

## Chapter 4

# LEHI'S HOUSE AT JERUSALEM AND THE LAND OF HIS INHERITANCE

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Where did Lehi and his family live before their departure into the wilderness? Nephi reported that Lehi had “dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days” (1 Nephi 1:4) and that he had “his own house at Jerusalem” (1 Nephi 1:7). We also read of a “land of his inheritance” (1 Nephi 2:4), which, along with his house and his riches, Lehi left behind when he took his family into the wilderness. But what was the connection between the two: Jerusalem and Lehi’s land of inheritance? Indeed, was there any connection at all? I will examine evidence in 1 Nephi concerning these questions and will supplement those passages with a significant amount of background information from the Old Testament, ancient Near Eastern historical records, and the findings of modern Israeli archaeology.

After assessing all the data, I will suggest that Lehi’s house was located in the city quarter of ancient Jerusalem called the Mishneh (the same location today is part of the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem’s Old City). I will further suggest that Lehi’s land of inheritance was a piece of real estate about fifty kilometers (thirty miles) north of Jerusalem, in the former tribal area of

Manasseh, which Lehi owned by virtue of having inherited a deed to the property and which he probably visited on occasion in order to manage the affairs of the land. However, I will suggest that he maintained no residence at the land of inheritance. Reading through the evidence from which my data is culled may seem, for some readers, somewhat long and circuitous. Those readers may trust, however, that by the end of this study they will be much more informed about the world of Lehi preceding 1 Nephi and that the above conclusions will be logically supported and understandable.

Before examining the evidence, it will be necessary to dismiss a misconception that has been in circulation among Latter-day Saint students for many years. In his 1952 book *Lehi in the Desert*, Hugh Nibley suggested the following about the residence of Lehi: “Though he ‘dwelt at Jerusalem,’ Lehi did not live in the city, for it was after they had failed to get the plates in Jerusalem that his sons decided to ‘go down to the land of our father’s inheritance’ (1 Nephi 3:16), and there gather enough wealth to buy the plates from Laban.”<sup>1</sup>

The oft-repeated notion that Lehi’s house was not inside the city of Jerusalem but somewhere well outside the city on his land of inheritance is simply incorrect. Also incorrect is the idea that Lehi’s land of inheritance was a plot of real estate close enough to the city of Jerusalem to be within the boundaries of the greater land of Jerusalem. Lehi’s house is sometimes said to have been “at Jerusalem” but not *in* the city Jerusalem, but this whole notion is not tenable since it does not correspond to the information in the Book of Mormon text. To his credit, Nibley himself later realized this error and offered a correction in his 1958 work, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*:

He [Lehi] had “his own house at Jerusalem” (1 Nephi 1:7); yet he was accustomed to “go forth” from the city from time

to time (1 Nephi 1:5–7), and his paternal estate, the land of his inheritance, where the bulk of his fortune reposed, was some distance from the town (1 Nephi 3:16, 22; 2:4).<sup>2</sup>

Here Nibley correctly alluded to the facts that Lehi's house at Jerusalem was inside the city itself and that his land of inheritance was a distinctly different location from both his house and Jerusalem. In this conclusion Nibley was certainly correct, although he offered no specifics concerning the questions of the location of the land of inheritance or its direction from Jerusalem, nor did he attempt to locate Lehi's house in any specific location within Jerusalem's walls. We may now address both of those issues by turning to the text of 1 Nephi itself.

### **The Land of Jerusalem versus the Land of Inheritance**

It seems clear that Nephi meant for readers of his record to understand that his father Lehi lived in the city of Jerusalem itself, not somewhere outside the city walls. In the same verse in which he reported that his father had “dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days,” Nephi called Jerusalem “the great city” (1 Nephi 1:4)—in other words, by saying “Jerusalem” Nephi was making reference to the city itself, not merely the land of Jerusalem region in which the city was located. When Lehi “went forth” to pray (1 Nephi 1:5), he was probably exiting the city walls, just as Nephi himself did later when he said, “I went forth unto my brethren, who were without the walls” (1 Nephi 4:27). It is entirely possible that Lehi went eastward from the walls of Jerusalem. Immediately east of Jerusalem is the Mount of Olives, a perfect place for Lehi's private prayer—he would even have been able to gaze over the Temple Mount and Solomon's temple from that location. Perhaps the Mount of Olives was where Nephi and his brothers went to “hide themselves without the walls” (1 Nephi 4:5), although that would more likely

have taken place directly adjacent to the city wall. In any event, Lehi's house clearly seems to have been located within the walls of Jerusalem.

Lehi's land of inheritance is first alluded to in 1 Nephi 2:4. Later, speaking to his brothers, Nephi called it "the land of our father's inheritance" (1 Nephi 3:16). But the real estate seems to have been destined to be passed on to Lehi's sons, for Nephi also called it "the land of our inheritance" (1 Nephi 3:22). The land of inheritance is not to be confused with the land of Jerusalem first mentioned in 1 Nephi 3:9. From the text of 1 Nephi as a whole, two things are obvious about the land of Jerusalem region: (1) The city of Jerusalem is obviously within the boundaries of the land of Jerusalem, and (2) the land of Jerusalem is a totally different region from Lehi's land of inheritance.

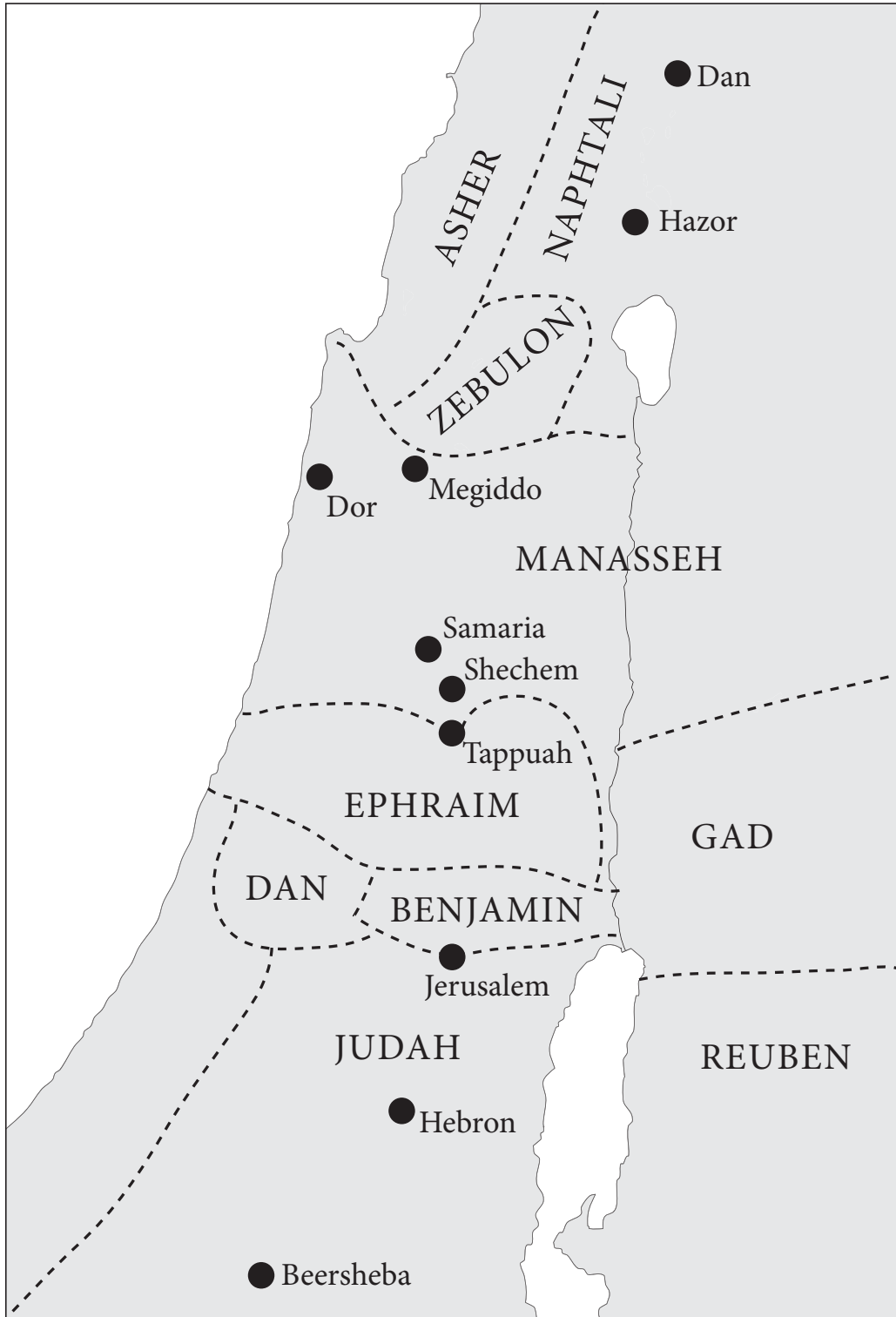
These observations are demonstrated by a three-step examination of Nephi's text:

1. Nephi and his brothers returned from the valley of Lemuel *up* to the land of Jerusalem (1 Nephi 3:9).
2. They then went *down* to the land of inheritance to collect Lehi's gold and silver (1 Nephi 3:16, 22).
3. Finally, Nephi and his brothers returned back *up* again to Jerusalem (1 Nephi 3:23).

It is important to remember that in the idiom of Nephi one always went *up* to come to the Jerusalem region, and one always went *down* when exiting the Jerusalem region. This is also the Hebrew idiom employed in the Bible, where persons in both the Old and New Testaments typically are said to go *down* to leave Jerusalem (see, for example, 2 Samuel 5:17; Luke 10:30; and Acts 8:15) and go *up* to come to Jerusalem (see, for example, 2 Chronicles 2:16 and Matthew 20:18). Nephi adhered to this Hebrew idiom throughout his account—whenever his party is reported to have gone to Jerusalem, they went

*up* (see 1 Nephi 3:9; 4:4; 5:6; 7:3–4), and whenever the reference is to leaving the Jerusalem region, they went *down* (see 1 Nephi 2:5; 3:4, 16, 22; 4:35; 5:1; 7:2, 5). It should be clear, then, that when Nephi and his brothers go *down* to the land of inheritance, they are in fact leaving the region of Jerusalem. The land of Jerusalem is clearly *not* the same as the land of inheritance. Since the location of Jerusalem has not changed, the question now becomes: Where was the land of inheritance?

For reasons that will become obvious in this discussion, Lehi's land of inheritance was most likely not located within the borders of the southern kingdom of Judah. The most likely location for Lehi's ancestral real estate in the ancient land of Israel was the region of Manasseh. Lehi is reported to have been a descendant of Manasseh, the son of Joseph who was sold into Egypt (see 1 Nephi 5:14 and Alma 10:3). The ancient tribe of Manasseh possessed large tracts of land on both sides of the Jordan River (see photo essay, p. 74). As described in the Bible (Joshua 13:29–31 and 17:7–10), the territory of Manasseh east of the Jordan was equivalent to the area of Bashan (the modern Golan) and the northern part of Gilead (north of modern Amman). West of the Jordan, Manasseh held territory in what came to be known as the Samaria region, from the Jezreel Valley on the north to Tappuah on the south—Tappuah being about thirty-five kilometers (twenty-one miles) north of Jerusalem (see fig. 1). Historical considerations suggest that the area west of Jordan and north of Tappuah—specifically between ancient Tirzah on the east and modern Jenin on the west—was more likely than any other segment of Manasseh to have been the location of Lehi's ancestral land tract. We will now explore those considerations and how it was that people of Manasseh came to live in Jerusalem, making it possible for



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Figure 1. Traditional territories of the tribes of Israel.

Lehi to have been born there and to have dwelled there all his days until the time of his exodus in 1 Nephi 2.

### **Lehi's Ancestors—From Manasseh to Jerusalem**

At least two significant migrations of Israelites from the Manasseh tribal areas to Jerusalem are now known. The first is reported in the Bible, and the second (for our investigation the more significant) has been discerned through the efforts of Israeli archaeologists working in Jerusalem. The first account, found in 2 Chronicles, reports that a number of Israelites from northern tribes left the northern kingdom of Israel and defected to the southern kingdom of Judah during the fifteenth year of Asa, king of Judah (about 900 B.C.). In speaking of Asa, the record reports that “he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance” (2 Chronicles 15:9).

While it is possible that these early defectors from Manasseh were the ancestors of Lehi, it is highly improbable. Political factors work against it. For example, Judah and Israel, led by King Asa and King Baasha respectively, were enemies at the time. In leaving Baasha's northern kingdom to join Asa's Judah, the defectors essentially forfeited all rights and privileges they might have claimed in the north, including title to their lands. It is most unlikely that Lehi would have had any claim to land in Manasseh if he were descended from those who left the region to ally with Asa in the south. Moreover, since Lehi's family was living around 600 B.C., nearly three hundred years after Asa, it is unlikely that any record or even memory of land ownership would have remained with them if they had been descended from the early defectors.

It is far more probable that Lehi was the grandson or great-grandson of people who left western Manasseh as refugees around 724 B.C. and fled south to settle in Jerusalem. The Bible reports

that many people of the northern Israelite tribes were deported from the land of Israel in connection with Assyrian conquests between 732 and 722 B.C. These deportations occurred in several different actions. The earliest action, carried out by the Assyrian emperor Tiglath-pileser III and known as the First Northern Deportation, involved the transfer of Israelites from the northern part of the land of Israel and also from across the Jordan in Gilead (where half of Manasseh's territory was found; see fig. 2). This First Northern Deportation occurred about 732 B.C., and 2 Kings 15 reports it thus:

In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria. (2 Kings 15:29)

A subsequent series of deportations, known collectively as the Second Northern Deportation, was carried out by the Assyrian emperors Shalmaneser V and Sargon II between 724 and 722 B.C., resulting in the transfer of Israelites from the hill country of Samaria—the area of Ephraim and the western area of Manasseh (see fig. 2). Second Kings 17 reports it this way:

Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. (2 Kings 17:5–6)

The two northern deportations involved many thousands of Israelites of all the northern tribes. A line from the Display Inscriptions of Sargon II contains a specific number of deportees that were taken from the city of Samaria: “I besieged and conquered Samaria [and] led away as booty 27,290 inhabitants



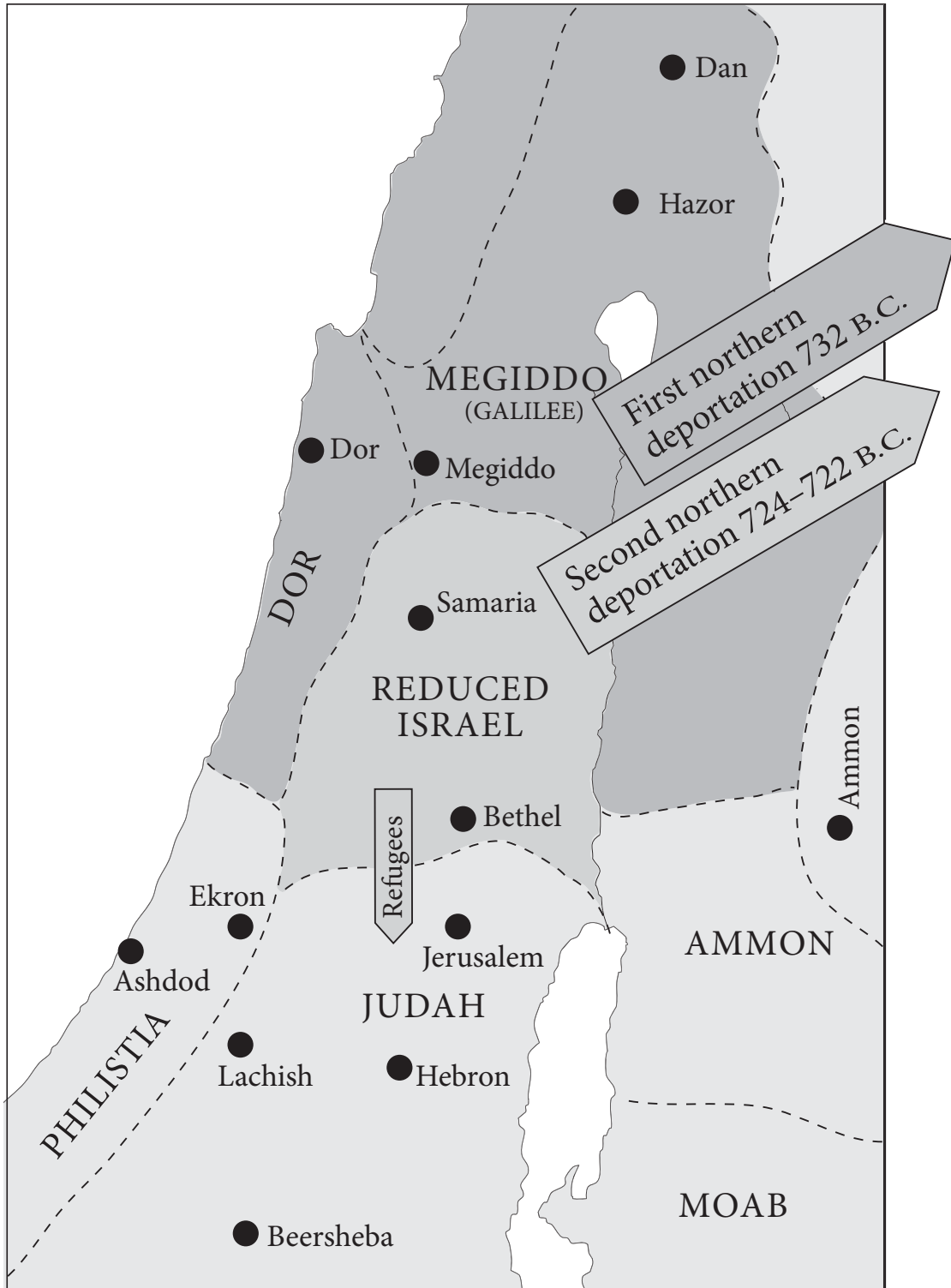


Figure 2. First and second northern deportations.

of it.”<sup>3</sup> The so-called Annals of Sargon II make it clear that the Samaria spoken of was not the whole countryside—which naming convention the Assyrians subsequently adopted—but the Israelite capital city itself, which had endured the three-year siege, only to fall in 722 B.C.:

At the begi[nning of my royal rule, I . . . the town of the Sama]rians [I besieged, conquered] (2 lines destroyed) [for the god . . . who le]t me achieve (this) my triumph. . . . I led away as prisoners 27,290 inhabitants of it. . . . [The town I] re[built] better than (it was) before and [settled] therein people from countries which [I] myself [had con]quered. I placed an officer of mine as governor over them and imposed upon them tribute as (is customary) for Assyrian citizens.<sup>4</sup>

Those 27,290 deportees taken when the city of Samaria fell, and many thousands more from all parts of the northern kingdom of Israel, were resettled far away among gentile peoples and gradually merged with those foreign cultures, eventually forgetting their Israelite lineage and heritage. (Inscriptions with all the specific numbers have not been discovered, but the total number of Israelite deportees probably exceeded one hundred thousand and could possibly have been as high as two hundred thousand.) Collectively, they became the lost tribes of Israel, not because they did not know *where* they were, but because they ultimately forgot *who* they were.

But not *all* the northern Israelites were deported and lost. Though not directly reported in the Bible, a significant number of Israelites appear to have fled the doomed northern kingdom and migrated as refugees to Judah in the south, settling in Jerusalem and other cities of the southern kingdom. This probably began around 724 B.C., incident to the initial attack of Shalmaneser V against Israel in that year (the commencement of the Second Northern Deportation), although refugee movement southward

probably continued for several years thereafter. This refugee movement has been demonstrated by archaeologists who excavated at Judean sites during the 1970s. They discerned unusually large population increases at Jerusalem and other locations from levels dating to the last quarter of the eighth century B.C.—the exact period of the Assyrian attacks on the northern kingdom. In terms of this phenomenon in Jerusalem, Israeli archaeologist and Hebrew University of Jerusalem Professor Nahman Avigad, who directed excavations in Jerusalem's Jewish Quarter, reported:

Archaeological finds in the Jewish Quarter clearly show that this area was settled in the period of the First Temple, from the 8th century B.C. on. . . . Our evidence indicates that Israelite houses were spread over the entire plateau of the Western Hill. To date, with the exception of a few isolated sherds, no pottery from before the 8th century B.C. has been found here. . . . It can be assumed that the expansion of Jerusalem in biblical times, to an area several times that of the original city, was brought about largely by the influx of refugees from the northern Kingdom of Israel, after the Assyrian conquest of Samaria.<sup>5</sup>

The northern kingdom refugees flooding south into Judah between 724 and 722 B.C. were probably followed by others who were not initially deported from Israel by the Assyrians but who felt compelled to move southward in the years between 722 and 715 B.C. because of the destruction of their land and government and because of the Assyrian importation of large numbers of gentile foreigners (see 2 Kings 17:24). Those foreigners became known as Samaritans and continued to live for centuries in the region the Assyrians called Samaria. The Israelites who migrated south represented not only Manasseh and Ephraim but other northern Israelite tribes as well. Passages in 2 Chronicles indicate that these displaced northern

Israelites (“you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria”; 2 Chronicles 30:6) were invited by their new king, Hezekiah of Judah, to come to Jerusalem for the Passover festival he was reintroducing into Judah. King Hezekiah became sole monarch of Judah in 715 B.C., and his Passover invitations were probably extended soon thereafter. The passages in 2 Chronicles seem to refer to northern refugees who were already in Judah but may also have included Israelites who had remained in Samaria and the Galilee and then moved to Judah specifically at Hezekiah’s behest:

Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the passover. (2 Chronicles 30:1)

Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria. (2 Chronicles 30:6)

Divers [Heb. *ʿanashim*, literally “men”] of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 30:11)

A multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun (did) eat the passover. (2 Chronicles 30:18)

And all the congregation that came out of Israel, and the strangers [Heb. *gerim* can also be rendered “refugees”] that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced. (2 Chronicles 30:25)<sup>6</sup>

These passages indicate that northern Israelites of several tribal lines, including Manasseh and Ephraim, had made their way to Judah to escape the Assyrians and were living at Jerusalem

and at other locations in the southern kingdom by the time of King Hezekiah's Passover (ca. 715 B.C.).

### **The Mishneh of Jerusalem**

As indicated earlier in the quotation from Avigad, those recently arrived refugees who decided to settle at Jerusalem began to build new homes on the western hill of the ancient city, an area that is known today as the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. By Lehi's day, this area had become known by the Hebrew name Mishneh, a term that means "addition." (In the King James Version of 2 Kings 22:14 and 2 Chronicles 34:22, the term is confusingly translated as "college," but in Zephaniah 1:10 it is more literally translated as "second.") The Mishneh was a second, or additional, part of ancient Jerusalem, which began essentially as a refugee camp for the arrivals from the north after 724 B.C. but was eventually considered part of the city of Jerusalem proper (see fig. 3). Other parts of the city, populated centuries earlier than the Mishneh, were the city of David (2 Samuel 5:9), the Temple Mount (2 Chronicles 3:1), and the Makhtesh (Zephaniah 1:11). We even know, within a window of roughly four years, just when this Mishneh was physically annexed to Jerusalem—sometime between 705 and 701 B.C. And we can deduce with some certainty that it was to that original Mishneh refugee camp on Jerusalem's western hill that Lehi's Manassite grandparents must have relocated sometime between 724 and 701 B.C. We know all this because of Sennacherib.

Some twenty years after the fall of the Israelite capital at Samaria, the Assyrians attacked the kingdom of Judah, destroying the entire southern kingdom (except for Jerusalem) and deporting hundreds of thousands of people. This dreadful event took place in the aftermath of King Hezekiah's decision to

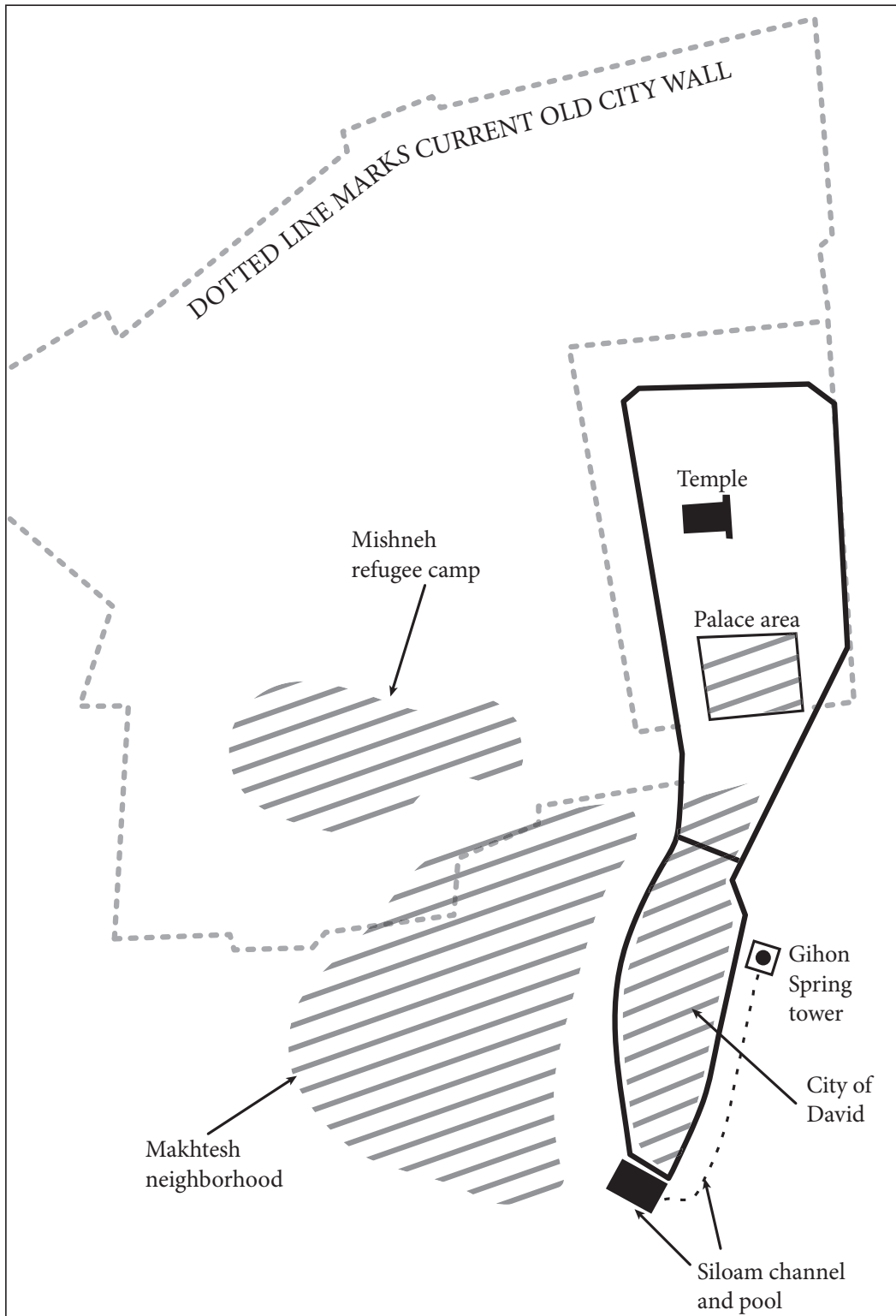


Figure 3. Jerusalem after 724 B.C.

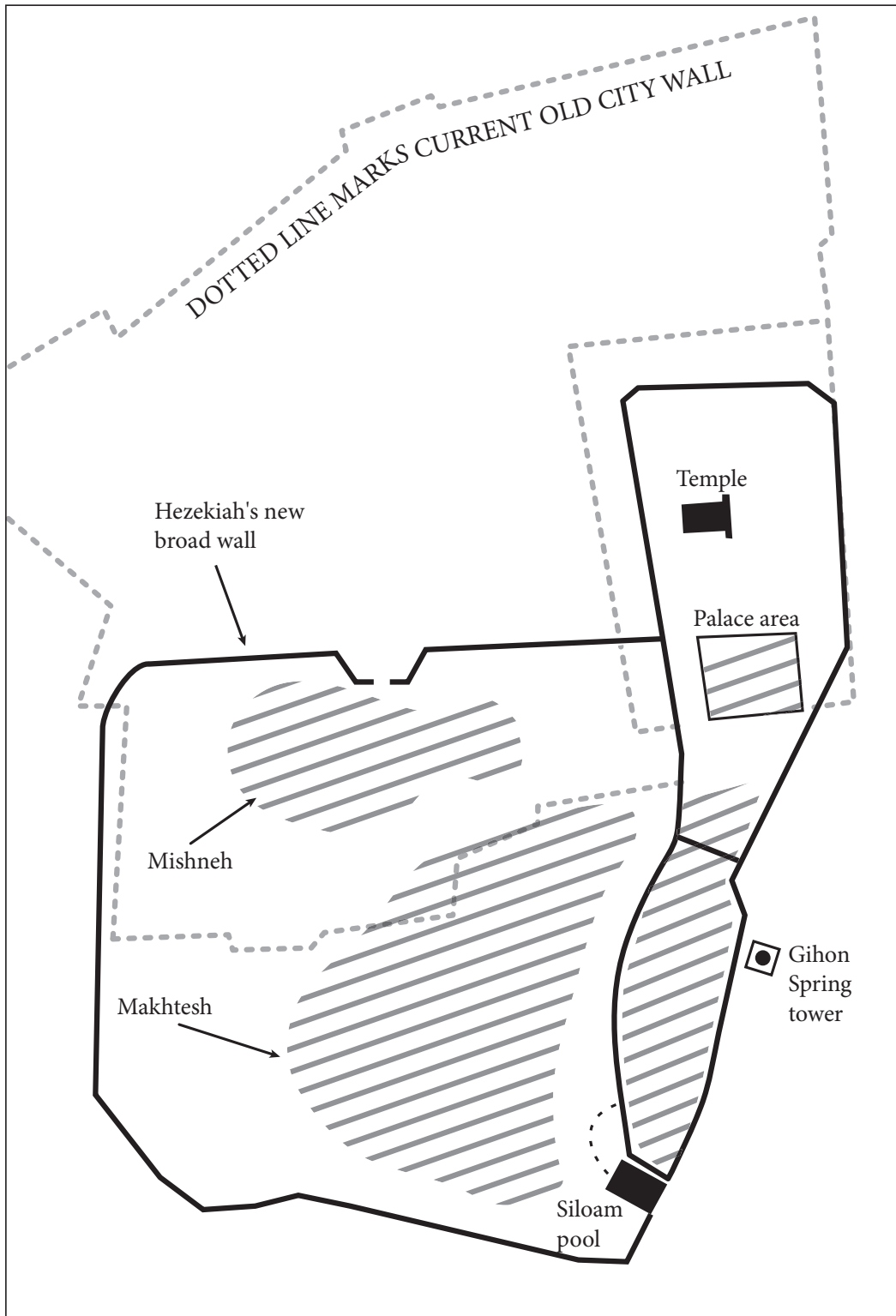


Figure 4. Jerusalem after 705 B.C.

withdraw Judah from the alliance with Assyria that his father, King Ahaz, had entered into around 733 B.C. Against the wishes of the Lord and the advice of the prophet Isaiah (see 2 Kings 16 and Isaiah 7–8), King Ahaz had concluded a treaty with the Assyrians that made Judah a client kingdom to their empire. Ahaz's actions resulted, among other things, in Assyrian idolatry being introduced into the temple at Jerusalem and in Judah agreeing to pay a hefty tribute to the Assyrian empire. But it had also made Judah safe from Assyrian attack, which made the southern kingdom a haven for northern kingdom refugees at the time Assyria was destroying Israel. King Hezekiah, however, was unhappy with the negative aspects of the arrangement his father had forged, and when the Assyrian emperor Sargon II died in 705 B.C., Hezekiah unilaterally canceled the alliance and withheld annual tribute.

Knowing that the new Assyrian king, Sennacherib, would not let this defection go unchallenged, Hezekiah undertook several efforts between 705 and 701 B.C. to strengthen Judah against the retaliatory attack he knew would come. He instituted weapons production, food storage, and water projects all over the southern kingdom (see 2 Chronicles 32:1–8). In Jerusalem, Hezekiah had his famous tunnel constructed to bring water to a pool (reservoir) inside the city (see 2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chronicles 32:30). This allowed Jerusalemites to access their water supply without leaving the safety of their city wall in time of siege.

As for that wall, Hezekiah not only repaired the existing rampart around the City of David but had a huge additional wall built to surround the outer suburbs of Jerusalem, including both the Makhtesh and the Mishneh refugee camp on the western hill (see fig. 4). In 2 Chronicles 32, this wall was referred to as “another wall without,” meaning *an additional wall outside the original wall*: “Also he strengthened himself,



and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers, and another wall without” (2 Chronicles 32:5). What 2 Chronicles called “another wall” was later called the “broad wall” in Nehemiah 3:8. The name was fitting, for the wall was constructed of solid stone and measured seven meters thick (23 feet) at the base. Remnants of this massive rampart, which stood approximately eight meters high (nearly 27 feet), were also discovered during Avigad’s excavation of the Jewish Quarter (see fig. 5). Commenting on the sixty-five-meter section of the broad wall he unearthed in 1970, Avigad concluded: “Apparently, the new wall was the ‘another wall’ built by Hezekiah, as noted in 2 Chronicles 32:5.”<sup>7</sup>

Hezekiah’s new wall around the western hills of Jerusalem afforded the northern Israelite refugee residents of the Mishneh camp (which probably included the great-grandparents and



Figure 5. Remains of Hezekiah’s “broad wall,” discovered by archaeologists in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem’s Old City during the 1970s, are seen in the bottom portion of this photograph.

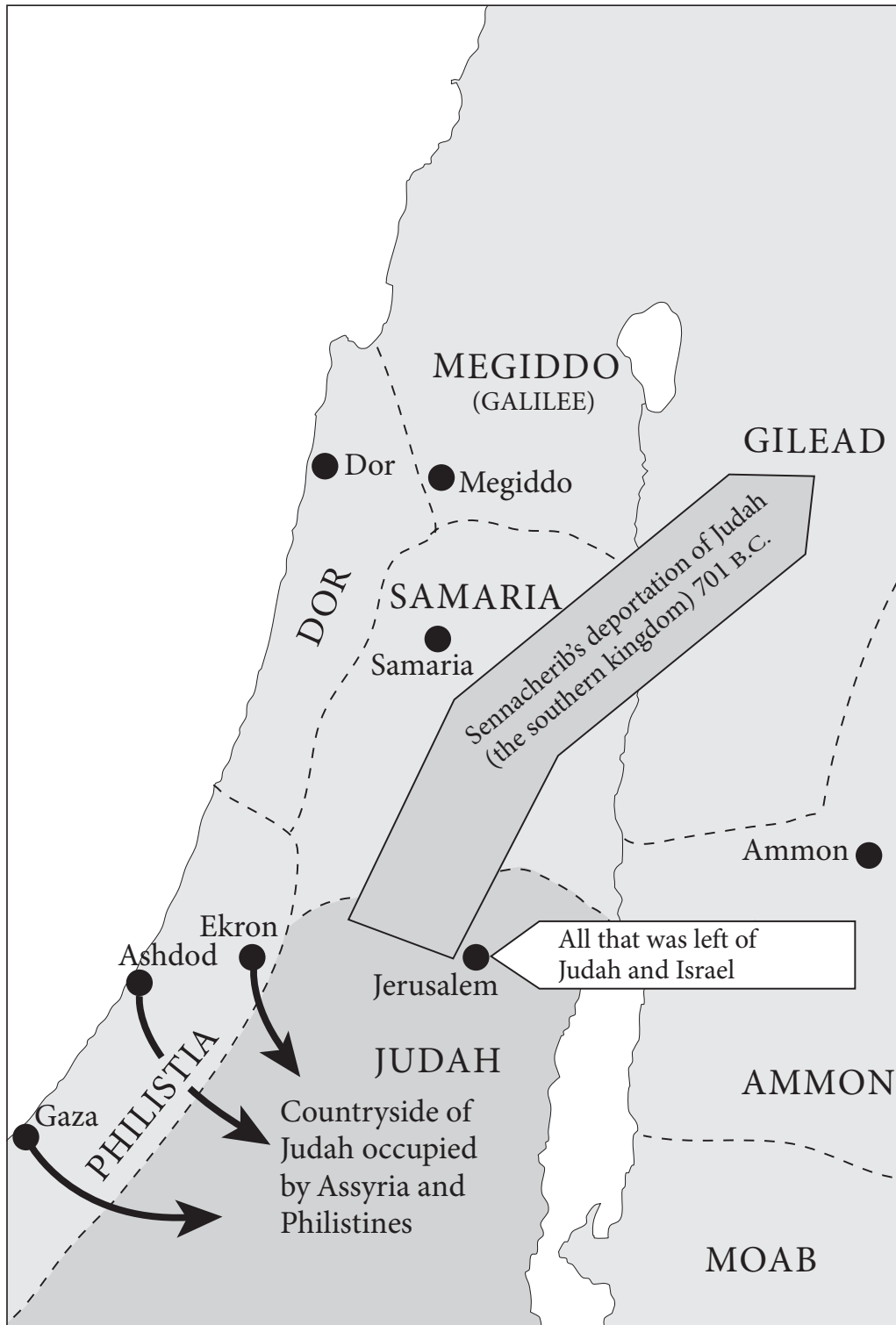


Figure 6. Deportation of Judah, 701 B.C.

grandparents of Lehi) safety from the attack of Sennacherib's Assyrian forces in 701 B.C. But the people of Jerusalem were the *only* ones who were spared the devastating effects of the Assyrian invasion (see fig. 6).

### **The Assyrian Attack on Judah**

The biblical account in 2 Kings reports that every city of Judah other than Jerusalem was taken by the Assyrians in Sennacherib's attack on the country in 701 B.C.: "Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced [i.e., walled] cities of Judah, and took them" (2 Kings 18:13; see also Isaiah 36:1).

The story of horror, suffering, torture, and death implicit in this abbreviated statement is not always obvious to readers moving quickly through the Bible. But more details of the attack were recorded by Sennacherib himself. The account is preserved in cuneiform on a hexagonal pottery relic known as Sennacherib's Prism (see fig. 7). It details Hezekiah's rebellion against the emperor and notes both the number of Judean cities destroyed and the huge total of Judean deportees carried away into captivity:

As to Hezekiah the Jew, he did not submit to my yoke, I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities, walled forts, and to the countless small villages in their vicinity, and conquered (them)



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Figure 7. The Prism of Sennacherib; a cuneiform account of the Assyrian King Sennacherib's attack upon and deportation of Judah is found upon this hexagonal pottery artifact.

by means of well stamped (earth-)ramps and battering rams. . . . I drove out (of them) 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, big and small cattle beyond counting, and considered (them) booty. Himself I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage. I surrounded him with earthwork in order to molest those who were leaving his city's gate. His towns which I had plundered, I took away from his country and gave them (over) to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, Padi, king of Ekron, and Sillibel, king of Gaza. Thus I reduced his country, but I still increased the tribute.<sup>8</sup>

The total of Judean deportees was staggering! And although large, the number 200,150 is probably a fairly exact count, within a few persons, of the number of Israelites taken from Judah after the 701 B.C. debacle. The Assyrians employed their policies of deportation in order to secure newly conquered territories, like Israel and Judah, into their empire. Deportation served to break the nationalism and identity of conquered populations, thereby minimizing the chances of those populations successfully rebelling against the empire. The Assyrians were also accomplished accountants. Their conquests were designed not only to establish their military hegemony, but also to create a great *Pax Assyriana*, a stable and peaceful empire that would grow into the economic powerhouse of the ancient Near East in the seventh century B.C. They captured lands and also created new economic and agricultural master plans for those lands and markets for the products of the territories they added to their expanding borders. An example of this activity was the vast expansion of Ekron, a Philistine city thirty-five kilometers (twenty miles) west of Jerusalem, which grew from ten to fifty acres and developed a large olive oil industry (which relied on the Assyrian/Philistine use of Judean fields for olive gardens) all within a short period in the seventh century B.C.<sup>9</sup> The Assyrian

macroeconomy required careful accounting, not just of money and territory, but also of people. The Assyrians knew exactly how many people were killed in their battles (careful counts of casualties were kept) and how many were taken as live prisoners.<sup>10</sup> They knew just how many people they would be deporting, where the deportees were coming from, and where they were being resettled. Preparation for the movement of the newly conquered and planning for their arrival in other provinces throughout the empire required having accurate counts. These are the same numbers to which the composers of Sennacherib's Prism would have had access. Thus, figures like 200,150 for the count of deportees from the whole country of Judah in 701 B.C., as well 27,290 from the single city of Samaria alone in 722 B.C., may be confidently taken as fairly accurate counts—they are probably accurate to within ten people, since one figure ends with 50 and the other with 90.

Notably, Sennacherib does not claim to have conquered or destroyed Jerusalem. Although he boasted that he had trapped Hezekiah within the city “like a caged bird,” he does not claim to have got inside the cage to get the bird. Both Assyrian sources<sup>11</sup> and the Bible suggest that Jerusalem survived the attack, that Hezekiah continued to reign, and that the city's Judean inhabitants were *not* deported. The biblical record preserves details of Jerusalem's survival in parallel accounts found in 2 Kings 18–19 and Isaiah 36–37, as well as in 2 Chronicles 32. In calling for Jerusalem's surrender, Sennacherib's *rav shakeh*, or chief cup bearer (the KJV transliteration “Rab-shakeh” is not the man's name, but his title; see 2 Kings 18:17, 19, 26–28, 37; 19:4, 8),<sup>12</sup> promised that the city's inhabitants would be spared, but nonetheless would be deported:

Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand: Neither let

Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, The Lord will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern: Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land. (2 Kings 18:29–32)

The account in 2 Kings 19 (and repeated in Isaiah 37) proceeds to explain how Hezekiah prayed to the Lord for the preservation of Jerusalem and how the Lord answered back through the prophet Isaiah. The conclusion of the Lord's answer was the guarantee that Jerusalem would not fall to the Assyrians, and that the city's inhabitants ("the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah") would survive, not to be deported, but eventually to reconstitute the kingdom of Judah ("again take root downward, and bear fruit upward"):

And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. For I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. (2 Kings 19:30–34)

The concluding account does not specify the exact nature of misfortune sent by the Lord upon the Assyrian forces, but it relates that 185,000 (a more plausible translation is "185 troops")<sup>13</sup> were killed in the divine intervention that caused Sennacherib to abandon the campaign against Jerusalem:

And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib king of Assyrian departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. (2 Kings 19:35–36)

So Jerusalem was spared, even though every other city of Judah had been destroyed, and over two hundred thousand of their survivors were deported to eastern regions of the Assyrian empire (see fig. 6). It is estimated that no more than about twenty thousand persons lived inside the city of Jerusalem in 701 B.C., a figure about one-tenth of the population of Judah that the Assyrians deported.<sup>14</sup> It is important to remember that, after 701 B.C., those twenty thousand or so residents of Jerusalem were essentially all that was left of Judah. Indeed, those twenty thousand represented the only remnant of the entire house of Israel that was not taken away by the Assyrians. This is the reality reflected in the first chapter of Isaiah, composed incident to the 701 B.C. siege:

Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah. (Isaiah 1:7–9)

The “daughter of Zion” refers to Jerusalem, and the images of a “cottage in a vineyard” and “a lodge in a garden,” while verbally pleasant in English translation, are less elegant in the Hebrew original and refer to harvest shacks left behind in the midst of harvested lands. All of Israel and Judah had been “harvested” so to speak—only Jerusalem had been spared



Figure 8. Scene from the engraved stone panels discovered at Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh, depicting Israelite Judeans being deported from Judah by Sennacherib's Assyrian forces. The figure with a spear is an Assyrian; the other three are Israelite Judeans.

destruction and deportation. It has often been maintained that the northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed and deported by the Assyrians but that the southern kingdom of Judah remained essentially unaffected. In the case of Judah, however, nothing could be further from the truth. Some ninety percent of the kingdom of Judah—consisting not only of people whose tribal heritage was Judah, but of many refugees and other citizens of Judah whose tribal heritage was of Ephraim or Manasseh, Dan or Asher, Zebulun or Naphtali—was also taken away and became part of “lost Israel” (see fig. 8). In this regard, it is perhaps more accurate to speak not of the ten lost tribes, but of the *twelve lost tribes* (or at least the *11.9 lost tribes*) since the majority of *all* twelve tribes, including Judah, was carried away captive by the Assyrians. This was a fact clearly understood in Nephi's day,



even though it is not so well known in our own. In fact, Nephi himself spoke of this around 600 B.C., just a century after the 701 B.C. attack:

And behold, there are many who are already lost from the knowledge of those who are at Jerusalem. Yea, the more part of all the tribes have been led away; and they are scattered to and fro upon the isles of the sea; and whither they are none of us knoweth, save that we know that they have been led away. (1 Nephi 22:4)

### **The Land of Inheritance—Somewhere in Western Manasseh**

The point of reporting this involved history of the Assyrian deportations of both Israel and Judah is to demonstrate where Lehi's great-grandparents must have settled after leaving Manasseh and where his grandparents must have lived—they had to have settled and lived in Jerusalem. Had they settled and lived anywhere else in Judah, they would have either been killed or deported in the Assyrian attack of 701 B.C. This is important not only in locating Lehi's house (which seems most likely to have been in Jerusalem's Mishneh, as will be explained below) but particularly in locating the land of his inheritance. Models that suggest that the land of inheritance was somewhere in Judah very near Jerusalem, in other words in the greater land of Jerusalem, are likely incorrect. If Lehi's ancestors had obtained land and settled anywhere outside the actual limits of Hezekiah's Jerusalem walls, those people would have disappeared (along with the memory of their having owned any land) in the 701 B.C. debacle. And models that suggest that the land of inheritance was somewhere in southwest Judah (the so-called Beit Lei area and the tomb mistakenly called the Lehi Cave) are not supported by the evidence.<sup>15</sup> Had Lehi's ancestors obtained land and settled in that region, or anywhere else outside Jerusalem,

they would likely have fallen victim to the Assyrians—having been killed or deported—and Lehi would not have eventually been born at Jerusalem. Two things about Lehi’s heritage emerge very clearly from the study of Assyrian actions in Israel and Judah: (1) Lehi’s eighth century B.C. progenitors *have* to have settled in Jerusalem and cannot be expected to have obtained land elsewhere in Judah; therefore, (2) Lehi’s land of inheritance must have been a tract in the north—a tract in western Manasseh—for which his ancestors, perhaps his great-grandparents, had retained a written deed when they fled around 724 B.C.

Why *western* Manasseh? The answer to this question requires us to explore yet another page of historical geography. For over half a century following the 701 B.C. attack, the Assyrian empire controlled all territory in Judah. Even though Sennacherib had lifted his siege of Jerusalem and gone back to Nineveh, he left occupying troops behind. He granted the Philistines, Judah’s neighbor-enemies to the west on the coastal plain, permission to occupy and farm the hilly, fertile lands of Judah left behind after the deportation of their Israelite inhabitants. As previously noted, Sennacherib’s Prism reported those lands being assigned to “Mitinti, king of Ashdod, Padi, king of Ekron, and Sillibel, king of Gaza.”<sup>16</sup> This was a significant and, in retrospect, very fortunate departure from the normal Assyrian practice of importing subjugated peoples from other areas of their empire to be resettled in newly conquered regions, such as had taken place in the Galilee and in Samaria. Even though the immediate result was that Judean land, like the Galilee and Samaria, was possessed by foreigners (as Isaiah 1:7 puts it: “your land, strangers devour it in your presence”), the Philistines were not strangers from afar—they had come from right next door and could be forced back out of Judah to their own coastal home when Judah eventually revived as a nation released from Assyrian domination.

By 652 B.C. Judah's territory had been under Assyrian dominion and Philistine occupation for some fifty years. During those five decades what existed of the actual kingdom of Judah was found essentially within and directly around Jerusalem's limits. For thirty-five of those fifty years, beginning in 687 B.C., the city-kingdom was ruled by King Manasseh, a wicked man given over to collaboration with his Assyrian overlords (2 Kings 21:1 reports that Manasseh was king for fifty-five years, but this includes ten years of a probable coregency from 697 B.C. with his father Hezekiah—his sole regency was probably from 687 to 642 B.C.). Also, by 652 B.C. the Assyrian empire had stretched itself to the limits of its capacity to control its far-flung territories both in the east and in the west. In that year, the Babylonians rebelled against the Assyrian empire in the east, causing the movement of Assyrian military assets from the west to the east in order to meet the challenge. This spelled the beginning of the end for Assyria along the Mediterranean coast, including its control of Judah, which meant that it was probably only after 652, late in Manasseh's reign, that Judah was again able to control areas outside the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem. Second Chronicles notes that Manasseh "put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah" (2 Chronicles 33:14). Even though the Babylonian revolt was put down by 648 B.C., by the time of Manasseh's death in 642 B.C. the Assyrian control of both Judah and Philistia had loosened considerably, and Judah was able to act with an increased measure of autonomy. Manasseh's son Amon was assassinated after only two years on the Judean throne (642–640 B.C.), and his son Josiah was installed as king of Judah in 640 B.C. at only eight years of age (2 Kings 22:1). Josiah had been born in 648 B.C., and it may be surmised that Lehi and Ishmael, as well as the prophet Jeremiah, were probably born about this time (the 640s)—all of them born into a Judah ready to rise again. Judean freedom to act continued to

grow during Josiah's younger years on the throne. When Josiah was twenty-one (627 B.C.), the emperor Assurbanipal died, and the Assyrians completely withdrew from the western part of their former empire in order to concentrate on defending the east. Judah became fully independent under the adult King Josiah, and many Judeans were able to move from the crowded precincts of Jerusalem back to the sites of cities in the Judean countryside, forcing Philistine farmers off Judean lands and resettling and rebuilding towns from Beersheba and Arad in the south to Lachish and Azekah in the west to Gibeon and Mizpah in Judah's north.

Josiah's Judah was not only able to reclaim its own territory, but it also moved into lands of the former northern kingdom of Israel (see fig. 9). Josiah sent forces north to take control of the tribal lands of Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon, and Naphtali in the regions of Samaria and the Galilee (2 Chronicles 34:6–7), lands that the Assyrians had abandoned but where the gentile populations they had fostered continued to live and work. By 622 B.C., when Josiah reinstated the Passover festival (see 2 Kings 23:21–23—by this time Lehi had reached adulthood, and Nephi was just about to be born), Josiah's government controlled both the ancient kingdom of Judah and the territory of the former kingdom of Israel, from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south. However, his dominion ended at the Jordan River. Ancient Israelite territory east of Jordan was not brought under Judah's umbrella—lands east of Jordan were controlled by Ammon, Judah's traditional rival. In terms of the ancient lands associated with Manasseh, this meant that Josiah's Judah only controlled the western part of Manasseh. But it also meant that any Judean whose great-grandparents had owned property in western Manasseh (or any other former northern kingdom territory west of Jordan) could lay claim to that land if they happened to

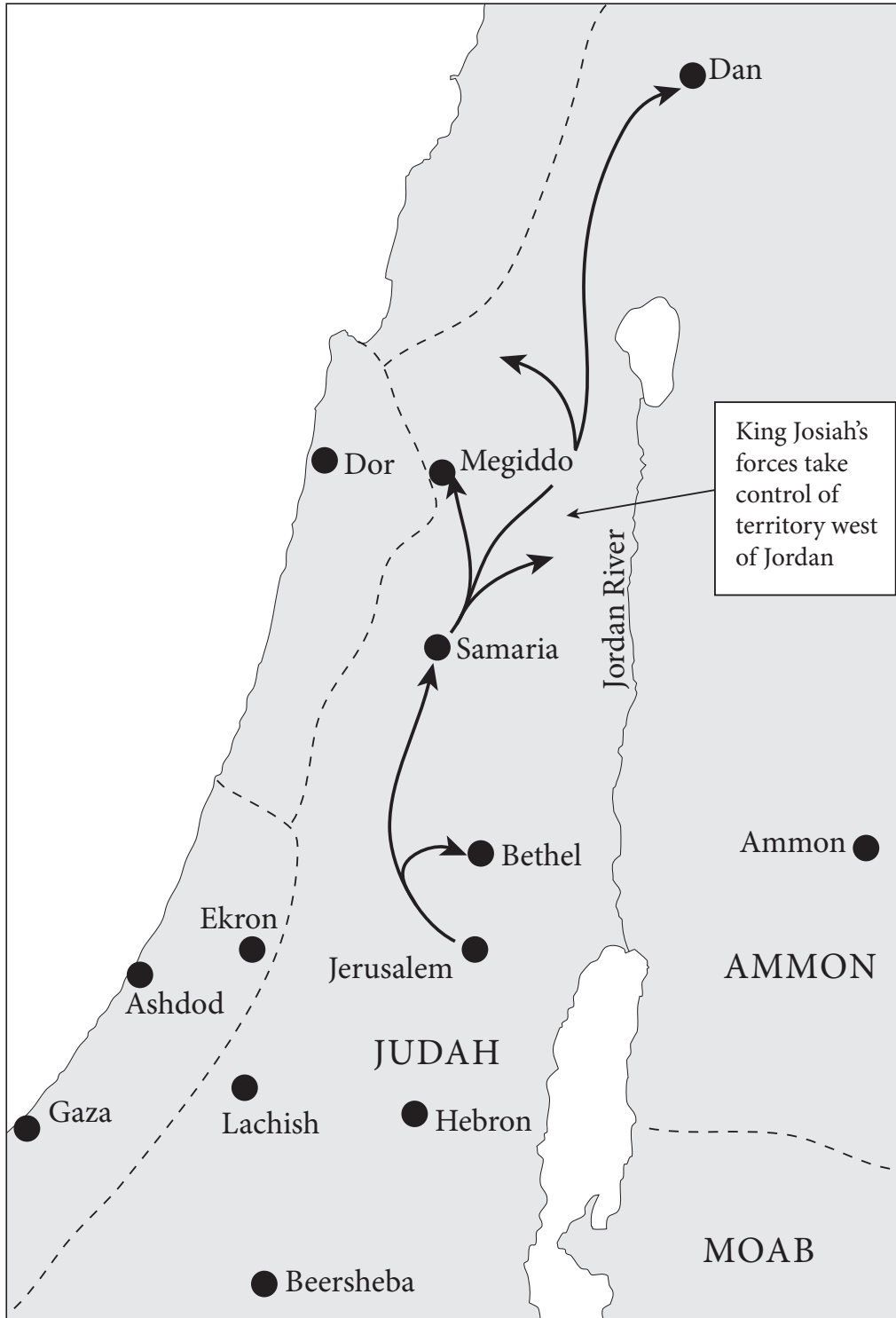


Figure 9. Resurgent Judah after 627 B.C.

be in possession of century-old deeds to such real estate. Lehi seems to have been in just this situation.

### **Conclusions about the Land of Inheritance**

Now, at last, I may present, or least recapitulate, some tentative conclusions about Lehi and the land of his inheritance—tentative because they are based on a series of plausible assumptions:

1. Since his tribal heritage was Manasseh, Lehi's land of inheritance was probably located in the ancient tribal land of Manasseh and was probably a plot abandoned by his great-grandparents, who were forced to flee as refugees from Israel to Judah around 724 B.C. to avoid death or deportation at the hands of the invading armies of Assyria.

2. Lehi's refugee ancestors (likely his great-grandparents) probably brought with them the deed to the property they left behind in Manasseh when they fled south to Jerusalem in Judah, and that deed had probably been passed down to Lehi's parents and finally to Lehi.

3. Lehi's refugee great-grandparents cannot have settled anywhere else in Judah but Jerusalem, or else they would not have survived the Assyrian attack of 701 B.C.—had they been killed or deported in that episode, as virtually all Judeans outside Jerusalem were, Lehi would not have been born at Jerusalem in the mid-seventh century B.C. In no case was the land of inheritance likely to have been within the traditional borders of Judah itself (not near Jerusalem and not near the so-called Beit-Lei area in southwest Judah) because of the ramifications of the Assyrian attack and deportation of Judah.

4. Neither Lehi's grandparents nor his parents would have been able to travel north from Jerusalem to lay claim to their

family land since it was part of the Assyrian province of Samaria and was occupied and farmed by gentiles called Samaritans.

5. However, by the time Lehi was an adult, the Assyrians had completely withdrawn not only from Judah, but also from Samaria and the Galilee, and Judah's subsequent extension of control over Samaria meant that Lehi could lay claim to the property whose deed he would have inherited from his great-grandfather through his grandfather and father.

6. Because Lehi's sons could apparently travel to and operate on this land of inheritance freely and without fear (see 1 Nephi 3:22), that property was most likely in western Manasseh rather than in the Manassite areas east of Jordan since it was only the area west of Jordan where Judah had reasserted control (eastern areas were controlled by Ammon—see fig. 10).

7. That Lehi could now claim and control his ancestral property in western Manasseh does not mean he maintained a house or household on the property—all indications are that his domestic residence was always at Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 1:4).

8. Lehi's land of inheritance was quite probably farmed by gentile Samaritans whose fathers had paid rent to the Assyrian administration during its tenure of control over the province of Samaria and who themselves were probably under the necessity of paying rent to Lehi after Judah asserted control in Samaria (such rental receipts would have added to Lehi's personal wealth).

Even though Lehi did not live on the land of inheritance, he had “left gold and silver and all manner of riches” on the property—these were probably buried in caches known only to the family. A common practice during the Iron Age II period, when Lehi lived, was to place loose silver in ceramic jugs and then bury those containers for safekeeping (see photo essay, p. 75). Lehi probably hid (buried) the bulk of his wealth at a secret location on his land of inheritance in Manasseh because

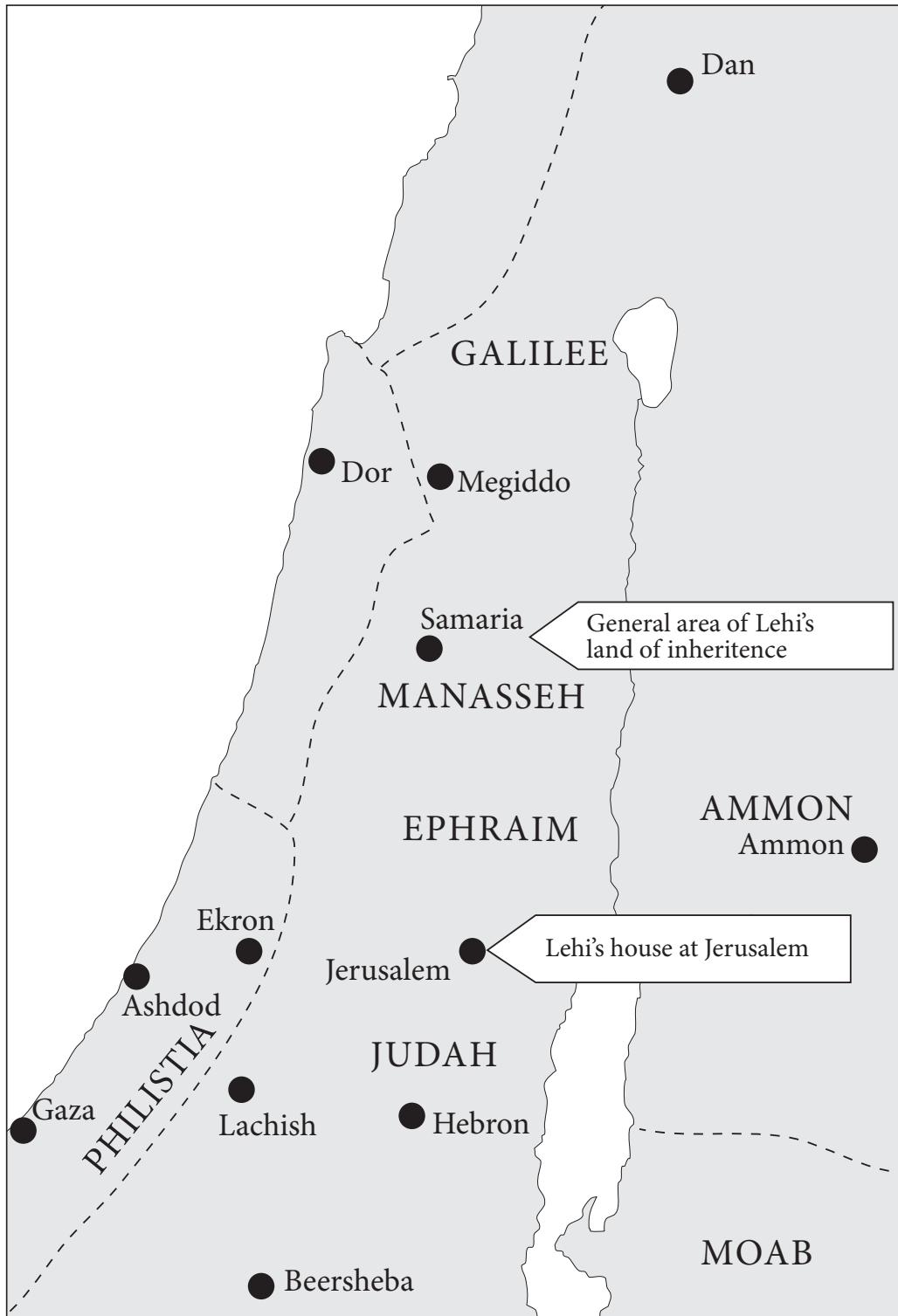


Figure 10. Judah at the height of Josiah's reign, 610 B.C.



he knew those riches would not be safe in Jerusalem—he knew the Babylonians would eventually destroy and loot the city or, as Nephi put it:

Let us go down to the land of our father's inheritance, for behold he left gold and silver, and all manner of riches. And all this he hath done because of the commandments of the Lord. For he knew that Jerusalem must be destroyed. (1 Nephi 3:16–17)

### **Life and Work for Lehi in Jerusalem**

If, as proposed above, Lehi's recent ancestors had come to Jerusalem as refugees from the north, they would have found themselves landless in Judah. This was not an ideal situation in a society where farming was the way much of the population made its living. Upon establishing themselves in the refugee camp that eventually became known as the Mishneh of Jerusalem, Lehi's great-grandparents and grandparents would have to have figured out a way to support themselves without any land to farm—something that they could do living inside the city wall that Hezekiah had built between 705 and 701 B.C. As first pointed out by John Tvedtnes, indications in the writings of Nephi suggest that both he and his father Lehi were professional metalsmiths.<sup>17</sup> Such a vocation would have been ideal for Lehi's ancestors to learn since it would not require the ownership or rental of property outside the city. Like most professionals of that age, Nephi would have apprenticed with and learned the metalworking trade from his father. Lehi had likely learned it from his father, who in turn learned it from his father, the man who came to Judah as a refugee, who had learned it in order to survive as a landless resident of Jerusalem's Mishneh.

Expertise in smithing precious metals such as silver and gold, particularly in smithing iron and hardening it into steel,

is not something a person picked up as a hobby or sideline skill. Smithing, and in particular iron and steel smithing, was the high-tech profession of Lehi's day—the period that archaeologists call Iron Age II. Evidence of Lehi's and Nephi's expertise in all sorts of metals—in other words, evidence that smithing was their profession—is found in several passages of Nephi's writings. A convenient list of ten such passages may be considered:

1. 1 Nephi 2:1. Lehi left behind gold and silver, two precious metals likely to have been used in expert jewelry smithing. While the population at large often utilized silver as money, in the form of cut pieces and small jewelry (no coins were in use in Judah during Iron Age II), to possess gold was very rare—gold was not used as a medium of common monetary exchange. For Lehi to possess both gold and silver suggests that he worked with gold, which in turn suggests gold smithing (gold and silver are also mentioned in 1 Nephi 3:16, 22, and 24).

2. 1 Nephi 4:9. Nephi's evaluation of the sword of Laban includes his assessment that the hilt was of pure gold. This suggests that, at his young age, he was experienced in gold working (nonexperts are rarely able to judge the purity or content of gold-colored metal). He also mentioned the blade of the sword as being of “the most precious steel” and said that “the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine,” assessments that suggest he was experienced in iron and steel work (see fig. 11).

3. 1 Nephi 5:19. Lehi predicts that the “plates of brass should never perish; neither should they be dimmed any more by time”—a surprisingly accurate statement that could probably be made only by a person experienced with the properties of copper-based alloys like bronze and brass (bronze is a combination of copper and tin, and brass a combination of copper and zinc). Whereas iron, the hardest metal of Lehi's day (it

could even be hardened into steel by Lehi's time), will oxidize and rust away over time if neglected, copper alloys such as bronze and brass will not. Even the most damp conditions will not cause plates of copper to “perish.” And while it is possible over time for bronze or brass items to be “dimmed . . . by time” with a greenish or greyish patina, even minimal maintenance on a regular basis would prevent this.

4. 1 Nephi 8:19. Lehi “beheld a rod of iron” (see 1 Nephi 8:24 and 30). It is noteworthy that no other artificial object in his dream is described with such specificity. He does not, for example, mention the material from which the large building was constructed. That he actually noted what specific metal the rod was made of, rather than just calling it a rod or hand-rail, suggests that Lehi was especially sensitive to or interested in metals, as a smith would naturally be.



Figure 11. Ancient Judean sword, dating to about 600 B.C., found in the Jordan Valley near Jericho (on display at Israel Museum, Jerusalem). As noted in the caption, “The sword is made of iron hardened into steel, attesting to substantial metallurgical know-how.” This weapon may be similar to the sword of Laban and other swords Nephi taught his people to make.

5. 1 Nephi 16:10. Nephi describes what eventually became known as the Liahona (see Alma 37:38). He notes that it was made of “fine brass” and was of “curious workmanship.” These are the types of assessments that one who has experience with quality brass work, such as a smith, would make.

6. 1 Nephi 17:9–16. Nephi knew how to smelt metallic ore from rock and forge tools with the metal made from the ore. This is obvious evidence that he was skilled in all aspects of the metallurgical knowledge of the period. Note that Nephi *does not* know how to work with wood or how to design a seagoing vessel—these skills are taught him by God (see 1 Nephi 18:1–2)—but he *does* know, without divine tutorial, how to work in metal and forge tools, indicating it was a previously mastered skill.

7. 1 Nephi 18:25. On arrival in ancient America, Lehi’s party found “all manner of ore, both of gold, and of silver, and of copper.” The inclusion of these items in their assessment of resources available to them indicates not only their value but implies the ability to use them in metalworking.

8. 1 Nephi 19:1. Nephi made “plates of ore” and lists the various records that he had “engraven” upon them—in other words, Nephi was experienced not only in ore smelting and metalworking but also in engraving long texts on the metal he worked.

9. 2 Nephi 5:15. Nephi taught his people to erect buildings and work wood, using only general terms for those activities, but then he reports specifically each type of metal he taught them to work in—iron, copper, brass, steel, gold, silver, and other precious ores. Not only does this clearly indicate that Nephi himself is a metalsmith but serves as something of a resumé of his varied smithing experience and abilities.

10. 2 Nephi 5:29–31. Nephi again mentions the two sets of metal plates that he had personally made in order to write the

two separate records he was keeping. The thinness and uniformity of size of these plate collections would require considerable skill in metallurgy and smithing.

This ample evidence that Nephi and his father Lehi were experienced in mining metallic ores and smithing a variety of precious and utilitarian metals sheds light on a number of interesting questions often asked about 1 Nephi. For example, why did Lehi and Nephi both seem to have been competent in Egyptian language and writing as well as their native Hebrew? The fact that Egypt was a primary center for gold trade could suggest that Lehi had regularly traveled there to conduct gold business or procure gold supplies. Why did Lehi and Nephi seem to have readily known the way from Jerusalem to the Red Sea (Gulf of Eilat) and back without the aid of the Liahona, which they later needed in Arabia? The fact that copper ore was mined in several locations near the Gulf of Eilat and in northern Sinai (see fig. 12) could suggest that Lehi and Nephi had traveled to the region several times over the years to obtain copper supplies and knew the route well prior to their permanent departure from Jerusalem in 1 Nephi 2. Certainly, however, their expertise in metalworking suggests this had been their primary vocation in Jerusalem. Their standard of living would have been comfortable by itself since metalworking was a respected middle-class occupation. When the rental monies Lehi was presumably able to collect from Samaritans living on and farming his land of inheritance are factored in (income which Lehi's father and grandfather would not have enjoyed, but which became available by the time Lehi was an adult), the combined wealth probably placed Lehi's family in an economic situation approaching Jerusalem's upper class. Thus it is no surprise to read that, in addition to gold and silver, Lehi had possessed "precious things" (1 Nephi 2:4; 3:22) and "all manner of riches" (1 Nephi 3:16).

### **Living in the Mishneh and Working in the Makhtesh**

The typical house found throughout Israel and Judah during the period when Lehi lived is called by archaeologists the “pillared” or “four-room” house.<sup>18</sup> The basic plan, which first appeared in the twelfth century B.C. and which, with improvements and variations, endured for over six centuries, featured three rectangular, parallel rooms on a long axis tied into a single rectangular room on a broad or perpendicular axis (see fig. 13 for plan and drawing). The outer three rooms were roofed and formed a squared U around the middle long room, which was an open-air courtyard. The walls on either parallel side of the open-air courtyard sometimes featured pillars instead of closed walls, hence the



Figure 12. Ancient copper mines at Timna in southern Israel near the Red Sea. Timna was a copper-mining area during both the Bronze and Iron ages and may have been where Lehi and his sons traveled to obtain copper for their metalworking.

term *pillared house*. The outer three rooms often featured interior walls that divided them into yet smaller chambers. Frequently, the forward chambers in the two outer long rooms were used for storage or as domestic animal stalls. The basic domestic living areas were generally in the chambers of the broad room but could also occupy half or all of one or both long rooms, depending on the size and situational needs of the family. The breadth of wall foundations and the presence of stone stairs discovered by archaeologists in some four-room houses suggest that they often supported a second floor, which doubled the number of living chambers possible in the four-room plan. The average dimensions of a four-room house were about 10 x 12 meters (33 x 40 feet). The total ground level floor space of Israelite and Judean four-room houses varied, but could be as much as 110 square meters (about 1,200 square feet).<sup>19</sup> The interior space of these houses was complemented by additional floor space (as much as 800 square feet) on the flat roof, which by law featured a waist-high, upright safety ledge, or battlement (see Deuteronomy 22:8). Domestic activities such as household work, socializing, and even sleeping could take place on the roof in the dry weather that lasted much of the year. The main entrance to the household was at the end of the enclosed (but open-air) courtyard, which also served as an area for gathering and working as well as for dry-weather cooking. Expansion of the house was possible not only by adding an upper floor, but by adding additional long rooms as annexes to the basic plan, or even by building a second four-room structure attached to the first (perhaps even sharing one of the long walls). This allowed for extended family expansion in limited available space, such as areas within walled cities like Jerusalem's Mishneh.

Lehi's house at Jerusalem was probably a large version of the typical pillared or four-room style with as much as 2,000 square feet of living space on two floors, representative of a family with

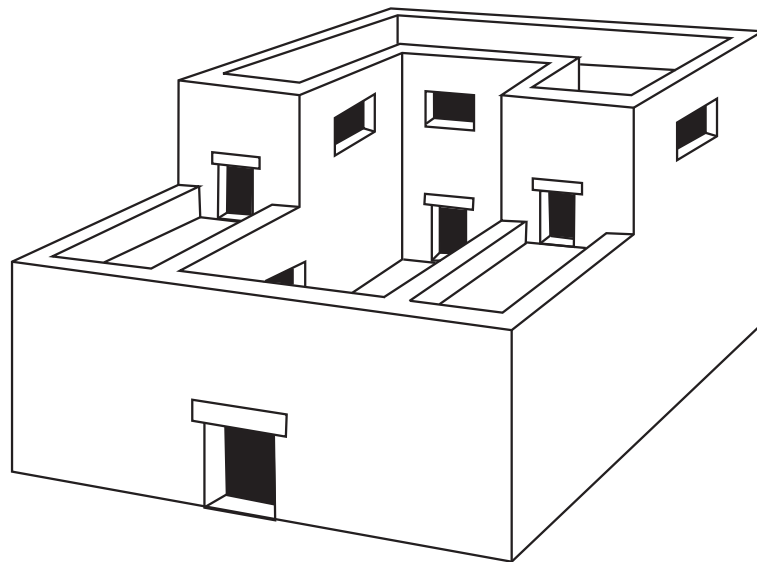
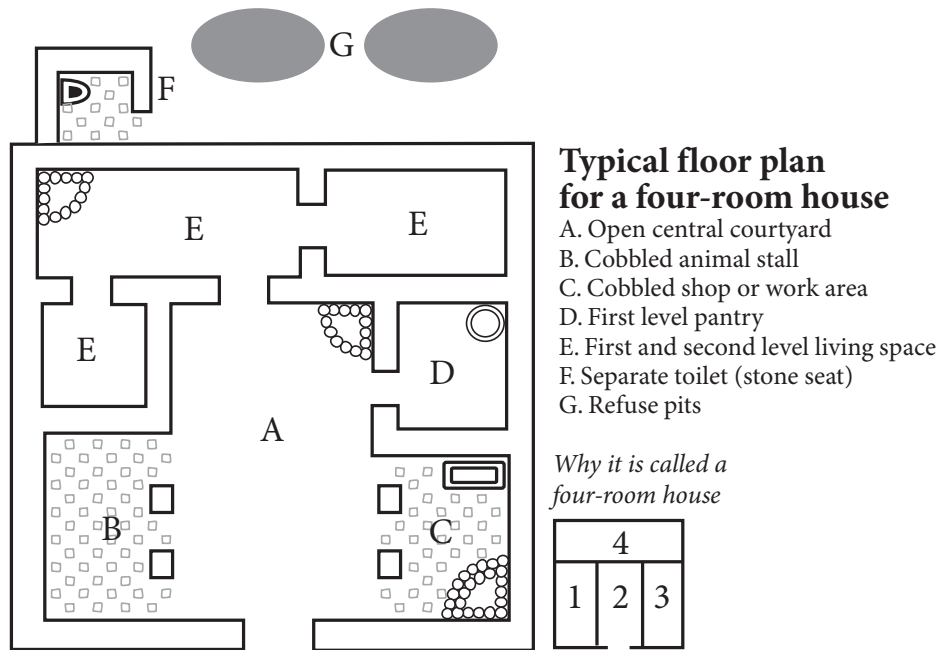


Figure 13. Typical four-room house from the period of Lehi.



considerable means in his day. Although the Mishneh area had begun as a refugee settlement in the eighth century B.C. and Lehi's grandparents would likely have plied their presumed metalsmithing trade in the courtyard of their own four-room house, the nature of the Mishneh changed in the eighty years between the completion of Hezekiah's wall in 701 B.C. and Josiah's Passover festival of 622 B.C. (by which time Lehi was likely a young father). By then the Mishneh had evolved into a rather upscale neighborhood, as evidenced by the fact that Huldah the prophetess and her husband, Shallum, the "keeper of the wardrobe" (i.e., the royal clothier), lived there (see 2 Kings 22:14, but beware that Mishneh is curiously translated as "college"). This fact led Avigad to conclude that "the Mishneh was probably a well-to-do residential quarter."<sup>20</sup> Lehi's relative wealth would have placed him at home in such a quarter. But upscale neighborhoods, even in ancient settings, tended to eschew industrial or heavy commercial operations in their midst. The relatively small plot of city property in the Mishneh that Lehi probably inherited from his father, or that he acquired nearby, was of adequate size for a comfortable four-room house but was no longer a place where smithing could be carried on as it had been in his grandfather's day. The question then becomes: If Lehi and his sons were indeed metalsmiths, where in Jerusalem did they conduct their metalworking and marketing operations? The answer may be that they did so in the other Jerusalem quarter previously mentioned—the Makhtesh.

The Hebrew word *makhtesh* means mortar, crater, or hollow. The ancient Jerusalem quarter called the Makhtesh was located in the southern part of Jerusalem's central valley (sometimes called the Tyropoean Valley) on the slope of the hill directly west of the much older City of David (see fig. 14). Topographically, it is easy to understand why the ancient inhabitants of Jerusalem would call this area the Makhtesh, since the narrow central valley is bounded by steep hills rising up on both the west and the east—to the east

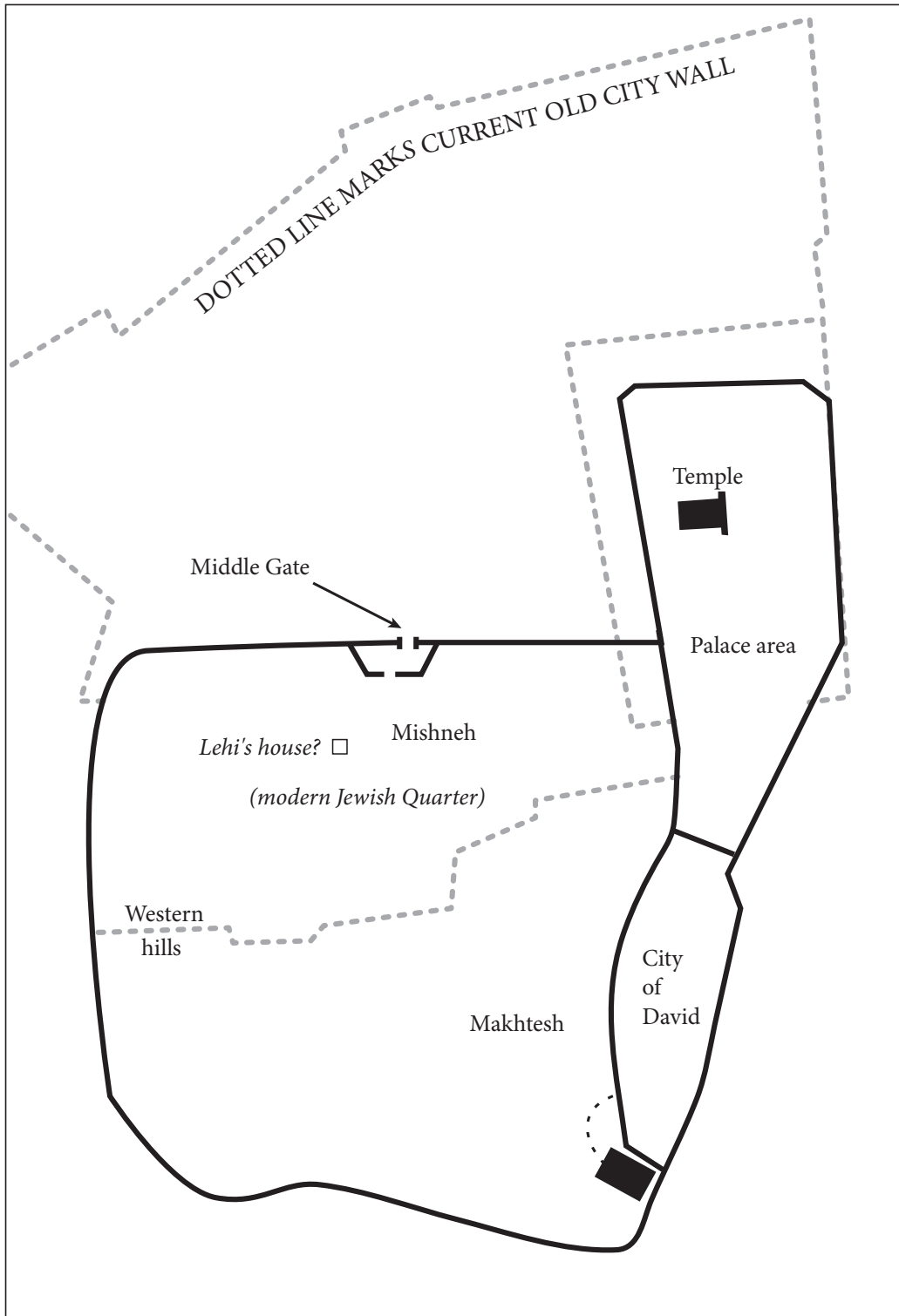


Figure 14. Jerusalem at Lehi's departure.

by the hill upon which sat the City of David and to the west by the larger hill known today as Mount Zion. Building activity in the Makhtesh may have begun as early as the tenth century B.C., when population growth in Jerusalem, the capital of Solomon's empire, would have begun to exceed the land available inside the walled City of David. The new quarter probably experienced only modest growth during the ninth and eighth centuries B.C., and it should be emphasized that those who lived and worked in the Makhtesh were local Judean Jerusalemites. When the northern kingdom refugees began arriving at Jerusalem in the last quarter of the eighth century, they were unlikely to have settled in the Makhtesh alongside the longtime Judean residents (most local populations are initially reticent to allow potentially transient refugees to integrate into their already established communities); thus the original Mishneh camp was located well to the north of the Makhtesh neighborhood (see again fig. 3). The Makhtesh had the advantage that it was nearer to the Siloam Pool, Jerusalem's water supply, than was the Mishneh. In the first few decades after the Assyrian attacks, the Makhtesh probably remained primarily native Judean, if only for proprietary reasons, and the Mishneh became the haven for Ephraimites, Manassites, and other northern Israelites. This situation gradually altered in the century after Hezekiah built his wall around both exterior neighborhoods in 701 B.C., physically annexing them to the City of David and the Temple Mount (see again fig. 4). By the time of King Josiah (640–609 B.C.), the Makhtesh area seems to have become the downtown of Jerusalem—it was *down* from both the City of David and the Mishneh, and for purely residential purposes it was topographically inferior to both, sitting in the Tyropoean hollow where traffic to the Siloam Pool was heavy. While the Mishneh was growing into a higher-class Jerusalem neighborhood, the Makhtesh downtown seems gradually to have evolved into a quarter of commerce and industry, as mirrored in a prophecy of Zephaniah uttered during Josiah's reign:

And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish gate, and an howling from the second [Heb. *mishneh*] and a great crashing from the hills. Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off. (Zephaniah 1:10–11)

Avigad contrasts the Mishneh with the Makhtesh in Zephaniah's day:

That the *Mishneh* was probably a well-to-do residential quarter is evidenced by the fact that Huldah the Prophetess and her husband, a high court official, lived there. In contrast, the *Maktesh* was probably a commercial and industrial section located apparently in the lower Central Valley.<sup>21</sup>

It is entirely possible that while Lehi's upscale home was located in the Mishneh, his metalsmithing shop, where he also likely marketed his work, was in the Makhtesh quarter of Jerusalem among the merchant people and "they that bear silver" mentioned in Zephaniah 1:11. This is admittedly conjecture, but it is at least plausible.

### **The Middle Gate into Lehi's Jerusalem**

One more feature of Lehi's Jerusalem is worthy of mention before concluding. When Hezekiah built his wall around the Mishneh and the Makhtesh, his builders created a baylike deviation in the middle of the otherwise straight east-to-west course of the northern wall line (see fig. 15). The likely reason for this feature was the topography of that exact spot. Jutting off of the so-called Transversal Valley, a small north-south ravine existed just at the point in question, and the baylike deviation skirted this ravine on its south side. A significant portion of its foundation was unearthed during Avigad's excavation of the Jewish Quarter in the Old City during the 1970s<sup>22</sup> and has been preserved for visitors to examine (see fig. 5). Avigad suggested that the topog-

raphy of the spot and the deviation in the wall line there made it likely this was also the location of a gate in the northern wall. The small ravine served as the alley to the gate entrance. The actual opening of that gate was even detected in Avigad's excavation.<sup>23</sup> During the seventh century B.C., however, almost surely during the reign of Josiah, a second phase of construction took place that resulted in another gateway that cut directly across the ravine just north of the first gate, straightening out the line of the northern wall (see fig. 15). Avigad found it difficult to propose a cause for this change, but it may have been that the ravine alley leading to the earlier gate offered a potential attacker too much opportunity to undermine the earlier gate and wall at that spot. In any event, the second gate was in use at the end of the seventh century B.C., when Lehi was living in the city. Doubtless, Lehi and his family passed through the gate on numerous occasions. Avigad even believed that this particular gate is mentioned in the Bible:

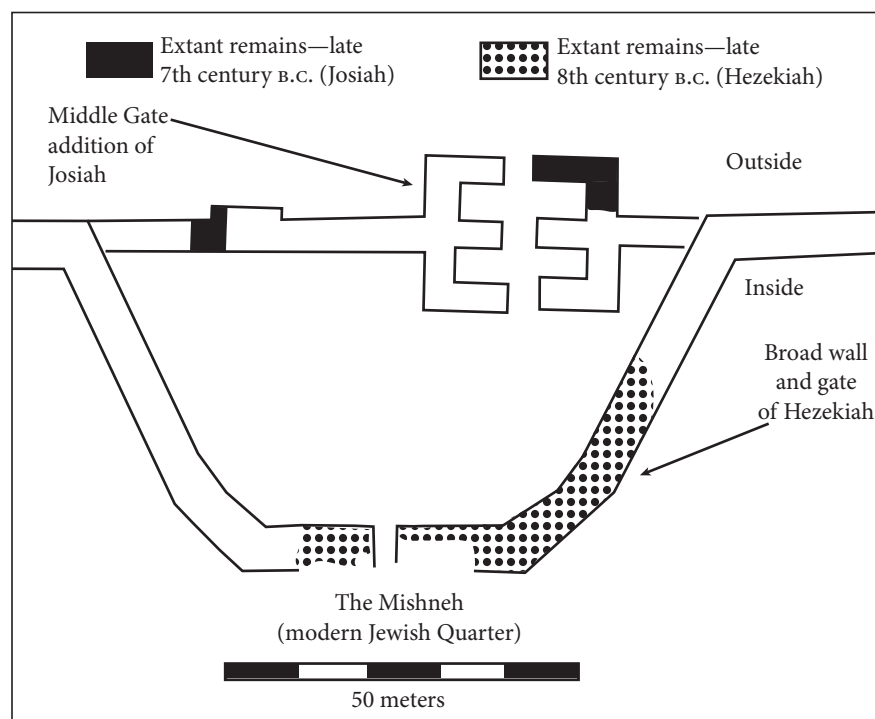


Figure 15. Archaeological diagram of the Middle Gate. (After Avigad.)

In trying to identify our reconstructed gate 2 with one of the gates known from the Scriptures, we seem to have no better candidate than the “Middle Gate” (*sha‘ar ha-tawekh*) mentioned only in Jer. 39:3. As can be observed on the plan . . . our gate is situated right in the middle of the northern defence wall of the city. The biblical narrator mentions the Middle Gate as the meeting place of the Babylonian generals after the forcing of the north wall of Jerusalem during the siege in 586 B.C.<sup>24</sup>

The restored remains of the eastern corner of this Middle Gate are open for visitors to Jerusalem to view (see fig. 16). Avigad’s team also discovered evidence of a battle on the excavated surface in front of the gate (i.e., on its north side): charred wood, ashes, soot, and a group of five arrowheads, four of iron and one of bronze. The veteran archaeologist felt this find was most significant: “It seems that what we found is the first tan-



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Figure 16. Tower of the Middle Gate discovered by archaeologists during the 1970s while excavating in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem’s Old City. This gate would have been in the north wall of Jerusalem during Lehi’s day and would have led directly into the Mishneh.

gible evidence of the fateful battle for the walls of Jerusalem, which terminated in the destruction of the entire city and the burning of Solomon's Temple."<sup>25</sup> Lehi had prophesied of this very destruction at the hands of the Babylonians (see 1 Nephi 1:13). Coincidentally, his own house had likely been located not far inside that Middle Gate, in the Mishneh of Jerusalem.

### **Conclusions about Lehi's House at Jerusalem**

Finally, I give some tentative conclusions about Lehi, his family, and his house at Jerusalem—tentative, again, because of the series of assumptions on which they are based:

1. Since his tribal heritage was Manasseh, but he had “dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days” (1 Nephi 1:4), Lehi was probably a descendant of Manassite refugees who had fled south to Judah with others of the northern kingdom when the Assyrians attacked, destroyed, and deported Israel in 724–722 B.C.

2. Because they settled at Jerusalem, Lehi's great-grandparents were part of the refugee camp that was surrounded by a new, seven-meter-wide city wall that King Hezekiah had built to protect the neighborhoods on the western hills and to annex them physically to the older parts of Jerusalem. The refugee camp area became known as the Mishneh, a “second” or “additional” part of the city.

3. Protected by Jerusalem's wall, Lehi's great-grandparents and their fellow Jerusalemites were not deported by the Assyrians in Sennacherib's 701 B.C. attack on Judah. While the rest of Judah was thoroughly destroyed and over 200,150 other Judeans were taken away into captivity, Lehi's ancestors were spared to live on, resulting in Lehi's eventual birth in Jerusalem.

4. Lehi's great-grandparents and grandparents were under the necessity of finding a way to make a living in Jerusalem, being landless sojourners to the area. They seem to have taken up the practice of metalsmithing, a high-tech vocation that did not require farm land outside the city. This vocation seems to have

been passed down through the generations to Lehi and Nephi themselves, who were apparently expert in working both precious and industrial metals.

5. Lehi was probably born around 645 B.C., a contemporary of both the prophet Jeremiah and King Josiah (born 648 B.C.). He would have been a young man when Assyrian occupation forces finally departed Judah after 630 B.C. and an adult by the time of Josiah's Passover in 622 B.C.—a witness to the renewed independence and resurgence of Judah under King Josiah.

6. Lehi would probably have inherited the house and plot of land owned by his grandparents and parents in the Mishneh or would have acquired a lot nearby in the same neighborhood. In either case, by the time he was an adult, the Mishneh had transformed itself from an eighth-century B.C. refugee camp to an upscale quarter of the city where wealthy types like Shallum the royal clothier and Lehi himself lived, as well as possibly Laban (a Josephite captain of fifty) and Ishmael the Ephraimite.

7. With the evolution of the Mishneh into a wealthier neighborhood and the likelihood that industrial work would not have continued to be carried out in such surroundings, it is possible that Lehi's metalsmithing and marketing operation was located well to the south of his residence, in the Makhtesh quarter of Jerusalem, where commercial and industrial enterprise were apparently operating during Josiah's reign (Zephaniah 1:10–11).

8. Since the Middle Gate of Jerusalem was in use in Lehi's day, just before 600 B.C., it could very well have been the gate he used to exit the city as "he went forth," perhaps circling the Temple Mount on its north side and crossing the Kidron Valley to ascend the Mount of Olives, where he "prayed unto the Lord . . . in behalf of his people" (1 Nephi 1:5). If so, it was likely through the same Middle Gate that "he returned to his own house at Jerusalem; and cast himself upon his bed, being overcome with the Spirit and the things which he had seen" (1 Nephi 1:7).



9. The Middle Gate may well have been the portal through which Nephi entered Jerusalem on the night he “crept into the city and went forth towards the house of Laban,” who, being also of northern descent, may have lived in the Mishneh as well. In that event, it was probably just outside that northern city wall that Nephi had directed his brothers to “hide themselves without the walls” (1 Nephi 4:5).

Thus, when modern visitors to Jerusalem’s Old City walk through the restored Jewish Quarter, photograph the seven-meter-wide remains of Hezekiah’s wall, descend into a nearby basement to inspect the tower of the Middle Gate, and rest for lunch in the pleasant open-air plaza near the Rambam Synagogue, they are in the very area of the ancient Mishneh of Jerusalem where Lehi’s house was most probably found.

## NOTES

1. Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert, The World of the Jaredites, There Were Jaredites* (1952, 1st ed.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 7.
2. Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 3rd ed. (1958, 1st ed.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 46–47.
3. James B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1958), 1:195.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Nahman Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem* (Nashville, Tenn.: Nelson, 1983), 54–55.
6. William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (Based upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner)* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 64.
7. Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem*, 60.
8. Pritchard, *Ancient Near East*, 1:200.
9. Seymour Gitin, “Ekron of the Philistines—Part II: Olive-Oil Suppliers to the World,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16/2 (1990): 34–42.

10. Will Durant, *Our Oriental Heritage* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), 1:271.

11. Both Sennacherib and Esarhaddon mention Manasseh's Judah; see Pritchard, *Ancient Near East*, 1:201.

12. Siegfried H. Horn and P. Kyle McCarter, "The Divided Monarchy," in *Ancient Israel: A Short History from Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple*, ed. Hershel Shanks, rev. and expanded ed. (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1999), 180.

13. The Hebrew word *'elef* is correctly rendered as "thousand" in the King James Version, but in this passage and some others, it may have been vocalized as *'aluf* (same consonantal spelling), indicating a single individual, like a tribal chief (as in Genesis 36) or a professional soldier. See Holladay, *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 17; and David Alexander and Pat Alexander, eds., *Eerdmans Handbook to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1973), 191–92.

14. The estimate is conservative but based on the two-thirds ratio of ancient to modern architectural capacity of the land area of the current Old City of Jerusalem.

15. LaMar C. Berrett, "The So-Called Lehi Cave," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/1 (1999): 64–66.

16. Pritchard, *Ancient Near East*, 1:200.

17. John Tvedtnes, "Was Lehi a Caravaneer?" in *The Most Correct Book: Insights from a Book of Mormon Scholar* (Salt Lake City: Cornerstone, 1999), 94–97. The suggestion was made by Tvedtnes as early as 1984 in "Was Lehi a Caravaneer?" (FARMS Preliminary Report, 1984), 13.

18. B. S. J. Isserlin, *The Israelites* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 124.

19. Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 486.

20. Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem*, 54.

21. *Ibid.*, 54.

22. *Ibid.*, 57.

23. *Ibid.*, 59.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*, 54.