
Science File

Israeli Kings No Myth, New Data Suggest

By THOMAS H. MAUGH II
Times Staff Writer

New radioactive dating from a major Iron Age site called Tel Rehov in northern Israel supports the biblical tradition that David and his son Solomon, founders of the ancient kingdom of Israel, were real nation-builders and not largely mythical figures, as some revisionist historians have argued.

Recent excavations at Megiddo, 25 miles west of Rehov, had suggested that palaces and other artifacts there once associated with Solomon were built by a later family of rulers called the Omrides. Based on those finds, archeologist Israel Finkelstein of Tel Aviv University established a so-called Low Chronology in which Solomon and David are minor chieftains at best.

But a team led by archeologist Amihai Mazar of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem reported in Friday's issue of *Science* that carbon from olive pits and charred grain from one of three "destruction layers" at Tel Re-



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RUINS: *The Tel Rehov site. Carbon dating from the site supports the story of David.*

hov date the layer to 940 to 900 BC. The destruction layers mark times when the site was demolished before being rebuilt.

The new dates correspond to a Sherman-like march across Palestine by the Egyptian Pharaoh Shoshenq, a well-documented event that occurred around 925 BC. According to the biblical books I Kings and II Chronicles, Shoshenq began his invasion five years after Solomon's death. Because Tel Rehov was a 10-hectare urban center, the dating supports the biblical account of Solomon.