

# The Search for Migdol of the New Kingdom and Exodus 14:2: An Update

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**Abstract:** The place name Migdol occurs as an Egyptian eastern border site in the books of the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and it is found again in the exodus itinerary. This study will review recent archaeological data from north Sinai that bear on the identification of this toponym. As it turns out, over the 1500 years for which the name of the site is attested in Christian, Roman, Greek, Assyrian, Hebrew and Egyptian sources, the location moved more than once, making locating the various “Migdols” an ongoing challenge. However, recent finds have allowed us to narrow the window for the location of Migdol of the 2nd millennium B.C.

Nearly 25 years have passed since Eliezer Oren published a preliminary report on his excavations at Tell Qedua (T-21) in NW Sinai entitled “Migdol: A New Fortress on the Edge of the Eastern Nile Delta” (Oren 1984: 7-44). He concluded that this site was the Migdol of the Hebrew prophets, but since no evidence for the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. was uncovered, he proposed that the Migdol of the New Kingdom sources and the exodus itinerary (Exod. 14:2) must be located elsewhere. The purpose of this study is to investigate an intriguing biblical problem, the location of the earlier Migdol in the light of the archaeological investigations of the past quarter century in North Sinai.

Let us begin by reviewing the biblical data, and then we will turn to the efforts to locate Migdol. Migdol (מִגְדוֹל) only occurs six times in the Old Testament, viz., in Ezekiel (29:10 & 30:6), Jeremiah (44:1 & 46:14) and in the exodus itinerary (Exod. 14:2; Num 33:7).<sup>1</sup> Migdol is a word of Semitic origin, meaning tower or fort (KB 543-544; Burke 2007: 30-34); consequently, it has long been thought that its presence in Exodus 14:2 indicates that it had a military function -- perhaps as a border fort (Spence 1882: 314; Cassuto 1967: 160). There have been some recent studies of the architectural features of the migdol-fort (Cavillier 2004: 57-79; Morris 2005: 415-420)

The references in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel both date to 586 B.C. or shortly thereafter. Ezekiel’s citations are especially helpful as he couples Migdol with Syene (Aswan) כּוּשׁ יַעֲרֵבְבוּל מִמִּגְדוֹל סִנְיָה “from Migdol to Syene as far as the border of Kush.” The sequence represents a geographical progression from north to south. Because Syene, i.e. Aswan built on and around Elephantine Island, marked Egypt’s southern frontier town, it appears that Migdol is its northern counterpart. Both had a military function and guarded an Egyptian frontier. “Migdol to Syene” would be Egypt’s counterpart to Israel’s from “Dan to Beer-Sheba.”

According to Jeremiah 43 the prophet himself travelled to Egypt after the assassination of the governor Gedeliah, but before Nebuchanezzar’s fourth campaign to Judah in 582 B.C. (Jer. 52:30). We lack information in the book of

Jeremiah about the prophet’s stay in Egypt. Nevertheless he does display remarkable knowledge of the geography, politics and religion of Egypt as I have argued elsewhere (Hoffmeier 1982: 165-170). In Jeremiah 44:1 the prophet’s oracle refers to Jews living “in Egypt, at Migdol, at Tahpanhes, and Memphis, and in the land of Pathros.” This sequence, like that of Ezekiel, represents a north to south progression. Tahpanhes is identified with the NE delta site of Tell Defeneh, located 12 km west of the Suez Canal at Qantara (Petrie 1888; Jones & Fiema 1992: 308-309). Pathros is the Hebrew writing for the Egyptian expression *p3 t3 rsy*, the southland or Upper Egypt (KB 991). The references in Jeremiah suggest, as do those in Ezekiel, that Migdol is located E or NE of Tahpanhes, almost certainly in NW Sinai. Seventh Century Assyrian sources likewise locate “Magdali” on the east frontier in north Sinai (Ver-rath 19 :235-238)

The importance of north Sinai to the economic and military history of Egypt and for its relationship to western Asia has long been recognized, but as Oren, who conducted extensive surveys and excavations in that region in the 1970s and early 1980s, has observed, it has been “until very recently, *terra incognita* to archaeological scholarship” (Oren 1984: 76). Over the last 25 years archaeological investigations in north Sinai have increased and, as a result, the picture has changed dramatically.

## Recent Paleo-environmental Developments

Before delving into the relevant archaeological sites and discoveries in north Sinai concerning the location of Old Testament Migdol, mention must be made of the recent results of geo-morphological and paleo-environmental study of the eastern delta and north Sinai in as much as they directly impact the search for archaeological sites related to Egyptian history and the biblical narratives.

The present day map of the NE Delta and Sinai, the starting point of most historical geographers, is woefully inadequate, as this region has changed significantly in the last three thousand years. Thanks to the work of geologists like David Neev (Neev, Bakler, & Emery 1987),

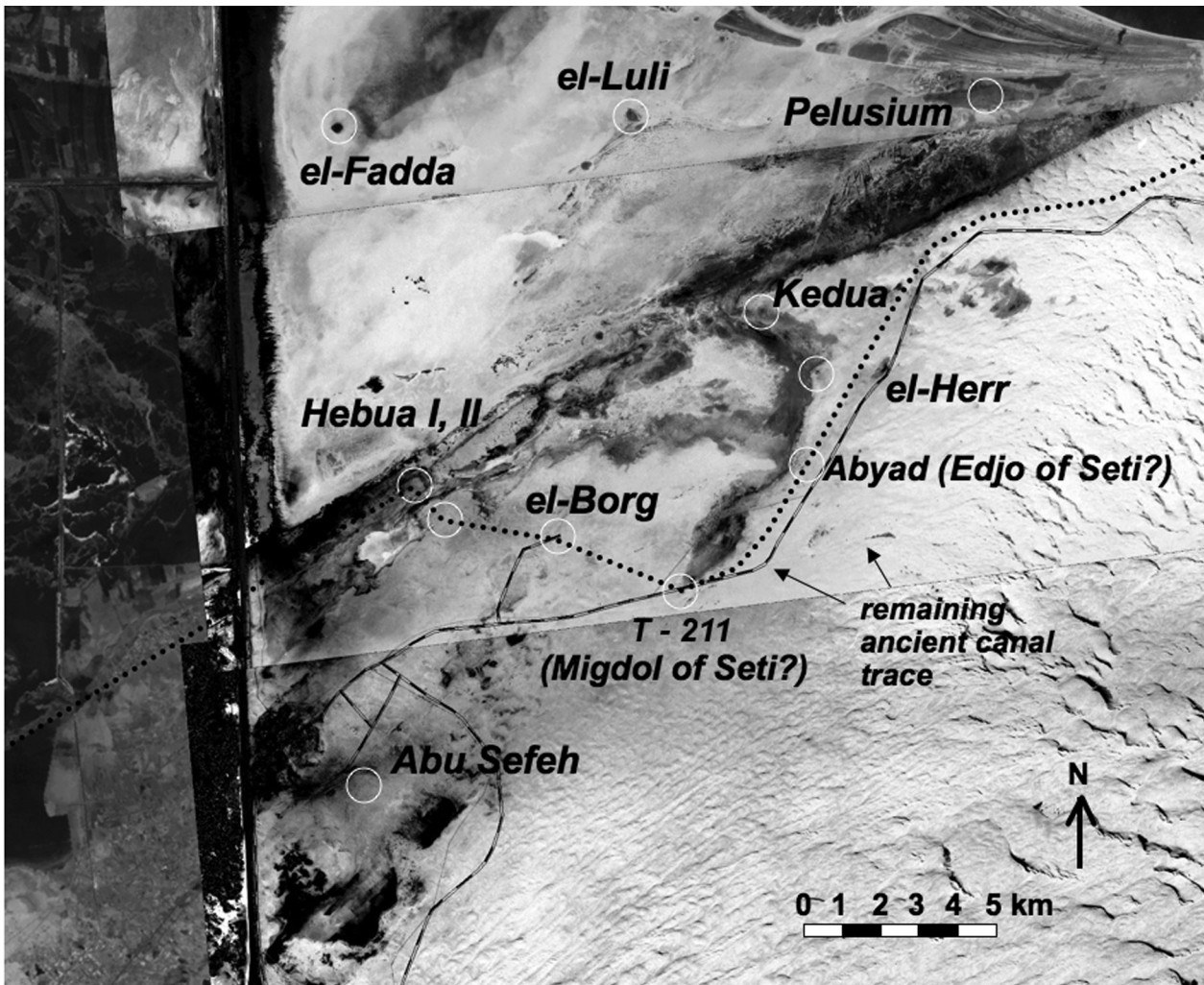


Figure 1: 1968 Corona Satellite Image of NW Sinai (Public Domain).

Tuvia Weissbrod and Amihai Sneh (1973 & 1975) of the Geological Survey of Israel, Jean-Daniel Stanley of the Smithsonian and his associates (Stanley & Goodfriend 1999; Stanley & Abu-Zeid 1990; Stanley & Coutellier 1987), Bruno Marcolongo (1992) who worked with the Institut Française d'archéologie Orientale, and Stephen Moshier (Hoffmeier & Moshier 2006; Moshier & Kalani 2008) who has worked with East Frontier Archaeological Project, which I have directed since 1995, the paleo-environmental picture of this area is becoming clearer. These studies reveal that the Mediterranean coastline during the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium (and earlier) was determined by a tectonic feature known as the Pelusiac Line that remains visible on satellite images (Figure 1). Moshier, in collaboration with several members of the Geological Survey of Egypt,<sup>2</sup> has investigated the coastal ridge that makes up this line. C<sup>14</sup> dating of shells embedded in the ridge date to around 6000 years BP (Moshier & Kalani 2008). Between the Suez Canal and Pelusium (Tell Farama) was a lagoon that at its widest (E-W) was around 8 kms. as was its length (N-S). From the west there flowed a distributary of the Pelusiac Nile, which ran parallel to the coastal ridge and past the important site of Hebua, debouching into the eastern lagoon

(Figure 2). In our excavations at Tell el-Borg in 2001 (more on this below), we uncovered evidence that another Nile distributary (or drainage channel from the el-Ballah Lakes) ran parallel to the northern branch, about 2.5 kms. away (Moshier & Kalani 2008). The lagoon or lake apparently still contained water during the 7<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. This new map of NW Sinai must be born in mind when one considers the ancient geography of the region and the location of ancient sites.

### Migdol of the Prophets

Efforts to locate Migdol go back more than a century. Sir Alan Gardiner's influential study, now approaching its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary, has made a lasting impact on Egyptological and biblical scholarship (Gardiner 1920: 107-110). He brought together Egyptian, biblical, classical and church historical sources in an effort to locate Migdol. Migdol of the Hebrew prophets, Gardiner concluded, was almost certainly Magdalo of the Antonine Itinerary that should be found east of the Suez Canal in Sinai (see also Davies, 1979). This itinerary places Magdala as the mid-way point between Pelusium and Sile. Pelusium has long been identified with Tell Farama. It is located near the present

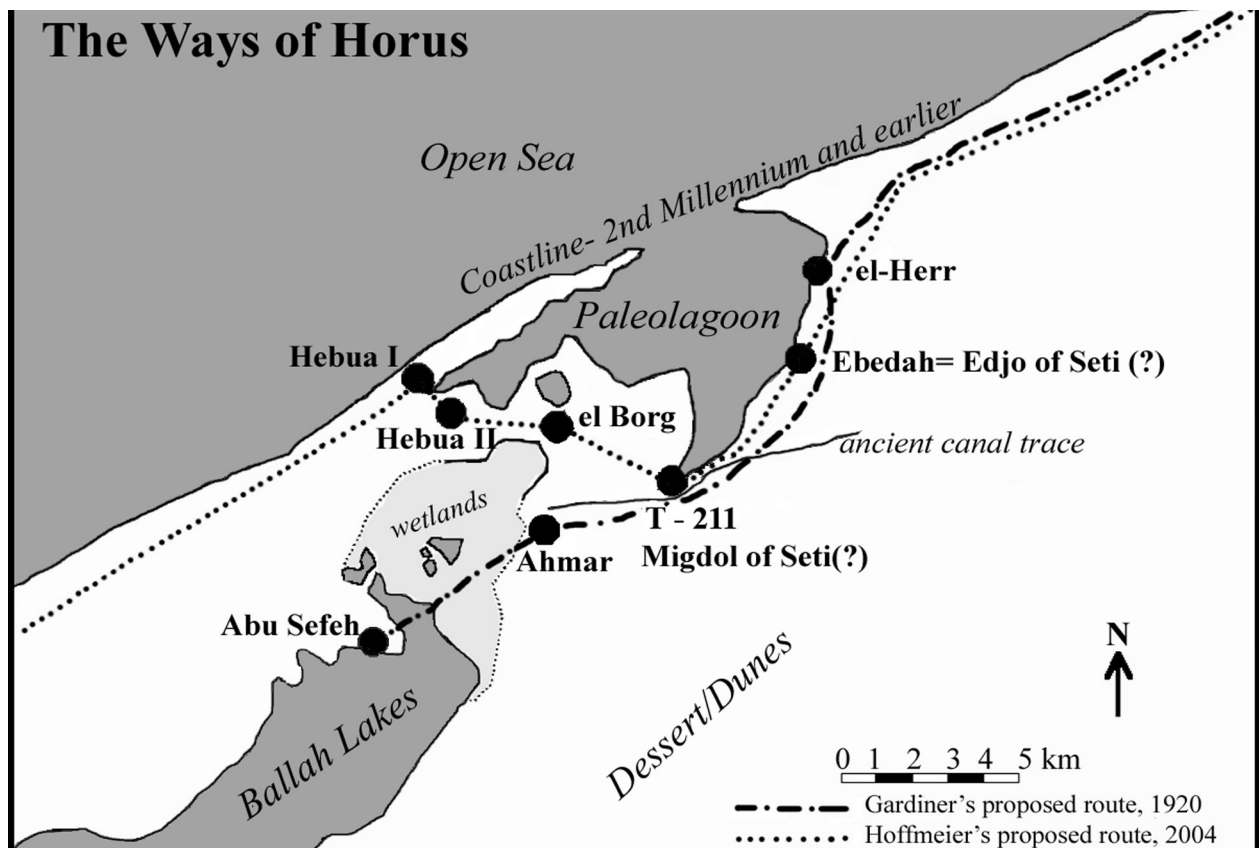


Figure 2: Map of NW Sinai based on geo-morphological of Stephen Moshier. Electronic reproduction by Jessica Hoffmeier Lim (2005)

day town of Baluza that preserves its ancient name (Carrez-Maratray 1999; Figueras 2000), while Tjaru/Sile was equated with Tell Abu Sefêh, located just 2 km east of Qantara East (Gardiner 1920: 99).<sup>3</sup>

F. Ll. Griffiths was the first to explore this tell in the 1880s (Petrie 1888: 97-108), then more recently Oren investigated it in 1972 and also dug a few sondages (Oren 1987: 113, n.3). Finally in the mid-1990s full-scale excavations were begun by archaeologists with the Supreme Council for Antiquities. The Egyptian team uncovered Greco-Roman Period forts, leading to the view that Tell Abu Sefêh is Sile of that period (Abd el Maksoud 1998: 61-65; Abd el Maksoud, Ibrahim, Mohamed & Grossman 1997: 221-226). No remains earlier than the late Persian period were uncovered by Griffiths, Oren or the Egyptian teams, indicating that this site could not be Tjaru/Sile of New Kingdom times.

Because the identifications of Pelusium and Sile were thought to be resolved, and since the Antonine Itinerary placed Magdala mid-way between these locations, the most obvious site between them is Tell el-Herr. It is located on the eastern coast of the aforementioned lagoon (Figure 2). So Gardiner, following the lead of Greville Chester and Griffiths who actually visited this site (something Gardiner never did!), determined that Tell el-Herr was Migdol (Gardiner 1920: 107-108). Because the Antonine Itinerary located Magdala 12 Roman miles from both Pelusium and Sile, whereas Tell el-Herr is actually only 7 Roman miles

south of Pelusium, Gardiner acknowledged this deviation as the only possible objection for the identification (109). But due to the absence of any other plausible site 4-5 Roman miles south Tell el-Herr, its equation with Migdol has continued.

Investigations at Tell el-Herr began with Griffiths in the late 1880s (Petrie 1888: 101) and Jean Clédat in 1905. Some of Clédat's notes have only recently been published, but prove not to be detailed or helpful (Valbelle & Le Saout 1999: 71-77). After the Camp David accords were implemented, Mohamed Abd el-Maksoud of the SCA began to excavate Tell el-Herr, but in 1985 he turned the site over to Dominique Valbelle, who has directed the work ever since. A strong case for equating Tell el-Herr with Magdala was recently made by Joffrey Seguin (2007).

After more than twenty seasons of excavations at Tell el-Herr, two forts have been uncovered, from the Persian and Greco-Roman period respectively. To date, no remains earlier than the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. have been documented (Abd el-Maksoud 1986: 15-16; Valbelle et. al., 1992: 11-31; Valbelle 2001: 12-14; Valbelle & Louis 1988: 23-55; Gratien 1996: 51-105; Valbelle & Nogara 2000: 53-66). Naturally this Persian through Greco-Roman Period site is too late to be Migdol of Ezekiel and Jeremiah (6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), but it is likely nearby, somewhere on the east side of the ancient lagoon.

As mentioned above, Oren's excavations at Tell Queda led him so conclude that it was the site of Migdol of the Hebrew

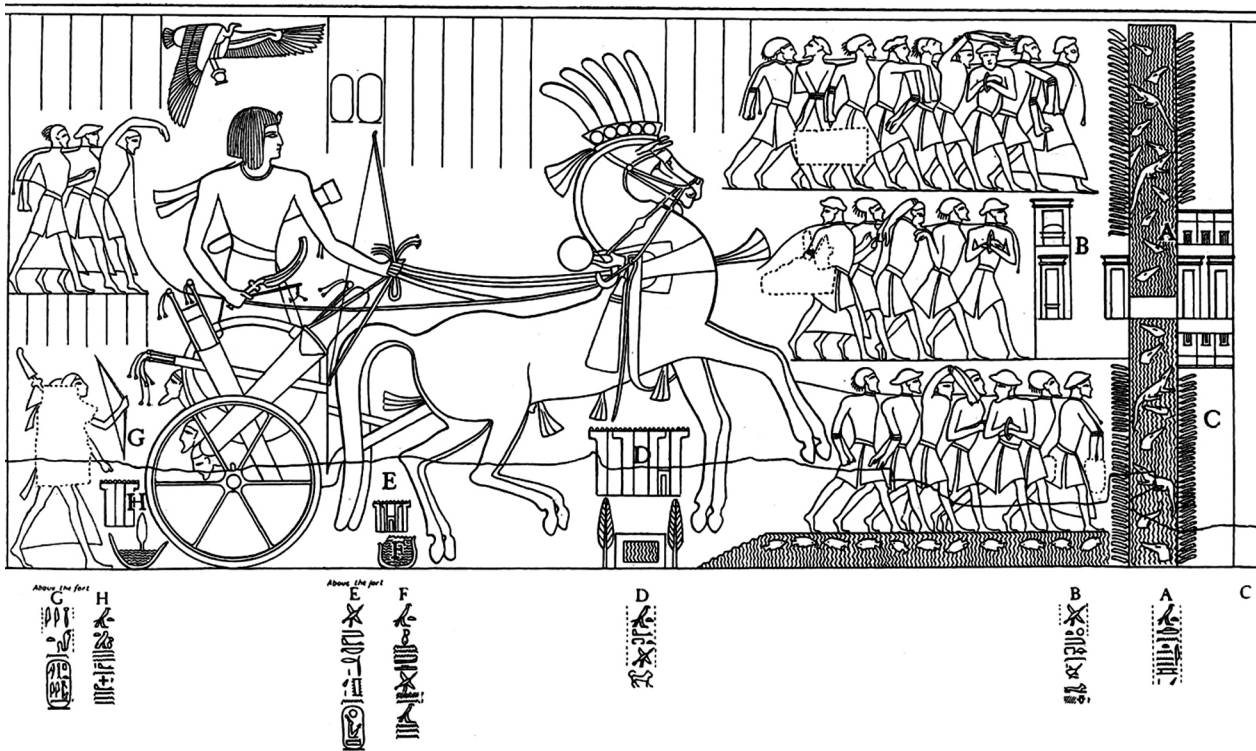


Figure 3: Seti I Karnak relief from Gardiner (1920)

prophets. He uncovered the remains of a mud-brick fort that occupied 40,000 square meters. The walls measured between 15-20 meters thick (Oren 1984: 10-11). Based on the data Oren amassed, he determined that the fort was occupied during the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, i.e. the Saite and early Persian periods, meaning that it functioned during the period of Jeremiah and Ezekiel's period of activity. In 1993 and 1997, Donald Redford conducted excavations at Tell Qedua, and his results reaffirmed Oren's earlier work, declaring that "the time represented by the occupation of Tell Qedwa was not long and was confined to a single period," the "last third of the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.," and "appears not to have survived into the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C." (Redford 1984: 31 & 35).

The occupational horizon of Tell Qedua, then, nicely fits into the period of Ezekiel and Jeremiah. Its location on the edge of the ancient lagoon, or lake, by the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century, on the eastern edge of Egypt's frontier with Sinai makes it an ideal candidate for Migdol of the Saite period. The fact that its occupation ended just before the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, about the time that the first fort was being built at Tell el-Herr, led Oren to propose that Migdol of the Hebrew prophets was transferred to Tell el-Herr, which is just over a kilometer south of Qedua (Oren 1984: 31 & 35).

In the intervening 25 years, no new evidence has emerged to challenge his theory, despite continued excavations there and at nearby Tell el-Herr. Thus we clearly have two sites that were both likely called Magdala or Migdol during the

first millennium B.C. Evidently the site moved from the Saite site to Tell el-Herr, slightly over a kilometer to the south, due to environmental change in the region, most likely the desiccation of the lagoon. But what about Migdol of the exodus itinerary?

### Migdol of the Exodus Itinerary

Gardiner's conclusions about geography of the Delta and north Sinai towered over the debates about the exodus geography for decades. Similarly the recent studies by the eminent Egyptologist, Donald Redford, on the dating biblical toponyms have cast a shadow on discussions of the past twenty years (Redford 1963: 408-418; 1987: 137-161). He believes that the geographical names in Exodus and Numbers 33 reflect realities of the Saite period (late 7<sup>th</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> centuries), and not those of Ramesside times as is generally believed. Redford's conclusions have, unfortunately, been uncritically followed in recent scholarly publications that have ignored Redford's critics. Here I speak of Wolfgang Helck's rejoinder (Helck 1963: 408-418). Redford thought that the absence of the element Pi in the toponym Rameses reflected on the lateness of exodus narratives. But Helck showed that there are New Kingdom writings that used the abbreviated form of the name, and thus the Hebrew writing in the Torah was an acceptable late 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. variant. Redford renewed his position concerning the dating of Egyptian toponyms in the Torah in the 1980s (1987: 137-161). Participating in the same symposium as Redford was Manfred Bietak. He demurred with Redford's con-

clusions, declaring: “I do not necessarily share Professor Redford’s pessimism” (Bietak 1987: 163). Additionally, Kenneth Kitchen, after reviewing all relevant Ramesside era texts, concurs with Bietak, maintaining that the exodus toponyms (e.g. Rameses, Succoth and Pithom) do reflect the Ramesside era (Kitchen 1998: 65-131).

These considerations notwithstanding, John Van Seters recently announced that “the geography of the sojourn and exodus, as it is presented in Exodus 1-15 does not provide us with any evidence of historicity of the events of the time of the Ramessides,” rather it “corresponds with the sixth century BCE” (Van Seters 2001: 275). Redford’s late dating of the exodus geography has also left its mark on Israel. Finkelstein and Neil Silberman’s (2001: 65) treatment of the geography and dating of the exodus narratives in their popular book, *Bible Unearthed*.

Assuming that Oren is correct in believing that Migdol of the prophets is Tell Qedua and that nearby Tell el-Herr replaced it in the late Persian through Roman era, and because neither site has yielded evidence for the New Kingdom, one might be inclined to think that the references to Migdol in Exodus and Numbers would likewise fall into this late period as Redford, Van Seters and Finkelstein believe. The problem with this conclusion is that Migdol is a well-attested toponym from the Ramesside Period texts, which is why Oren and Kitchen rightly argued that the location of New Kingdom Migdol must be found elsewhere. Commenting on the conflict between the present archaeological remains from Tell el-Herr and Qedua and the Egyptian texts mentioning Migdol, Kitchen reckons that “New Kingdom ‘Migdol’ of Sethos I is identical with neither of these sites, but remains to be discovered somewhere in the vicinity” (Kitchen 1993: 14).

In a recent issue of *BASOR* (no. 346), Aaron Burke offered an exhaustive review of ancient and modern sites in the Levant and Egypt that bear the name Migdol and its derivations. Concerning the references to Migdol in NW Sinai from Egyptian, Northwest Semitic and Greek texts, which he equates with Migdol of the Hebrew Bible, he concludes, “The references to this site demonstrate that variant spellings of the same place name occurred in a variety of languages over a period of more than one thousand years” (Burke 2007: 30).

### Egyptian Texts and the Location of Migdol

Egyptian New Kingdom sources mentioning Migdol were assembled by Gardiner (1920: 106-109), and no new references can be added to his corpus. Possibly the earliest mention of Migdol is a somewhat obscure occurrence in Amarna Letter no. 234. It states: “Akka (i.e. Acco) is like Magdalu in Egypt,” which William Moran maintained is “probably Migdol of the Exodus” (1992: 390). If he is correct, then this is the earliest reference to this frontier fort found in Egypt. The text, however offers no hint where this site is located nor how it and Acco are similar.

The foundation of Gardiner’s study of the military road

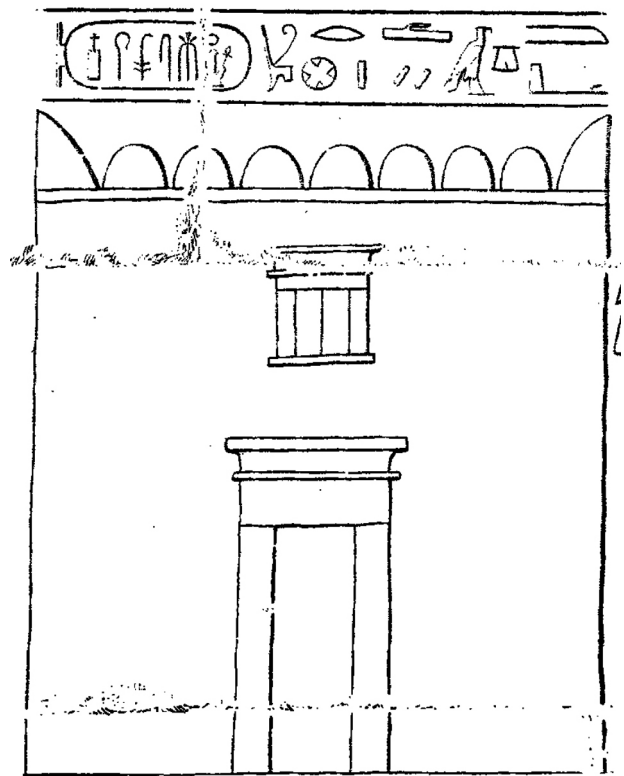


Figure 4: Fortress Migdol of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu (Nelson, 1930)

between Egypt and Canaan is the relief of Seti I carved on the outside northern wall of the hypostyle hall at Karnak Temple (Epigraphic Survey, plates 1-6) (Figure 3), which is supplemented by the satirical letter in Pap. Anastasi I (Fischer-Elfert 1983 & 1986). The scene depicts a sequence of named forts that begins with Egypt’s frontier town at Fort Tjaru/Sile and ends with Gaza, the entry point of Canaan (Epigraphic Survey 1986: plates 2-8; Gardiner 1920: 99-116).<sup>4</sup> The first three forts are: 1) the Fortress (*h̄tm*) of Tjaru, 2) the Dwelling (*ṯ*) of the Lion and 3) the Migdol (*mktr*) of Menmaatre (the pre-nomen of Seti I), all of which are depicted and labelled by their name (Figure 3).

Another reference to Migdol occurs in Pap. Anasatasi V (20, 2) where it is called *t3 inbt m̄h̄ty n m̄tkr sti mr-n-pt* “the northern wall of Migdol Seti-Merneptah” (Gardiner 1937: 67). It is unclear if the king’s name refers to Seti I or II. Regardless, in this text, the troop commander Kakemwer is travelling from Pi-Ramesses to the Tjeku (Heb. Succoth), i.e. the Wadi Tumilat area. It is here that the statement is made about the northern wall of Migdol. This suggests that this particular fort is not located in the Wadi Tumilat, but to the north, in the Ways of Horus area, Egypt’s northern corridor across north Sinai.

A final New Kingdom reference to Migdol is from the reign of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu (Nelson 1930: pl. 42). After repulsing the Sea Peoples invasion, the king celebrates his victories at the nearby fort identified as “Migdol of Ramesses Ruler of Heliopolis.” The name is actually written over the depiction of the fort (Figure 4).

Thus we have three clear Egyptian references to a frontier site name Migdol, and possibly a fourth in EA 234. In her recent exhaustive and masterful study of all the textual and archaeological data regarding Egypt's east frontier, Ellen Morris observed that forts incorporating Migdol in their name are limited in the New Kingdom and that they are found in Sinai. "One or possibly two *mkdr*-forts were situated along the Ways of Horus" (Morris 2005: 717-718). There appears to be only one site named Migdol in the NE Delta and frontier area in New Kingdom times, but where was it?

### Recent Archaeological Work in North Sinai

Gardiner made the first serious attempt to locate the Ways of Horus sites, but the archaeology of north Sinai was just in its infancy. His provisional sequence for the first three sites was Tjaru/Sile = Tell Abu Sefêh, the Dwelling of the Lion/Ramesses = Tell Ahmar (or Hebua)<sup>5</sup> and Migdol of Menmaatre (i.e. Seti I) = Tell el-Herr. Furthermore, he saw no reason for distinguishing Migdol of the Hebrew prophets with the one named in Exodus 14:2 and Numbers 33:7 (Gardiner 1920: 108). The problem with Gardiner's proposal is that recent excavations discussed above at Abu Sefêh and Herr could not be Sile and Migdol respectively because neither have New Kingdom remains. Concerning the third site, he thought that it was both Migdol of the prophets and the exodus itinerary (Gardiner 1920: 107-09).

From the sequence on the Seti I relief, it is evident that Migdol was located near Egypt's border town and fort Tjaru/Sile. Since Oren's surveys and excavations in north Sinai, there has been a surge of archaeological work in the region that has shed light on the east frontier defence system and the forts across Sinai. The above-mentioned excavations at Tell Abu Sefêh have eliminated it from consideration as New Kingdom Tjaru/Sile, but it likely to be Sile of Greco-Roman texts. However, starting in 1981, Mohamed Abd el-Maksoud began to investigate Tell Hebua, a site located around 8 km NNE of Tell Abu Sefêh and situated on the coastal ridge that demarcated the land from the Mediterranean during the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. and earlier. Hebua is made up of four different zones. Excavations at Hebua I have revealed an enormous fort (800 X 400 m.) that dates to the early 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and is thought to be Seti I's construction according to the excavator (Abd el-Maksoud 1998, 128-144). Initially Abd el-Maksoud (1986: 13-16) considered Hebua to be the second New Kingdom fort, the Dwelling of the Lion because he, like everyone else in the 1980s, still thought that Abu Sefêh was Tjaru/Sile. But as his work progressed, and the excavations at Abu Sefêh proved to have no New Kingdom levels, Abd el-Maksoud began to shift his thinking towards equating Hebua with Tjaru/Sile. I too came to this position after visiting Abu Sefêh and Hebua in 1994.<sup>6</sup>

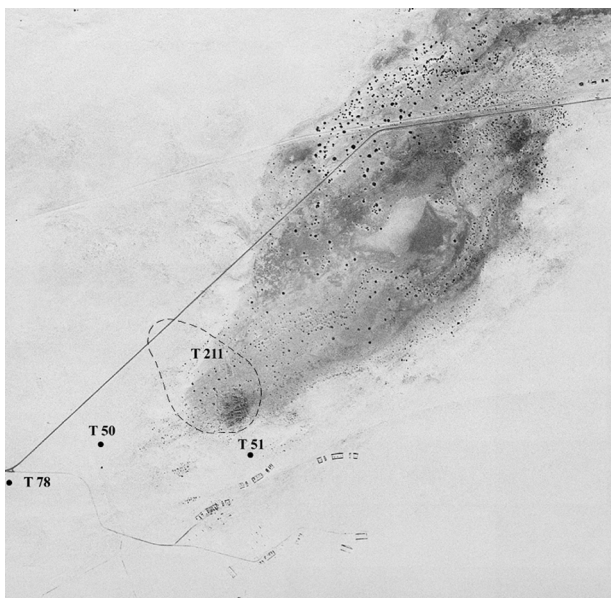
In May 1999, while visiting with Dr. Abd el-Maksoud in East Qantara (N. Sinai), a statue was discovered at Hebua

I with a text on it. I was able to examine it with my colleague that very day. This important find was recently published. The figure is that of a kneeling man who holds a stela on which there is an inscription. It identifies him as a military officer, *snni n hm.f*, "a chariot warrior of his majesty," and *imy-r mšs* "overseer of the army" or general. Most significantly the offering formula reads *hṭp di hr nb ṯhrw* – "An offering which Horus lord of Tjaru gives" (Abd el-Maksoud & Valbelle 2005: 6-8). In 2005, a second statue was discovered with an occurrence of Tjaru on it, this time dating to the early 2<sup>nd</sup> Intermediate Period and containing the name of the ruler Nehsy of the 14<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Abd el-Maksoud & Valbelle 2005: 6-8). This votive statue was discovered in the temple precinct that is within the enclosure wall of the site, thus safeguarding its original context. These two texts confirm the earlier beliefs that Hebua is the site of Egypt's east frontier town and fort.

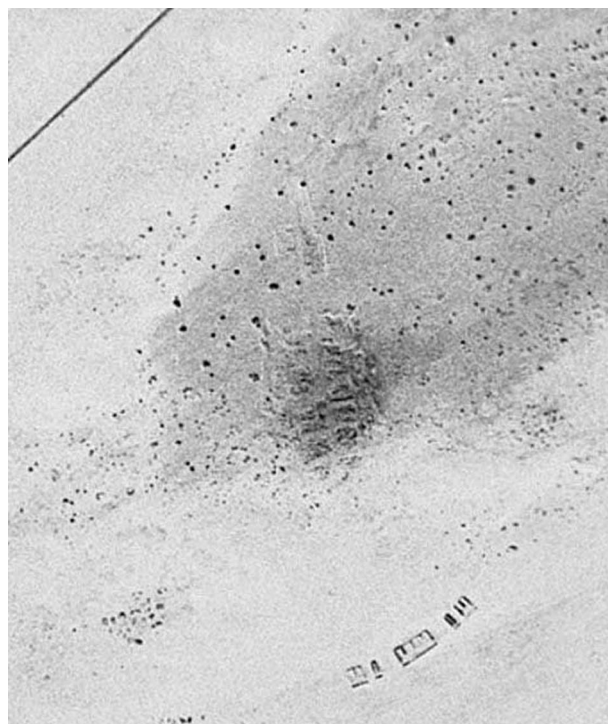
Fixing Egypt's east frontier town and fort allows us to begin anew to search for the location of Migdol of New Kingdom times. To move towards the Levant from Hebua/Tjaru, one has to travel SE as the lagoon to the east precludes ground travel across it (Figure 2). Based on my study in 1998 of Corona images, which had only recently become declassified, and realizing that the lagoon formed an impassable barrier, and knowing that the northern extent of the Ballah Lakes were just kilometres to the south, I reasoned that there had to be some sort of fort between Hebua and the top of the lake. It is precisely here, just three kilometers SE of Hebua II, which is opposite Hebua I and separated by a body of water (the Pelusiac and adjacent wetlands) that Tell el-Borg is situated (Figures 1 & 2).

Tell el-Borg was identified by Oren's survey as T-108 and 109 (Oren 1987: 79). Our excavations between 2000 and 2007 revealed the meagre remains of two forts dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (ca. 1440/20-1330/25 B.C.) and the second from the Late 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty or early 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and into the 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (ca. 1330/25-1180 B.C.) (Hoffmeier & Abd el-Maksoud 2003, Hoffmeier 2004 & 2006). Based on its proximity to Hebua (Tjaru/Sile), I have proposed that Tell el-Borg is the Dwelling of the Lion/Ramesses, the second fort in the sequence on the Seti I sequence (Hoffmeier & Abd el-Maksoud 2003: 195-197). Two other researchers have actually proposed that Tell el-Borg is Migdol, the first was Giacomo Cavillier (2001) and the other is Benjamin Scolnic, a member of the team at Tell el-Borg (Scolnic 2004: 113-120). In their favour is the meaning of Borg, the Arabic for tower, a possible translation for Migdol. Against this identification is the proximity of Tell el-Borg to Hebua I (ca. 5 km) and Hebua II (ca. 3.5 km), which together I believe make up the border town of Tjaru with its various military installations.

Brief excavations in 1999 by the SCA at Hebua II were directed by Abd el-Rahman Al-Ayedi. He reports that he has uncovered a fortress that is 100 m<sup>2</sup> with walls that are 4 m. thick and storage facilities within it (Al-Ayedi 2006: 35-44). His report, however conflicts with the recent



**Figure 5:** 1968 Corona Satellite Image of NW Sinai (Public Domain). The marking of the area of T-211 is by Eliezer Oren.



**Figure 6:** Close up of part of Figure 5.

discoveries that were made at Hebua II. During the Spring-Summer 2007 Abd el-Maksoud's team uncovered a much larger fort in the very area where Al-Ayedi claimed to have discovered a smaller one.<sup>7</sup> Abd el-Maksoud showed me pictures of his stunning discoveries in July 2007 and then in May 2008 I was able to visit the excavations while in progress.<sup>8</sup> The fortress he is uncovering has mud-brick walls that are 13 m. thick and corner towers that measure 20 m. long. The sheer size of this structure suggests that the Hebua II fort was the entry point of Tjaru. It must be recalled that the Seti I Karnak relief shows Tjaru divided by a body of water (*t3 dnit*), and that the label *htm n t3rw*, "the fortress of Tjaru" is associated with the buildings on the east side of the water channel (Fig. 3). This placement leaves no doubt that Hebua II is part of the Tjaru complex. This interpretation of the data leaves Tell el-Borg – just 3 km SE of Hebua II -- as the best candidate for the Dwelling of the Lion, the second fort in the Seti I sequence.

Assuming that Hebua I and II is the Tjaru complex, and that Tell el Borg is the Dwelling of the Lion, then for defensive and strategic reasons Migdol of Seti I should be located to the SE either at the southern end of the lagoon or somewhere on its eastern shores, that is, near the late period sites that bore the name "Migdol." When examining some Corona satellite images of this area, I noticed a dark spot at the southern tip of the lagoon. A number of other identified archaeological sites are marked in these images by a darkened area during the winter months, e.g. Tell el Luli, Tell Ghabba, Tell Queda and Tell el-Herr (Figure 1). Based on Oren's small-scaled map of New Kingdom/LBA sites published in 1987,<sup>9</sup> I had tentatively proposed that T-78 was this spot and that it might be Migdol (Hoffmeier 1997: 102; Hoffmeier & Moshier 2004: 174-174) (Figure

5). But Oren advised me that this site was too small to be the location of a fort. He kindly told me of a larger site nearby, viz. T-211.<sup>10</sup> As it turns out, T-78 is actually less than a kilometer west of the dark spot or T-211, which in turn is situated about 4 km. SE of Tell el-Borg.

In March 2007 several members of my staff attempted to locate T-211 as a possible site to investigate. We were disappointed to discover that the site is on a privately owned fruit plantation with groves of fruit trees and open fields that had been covered by a meter or more of sand, trucked in approximately a decade ago to build up and level the ground for agriculture. We were unable to find so much as a potsherd. The best we can do now is to examine the satellite image. When enlarged, one can see that within the darkened area is a rectangular or square walled area within which smaller walls are visible (Figure 6). The complex appears to be more than 100 meters on a side. Combining this image with Oren's survey data, it is evident that T-211 was a significant site that was possible a fort. There is no other reason for a structure of this size to be located at this point east of Egypt's border with Sinai. We may never know if this site is New Kingdom Migdol, but it certainly was a significant site on the Ways of Horus.

Another site deserving of mention is Tell Abyad (white), situated beside the Bedouin village of Gilbana, the home of many of our workers at Tell el-Borg (Figure 1). In fact it was our guard who brought the site to my attention in 2002. We visited it and based on sherds collected on the surface, it is clearly a New Kingdom site. During the spring of 2007, Dominique Valbelle's team conducted a geophysical survey and began excavating this site. Preliminary

indications are that it is small Ramesside residence of some sort (Valbelle & Leclère 2008). The external walls are only 1.05 m. thick. Clearly this is not a fort. Future excavations should clarify the nature of this site and its occupational horizon, and they may hold the clue for finally determining the location of New Kingdom (LB) Migdol.

We return now to the question of Migdol in the exodus itinerary. Egyptian textual evidence demonstrates that there was a frontier site southeast or east of Tjaru/Sile in Ramesside times, and possibly as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Given the developments in the archaeology of western northern Sinai in recent decades and a better understanding of the topography and paleo-environmental conditions of north-western Sinai, it is likely that Migdol of Ramesside Egypt is located southeast or east of Hebua and Tell el-Borg. If it is T-211, then it is about 8 km south of Tell el-Herr and 9 south of Tel Qedua, whereas Tell Abyad is about 3 km south of the former and 4 km south of the latter. What is clear is that there are at least three different sites on Egypt's east frontier on the east side of the lagoon that used some form of the name Migdol at different periods. While the site moved within a limited area, the name continued. Similarly Tjaru/Sile of New Kingdom times, as we have shown, is located at Hebua, whereas Sile of Greco Roman times, or 8-9 km apart. Another example of an east frontier site that relocated but preserved its name is Pithom/Pr-Atum in the Wadi Tumilat. Originally the Wadi Tumilat's frontier fort from the 2nd Intermediate Period till the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C. was located at Tell Rebateh. Then the site moved 14 km. east, along with the name, to Tell el-Maskhutta around 610 B.C. (Hoffmeier 2005: 58-65).

Based on the textual and emerging archaeological data regarding Migdol, it must be asked, is Ramesside Migdol one and the same as Migdol of the exodus itinerary? Gardiner saw no reason for this not to be the case (Gardiner 1920, 108). Based on all the textual and archaeological evidence now available, Migdol is the name of a frontier site that flourished from as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century B.C. through the Roman period as a strategic frontier fort.

If we follow the reasoning of Redford and Van Seters that geographical terms in the exodus itinerary reflect the period of composition, what do the occurrences of Migdol in Exodus and Numbers tell us? In fact the data could be used to support an early or later date. I suspect that here scholars will allow their assumptions about the sources behind the text to pre-determine their conclusions. However, when we consider the reference to Migdol along with the other Exodus toponyms like Rameses, Pithom, Succoth, Pi-Hahiroth and Baal-Zephon, all of which are attested in some form or derivation in New Kingdom sources,<sup>11</sup> an earlier date cannot be dismissed and certainly there is no basis for believing that the name is a late invention from the creative mind of the author.

Over thirty years ago Manfred Bietak (1975: 136-137; 1987: 163-171; 1996: Fig. 1) and, more recently, I have

argued that the Ballah Lakes, located just south of Hebua and Tell el-Borg is *p3 twfy* of Ramesside period texts, should be identified with *Yam Sûp* of Exodus (Exod. 10:19; 13:18; 15:4 & 22; Josh. 2:10; 4:23; Hoffmeier 2005: 81-89; Hoffmeier & Moshier 2006: 171-173). Furthermore, now that Sile/Tjaru has been positively identified, and that the northern limits of the Ballah Lakes have been traced to just two km. south of Hebua II (Figure 2), the reference to *p3 twfy* and Tjaru in the 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasty Onomasticon of Amenemopet take on new mean (Hoffmeier 2005: 87-88; Hoffmeier & Moshier 2006: 171-173). The toponym section the Onomasticon lists cities (*dmi*) from south to north, beginning with Biggeh Island (#314) located just south of Aswan, and concluding with Tjaru (#419), Egypt's east frontier town-site. The penultimate toponym is *p3 twfy* (# 418 – Gardiner 1947: 201\*-202\*). The juxtaposition of Tjaru and *p3 twfy* helps to locate the latter immediately south of Tjaru. Exodus 14:2 shows that "the sea" (i.e. *Yam Sûp*) and Migdol were located in the same area. The collocation of the locations Tjaru, *Yam Sûp* /*p3 twfy* and Migdol in biblical and Ramesside sources suggests that they were in the same general vicinity.

Based on the foregoing new data, it is likely that the New Kingdom fort known as the Migdol of Menmaatre (Seti I), which is believed to be one and the same Migdol of Exodus 14:2, is located somewhere between the southern tip and the eastern shores of the paleo-lagoon (Figure1), with T-211 being a possible candidate.

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### Abbreviations:

KB = Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Leiden: Brill, 2001.

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## Endnotes

- 1 For a recent review of all the textual evidence regarding the location of Migdol, see (Scolnic 2004: 91-120)
- 2 Since 1999 we have been assisted by or directly worked with Dr. Bahay Essawy, Dr. Ali el-Kalani, Dr. Bahaa Gayed, and Dr. Rifaat Osman of University of Benha. The Geological Survey facilitated the study of some of our samples in their laboratories in Cairo and enabled us to get C14 samples to the USA analysis.
- 3 Gardiner was convinced that Tjaru/Sile, Egypt's frontier town was located at Tell Abu Sefêh, and for the next 70 years, almost no one questioned his identification.
- 4 For recent discussions of the sites, see (Hoffmeier 2005: 94-105) and (Scolnic 2004: 99-120).
- 5 Not the same site as Hebua being excavated now by Mohamed Abd el-Maksoud, but a small site E of Tell Abu Sefêh.
- 6 He expressed his thinking to me on this visit. I put this suggestion in print in (Hoffmeier 1997: 185).
- 7 Perhaps he misinterpreted the walls he discovered as defensive walls of the fort when in actuality they were walls of a structure within the fort discovered by Abd el-Maksoud.
- 8 I am grateful to Mr. Abd el-Maksoud for showing me these pictures of his work and for allowing me to mention his preliminary results.
- 9 For reasons that remain unclear to me, T-211 is not included in Oren's earlier published map (Oren 1987, 79), nor in more recent versions of the map (Oren 2006: 279-292).
- 10 Verbal communication in May 2006 and email in February 2007.
- 11 For a recent treatment of these terms see (Hoffmeier 2005: 81-109).