

These low steps led directly to the Middle Bronze II mudbrick gate, shown here from the inside. Such a grand entrance, through which caravans approached the markets of Laish, as it was known in the Canaanite period, befitted this important city. Dating to the mid-18th century B.C.E., it is the only intact Middle Bronze Age gate known in the entire Near East. Two mudbrick towers flank a three-course archway (center, top), now sealed. One tower (upper right) is seen in this view jutting out 5 1/2 feet from the archway. The entire gateway--the archway and the towers--is 50 feet wide and preserved to a height of about 20 feet. That this structure is so well preserved is thanks to its having been buried as part of an earthen rampart that later surrounded the entire city. The opening under the archway was also filled with earth, keeping it from collapsing during the nearly 4,000 years since it was built.