Khirbet Qeiyafa is a 2.3 hectare site surrounded by massive fortifications of megalithic stones that still stand to a height of 2–3 m. It is on the summit of a hill on the north side of the Elah Valley. This is a key strategic location in the biblical Kingdom of Judah, on the main road connecting Philistia and the Coastal Plain to Jerusalem and Hebron in the hill country.

The excavations unearthed, for the first time in the archaeological research of Israel, a fortified city in Judah from the late 11th–early 10th centuries BCE. The planning of the city includes the casemate city wall and a belt of houses abutting the casemates and incorporating them as part of the construction. This is a typical feature of planning in the biblical Kingdom of Judah and is known at Beth-Shemesh, Beersheba and other sites. Khirbet Qeiyafa is the earliest known example of this plan and indicates that this pattern had already been developed in the time of King David.

The outstanding discovery of the 2008 excavation season was an ostracon, a pottery sherd bearing an inscription, uncovered near the western city gate. This inscription clearly indicates that writing was indeed practiced in Judah during the late 11th–early 10th centuries BCE. Historical knowledge could have been documented then and preserved for generations.
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