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Source: *The Biblical Archaeologist*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (May, 1960), pp. 62-68

Published by: [The American Schools of Oriental Research](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3209161>

Accessed: 07/07/2014 09:23

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New Light on Solomon's Megiddo *

By

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"And this is the reason of the levy which king Solomon raised; for to build the house of the Lord and his own house, and Millo, and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor and Megiddo and Gezer" (I Kings 9:15).

It all started with the above brief account of Solomon's building activities. In fact hardly ever in the history of archaeological digging has such a short verse in the Bible helped so much in identifying and dating actual remains found by the spade.

When the magnificent six-chambered and two-towered gate was found at Megiddo by the expeditions of the Chicago Oriental Institute, it was correctly attributed by the excavators to the Solomonic city.¹ Furthermore, Albright was able to show the striking resemblance between the plan of that gate and the east gate of the enclosure in the Solomonic temple in Jerusalem as described in Ezekiel 40:5-16.² When a similar gate was found during our excavations at Hazor in a level attributable to Solomon on stratigraphical as well as pottery grounds³, the attribution of the Megiddo gate to Solomon became certain.

These discoveries led me sometime ago to re-examine Macalister's report on his excavations at Gezer, and to my great surprise and delight a similar gate emerged from one of his plans, which he had entitled a "Maccabean Castle."⁴ That this gate was indeed Solomonic was clear not only from its plan and method of construction, but also from the fact that it was part of a casemate city wall, similar to the one found at Hazor which was also connected with the Solomonic gate. It occurred to me, therefore, that the nature of the city wall of Megiddo attributed to Solomon (Stratum IV) would have to be reconsidered; while the gates at Hazor and Gezer belonged to a casemate city wall, the one at Megiddo—as shown on the plans of the Excavations⁵—belonged to a solid wall built with "offsets" and "insets." This anomaly could not be explained away by the different character of the three cities⁶. It is axiomatic that the strength and character of a wall is determined by the tactics, strength and siegecraft of the enemy against whom it is erected. Gezer in the south and Hazor in the north could theoretically have been fortified against two different potential enemies, yet both had the same type of fortifications. There was no reason why Megiddo in the center of the land should be protected by a different type of fortification, one which was obviously stronger.

I suspected, therefore, that a casemate wall was perhaps hidden beneath the solid wall and when the solid wall was built, the former was filled up, and for some reason failed to be recognized by the excavators. A similar process was found at Hazor, where at some places the older casemate wall was filled up by the builders of the solid wall at the beginning of the 9th century.⁷

*The editors regret that, due to limitations of space, it has been necessary to publish this important article in slightly smaller type.

1. Robert S. Lamon, *apud*, G. Loud: *Megiddo* II, 1948, pp. 46-57.
2. *AJA*, LIII, 1949, pp. 213-215; *BASOR*, 117, 1950, pp. 13-19 (Carl G. Howie's article).
3. *IEJ*, 8, 1958, pp. 80-86.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Megiddo* II, Figs. 105, 389.
6. As suggested by Y. Aharoni, *BASOR*, 154, 1959, pp. 35-39.
7. See *Hazor* Vols. III-IV (forthcoming).

Another fact connected with the problem of the solid wall at Megiddo created great difficulties for the excavators and for all who studied the Megiddo report. At the southern part of the mound, east of the southern complex of stables, the excavators discovered a huge palatial building constructed of fine ashlar blocks. This building, which was obviously Israelite, nevertheless lay in part immediately beneath the solid "Solomonic" wall. Furthermore, another building (1482) of the same level, west of the palatial building, was shown to be covered partly by the stables. The excavators attributed the stables and solid wall to Stratum IV, while the palace and building 1482 were attributed to a newly-named stratum IVB— the designation "V" having already been taken up by another stratum.⁸



Fig. 6. The northern wall of the Northern Fort, lying beneath the foundation of the "offsets and insets" wall. Note the NW corner of the "fort," and, at right, the northern wall (inferior dressed stones) of the west casemates.

Since the solid wall and stables had been attributed to Solomon, the lonely palace or fort had to be attributed either to David or to an early Solomonic phase; both alternatives allowed for the belief that Solomon himself tore down this fine building in order to build the city wall, the stables, etc.⁹ In spite of the brilliant and ceaseless efforts of Albright and Wright¹⁰, who have introduced considerable clarity into the complex problems of the Megiddo stratigraphy (particularly by showing that the remains of VA are in fact part of the IVB city), the above difficulty remained. Either the lonely fort was built by David (for which there is no Biblical support) or by Solomon himself, who in either case was "accused" of demolishing one of the finest buildings of Israelite Megiddo for no apparent reason.

8. Robert S. Lamon and Geoffrey M. Shipton, *Megiddo I*, Chicago 1939, p. 9.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

10. See G. Ernest Wright in *BA* XIII, 1950, pp. 28-46; *idem*, *Biblical Archaeology*, 1957, pp. 120 ff., which lists further bibliography.

In view of the above difficulties and in search for a hoped-for casemate wall, I carried out a short dig during January 1960 at Megiddo. The results, which were really startling, will soon be published in detail with plans in a forthcoming issue of *Israel Exploration Journal*.¹¹ There too the full implications concerning Strata V-IV and III will be discussed. At the request of Prof. Wright, I submit herewith a concise report of the dig and the general conclusion which may be drawn from it.

The most promising area for the soundings seemed to be the north-eastern sector of the site, due east of the city-gate, near the eastern group of stables. On the one hand, the remains of the solid wall in that spot were still intact and had not been removed by the excavators, and, on the other, air photographs showed some structures which obviously extended beneath the city-wall.¹² Even before we began the actual digging, we were surprised to notice that what seemed to be the lower courses of the outer face of the solid wall, in square K13,—as exposed by the excavators—were built of big ashlar blocks, some smoothly dressed, some with marginal-drafting, like those of the Solomonic city gate (Fig. 6). This was unlike the rest of the wall, which was built of smaller stones. Furthermore, these courses extended for a considerable length without any “offsets and insets.” No conceivable reasons were apparent why that sector should be built differently; our suspicion grew when we noticed that these courses at the north end came to an abrupt end in a straight vertical line. The only *a priori* explanation was that these courses did not originally belong to the city wall, but to an earlier huge building, on whose ruins the solid wall was built. To examine this theory the lower courses of the solid wall above the end of the ashlar blocks were carefully removed, and immediately we struck a surprise, the first in a series. A solid wall 1.5 meters wide, built of large ashlar stones, appeared just below the city wall, extending in a right angle toward the city. This wall formed a corner with the ashlar courses (Fig. 7). We followed the wall of this building for more than ten meters well inside the city, until we were satisfied that the building was lying not only below the solid city wall, but also below the foundations of the adjacent partially excavated stables.¹³

As though these facts were not in themselves enough, we were fortunate in finding in the corner room of the newly discovered building, just below the lower courses of the “offsets and insets” wall, a fine group of whole vessels, all typical of the VA-IVB period, i.e. the Solomonic times: typical cooking-pots, deep bowls with hand burnishing, a number of store jars and a fine imported Cypriote juglet.

The next problem was to locate the other corner of the building, i.e. the eastern corner. This was a more difficult task since that part was badly destroyed even prior to the building of the “offsets and insets” city wall. Due south of the hypothetical corner at a distance of about 15 meters, lies the “finger” of the deep “BB” cut made by the Megiddo excavators.¹⁴ In this section were visible huge ashlar stones (unmarked in the plans of the Megiddo excavators) forming a wall of exactly the same width (i.e. 1.5 meters), lying clearly *beneath* the floors of Stable 407. Several trial soundings along the hypothetical line revealed, immediately below the walls and floors of the stable, the eastern outer wall of the newly discovered building. Thus this building turned out to be

11. This dig, carried out on behalf of the Hebrew University and through the generous support of Mr. John Wilks of Corona Del Mar, California, lasted from 13th to 15th January and again for several sporadic days in the second half of the same month. I was assisted by Mr. I. Dunayevsky, chief architect of the Hazor Expedition, with whose collaboration the full report will be published.

12. *Megiddo I*, Fig. 119, Squares K12-13; L15.

13. *Ibid.*, plan on Fig. 49.

14. *Megiddo II*, Fig. 377 (Square L13).

a huge structure, its northern face measuring 29 meters, a few meters more than the "palace" of IVB, previously discovered in the south, and it was lying in similar stratigraphical conditions, i.e. beneath the solid city wall and stables.

Our second effort was concentrated west of the western wall of this palatial or fort-like structure (to be called the "Northern Fort"). The fact that the northern wall of the fort was built on the very edge of the mound indicated either that there was no city wall to be connected with it, or that the outer wall of the fort also served as part of a city wall which abutted on the building west and east of it. West of the building two facts demanded clarification:



Fig. 7. The west wall of the Northern Fort, discovered after the removal of the foundations of the stratum NA solid wall, (cf. fig. 8). This wall extends southward beneath the foundations of the stables.

1. West of the outer wall of the fort, and in straight line with its outer face, a wall built of slightly masoned boulders was visible. This wall was also lying below the foundations of the "offsets and insets" city wall (Fig. 6).

2. About five meters south of this latter wall and parallel to it, right inside the city in the narrow strip between the inner face of the offsets and insets wall and the northern wall of the stable complex, the top of a fine wall built of carefully laid headers and stretchers was visible. Although its top is visible on the air-photograph published in Megiddo I¹⁵ it is not marked on any of the published plans. The excavation of the two walls mentioned above, by carefully removing the foundations of the "offsets and insets" city wall when that was necessary, revealed a series of casemates, measuring 4 x 5 meters (Fig 8). Each casemate had a carefully built entrance in its south-west corner, and its diaphragm always served also as the western jamb of the door. It was interesting

15. *Megiddo I*, Fig. 119, Square K12.



Fig. 8. View looking west, roughly towards the city gate, of the casemates west of the "fort." Left: the exterior wall of the stables complex. Right: Foundations of the "offsets and insets" wall, partly removed.

to note that the dividing walls (diaphragms) also built of ashlar blocks, were well bonded into the outer wall, which, as already mentioned, was built of slightly masoned boulders. The westward extension of the series of casemates cannot be traced, since here lies the Schumacher trench (dug in 1903-5). But that these casemates did extend

westward is clear since the western part of the third casemate and the beginning of a fourth are clearly marked in the sketch plans in Megiddo II, where the buildings found by Loud in the strip between the eastern edge of the Schumacher trench and the present edge of the trench are marked.¹⁶ Some of the casemates yielded a considerable number of domestic vessels, all identical with those found in the corner-room of the Northern Fort.

A second sounding was made east of the newly discovered Fort. Here again, the straight line of a wall became visible, parallel to and beneath the outer broken edge the "offsets and insets" city wall¹⁷. The removal of the foundations of the "offsets and insets" city wall in several places revealed below a fill of loose earth and stones, a series of long casemates measuring in the average 7.5 meters in length and 2 meters in width (between the walls). While one casemate was found intact (on all sides), of the others only the inner and dividing walls were found (of casemate no. 2, parts of the outer wall were also discovered.) The outer walls, built on the very edge of the mound, have disappeared, together with the outer edge of the "offsets and insets" wall. It is interesting to note that part of the second casemate lay bare before we began excavating and in fact is visible on the air photograph.¹⁸ As mentioned above, the area around the eastern corner of the fort was utterly and deliberately destroyed even before the erection of the "offsets and insets" city wall. Because of this fact, no remains of the casemate wall were found in the immediate area of the Fort's corner; nevertheless it was interesting to note that the remnant of the nearest casemate, lying at a distance of some 6 meters east of the Fort, show that it was built in a sharp curve intended to meet the Fort's bastioned-corner. Furthermore, this casemate had a series of at least two dividing walls built close to each other, thus strengthening the curve.

This casemate wall is built on much flimsier foundations than that west of the Fort and in fact than that of Hazor. This may be explained by the fact that it was located on the highest part of the site, where the slope to the north is extremely steep, thus making any conceivable attack with engines of war practically impossible from that direction. The area west of the Fort is much lower and is adjacent to the city gate.

The stratigraphical position of the Fort and the series of casemates in relation to the stables, and the "offsets and insets" wall of stratum IVA, was clear and decisive: the former lay immediately below the latter. There remained the problem of fixing the relation of the newly discovered IVB constructions to the earlier strata. This was done with the aid of several soundings below the Fort and casemates on the one hand, and checking the exposed section of the Schumacher trench on the other. The Fort was found to be built above the remains of walls which in turn were built above the clearly discernible burnt brick walls of Stratum VIA. Thus again the newly discovered stratum had to be attributed to IVB-VA, even when counting the strata from below upwards, i.e. from the burnt brick walls of Stratum VIA; the remains above them and below the foundations of the Fort were VB and the Fort itself was VAWIVB. This conclusion was further corroborated when a sounding near and beneath the eastern corner of the Fort revealed the corner of a room, badly burnt and filled with a large number of whole vessels of the VIA types.

Before trying to apply the conclusions of these finds to the other discoveries at Megiddo, let us sum up the facts:

16. *Ibid.*, Fig. 114, Square K12, northern part.

17. *Ibid.*, Air photograph, Fig. 119, Square L14.

18. *Ibid.*

1. A huge Fort, built of ashlar blocks, dressed similarly to the other IVB structures, was found immediately beneath the solid IVA city wall and the northern complex of stables. The pottery associated with this Fort is typical IVB-VA.

2. This Fort is part of a casemate complex of fortifications, built east and west of it; the outer wall of the Fort served at the same time as part of the casemate system.

C o n c l u s i o n s

1. The first and most important conclusion to be drawn from the above facts is that the southern palace, or Fort, discovered by the excavators of Megiddo, should no longer be considered as an isolated fort built in an undefended city; on the contrary, it was part of a big city (Stratum VA-IVB), well defended by casemate walls, the formidable six-chambered city gate and the newly discovered northern Fort which dominated from above the approaches to the city gate. To these two forts should be attributed quite a number of public and private buildings, some of which were considered by the excavators as belonging generally to Stratum V or more specifically to VA. Such a city, of the 10th century, was probably not built by David, if we base our judgment both on general historical considerations and especially on I Kings 9:15. This city, with its system of fortifications similar to those of Hazor and Gezer, must have been the Solomonic city referred to in the above Biblical verse.

2. The second automatic and unavoidable conclusion is that city IV proper (IVA) with its solid city wall of the "offsets and insets" type (built in part on a filling of the older casemate wall), the two complexes of stables and the four-chambered city gate (the unfinished IIIB gate in the terminology of the excavators),¹⁹ is *not* Solomonic but was built after the destruction of the Solomonic city by Pharaoh Shishak in the fifth year of the reign of Rehoboam. The work was that of a later sovereign, most probably King Ahab, whose great force of 2000 chariots is mentioned in the annals of Shalmaneser III. This does not exclude the possibility that Solomon's city had stables too, but these were not the excavated ones, nor would they have been in the area in which these were found.

3. It is to Stratum III, then, that the last of the city gates of Megiddo, the one with the two chambers,²⁰ should be attributed.

Many problems which require fresh consideration will be dealt with in the forthcoming article in *IEJ*; these will include the problem of building 338, the exact relation of the various gates (including the one attributed by the excavators to Stratum V), the duration of Stratum IV, etc.

Let me conclude by saying that the few days of soundings in Megiddo were most exhilarating to all of us. These few finds made in a short time only show how much more can be done in this magnificent mound. The tremendous and pioneering work done by the Oriental Institute of the Chicago University enables us now to probe further into the mysteries of this city with relatively small effort.

19. *Ibid.*, Gate 1 on Fig. 86.

20. *Ibid.*, Gate 2.