

people of Hamath made Ashima" (2 Kgs 17:24–30). Usually Hamath is identified with the Aramean city-state of Hamath in North Syria, but this identification has been called into question (Becking: 99).

Some scholars conjecture the presence of Ashima also in Amos 8:14 reading "ʿĀšimat of Samaria" (instead of MT ʾašmat "guilt" of Samaria), but this reading is open to question.

2. Aramaic Inscriptions. Some Aramaic temple foundation inscriptions from Tayma dating from about 400 BCE mention the god Ashima together with the gods Šalmu and Sengallu (Beyer/Livingstone: 286–87). Ashima is usually identified with the morning star depicted as divine symbol in a stele from Tayma. This iconography emphasizes the astral characteristic of Ashima.

Many scholars argue that the god Ashima is to be found also at the Jewish-Aramean community of Elephantine under the name Eshem-Bethel (Porten/Yardeni: vol. 3, 234; van der Toorn: 86). The cult of Ashima in both Tayma and Elephantine could be explained by previous contacts with Arameans.

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Ashkelon

1. Geography. The ruins of Ashkelon are located on the southern coast of Israel 50 km south of Tel Aviv and 10 km north of the Gaza Strip. The ancient mounds of Ashkelon sit atop a late Miocene river channel covered by a series of kurkar ridges made of Nile Alluvium. While the Nile alluvium hid the earlier channel and gave the coastal plain of this region its visible structure, the ancient stream continued to flow directly below the site. Ashkelon's location on the seashore allowed its inhabitants to play an important role in the maritime economy of the Eastern Mediterranean, and its underground river provided a plentiful water supply for anyone able to build a simple well.

Ashkelon became a city of merchants and gardeners from the Chalcolithic period through the Crusades. The name *Ashkelon* likely comes from the Semitic root meaning to *weigh*, also seen in the word *shekel*, and the gardens of Ashkelon gave their name to the type of onion known as a *scallion*. Even after the city of Ashkelon was intentionally destroyed in the 13th century, the site continued as an agricultural oasis. Its ruins were plundered for building

stone in the 19th century, but its abundant vegetation has been constant. Today, the entire 60 hectare site is the Yigael Yadin National Park, a lush campground for weekend recreation and summer holiday.

2. Textual References. The ancient city of Ashkelon was mentioned widely in ancient texts ranging from the early 2nd millennium BCE through the site's destruction in the late 13th century CE. Egyptian texts from the 2nd millennium recorded shifting relationships between a prosperous Canaanite seaport and the Egyptian Empire. Ashkelon was cursed several times in the Egyptian execration texts. In the 14th-century Amarna correspondence, however, Ashkelon was ruled by the obsequious Yidya (EA 320–36, 370). By the end of the 13th century, rebellious Canaanite Ashkelon was conquered by Merneptah.

In the later texts of the Hebrew Bible, *Ashkelon* had two connotations. In texts which describe the early history of Israel, Ashkelon was associated with the aggressive Philistines (Josh 13:3, Judg 1:18, 1 Sam 6:17, 2 Sam 1:20). In texts describing the 8th century and beyond, Philistine Ashkelon was usually mentioned in concert with its role as a Mediterranean seaport (Jer 25:20, 47:7, Amos 1:8, Zeph 2:4, 7; 9:5). These roles can be intertwined, but the focus shifted from the earlier imperial Philistine to a later economic maritime emphasis.

In the 8th and 7th centuries BCE, Assyrian and Babylonian annals reported on the political intrigues of Ashkelon. It was mentioned as rebelling at least twice in the 8th century, but by the first half of the 7th century was a loyal vassal. At the end of the 7th century, poor political choices led Nebuchadnezzar II to raze the city in Kislev, 604 BCE.

The *Periplus* of Pseudo-Scylax characterized Ashkelon as a prosperous city of the Tyrians, and several classical writers described the extensive religious architecture. But with the expansion of Mediterranean trade through the first half of the 1st millennium BCE, the references to Ashkelon and its inhabitants become too numerous to mention. In the 1st century, according to the later historian Eusebius, Ashkelon was the birthplace of Herod the Great.

Passing references to the Byzantine and Islamic city are common, famed for its gardens, wineries, and architecture. In the 6th century CE, Julian of Ascalon composed a treatise which discussed the competing issues of public good and private freedom in the city of Ashkelon through a series of very detailed zoning laws. The success of these laws led to a period of such urban prosperity that a 7th-century companion of the Prophet is reported to have said, "There is a pinnacle for everything, and the pinnacle for al-Sham is Askalan" (Hakim: 23). Fi-

nally, as Ashkelon was conquered and reconquered during the Crusades, the medieval historian William of Tyre composed an important record of the 12th-century city plan, fortifications, and harbor in the years just before the city's demise.

3. History of Excavations. The first excavation at Ashkelon in 1815 was directed by Lady Hester Stanhope. While Lady Hester undertook extreme measures to demonstrate that her expedition was not a treasure hunt, others soon followed with the express purpose of looting gold, marble, or building materials. The most extensive plundering of the site took place during the time of Ibrahim Pasha who mined the site for building materials between 1832 and 1840. Almost all of the visible remains of the medieval city were systematically removed to create a "New Ashkelon" northeast of the ancient ruins.

Still, when the first systematic excavations took place under John Garstang and W.J. Phythian-Adams, the site quickly yielded monumental architecture and impressive statuary. Phythian-Adams was able to probe through 9 meters of occupational material revealing a sequence extending from the Late Bronze Age through the Islamic Periods. However, because so many periods were represented at the site in such a deep and complicated accumulation, the garden city of Ashkelon was ignored in favor of lower-hanging archaeological fruit. The only other excavations of note were the salvage excavations of J. Illife which attempted to provide context for a hoard of bronzes recovered from the site. While Illife argued that the bronzes belonged to the Persian or Hellenistic Period, the complicated nature of Ashkelon's stratigraphy has rendered his conclusions uncertain.

In 1985, visionary philanthropists Leon Levy and Shelby White joined with Harvard Archaeologist Lawrence E. Stager to launch the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon. This large scale, long-running excavation has probed the depth and breadth of Ashkelon, providing new information for every period of Ashkelon's habitation, uncovering more than 24 periods of occupation through excavation of eight major fields.

4. Results of the Excavations. The Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age remains, buried deep within the mound, have been touched only through the accident of chance excavation, and the earliest substantive archaeological remains come from the Middle Bronze Age. During this era, a massive rampart was built around the site, ringing a 60 hectare city. Within the ramparts, two large tells mark the areas of most continuous occupation. On the northern tell, excavations have shown at least four superimposed rampart constructions, all dating to the Middle Bronze IIA. Joined with the ramparts, a sequence of gates with a stone arch, barrel vault, and mudbrick arch are some of the earliest Middle

Bronze Age fortifications in the region. The chronology of this period is anchored not only in a detailed ceramic sequence linked to architectural changes in the gate area but also by clay sealings of 13th-Dynasty Egyptian officials found within the fill of a moat associated with the early ramparts. By the Middle Bronze IIB, the gate had been transformed into a much smaller footgate, and a small shrine had been built along the road leading into the gate. Excavation of this small sanctuary revealed a calf sheathed in silver, placed within a purpose-built ceramic dwelling. Late Bronze Age remains have been found in the excavations on the southern tell within the ramparts. The discovery of occupational material has been limited to a courtyard building of the Late Bronze II, but an extensive necropolis was uncovered with evidence of use from the Middle Bronze Age through the Late Bronze II. Genetic material taken from the skeletal remains in the tombs has revealed that the males interred in the tombs come from related lineages while the females were not from related lineages. This result provides important evidence for patrilineal kinship during these periods.

Ashkelon's southern tell provides the best evidence of the transition between the Late Bronze and the Iron Age. At the very end of the Late Bronze Age, immediately following the conquest of the city by Merneptah, a large mudbrick wall was constructed using Egyptian building techniques. Early in the 12th century, a new group with Aegean affinities, the biblical Philistines arrived and lived around and above the Egyptian structure. The new inhabitants of the first phase of the settlement were distinguished in the archaeological record through their use of locally made pottery decorated and shaped in the Aegean style. This pottery, known as Philistine monochrome (Mycenaean IIIC), is also found at contemporary sites such as Ashdod (XIIIb) and Ekron (VII). The restriction of the Philistine monochrome assemblages to a very few sites is an oddity of the 12th century that some have tried to ameliorate by arguing that it occurred in a time when the rest of the south was uninhabited. The lack of such a gap at nearby sites such as Gezer, however, indicates that another explanation for this sharp regionalization in the pottery styles must be found. An Egyptian embargo, demonstrated by fortresses such as Tel Mor and Deir el-Balah and increased Egyptian presence at sites such as Lachish (VI), provide the best explanation for this phenomenon. The first Philistine settlement at Ashkelon was replaced by new buildings built in Aegean fashion with Aegean installations: bathtubs, round hearths, keyhole hearths, cylindrical loomweights, and a combination of the Philistine monochrome and Philistine bichrome pottery. With the collapse of the Egyptian Empire, Philistine bichrome pottery made in Philistia began to appear in sites outside the Philistine pentapolis.

Many of the Aegean affinities of the material culture at Ashkelon disappeared after the 11th century, but the plan of the city established in the early Iron Age persisted. Further, fortifications on the north tell show that the line of defense for Iron II Ashkelon followed the line of the Middle Bronze Age ramparts and encompassed Ashkelon's full 60 hectares. The 9th- and 8th-century occupation is more difficult to characterize in the occupational areas because the deep foundations of the 7th-century buildings destroyed all but the barest foundations of 9th- and 8th-century Ashkelon in the areas that have been excavated. Ceramic assemblages fill the gap, but little can be said about life in the city during the early Iron II period. By the 7th century, the city underwent a renaissance with a surging population, renewed construction, and extensive international connections. When Nebuchadnezzar II ravaged the entire city, he destroyed the inhabitants but preserved a remarkable picture of a prosperous Iron Age port. Finds include imports from Greece, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and Judah, alongside the weights and measures for commerce, production facilities for wine, shops of all shapes and varieties, and even the skeletal remains of the inhabitants themselves.

Occupation at the site did not resume until the late 6th century, when it became a Tyrian dependency. Excavations have uncovered warehouses built along the sea and villas closer to the center of the city. Within the open spaces, hundreds of dogs were individually buried, an oddity whose significance is not fully understood. The Persian period occupation ended in a destruction numismatically dated to around 290 BCE.

The Hellenistic and Early Roman period saw renewed interest in the fortifications on the northern side of the city as well as rebuilding of the villas on the southern mound, but much of the material from these periods was overbuilt by extensive Byzantine constructions which have been uncovered in virtually every excavation area. On the northern tell, an extensive bathhouse complex was partially exposed. On the eastern side of the city, the church of "St. Mary of the Green" highlights one religious group within this cosmopolitan city. In the south, a brothel and bathhouse, complete with heart-shaped columns, erotic oil lamps, and discarded progeny in the sewers show another side of the this Mediterranean seaport.

Excavations demonstrate that Umayyad, Abbasid, and Fatamid Ashkelon followed the plan of the Earlier Byzantine city. The church became a Mosque, the fortifications were reinforced; yet the city remained multi-ethnic garden seaport that it had always been. The beauty of the city described by Julian of Ashkelon was cultivated by the later rulers of the city. The Fatamid fortifications of the city, which were the subject of such dispute during

the Crusades, are still visible in their half-ruined state. Excavations have uncovered broad sections of the rampart near the northern gate, even discovering a Fatamid dedicatory inscription. The inscription had been defaced Crusader shield graffiti and tossed to the bottom of the moat, a harbinger of what would befall the entire city by the end of the 13th century.

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Ashkenaz

- I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
- II. Judaism

I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

Ashkenaz (MT *ʾAškēnaz*) is listed in the Table of Nations in Gen 10:3 as the son of Gomer, grandson of Japheth (ancestor of the nations to the north and west of Canaan), and great-grandson of Noah (see also 1 Chr 1:5). The only other biblical reference to Ashkenaz is Jer 51:27. Jeremiah summons three nations with militaristic reputations to war against Babylon in judgment for Babylon's excessive cruelty against Jerusalem and Judah in 587 BCE. The three nations are Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz, a triad of enemies all associated with the northern part of the ancient Near East.

Just as Gomer and Ashkenaz are paired together in Gen 10:2–3, so too Assyrian inscriptions (Esarhaddon) linked Gimirrai and Ashkuza as a pair. The Greek historian Herodotus described