

Biblical Tels (Israel)

No 1108

1. BASIC DATA

<i>State Party:</i>	State of Israel
<i>Name of property:</i>	The Biblical Tels and Ancient Water Systems – Megiddo, Hazor, Beer Sheba
<i>Location:</i>	Megiddo, Megiddo Region Hazor, Upper Galilee Region Beer Sheba, Beer Sheba Region
<i>Date received:</i>	26 January 2004
<i>Category of property:</i>	

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, these are *sites*. Together they form a *serial nomination*.

Brief description:

Tels, or pre-historic settlement mounds, are characteristic of the flatter lands of the eastern Mediterranean, particularly Lebanon, Syria, Israel and Eastern Turkey. Of more than 200 tels in Israel, Megiddo, Hazor and Beer Sheba are representative of tels that have substantial remains of cities with biblical connections. The three tels also present some of the best examples in the Levant of elaborate, Iron Age, underground water collecting systems, created to serve dense urban communities, reflecting centralised authority, based on prosperous agriculture and control of important trade routes.

2. THE PROPERTY

Description

The three nominated tels are scattered across the State of Israel. Tel Hazor is in the north, 14km north of the Sea of Galilee; Tel Megiddo is just north of where the Qishon river reaches its northernmost point, south-east of Haifa; Tel Beer Sheba is east of the city of Beer Sheba, to the north of the Negev Desert in the south of Israel.

The tels are three out of over 200 tels in the State of Israel. Tels are pre-historic settlement mounds, which form a distinctive and prominent feature of comparatively flat landscape areas of the Levant – Israel, Syria, Lebanon, and Eastern Turkey. Many of the mounds are both extensive and tall, representing large, multi-layered settlements, which persisted for several millennia. The tels have a characterise shape, being conical in profile with a flattish top. Some extend up to 20 metres above the surrounding countryside.

Tels reflect nucleated settlements, which continued over time in one place, often because of the strategic advantages of the site in terms of communications, and more crucially the availability of water supplies, in what were fairly arid areas at certain times of year.

In Israel, the tels vary in size from small ones covering around a hectare, such as Beer Sheba, to large ones extending to around 10 hectares, such as Megiddo. There are also a few notably extensive sites such as Hazor, which covers almost 100 hectares. Similar large tels are found in Syria.

A considerable number of the tels are the remains of cities and settlements mentioned in the Old Testament bible, a book revered by both Jews and Christians, and acknowledged in Islam as a fundamental source. They are therefore referred to as ‘biblical’ tels. The three nominated tels are put forward as representative of biblical cites in Israel. A further eight tels are listed in the nomination, which, it is implied, might in the future be put forward as an extension to this serial nomination.

The Old Testament, as a historical source document, refers to events in the period from roughly 1700 BC to the second century BC. The tels do, however, for the most part have a far longer history, in some case stretching back 6,000 years BP. The nomination is therefore reflecting mainly the association of that part of their history, which aligns with events portrayed in the Old Testament.

Old Testament history is principally concerned with the religious history of Israel in Canaan. The land known as Canaan was situated in the territory of the southern Levant, in what is now Israel, the Palestine Authority, Jordan, Lebanon and southwestern Syria. Throughout time, many names have been given to this area including Palestine, Eretz-Israel, Bilad es-Shem, the Holy Land and Djahy. The earliest known name for this area was “Canaan”.

The inhabitants of Canaan were never ethnically or politically unified as a single nation. They did, however, share sufficient similarities in language and culture to be described together as “Canaanites.” Israel refers to both a people within Canaan and later to the political entity formed by those people. To the authors of the Bible, Canaan is the land, which the tribes of Israel conquered after an Exodus from Egypt and the Canaanites are the people they deposited from this land.

The biblical history starts in the 17th century BC with the Patriarchs of the Jewish people, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, leading nomads, the Israelites, from Mesopotamia to settle in the mountains of Canaan. Famine forced the Israelites to migrate to Egypt. They then spend years wandering in the wilderness until around 1250 BC Moses led the exodus to return to the Promised Land. The Israelites conquered the mountains of Canaan, while the Philistines took the plains.

The first King of a centralised Israel was Saul c1023-1004 BC. His adopted son, David, conquered Jerusalem, making it his capital and installing the Ark of the Covenant, which it is believed, contained the stones on which the 10 Commandments were written. His son was King Solomon, whose building works are celebrated in the

Old Testament Books of Proverbs, Ecclesiasticus and the Song of Songs, which he is believed to have written. Solomon's reign is often seen as Israel's golden era. After Solomon's death, the kingdom was split into two, becoming Israel and Judah.

The independent Kingdom of Israel ended in the 8th century BC with conquest by the Assyrians, who largely destroyed the tel towns. Both Beer Sheba and Hazor were immediately abandoned; some settlement persisted at Megiddo until the early 4th century, when it, too, was finally abandoned.

The three tels are also nominated for the impressive remain of their underground water catchments systems, which reflect sophisticated, and geographically responsive, engineering solutions to water storage. These seemed to have reached their zenith in the Iron Age.

The three tels are considered in turn:

- *Tel Megiddo*
- *Tel Hazor*
- *Tel Beer Sheba*

Tel Megiddo

Megiddo is one of the most impressive tels in the Levant. Strategically sited near the narrow Aruna Pass overlooking the fertile Jezreel Valley and with abundant water supplies, from the 4th millennium BC through to the 7th century BC, Megiddo was one of the most powerful cities in Canaan and Israel, controlling the Via Maris the main international highway connecting Egypt to Syria, Anatolia and Mesopotamia. Epic battles that decided the fate of western Asia were fought nearby.

Megiddo also has a central place in the Biblical narrative, extending from the Conquest of the Land through to the periods of United and then Divided Monarchy and finally Assyrian domination. It is mentioned eleven times in the Old Testament in connection with, amongst other events, the cities distributed amongst the Tribes of Israel, and the construction work of Solomon. It is also mentioned once in the New Testament as Armageddon. (a Greek corruption for Har-Megiddo = mound of Megiddo)

Megiddo is said to be the most excavated tel in the Levant. Its twenty major strata contain the remains of around 30 different cities.

Megiddo rose to prominence in the 4th millennium BC. In the late 4th, 3rd and 2nd millennium BC, Megiddo became one of the most powerful cities in Canaan. With other Canaanite cities, it was incorporated into Egypt, as a province of the New Kingdom, by the Pharaoh Thutmose III. Excavations have revealed much evidence of its wealth, such as carved ivories, which persisted until it was destroyed by the Sea People in the 12th century BC.

In the Iron Age, Megiddo became an economic centre and in 925 BC was once again conquered by Egypt for a short while. In the 9th and 8th centuries BC Megiddo was the main centre for the Northern Kingdom of Israel when its

prosperity was based on the horse trade and it had a reputation for chariot racing. This was Megiddo's heyday.

In 732, the Assyrians took over the region and the city became the capital of the Assyrian province of Megiddo. In the 7th century BC, Megiddo once again fell under Egyptian rule. Before it was finally abandoned in the late 5th to early 4th century BC, it had come under first Babylonian and then Persian rule.

Settlement on Tel Megiddo covers four main periods. The earliest settlement during the Neolithic period is revealed by pottery finds in caves, and habitation sites within stonewalls. In the early Bronze Age there is evidence of a massive stone-built town wall that partly encircled the site and also a temple compound, both destroyed by an earthquake. When the town was re-built, three porticoed rectangular temples, and a round altar were constructed in what has been described as a sacred compound, the monumentality of which has no parallel in the Levant. It features the only record of ritual activity in an ancient near eastern temple. The complex is also a very early manifestation of the urbanisation process.

In the middle Bronze Age, around the 12th century BC, the town was rebuilt as an urban fortified centre, part of the Canaanite city-state. After its destruction by "sea peoples" in c 1130 BC, the city was destroyed by a violent fire. It was then rebuilt as an Israelite City in the Iron Age. This city had palaces, which are considered the best examples in Israel, comparable to Samaria, and to the monuments excavated in northern Syria such as Tel Halaf. There were also large pillared buildings somewhat similar to the storehouse at Beer Sheba (below), but here considered to be horse stables with an associated training yard.

During the Iron Age the water systems at Megiddo reached their most sophisticated phase. The water came from a spring at the foot of the mound, accessed by a concealed passageway from within the city under the city wall. As the town grew and rose, the journey to collect water increased. In its final manifestation, the water system consisted of a cave hewn round the well, with an 80 metre long aqueduct carrying water to the bottom of a vertical shaft in the city. This system is one of the most impressive in the ancient world and reflects the capacity to organise manpower and invest huge resources.

Tel Hazor

Tel Hazor is the largest biblical site in Israel, covering an area of almost 100ha. It is strategically sited at a major cross roads, dominating the trade and military routes that connected the land of what became Israel to Phoenicia, Syria and Anatolia to the north, Mesopotamia to the east and Egypt to the south. The surrounding fertile Hula plain was the basis for Hazor's wealth, and the site of several battles.

Hazor's population in the second millennium BC is estimated to have been around 20,000, making it one of the most important cities in the region. Hazor was inhabited from the end of the third millennium, the Early Bronze Age, until the 2nd century BC.

The references to Hazor in the Old Testament fall into two main categories. The first relate to Hazor's role in the settlement of the tribes of Israel, and the second to Solomon's building activities and the end of the Kingdom of Israel when it was overrun by the Assyrians in the 8th century BC.

The first references are regarded as one of the most controversial subjects in the study of Ancient Israelite history, as the two main references which detail the battle of the children of Israel against Jabin, King of Canaan, are contradictory in claiming different outcomes.

The second, too, is not clear cut, as reference to Solomon building the walls of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer is hotly debated as to whether these are the excavated walls that can be seen.

Hazor was a thriving city throughout most of its existence. Several monuments deserve mention. In the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC the whole enclosure of the lower city was enclosed by earthen ramparts, 9 m high of a brick core and earthen outer skin and protected by a deep moat. There were at least two monumental gates with "Syrian" pilasters flanking the entrance. The whole Bronze Age enclosure was similar to contemporary Syrian towns such as Qatna.

During the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, several palaces and temples were erected in both the upper and lower city. Some of these were built on huge earthen podiums, with well-dressed basalt stone for lining the walls, round basalt column bases defining the entrances, and cedar wood beams for walls and floors. Hazor is the southernmost site where these Syrian architectural features were found. The palace is the most elaborate and one of the best preserved of its time in the Levant.

In the first Israelite city, attributed to the time of King Solomon, there is a massive six chambered stone gate within a casemate wall encircling the western half of the tel. In the following centuries a wide wall was built all round the tel and large administrative buildings created with stone pillars separating their inner halls from one another.

A noteworthy element, in the overall plan of this prosperous city, is the water system built to supply the city's needs under siege. The system consists of a network of channels dating to the Middle Bronze Age, a plastered Late Bronze Age water reservoir, the oldest of its kind in Israel, and a later Iron Age water system.

The Late Bronze Age system consists of a 30 metre descending, partly rock-hewn, and partly corbelled, tunnel leading to a trefoil shaped cave and a vaulted corridor with stair leading to the tunnel. The entire tunnel was covered in plaster to allow it to store water. This system seems to have served a palace.

The Iron Age system drew water from beneath the city. It is dated to 9th century BC. It consists of a 20 metre vertical shaft, and a sloping 25 metre tunnel with steps and a pool.

Tel Beer Sheba

Tel Beer Sheba is at the intersection between roads leading north to mount Hebron and eastwards to the Judean desert and the Dead Sea, Westwards to the coastal plain, and southwards to the Negev Heights and the Red Sea.

Although, the earliest remains from the tel date to the 4th millennium BC, Beer Sheba remained abandoned during the Bronze Age. Having remained uninhabited for some two thousand years, the tel was re-settled during the 11th century BC in the early Iron Age. This phase of settlement came to an end in 925BC when the site was conquered by the Egyptians.

The main period represented in the tel was founded in the 9th century BC by the Judahite monarchy and then rebuilt three more times until its final destruction at the end of the 8th century. This very last Israelite city was destroyed in a fierce fire during the Assyrian campaign.

Biblical references to Beer Sheba detail the Patriarchs' wandering throughout the Holy Land and God's appearance to them in Beer Sheba, as well as the struggle with the Philistines over the right to dig wells. They indicate variously that the city was allocated to the tribe of Simeon and also to the tribe of Judah, and refer to it as the southernmost city of Judea.

Beer Sheba was a planned city rather than one that evolved gradually. The Iron Age plan has been unearthed almost in its entirety. The outline is oval, encircled by a wall and gate to the south. The city was divided into three blocks by peripheral streets and the residential quarters were of uniform size. All streets lead to a main city square. Beneath the city streets was an elaborate drainage system of plastered gutters that collected water from houses and channelled under the outer wall to a water cistern, outside the city.

Notable structures were six storehouses, covering an area of around 600 square metres and providing space for the storage and preparation of a wide range of food for the administrative and military functionaries, and the Governor's Palace of three elongated halls and ancillary rooms.

Beer Sheba had two water systems: a well outside the city wall and, within the city, a reservoir for times of siege. Both were built in the Iron Age and were in use until the end of the 1st century BC. The well water was some 69 metres below the surface. The upper part was lined with dressed limestone; the lower part cut into chalk. This deep well has no parallels until the Byzantine period.

Inside the city, the water system consisted of a network of channels that collected water into a subterranean reservoir, accessed by a deep shaft equipped with stairs. The water was flood water from the Hebron wadi, diverted into the channels.

History

The early history for each of the three cities is covered above.

Tel Megiddo

Tel Megiddo has been excavated three times. The first work was from 1903-5 on behalf of the German Society for Oriental Research, the first major excavation of a biblical site. In 1925 the work was renewed by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. This major work persisted until 1939 and revealed most of the Iron Age site. In the 1960s and early 1970s a series of short excavations were carried out by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and since 1994 Tel Aviv University has been working there in alternate years, led by Professors Israel Finkelstein and David Ussishkin, reinvestigating former work to inform debates about the chronology of the Iron Age strata and the extent of King Solomon's kingdom.

Tel Hazor

The earliest excavation at Tel Hazor was carried out in 1928 by the Department of Antiquities of the British Mandate, but it was in the 1950s that the major excavation campaign was carried out under the leadership of Yigael Yadin of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Excavations were resumed in 1990 as a joint project of the Hebrew University and the Israel Exploration Society, with the object of identifying the extent of Solomon's city and checking earlier chronology.

Tel Beer Sheba

Tel Beer Sheba was excavated as part of a regional study in the 1960s, which continued until the 1970s. This excavation focused on Beer Sheba as part of a frontier area, which consisted of a collection of tels in the biblical "Negev".

Management regime

The three tels that make up this serial nomination are owned by the State of Israel and are designated National Parks, administered by the Israel Nature and Parks Authority (INPA). Tel Megiddo and Tel Hazor come within the Northern District of INPA and Tel Beer Sheba in the Southern District.

The Planning and Development Forum of the Director General of INPA approves all significant plans regarding activities in the National Parks. Additionally, there is an internal forum under the chairmanship of the Authority's Director of Archaeology and Heritage, which is concerned, with the management of actual and potential World Heritage sites.

Legal provision:

All three sites have been designated as National Parks. This status provides protection under the Heritage and National Sites Law, 1998.

Resources:

The Israel Nature and Parks Authority finances on-going running and maintenance of the sites and emergency conservation work. Special projects are funded separately by drawing in funds from relevant institutions.

Justification by the State Party (summary)

The tels are considered to be of outstanding universal value for their association with biblical history and, in particular:

Tel Megiddo, as the most impressive tel in the Levant, represents a cornerstone in the evolution of the Judeo-Christian civilisation through its central place in the biblical narrative, its formative role in messianic beliefs, and for its impressive building works by King Solomon.

Tel Hazor as the largest biblical site in Israel relates to evidence of the Israelite tribes' settlement processes in Canaan and to Solomon's building activities.

Tel Beer Sheba reflects biblical traditions surrounding the Patriarchs' wanderings in the Holy Land and to God's appearance to the Patriarchs in Beer Sheba.

The water cisterns are considered to be of outstanding universal value for their size and sophistication, and for their reflection of technical know-how, the capacity to invest large financial resources, and the administrative systems to plan and deploy substantial manpower.

3. ICOMOS EVALUATION

Actions by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS Mission visited the three sites in October 2004.

ICOMOS has also consulted its International Scientific Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management.

In response to a request from ICOMOS, in March 2005 the State Party asked for the nomination to be considered for its biblical associations and not for both biblical associations and water systems. The State Party further submitted a more detailed comparative analysis to justify the choice of the three sites for their biblical associations.

Conservation

Conservation history:

Tel Megiddo

The present-day appearance of Tel Megiddo to a considerable extent reflects the history of its investigation for the last century. A striking feature of the site is the long, narrow trench dug by the German Society for Oriental Research in 1903-5, which cuts right through the

ancient town. This, however, is less obtrusive than that dug by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago during its long-term excavations.

The quality of the conservation work is in general satisfactory. There has been a good deal of reconstruction of walls, the level to which the original structures survive being delineated by means of a raised band of lime mortar. Care has been taken in the selection of conservation materials, and replacement mud-bricks are made on site. It was necessary in the interests of safety and stability to use modern materials at certain points, such as the Inner Gate, the upper edge of the grain silo, and, in particular, the entrance to the water system. None of these interventions may be considered to be obtrusive or misleading.

The nomination dossier records that there is a conservation master plan prepared by the architect to the site. However, this appears to have been very general in its approach, and it is uncertain to what extent it is being implemented. The key indicators are set out on p. 106 of the nomination dossier and constitute a viable monitoring system for the conservation of the site.

At the present time, work is in progress on the reorientation of the paths traversing the site on the lines of the original road layout, instead of crossing walls and other features without reference to the archaeological evidence. Experimental work is being carried out to select the best surfacing material for the new paths.

Tel Hazor

The quality of the conservation at Tel Hazor is broadly comparable with that at Tel Megiddo.

The conservation work at Tel Hazor is of a high order, thanks to the involvement of one of the top site conservators in Israel. The so-called 'Canaanite Palace,' which is protected by a simple but effective overhead structure, is the location of some sophisticated conservation techniques, which as well as protecting the structures are yielding a great deal of scientific information of considerable importance in the interpretation of the site.

Whilst some of the conservation work is of outstanding quality, there are, however, a number of excavated buildings where conservation has not been completed. The excellent annual conservation reports that have been produced for some years demonstrate that the limited resources are used for the conservation of a small number of more important structures. There is a regular monitoring programme, and the key indicators are to be found on pp. 106–7 of the nomination dossier. Nonetheless, it would be desirable for an overall conservation plan to be drawn up, in order to achieve a comparable standard across the entire site, with short-, medium-, and long-term objectives.

Tel Beer Sheba

This tel is smaller (3.09 ha) than the other two in this serial nomination. Some 60% of its area has been excavated and most of the excavated buildings and other structures have been conserved. On the whole, the conservation has been carried out satisfactorily so far as the choice of materials and techniques are concerned.

In places, and notably at the main gate, there has been considerable reconstruction of walls, and in particular the upper, mud-brick, portions. This gives a somewhat spurious impression of completeness, the more so since in some cases the walls have been reconstructed to an equal height. A different policy would be appropriate in future.

Management:

There are a number of detailed procedures relating to risk-preparedness, safety, fire prevention, supervision, enforcement, safety, rescue, and emergency that are in force at all INPA sites.

Tel Megiddo and Tel Beer Sheba have compendious site manuals, which are continuously updated (see paragraph 7.b of the nomination dossier). These are all available only in Hebrew, but a study of the dossiers during the mission, with the help of INPA officials, demonstrated the degree of detail that they contain.

At Tel Hazor there is at the present time only a collection of general directives and instructions relating to all INPA properties. However, there are plans to create a full dossier comparable with those at the other two sites; these are held up at the present time owing to funding problems. Once the Tel Hazor manual has been produced, this provision may therefore be deemed to conform to the requirements of the World Heritage Committee regarding management mechanisms.

At Tel Megiddo, a programme for the development of the site has been prepared by the INPA and the Government Tourist Corporation. This provides for the planning of services and facilities, revamping of the entrance complex, the establishment of trails round the tel, conservation of architectural remains, and a comprehensive presentation programme.

At both Tel Megiddo and Tel Hazor the complement of staff is considered to be too small for the visitor numbers and the size of the site.

Buffer zones:

At Megiddo, the nominated property covers 16.05ha, and the buffer zone 7.1ha. The latter is considered to be too small to protect the setting of the tel. At Hazor, the proposed buffer zone, which covers 119.2ha, in the north-east is too close to the boundary of the nominated property. And could do with enlargement. At Beer Sheba the buffer zone is not large enough to prevent the development of houses, which impact on the site.

Risk analysis:

Development and environmental pressures are said to be non-existent. However the construction of estate of "ranch-style" houses in open land to the south-east of the Beer Sheba tel points to considerable pressures.

Floods

Floods are a risk and improvements are planned to the drainage system.

Fire

Fire is a potential problem in the summer months and steps are taken to minimise the threat.

Visitor pressure

Overall this is not a problem at the sites, but access to the water cisterns is restricted and measures are taken to control the flow of visitors.

Authenticity and integrity

Authenticity:

Tel Megiddo

The authenticity of the ruins on Tel Megiddo is incontestable. Scientific excavations have revealed evidence of human occupation over many centuries and the excavated remains have been carefully conserved for display to visitors. There has been a certain degree of restoration of walls and other structures, but this has been executed with attention to the choice of materials and technique.

It might be argued that the water system lacks some measure of authenticity. To make it accessible to visitors, has necessitated, primarily for reasons of safety, some additions using modern materials. In order to demonstrate how the system operated, certain alterations have also been made below ground. However, these modern modifications may be justified in view of the outstanding technological achievement of the ancient engineers.

Tel Hazor

Overall, Tel Hazor has an acceptable level of authenticity. It is, however, the site of a somewhat unconventional conservation activity.

Two Iron Age buildings (a storehouse and a residential building) that had been excavated in the 1950s and had remained exposed to deterioration for some four decades on an "island" as excavation proceeded to lower levels around them. After considerable discussion and negotiations with the Israel Antiquities Authority, it was agreed that the two buildings should be dismantled and rebuilt elsewhere on the site. This action may be justified in that it permitted excavation of earlier archaeological layers beneath the two Iron Age buildings.

As at Tel Megiddo, certain interventions, in the interests of safety and interpretation, have been made to the water system. None seriously impacts the authenticity of the overall system.

Tel Beer Sheba

With the exception of the over-restoration of some of the walls, Tel Beer Sheba has considerable authenticity.

As at the other two sites, some modifications have been necessary to the impressive water system, to ensure stability in the underground structure and in the interests of the safety of visitors.

Integrity:

The integrity of the individual sites appears to be intact.

Comparative evaluation

The comparative analysis given in the dossier states that the three tels are an "unparalleled phenomenon in Israel and the entire Levant".

In detail, it is said that there are no parallels for the number of temples in the early Bronze Age compound at Megiddo, the continuity of cult activity and the record of ritual activity.

At Hazor, the ramparts are said to be the best example in the area from southern Turkey to the north of the Negev in Israel and the Late Bronze Age Palace the most elaborate in Israel, and one of the best in the Levant.

For the Iron Age remains, the town plan of Beer Sheba, the orthogonal plan of Megiddo, the stables and palaces at Megiddo and the water systems of the three tels are said to have few parallels in the Levant. The revised comparative analysis provides a thorough comparison of the three nominated tels with other tels in Israel and the surrounding region under three main headings which reflect their association with the bible and their physical remains in terms of buildings and technology:

Archaeological heritage

- Monuments, fortification and gate systems
- Palaces
- Temples

Technological properties

- Water systems
- Fortification and gate systems

Symbolic properties

- Prominence in the Bible

This analysis shows that overall the three nominated tels together reflect the key stages of urban development in the region and also are strongly associated with events portrayed in the bible. Hazor manifests the great Bronze Age fortifications and palaces; Megiddo exhibits many Bronze and Iron Age monuments and Beer-Sheba displays the only highly elaborate town-planning of a Biblical town in the Levant. Together they provide significant insights into biblical civilisation.

Outstanding universal value

General statement:

The three tels together have the following qualities which when combined give the serial nomination outstanding universal value: *the three tels reflect the wealth and power*

of Bronze and Iron Age cities in the fertile biblical lands, based on centralized authority which allowed control of trade routes to the north east and south, connecting Egypt to Syria and Anatolia to Mesopotamia, and the creation and management of sophisticated and technologically advanced water collection systems.

The three tels reflect occupation of single sites for more than three millennia until between the 7th century and 2nd century BC; they particularly reflect in their final flowering the formative stages of biblical history from c1200-332 BC.

The three tels, with their impressive remains of palaces, fortifications and urban planning, are the key material manifestations of the biblical epoch.

Evaluation of criteria:

The biblical associations of the three tels are nominated on the basis of criteria ii, iii, iv and vi.

The water systems were originally separately nominated on the basis of criteria i, ii, iii. These criteria were subsequently withdrawn and so will not be considered.

Biblical tels:

Criterion ii: The tels are seen as an outstanding example of the interchange of human values throughout the ancient near East, from Egypt in the south to Anatolia and Mesopotamia in the north. Megiddo and Hazor were large, important city-states founded on international trade routes, which brought them in to contact with Egypt and kingdoms to their north and east. The bible gives evidence of ties with neighbours as well as of alliances with other royal houses. Architectural styles also reflect Egyptian, Syrian and Aegean influences. But these influences were merged with local ones to create a unique local style.

Criterion iii: The tels reflect both a testimony to a cultural tradition that has died, the Bronze Age Canaanite towns and the Iron Age biblical cities, and to one that is still living – the values that have evolved from the Ten Commandments, the social and other laws set out in the Bible.

Criterion iv: It is suggested that the excavated remains form outstanding examples of urban planning; they also offer outstanding structures such as the Megiddo stables, the Hazor temples and the three water systems. Perhaps more pertinent would be the influence of the biblical cities through the biblical narrative on subsequent history.

Criterion vi: The three mounds, through their mentions in the Bible, form a ritual and tangible testimony to historical events and are a testimony to a civilisation that still exists today.

4. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation for the future

The title of the original nomination, “The Biblical Tels and Ancient Water Systems – Megiddo, Hazor, Beer Sheba” -

brought together two concepts, that of the Biblical tel and that of ancient water systems. This was reinforced by the fact that two sets of criteria were offered for the two concepts.

The revisions offered by the State Party have now focused on only one of these aspects: that of biblical tels. In order to reflect this change, the title of the nominated sites needs to be changed to: “The Biblical Tels – Megiddo, Hazor, Beer Sheba”.

Although the revised comparative analysis has shown that the three nominated tels can represent the complex and sophisticated development of biblical tels in the area, the possibility of adding further tels to widen the serial nomination in the future should not be excluded, and the State Party should be encouraged to explore this possibility.

Recommendation with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the World Heritage Committee adopt the following draft decision:

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-05/29.COM/8B,
2. Inscribes the property on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria ii, iii, iv and vi*:

Criterion ii: The three tels 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 which merged Egyptian, Syrian and Aegean influences to create a distinctive local style.

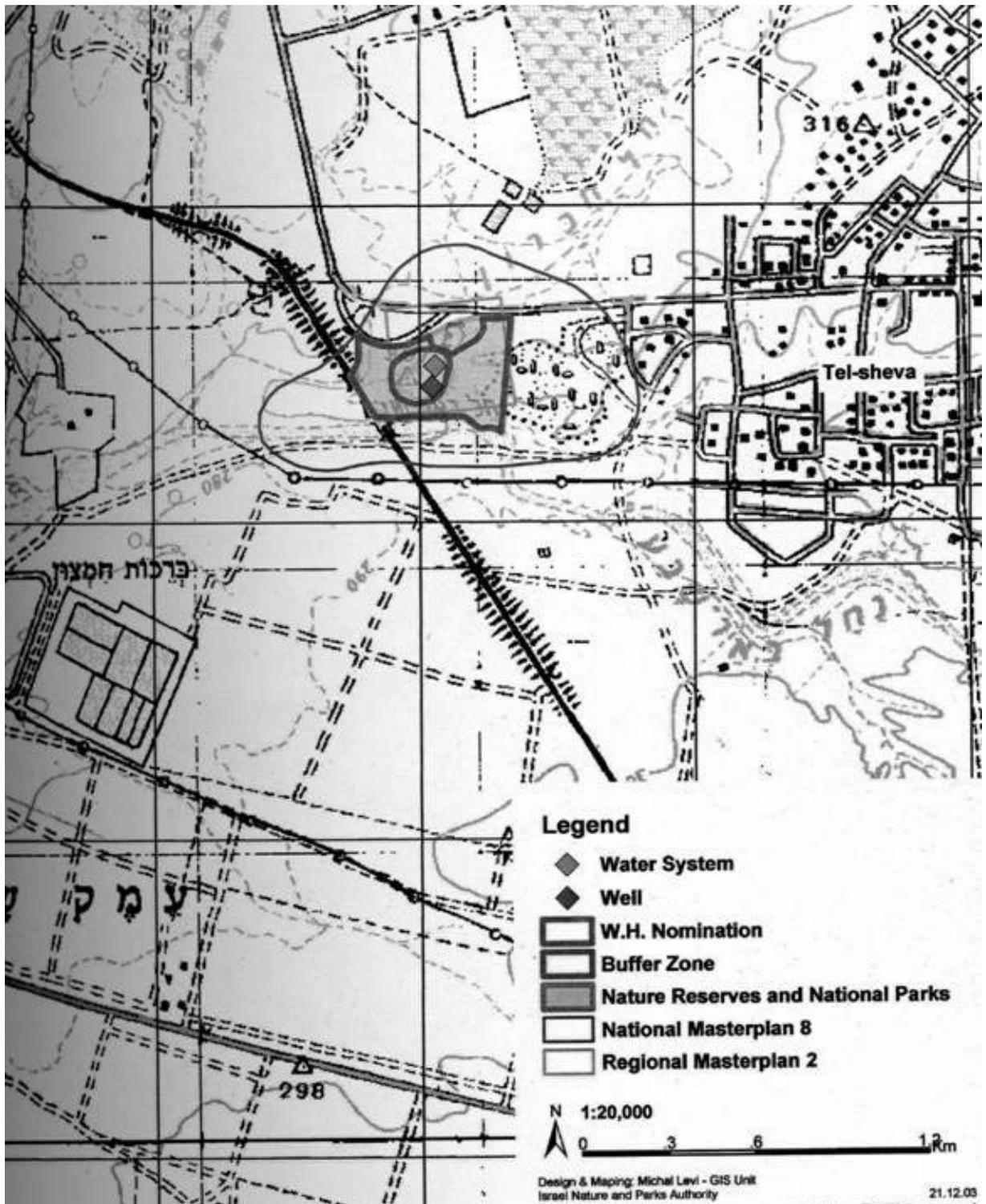
Criterion iii: The three tels are a testimony to a civilisation that has died – the Bronze and Iron Age biblical cities – manifest in their expressions of creativity: town planning, fortifications, palaces, and water collection technologies.

Criterion iv: The biblical cities exerted a powerful influence on later history through the biblical narrative.

Criterion vi: The three mounds, through their mentions in the Bible, form a ritual and tangible testimony to historical events and are a testimony to a civilisation that still exists today.

3. Notes the changing of the name of the property which becomes: “The Biblical Tels – Megiddo, Hazor, Beer Sheba”.
4. Encourages the State Party to explore the possibility of adding further tels to widen the serial nomination in the future.

ICOMOS, April 2005



Map showing the boundaries of Tell Beer Sheba



Aerial view of Tell Megiddo



Tell Hazor Water System