

Tell el-Husn, identified as biblical Beth-Shean (green mound at center), stands in the east end of the Plain of Jezreel in the valley of Harod, a wadi, or seasonally dry riverbed, that empties into the Jordan. Three hundred and fifty feet below sea level, Beth-Shean stood at an important crossroads in antiquity. Beth-Shean was occupied from the Chalcolithic period (4500-3500 B.C.E.), with extensive occupation in the Early Bronze Age (3150-2000 B.C.E.) and the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1750 B.C.E.). In fact, Middle Bronze Beth-Shean is mentioned in the 20th-century B.C.E. Egyptian execration texts, texts of curses against pharaoh's enemies. Beth-Shean also appears in the el-Amarna letters of the 14th century B.C.E. and in the list of cities conquered by Thutmose III in 1468 B.C.E. Other 13th-century B.C.E. Egyptian texts also mention Beth-Shean. The city resisted the siege of the invading Israelites according to Joshua 17:11 and Judges 1:27. Eventually Beth-Shean became a Philistine city. According to the Bible, the bodies of King Saul and his sons were fastened to the walls of Beth-Shean by the Philistines (1 Samuel 31:10, 12). However, David must have conquered the city in his expansion northward, for it appears in the Bible as Solomon's fifth administrative district (1 Kings 4:12). Pharaoh Shishak conquered Beth-Shean about 925 B.C.E. Near the end of the Iron Age, or from 815 to 700 B.C.E., the city declined, and only a small village survived. A theater from the Roman period can be seen just beyond and to the right of the top of the mound (see Slides 72 and 75).