

## IRON AGE IIA REMAINS FROM A SALVAGE EXCAVATION AT SULAM

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The village of Sulam is located near the southern slopes of Giv'at Ha-More in the Jezreel Valley, 14 km east of Megiddo and 16 km west of Bet She'an (map ref. NIG 2315-18/7234-7, OIG 1815-18/2234-7). In the center of the village is a tell, spread over an area of c. 25 dunam (2.5 hectares), on the upper part of which is an old Muslim cemetery. South of the mound, within the present-day village, a spring once flowed out of a cave, but it is now dry. The site was first visited by Guérin (1874/5: 112-113) over one hundred years ago, then surveyed by Conder and Kitchener (1882:87) while working for the Survey of Western Palestine. Subsequently, Zori (1977:55-57) and Gal (1998:62\*) carried out further archaeological surveys in the area.

The identification of Sulam with the ancient town called Shunem is accepted by scholars on the basis of the location, preservation of the name, and the archaeological periods represented at the site. Shunem is mentioned in the fifteenth century BCE conquest list of Thutmose III (Simon 1937:214). In the fourteenth century BCE the town is mentioned in the Tell el-'Amarna tablets as subordinate to Biridiyeh, the king of Megiddo (EA 365; Aharoni 1978:173; Na'aman 1981:178-179). It also appears in the Biblical description of the borders of the Tribe of Issachar (Joshua 19:18) and in additional traditions from the Monarchic period (Samuel I 28:4; Kings I 1:3; Kings II 4:8). In the fourth century CE Shulem is mentioned in Eusebius' *Onomasticon* (Klostermann 1966:158, Line 11).

Several salvage excavations have been carried out in the village: in 1998-1999 by Gal and Hana (2002); in 2000, the excavations presented here; in 2003, by Covello-Paran

(forthcoming), who uncovered a small area c. 50 m to the west of the present excavation. Additional small salvage excavations were carried out by Amos (forthcoming) in 2004 and in 2006, by Covello-Paran in 2004 (Covello-Paran 2006), by Ben Zioni (forthcoming) in 2005, and by Alexandre in 2006.

### THE EXCAVATION

In July 2000 a small salvage excavation was carried out on the northern side of the tell (map ref. NIG 23181/72369, OIG 18181/22369), at the edge of the old cemetery (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> An area of c. 16 sq m was opened beneath the floor of a house in order to create a single parking space. Since the house was built on a slope and the owner had begun the earthworks illegally, two visible sections (Plan 1: Sections 2-2, 4-4) were cleaned and drawn at the outset of the excavation. Subsequently, the earth beneath the house was excavated to a depth of 1.8 m, exposing Sections 1-1 and 3-3 (Plan 1). Work ceased before reaching the depth of the pre-Iron Age II archaeological strata known from previous surveys and excavations.

Four building phases were observed, but the limited extent of the excavation permitted only a tentative division of the phases into two localized strata, on the basis of the associated pottery. The uppermost phase, Stratum I, is attributed to the late Byzantine/Early Islamic period. The three lower phases, Stratum IIa-c, date to Iron Age IIA. Meager Hellenistic and Iron Age I sherds were found, but no building remains could be associated with them. The building phases are described from early to late.



Fig. 1. Aerial photograph of Sulam showing excavation areas A to E (after Gal and Hanna 2002:83) and the present excavation site.

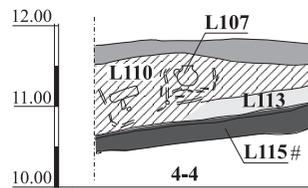
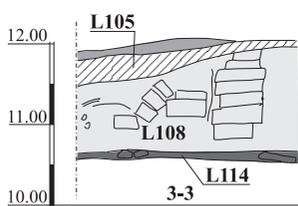
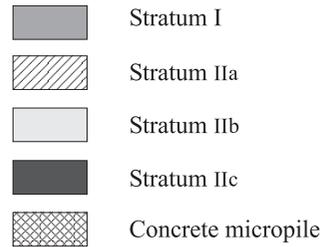
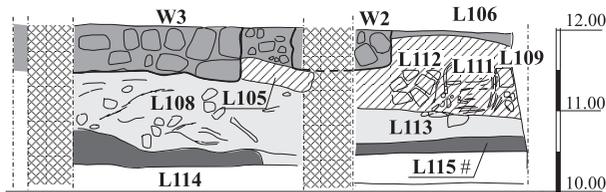
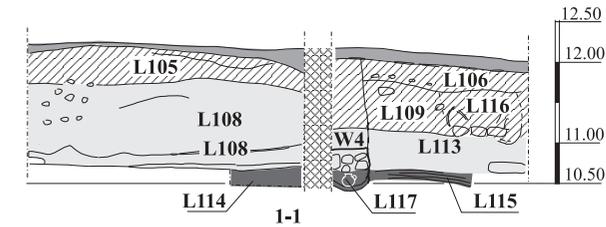
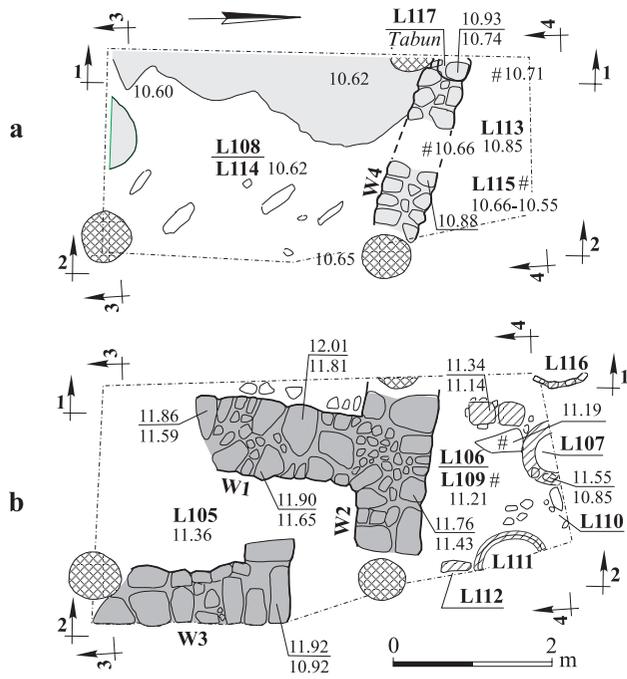
#### *Stratum IIc* (Plan 1:a)

The earliest building phase exposed was a packed earth floor, L115, with patches of plaster. Directly below a later stone wall (W4) was found a *ṭabun* (L117), which had been dug into Floor 115 and lined with baked clay. The *ṭabun* appears to have been contemporary with the floor (Plan 1: Section 1–1). An ashy surface, L114, to the south of the *ṭabun*, is at approximately the same level and seems also to be contemporary with Floor 115 (Plan 1: Sections 1–1, 3–3). A complete cooking jug,

burnt from use, was discovered *in situ* inside the *ṭabun* (Fig. 3:8). Several small, non-diagnostic Iron IIA body sherds (not illustrated) were found on Floor 115.

#### *Stratum IIb* (Plan 1:a)

Above Stratum IIc was an approximately one-meter-thick layer of violently burnt mud-brick debris, including red-baked and blackened bricks (L108). The plan of the original mud-brick structure was not clear, possibly due to the intensity and extent of the conflagration.



Plan 1. Plan of (a) Strata IIC and IIB; (b) Strata IIA and I, and sections (heights are not absolute asl).

However, remains of some mud-brick walls could be observed in Sections 2–2 and 3–3. Charcoal from the destruction layer was examined by <sup>14</sup>C analysis and provided calibrated dates (see below). Wall 4, carefully built of a double row of medium-sized stones with a smaller rubble fill, seems to be the northern limit of the burnt area. This stone wall probably had a mud-brick superstructure. To the north of W4, at a similar elevation and probably contemporary with L108, was a layer of mud-brick material with some charcoal patches (L113). The remains of this phase may indicate some industrial activity rather than domestic use, but it is not possible to be more specific owing to the small scale of the excavation.

#### *Stratum IIa* (Plan 1:b)

A level, packed earth floor (L109), above the Stratum IIb mud-brick layer (L113), incorporated three ovens (L107, L111, L116) and other cooking installations (L110, L112). The term ‘ovens’ is used here for the smallish clay-lined installations with an oval section, their bases c. 0.25 m below the floor level. One of these (L107) contained a complete storage jar *in situ* (Fig. 4:5). Although the oven area was damaged by modern digging, it was possible to observe that Oven 107 was made of two layers of baked clay with a layer of large potsherds in between. Some of the sherds were restored into complete vessels.

A jar (Fig. 4:6) and two basalt grinding stones were discovered on the floor (L109). Significant quantities of pottery were also found, particularly inside the ovens, lining the oven walls and on the floor itself. The majority of the broken vessels was cooking pots. Charcoal remains in Oven 111 add to the impression that this was an intensive cooking area. In the small area excavated, no walls could be associated with this stratum. The state of the finds, with a complete jar in Oven 107, suggests that this stratum came to a sudden end, the occupants not having the opportunity to recover their possessions.

#### *Stratum I* (Plan 1:b)

Above the Iron IIA remains lay foundation courses of three stone walls (W1, W2, W3). Two walls (W1 and W2) form a corner, indicating that they may have been part of a building. On the other hand, the width of the walls (c. 0.9 m), their large stones, and the careless manner of construction suggest that they may have been terrace walls rather than part of a building. The limited quantity of pottery sherds found included black ribbed jar fragments with white wash decoration, datable to the late Byzantine/Early Islamic period (not illustrated).

### THE STRATUM II POTTERY

The small quantity of pottery from Stratum IIa–c is presented together by types (Figs. 2–4), since few significant differences could be observed between the three phases. The vessels include bowls and kraters, a relatively large number of cooking pots and several storage jars. The domestic repertoire is limited, and reflects the function of this small cooking area, at least in Stratum IIa. Only one vessel, a cooking jug, is presented from the earliest Stratum IIc (Fig. 3:8), as the other sherds from this phase were non-diagnostic. All the other vessels are from Strata IIb and IIa. Nearly all the pottery has parallels in the similar Iron IIA repertoire from Strata IIb–IIa in the Ḥorbat Rosh Zayit fort (Alexandre and Gal 2000). In that report parallels from other sites near Sulam in the Jezreel and Bet She’an Valleys are cited.

#### *Bowls*

Four medium-sized open bowls and one large bowl are red-slipped and have thickened rims and gentle carinations at mid-body (Fig. 2:1–5). One is different in that it is made of a thicker, whitish coarse ware, but this bowl, too, has remnants of red slip on the outside and partially on the inside (Fig. 2:1). These bowls belong to Type B I, as discussed in the Ḥorbat Rosh Zayit report (Alexandre and Gal 2000:34–35). Another fragment is a plain small bowl with a simple curved profile (Fig. 2:6).

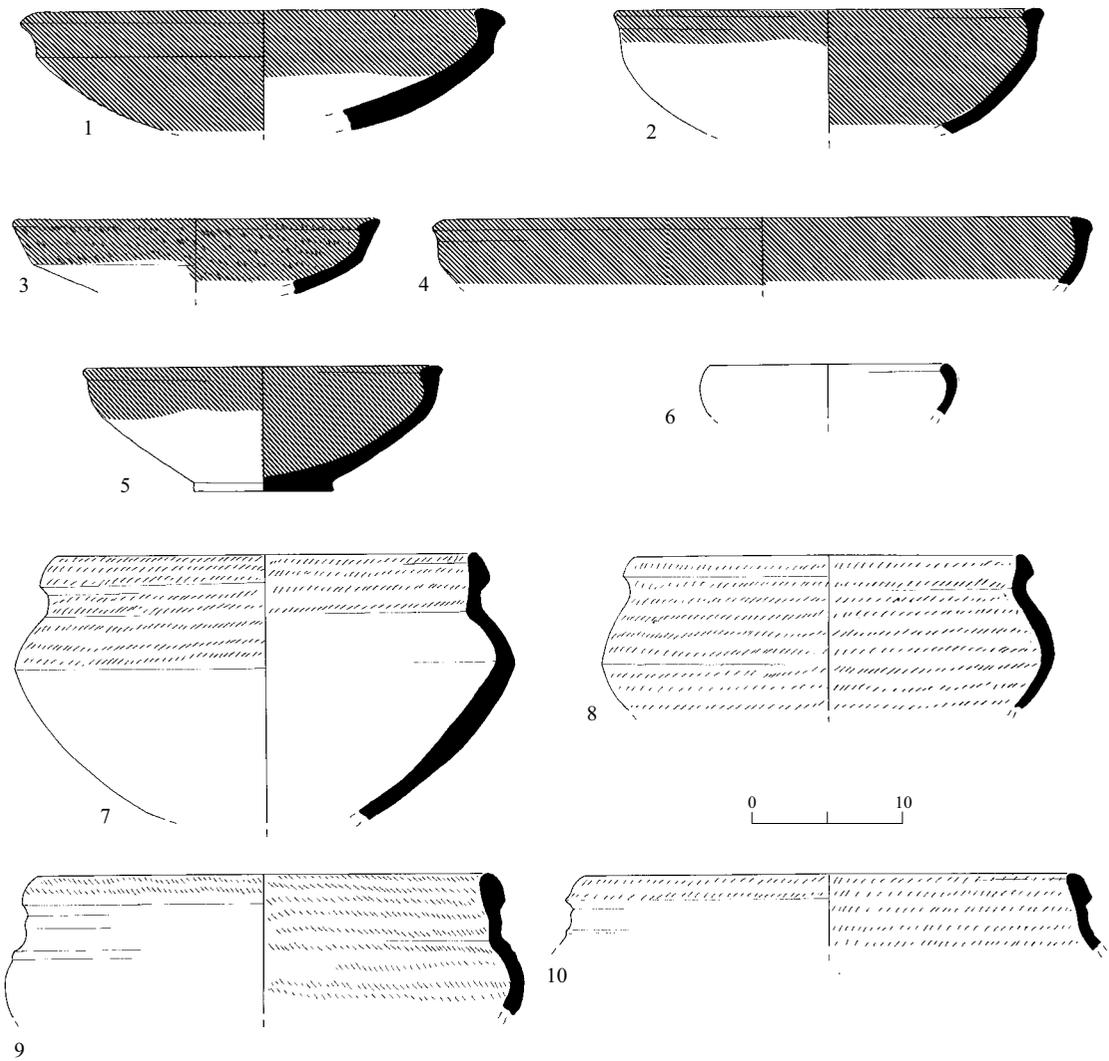


Fig. 2. Bowls and kraters from Strata IIA and IIB.

No.	Vessel	Reg. No.	Locus	Phase	Description	Parallels from H. Rosh Zayit (Alexandre and Gal 2000)
1	Bowl	1010/2	108	IIB	Cream ware, red slip	Type B I (pp. 34–36)
2	Bowl	1038/3	107	Ia	Brown ware, red slip	As No. 1
3	Bowl	1038/2	107	Ia	Brown ware, red slip	As No. 1
4	Bowl	1001/3	107	Ia	Brown ware, red slip	As No. 1
5	Bowl	1021	113	IIB	Brown ware, red slip	As No. 1
6	Bowl	1001/4	101	Ia	Light brown ware	
7	Krater	1025	111	Ia	Brown ware, burnished	Type K II (p. 40)
8	Krater	1010/1	108	IIB	Brown ware, burnished	As No. 7
9	Krater	1009/1	107	Ia	Brown ware, burnished	As No. 7
10	Krater	1014/2	108	IIB	Brown ware, burnished	As No. 7

*Kraters*

Four deep, roughly hand-burnished carinated kraters were found, with thickened rims (Fig. 2:7–10). Although the ware differs from the dark red ware of the cooking pots, indications of burning on the lower parts of the vessels suggests that they too may have been used for cooking.

*Cooking Pots and Cooking Jugs*

Open cooking pots with the typical triangular rim made of red gritty ware, blackened from use, were the most common vessel found in the excavation (Fig. 3:1–7). The pots have straight and pinched rim forms. The form is ubiquitous in Iron IIA sites in the north of Israel (Type CP I; Alexandre and Gal 2000:40–42). One sherd (Fig. 3:7) has part of an incised line on the rim, thereby associating it with the well-known group of marked cooking pots (Sharon, Yellin and Perlman 1987; Alexandre and Gal 2000:184, Fig. VII.6:8). A complete globular, slightly squat cooking jug (Fig. 3:8), found in the Stratum IIc *tabun*, has a gentle carination and a rounded base, similar to a cooking jug from the early Iron IIA pre-fort Stratum III at Ḥorbat Rosh Zayit (Type CP II; Gal and Alexandre 2000:32, Figs. III.1:19; III.2). This vessel is probably an earlier form than the cooking jug from Stratum

IIb (Fig. 3:9; cf. Gal and Alexandre 2000:42–43, especially Figs. III.14; III.91:5).

*Storage Jars*

Although few, the rim sherds and the two complete storage jars reflect a variety of forms, similar to some of those from the Strata IIb–IIa repertoire at Ḥorbat Rosh Zayit (Alexandre and Gal 2000:44–50). The forms include the true hippo jar of gray metallic ware with the profiled neck and rim (Type SJ Ia; Fig. 4:1), the ridged neck, non-hippo jar (Type SJ Ib; Fig. 4:2), the short neck jar (Type SJ II; Fig. 4:3) and the high neck jar, Type SJ III, either thickened on the inside rim (Fig. 4:4, 5) or with a thickened ring on the outside of the rim (Fig. 4:6).

## OTHER FINDS

*Stone Vessels*

Two grinding stones were found (not illustrated). One was rectangular and the other amorphous in shape. Both were made of basalt and heavily worn.

*Charcoal and Carbonized Organic Material*

Large quantities of charcoal and carbonized organic material were recovered from the burnt layer of Stratum IIb (L108) and from Oven 111

Fig. 3 ▶

No.	Vessel	Reg. No.	Locus	Phase	Description	Parallels from Ḥ. Rosh Zayit (Alexandre and Gal 2000)
1	Cooking pot	1038/4	107	IIa	Cooking ware, grits	Type CP I (pp. 40–42)
2	Cooking pot	1006/2	106	IIa	Cooking ware, grits	As No. 1
3	Cooking pot	1005/1	105	IIa	Cooking ware, grits	As No. 1
4	Cooking pot	1006/1	106	IIa	Cooking ware, grits	As No. 1
5	Cooking pot	1006/6	106	IIa	Cooking ware, grits	As No. 1
6	Cooking pot	1009/2	107	IIa	Cooking ware, grits	As No. 1
7	Cooking pot	1006/7	106	IIa	Cooking ware, grits	As No. 1
8	Cooking jug	1035/1	117	IIc	Cooking ware, grits	Type CP II (p. 32)
9	Cooking jug	1011/3	108	IIb	Cooking ware, grits	Type CP II (pp. 32, 42–43)

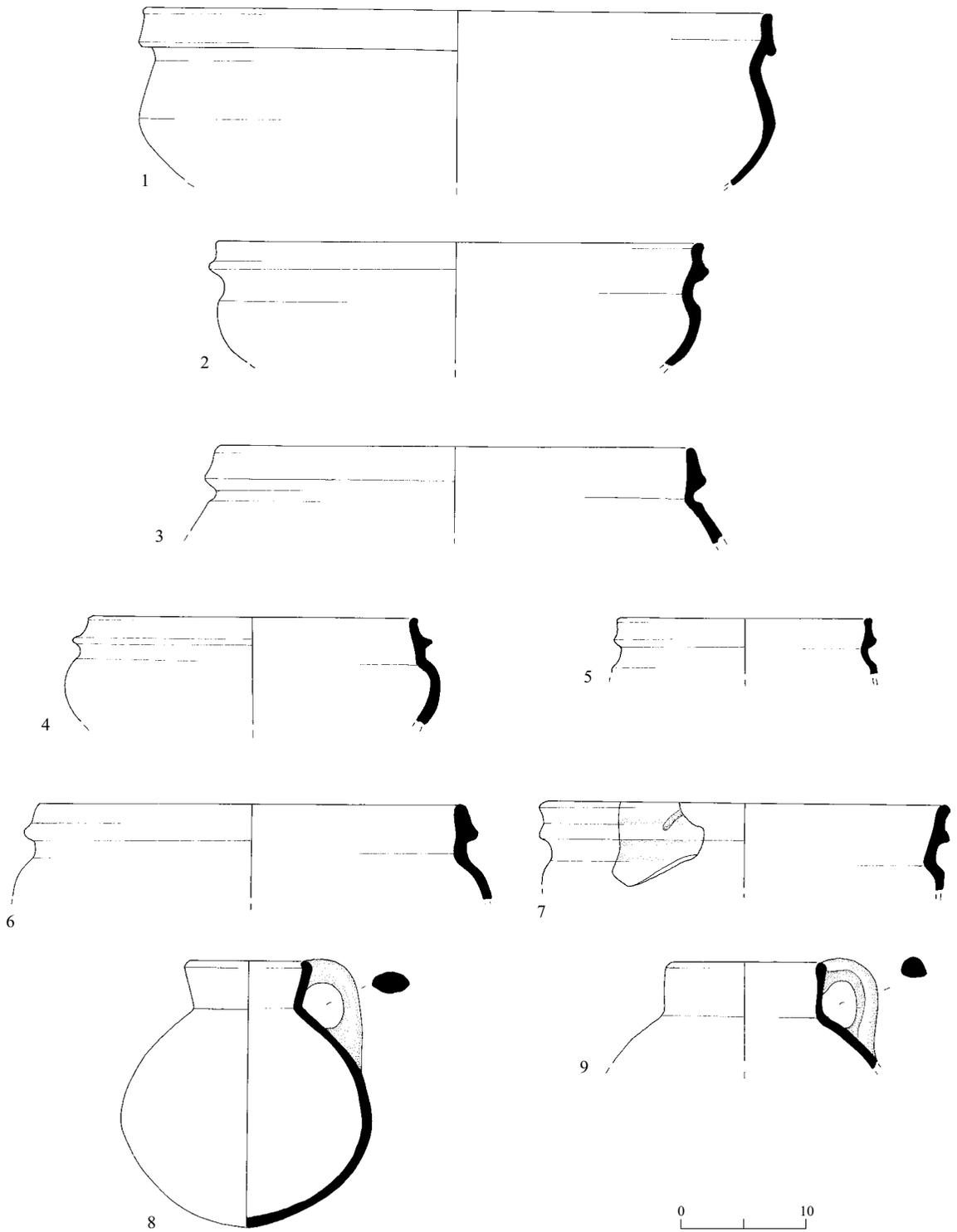


Fig. 3. Cooking vessels from Strata IIa, IIb and IIc.

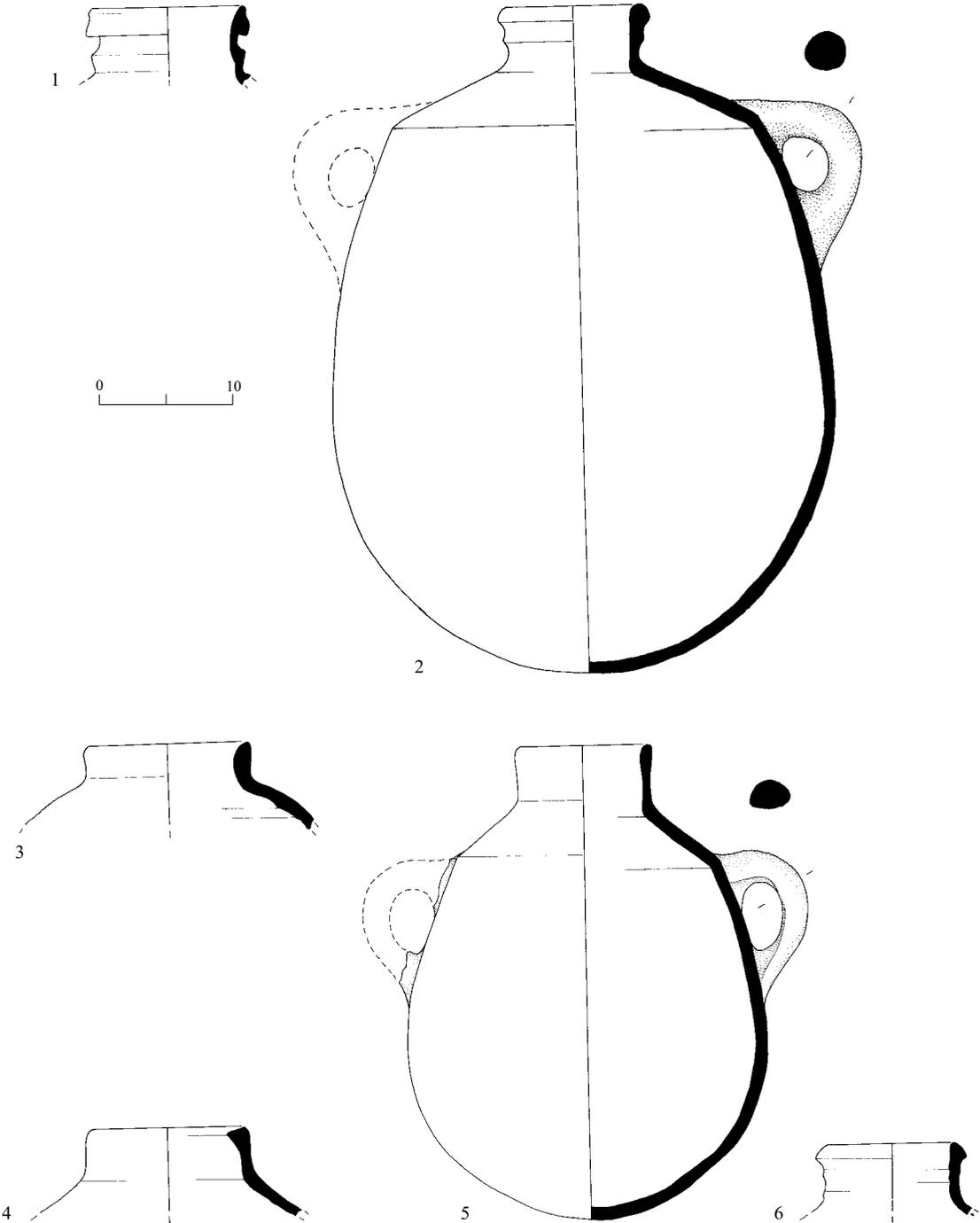


Fig. 4. Storage jars from Strata IIa and IIb.

◄ Fig. 4

No.	Reg. No.	Locus	Phase	Description	Parallels from H. Rosh Zayit (Alexandre and Gal 2000)
1	1014/5	108	I Ib	Gray, metallic	Type SJ Ia (pp. 44–48)
2	1015	109	IIa	Brown	Type SJ Ib (p. 48)
3	1029/2	109	IIa	Brown	Type SJ II (pp. 48–50)
4	1014/1	108	I Ib	Brown	Type SJ III (pp. 50–51)
5	1009/5	107	IIa	Brown	As No. 4
6	1005/3	105	IIa	Pink	As No. 4

in Stratum IIa. Samples were submitted for radiocarbon dating (see below).

#### DATING AND CONCLUSIONS

##### *Radiocarbon Dating*<sup>2</sup>

Three charcoal samples were submitted for analysis. Two came from L108 in Stratum I Ib and provide uncalibrated dates of  $2835 \pm 28$  BP and  $2865 \pm 24$  BP, and calibrated ages of 1080–900 and 960–940 BCE. One sample from L111 in Stratum IIa provided an uncalibrated date of  $2680 \pm 24$  BP and a calibrated age between 900 and 800 BCE. The radiocarbon dates obtained for Stratum I Ib align with the conventional Iron IIA chronology, whereas the date for Stratum IIa favors a lower chronology. However, three dates based on charcoal samples are insufficient to allow the drawing of significant historical conclusions.

##### *Dating According to Contemporary Pottery Repertoires*

Despite the small quantity of pottery found in the earliest Sulam phase, Stratum I Ic, this stratum appears to be contemporary with Ḥorbat Rosh Zayit pre-fort Stratum III (Alexandre and Gal 2000:30–33). The pottery forms from the next two Sulam phases, Stratum I Ib and IIa

are contemporary with the repertoires from Megiddo Stratum VA–IVB, Ta’anakh Period IIB, Bet She’an Stratum S1, Ḥorbat Rosh Zayit Strata I Ib–IIa (see Alexandre and Gal 2000:151 and references there) and other sites. According to the conventional chronology scheme, these strata should be dated between the late tenth and mid-ninth centuries BCE.

##### *Conclusions*

The small-scale excavation at Sulam exposed three phases of Iron IIA occupation—cooking areas in Stratum I Ic and Stratum IIa, and possibly an industrial installation in Stratum I Ib. The burnt debris observed in Stratum I Ib may be related to heat-involving installations at the site, such as kilns and furnaces, or a localized fire. Alternatively, it may be explained as a destruction level in the broader historical context of Shishak’s campaign of c. 927/924 BCE, thus adding Sulam to the list of destroyed towns in the Jezreel and Bet She’an Valleys (see Alexandre and Gal 2000:151 and literature cited there), or it may be related to the Aramean attacks in the ninth century BCE. However, only extensive excavations can determine whether the burnt levels are the result of local activities/events or an external enemy.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The excavation (Permit No. A-3261) was carried out by the owners of the house on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority under the direction of Yardenna Alexandre with the assistance of Karen Covello-Paran. Assistance was provided by Leea Porat (pottery restoration), Hagit Tahan (pottery drawing) and Natalia Zak (final plans).

<sup>2</sup> The samples were examined in the framework of the Iron Age Dating Project conducted by Ilan Sharon

(Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University), Elisabetta Boaretto (Weizmann Institute of Science) and Ayelet Gilboa (Department of Archaeology, University of Haifa). This research is supported by a grant from the Israel Science Foundation of the Israel Academy of Science and Humanities (Sharon, Boaretto and Gilboa, forthcoming).

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