

On-site Lecture Tour: Ancient Canaanite City (Arad)

Lecture: 02-27 On-site Lecture Tour: Ancient Canaanite City (Arad), Numbers 21 Route, Early Bronze Age Urban Grid, Solomonic Stratum, Fortifications, and Economy | Israel 2026

SITE OVERVIEW

Location: Tel Arad (modern name); Arad (ancient/biblical Canaanite name)

Date of Visit: Not explicitly mentioned in the recording

Biblical References: Numbers 21 (referenced in connection with the Promised Land and the Israelites' approach to Arad)

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Arad was an established Canaanite city at the time of Moses and the Israelite exodus

The king/leader of Arad refused Moses' request to pass through the city with the Israelite people on their way to the Promised Land

As a result of this refusal, Moses was forced to divert the Israelites southward — down to the southern end of the Dead Sea, through the Aqaba desert region (prior to the Red Sea), and around to approach Jericho from the east (modern-day Jordanian side)

The city was destroyed at various points by the Edomites, Assyrians, and Babylonians, but was repeatedly rebuilt

The current excavated level visited corresponds to the Solomonic period, dated to the 12th century B.C., contemporaneous with the reigns of David and Solomon, and linked thematically to Solomon's Temple

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Excavations have revealed a house that visitors can observe on site

The city was enclosed by approximately 4,000 feet of wall, with watchtowers positioned at intervals around the perimeter

The urban layout features a grid system of crossing streets organized around city squares — a notably sophisticated design for its era

A settlement at this site has been dated to approximately 4,000 years ago, placing its origins in the Early Bronze Age (3100–2100 B.C.)

The current accessible stratum is identified as Solomonic (12th century B.C.)

The watchtower system provided broad visibility across the surrounding plain, enabling early detection of approaching groups — contextually significant given the scale of the Israelite migration

DR. SCHILLING'S KEY POINTS

The tell (the elevated mound formed by successive layers of occupation) is introduced as a key symbol and concept, with scriptural grounding in Numbers 21

The Canaanite king's refusal of passage was pragmatically motivated: a population of approximately one million people would have devastated local crops and agricultural resources — not purely a military or political decision

Moses, leading a population of former slaves with no standing army, had no military option to force passage; retreat and diversion was the only viable course

The Solomonic-period level of the site connects the physical archaeology directly to the biblical monarchy narrative and becomes explicitly relevant to discussions inside the site (presumably the Israelite temple complex within Arad)

The group's current hotel is described as being approximately halfway down the Dead Sea — used to orient listeners to the geographic scale of the Israelite detour

GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Arad sits on an open plain with extensive sightlines for miles in every direction — strategically advantageous for defense and surveillance

The site lies along a route that would have provided relatively direct access to the Promised Land from the south

Moses' forced detour followed a route: southward along the Dead Sea → Aqaba (desert region preceding the Red Sea) → south end of the Sinai/Arabian peninsula → northward up the east side (modern Jordan) → arriving at Jericho

Jericho is noted as the next major site on the group's itinerary (approximately two days away from the date of this visit)

The relationship between Arad and surrounding Canaanite territory underscores the controlled and occupied nature of the land prior to Israelite entry

QUOTABLE MOMENTS

“He doesn’t have an army. He can’t fight the Canaanites. He’s got to make a decision. We can’t fight them. We’re not an army. We’re slaves. We build mud bricks.”

“If a million people are coming towards you, you know it ahead of time.”

“This is a tell. It’s a symbol. You’ll find it in scripture.”

PERSONAL NOTES

⚠ Speculative flag: The figure of “one million people” for the Israelite population is a traditional/popular estimate and is subject to significant scholarly debate regarding the Hebrew term *’elep* and its translation

⚠ Speculative flag: The dating of the Solomonic level to the “12th century B.C.” warrants cross-referencing; conventional scholarship often places Solomon in the 10th century B.C. — this discrepancy should be followed up

The reference to activity and discussion inside the site suggests a continuation of the lecture, likely focused on the Israelite temple at Arad — follow-up notes from that portion of the visit would be valuable

Recording appears to have been interrupted or terminated abruptly by a device connectivity issue (Speaker 3); content may be incomplete

Follow-up question: What is the current scholarly consensus on the identification of the Solomonic stratum at Tel Arad, and how does it relate to Yohanan Aharoni’s excavations?