shechem in this period. Only in Bet-Shean the series of Late Bronze Age temples continued at least to the end of the 12th or even the beginning of the 11th century BCE. But already H. Weippert noted: "Politisch hat die Eisen-I-Zeit ... in Beth-Sean überhaupt nicht stattgefunden" (Politically the Iron Age I period did not exist in Bet-Shean).[13] This town may have been under Egyptian influence until the 11th or even 10th century BCE – and likewise also the temple with the Late Bronze Age tradition existed longer than at any other site in the country. We do not know if other city states survived likewise until the 11th century BCE. This is likely at least in Jerusalem and maybe also in some (very few) other sites, that the Late Bronze Age temples still existed during the Iron Age I period, since those cities were still able to exist as typical Canaanite city states until the 11th or even 10th century BCE.

Thesis 7: *If a Late Bronze Age town or village was re-established during Iron Age I, after abandonment, the new temples were – as far as we know until now – never erected on the same spot.*

As soon as a town lost its character as a Canaanite city state, the sacred area was abandoned. This is even true for Shechem, where a building of the late 9th or 8th centuries BCE was considered by the first excavators to be a sanctuary, because it was built above the former temples; but it should be regarded to be a granary.[14] This general abandonment is a really surprising fact, which demonstrates that the settlers were not interested in any continuation of cultic activities from the Late Bronze Age.

Thesis 8: *Typical sanctuaries of the Iron Age I and II periods were open air sanctuaries (bamot).*

Until now, the word *bamah* has not been mentioned in any Levantine Late Bronze Age inscription in a cultic sense.[15] The *bamot* are likely new types of cultic places founded for the first time during the Iron Age I period. The word *bamah* should be translated very generally as an "open air sanctuary", which was normally situated on a higher spot. According to its description in the Old Testament, the typical layout of a *bamah* includes a tree, a *masseba* and maybe a small stone-altar (just a usual big stone), but any special "high place" had likely its own layout: "They set up pillars (*massebot*) and sacred poles (*asherim*) on every high hill and under every green tree; there they made offerings on all the high places" (2 Kgs 17:10–11a).

Such sanctuaries can hardly be identified during archaeological field work (except:

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[13] H. Weippert, *Palästina in vorhellenistischer Zeit* (Handburch der Archäologie. Vorderasien II. Band 1; München, 1988), p. 365.

[14] Cf. Zwickel, *op. cit.* (note 12), p. 248.

[15] P. H. Vaughan, *The Meaning of bāmâ in the Old Testament. A Study of Etymological, Textual and Archaeological Evidence* (The Society for Old Testament Study. Monograph Series 3; Cambridge, 1974), pp. 3–28.

Ḍahret et-Tawile/The Bull Site) because of this basic and non-diagnostic equipment, especially when they are not connected with any buildings.

The high place of *Ḍahret et-Tawile*[16] in the Samarian hill country was discovered by chance because a bronze bull had been found on top of a hill. Otherwise this simple stone construction certainly would not have been observed by archaeological surveys. Until now this is the only discovered high place of the Iron Age I or II period. Recent survey activities by A. Zertal[17] and his team showed several Iron Age I sites only in the north of *Ḍahret et-Tawile*; this open sanctuary was used by those settlers as a religious centre. The people living in a diameter of 5–10km used those open air sanctuaries for their cultic meetings.

A similar installation dating from the 7th century BCE has been found as the nucleus of the sanctuary of Apollo Hylates in Cyprus.[18] Other sites like the so-called altar of Joshua on Mount Ebal[19] should not be considered as open sanctuaries because they may be explained differently. Real temples have not yet been discovered on Iron Age I sites in Israel and Judah, but in the neighboring countries.[20]

Thesis 9: *In the biblical literature as well, it is mainly bamot which are attested for the Iron Age I and IIA. They seem to be the typical type of sanctuary in that period.*

Surprisingly the list of the open air sanctuaries in the Old Testament and the extra-biblical literature is rather long. Unfortunately, for most of the sanctuaries, we cannot write a history of their development since they are mentioned only once or twice in the Old Testament. We seldom know when they were founded. The following list mentions all sanctuaries according to Biblical literature except those which are definitely from the Iron Age II period:

> Atarot (Num 32:3; KAI 181:12)
> Beer-Lahai-Roi (Gen 16:14)
> Beer-Sheba (Gen 21:33; 26:23–25; 46,1; Am 5:5; 8:14)
> Bethel (Gen 28:10–22; 35:8–15; 1 Kgs 12:28–30 and others)
>   – Tabor Oak near Bethel (Judg 4:5; 1 Sam 10:3)
> Bethlehem (e.g. Judg 17:7)
> Carmel (1 Kgs 18:19–40)
> Dan (1 Kgs 12:29–30; Am 8,14)
> Palm of Deborah (Judg 4:5)
> Eben-Ezer (1 Sam 7:2)
> Gibeah in Benjamin (1 Sam 10:5,13; 22:6)
> Gibeon (2 Sam 20:8; 1 Kgs 3:4–5)
> Gilgal (Josh 4:20; 5,9–10; Judg 3:19; 1 Sam 7:16; 10:8; 11:14–15; 13:8–10;
>   15:21; Hos 4:15; 12:12; Am 4:4; 5:5)
> Jabesh (1 Sam 31:12–13; 1 Chron 10:12)
> Jerusalem
>   – High Places of the Satyrs (2 Kgs 23:8)

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[16] For a summary and literature: Zwickel, *op. cit.* (note 12), pp. 212–215.

[17] A. Zertal, *The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Volume 1: The Shechem Syncline* (CHANE 21; Leiden – Boston, 2004), p. 55, site 61.

[18] W. Zwickel, "Eine zyprische Parallele zur kürzlich in Israel gefundenen Kulthöhe", *BN* 24 (1984), pp. 24–29.

[19] Cf. for a summary and literature see Zwickel, *op. cit.* (note 12), pp. 204–207.

[20] Cf. for a summary, see now Elkowicz, *op. cit.* (note 1).

- Spring of Gihon (1 Kgs 1:33–34,39)
- Mount of Olives (2 Sam 15:32; 1 Kgs 11:7)
- Serpent's stone (1 Kgs 1:9)

Mamre/Hebron (Gen 13:18; 18:1)
Altar of Manoah between Zora and Eshtaol (Judg 13:20)
Mizpa in Benjamin (Judg 20–21; 1 Sam 7:5–16; 10:17)
Mizpa in Gad/Gilead (Gen 31:45–46)
Morija (Gen 22,14)
Nebo (Num 33:47; KAI 181:14–18)
Ofra (Judg 6:11–24)
Peor (Num 23:28; 25,18; Josh 15:59; 22:17; cf. Num 25:3.5; 31,16: Deut 4:3; Ps 106:28; Hos 9:10)
Qeriho/Dibon (KAI 181:3)
Qerijot (KAI 181:13)
Ramah(tajim) (1 Sam 9:19,22,25)
Shechem/Oak More (Gen 12:6; 33:20; Jos 24:26; Judg 9:6,37)
Shittim (Num 25:1)
Zaanannim (Josh 19:33; Judg 4:11).

At least some of those open air sanctuaries like Beer-Sheba, Mamre, Ofra and others can certainly considered as *bamot* because they are closely connected to sacred trees. The layout of most of the other sanctuaries is unknown, but according to the biblical texts no temple building existed there. In Dan the so-called *bamah* reconstructed by Avraham Biran is not really proven by archaeology, but just a reconstruction.[21] For Bethel a temple is not mentioned in the biblical texts; this may have been just an open air sanctuary.

Thesis 10: *Typical offerings at these sites seem to have been the sacrifice of animals, only the fat of which was burnt, while the meat was shared by the family (zaebah).*

We have only very few—if at all—biblical texts from the Iron Age I period. Nevertheless it is possible to reconstruct the development of cult in the Iron Age using the historical-critical method. In the following overview I present the results of a more detailed study published elsewhere.[22]

The slaughter of animals was not necessarily a cultic act in the early periods. The basic text of the Gideon story in Judg 6:11aα,18,19aαb,21–24a did not mentioned any cultic slaughter of an animal, as well as the Abraham story in Gen 18:1–8 or 19,1–3, traditionally attributed to the Jahwistic source.

On his pilgrimage to the sanctuary of Silo, Elkanah killed an animal and boiled the pieces of this animal in several pots as a *zebah*-offering. Normally, as shown in 1 Sam 2:13–17, the fat of the animals had to be burned on a small altar as an offering for god, while the meat was eaten by the members of the family. The main duty of the priests was to prepare things to be offered on the altar, to burn fat and other things on it, and to wear the Ephod, that means to give oracles (1 Sam 2:28a).

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[21] Cf. for some criticism Zwickel, *op. cit.* (note 12), pp. 254–256.

[22] Zwickel, *op. cit.* (note 12), cf. also W. Zwickel, "Priesthood and the Development of Cult in the Books of Kings", in A. Lemaire and B. Halpern (eds.), *The Books of Kings: Sources, Composition, Historiography and Reception* (VTS 129; Leiden – Boston, 2010), pp. 401–426.

1 Sam 9:12–24* presents a cultic feast on a high place of Rama, likely typical for that period at that site. Similar feast activities are also mentioned in 1 Sam 16:1–13 and 1 Sam 20. Some guests were sitting in a special house (*lishka*) at the high place waiting for a *zebah* meal prepared by a cook. Nothing is said about any burning of fat of the animal. Even the fat tail of the animal was taken aside as a present for a special guest.

Burnt offerings are mentioned in early texts at the end of the Great Flood (Gen 8:20–22). The aim of this offering of Noah is to calm god after his anger against mankind. But it was also necessary to offer burnt offerings to god in order to get his assistance during the fights in the beginning of a war. Therefore Saul offered an *'olah* in Gilgal before he started to fight against the Philistines (1Sam 10:8; 13:7b–15a). Nevertheless burnt offerings are not mentioned before the 8th century BCE as regular sacrifices.

Libations are only mentioned in 2 Sam 23:16. They seem to be in a Late Bronze Age tradition, where libation offerings were very prominent.

To sum up: The typical cultic offering in the early days of Israel is the *zebah*-offering. At some placesm the fat was burnt and at some not. The typical place for cultic activities was a high place (*bamah*). *'Olah* offerings were only used to calm god or to make god well-disposed, and libations are rarely mentioned.

Thesis 11: *So far, temples are not attested for the Iron Age I and IIA periods in Israel and Judah through archaeological finds. All those buildings considered as temples can possibly be interpreted in a different way. But there are evidently some rooms which contained cultic items. Likely those rooms were used as storage rooms for cultic vessels to be used anywhere outside on an open air sanctuary.*

No archaeological traces of any temple have been found during the excavations at Silo/Khirbet Selun, where, according to the biblical tradition, a temple in the Iron Age I period existed. Perhaps, the excavations failed to find the very place. But there are no traces of any temple building remains in the whole of Israel and Judah during the Iron Age I and II as well. The temple in Arad, which did not exist before the Iron Age II period,[23] is an exception because it has been a border sanctuary in the very south of the country. In Lachish, Room 49, and Megiddo, Room 2081,[24] both very famous and often discussed in the literature, special rooms for storing cultic vessels were found. But compared to the number of items found in these rooms, the space was too small for a usage as sanctuary. Most likely, all the cultic elements were used on a high place or an open air sanctuary nearby, whose location is still unknown. Both rooms are from the Iron Age IIA period, but may reflect earlier developments.

Some more special buildings need further consideration. One building of Strata VIIIA/B/C and IX (12th–11th centuries BCE) in Tell Qiri was considered by the excavators as a cultic building because of the finds discovered in the house.[25] The size of the house, which was built up in a domestic context, is approximately 7x7m

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[23] Z. Herzog, "The Fortress Mound at Tel Arad. An Interim Report", *TA* 29 (2002), pp. 3–109; L. Singer-Avitz, "Arad: The Iron Age Pottery Assemblages", *TA* 29 (2002), pp. 110–214.

[24] Cf. Zwickel, *op. cit.* (note 12), pp. 277–280.

[25] A. Ben-Tor *et al.*, *Tell Qiri: A Village in the Jezreel Valley. Report on the Archaeological Excavations 1975–1977. Archaeological Investigations in the Valley of Jezreel. The Yoqne'am Project* (Qedem 24; Jerusalem, 1987), pp. 86–90.

(external measurements) in its earliest phase, VIIIC. During that phase, the house was entered from the street in the north. Nearly half of the house belonged to a front room (Locus 685a) with a narrow bench on the western wall; because of the light conditions, this room may have been an uncovered courtyard. Another room could be entered by a small doorway (Locus 1074), and a third dark room (Locus 1065), which may have been used as storage room, lay behind the second one. In Phase B, the complete layout was changed. Now the entrance was in the south, where an additional broadroom, Locus 690, was added. Loci 1074 and 1065 were combined to a new broadroom, Locus 1044. That means that the building was divided now in three parallel broadrooms of nearly equal size. The size of the house was enlarged to 7 x 9.5m. Whether or not the former courtyard was still uncovered is not clear, but this is most likely, since otherwise, no light could enter this room. In Phase VIIIA, the layout was changed once again. Now the former courtyard served as an open air entrance area; the house could be entered again from the north. Locus 670 (former Locus 1044) and Locus 690 were now two parallel broadrooms.

The architecture—besides the bench in Locus 685a—is typical for domestic houses. Due to the finds, the excavators suggeste that this building should be connected with cultic purposes. More than 200 bones were found, 92% of them from the right foreleg of sheep or goats. The excavators connected this with the cultic practice in Ex 29:22 and Lev 7:32 and compared the high amount of right forelegs found in the Fosse temple in Lachish. In addition, a vessel and a stand, likely used for libations, and not as an incense burner, had been found in that building. It is not clear that the upright stone that found there can really be considered as a *masseba*. Also the function of a stone basin recovered in Phase VIIIA/B is not clear.

The space in this building seems to be too small for public use. If the right forelegs can really be combined with the priestly portion of a sacrifice, it seems understandable that this building was used as the private house of a priest. The cultic instruments were stored in his private house and could be used on an open air site anywhere in the surroundings of Tel Qiri. The priests did not live on the open air sanctuaries, but in the villages nearby (cf. 1 Sam 9:12–13). But likely, they ate their portion of the sacrifices at home with their families. If this assumption is true, the finds from the Iron Age I period in Tel Qiri are proof for a cultic practice only described in much later texts of the priestly source in the Bible.

A similar building has been excavated in *Tell el-'Oreme*/Kinneret at the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. The size of this building is 11.8 x 5.95m. This building complex consists of a courtyard (Locus 3507) with a roofed part on the eastern side, separated by five pillars (Locus 3925); to the west, the courtyard is bordered by two elongated rooms (Loci 3578 and 3538). The house complex is situated at the corner of two streets of the Iron Age I period. Surprisingly, no domestic finds were discovered in the building, but a partially preserved kernos-like bowl with zoomorphic applications, a complete fenestrated vessel, and a pilgrim flask were discovered. Also, two pits filled with bones of small livestock were discovered, but the bones are not yet analyzed. In particular, the fenestrated vessels[26]

[26] Cf. M. Nissinen and S. Münger, "'Down the River ...': A Shrine Model from Tel Kinrot in its Context", in E. Kaptijn and L. P. Petit (eds.), *A timeless vale: Archaeological and related essays on the Jordan Valley in honour of Gerrit van der Kooij on the occasion of his sixty–fifth birthday* (Leiden, 2009), pp. 129–144, for an additional parallel D. Vieweger and J. Häser, "Das 'Gadara Region Project'. Der *Tell Zerā'a* in den Jahren 2007 bis 2009", *ZDPV*

are typical in the Levantine area for the Late Bronze (Ugarit, *Kamid el-Loz*, Hazor, *Tell Deir 'Alla*) and Iron Age I (Dan, *Tel Hadar*, Kinneret, *Tell Zera'a*) periods. One example from Ashkelon, which can be dated to the Middle Bronze Age II period, has a much higher profile and should be considered separately, while another piece from *Tel Rehov* is likely in a Iron Age I tradition. All those fenestrated, globular vessels from the Iron Age I period were found in a very limited area in the Jordan valley, from Dan in the north and *Tell Zera'a* and maybe *Tel Rehov* in the south. They seem to be typical of an unknown ritual. One may suppose that also the building in *Tell el-'Oreme*, where the vessel was found, was used as a storage house for a cultic context. Most likely, the cult place was somewhere in the neighborhood, perhaps outside the city wall, which is just to the south of this building.

We find a similar situation in Dan, where a storage room (Locus 7082), measuring only 1.5 x Im was excavated, and a similar globular clay vessel was found within.[27] Also this room could have been used as a storage room for cultic purposes. At other sites, the globular clay vessels were discovered in typical storage rooms. In *Tel Hadar* this type of cultic vessel was found in the tripartite pillared building.[28] In *Tell Zera'a* it was found in a silo.[29]

Other typical cultic items are cult stands with a square groundplan.[30] All the items dating to the Iron Age I period were found in a very limited area (Bet Shan, Megiddo, Pella, Ta'anach), comparable to the globular clay vessels. Perhaps these items are markers for specific cultic or ethnic groups or traditions. The so-called 'Sellin-stand' from Taanach was found in a private house, but a ground plan of this building is missing. The 'Lapp-stand' from the same site was discovered in a nearby cistern. The items from Bet-Shean were found in the so-called 'North temple' respectively in the south temple. But both buildings should not be considered as temples.[31] One item from Megiddo was found in Building 338, considered by the excavator Schumacher[32] and by Ussishkin[33] as a shrine. If this building can really be interpreted as a temple or a shrine is still highly debatable.[34] Some items from this building can clearly be identified as cultic, but no clear architectural proof can be found for a definite cultic use of this building. Unfortunately, the publication of the excavation

126 (2010), tf. 7.

[27] A. Biran, *Biblical Dan* (Jerusalem, 1994), pp. 152–153.

[28] M. Kochavi and E. Yadin, "Hadar, Tel", in NEAEHL, V, pp. 1756–1757.

[29] Vieweger and Häser, *op. cit.* (note 26), p. 13.

[30] J. Bretschneider, *Architekturmodelle in Vorderasien und der östlichen Ägäis vom Neolithikum bis in das 1. Jahrtausend. Phänomene in der Kleinkunst an Beispielen aus Mesopotamien, dem Iran, Anatolien, Syrien, der Levante und dem ägäischen Raum unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der bau- und religionsgeschichtlichen Aspekte* (AOAT 229; Kevelaer – Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1991); B. Muller, *Les "maquettes architecturales" du Proche-Orient Ancien. Mésopotamie, Syrie, Palestine du IIIe auch milieu du Ier millénaire av. J.-C.* (BAH 160; Beirut, 2002); C. Frevel, "Eisenzeitliche Kultständer als Medien der Alltagskultur in Palästina", in H. von Hesberg (ed.), *Medien der Antike* (Zakmira 1; Berlin, 2004), pp. 145–202; W. Zwickel, "Kultständer aus Taanach", in S. Kreuzer, (ed.), *Taanach/Tell Ta'annek. 100 Jahre Forschungen zur Archäologie, zur Geschichte, zu den Fundobjekten und zu den Keilschrifttexten* (WAS 5; Frankfurt, 2006), pp. 63–70.

[31] Zwickel, *op. cit.* (note 12), pp. 240–242.

[32] G. Schumacher, *Tell el-Mutesellim I: Fundbericht* (Leipzig, 1908).

[33] D. Ussishkin, "Schumacher's Shrine in Building 338 in Megiddo", *IEJ* 39 (1989), pp. 149–172.

[34] Cf. Zwickel, *op. cit.* (note 12), pp. 257–258.

results in Megiddo by Schumacher was insufficient for a careful interpretation more than 100 years after the original excavation. Therefore, the identification is uncertain and this building should not be considered as a shrine. Similar items from Pella were found out of their original context in a pottery deposit.[35]

To sum up: The overview has shown that no definite temples have been discovered in Judah or Israel from the Iron Age I period until now. At some sites, cultic material was discovered, but very likely the buildings connected to those items served not as sanctuaries, but rather as storage rooms or as domiciles for a priest. The sacred area should be located nearby as an open air sanctuary. Because of the fact that many sites of the Iron Age I period were already excavated, this result is likely not accidental. Rather, it is likely that at nearly all the sites there were no temples and that some cultic activities took part in open air places in the villages or nearby. Even if the small rooms in Tell Qiri, Kinneret, and perhaps Megiddo, really should be regarded as shrines, the size of the shrines was extremely small and cannot be compared to the magnificent temple buildings in the Late Bronze Age.

Thesis 12: *Temples are rarely mentioned in the biblical texts describing the early periods of Israel and Judah. Actually, some must have existed, but they were really rare.*

According to the biblical text, there are only two buildings that can clearly be considered as temple buildings and not an open air shrine in the Iron Age I period: the sanctuary of Shiloh and the sanctuary of Nob. Perhaps a temple existed in Shiloh (1 Sam 1:3,9,24; 2:14 and others) because it was a central cultic place for the tribes of Northern Palestine or at least of the tribe of Ephraim. Unfortunately, during the excavations in Silo no cultic building was discovered. The story of the sanctuary of Nob on the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives (1 Sam 21:2; 22:9,11,19) could also be of an early origin. There are also some observations for a very late tradition (or a late redaction) of those texts. According to 1 Sam 22:18, eighty-five priests were killed by Doeg. Such a high number of priests only existed in the late postexilic period. During the Iron Age I and II period, only one priest, or perhaps in late Iron Age II in Jerusalem, three priests worked at one sanctuary.

Thesis 13: *The situation in Israel and Judah is completely different to the neighboring countries (Arameans, Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Philistines), where according to recent excavations temples existed already in Iron Age I.*

New excavations in the neighboring regions of Philistia, Edom, Moab and Ammon show that in those territories, some temples existed already in the Iron Age I and especially in the Iron Age II.[36] For the Iron Age I, *Tel Qasile* and Ekron are the most important sanctuaries, but there are further examples at other sites. In *Wadi eth-Thamad* 13, a 'wayside shrine' dating back to the Iron Age I was discovered. In the Iron Age II period, many temples were discovered (e.g. *Rujm el-Kursi, Horvat Qitmit, Khirbet el-Mudayne*). Accordingly, the religious situation in Israel and Judah was completely different from the neighboring countries.

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[35] T. F. Potts *et al.*, "Preliminary Report on a Sixth Season of Excavation by the University of Sydney at Pella in Jordan (1983/84)", *ADAJ* 29 (1985), pp. 181–210.
[36] Cf. now Elkowicz, *op. cit.* (note 1).

Thesis 14: *The surprising discontinuity of cultic sites from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age demands explanation. It must be associated with the abandonment of towns at the end of the Late Bronze Age and the completely new sociological and economic situation. This results in social changes which influenced cultic behavior as well.*

All the temples were abandoned when the Canaanite period at those sites came to an end. The economic and social situation changed completely in the Iron Age I. While the people in the Late Bronze Age had some specialists among the craftsmen, in the Iron Age villages, people were trained to do everything by themselves. The quality of the products, especially the quality of pottery, was poorer in the Iron Age I period, because people were not trained anymore as specialists. Likewise, the cult changed during the Iron Age I period. While in the Late Bronze Age cult was in the hand of a small group of well informed priests at every city state, the cult became more popular during the Iron Age I period. Most probably, many new cultic sites were now established ("under every green tree"), distributed over the hill country region, and it was not necessary anymore to have a priest responsible for the sanctuary. Also, a judge like Samuel (1 Sam 9:14–25) could be responsible for the ceremony, while a purely political leader could not overtake the role of a priest (1 Sam 13:7–15).

Thesis 15: *Because of the close connection between temple and kingdom in Late Bronze Age city states, people of the Iron Age I period did not trust the traditional city gods anymore. When the city-state system broke down, the traditional religious system came to a sudden end as well. The bamot are evidence for a new kind of worship during Iron Age I. If there were still some temples in the Iron Age I period, they mostly were surviving relics of the Late Bronze Age tradition.*

The main god of early Israel in the Iron Age I period was the god El, as clearly shows the name Isra-El ('El fights' or 'El reigns'). The most important god of the Late Bronze Age in Palestine was Baal, who is most often mentioned as theophoric part of a personal in the Amarna letters and other Late Bronze Age texts.[37] Baal was a god of war and fertility. The famine and the weak political situation for the people of Palestine during the Late Bronze Age were certainly not profitable for Baal's power and popularity. Therefore it seems understandable that a specific group of settlers in the hill country, which are mentioned for the first time at about 1208 BCE on the stela of pharaoh Merenptah, named themselves after the god El, the second popular god in the Late Bronze Age (according to appearance of theophoric names).

We do not know anything about male gods besides El that were worshipped during the Iron Age I period. YHWH is not attested in Late Bronze Age personal names, but he must have been venerated by some groups in the Iron Age I. He was a newcomer, who rose because of the crisis of the traditional religious systems. But YHWH did not become a central god before the time of David who introduced his personal god as the new national god for the United Kingdom. There exists a surprisingly high number of names with the theophoric element YHWH among the people connected with David (Benaja, Joab, Joshafat, Seraja, Jojada, Jonatan). YHWH was most likely worshipped by people of a lower social class, because the

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[37] R. S. Hess, *Amarna Personal Names* (Winona Lake, IN 1993); W. Horowitz – T. Oshima, *Cuneiform in Canaan: Cuneiform Sources from the Land of Israel in Ancient Times* (Jerusalem, 2006).

military group fighting under the leadership of David can be considered as some of the last *habiru*.

The social system of the Iron Age I period was rather egalitarian compared to the elite system of Late Bronze Age Canaanite society. The popularity of open air sanctuaries during the Iron Age I period clearly demonstrates that there was also an egalitarian religious system. No leaders in cultic affairs were needed anymore.

Thesis 16: *Besides gathering on the* bamot, *personal cultic practice became more relevant during the Iron Age I period. Some element of traditional cult praxis survived in private cult. The poor economic situation in the Iron Age I period in Judah and Israel is reflected by the poor quality of cultic artifacts at most sites.*

We still have some cultic finds that were typical for the Late Bronze Age cultic practice. But the number of items is much lower in the Iron Age I than in the Late Bronze Age, and instead of bronze items, less expensive pottery objects were commonly used. According to the O. Negbi's catalogue "Canaanite Gods in Metal"[38] there are more than 53 metal figurines from the Late Bronze Age compared to only 3 from the Iron Age. More recent finds have not changed this significant contrast, and even some of the Iron Age items seem to be heirlooms from the Late Bronze Age.

On the other hand, there are some important changes in the cultic material. Only 8 *kernoi* are known from Late Bronze Age Palestine, while 47 were found in Iron Age I levels, most of them in Israel and Judah, but some also in the Philistine area.[39] For globular clay vessels and stands with a square ground plan, cf. thesis 11, above.

Thesis 17: *The establishment of a new kingdom under (Saul), David and Solomon made a new cultic center for the whole country necessary. David was not yet a "real" king (like other king in the ancient orient), who combined political and religious power in one hand. But it was David's idea to introduce his personal god YHWH as the central god for his united kingdom instead of El (Isra-El). It was only Solomon, who erected a new temple building in order to combine political and religious power; both temple and palace were situated on the temple mount in close spatial relation.*

The temple of Solomon[40] was one of the largest temples of that period in the whole country. The only excavated temple of the Bronze and Iron Age, which is larger than the Solomonic temple (according to the biblical description), is the temple in Aleppo.[41] To build a magnificent temple in Jerusalem was a recourse to Late Bronze Age traditions. Because Jerusalem survived as one of the last Canaanite city-states until the time of David, it was easier here to resume the Late Bronze Age tradition than at any other site in the country. The establishment of United Kingdom needed a religious centre, and therefore Solomon erected the temple in Jerusalem. The maj-

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[38] Negbi, *op. cit.* (note 10).

[39] A. M. Bignasca, *I kernoi circolari in Oriente e in Occidente. Strumenti di culto e immagini cosmiche* (OBO, Series Archaeologica 19; Fribourg – Göttingen, 2000).

[40] Cf. W. Zwickel, *Der salomonische Tempel* (Kamen, 2011²).

[41] K. Kohlmeyer, *Der Tempel des Wettergottes von Aleppo* (Münster, 2000); J. Gonnella *et al., Zitadelle von Aleppo und der Tempel des Wettergottes* (Münster, 2005).

esty of the national god YHWH should be presented in the glory of a temple building, and the stability of the cult should help to stabilize the kingdom of Solomon.

Thesis 18: *The close connection between the personal god of the king and a whole national state was first established during the kingdom of David and Solomon. This concept was clearly influenced by the neighboring countries, where the same process can be observed during this period or even somewhat earlier. This close connection of one god and a national territory continued after the death of Solomon, both in Judah and Israel. Jerobeam I erected two new border sanctuaries in Bethel and Dan in order to protect his territory by the power of the god YHWH.*