

The Excavations at the Northern Platform of Tel Shiloh for the 2012–2013 Seasons

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A flat rectangular platform (ca. 25x100 meters, see Fig. 1) on the northern slope of Tel Shiloh is defined to its north and south by rock outcrops, while presumably enclosure walls were built to its east and west where the southern rock outcrop disappears below the surface. The eastern wall was not visible prior to excavation, though a later terrace preserved its original course, and of late, its northern section has been exposed. While the western wall still awaits excavation, a course of stones visible on the surface hints to its existence, and although the northern rock outcrop line naturally protrudes outward past what would be the enclosure border lines, its center appears to have been worked in order to complete its course.

Charles Wilson hypothesized that the Northern Platform was the site where the biblical Tabernacle stood (Wilson, 1876, p. 110), though other locations have also been suggested for the exact spot of this Iron Age I cultic structure. Finkelstein suggested a location at the tel's summit (Finkelstein, 1993, pp. 384–385).¹

Garfinkel, on the other hand, has suggested the presumed location of the city gate in the southern part of the tel as being a good candidate for the site of the Tabernacle.²

¹ The original Hebrew report incorrectly stated “Finkelstein suggested a location between the tel’s summit and its Middle Bronze western city wall that is adjacent to the eastern face of the Iron Age I pillared Structure exposed in Area C.” This has been corrected in the English version.

² According to a lecture given by him at the 23rd Judea and Samaria Studies Conference on 6.13.2013.

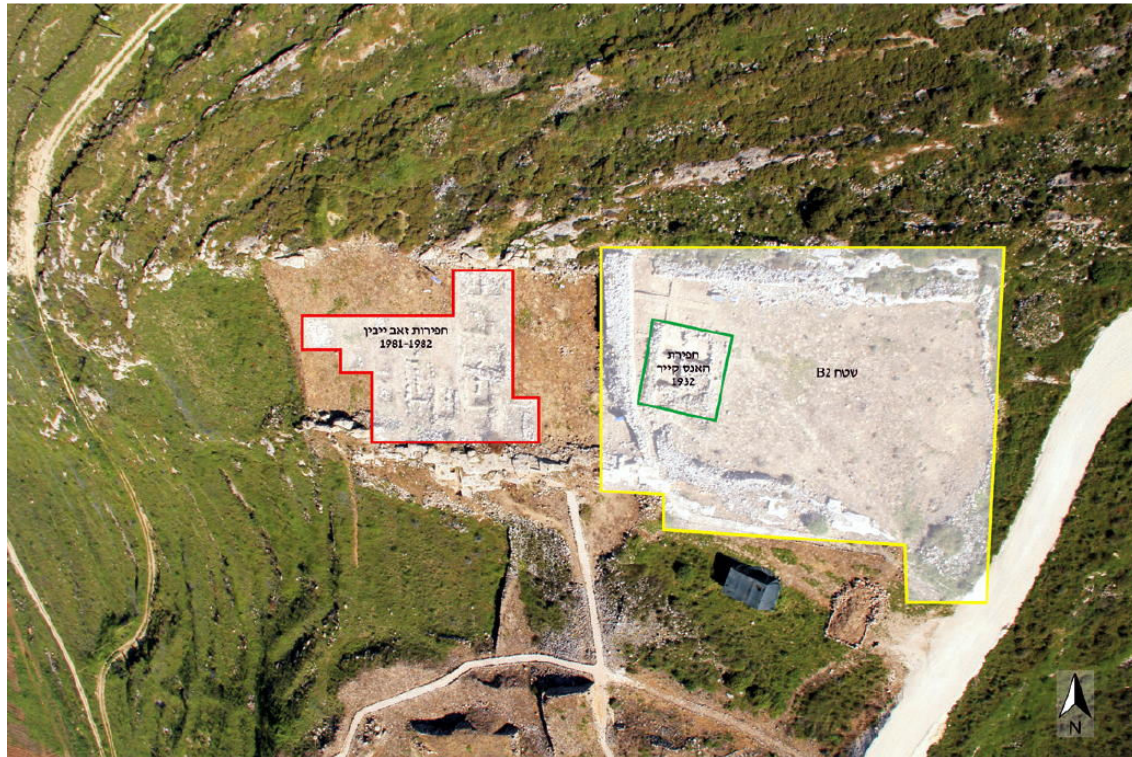


Fig. 1: An aerial view: the northern platform can be seen divided by a wide rock clearing wall pile from the Ottoman period. To its west, the Ze'ev Yeivin excavation area is visible, and to its east is the Danish expedition's area and Area B2 of the Staff Officer for Archeology's excavation (photo: aerial view).

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The first excavation on the northern platform was conducted in its central area in 1932 by a Danish team headed by Hans Kjaer. The excavation revealed a Roman period structure (Andersen, 1985, pp. 20–22). The Danish expedition was followed by Ze'ev Yeivin excavating in 1981–1982 in accordance with Wilson's presumed location of the Tabernacle. The excavation was carried out in the western part of the platform revealing two separate strata, one dating to the late Iron Age and Persian periods and another layer dating to the Iron IIA (Yeivin, 1992, pp. 99–103). To the west of the excavation area, in the early strata, Yeivin identified an entrance to a structure adorned with pillars on its front façade. In addition, a female figurine was discovered, and although its exact stratigraphic attribution was uncertain, it allowed for fixing the date for the beginning of the activity at the northern platform, and perhaps even hints at a cultic structure that stood in the area. The figurine's head as well as its legs are broken, and on its back it preserves part of an Egyptian benediction inscription. According to Marina Popovich it reads as follows: "May the king and Isis grant sovereignty and life to the house (Temple) of..."

(Popovich, 1996, p. 36). According to Popovich, the earliest possible dating for the inscription is the 21st Dynasty, i.e. the 11th century BCE. The inscription alludes to a temple, the identification of which was on the missing part of the artifact, perhaps it was the same Iron II period structure that Yeivin unearthed.

The two excavation seasons were conducted on behalf of the Staff Officer for Archeology in Judea and Samaria in April through July of 2012 and in April through June of 2013.³ Their main objective was to determine if evidence exists for Israelite cultic activity on the northern platform in the Iron Age I. An area to the east of the large Ottoman period rock clearing wall pile was excavated, as well as an area below it (Fig. 2 Area B2).



Figure 2: Area B2 at the end of the 2013 season, looking north (photo: S. Amami).

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The excavation revealed remains dating to the Middle Bronze Age, the Iron Age, the Hellenistic and Early Roman periods and the Ottoman period. Excavation in the southeastern corner of the area revealed a Late Roman burial cave that the Mamluk period residents reused.

³ The excavation was directed by Hananyah Hizmi and Reut Livyatan Ben-Aryeh with the assistance of Shimon Mayer and Phelix Portnov (measurements and plans), Shlomi Amami (photography), Yuval Peleg (metal detecting and late period pottery reading), Shlomit Bachar and Benjamin Haraban (early Pottery reading), Miriam Manokyan (Pottery drawing), Anna Harel (Pottery drawing and preparation of plates) and Yossi Nagar (physical Anthropology).

The Middle Bronze Age

Although Area B2 is located outside the Middle Bronze city walls (Fig. 3),⁴ two floors dating to the period were discovered in the area (Pl. 1: L7177, L7306). Floor 7177 is a layer of pottery resting upon bedrock including bowl fragments (Fig.1: 4, 5), a cooking pot (Fig.1: 8), storage jars (Fig. 1: 10, 12), and an oil lamp (Fig. 1: 14). Floor 7306 is a stone layer with pottery vessels found *in situ* comprising bowls (Fig. 1:1–3, 6), a cooking pot (Fig. 1:9) and jars (Fig. 1:11, 13) as well as a stone mortar containing a pestle, possibly alluding to the domestic nature of the floor.

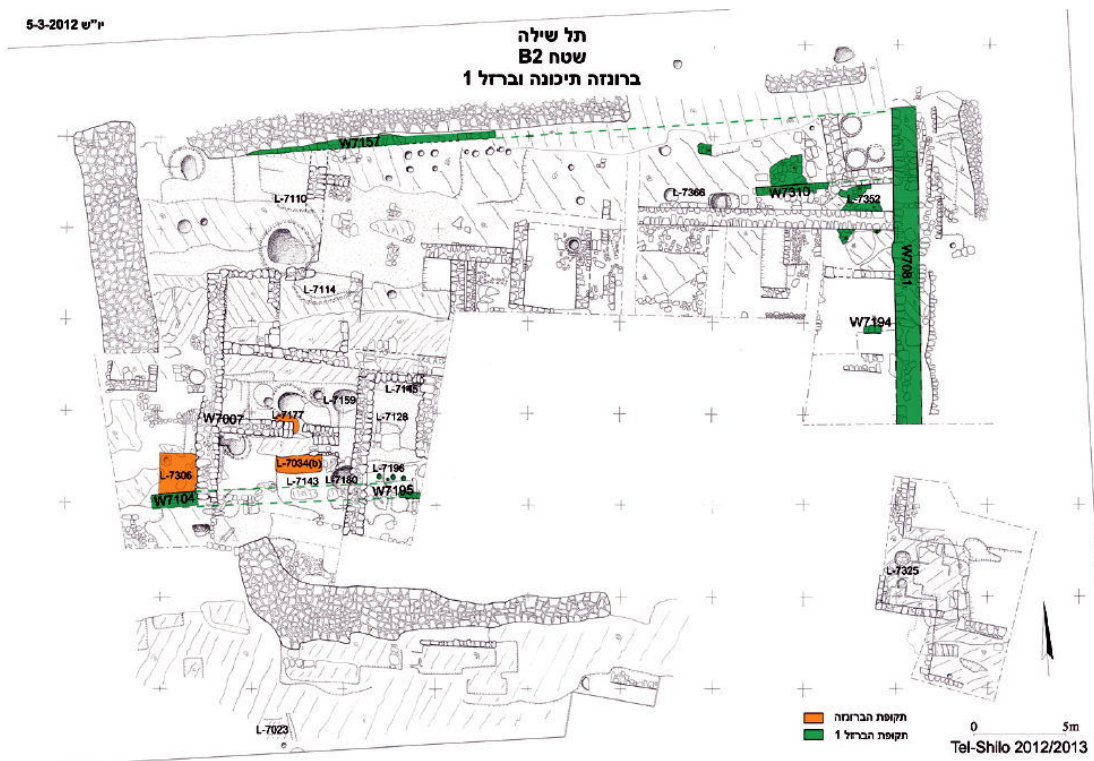


Fig. 3 Building remains from the Bronze and Iron I periods in Area B2 (Plans: S. Mayer and P. Portnov).

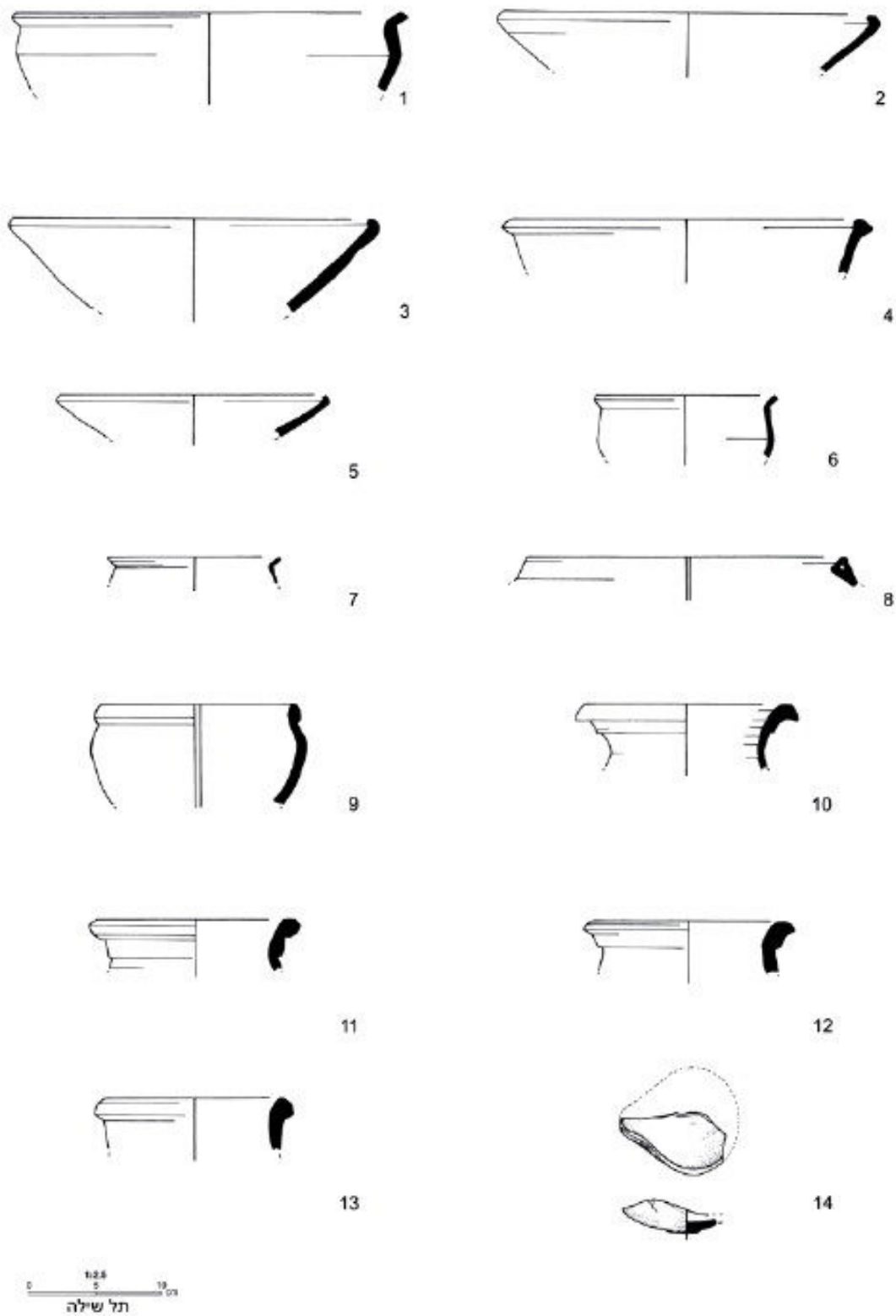
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A rectangular rock-cut tomb (L.7034b ca. 3x1 meters) was discovered about a meter south of floor 7177. The earth fill inside the tomb yielded several pottery vessels including

⁴ Excavations by Kjaer and Finkelstein revealed the wall's northern and western course (Finkelstein, 1993, p. 6, Fig. 1.5)

complete bowls and a lamp that appear to be of MB-LB transitional types (Fig. 4) as well as a fragment of an infant's skull. On the floor of the tomb a complete jug was discovered beside additional remains of an infant about two years of age.⁵ Not far from the tomb to its south, a thick layer of stone chips (L7143) containing a grinding stone was discovered. These finds appear to be residue from the excavation of the tomb. The tomb appears quite large for a burial, let alone an infant burial, suggesting that the tomb most likely had a different use prior to it being used for burial. Though the MB floors were discovered near the tomb, they were discovered on a higher level, hence a definite link between the tomb and these occupation levels is not certain, though it is possible that the domestic remains and the infant burial were in fact of a single unit as was custom in the period (Mazar, 1990, p. 214). Although its exact plans are not known, it can be assumed that at least one domestic unit was built on the northern platform outside of the city walls.

⁵ These finds are included in Dr. Yossi Nagar's Anthropological study that will be published in the final report.



Pl. 1: An assortment of MB pottery vessels from Floors 7177 and 7306 (drawing: A. Harel).



Fig. 4 An assemblage of pottery vessels from box tomb B7034 (photo: S. Amami).

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The Iron Age

Most of the Iron Age remains were discovered in the eastern part of Area B2 where wall remains revealed three separate building phases dating to Iron I, Iron IIA and Iron IIB. The first phase is represented by the “early structure,” the second phase is represented by the “leaning stone structure,” and the “round installation room” represents the third phase. In the western area, the preservation is scanty due to later building and exposed bedrock, making it difficult to make sense of the remains.

The Early Structure

A large structure (at least 17x75 meters; see Fig. 3) was discovered in the northeastern part of the area. In the north the structure incorporates the rock outcrop as its wall, and its eastern wall (W7081) is the eastern boundary of the north platform. Wall 7081 is composed of various size fieldstones including medium size stones and boulders. This wall remained in use in the subsequent building phases of the Iron Age and in the Hellenistic period as well. The scanty preservation of the inner walls of the structure, Walls 7310 and 7194, do not allow for a proper understanding of its interior plans. The floor of the structure was leveled partially by carving the rock layer, while large pavers were laid in the lower areas (L7352). In the western part of Area B2 remains of a wall were discovered. This wall was built as an addition to the northern rock face of the northern platform in an area where the natural rock was insufficiently low. Considering that

this wall is associated with the northern rock outcrop that is essentially the outer wall of the structure, as well as its orientation, which is compatible with the “Early Structure,” a connection between the wall and the structure is conceivable. It is possible that this wall was an enclosure wall for a courtyard to the west of the of the “Early Structure,” and perhaps Wall 7195 discovered 18 meters south of the northern wall, was the southern boundary of the courtyard (see Fig. 3 above). Four carved cup-marks found on the northern end of Wall 7195 seemingly point to grinding activities carried out in the courtyard.

The “Early Structure” did not present any datable evidence; however, the “Leaning Stone Structure” (see Fig. 5) built above it dates to the Iron IIA, and is a *terminus post quam* for the “Early structure.” In addition, the stone pavers that were laid in order to level the lower areas of the “Early Structure” are similar to the paving stones used in the Iron I storage building found in Area C (Finkelstein, 1993, pp. 21–22, Fig. 2.7). Both factors most probably date the building to Iron I.

The Leaning Stone Structure

In the Iron IIA, a new building (17×15 M; Fig. 5) was built using fieldstones laid diagonally (Fig. 6). It was built directly above the remains of the earlier structure, while continuing to incorporate its eastern wall and the northern rock outcrop of the northern platform. A well-preserved wall (7167) running down the center of the structure divides it into two vertical units that do not share an entrance between them. The northern unit is enclosed on three sides allowing the only possible entrance to its west.

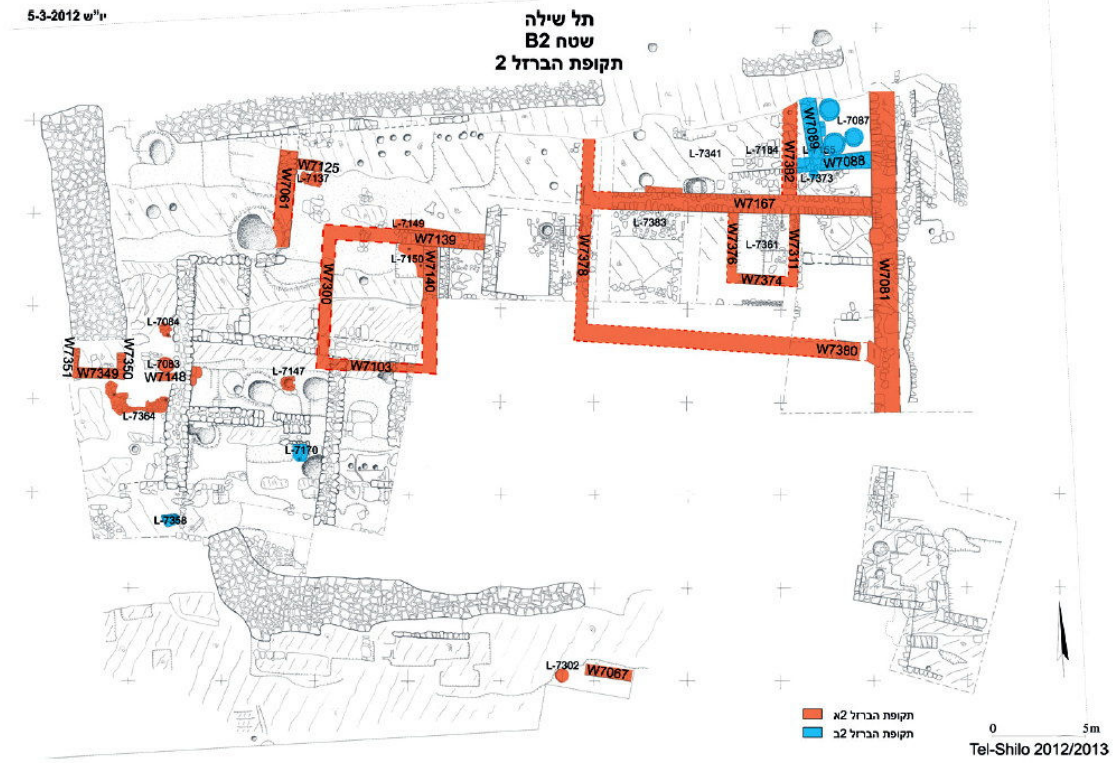


Fig. 5: the Iron IIA Leaning Stone Structure and the Iron IIB additions (plans: S. Mayer and P. Portnov).



Fig. 6: Wall 7167 with its characteristic diagonally laid fieldstones, looking south (Photo: Reut Livyatan-ben-Aryeh).

Two rooms divided by a wall (W7382, 0.5×0.8 M, ca.1 meter high; Fig. 7) incorporating a stone pillar were discovered north of Wall 7167. Similar building styles were discovered in the Iron I storage rooms in Area C (Finkelstein, 1993, pp. 21–31), and on the northern platform, in a structure dating to the Iron IIA (Yeivin, 1992, pp. 102–103). East of Wall 7382 a deposit of pottery was discovered resting upon bedrock (L7155), and to its south a small round installation

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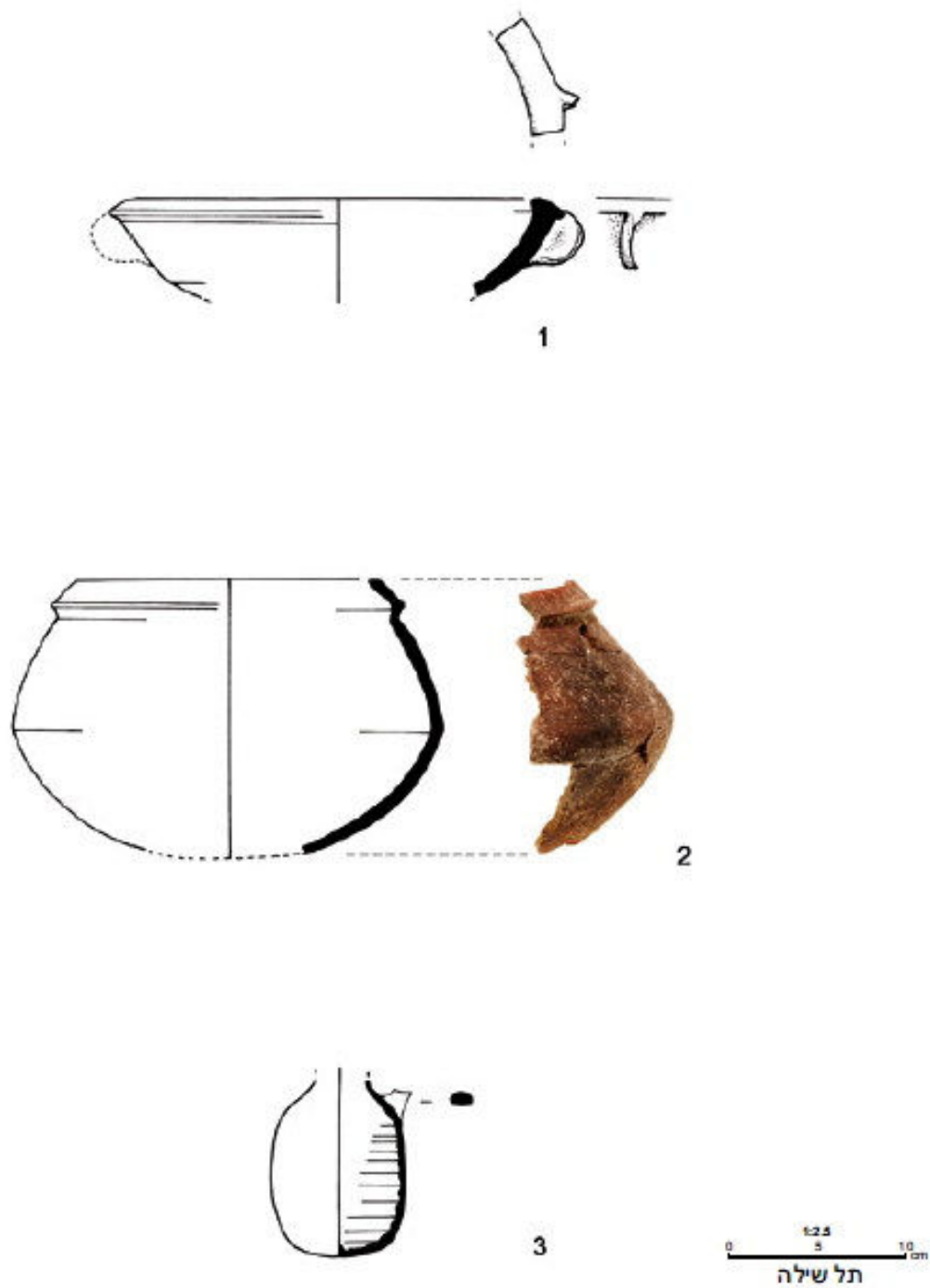
(L7373) composed of a large section of a pottery vessel, probably a storage jar base, which was internally coated with clay (Fig. 8). Within the installation, a knife was discovered beneath a complete pottery bowl. West of Wall 7382 another clay-coated installation leaning against Wall 7167 was found (L7184) containing a cooking pot (Pl. 2:2). Outside the installation several broken pottery vessels were found *in-situ* including a bowl with a lug handle (Pl. 2:1) and a juglet (Pl. 2:3).



Fig. 7: A pillar incorporated into Wall 7382, looking southwest (Photo: Reut Livyatan-ben-Aryeh).



Fig. 8: Installation 7373 with a bowl found within (photo: S. Amami).



Pl. 2: Iron IIA pottery vessels discovered in the installation (L7184) and beside it (drawing and preparation of plate: A. Harel, photo S. Amami).

South of Wall 7167, near its western section, a fill consisting of large fieldstones

(L7383) was laid in order to level the floor with the height of the bedrock. Near the central part of the wall a room (L7361) was built with its floor level about 40 cm lower than Floor 7383. It appears that in this section a natural stone step was deliberately used as the western wall of the room. West of the structure, sections of walls and floors were discovered as well as tabun ovens and a stone-lined cistern that may all be part of the same building phase, though it is not certain.

The Round Installation Room (see Fig. 5)

During the Iron IIB, modifications were made to the “Leaning Stone Structure.” A new room (L7087) was built in the northeastern corner of the structure with an orientation that does not match the previous room (Fig. 9). Within the room, adjacent to the wall, were built three large round installations coated with clay internally and with pottery sherds externally, which were probably used for grain storage. The entrance to the room was from the west, where a step descending to the stone floor was found. The purpose of the changes made to the room is not known, making it difficult to understand the relationship between the new room and the Leaning Stone Structure. It is unclear if the room was a separate unit or an addition after the Leaning Stone Structure went out of use.



Fig. 9: The round installation room, looking south (photo: Reut Livyatan-ben-Aryeh).

Room 7361 of the Leaning Stone Structure remained in use in the round installation room of the subsequent Iron IIB phase. Cooking pots typical of the 8th century BCE were found *in situ* on the stone floor of the structure in addition to a zoomorphic figurine. In the western part of Area B2 a tiled floor (L7170) and a hewed cistern (L7358) were discovered. On the floor and in the cistern, *in situ* vessels were discovered including storage jar fragments, a flask, cooking pots, kraters and a complete oil lamp, all of which are typical of the 8th century BCE. Two of the storage jars found are variations of “Hippo” jars that are a northern type known from

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Tel Rehov and Megiddo and dated to the 8th century BCE (Harosh 2014), making Tel Shiloh one of the southernmost sites in addition to Rujm Abu Meheir and khirbet Marjameh in which Hippo jars were found.

Summary of the Iron Age

The first Iron Age phase in Area B2 probably dates to Iron I. The second and third phases date to the Iron IIA and Iron IIB. The construction of the second phase destroyed the floor and inner walls of the first phase, and was not founded on bedrock. It was also built in a slightly different orientation than the first phase. It thus seems that the first phase was destroyed before the builders of the second phase arrived on the scene. They leveled the area and built on top of it. The only wall that remained in use by the builders of the second phase was the eastern wall of the early structure. It appears that its practicality highlighted by its thickness and strategic location in the eastern edge of the northern rock outcrop carried it through the Hellenistic period. No indication of violent destruction as the cause for the termination of its use was discovered in the early structure, but perhaps a connection between the abandonment of the structure and the destruction layer unearthed in Area C and attributed to the battle of Ebenezer is conceivable (Finkelstein 1993, pp. 388–389). In contrast, it appears that during the Iron II, the building remained in use uninterrupted, with only minor structural modifications being made. The Iron IIA pottery discovered *in situ* in the northern section of the leaning Stone Structure was probably preserved as a result of the raising of the floor level there, and sealing Wall 7382, the walls continued to be used in the subsequent Iron IIB. The complete Iron IIB pottery vessels discovered *in situ* (Room 7361, Floor 7170 and cistern 7358) testify to a hasty abandonment or to the impossibility of return, presumably during the Assyrian conquest in the late 8th century BCE.

The Hellenistic Period

A single structure (Fig. 10), “The Burnt Structure” dating to the Hellenistic period was found; it stretches north and south of Wall 7167 and incorporates some of the Iron Age walls. It derives its name from a 15 cm thick burnt layer discovered in two of its rooms (L7338, L7356). The bedrock previously used in the earlier periods was incorporated as the floors of the rooms, except for the lower areas where packed earth was used. No *in situ* pottery was found in the room except for a 2nd–1st century BCE oil lamp. In another room (L7113), a collapse (lacking any burning signs) was discovered. In the southern walls of Rooms 7356 and 7113 there are openings leading to an elongated room (L7131, L7342), with an abundance of 2nd–1st century BCE pottery on its floor, the majority of which are jars (Pl. 3: 4–15) as well as bowls (Pl. 3:1–3), a jug (Pl. 3:16) and a flask (Pl. 3:17). In the western part of the room, 14 large iron nails bent at right angles were discovered imbedded in the floor (Fig. 11). Presumably they fastened some apparatus that was not preserved. Hellenistic pottery was also discovered in mixed fills near the

structure, among them three stamped imported amphora handles from the mid-2nd century BCE.⁶

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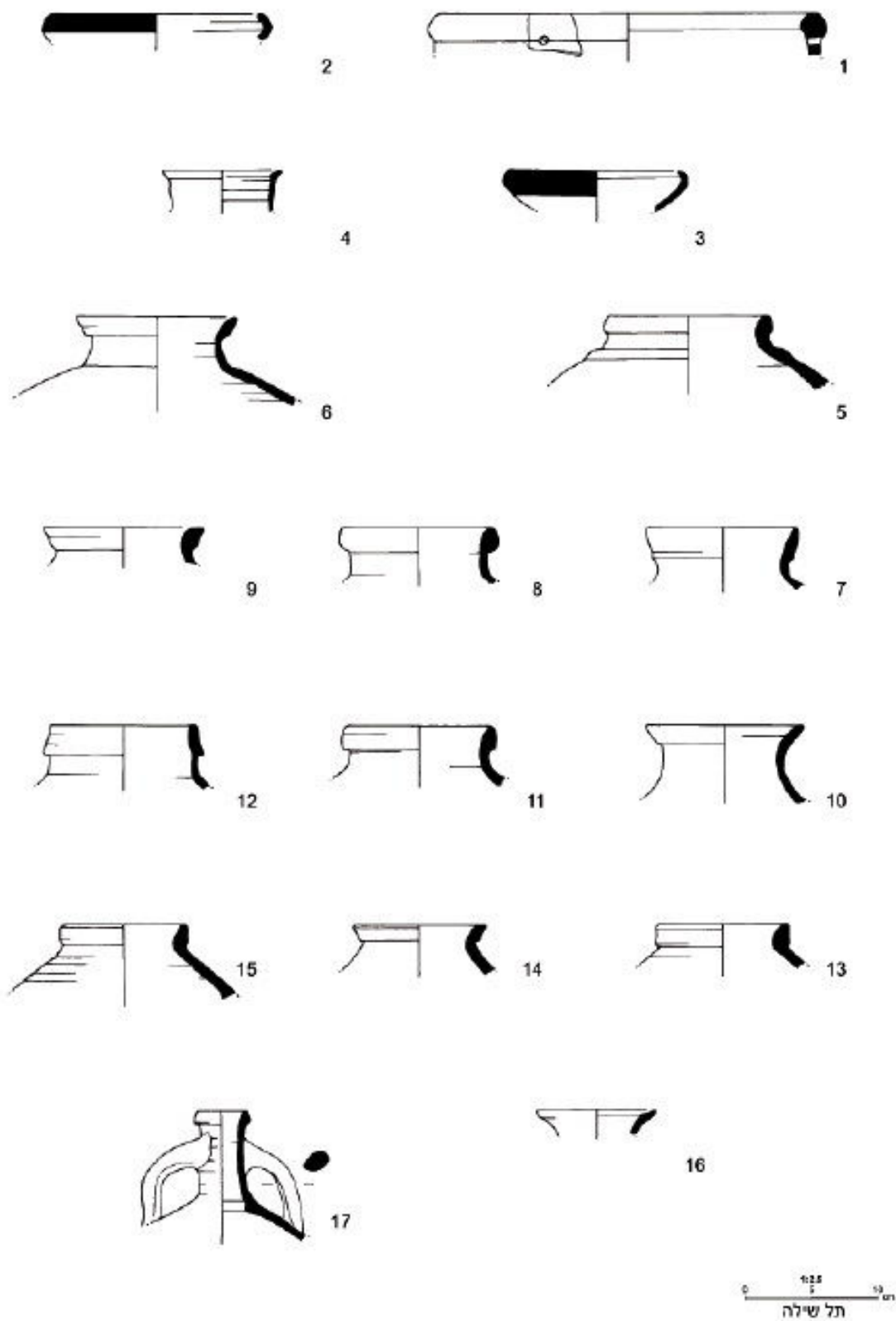


Fig. 10: Plan of the Hellenistic and Roman period remains (plans: S. Mayer and P. Portnov).

⁶ The authors are grateful to Donald Tzvi Ariel for the preliminary identification of the impressions.



Fig. 11: Iron nails imbedded in the elongated rooms floor, looking south (photo: Reut Livyatan-ben-Aryeh).



Pl. 3: Hellenistic pottery found on the floor of the elongated room (drawing: M. Manokyan, preparation of plate: A. Harel).

Summary of the Hellenistic period

The Burnt Structure discovered in the excavation came to an end in a violent destruction and was abandoned hastily while leaving behind complete vessels. Judging by the oil lamp discovered in The Burnt Room and the assemblage discovered in the elongated room, the destruction should be dated to the 2nd or 1st century BCE, and it is reasonable to attribute it to the campaigns of John Hyrcanus I during the annexation of the region of Aqraba to Judea in 112–108 BCE (Bar-Cochva 2003, pp. 23–28). The date of the destruction could also be earlier and may perhaps be attributed to Judas Maccabeus who came to the aid of isolated Jewish towns in 163 BC: “*and Judah fought against the sons of Esau in Edom, by Aqraba*” (Maccabees 2,5,3), though the second option seems less plausible.⁷ In any case, the structure was left in ruins, and when the settlement resumed in the Early Roman period or perhaps even as early the Hasmonean period, it was covered by refuse.

The Early Roman Period

The Early Roman period remains include three buildings (A, B, C), three water cisterns, and two refuse dumps. Near the southeastern corner of Area B2 a system of rock hewing was discovered which includes subterranean structures. In addition, a quarry stretching along the southern rock face of the northern platform was discovered which is no later than the Early Roman period, but may be earlier.

Building A— This structure was first discovered by the Danish expedition in 1932 during their third excavation season, unfortunately only a short number of weeks before the sudden death of the expedition’s leader Hans Kjaer. Initially, the Danes named the structure “The Byzantine House,” though Anderson dated it to the Roman period and concluded that it was destroyed in the end of the 3rd or beginning of the 4th century CE (Andersen, 1985, pp. 20–22, Plan A). The Danish team neglected to excavate under the floor, and at times did not expose the floor in its entirety, thereby preventing them from properly identifying the early phase of the building.

⁷ On the difficulties concerning the geographical identification see Rapaport 2004, p. 168.

In the renewed excavations, fills below the floors were excavated pointing to two separate phases. In the first phase, three elongated parallel units were built while the northernmost was divided into two separate rooms (L7013, L7014), Room 7013 being unique in its meticulous ashlar masonry, tiled floor (L7055), and its small stone coated western wall which was probably a bed for plaster, in contrast to the rest of the structure which was haphazardly built of partially worked field stones and walls of uneven thickness showing no evidence of plaster. This phase ended when a subterranean hollow collapsed beneath the central unit of the building. A radial oil lamp discovered imbedded in the western wall of the structure (Barag & Hershkovitz 1994, p. 16, no. 12; Rosenthal-Heginbottom, 2003, p. 200, Pl. 6.8:3) dates the building of the structure to no earlier than the 1st century BCE, and the finds from the collapse discovered in the subterranean hollow (L7117) date its destruction to the end of the 1st century BCE or the beginning of the 1st century CE. In the second phase, the eastern section of Wall 7008 was dismantled leaving only its lower course and Wall 7022 was built in its place, in addition walls were erected dividing the central and southern units into four small rooms (L7020, L7026, L7027, L7029), and a stone mortar was placed in the entrance created between Rooms 7026 and 7027.

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Based on the finds discovered in the second phase, the building went out of use in the 1st century CE, in contrast to the dating suggested by the Danish expedition which was probably incorrectly based their dating on latter fills which are not associated with the buildings collapse.

Building B – Two rooms were exposed east of Building A, adjacent to its southern part (L7101, L7072) presumably sharing an entrance between them. The structure was founded upon bedrock, and stones were placed to level the surface in areas where the rock was quarried. In Room 7101 a collapse was discovered with Early Roman pottery beneath it.

Building C – Northeast of Building B a room and courtyard were discovered (L7346, L7357). Within the courtyard, a tabun was discovered, internally coated with clay, and with small stones (pebbles?) covering the outside. West of the tabun, remnants of bricks were found, presumably belonging to an installation that stood beside it. Though the excavation in this area was not completed, extension of the excavation south of these walls would likely reveal its complete plan.

The Water Cisterns – Three water cisterns containing Early Roman finds on their bottom were discovered. Cistern 7090 was discovered north of Building A containing an

abundance of finds including complete storage jars and coins dating to Alexander Jannaeus, Herod Agrippa, the Roman Procurator Festus, and the 2nd year of the great revolt. Cistern 7182 was discovered in the northeastern corner of Room 7026. Its opening continues north below Wall 7007. It predated the building and remained in use when it was built. The builders of Wall 7007 placed a very large stone near the cistern's entrance in order to facilitate the building of the wall above it. On the bottom of the cistern, complete Early Roman period storage jars were discovered in addition to other artifacts. Cistern 7328 was discovered in the southeastern part of Area B2 containing Early Roman pottery.

Refuse Dumps – Two refuse heaps (L7334) dating to the Early Roman period were discovered above Floor 7342 of the Hellenistic period. They contained pottery, animal bones, and glass and metal objects.

Quarrying in the Southeastern Part of Area B2 – A hewed platform was discovered in the southeastern part of the area, the structure contains a corridor with steps descending below the surface of the bedrock (L7372). Toward the end of the corridor a sharp right turn leads to a narrow tunnel containing indentations in its walls for placement of oil lamps. The tunnel leads to a subterranean hollow (L7336) irregular in shape. In its southeastern wall, adjacent to its opening, a rectangular shaped carving creates a large alcove, the use of which is unknown. Safety issues prevented the completion of the subterranean structure's excavation, and its use is not sufficiently understood, though it can be assumed that the narrow tunnel that connects the stepped corridor and the irregular hollow is a hiding system that connected two subterranean facilities that predated it.

Summary of the Early Roman Period

Activity on the northern platform was resumed as early as the 1st century BCE, and established upon the destruction layer of the Hellenistic period. It then continued at least until the destruction of the Second Temple. The Jewish identity of its inhabitants is reflected in the stoneware and coins discovered. Among the 22 coins discovered in the 2012 season, 6 belong to rulers of the Hasmonean dynasty, and 12 were minted in the Early Roman period.⁸ A Jewish

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⁸ In addition to these coins, a Seleucid, a Ptolemaic coin and two Islamic coins were discovered on the surface. The coins from the second season are yet to be cleaned. Thanks to Yuval Peleg and Gabriella Bichovsky for the preliminary reading of the coins.

presence at Shiloh is seen correspondingly through the entire site; indications to this include ritual baths, coins, and stoneware (Zissu, 2001, pp 27–28; Zissu, 2006, pp 86–87; Klein, 2009, pp 181–183). Although Buildings A and B are in close proximity to each other, it is known that an open area in between them was used as a refuse dump. A future excavation between the structures and the refuse and agricultural areas would shed light on the relationship between them and on the population density and the nature of the settlement in the area. The hewed tunnel discovered in the southeastern part of Area B seems to be a refuge system connecting two facilities that predated it. It appears that the inhabitants of Shiloh prepared for revolt against the Romans, and at the present time it is unclear whether the settlement ended as a result of the Great Revolt or if it continued on until the Bar Kokhba Revolt. In one of the Bar Kokhba scrolls found in Wadi Murbaat the etymology Σειλωνει meaning the Shilonite appears (Benoit, Milik, & de Vaoux, 1961, p. 222 f, no. 92.5). This may allude to the presence of a Jewish settlement at Shiloh during of the Bar Kokhba revolt, though it may be only a historical designation, in which case the individual wasn't living in Shiloh at the time, but traced his past or his family's heritage to the site.

The Late Roman Period

A rock-cut tomb built in the Arcosolium style (Fig. 12) and dating to the Late Roman period was discovered in Area B2. The tomb's façade was built in the shape of an arch carved into the rock wall that was previously quarried in the Early Roman period. The tomb consists of a square central room, three arcosolia, and four box tombs. In the southern arcosolium there are two "box tombs" oriented parallel to the central room. In the western arcosolium there are two more that are perpendicular to the room and in the northern arcosolium no tombs were found.⁹ Most of the floor in the central room was rock hewed except for the southeastern corner in which a dirt floor was found and below it an opening (L7336) that presumably predated the tomb and was sealed with stones while it was queried. A section of the opening was excavated, and it revealed among other things a complete third century CE oil lamp. The sealing of the opening was done to prevent the tomb's collapse. The tomb was later used in the Mamluk period, probably as an improvised shelter.

The discovery of the tomb complements the little information already known about Shiloh in the Late Roman period which previously was represented by three coins discovered on the northern platform (Andersen, 1985, p. 107), a single coin from the salvage excavations

⁹ The finds from the tomb are included in Dr. Yossi Nagar's report that will be included in the final publication.

conducted on the tel's summit (Area O, pending publication) and two coins found in the southern part (Area N, pending publication).

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Tel Shiloh

Area B2

The Late Roman period

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תל-שילה
שטח B2
התקופה הרומית המאוחרת

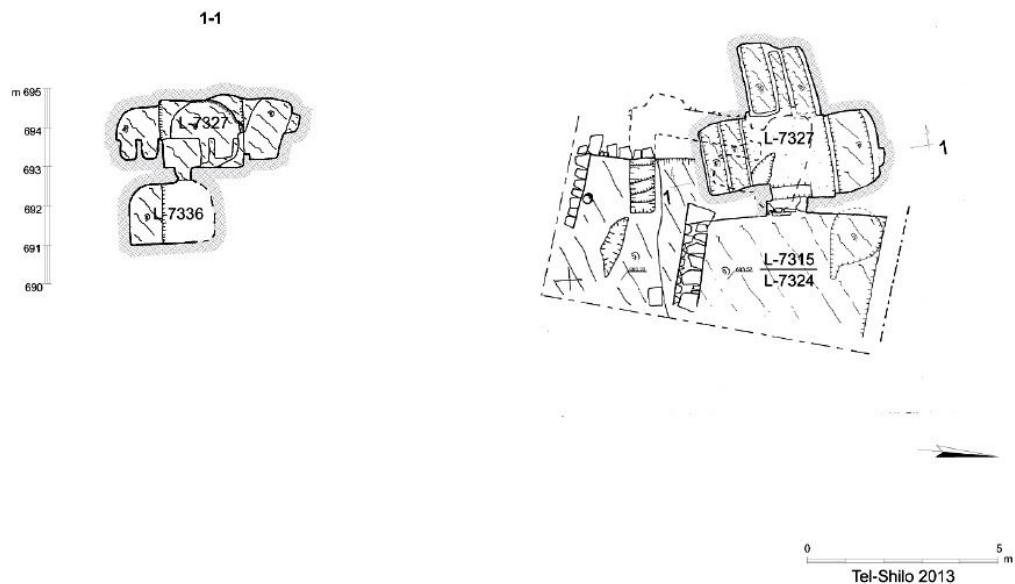


Fig. 12: A Late Roman burial cave, plan and section (drawing: S. Mayer and P. Portnov).

In excavations just south of the tel, in the area of Jama Al –Yatīm, a paved Late Roman Period walk way was found surrounded by buildings dating to the same period (Magen & Aharonovich, 2012, pp. 164–165). In Area N in the southern part of the tel, an Abbasid oil press was discovered in a structure dating to the Late Byzantine or Umayyad period (Hizmi & Haber

2014), the western wall of the structure incorporates a stone in secondary use with a carved relief depicting a bull, which probably dates to the Late Roman period.

Agricultural Activity

At an unknown period, when the northern platform ceased being used for domestic activity, an area in its south spanning the entirety of Area B2 was used for agricultural purposes. The area is enclosed from north, south, and west by rock clearing walls (W7000, W7001, and W7002) and a terrace was built as its eastern boundary (W7078). The rock clearing walls were built upon the surface level without any foundations or fills that connect to them. The western wall is exceptionally wide (3 meters) and consists of two faces and a core. It was founded on a heap of stones that leans against Building A of the Early Roman period. The northern and southern walls of the agricultural area are dressed only internally while the external faces flow outwardly in a moderate inclination. A pathway leading into the area was built in the southwestern corner of the agricultural enclosure in between the rock clearing walls. At present, the date for the construction of the agricultural area is unknown though there was a Medieval village on the southern part of the tel, remains of which are still apparent on the surface. This village existed at least until the 16th century (Hutteroth, & Abdulfattah, 1977. p. 133).

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It is possible that the northern platform was used as an agricultural area at the time due to its conveniently flat outlay. In addition there are photographs from the early 20th century depicting agricultural cultivation on the southern part of the tel where a wide stepped area is suitable for such activity. Possibly the northern part of the tel was cultivated as well for the same reason.

Discussion

The primary motive behind the excavations at the northern platform was the hypothesis offered by Wilson and adopted by others that the northern platform was in fact the place where the biblical Tabernacle stood. The excavations in Area B2 at the western part of the platform exposed structures and quarrying that allude to its various uses through the different periods. Even though the structure's overall shape is owed undoubtedly to a geological fault line which runs through it, it is now understood that at least its northern wall was worked and shaped by man during the Iron Age I or perhaps even earlier. The human activity is noticeable primarily on the projecting hewed rock face adjacent to the northern rock outcrop and less on the outcrop

itself. It should be noted that no evidence of a rock quarry was discovered anywhere along the northern wall precluding the possibility of it being the result of extracting stones for building purposes. In the southern rock line a carved wall was identifiable only on its eastern end, and due to limited penetration in other locations in its course, it cannot be ascertained if a rock wall was carved all along its course or whether the worked area exposed is the result of a rock quarry which was discovered in its upper and lower southern parts.

The results of the excavations on the northern platform attest to activity beginning in the Middle Bronze Age, though the exact nature and extent of this activity is not properly understood, neither is it understood if the building was done prior to the forming of the northern platform or subsequently. On the other hand, the early structure that probably dates to the Iron Age I was definitely built after the shaping of the northern rock wall of the northern platform since it abuts it and incorporates it.

No finds from the Iron Age I point to obvious cultic or religious activity. The fact that later structures were built directly upon the Iron I building may exclude it preserved any traditions of religious significance since had such a tradition have existed, it would probably have prevented the inhabitants from building domestic structures in the area, though there is a possibility that the buildings discovered in the excavation stood in front of the cultic structure which, in turn, should be located further to the west.

The excavations on the northern platform shed light on the continuity of the settlement at the site, including during time periods that were not reflected in prior excavations on the central part of the tel surrounding its summit. Excavations conducted by Finkelstein on the eastern, northern, and western slopes of the summit did not reveal occupation levels from the Iron Age IIA leading him to conclude that the site was in fact abandoned from the mid-11th century BCE until it was resettled in the 8th or 7th century BCE (Finkelstein, 1993, p. 389). This notion was accepted in the literature, leading Faust in a discussion regarding settlements in the 10th century BCE to include Shiloh as an example of a rural site which was abandoned in the late 11th century BCE to coincide with the majority of the Iron I settlements which were abandoned in the late 11th century BCE apart from a handful of sites which became urban centers in the 10th century BCE, Shiloh not being among them (Faust, 2000 p. 389). Yeivin's excavations in the 1980's and the recent excavations attest to the fact that at minimum the northern platform was settled during the Iron II from the 10th

to the 8th century BCE. It appears that Shiloh was resettled after the battle of Ebenezer on the northern slope of the tel. Possibly protruding walls visible on the surface of the upper part of the slope descending from the northern platform down to the Eli Valley belong to a settlement from the same period. The moderate slopes east and west to the recent excavation area may also preserve structures belonging to the period that future excavations may elaborate on.

The settlement at Shiloh probably persisted after the Assyrian conquest, as evidenced by Finkelstein's excavations on the eastern part of the tel (Finkelstein, 1993, p. 389) as well as in Yeivin's excavations on the northern platform (Yeivin, 1992, pp. 99–101). According to the biblical account, the settlement at Shiloh existed at least until the Babylonian conquest (Jer 41:5), and Yeivin's excavations indicated the settlement continued after the conquest and into the Persian period. The 2012–2013 excavation revealed Hellenistic floors built directly above Iron II buildings. It appears the settlement in the late Iron and Persian periods was scattered and sparse resulting in it being exposed only in small parts of the excavated areas. On the other hand, the Hellenistic and Early Roman period settlements discovered in Area B2 mirror the situation encountered on the tel's summit. The finds from the Early Hellenistic period are quite sparse, and it appears the settlement at the time was small (Finkelstein, 1993, p. 9: Stratum III). The small number of structures discovered from the period in our excavation, as well as in Finkelstein's excavation in Area G all incorporate Iron Age walls (Finkelstein, 1993, p. 67). Evidence of a violent destruction in the Hellenistic period is readily apparent in Area B2, and it makes sense to attribute it to John Hyrcanus I during his campaign against Samaria and the Aqraba district (Bar-Cochva 2003, pp. 23–28). During the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman periods the settlement at Shiloh expanded, and its remains can be found in all parts of the tel (Finkelstein, 1993, p. 9: Stratum II) including Area B2. Great Revolt coins and stoneware discovered in the current excavation attest to the Jewish identity of the population in that time, in addition to a yet to be published ritual bath discovered during salvage excavation on the tel's summit and another one excavated in the southern slope by the Danish team who incorrectly identified it as a tomb (Klein, 2009, pp. 181–183). The Jewish settlement at Shiloh during the Second Temple period was also mentioned by the early 2nd century CE Tana (Mishnaic sage) Rabbi Yehoshua bar Karcha who quoted an elderly man in saying "I once visited Shiloh, and smelled the fragrance of incense burning coming from within its walls" (Talmud Bavli, Yoma,

39A). This story corresponds to the generation prior to Rabbi Yehoshua's and probably belongs to the time of the late Second Temple period.

Summary

The area excavated on the northern platform at Shiloh yielded remains representing vast time periods on the site, beginning in the Middle Bronze period until the Late Roman period, after which the main activity on the site shifted to the southern slope of the tel and to the plain south of it, with the northern platform area being used only for agricultural activity.

During the Middle Bronze Age, domestic units were built on the northern part of the site even though it was beyond the city's walls. No structural remains from the Late Bronze period were found on the northern platform, and the activity in the period probably only amounted to cultic activity serving a pastoral population (Finkelstein, 1993, p. 382). It seems that during Iron Age I the northern platform already existed

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in its rectangular outline and that a building was built inside of it, though its purpose is unknown. Extensive remains dating to the Iron IIA were also discovered in the area in contrast to the other parts of the tel that gave the impression of a gap during that time period. During the 8th century BCE, there is evidence for an abandonment of the site, this again in contrast to the information from the rest of the site,¹⁰ and on the other hand, remains from the late Iron Age which were found in Yeivin's and Finkelstein's excavations were not found in the current excavation.

Thus, it appears that the northern platform is in many aspects, including topographically and temporally, a separate unit compared to the rest of the tel, and they don't coincide in all instances. A future excavation east and west of the northern platform and in the area between it and the Middle Bronze city wall may elaborate on the differences in their settlement patterns.

Clear evidence for cultic activity was not found in our excavations on the northern platform, and perhaps the subsequent seasons will yield finds that may further elaborate as to the purpose and function of the northern platform during the Iron Age I.

¹⁰ Although the Danish expedition reported an 8th century BCE destruction layer (Buhl & Holm Nilsen, 1969, p. 61), it appears that they misidentified the 11th century BCE destruction and wrongly dated the pottery.

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