

Archaeological Discoveries of Solomon's Building Program:  
Gates of Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer

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A Paper  
Presented to  
Dr. Gary Gromacki  
Baptist Bible Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

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by  
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January 31, 2014

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What do Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer have in common? They are all mentioned specifically by name in the biblical account of Solomon’s kingdom building program (1 Ki 9:15). In this passage we read, “Here is the account of the forced labor King Solomon conscripted to build the LORD’s temple, his own palace, the supporting terraces, the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer.”<sup>1</sup> By the time Solomon became king, the kingdom he inherited was relatively well established. And although he did expand the kingdom, as Vos states, his greatest contribution was “to fortify and improve the land which came under his suzerainty.”<sup>2</sup> This is exactly what is described in I Kings 9 and evidenced by the archaeological discoveries at Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer. Why were these particular cities singled-out? These particular cities were very significant to the fortification of Solomon’s kingdom (See Appendix A). All three locations were ancient Canaanite cities on or near the International Coastal Highway.<sup>3</sup> As Vos states, “Hazor guarded the strategic point in northern Canaan; Megiddo stood across the open plain of Edraelon;...Gezer protected the main road and entrance to the valley of Sorek;”<sup>4</sup> Solomon, with all his wisdom, understood that humanly speaking, for the kingdom to remain secure, it required strategic military cities to be established. Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer, were three such cities, protecting three key regions of the Kingdom.

The ancient city of Megiddo is first mentioned in Joshua 12:21 as a city that was captured by Joshua. It was assigned to Manasseh (Josh 17:11; 1 Chr 7:29). The book of Judges records the failure of Manasseh to drive out the inhabitants of Megiddo. Instead they subjected them to

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984).

<sup>2</sup> Howard F. Vos, “The Glories of the Reign of Solomon,” in *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Oct 1953), 322.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas V. Brisco, *Holman Bible Atlas*, Holman Reference (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 109.

<sup>4</sup> Vos, “The Glories of the Reign of Solomon,” 327.

forced labor (Judg 1:27-28). The city of Megiddo is mentioned once again at the time of Solomon, where he built a fortified city there, including horses and chariots (1 Ki 9:15-19). It is the location that Ahaziah died (2 Ki 9:27) and where Josiah was killed by Pharaoh Nechoh (2 Ki 23:29-30). Megiddo is also famous for the prophetic battle that will take place at this locality (Zech 12:11; Rev 16:16). The ancient city of Megiddo, called Tell el-Mutesellim, is of great interest to the archaeologists in general, as well as the Biblical Archaeologists in particular. This is because of all the history and epic battles that have transpired there (and one that is yet to come). Achtemeier explains the tactical importance of Megiddo,

Megiddo's location has throughout history made direct control a matter of singular strategic importance, from the armies of Thutmose III in the fifteenth century B.C. to General Allenby's in World War I. When the mound was no longer occupied in Roman times a Roman camp at modern el-Lajjun, about a half-mile south, controlled the pass. Travelers and traders have passed through Megiddo from the Stone Age to the present.<sup>5</sup>

Schumacher excavated this site as early as 1903-1905, under the auspices of the German Oriental Society. From 1925-1935 it was excavated by C.S. Fisher, P.L.O. Guy and G. Loud representing the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.<sup>6</sup> Further investigations were made by Yigael Yadin in 1960 and beyond.<sup>7</sup> Three significant aspects of ancient Megiddo were assigned to the time of Solomon: (1) the casemate wall (2) the fortress-palace, and (3) the massive six-chamber and two-towered gate.<sup>8</sup> The six-chamber gate at Megiddo was built upon

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<sup>5</sup> Paul J. Achtemeier, Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 621.

<sup>6</sup> Avraham Negev, *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land*, 3rd ed. (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1990) electronic edition.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud\\_0002\\_0013\\_0\\_13515.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0013_0_13515.html), (accessed, 1/31/2014).

<sup>8</sup> Negev, *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land*, electronic edition.

the remains of the previous Canaanite gate. This lower portion was built from hewn stone, which the upper part was comprised of mud-brick.<sup>9</sup> The six chambers have a passage between them, providing additional security along with the two attached towers. Outside of the military gate was an additional gate for security.<sup>10</sup> (See Illustration 4, Megiddo city model).

Hazor too, was a great tactical location for a fortified military station. It was the location from where Jabin ruled and battled against Joshua (Josh 11:1). Because of its strategic importance, it is called, “the head of all those kingdoms” (Josh 11:10). Jabin was eventually killed, and Hazor was destroyed by fire (Josh 11:10-12:19). Apparently another king by the same name, or this one, which survived being “smote,” fought and lost against Deborah (Judg 4:24). Solomon made Hazor a fortified city (1 Ki 9:15). During the 8<sup>th</sup> century, Tiglath-pileser III destroyed Hazor and took its citizens into captivity (2 Ki 15:29).

Hazor is located in Upper Galilee (See Appendix A), on the primary roadway from Egypt to Mesopotamia, connecting the most powerful empires of the ancient near east (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia). In 1875, J.L. Porter identified the Tell el-Qedah as the ancient city of Hazor. In 1928, J. Garstang made some trial digs. However, the major excavations at Hazor, took place from 1955 to 1958 and 1968 until 1969. This was carried out under the direction of Yigael Yadin.<sup>11</sup> Yadin’s expedition discovered from the reign of Solomon: (1) buildings, (2) a casemate wall and (3) a city gate.<sup>12</sup> The Jewish Virtual Library also confirms, that a residence was

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<sup>9</sup> Howard F. Vos, “The Glories of the Reign of Solomon,” in *Bibliotheca Sacra Volume 110*, 440 (Dallas, TX: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1953), 324.

<sup>10</sup> Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/israelexperience/history/pages/megiddo%20-%20the%20solomonic%20chariot%20city.aspx>, (accessed, 1/31/2014).

<sup>11</sup> T. C. Mitchell, "Hazor" In , in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard et al., 3rd ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 447.

<sup>12</sup> Negev, electronic edition.

discovered, probably for a governor appointed by the king, a casemate wall was found, and a gate which consisted of six chambers and two towers.<sup>13</sup> The casemate wall and the six chamber gate were strikingly similar to that which was found in Megiddo.

The city of Gezer was also an important ancient city. During the conquest, the king of Gezer, Horam, tried to help Lachish against Joshua, but was unsuccessful (Josh 10:33; 12:12). The Israelites were unsuccessful in their first attempt to drive out Canaanites who lived in Gezer (Josh 16:10). David “smote” the Philistines who later inhabited this city (2 Sam 5:25). The city was attacked, Canaanites slain, and the city given as a gift, by the Egyptian Pharaoh to his daughter who married Solomon (1 Ki 9:15-16). This was an ideal location, so Solomon built a fortified city there (1 Ki 9:17).

The ancient city of Gezer is located on an important roadway between Jerusalem and Joppa, and only 12 km from the main highway from Egypt to Mesopotamia (See Appendix A). From 1902 until 1909 R. A. S Macalister began archaeological digs in Gezer, sponsored by the Palestine Exploration Fund. Excavations resumed in 1934 by A. Rowe with the same sponsor. In 1964, ten years of digs were sponsored by the Hebrew Union College Biblical and Archaeological School in Jerusalem, led by various archaeologists (G.E. Wright, W.G. Dever, J.D. Seger).<sup>14</sup> Many wonderful discoveries were made in Gezer, but of special significance to this study, are the Solomonic casemate walls and six-chamber gate.<sup>15</sup> In Gezer, the archaeologist discovered the same style and structure that were found in Megiddo and Hazor (see Appendix B, Illustration 2).

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Archaeology/Hatzor.html>, (accessed, 1/31/2014).

<sup>14</sup> Negev, electronic edition.

<sup>15</sup> This gate was initially misidentified by Macalister as a Maccabean castle.

The building projects in these three ancient cities were massive, and the similar discoveries are striking. All three of these locations were heavily fortified in the same fashion.

Vos describes the elements that are similar in all three archaeological sites,

a casemate wall; an inner gate with six chambers formed by three piers on either side and two bastions at the town wall; and an outer gate with two piers built on the slope of the mound. Between these two gates a passageway led into the town. The whole complex was built on the basis of the indirect approach, whereby entry was through a right-angled turn to reach the inner gate. By stratigraphical evidence it has been possible to ascertain that Solomon's gateways were always associated with a casemate wall.

These striking observations caused Yadin to recognize that the materials and dimensions were similar and in some cases identical. Yadin concluded that not only were the gate systems built by Solomon, but he employed the same single architect.<sup>16</sup>

The Solomonic building program discovered at Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer is of tremendous value in confirming the biblical record. As argued above, the materials used, the architecture utilized, and the form built, all but demand that it was planned and built by one king, using one architect. That king is none other than King Solomon who set out to do that very thing, fortify the United Kingdom that he had inherited from his father David.

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<sup>16</sup> Alfred, Hoerth. *Archaeology and the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 287-288

Appendix A: Map of Solomon's Building Program<sup>17</sup>



<sup>17</sup> Thomas V. Brisco, *Holman Bible Atlas*, Holman Reference (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998).

Appendix B: Ancient Gate Structures

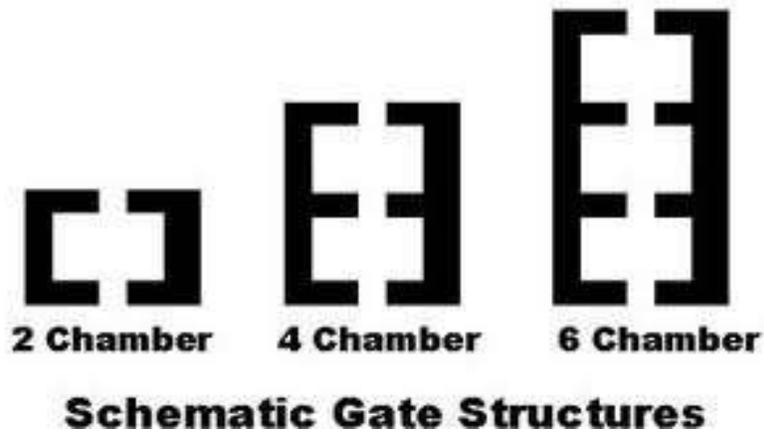


Illustration 1

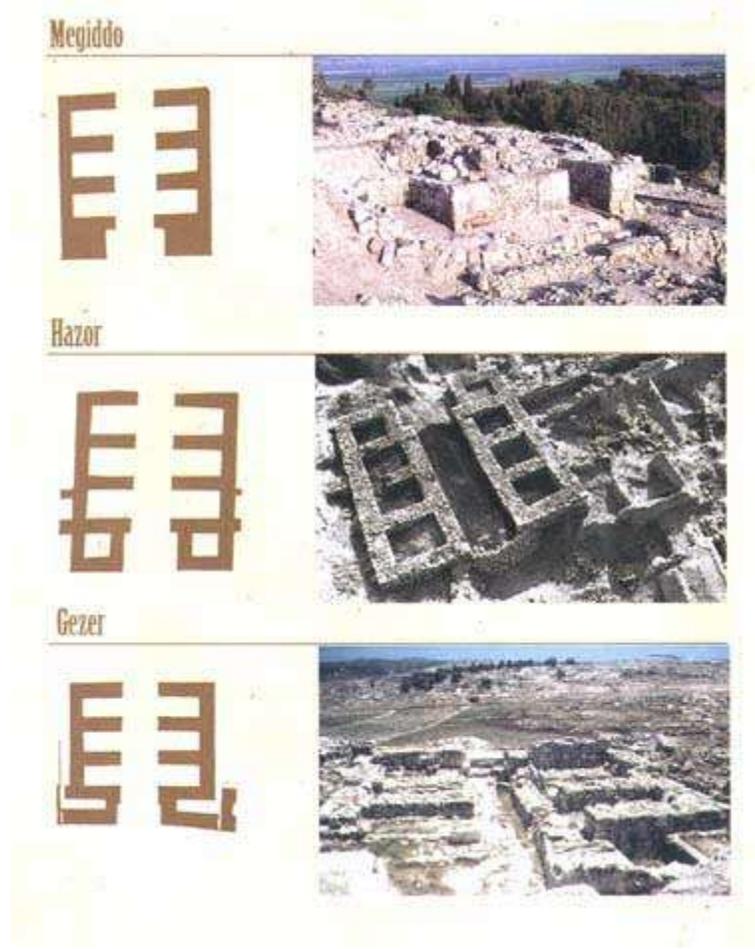
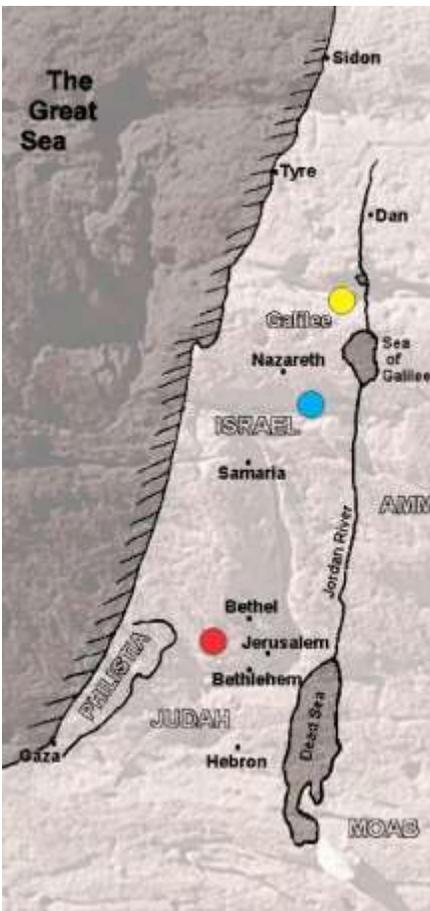


Illustration 2

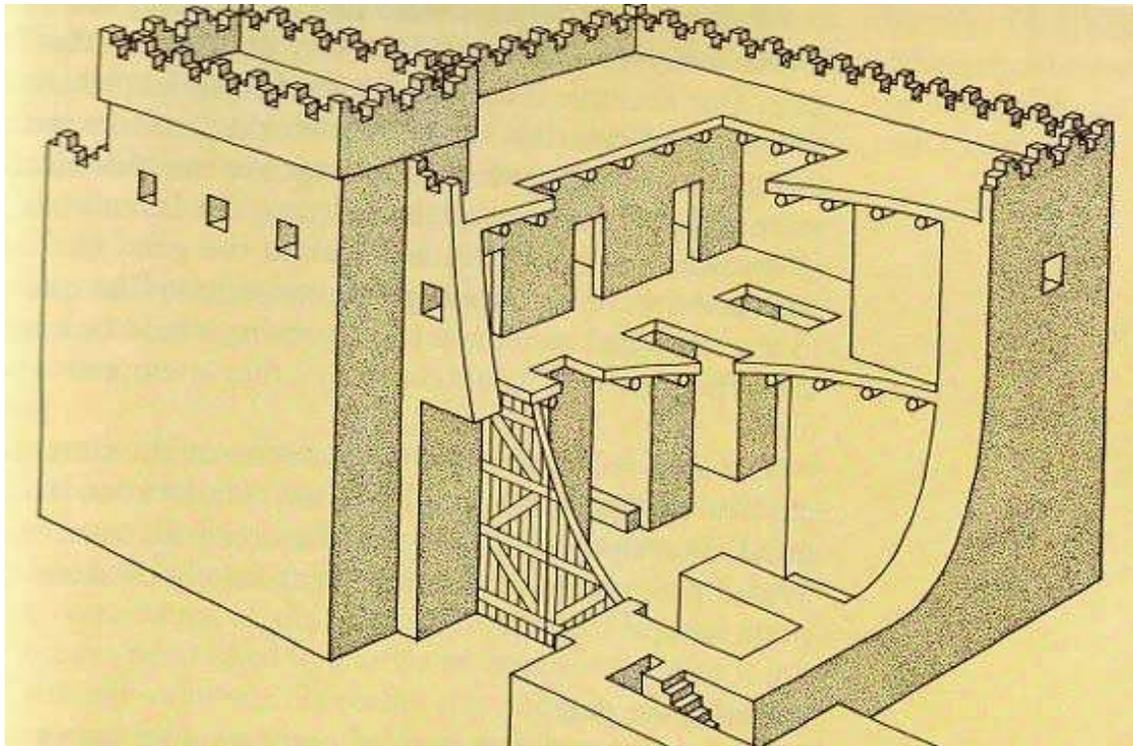


Illustration 3: Gezer Gate



Illustration 4: Megiddo City Model (Gate in the bottom right corner of picture)

Appendix C: Modern Pictures



Hazor (above and below)



Tell Hazor



Tell Gezer



Gezer Gate



Tell Megiddo



## Megiddo Gate



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