The second group of sarcophagi, of which there are about 20 specimens, and an additional one in the cave of the "single sarcophagus," are characterized by suspended wreaths surmounted by discuses, and sometimes in the center a *tabula ansata* (a rectangle flanked by ear-shaped triangles), usually a place for an inscription, but sometimes used only as a decorative element without an inscription. This type of sarcophagus decoration is actually an imitation of unfinished, row decorations of marble sarcophagi that were imported from abroad and whose decoration was completed (or not) in workshops in the land of Israel. Sarcophagi with identical decoration were found in about 10 towns in the western lower Galilee, north and east of Beth Sheʿarim, as well as in Sepphoris, the capital of Galilee. The widespread use of sarcophagi decorated in this manner in the villages of lower Galilee (and the lack of finds of boxes decorated with human or animal figures), indicates that the Jews of Galilee refrained from using figurative art in their burial practice. This fact confirms the distinction made earlier between Diaspora and land of Israel Jews with regard to the figurative art of the sarcophagi of Complex 20.

7. Finds. In the center of the hall of the modern visitors' center is a huge block of raw glass, weighing about 8.9 tons (!) which was found on site. It was used in the early Muslim period as a melting spot for glass production, when the cave ceased to serve as a water cistern. This raw material was broken into pieces and sold to craftsmen who melted them and blew from the molten glass various household utensils, examples of which were found at Beth Sheʿarim and other sites.

One of the most significant finds of the extensive and lengthy excavations in the burial complex at Beth Sheʿarim is the wealth of inscriptions and Jewish symbols: 218 Greek inscriptions, 46 in Hebrew, three in Aramaic, and about 10 Palmyrene ones.

8. Conclusions. The excavations revealed a large variety of inhumation methods practiced by Jews in the area: burial in niches; arcosolia; *kokhim* cut into the stone walls; trough graves; sarcophagi and coffins made out of wood, pottery, lead, local stone, and marble; and even the gathering of bones into clay ossuaries. The types of graves, and the methods of burial, the language of the inscriptions, the abundance of Jewish symbols (a phenomenon not found in the cemeteries of rural Galilee), and especially the mention of the places of origin of the deceased, attest to the fact that Beth Sheʿarim was, essentially, a cemetery for Diaspora Jews, from Asia Minor, the Syrian desert, southern Arabia, Egypt, Lebanon, and even from Gentile towns in the land of Israel. The reason for this was clearly the importance of being buried in the land of Israel, as it is abundantly attested in the written sources. Beth Sheʿarim operated as a public cemetery from the middle of the 3rd century CE to the middle of the 4th century CE, after which it began to decline.

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Mordechai Aviam and Iosi Bordowisz

See also →Burial; →Catacombs; →Dead, Cult of the; →Necropolis; →Sarcophagus; →Tombs

Beth-Shemesh

The name Beth-shemesh (MT *Bêt šemeš*), meaning "House of the Sun," seems to indicate the Canaanite practice of sun god worship and refers to four distinctive cities in the HB/OT.

1. Boundary of the Tribe of Judah

The most prominent Beth-shemesh in the HB/OT is identified with Tell er-Rumeileh, west of the Arab village of ʿAin Shemes ("Well of the Sun" in Arabic) and located between Chesalon and Timnah, along the Valley of Sorek in the northeastern Shephelah. Situated on the main road leading up from the Philistine territory and the coastal plain in the west to the Judean highlands and Jerusalem in the east, it is closely connected with a route running northwards from Hebron. As a border town, Beth-shemesh was the scene of several important events in the history of Israel, including the Philistines' attempt to return the ark to the Israelites (1 Sam 6) and the battle between Israel's King Jehoash and Judah's King Amaziah (2 Kgs 14 : 11, 13; 2 Chr 25 : 21, 23). Otherwise, it is mentioned only in lists: the northern border of the tribe of Judah (Josh 15 : 10), the allotment to the tribe of Dan (Josh 19 : 41; expressed as Ir-shemesh ["City of the Sun"]), the Levitical cities given to the Aaronites (Josh 21 : 16; 1 Chr 6 : 59), cities of Solomon's second administrative district (1 Kgs 4 : 9), and cities destroyed by the Philistines in the reign of Judah's King Ahaz (2 Chr 28 : 18).

According to the results of the excavations by D. Mackenzie in 1911–12 and E. Grant in 1928–33 (with the final report published in 1939 by G. E. Wright) and on-going explorations by S. Bunimovitz and Z. Lederman since 1990, Beth-shemesh started to emerge as a modest town during the Middle Bronze Age (2200–1550 BCE), as evidenced by a city wall, a gate, and a patrician house built against the wall. Most likely destroyed by the Egyptian campaign in the second half of the 16th century BCE, the city was later rebuilt and enjoyed prosperity in the Late Bronze Age (1550–1200 BCE), represented by a spectacular jewelry hoard and a copper-

smelting furnace. The Iron Age I (1200–1000 BCE) is the period that intersects with biblical accounts. 1 Samuel 6 suggests Beth-shemesh was the first place inside Israelite territory adjacent to the Philistine city Ekron, in the Valley of Sorek. Archaeological excavations found the city full of collar-rim jar fragments that retain strong Canaanite traditions during the 12th century BCE. Yet the settlement as a whole reveals a large but unplanned village with simple house structures and a general absence of pig bones, a situation akin to contemporaneous "Israelite" sites (such as Shiloh) but dissimilar to "Philistine" and "Canaanite" sites (Ashkelon and Lachish, respectively). The city experienced a massive destruction in 1100 BCE from unknown causes and was rebuilt with pillared houses containing square monolithic columns and thick plaster floors, which indicates a sharp departure from the architecture of the previous century. These finds may reflect the cultural and ethnic interaction between the "Canaanites" and "Israelites" that occurred at border sites like Beth-shemesh during the 12th–11th centuries BCE.

The fluidity of ethnic identification during the pre-monarchic period also sheds light on whether Beth-shemesh belonged to the tribe of Dan or Judah. Joshua 19:41 suggests that Beth-shemesh originally belonged to the tribe of Dan but was later occupied by the Amorites, who pushed the Danites into the hill country (Judg 1:35; identified with Har-heres) and left Beth-shemesh open to the Judahites to occupy with a mixed population. The list of cities in Solomon's second district (1 Kgs 4:9), which seems to represent the eastern part of the Danite territory, may strengthen this scenario. Most scholars agree that the list in 1 Kings 4:7–19 reflects the historical period of the 10th century BCE, when Solomon incorporated David's recently conquered Canaanite territories to reorganize the kingdom, thus providing plausible circumstances for an ethnically mixed Beth-shemesh. Archaeological findings in Beth-shemesh during Iron Age IIa (1000–950 BCE) – such as carefully designed fortifications including the "strong wall," spacious public buildings, and a cruciform-shape water reservoir – reveal the city's transformation into a regional administrative center of the united monarchy. The town list of Dan in Josh 19:41 would then be historically reliable. This scenario explains the absence of Beth-shemesh in the list of Judah's inheritance (Josh 15:20–63) and its inclusion in Judah's northern border (Josh 15:10) as part of a tendency in which the same town names appear in the border descriptions of neighboring tribes.

This scenario, however, does not stand up under close scrutiny. The identification of Har-heres with Beth-shemesh is inconclusive, even if the *ḥeres* is understood as similar to *šemeš* ("sun"). Judges 1:35 is not historically reliable due to obvious contradictions within Judg 1, including the fate of Jerusalem (vv. 8, 21) and the extension of the Judahites' conquest (vv. 18, 19). Since the span of Josh 13–19 runs from pure idealization of the conquest and settlement to precise geographical description, and since the possible date of its composition may be the exilic period or even later, it is difficult to claim that the boundary list of Judah came from the time immediately following Dan's forced migration to the north. Regarding the historicity of Solomon's district list, recent studies question whether Solomon's reorganization for taxation purposes is demonstrable in the context of Iron Age II in the hill country of Palestine. The list could contain some reliable historic data, but it is not historical in its entirety.

On the other hand, Beth-shemesh is mentioned in Josh 21:16 and 1 Chr 6:59 as a city given to the Aaronites from the tribes of Judah and Simeon, implying that the city belonged to the tribe of Judah not Dan. This inconsistency is compounded by a logical sequence within Josh 14–21 that the Levitical cities in ch. 21 must be taken from the inheritance of the 12 tribes in chapters 14–19. This literary dependence, however, does not necessarily negate historical reliability. If the list of Levitical cities existed separately from Josh 14–19, and if the list reflects the geographical and political reality of the early monarchic period, then Beth-shemesh would belong to the tribe of Judah originally. Later, when Solomon reorganized his kingdom without honoring the old tribal boundaries, the city fell into the tribe of Dan. However, recent studies argue that the list of Levitical cities could not reflect the monarchic period because of several unique features of the list, such as a numerical pattern (four Levitical families received 48 cities composed by four cities from each of the 12 tribes) and the prominence of the Aaronites (its share is proportionally larger than the share of any other Levite groups). It seems instead that the list indicates the ideological concerns of a Judah-centered, post-monarchic societal milieu. Thus, it is not certain whether Beth-shemesh originally belonged to Judah or Dan.

From the 9th century BCE, however, Beth-shemesh was undoubtedly part of the southern Judean kingdom. It was the battlefield where Israel's King Jehoash defeated Judah's King Amaziah (796–767 BCE), and it was destroyed by the Philistines in the reign of Judah's King Ahaz (735–716 BCE). A few questions can be raised. Why did Rehoboam neglect to fortify Beth-shemesh while strengthening defenses at a number of Judean towns, including the neighboring town of Zorah (2 Chr 11:5–10), if its location was strategically important for the kingdom of Judah? Was the city rebuilt after being destroyed by Jehoash? If so, as is suggested by the Philistines' capturing it in the 8th century BCE, was the Philistine assault the final destruction of the

city? Archaeological discovery may fill the historical gaps. Contrary to Mackenzie and Wright's view that the city was unfortified and unimportant for the defense of the kingdom of Judah from the 9th century on, recent excavations show that the city remained well fortified during Iron Age IIb (950–700 BCE), represented by massive rebuilding efforts, the prevalence of handles inscribed *lmlk* ("[belonging] to the king"), and large olive-crushing installations. The city played important geopolitical roles as a meeting place of the western and northern borders of Judah until its destruction during Sennacherib's campaign against Judah in 701 BCE. According to Bunimovitz and Lederman, the city was re-occupied by surviving Judeans who settled around water reservoirs at the beginning of the 7th century BCE, and it was completely destroyed by the Philistines, who capitalized on its olive oil for the emerging city of Ekron.

2. Town of Issachar

The Beth-shemesh mentioned in Josh 19:22 was allotted to the tribe of Issachar, though its precise location is disputed due to the verse's ambiguity. If it is on the border, it could be identified with Khirbet Shemsin, two miles northwest of Tell el-ʿAbeidiyeh. If it lies within the border, however, it should be identified with Tell el-ʿAbeidiyeh itself. Given the tendency of ancient sources to describe borders with towns located in adjoining allotments, the latter is preferable (e.g., Josh 19:33).

3. Town of Naphtali

The Beth-shemesh of Josh 19:38 was allotted to the tribe of Naphtali. It is often identified with Khirbet Tell er-Ruwesah in the northern extremity of Upper Galilee. Based on Josh 19:35 (a list of fortified towns), Judg 1:33 (the failure of Naphtali to expel the Canaanites from Beth-shemesh and Beth-anath), and archeological findings of the upper region of Galilee (indicating the presence of well-developed Canaanite settlements), it appears to have been a fortified Canaanite town until the Israelite occupation.

4. Heliopolis

Jeremiah 43:13 mentions a Beth-shemesh in the land of Egypt, rendered in translations as Heliopolis following Ἡλίου πόλεως of the Septuagint (Jer 50:13).

See further →Heliopolis

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Won Lee

Beth-Shittah

Beth-shittah (MT *Bêt haššiṭṭâ*; LXX Βαιθασεττα, Βηθσεεδτα; literally "house of [the] acacia") is a town of unknown location along the Midianites' flight from Gideon's army (Judg 7:22), which began near the Hill of Moreh (Judg 7:1) and went southeast toward the Jordan River. The other three towns in v. 22 appear to be in Transjordan, but Gideon does not cross the river until Judg 8:4. Thus, Beth-shittah may be Beit Hashita, about 9.6 km northwest of Beth-shan.

James K. Mead

Beth-Tappuah

Beth-tappuah (MT *Bêt-tappûaḥ*; LXX Βαιθθαπφουε, Βαιθαχου; "house of apple/apricot") is listed in Josh 15:53 among the towns belonging to Judah (Josh 15:20–63). Typically identified with modern *Taffûḥ* about 6.4 km west of Hebron, Beth-tappuah is not the Tappuah in the Judean lowlands (Josh 15:34). Beth-tappuah's geographical association with Hebron (Josh 15:54) dovetails with the mention of a son of Hebron named Tappuah in the genealogy of Judah (1 Chr 2:43).

James K. Mead

Bethuel (Person)

Bethuel (MT *Bĕtûʾēl*; LXX Βαθουηλ) was the father of Rebekah and Laban and the youngest of the eight sons of Abraham's brother Nahor by Milcah (Gen 22:22–23). In Gen 25:20, he is called "the Aramean of Paddan-aram." Although his name occurs nine times in the Bible, he appears as a character only once, when he and Laban consent to Rebekah's return with Abraham's servant to marry Isaac (Gen 24:50). In the other passages, Bethuel is mentioned mainly to clarify Rebekah's lineage (Gen 24:15, 24, 47; 25:20) and emphasize that Jacob must find a wife from "Bethuel's house" (Gen 28:2, 5).

Minor text-critical questions arise over Bethuel's role in Gen 24. When Rebekah runs to tell her family about meeting Abraham's servant, the Masoretic Text of Gen 24:28 has "her mother's household," and although Peshitta reads "her father's house," both the Septuagint and Vulgate support the MT. The expectation of Bethuel's greater involvement also plays into discussions of Gen 24:50, where the MT has "and Laban and Bethuel answered."

These textual questions are reflected in a long reception history about Bethuel. Josephus expands