

An Inner and Outer Gate Complex at Tell en-Nasbeh

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At Tell en-Nasbeh (Mizpah), W. F. Badè uncovered a two-chamber gate at the north-east corner of the site and a four-chamber gate on the east side. The relationship of these gates to each other, and to the offset-inset wall of King Asa of Judah, has puzzled scholars. Most have assumed that the four-chamber gate was never completed or only functioned as the settlement's gate until an Assyrian destruction in 701 B.C. It is more likely that the two gates are a single, Inner-Outer Gate complex, built by Asa in the ninth century B.C., which functioned until the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586, after which the four-chamber gate was replaced by new constructions associated with the transformation of Mizpah into an administrative center under Gedaliah. The two-chamber gate functioned until the fifth century B.C. Fresh evaluations of the topography in the intergate area, the site's stratigraphy and in situ ceramic deposits are marshaled to support this theory.

INTRODUCTION

At the northern border of the ancient kingdom of Judah, 12 km northwest of Jerusalem, sits the fortified Iron Age town of Tell en-Nasbeh (probably biblical Mizpah of Benjamin). In five seasons of excavation (1926–1935) William F. Badè uncovered the remains of two gates. The first, a four-chamber gate in almost the middle of the east side of the tell, was excavated in 1929 and was called the “‘earlier’ gate.” The other, a two-chamber gate in the northeast corner of the site, was cleared in 1932 and was named the “city gate” (figs. 1, 2). The relationship of these two gates to each other, and to the massive solid offset-inset wall that rings the settlement, have been a matter of debate since their discovery. The proposal advanced here argues that these gates are part of a unified monumental Inner-Outer Gate complex.

History of Research

After Badè's unexpected death in 1936, his seminary colleague C. C. McCown and Badè's field as-

sistant J. C. Wampler prepared the final site report (McCown 1947; Wampler 1947). When the four-chamber gate (hereafter the Inner Gate) was excavated, it was not immediately recognized as a gate. Only during his postexcavation analysis did Wampler identify the Tell en-Nasbeh structure as a gate, based on its similarity to the four-chamber gate at Megiddo. However, the location of the Tell en-Nasbeh Inner Gate, some 60 m inside the two-chamber gate (hereafter the Outer Gate), and blocked by several buildings, posed a problem: when and how did the Inner Gate function in combination with the offset-inset wall against which it was built? McCown and Wampler understood that originally a wall (hereafter Wall 1), partially exposed in a test trench in 1927 (Squares W22–25;* figs. 3–5; McCown 1947: fig. 57), extended south from the west tower of the Outer Gate in T22–23 as far as W23 (McCown 1947: 200–201, 219–21). They also realized that if this

*The letter-number designations throughout this article refer to the squares as set out by Badè; figs 1, 2 show their location in the dig area.

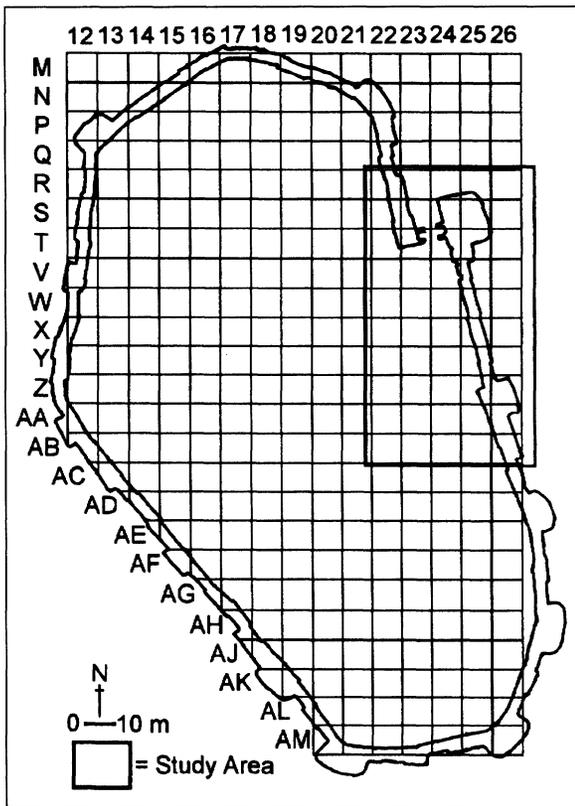


Fig. 1. Outline site plan showing study area.

wall continued its course to the south it would reach the west side of the Inner Gate.

From the evidence available it was clear to them that the Inner Gate and Wall 1 went out of use before the final phase of the Outer Gate.¹ Wampler's theory was that the Inner Gate and Wall 1 were a "false" start. That is, they were begun early, but when in the process of building the offset-inset wall the flat area of bedrock in Q-R-S-T22-23-24-25 was revealed, work was stopped on the Inner Gate (and apparently also on Wall 1) and the location of the gate was shifted to the site of the Outer Gate. In his view, only the foundations of the Inner Gate and Wall 1 were constructed before the building project was abandoned (McCown 1947: 201).

McCown suggested an historically based hypothesis. He believed that the Inner Gate was constructed first and was connected to the offset-inset wall in T22-23 by the southward continuation of Wall 1. The Inner Gate functioned until an assumed destruction by Sennacherib in 701 B.C. Subsequently, Wall 1 was dismantled. The Outer Gate and the section of

wall that connected the massive east tower of the Outer Gate with the east "tower" of the Inner Gate in Z25 (hereafter Wall 2) were erected afterwards and were destroyed during the Babylonian invasions or later (McCown 1947: 201-2, 219-21). However, no clear evidence of a massive and violent destruction was ever found in or around either gate or, for that matter, anywhere else on the site. Even with the methods in use at the time of the excavations, such a destruction level would not have been missed!

Common to both these theories is the notion that Wall 1 either originally functioned solely with the Inner Gate, or was so intended; but neither McCown nor Wampler advanced the thesis set forth here, that both gates were built at the same time and that the Inner Gate and Wall 1 simply went out of use earlier than the two-chamber structure. There are two probable reasons why McCown and Wampler did not explore this possibility: First, at the time in which they worked the only Inner-Outer Gate complexes known were at Megiddo (Lamon and Shipton 1939: fig. 82) and Lachish (Ussishkin 1978: figs. 15-16): to the excavators of that day, such double gate structures were a new type of building complex. It is also unlikely that they would have thought it possible that a small site like Tell en-Nasbeh would have possessed such an elaborate gate system; they simply had no prior experience that would lead them to such a theory. Even today, there are no Inner-Outer Gate complexes in ancient Israel comparable to the complex proposed here for Tell en-Nasbeh. Second, their theories do not reflect an understanding of the essential interplay between the natural topography in the northeast corner of the tell and the defensive requirements faced by the ancient engineers.

No alternatives to the theories put forth by McCown and Wampler have been advanced over the last 50 years. In the studies of Broshi (1977: 915-16), Yadin (1979: 205-7), Wright (1985: 191-204), Herzog (1986: 109-11; 1992: 274), and Mazar (1990: 467-69) one of the above theories or the other was preferred. Only Aharoni suggested that the two gates functioned as a single complex, and even he vacillated on this proposal.² His reconstruction is in an atlas without any accompanying explanation.

However, once the possibility is allowed that the gates were originally intended to function together, all of the difficulties faced by McCown and Wampler, a dubious halt to a building project based on the sudden discovery of a better construction site and an undocumented Assyrian attack on the town, disap-

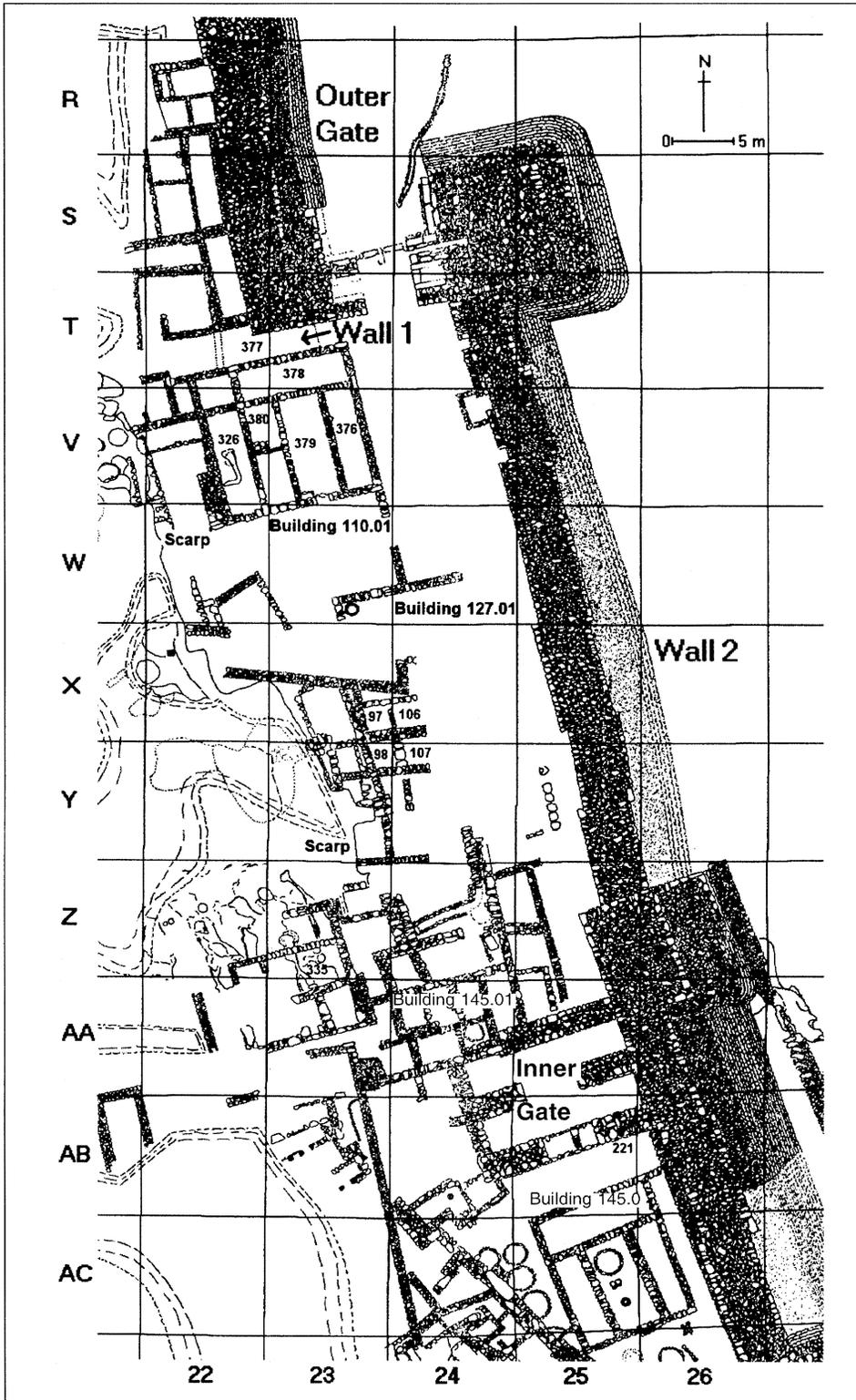


Fig. 2. Intergate study area.

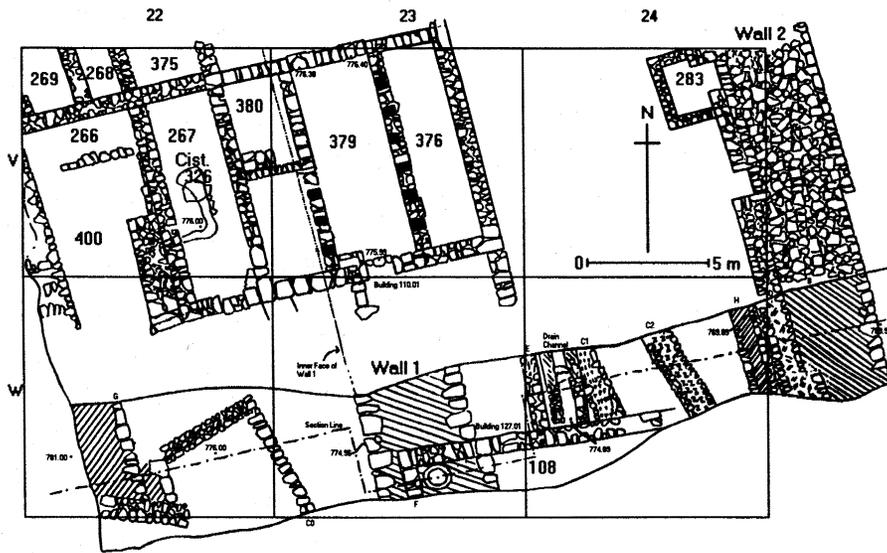


Fig. 3. Plan showing southern part of four-room house, Building 110.01 and test trench.



Fig. 4. Test trench. Foreground, Wall 1 with northwest corner of Building 127.01; background, Wall 2, in W23.

pear. There is no a priori reason in the data presented by McCown that the gates could not have been constructed at the same time and functioned together. McCown (1947: 200) noted that Wall 2 ran off at a slight angle from the east tower of the Inner Gate and that there was a seam where this wall met the east tower of the Inner Gate. These data only show that construction of Wall 2, and the Outer Gate to which it is connected, were begun subsequent to the completion of the Inner Gate. However, this could

easily have been a span of only a few days or weeks during the same general construction program, not necessarily one of decades or centuries.

AN INNER-OUTER GATE COMPLEX

Three key issues must be resolved to understand the relations of the two gates to each other and to the rest of the fortification system: to understand the interplay between the natural topography of the area of the sites in which the gates were built and the requirements of the ancient engineers charged with the construction of the town's fortifications; to date the construction of the offset-inset wall, for neither gate can be earlier than that wall; and to date the period in which each gate went out of use.

There are no detailed debris-layer section drawings for any part of Tell en-Nasbeh; also, elevations are sporadic. Therefore the primary method for re-examining the gates themselves must be based on a planimetric approach. Walls that follow a similar alignment and are of similar construction technique are grouped together as contemporary architectural units. Usually there are enough elevations, photographs, and stratigraphic correlations among the large contiguous block of architecture common at Tell en-Nasbeh to provide the basis for a sound overall architectural phasing.

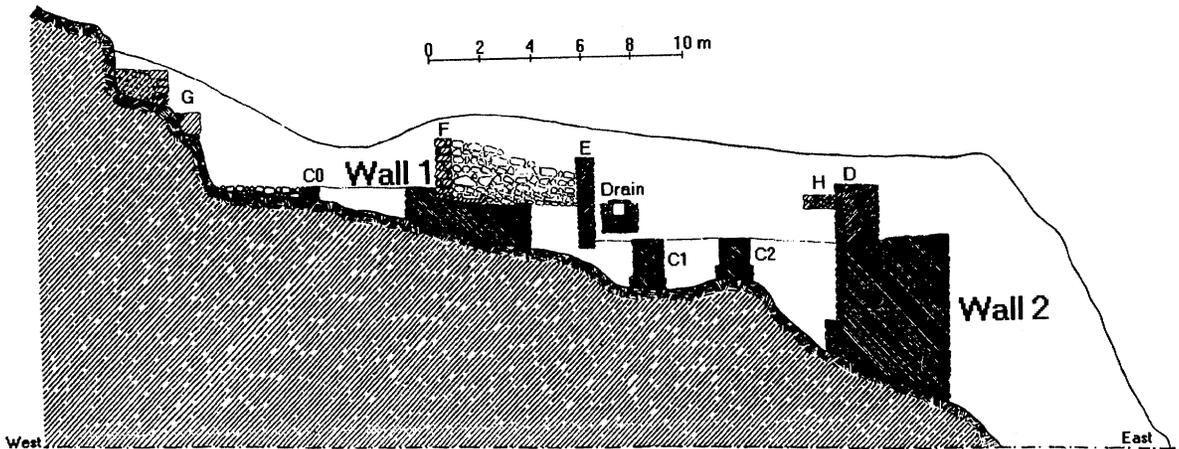


Fig. 5. Section through square W22–25 showing Wall 1 and Wall 2.

TABLE 1. Elevations in Intergate Area.

<i>Position of elevations</i>	<i>Elevations, above sea level</i>	<i>Absolute height, m</i>	<i>Slope ratio</i>
V21–V22 (scarp: west of gate)	781.00–776.00	5.00	1:1.6
V22–R24 (Outer Gate area)	776.00–773.29	2.71	1:13.3
R24–R25 (beyond Outer Gate)	773.29–770.00	3.29	1:5.0
W22 (scarp: intergate area)	781.00–776.00	5.00	1:1.0
W22–W25 (base of scarp to inner face of offset–inset wall)	776.00–768.51	7.49	1:3.6
W23–W25 (slope between Wall 1 and Wall 2)	774.96–769.89	5.10	1:3.1
Z23 (end of scarp)	779.39–778.31	1.08	1:1.0
AB23–AB25 (slope to inner face of offset–inset wall)	779.90–775.30	4.60	1:5.9
AB23–AA26 (slope to base of revetment)	779.90–774.11	5.79	1:6.0

Local Topography

To understand why the two gates were constructed where they were we must examine the natural topography of the north-central side of the tell.³ The most dominant topographic feature in the intergate area is a limestone rock scarp that extends from V21 southeast to Z23, a distance of ca. 48 m. Table 1 summarizes the data on the west–east slope at key points in the area of the two gates.

Over a distance of ca. 8 m from V21 to V22 the scarp drops off 5 m, or 1 m in every 1.6 m (781.00 to 776.00).^{*} The Outer Gate and four-room house,

^{*}These numbers indicate elevations, above sea level, in meters.

Building 110.01, were built east of this scarp in V–W22. Wampler states that the Outer Gate area contained a “large expanse of flat bedrock” and that the gate tower (presumably the east tower) was “built on this rock” (McCown 1947: 201). The elevations most clearly on bedrock are ca. 776.00 near Cistern 326 in Room 267 in V22, and 773.29 at the mouth of an unnumbered rock cutting in R24, about a 3 m drop over 40 m southwest to northeast, or ca. 1 m in 13 m. The bedrock seems to drop off more steeply to the east of R24. The base of the revetment of the east Outer Gate tower is at ca. 770.00 in R25; a drop of over 3 m in 15 m, or 1 m in 5 m. The Outer Gate was indeed placed in the most level spot possible between the two more steeply sloping areas in V21–22 and R24–25.



Fig. 6. Rock scarp in X22-23 and Y23. Opening is “Tb” 167.

Besides the relatively level surface of bedrock in this area, there was another reason for establishing the Outer Gate at the northeast corner of the mound. Aerial photographs (McCown 1947: frontispiece) show that the area north and east of the Outer Gate drops off fairly rapidly in a series of rugged terraces, making this the best possible site for a gate. All other sides of the town are bordered by a fairly broad natural terrace or by the saddle that connects the tell to the Ramallah ridge on the north. The northeast corner of the tell is the most naturally defensible part of the site.

Excavation in the intergate area reached bedrock only in a 1927 test trench in W22–25. At points the rock scarp in the intergate area is several meters high (fig. 6). In W22 the drop is 5 vertical meters in 5 horizontal meters, 1 m in 1 m (781.00 to 776.00). From the middle of W22 to the outer face of Wall 2 is a drop of about 7.5 m over 27 m, 1 m in 3.6 m (776.00 to 768.51). The scarp becomes very irregular by Z23 and is only 1 m high there (779.39 to 778.31 in Room 335). Therefore any Inner Gate constructed much farther north than Z23 would have required a steeply sloping east–west passageway to clear the rock scarp and enter the town.

It is more difficult to determine the slope of the bedrock in the area of the Inner Gate. The excavators provide few elevations that rest clearly on bedrock. Also, a note on Plan 145 (housed at the Badè Institute of Biblical Archaeology) confesses that a 1.0 m error was made in the elevations for at least part of this area. The corrected elevations



Fig. 7. Deep trench between Inner Gate and four-room house Building 145.01 to its south (from east). Wall 2 is at center.

were written in on the plan in blue ink. However, it is difficult to ascertain if all the errors were corrected.

It seems that bedrock was reached in AB23 at an elevation of 779.90 in the middle of that square. A deep cut was made in the area of “Room” 221, between the Inner Gate and the four-room house, Building 145.01, to its south. In his diary Badè noted that it was 5.5 m from the northeast corner of Building 145.01 (780.86) to bedrock (McCown 1947: 210). Bedrock therefore would be ca. 775.30. There is thus a drop of ca. 4.6 m from AB23 to AB26, a distance of 27 m; this is a drop of 1 m ca. every 5.9 m. In AA26 there is an elevation at the base of the revetment at 774.11. From AB23 this is a drop of ca. 5.8 m over 35 m, or a drop of 1 m every ca. 6.0 m. This slope is also clear from fig. 7, which shows the sloping debris below the four-room house south of the Inner Gate and the depth to which the trench in this area reached. At the Outer Gate, over a similar distance, there was a drop of 3 m over 40 m, or 1 m in 13 m. Therefore the Inner Gate was constructed on a much steeper slope than the Outer Gate. This is in contrast to McCown (1947: 200).

One of the keys to establishing the unity of the Inner and Outer Gates is the contemporaneity of the two walls that connected them (Walls 1 and 2). The bottom elevation of the inner face of Wall 2 in W25 is 769.89. An elevation for the inner face of Wall 1

in W23 is 774.96, a drop of ca. 5.1 m over 15.5 m, 1 m in 3.1 m (fig. 5; McCown 1947: fig. 57). The unevenness of the terrain is visible in this section. If the Inner Gate ever functioned independently of the Outer Gate and was connected to the offset-inset wall in T23 by Wall 1, a road must have led up to the Inner Gate from the north. A retaining wall would have been required to support the huge fill on which the approach road was built. The east tower of the Inner Gate would not suffice by itself to support the fill below the Inner Gate. Without Wall 2, the fill supporting the approach to the Inner Gate, and the Inner Gate itself, would have eroded away or been easy for attackers to undermine. Preventing this is precisely one of the functions of Wall 2.⁴ Note also that the Inner Gate itself is built on fill, not on bedrock like the Outer Gate; this fill had to be supported by Wall 2, in turn reinforced by the revetment constructed against Wall 2. This provides yet another example of Ussishkin's "built-up foundations" (Ussishkin 1980: 10; 1990: 78).

The Offset-Inset Wall

Tell en-Nasbeh is most likely to be identified with biblical Mizpah of Benjamin. The only other candidate is Nebi Samwil; however, no sherds earlier than Iron Age II were recovered from a recent survey at the latter site, suggesting that it is not Mizpah, a site that should have been occupied in Iron Age I (Finkelstein and Magen 1993: 46*). Moreover, if Tell en-Nasbeh is not Mizpah there is no biblical toponym in the area of Benjamin with which a site the size of Tell en-Nasbeh can be equated. 1 Kgs 15:22 specifically states that King Asa of Judah "built" Mizpah, i.e., fortified it, in the early ninth century B.C.; it is very likely that the massive offset-inset wall, and at least some part of the gate system, is the work of Asa.⁵ To avoid destroying the preexisting houses, Asa's engineers sited the new wall slightly farther downslope.

Site Stratigraphy and Ceramics

The discussion thus far has suggested that the massive offset-inset wall is probably the work of King Asa in the early ninth century B.C., a proposal accepted by most archaeologists. The presence of Wall 1 as far south as W23 has been demonstrated. It has also been shown that the construction of Wall 2 was a requirement for the Inner Gate to have

been a fully functional structure. It is now necessary to present an overview of the stratigraphy of Tell en-Nasbeh, followed by certain stratigraphic details that relate to the final periods of use of each gate and that will ultimately clarify the connection between the two (Zorn 1993a; 1993b: 88–199).

Stratum 5 of Early Bronze I and Stratum 4 of Iron Age I are the earliest strata at Tell en-Nasbeh.⁶ However, virtually all of the surviving excavated remains from these two periods consist of cave tombs (Stratum 5) or rock-cut installations (Stratum 4). The first clear building remains belong to Stratum 3. Two architectural factors define this stratum. First, the buildings follow the natural "oval" contour of the hill, giving the town its characteristic ring-road arrangement. All buildings of Stratum 3 front either onto some form of a ring-road or onto one of the crossroads that run perpendicular to the slope. Second, walls of Stratum 3 in its earliest phase were a single stone in width. Later rebuildings, modifications, and additions in Stratum 3 (primarily called Stratum 3A) were often two stones wide.⁷ The construction of the massive offset-inset wall (Stratum 3B) postdates the original ring-road town (Stratum 3C), which was protected by a casemate-like wall made up of the linked broad back rooms of the dwellings along the periphery of the settlement.⁸

There are three primary factors for identifying Stratum 2. First, the buildings do not follow the natural contours of the hill. It seems that when the Stratum 3 buildings were demolished they were filled in. This fill created a more level surface for the builders of Stratum 2, and the buildings of that stratum have no clear orientation. Second, the buildings of Stratum 2 are larger than all but the biggest buildings of Stratum 3 (Zorn 1993b: 173–75). Third, the walls of the Stratum 2 buildings tend to be a mix of large single stones and stretches of double-stone-wide construction.

The buildings that most clearly define Stratum 2 are the three large four-room houses south of the Outer Gate, south of the Inner Gate, and in the southwest corner of the mound. Even as early as the 1947 report, the singular character of these structures was recognized; they were all of approximately the same size, "10 × 12 or 13 m" and the same construction technique, as described above. McCown, noting the superior nature of these buildings compared to most of the buildings at Tell en-Nasbeh, suggested that they were the dwellings of well-to-do Israelites, or of government officials (McCown 1947:



Fig. 8. Four-room house complex, Building 110.01 south of the Outer Gate.

207). He suggested a date for them as early as the ninth century B.C., continuing possibly into the Persian period.⁹

These four-room buildings are on the periphery of the town. There are, however, remains of buildings of similar construction and not oriented to the contours of the tell at several points in the center of the mound, suggesting that the three four-room buildings already noted are actually part of a site-wide phenomenon postdating the ring-road Stratum 3. It is beyond the scope of this article to go into the details of these additional structures. However, one of these buildings, a four-room house (Building 125.01) will be discussed below because *in situ* pottery was found on the floor of one of its rooms; this pottery will be useful in the present attempt to date the gate structures.

With this stratigraphic framework in mind it is now possible to examine the final key issues involved in the relations of the two gates. First, at what point did the Inner Gate go out of use? Figure 2 clearly shows that Building 144.01 cuts the north-west corner of the Inner Gate. Moreover, its floor level (ca. 778.30) is 2 m below the top preserved

portions of the gate (ca. 780.55). The fragmentary rooms east of Building 144.01 block direct entrance to the gate on the north; and the four-room house, Building 145.01, blocks easy access from the south. The four-room sections of Buildings 145.01 and 110.01 are virtually identical in size and construction technique, indicating that they belong to the same period. Buildings 144.01 and 110.01 seem aligned with each other and certainly do not follow the roughly oval plan of the ring-road phase of settlement, indicating that they, too, are contemporary structures. Building 127.01, and most of the more fragmentary remains to the south, also seem to be aligned with Building 110.01. Therefore Buildings 110.01, 127.01, 144.01, and 145.01 all belong to Stratum 2 and postdate the Inner Gate and Wall 1 of Stratum 3. Moreover, Building 110.01 was constructed directly on top of Wall 1. Thus the dating of the construction of Building 110.01 is the key to dating the end of both Wall 1 and the Inner Gate.

Building 110.01 is also important for dating the final period of use of the Outer Gate (fig. 8). Two pieces of evidence suggest that the Outer Gate continued to function in association with Building



Fig. 9. Outer Gate from the north showing earlier (right) and later (left) blocking of the gate.

110.01 after the Inner Gate and Wall 1 had gone out of use. First is the obvious care that the builders of the house took to align this dwelling with the gate and with Wall 2. Note also how the central Room 379 was constructed directly on top of Wall 1 so that the east and west pillared walls of Rooms 379 are founded directly on the east and west edges of Wall 1. Second, the elevations on the thresholds of Room 379 are very close to those of the floor of the Outer Gate. The southern threshold is 775.99 and the northern doorways are at 776.38 and 776.40. No elevations are provided specifically for the gate passage. However, the two elevations for the bottom of the blocking debris in the gate are at 774.73 and 774.49. There is thus a very minor difference in elevation of about 1.5 m between the entrance to the four-room house and gate passageway over a distance of ca. 18 m (1 m in 12 m).

The Outer Gate was first narrowed, and then finally completely blocked off. Presumably the final blocking of the gate took place shortly before Building 110.01 was destroyed (fig. 9). The date for the destruction of Building 110.01 is established beyond reasonable doubt by the *in situ* storage jars found

on its floor (fig. 10). Eighteen jars of types 311–313 were found on the floors of Rooms 376 and 380 (fig. 11). The best parallels to these jars are found in Strata X–IX at Tel Michal, dated approximately to the middle of the fifth century B.C. (Herzog et al. 1989: 122, figs. 9.3:2–6, 9.1:6).¹⁰

The date Building 110.01 was constructed is a little more problematic. However, indirect evidence suggests a date soon after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Building 125.01 in Y–Z17–18, a four-room house of similar size and construction technique to Building 110.01, clearly cuts the buildings around it that belong to the ring-road phase. On the floor of Room 643 were found the *in situ* remains of three large sack-shaped, hole-mouth pithoi of types 89 and 90 (fig. 12) which are known from Babylonian destruction levels at Jerusalem (Mazar and Mazar 1990: 33, 39–40, pls. 12:8–10, 17:1–2, 20:6–7, 21:1) and Lachish (Zimhoni 1990: 421–24, fig. 31:3). Such massive jars tend to remain in place once positioned, surviving until the building itself is destroyed, even for spans of 100 years and more (London 1989: 37–55). This suggests that Building 125.01, and by extension the contemporaneous Building 110.01, were



Fig. 10. *In situ* storage jars in Room 376 of Building 110.01.

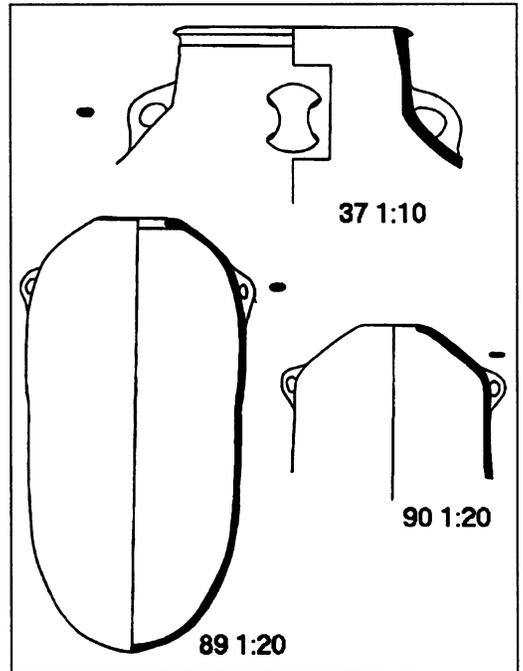
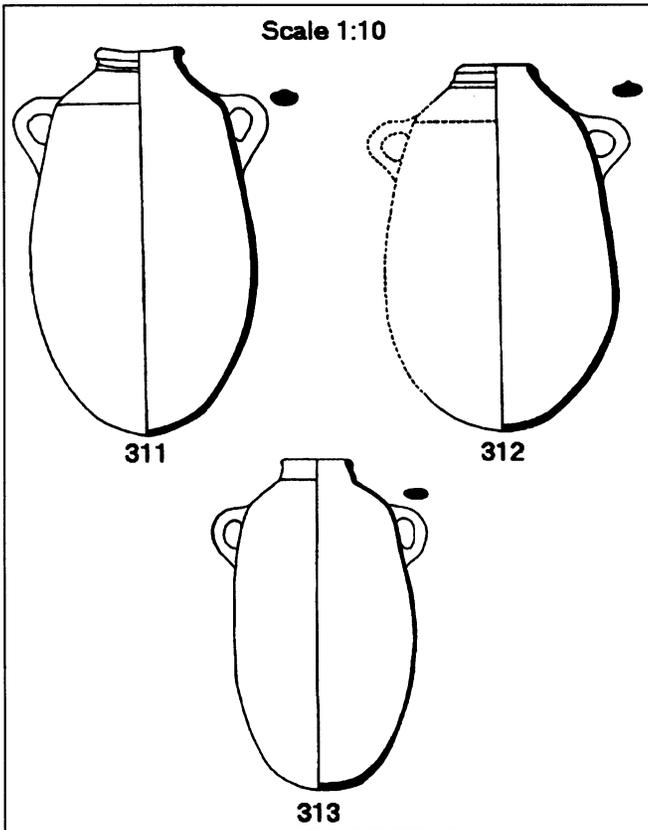


Fig. 11. (Left) Storage jar Types 311–313 from Rooms 376 and 380 of Building 110.01.

Fig. 12. (Right) Pithos Types 37 and 89–90 from Room 643 of Building 125.01.

constructed sometime in the early sixth century B.C. A date after the fall of Jerusalem is probable because the replacement of the ring-road settlement by larger, better-constructed structures would fit in well with the building needs of Gedaliah, the Babylonian-appointed ruler left in charge of Judah, as he attempted to establish a new governmental center at Mizpah.

One final issue remains. If Wall 1 originally reached the Inner Gate, why were traces of that wall not found farther south than W23? There are three possibilities, the first of which is that excavation south of W23 did not reach deep enough to uncover Wall 1. Elevations on Wall 1 are 775.99 in Room 378 and 776.12 in W23. The lowest elevations reached in Y-AA23-24-25 are all ca. 777.00 or higher. Excavation at the southern end of the intergate area probably did not reach low enough to uncover remains of Wall 1.

The second possibility is that Wall 1 was robbed out to different depths depending on local circumstances. In W23 the section shows that Wall 1 was cut down to a greater depth on the east than on the west to accommodate Building 127.01. Another example is in Room 377, between Building 110.01 and the west tower of the Outer Gate (which may have served as a passageway from the Outer Gate area to the center of the town), where Wall 1 is preserved at 776.49, half a meter higher than to the south. Similarly, the low elevations in Rooms 97 and 106 (775.09 and 775.03), where there is no trace of Wall 1, may indicate that Wall 1 was cut away to a greater depth here than it was to the north. Alternatively it may be noted that the wall between Rooms 98 and 107 is on the same alignment as the outer face of Wall 1 in W22; the stones are comparable in size and the elevation of 775.40 is quite possible. It may be that the scrappy little wall between Rooms 97 and 106 (776.43) is founded on Wall 1 and so masks its course in that area. The elevation of 774.20 in Room 107 is puzzling as it is a full meter lower than any other elevation in the area; it is either an error or perhaps a deeper probe.

The third possible reason that there were no traces of Wall 1 south of W23 may be that bedrock was higher in the south and Wall 1 may not have been as tall there. It may be that Wall 1 was completely robbed out in the vicinity of the Inner Gate. Only renewed excavations at the site can clarify this issue.

The Original Town Gate?

A final intriguing issue is the location of the gate or entryway into the pre-offset-inset walled town, that is, the town whose fortifications consisted of the linked back rooms of the houses along the periphery of the site, Stratum 3C. There is no certain trace of such a gate in the excavated areas. A reasonable surmise is that it should be located near the Inner Gate. Once an individual passed through the new defenses, the original casemate-like defenses were still an obstacle to entering the town. If the original town gate were not in the vicinity of the Inner Gate, the engineers presumably would have had to demolish a nearby house to allow fairly direct access to the town. Unfortunately the remains belonging to Stratum 3 west of the Inner Gate are very confused due to the relatively limited exposure of architecture there and the construction of the long Stratum 2 wall that runs from AA23 to AD24, cutting across the earlier remains. It is thus impossible to determine a more precise location for this earlier gate.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The interplay between the topography of the northeast corner of the tell and the defensive needs of the town described above provide strong supporting data to the thesis that the Inner and Outer Gates of Tell en-Nasbeh were constructed at the same time and intended, initially, to be used together (fig. 13). The reason behind the unusual layout of the complex—the use of overlapping wall segments to form the Outer Gate and the length of the connecting passageway to the Inner Gate—were dictated by this interplay. The overlap provided restricted access to the gate for attackers while giving the defenders on the large east tower and the town wall on the west plenty of room to hurl missiles down on their unshielded sides. It was also sited at the most easily defensible location on the hill. The length of the passage between the two gates is due to the presence of the rock scarp extending from V22 to Z23. An Inner Gate built anywhere along the length of this scarp would have necessitated a sharply sloping east-west passageway leading to/from the town to the gate. The engineers built the gate in AA-AB24-25, the point at which the scarp finally ceases. The steep west-to-east slope here meant that the offset-inset wall (and

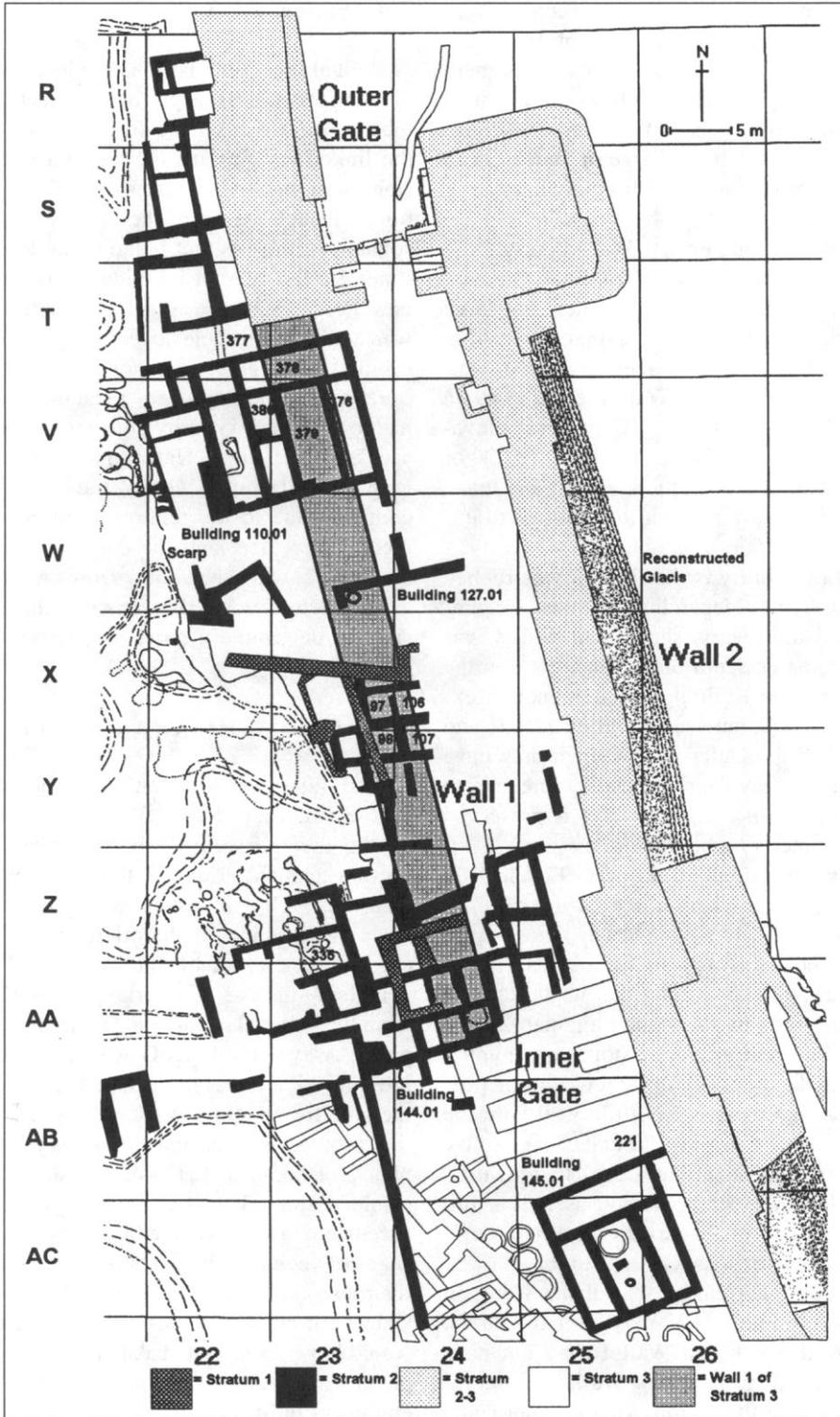


Fig. 13. Stratigraphic plan of intergate area and proposed course for reconstructed Wall 1.

its outer sloping revetment) east of the Inner Gate not only served a defensive role, but also acted as a retaining wall to support the fill on which both the passageway and the Inner Gate themselves were built.

At some point those responsible for the town felt it was more important to construct houses over Wall 1 and over, or blocking access to, the Inner Gate itself than to maintain these fortifications. The pottery from Building 110.01 shows that this structure and the Outer Gate still functioned into the Persian period. When is the most likely period for the Inner Gate and wall to have been dismantled and replaced by spacious, well-constructed dwellings? As suggested by the pottery from Building 125.01, the Babylonian period, when Mizpah was a minor pro-

vincial capital, offers the most suitable historical context. Housing for government officials would have been required; and as a part of the Babylonian empire, Mizpah's role as a border fortress would have been a thing of the past. The massive offset-inset wall still survived and the Outer Gate by itself was enough to ward off local trouble. The Inner Gate, no longer necessary, was razed.

This reinterpretation of the Tell en-Nasbeh gate system has shown that the defenses of Mizpah are even more formidable than earlier scholars had imagined. Given their monumental character, it is not surprising that the course of the northern attackers described in Isa 10:27–32 veered east around Mizpah rather than face these massive fortifications.

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36, 492–98, 686–91, 702–8. Professors David Ussishkin, Ilan Sharon, and Kathryn Gleason read various versions of this article and offered much useful advice; any errors are my responsibility alone.

NOTES

¹First, the four-room house complex immediately south of the Outer Gate (Building 110.01) in T-V22-23, and a string of additional buildings to the south were constructed over Wall 1 (fig. 2, Squares W-AA23-24). Second, a section of the southernmost of these structures (Building 144.01) was built over a corner of the Inner Gate. Third, fragmentary walls built over the Inner Gate itself were also uncovered, though no plan of them was published in the 1947 report. See below.

²In 1968 and 1982 he seems to have followed McCown's theory (Aharoni and Avi-Yonah 1968: 79; Aharoni 1982: 234). In 1977 he reconstructed the gates as functioning together (Aharoni and Avi-Yonah 1977: 79); this is also the reconstruction offered in the latest edition of his atlas (Aharoni et al. 1993: 94).

³The excavators refilled their trenches at the end of each season. Thus it is not possible today to evaluate visually the settlement's natural topography. Any work on this issue must be undertaken from the existing plans, section drawings, and photographs.

⁴The two roughly north-south wall fragments in W24 may be subsidiary support walls within the fill between the two larger walls. It is also possible that these two wall sections belong to a structure that predates the entire gate complex. Given the limited exposure it is impossible to decide the issue.

⁵Badè cut trenches into or through the offset-inset wall at several points. The pottery was from the Iron Age, and

evidently some of it was believed to be what today is called Iron IIA (McCown 1947: 195; chart on p. 2). Unfortunately there are no records, drawings, or photographs of these sherds.

⁶Roman numerals are used in the 1947 report to identify the site's strata. To differentiate the new stratigraphic scheme from that in the 1947 report, Arabic numerals are employed here.

⁷Aspects of this basic scheme were already advanced in the 1947 report (McCown 1947: 183–86; fig. 43).

⁸Figure 7 shows the pronounced tip lines of the fill below the four-chamber gate and the four-room house to its south. This fill was poured into the area between the case-mate-like wall of the original Stratum 3C town and the offset-inset wall of Stratum 3B to create a usable ground surface. Into this fill were built the numerous bins found ringing the southern half of the site, and the drains that pass through the offset-inset wall on the west and north sides.

⁹McCown does not seem to have recognized the contradiction this caused. On the one hand he believed that the Inner Gate was the sole town gate down to a presumed Assyrian destruction in 701 B.C. (1947: 203) and that the Outer Gate postdated this destruction. Yet his ninth-century four-room house complex south of the Outer Gate (Building 110.01) was built over Wall 1, which according to his theory should have gone out of use in 701 as well.

¹⁰Stern (1982: 104, fig. 142) lists the Nasbeh jars among his Class F1. However, none of the parallels listed there have the low ridge at the base of the neck, which is the most distinguishing feature of Nasbeh Jar 311. So far only Tel Michal has yielded exact parallels to the Tell en-

Nasbeh Jar 311. Whether this limited distribution is due to the vagaries of excavation, or is really an issue connected with the geographic and chronologic range of this jar type, is unclear.

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