

Beth Shean (Scythopolis)

Civilization first settled at Beth Shean 4000 BC south of the Harod River in the fertile soil, with springs of water on the cross roads of trade where the Jezreel/Jordan Valleys meet..

Egypt ruled in Beth Shean when it was a Canaanite city 1500-1100 BC. Joshua did not take Beth Shean (Judges 1:27) and the Philistines displayed the bodies of Saul and his sons on their city walls (1 Sam.31:10).



Not until David took Beth Shean (along with Megiddo and Ta'anach) did Israel occupy the city. Solomon made it an administrative center (1 Kg.4:7). Tiglath-Pileser destroyed the city in 732 BC. The remains of this OT city can be seen in the tel setting next to the Greek/Roman city called Scythopolis that was built in its place during the Hellenistic period. The Hasmoneans took the city in 107 BC. The Gentiles were exiled and it became a Jewish community. Rome took the city in 63 BC and Beth Shean (Scythopolis) became one of the ten citeis of the Decapolis and the predominant city in northern Israel. Rome executed the Jewish residents in 66 AD at the beginning of the Jewish revolt. From that time on into the Byzantine period Beth Shean was a mixed culture of Greeks, Jews and Christians growing to a population of 30,000-40,000. The city was Christianized but the Arab conquest slowed its growth. An earthquake in 749 AD leveled the city. The devastation of this earthquake can still be seen today. Some of the sites visible today are: 1) Theater, 2) Bathhouse, 3) "Palladius Street", a colonnaded street, 4) Sigma, a semicircular concourse surrounded by rooms, 5) Agora, 6) Roman Temple, 7) Northern Street, a colonnaded street leading to the NW city gate, 8) Nymphaeum, 9) Public lavatories (bathrooms), 10) Valley Street and the Truncated Bridge, 11) Amphitheater, 12) Tel Beth Shean from the OT



In the background is the Tel of OT Beth Shean. In front are the theater and the colonnaded streets of Scythopolis



Pillars in the corner of the front of the theater.