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TAANACH (Heb. *ta'ānāk*)

A city in the southern corner of the Jezreel Valley in the foothills of the Samarian hill country. Its identification with modern Tell Ta'annek (171214) is undisputed because of the continuity in the name and because of its location on the southern branch of the Via Maris, next to the pass of Megiddo. Taanach is 8 km. (5 mi.) SE of Megiddo and ca. 40 km. (25 mi.) from the coast. The pear-shaped mound measures 340 m. (1115 ft.) from north to south, and up to 140 m. (460 ft.) from east to west. It rises ca. 40 m. (130 ft.) above the surrounding plain and 180 m. (590 ft.) above sea level.

Taanach is mentioned in Pharaoh Thutmose III's account of the battle of Megiddo (ca. 1468 B.C.) as a southern bypass to Megiddo and a place where Egyptian troops were mustered, and occurs in the Palestine list in the Amon temple at Karnak. Its prince Yašdata fled to Megiddo because of a conflict with Shechem (EA 248:14). Taanach was one of the Israelite cities destroyed in Shishak's campaign ca. 918. Its king was one of the 31 kings defeated by Joshua (Josh. 12:21), and it is named among the Levitical cities (21:25). The city was assigned to Manasseh, but it was not immediately conquered (Judg. 1:27; Josh. 17:11-12). Taanach finally came under Israelite control at the time of Solomon and was one of his administrative centers (1 Kgs. 4:12).

The site was first excavated by Ernst Sellin in three campaigns, 1902-4. This was one of the first excavations in Palestine and the first in the north of Israel, and excavation techniques and recording systems were still in their infancy. A keen observer and careful in his conclusions, Sellin was reluctant to interpret the many child burials as remains of child sacrifices. Besides the small cuneiform archive, the most important findings were fragments of two cult-stands and the bronze figurine of a goddess of Hurrian type. Sellin emphasized the traces of influence from Cyprus (later to be identified as Mycenaean) during the Canaanite period (ca. 1400). In 1963-68 Paul W. Lapp excavated the west and southwest of the tell, demonstrating that the town

was protected by city walls in all major periods. Ceramics differentiated several phases of the Bronze Age city and identified a gap in occupation of about half a millennium between Early Bronze II and III and Middle Bronze II (down to ca. 1700).

The oldest archaeological evidence shows Taanach as a prestigious center for EB (ca. 2700-2300). In later phases retaining walls and a large glacis were added. After the 500-year gap, Taanach revived as an impressive MB city (ca. 1700-1350), with extensive building activity. The city had far-reaching trade relations, but it was always dependent on the still larger Megiddo. Personal names in letters and lists show a mixed population (ca. 60 percent Semitic, the rest Hurrite, Hittite, and Indo-Aryan). As did Megiddo, Taanach sided with the Syrian powers against Egypt and was consequently seriously affected by the victory of Thutmose III at Megiddo in 1468. Its culture and population declined during LB. The archive from ca. 1450 mentions the Egyptian governor at Gaza and shows Egyptian dominance in the local affairs of the Jezreel Valley. During the Amarna period Taanach was affected by the local conflict between Megiddo and Shechem.

During the 12th century Taanach seems to have suffered two (at least partial) destructions, but its population increased again in the 10th century. It was now under the domination of the newly formed Israelite state. A large building found by Sellin may have been the residence of the Israelite governor. Destroyed by Shishak ca. 918, it recovered under the Omrides in the 9th century; the so-called northeast-outwork belongs to the extensive building activities of Omri and Ahab.

Taanach may have suffered as a consequence of the Aramean wars in the late 9th century and the Assyrian war in 733. Its final destruction ca. 600 may have been at the hand of the Egyptians (Neco) or the Babylonians. In Hellenistic and Roman times the village was located E of the tell. Jerome indicates that it had become quite large during the Byzantine period.

The 12 texts discovered by Sellin were the first and to date only cuneiform archive found in Palestine. Included are four letters (ca. 100 readable lines) and nine name lists (ca. 80 personal names). The letters bear witness to the domination of the Egyptian governor Amanhatpa, who resided at Gaza and visited Meggido. Evidently, the Akkadian language and script were used not only for international diplomacy, but also for local and even private affairs in the region.

Bibliography. A. E. Glock, "Taanach," *NEAEHL* 4 (New York, 1993); "Texts and Archaeology at Tell Ta'annek," *Berytus* 31 (1983): 57-66; 1428-33; P. W. Lapp, "The 1963 Excavation at Ta'annek," *BASOR* 173 (1964): 4-44; "The 1966 Excavation at Tell Ta'annek," *BASOR* 185 (1967): 2-39; "The 1968 Excavation at Tell Ta'annek," *BASOR* 195 (1969): 2-49; L. Nigro, "The 'Nordostburg' at Tell Ta'annek," *ZDPV* 110 (1994): 168-80; W. E. Rast, *Taanach I: Studies in the Iron Age Pottery* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978).

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