

Tel Hazor National Park

www.parks.org.il | *3639 | 



Welcome to Tel Hazor National Park World Heritage Site

“Hazor was formerly the head of all those kingdoms”
(Joshua 11:10)



A private dwelling and a public building from the Israelite period

Tel Hazor is located in the Hula Valley, at the foot of the Galilee mountains. It is situated along the ancient road that turned northeast and linked the land of Israel (southern Canaan) through Lebanon's Beka'a Valley to Babylon. Another road, to the northwest, led to Phoenicia. Hazor's location, its fertile land and the springs in the nearby Hazor Stream, gave it the natural conditions to develop into the greatest city in the land of Israel and one of the most important cities of the Canaanite period.

Hazor, which extends over approximately 80 hectares, consists of an upper city (the acropolis) and a lower city (the enclosure). The upper city rises about 40 meters above the Hazor Stream, and covers some 10 hectares. The lower city, which is north of the acropolis, is surrounded by an earthen rampart.

The History of Hazor

Hazor's history is divided into two main chapters: Canaanite Hazor (the Bronze Age) and Israelite Hazor (the Iron Age). Canaanite Hazor encompassed both the upper and the lower cities, while Israelite Hazor was confined to the upper city only.

Little is known about the beginning of Hazor in the Early Bronze Age III (the third millennium BCE). At that time the settlement occupied the upper city only. The archaeological record clearly indicates that as early as that time, Hazor had close ties with the regions to the north and was an integral part of the culture of northern Canaan.

The name Hazor is first mentioned in the Middle Bronze Age, in the eighteenth-century BCE Egyptian documents known as the Execration Texts. By the end of this period, Hazor had become a great city, with a population of about 15,000 and covering the entire area

World Heritage Site The Biblical Tells: Hazor, Megiddo, Beer Sheva

In 2005, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) added the three biblical tells of Hazor, Megiddo and Beer Sheba to its list of World Heritage Sites of outstanding universal value. These tells, mentioned frequently in the Bible, were chosen out of approximately 200 such mounds as the best examples of cities from the time of the Bible. The intensive archaeological excavations carried out at these tells have produced exciting finds that shed light on the history of the various peoples of the land of Israel in general, and the history of the people of Israel in particular.

UNESCO determined six criteria for inscription and even one of them (other than Criterion 6) is enough to place a site on the World Heritage List. The biblical tells were inscribed after having met four criteria, as follows:

- The three tells represent an interchange of human values throughout the ancient Near East, forged through extensive trade routes and alliances with other states, and manifest in building styles that merged Egyptian, Syrian and Aegean influences to create a distinctive local style.
- The three tells are a testimony to civilizations that have disappeared – that of the Canaanite cities of the Bronze Age and the biblical cities of the Iron Age. These cultures manifest themselves in town planning, fortifications, palaces, and water systems.
- The biblical cities exerted a powerful influence on later history through the biblical narrative.
- The three tells, through their mentions in the Bible, constitute religious and spiritual testimony of outstanding universal value.



Tel Megiddo – the Canaanite bamah (high place)



Tel Beer Sheva – overview

of the upper and lower cities. In those days Hazor was the only city in the land of Israel that had links with the important political center of Mari on the banks of the middle Euphrates River. Twenty documents have so far been discovered in the Mari Archive highlighting a close relationship with Hazor. Among other things, these documents tell of the importance of Hazor, the commercial caravans that passed through it, and ambassadors, singers and musicians that lived there. Documents from this period have also been found at Hazor, among them one mentioning an individual named Ibni-Addu (apparently the city's king); The Bible mentions a king of Hazor bearing the same name (Jabin) who fought the Israelites at the time of Joshua – some 300 years later. The name Ibni /Jabin was probably a common name among Hazor's ruling dynasty.

During the Late Bronze Age (the second half of the second millennium BCE) the city continued to prosper. Hazor is mentioned in the list of military campaigns and conquests of the kings of Egypt, and in a number of letters found in the el-Amarna archive in Egypt (the fourteenth century BCE). Two of these letters were written by Hazor's king, 'Abdi-Tirshi.

In addition to documents, finds unearthed in the excavations particularly indicate the greatness of Canaanite Hazor. The gigantic city was fortified by an earthen rampart and walls. Palaces, temples and dwellings have been revealed, along with pottery vessels, statues, weapons, jewelry and many artistic items. The finds reveal Hazor's extensive links with Syria, Egypt, the Hittite kingdom, Babylon and the lands of the Mediterranean – Crete, Greece and Cyprus. These connections are the reason why Hazor became known as “the head of all those kingdoms” (Joshua 11:10), and the king of Hazor as “the king of Canaan” (Judges 4:2).



Seal found in the Canaanite palace, depicting a cultic scene

The Bible relates that King Jabin of Hazor went out at the head of an alliance of Canaanite cities to fight against the settling Israelite tribes, led by Joshua. The Israelite victory led to the destruction and burning of the city (Joshua 11:1–12). Archaeological finds show that Hazor was indeed burned in a huge conflagration, signs of which are visible in both the upper and lower cities. The relation between the archaeological record and the biblical story is still a matter of debate among scholars.

After Hazor was destroyed, it was abandoned for approximately 100 to 150 years. In the eleventh century BCE, settlement was renewed in a limited area of the upper city only. The lower city was never resettled. During this time period, which is known as “the settlement period” (the biblical period of the Judges), Hazor was poor in character. Its remains from this time consist mainly of dozens of small pits, which were found full of ash and pottery sherds. Portions of meager walls

Rules of conduct at Tel Hazor National Park

- Excavations at the site are on-going. Watch out for open pits and excavated areas.
- Walk on marked trails only and do not enter sites that are closed to the public.
- Do not climb walls.
- Do not damage the antiquities.
- Please keep the area clean.
- Follow all directions on signs and those given by park personnel.



Statue of a Canaanite deity

Writers: Prof. Amnon Ben-Tor and Ruhama Bonfil

Editing: Ya'acov Shkolnik and Dr. Tsvika Tsuk

Map: Avigdor Orgad; **Map production:** Avigdor Orgad

Photographs: Joseph Schweig, Ilan Sztulman, Menahem Greyevsky, the Tel Hazor Expedition, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and INPA Archive

Translation: Miriam Feinberg Vamosh

Production: Adi Greenbaum

www.parks.org.il | *3639 | 

Tel Hazor National Park telephone: 04-6937290

reveal the existence of temporary structures. The most important remnant of this period is a *bamah* (high place) situated on the western edge of the mound.

Hazor rose from the ashes during the Iron Age II (the first millennium BCE). In the tenth century BCE, Hazor was one of the most important cities in the united monarchy. The settlement occupied the western portion of the upper city only, and was apparently fortified by King Solomon.

Extensive building activities that began at the time of Ahab (the ninth century BCE) doubled the size of the city. Hazor then extended over the entire upper city. Public structures were built, including a water system, a citadel and storehouses.

Hazor was destroyed during the military campaign of Tiglath-pileser III in 732 BCE, and its inhabitants were exiled along with those of the entire Galilee.

After the destruction, settlement at Hazor was limited. A citadel was built in the western, higher part of the upper city during the Assyrian, Persian and Hellenistic periods. Hazor is mentioned for the last time in a historical document in I Maccabees (11:67) describing the war of Jonathan against Demetrius, which took place on the “plain of Hazor” (147 BCE).

The History of Research

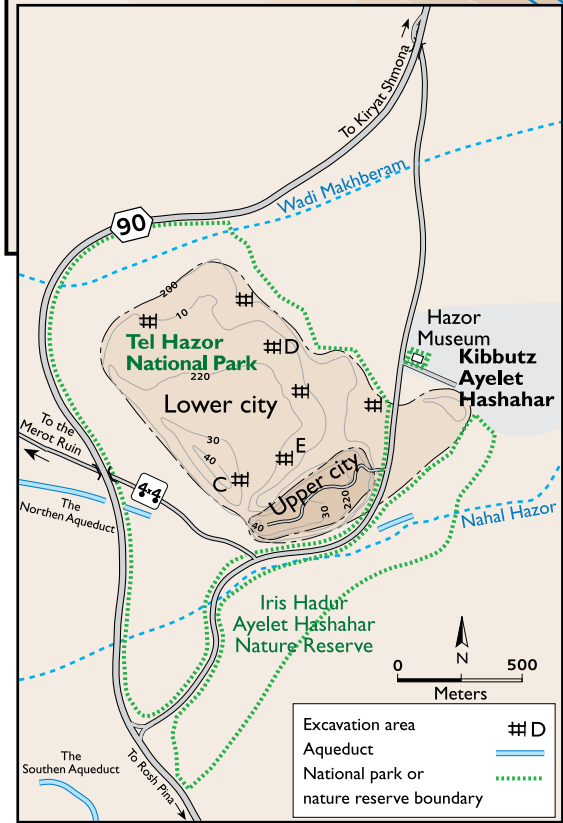
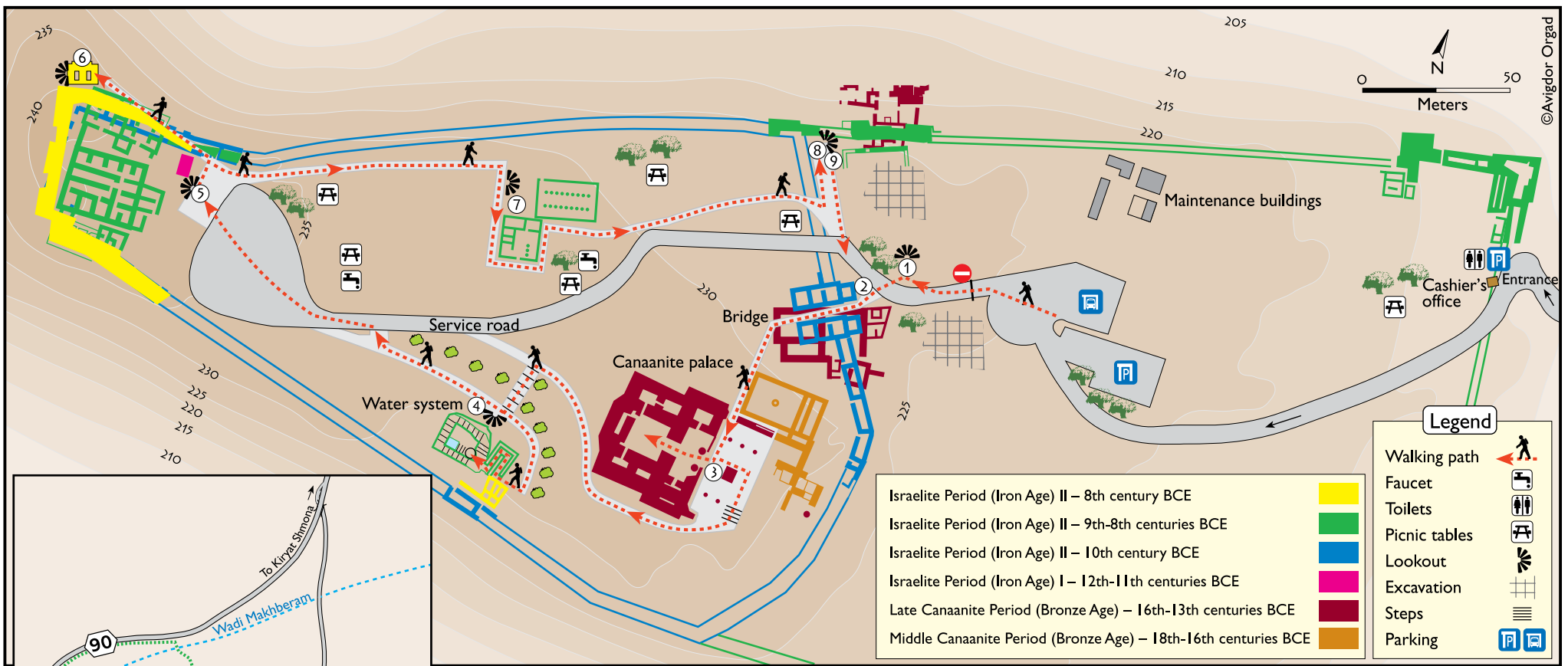
The Irish scholar Leslie Porter was the first to identify biblical Hazor at Tel el-Qedah (1875). In 1928 the British archaeologist John Garstang conducted a short excavation at the site. An expedition of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem headed by Prof. Yigael Yadin and funded by the Rothschild Foundation was the first to extensively excavate the site (1955–1958, 1968–1969). Excavations were renewed in 1990 by the Selz Foundation Hazor Excavation in Memory of Yigael Yadin, headed by Prof. Amnon Ben-Tor on behalf of the Hebrew University, and sponsored by the Israel Exploration Society. Funding was provided by the Selz Foundation (New York),



*Basalt statue;
Late Bronze Age*



*Bronze plaque depicting a
Canaanite nobleman; Late
Bronze Age*



Tel Hazor – the upper and lower cities

the Antiqua Foundation (Geneva), the Philip and Muriel Berman Foundation (the Hebrew University), the Edith and Reuven Hecht Fund, the Reginald David Benjamin and Esme Marion Benjamin Fund (Australia) and private donors.



Tour of Tel Hazor

1. Lookout over the Lower City – The lower city extended as far as the trees you can see in the north. The area of the lower and the upper cities reached about 80 hectares. The lower city was settled during the Canaanite period, when Hazor became the largest city in the land of Israel, with a population of some 15,000. Excavations in eight areas of the lower city revealed temples, dwellings, gates and other architectural elements and an abundance of finds.

2. The “Solomonic Gate”

– At the entrance to the Israelite city was a gate with six chambers, three on each side, flanking a passage. In front of the chambers were two towers. The gate has been dated to the tenth century BCE, the time of the united monarchy. The plan of the gate is similar to gates discovered at Megiddo and Gezer. Yadin noted that the description of Solomon’s building activities does indeed recall the construction of these three cities: *“And this is the reason for the labor force which King Solomon raised: to build the house of the Lord, his own house, the Millo, the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer”* (I Kings 9:15). South of the gate, the casemate wall can clearly be seen. Under the middle chamber of the southern wing of the gate, the basalt threshold of a Canaanite temple (from the Late Bronze Age) was found, on top of whose ruins the gate was built. A cultic stele stands next to the temple doorway.



A letter mentioning Ibni (Addu)(?) king of Hazor; eighteenth century BCE

3. The Palace of the Canaanite Kings of Hazor

– The roof protects the Canaanite ceremonial palace that served the kings of Hazor during the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BCE. In the western part of the palace courtyard, in front of the door, a *bamah* (“high place”) was found. At the top of the stairs leading to the entrance to the palace, two huge column bases can be seen. A throne room was found in the center of the complex. The lower parts of the mud-brick walls of the palace were covered by dressed basalt stones and the upper parts with cedar-wood paneling. Excavations in the palace revealed, among other things, several clay tablets bearing inscriptions in cuneiform writing, stone and bronze statues and jewelry. The palace was destroyed in a huge conflagration in the thirteenth century BCE.

East of the palace courtyard you can see massive stone walls running

beneath the courtyard. These are the remains of a monumental, earlier structure, which may have been the palace of Ibni-Addu mentioned in documents found in Mari. South of these walls, a group of stone stelae can be seen, with offering tables next to them. This is a cultic complex from the Middle Bronze Age.

4. The Water System

– Hazor flourished during the ninth century BCE (apparently during the reign of Ahab); the area of the city doubled and fortifications were built along with a citadel and a water system. This system was constructed in order to ensure a regular water supply to the city’s residents in time of siege, so they would not have to go out of the city to the springs in the Hazor Stream.

The water system consists of three parts. The first part is the access structure leading to the vertical shaft. The second part is the vertical shaft, including walls retaining earlier levels of settlement and rock-cut steps. The total depth of the shaft is 45 meters. At the point where the shaft ends at the base of five flights of stairs, the third part begins – a 25-meter-long sloping tunnel. The tunnel ends at a small pool fed by ground water.

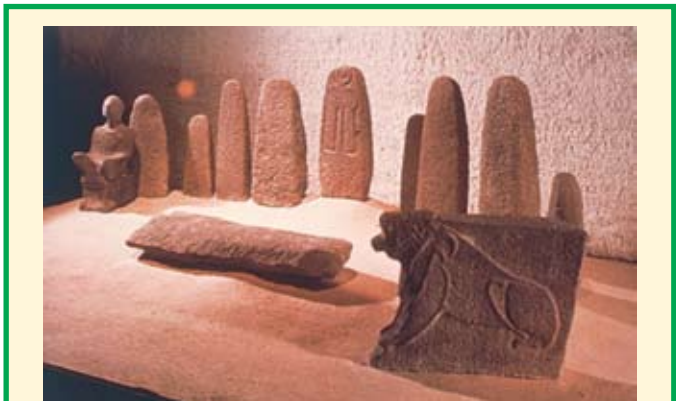


The Hazor water system – the original steps and the modern descent

5. The Citadel and Cultic Installation

– At the western, higher end of the upper city, the remains of a citadel were uncovered, apparently built at the time of King Ahab (the ninth century BCE). The doorjambs of its impressive gate were crowned by capitals depicting a stylized palm tree, a design that may have originated in this region (the same type of capitals were found in public buildings in Megiddo, Samaria and Jerusalem). The capitals and the lintel were transferred to the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, where the entrance to the citadel was restored. The citadel that can be seen today at the site – only the foundations remain – is built atop the remains of an earlier citadel and the casemate wall attributed to the reign of King Solomon. The citadel was destroyed together with the entire city by Tiglath-pileser III, king of Assyria, in 732 BCE.

A cultic installation, a *bamah*, from the period of the Judges (the eleventh century BCE), has been uncovered in front of and at a lower level than the citadel. Cultic items such as a stele, incense burners



Statues of a deity (or king), a lion and cultic stelae from one of the temples in the lower city.

The Hazor Museum

The Hazor Museum is located at the foot of Tel Hazor, near the entrance to Kibbutz Ayelet Hashahar. The museum displays various finds of the Hazor excavations, such as vessels found in the Canaanite temples, statues of deities it contained, basalt stelae, vessels from Egypt, Cyprus and Greece, various objects from the Israelite period, a musical instrument made out of a conch shell, cosmetic implements, ancient Hebrew inscriptions, and more. The entrance to the museum is for groups only, by prior arrangement with the Tel Hazor National Park staff.



One of two stylized palm-tree capitals that adorned the entrance gate of the Israelite citadel

and a small hoard of metal artifacts including a figurine of a deity were found here.

6. The Israelite Tower

– The tower at the western edge of the mound is the remnant of the last Israelite construction phase at Hazor. The tower, part of the city’s defense system, was constructed in the face of the imminent Assyrian threat. In 732 BCE, the Assyrians managed to conquer the city. “In the days of Pekah King of Israel, Tiglath-pileser King of Assyria came and took Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria” (II Kings 15:29).

7. A Private Dwelling and a Public Structure from the Israelite Period

– These two buildings, located close to the northern edge of the upper city, dating from the ninth–eighth centuries BCE, originally stood above the Canaanite palace (approximately 100 meters to the east). They were moved to this location to allow their preservation and the excavation of the palace. The stones were replaced exactly according to their original positions, and the relationship between the two structures was also maintained. This is a dwelling of the “four-room house” type. Its plan, typical of the Israelite period, included a courtyard surrounded by three wings. The residents lived on the upper floor, and household activities took place in the courtyard. An olive press has been reconstructed in the courtyard, in the original location, as found in the excavations.

The second structure, the “pillared house”, in which two rows of stone columns can be seen, served as a public storehouse. The central part of the roof was supported by the two rows of columns, which were originally taller. Thus, the roof over the two side spaces of the structure was lower than the one in the middle. Air and light entered through the space between the higher roof in the center and the two outer sides.

8. The Cities of Solomon and Ahab

– The casemate wall consists of two parallel walls separated by a space of approximately 2.5 meters. Perpendicular dividers created a chain of rooms. The casemate wall uncovered here links up with the “Solomonic Gate,” attributed to the reign of Solomon (the tenth century BCE). The solid, offset-inset wall ascribed to the reign of Ahab (the ninth century BCE), was uncovered adjoining it, to the east. That wall consisted of alternating offsets (protrusions) and insets (set-back portions). The area of the city in Ahab’s day had doubled, and it was entirely surrounded by the solid offset-inset wall.

9. The Passage from the Lower City to the Upper City of Hazor

– At this point a staircase made of basalt led to the upper part of the mound. This was the passage between the upper city and the lower city in the Canaanite period.

From the lookout, remains of a monumental structure with a number of rooms (from the Late Canaanite period) can be seen. In the entrance area, which was paved with basalt slabs, a *bamah* was found, made of smoothed basalt stones. Four holes of about two centimeters in diameter each were drilled into the upper face of the slab, apparently to support the legs of a throne. Such cultic installations near city gates are known from a number of sites (such as at neighboring Tel Dan). This type of cultic installations is also attested to in the Bible.

As part of his religious reform King Josiah destroyed the high places near gateways: “And he brought all the priests from the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba; also he broke down the high places at the gates” (II Kings 23:8).