

SETTLEMENT REMAINS FROM THE BRONZE AND IRON AGES AT HORBAT MENORIM (EL-MANARA), LOWER GALILEE

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THE SITE

Horbat Menorim (el-Manara) is located in the eastern Lower Galilee, strategically positioned on the Poriyya Ridge at the eastern edge of Yavne'el Valley (Fig. 1). The site (map ref. NIG 25120/74010; OIG 20120/24010), situated on an elevated mound, overlooks the Sea of Galilee above a steep escarpment that provided a natural defense on the eastern side (Fig. 2). The ancient settlement is located 235 m above

sea level, and its water sources include several springs on the slope below the site. The agricultural potential of the valley floor, the defensible position of the elevated mound, in direct proximity to an ancient highway, and the ensuing trade advantages from this route, appear to be the primary factors for settlement at this locale.

The mound itself was never excavated, but has been surveyed, twice systematically and once randomly. In his study of the Lower Galilee, Gal (1992:34) dated the occupation of the site to Early Bronze Age I (EB I), Late Iron Age I/Iron Age II and the Byzantine period.¹ Within the framework of the survey of the map of Tiberias, Stepansky (in prep.) found pottery sherds dating to EB I, MB II, the Iron Age, and the Roman and the Early Islamic periods.² Braun and Porath surveyed the site unsystematically and conducted short salvage excavations of three cist graves in the immediate environs, all dated to an early phase of Iron II. During their survey, Braun and Porath retrieved pottery sherds that dated to EB I (Braun 2001: Fig. 1) and to the Intermediate Bronze Age, and documented numerous modern disturbances and the state of the site's preservation at the time. According to Gal (1992:34), the size of the site was 5 hectares; however, Stepansky's survey revealed that the site extended over an area of at least 122 hectares, probably including the adjacent burial grounds. Thus, information gleaned from previous work at the site indicates a settlement history dating to EB I, the Intermediate Bronze Age, MB II, early Iron I, Iron II, and the Roman, Byzantine and Early Islamic periods.

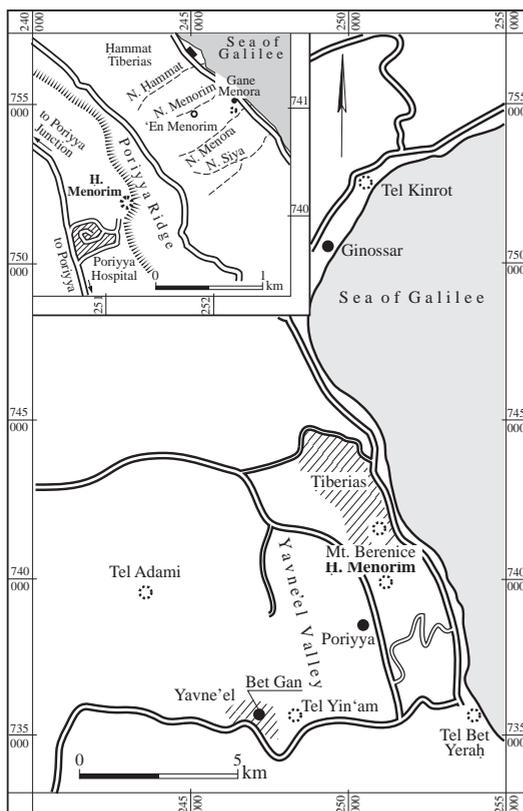


Fig. 1. Location map.



Fig. 2. Aerial view of the site, looking northeast.

THE EXCAVATION

The present excavation³ at the site encompassed three squares, in which architectural remains of three strata were found (Fig. 3); the squares were directly aligned with the modern road. Pottery recovered suggests utilization and/or occupation of the site during two main periods—a late phase of EB I (Stratum III) and Iron IIA (Strata II and I). The Strata II–I elements were found partially protruding above the modern surface.

Pottery sherds dating to the Intermediate Bronze Age (Fig. 4) and MB IIB (not drawn) were also retrieved in the excavated area. However, they could not be associated with any architectural elements. It is probable that these sherds washed down into this area from the upper reaches of the site as a result of erosion. Apparently, the settlement was smaller during those periods and did not reach the westernmost part of the site.



Fig. 3. General view of the excavation, looking south.

the excavation. The absence of both the preceding phase of EB IA, and of the successive EB II occupation, enabled us to securely isolate the pottery sample to EB IB. This homogenous assemblage allowed for the recording of all rim sherds (Table 1).

Table 1. Stratium III Pottery-Type Frequencies (rims)

Vessel Class	N	%
Bowls	8	13
Kraters	3	5
Holemouth jars	13	22
Storage jars	18	29
Pithoi	16	27
Small closed vessels	2	4
<i>Total</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>100</i>

Most of the larger vessels are thick-walled and produced from coarse and poorly fired fabrics. The dominant temper is basalt. Smaller vessels have thinner walls and usually a red-slipped surface, often burnished. Decoration includes burnishing, line-painting, red slip and band slip, with the latter two being the most common forms of surface treatment. Band slip decoration is notable on sherds of large storage vessels, ranging in color from red to brown to gray.

The vessel types from the site fit well into a typology established for the contemporary site of 'En Shaddud by Braun (1985:110–115, Figs. 14–27). Additional *comparanda* are known from nearby Bet Yerah (Stratum V, Getzov 2006: Figs. 2.12–2.17; Period B, Greenberg and Paz 2006: Figs. 8.45–8.52), and Tel Kinrot (Winn and Yakar 1984: Figs. 7–10). Notably, these sites are visible from the summit of H. Menorim.

Fig. 5 ▶

No.	Vessel	Locus	Reg. No.	Parallels
1	Bowl	214	2015/2	'En Shaddud, Types 2–3 (Braun 1985: Fig. 15:1–11)
2	Bowl	200	2003	
3	Bowl	214	2016/1	
4	Krater	Sq A2, topsoil	2024/2	
5	Krater	202	2008	
6	Holemouth jar	209	2032/3	
7	Storage jar	214	2013/2	'En Shaddud, Type 17b (Braun 1985: Fig. 20:10–13)
8	Storage jar	214	2015/1	
9	Storage jar	202	2002	'En Shaddud, Type 17d (Braun 1985: Fig. 21:2–7)
10	Storage jar	214	2022	
11	Pithos	214	2014/2	Bet Yerah Str.V (Getzov, Paz and Gophna 2001: Fig. 2:5, 6) 'En Shaddud, Type 25 (Braun 1985: Fig. 23:4–7) Tel Kinrot (Winn and Yakar 1984: Fig. 9:5–7)
12	Pithos	214	2013/1	
13	Pithos	200	2000/1	'En Shaddud, Type 25 (Braun 1985: Fig. 23:3) Tel Kinrot (Winn and Yakar 1984: Fig. 9:8)
14	Pithos	Sq A2, topsoil	2024/1	
15	Handle, small closed vessel	214	2010	
16	Handle, closed vessel	209	2011	
17	Bowl	211	2026	'En Shaddud, Type 10 (Braun 1985: Fig. 18:8, 9)
18	Flint sickle blade	214	2013/3	

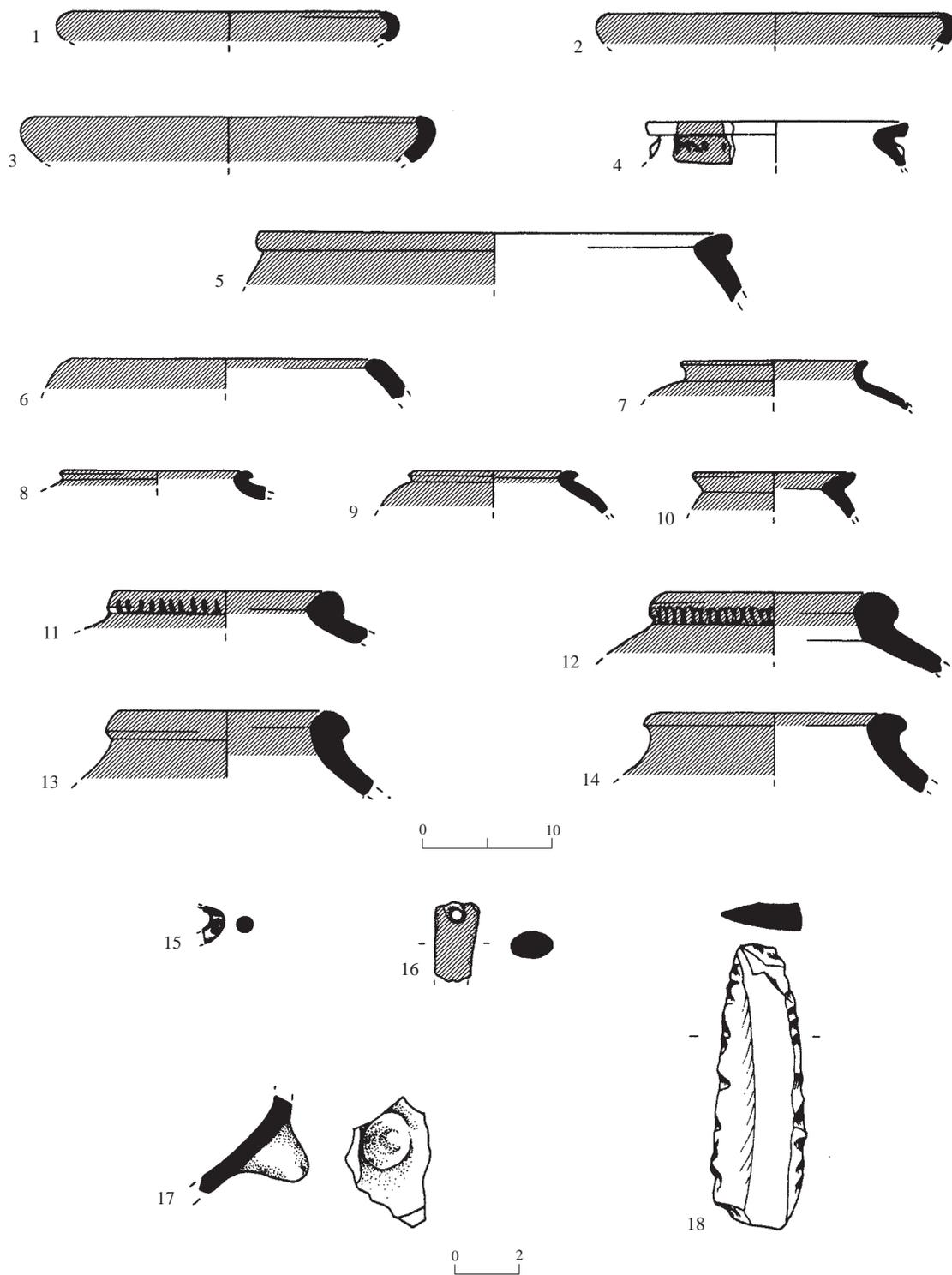


Fig. 5. Stratum III pottery and flint.

Bowls.— All seven of the small bowls that were registered have inverted rims, curving profiles and a red-slipped surface, sometimes burnished (e.g., Fig. 5:1–3). One red-slipped fragment with a conoid projection (Fig. 5:17) probably comes from a bowl with a similar profile.

Kraters.— The three krater rims exhibit variability in form and size similar to those from Bet Yerah (Stratum V, Getzov 2006). The krater in Fig. 5:4 has a gutter rim and applied impressed decoration at the neck. An additional large krater or basin (Fig. 5:5) has a thickened and folded flat rim.

Holemouth Jars.— Holemouth jars are simple; five have rounded rims (e.g., Fig. 5:6), six have tapered rims and two have squared rims.

Storage Jars.— The storage jars are divided into necked jars (six jars; e.g., Fig. 5:7), neckless jars with a slightly everted or folded rim (seven jars; e.g., Fig. 5:8, 9) and jars with an everted flaring rim (five jars; e.g., Fig. 5:10). These include a number of variants and it is often difficult to distinguish amphoriskoi from storage jars with this rim type.

In addition to the storage-jar rims, six handles were found that could belong to storage vessels; these bore band slip decoration.

Pithoi.— All of the 16 pithoi from H. Menorim have rounded, thickened rims and either a short neck or no neck. When this type bears vertical striations, it is termed a “rail rim” pithos; nine such examples were found (e.g., Fig. 5:11, 12). The remaining seven pithoi with rounded rims lacked these striations (e.g., Fig. 5:13, 14). All of the H. Menorim pithoi are red-slipped on the exterior and on the rim’s interior.

Such pithoi were previously noted at H. Menorim during the site survey by Braun (1996:199, n. 45). According to Braun, their distribution pattern encompasses northern Israel, including the Jordan Valley. He suggested that the pithoi without the striations are a later development, with a distribution limited

primarily to the Jezreel and Jordan Valleys (Braun 1996:199–200). Note that in the case of H. Menorim, both types (with and without striations) appear together at a site located on the margins of the Jezreel and the Jordan Valleys. However, the limited assemblage from H. Menorim does not allow us to securely investigate Braun’s claim.

Small Closed Vessels.— This category includes body sherds and two rims belonging to small closed vessels, such as cups, juglets or amphoriskoi, that are not distinguishable. Five small loop handles with circular sections, all bearing red slip, most likely belonged to such small closed vessels as well. One of these (Fig. 5:15), probably from a cup or juglet, is a red-slipped and burnished high loop handle with three incisions on its side. A larger handle (Fig. 5:16) has a circular incision on one end.

Other Finds

Flint.— A complete Canaanite flint sickle blade (Fig. 5:18) was found above Floor 214.

Summary of Stratum III

The Stratum III occupation was only minimally exposed. The domestic pottery assemblage exhibits features typical of EB IB in northern Israel, such as the “rail rim” pithoi, red-slipped bowls with conical protrusions and band slip surface decoration.

Stratum II: Iron Age IIA

Associated with this best-preserved phase are a number of well-built architectural elements belonging to one structure, encountered beneath stone tumble and accumulation (see Plan 1). Notably, all Stratum II walls penetrated Stratum III accumulations to bedrock. It is possible to identify two rooms (L208, L213) of this building that extended beyond the excavated area.

Room 208 (Sq A3; Fig. 6).— This room is separated into two loci, L208 and L209, by the

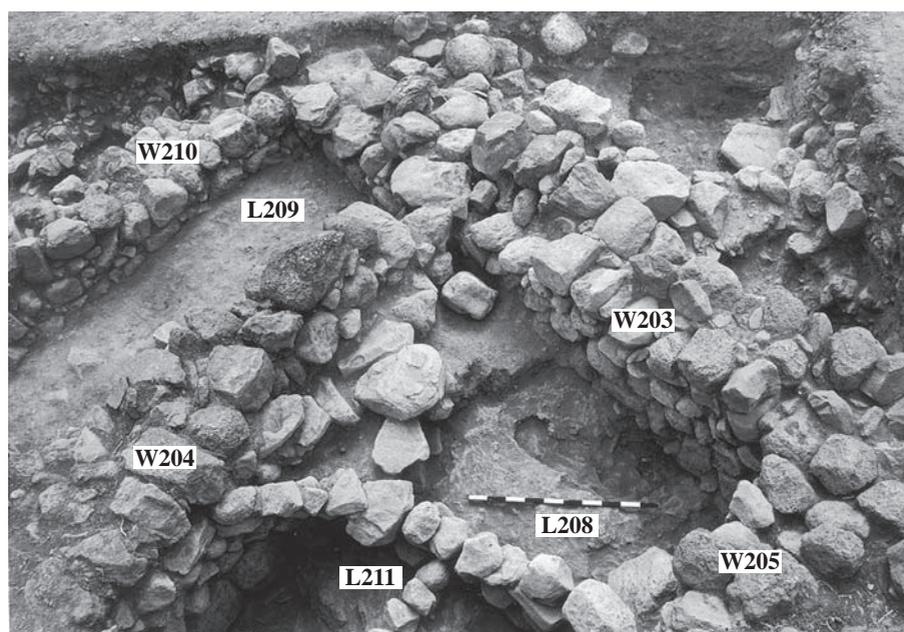


Fig. 6. Stratum II L208, looking southwest (Sq A3); Installation 211 in foreground center, with W204 above it.

Stratum I wall (W204). The room is bordered by W203 in the west, W205 in the north, and W210 in the south. The walls were constructed from two lines of medium- to large-sized fieldstones with small filler stones between them. Wall 203 was preserved to a height of 1.1 m. A stone collapse covered the bedrock in this room. No floor was perceived, and it is probable that bedrock served as the floor or the floor foundation. An installation (L211) was erected above the bedrock and was preserved five courses high. It is possible that L211 was a corner installation that connected W205 in the north and an earlier Stratum II wall (not excavated) in the south. Evidence for this proposal can be seen beneath W204 (Fig. 7; Plan 1: Section 1–1) and W215, where earlier stones, probably from a Stratum II wall that divided this room, were observed in the section. A small partition wall, three courses high, inside this installation sub-divides it, although its function is enigmatic. Iron blade fragments, possibly from a sickle (not illustrated), were

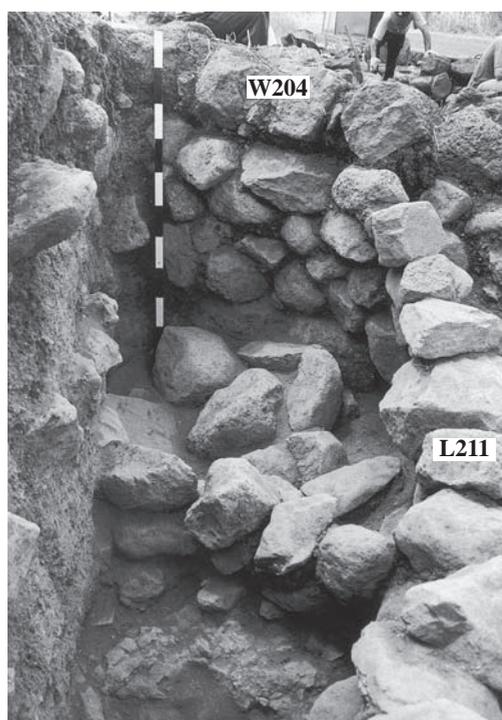


Fig. 7. Square A3, looking south; note Stratum I W204 running above Installation 211.

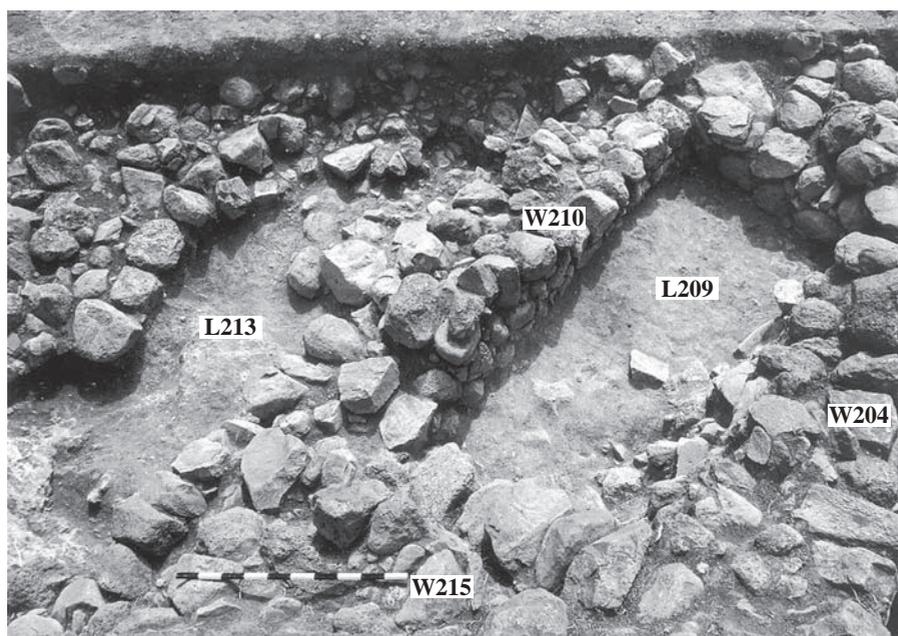


Fig. 8. Square A2, looking west; stone floor of Stratum II L213 on far left, corner of Stratum I W204 and W215 in right corner.

found directly above bedrock inside Installation 211. Ashy deposits were found west of the installation, in the corner of W203 and W205.

Finds in this room include cooking and storage vessels and a basalt upper grinding stone fragment (see below, Fig. 13:3).

Room 213 (Sq A2).— This room is bordered by W210 in the north and W212 in the south (Fig. 8); an extension of W203 to the south most likely enclosed this room on the west. The Stratum I building activities, e.g., W206, damaged the southern part of this room. Wall 212 (Sq A1) was poorly preserved, and is assigned to Stratum II because it runs parallel to W210, and on account of the Iron Age pottery sherds that were found down to bedrock here. A stone collapse, including many large basalt boulders, was found throughout this room.

A stone-slab floor paved this room (Fig. 9), leveling the many niches in the uneven bedrock surface. In the easternmost part of this room, the bedrock is at a much higher level. In the area south of W212, the natural bedrock was



Fig. 9. Square A2, looking north at Stratum II stone floor L213 abutting W210.

exposed almost directly below the modern surface.

Additional Stratum II deposits were noted in Sq A3, to the northwest of W203, apparently outside Room 108. Above Floor 207 was a large amount of collapsed stones and light-colored debris, often hard-packed. A non-restorable storage vessel (not drawn) was found smashed in this northwestern corner of Sq A3. The jar penetrated down through the

Stratum III deposits below and was probably a storage installation.

Pottery (Figs. 10–12)

The limited repertoire of forms is probably the result of the small scale of the excavation and the proximity of the finds to the modern surface. The sparse assemblage is analogous to H. Rosh Zayit Stratum II (Gal and Alexandre 2000) and the parallels will focus on comparison with this

site. Additional parallels will be given to the limited published assemblage from Tel Yin‘am Stratum IV (Dehnisch 2005).

Cooking Pots.— The sole cooking-pot type found at H. Menorim has a wide, open body and variations on a vertical, triangular rim (Fig. 10:1–4). In addition to the rim fragments, there were many large body sherds, yet none were restorable.

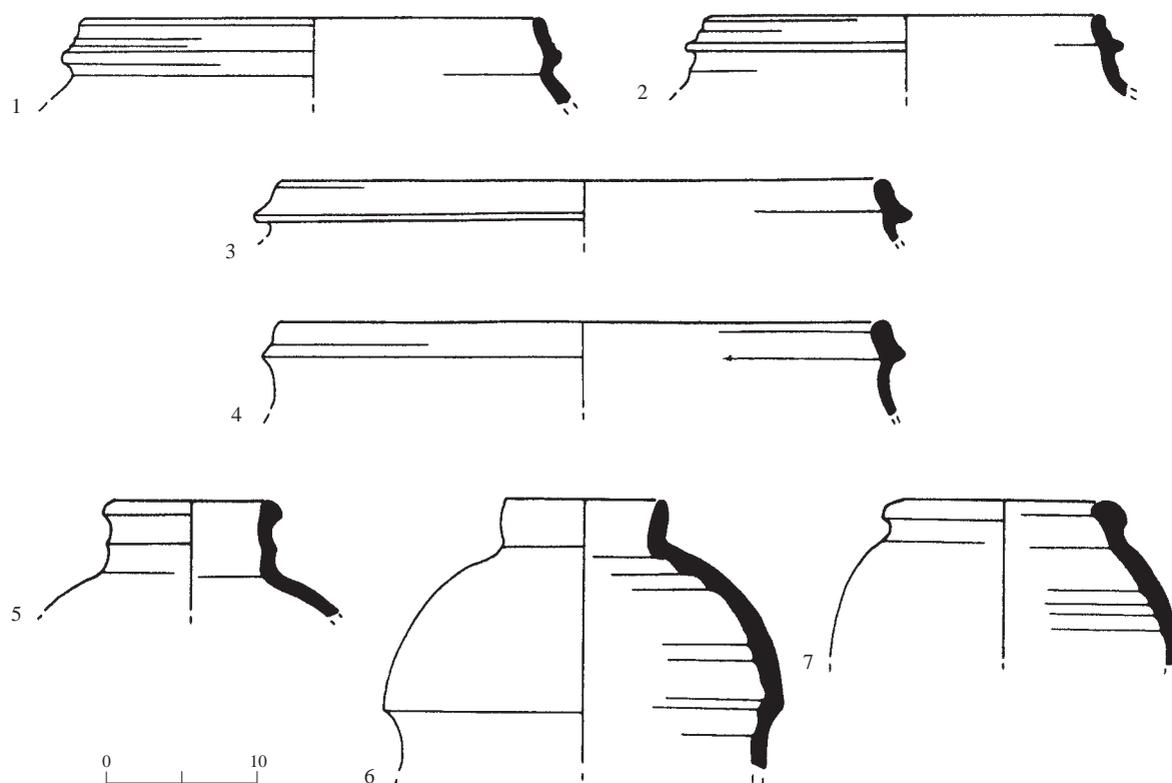


Fig 10. Stratum II pottery.

No.	Vessel	Locus	Reg. No.	Parallels
1	Cooking pot	209	2027	H. Rosh Zayit, Type CP1 (Gal and Alexandre 2000:40–41, Figs. III.89:4–13; III.93:2–5 and additional references therein) Tel Yin‘am, Str. IV (Dehnisch 2005: Figs. IV.3:2–9; IV.10:1; IV.14: 6–9)
2	Cooking pot	207	2014	
3	Cooking pot	200	2000	
4	Cooking pot	211	2026/1	
5	Storage jar	208	2031	H. Rosh Zayit, Type SJ Ib (Gal and Alexandre 2000:48; Fig. III.76:18 and additional references therein) Tel Yin‘am, Str. IV (Dehnisch 2005: Fig. IV.12)
6	Storage jar	209	2032/3	H. Rosh Zayit, Type SJ IV (Gal and Alexandre 2000:51–52, Fig. III.95:18)
7	Storage jar	209	2032/1	Tel Yin‘am, Str. IV (Dehnisch 2005:284–288, Figs. IV.11:1–3; IV.14:2–5)

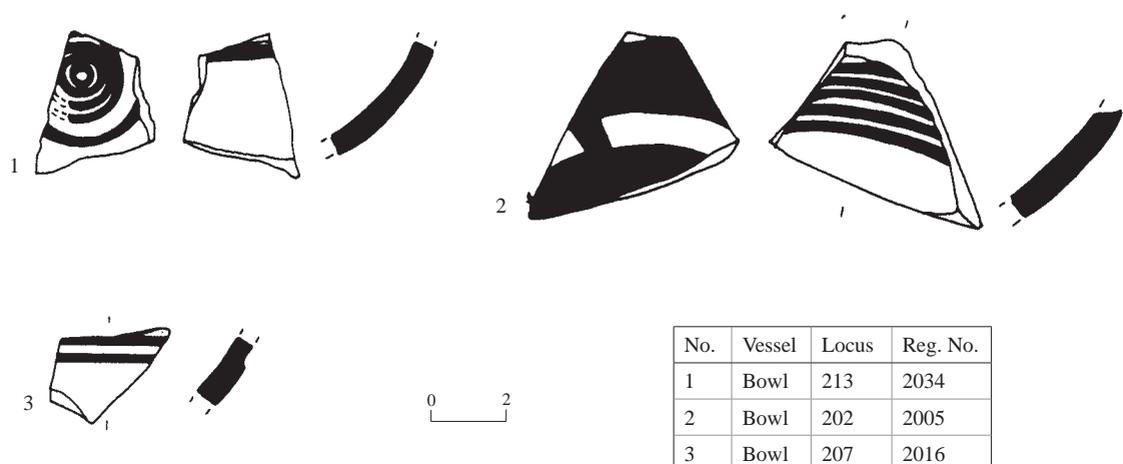


Fig. 11. Stratum II Black-on-Red bowl fragments.

Storage Jars.— The storage-jar types include a ridged-necked jar, a short-necked jar and a cylindrical holemouth jar. The ridged-neck jar (Fig. 10:5) has a thickened rim and a ridge at mid-neck. It is termed a ‘hippo jar’ and is commonly found at Iron II sites in northern Israel (Gal and Alexandre 2000:48). The short-necked jar (Fig. 10:6) has a simple rim and a rounded shoulder that creates a carinated profile where it joins the body of the vessel. A slight concavity is distinguished below this carination. At Ḥ. Rosh Zayit, complete storage jars of this type have a body that tapers toward a button base, and is considered a predecessor of the torpedo jar (Gal and Alexandre 2000: 51–52). A cylindrical holemouth jar (Fig. 10:7) is of the handleless type (Gal and Alexandre 2000:53–54).

Black on Red Ware.— Three body sherds of Black-on-Red (BOR) bowls were found (Fig. 11). All were fabricated from hard-fired, well-levigated orange clay, and bear high-quality, burnished red slip painted in black. The illustrated sherds are small and do not present even a single complete profile. Nevertheless, they can be compared to types in the large BOR assemblage from Stratum II at Ḥ. Rosh Zayit (Gal and Alexandre 2000:68–78).

The bowl sherd illustrated in Fig. 11:1 has a concentric circle motif on the exterior, similar to the deep, rounded bowl Type BOR Ib at Ḥ. Rosh Zayit (Gal and Alexandre 2000: Fig. III.77:16). The thicker-walled sherd in Fig. 11:2 is from a rounded, out-flaring bowl of Type BOR Ia at Ḥ. Rosh Zayit (Gal and Alexandre 2000: Fig. III.77:16); it bears black painted circles on its interior and black painted bands on the exterior. The smallest bowl sherd (Fig. 11:3) exhibits a ridge found on both BOR Ia-type (Gal and Alexandre 2000: Fig. III.75:1) and BOR Ic-type (Gal and Alexandre 2000: Fig. III.88:16) bowls at Ḥ. Rosh Zayit.

Other Finds

Loomweight.— A limestone biconical loomweight (Fig. 12:1) was poorly preserved.

Scraper.— A small oblong object, made of scoria basalt (Fig. 12:2) with an incised groove, most likely functioned as a scraper. It is possible that this is a variant of the contemporary scoria scrapers known from Ḥ. Rosh Zayit (Gal and Alexandre 2000:127, Fig. III.103).

Grinding Stone.— A fragment of a loaf-shaped, basalt upper grinding stone was found in Room 208 (Fig. 12:3). Additional stone-implement

fragments include two basalt upper grinding-stone fragments and a large basalt pestle (not illustrated).

Iron Blade.— Fragments of an iron flat sickle blade (not illustrated) were found in the Stratum II installation (L211) directly above bedrock. Iron sickle blades are quite common during Iron Age II, as evident from the numerous sickles found at H. Rosh Zayit (Gal and Alexandre 2000:128, Fig. III.105). An iron knife or sickle blade was also placed in one of the cist graves (CG 1) at H. Menorim, dated to late Iron Age I/early Iron Age II (Braun 2001: Fig. 3:10).

Stratum I

The architectural elements of this stratum were found protruding above the modern surface and were most likely contemporary with additional extant walls found throughout the site's surface. Three walls (W206, W204 and W215) are associated with this stratum. All were similarly constructed from large unworked basalt stones. These walls did not have well-preserved vertical faces due to post-occupation erosion effects.⁴

No floors were associated with these walls. However, considering that no post-Iron Age IIA pottery sherds were found in the excavated area, Stratum I apparently represents a later phase within Iron Age IIA.

The elements of this stratum were clearly post-Stratum II, and overrode the collapse of the Stratum II stone walls. Wall 206 (Sq A2), for example, overrode the collapse above Floor 213, and W204 and W215 (Sqs A2–3) directly cover the collapse in L208. Wall 204, which traversed the center of this room (Fig. 13), overrode Stratum II Installation 211 (see Fig. 7).

We were not able to securely attribute specific finds to the Stratum I habitation, due to the limited preservation of only the lower courses of the walls' foundations. In light of the absence of post-Iron IIA finds in the excavated area, it is assumed that both Strata II and I are dated to this period.

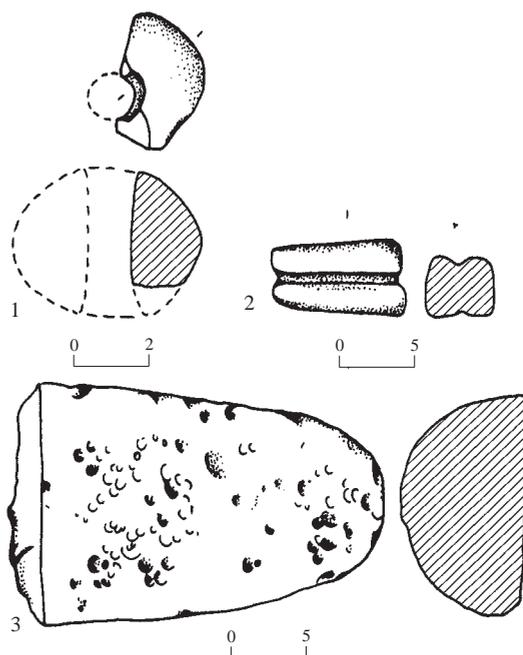


Fig. 12. Stratum II objects.

No.	Object	Locus	Reg. No.	Description
1	Loomweight	202	2002	Limestone
2	Scraper	213	2018	Basalt (scoria)
3	Grinding stone	208	-	Basalt

Summary of Strata II–I

The well-preserved architectural elements of Stratum II belong to a single structure that was aligned on a northwest–southeast axis; the entrance was most likely on the eastern side. The width of both exposed rooms is a uniform 4 m, and judging by Walls 210 and 212, these are long rooms of large dimension. It is possible that the plan of this structure was a variant of the Four Room house, although the evidence is quite fragmentary. The resultant plan of the Stratum I architectural elements is not definable, although it is clear that these elements were not built according to the previous Stratum II layout.

Pottery and finds from Stratum II are comparable to Stratum II at H. Rosh Zayit, and include Black-on-Red ware, triangular-

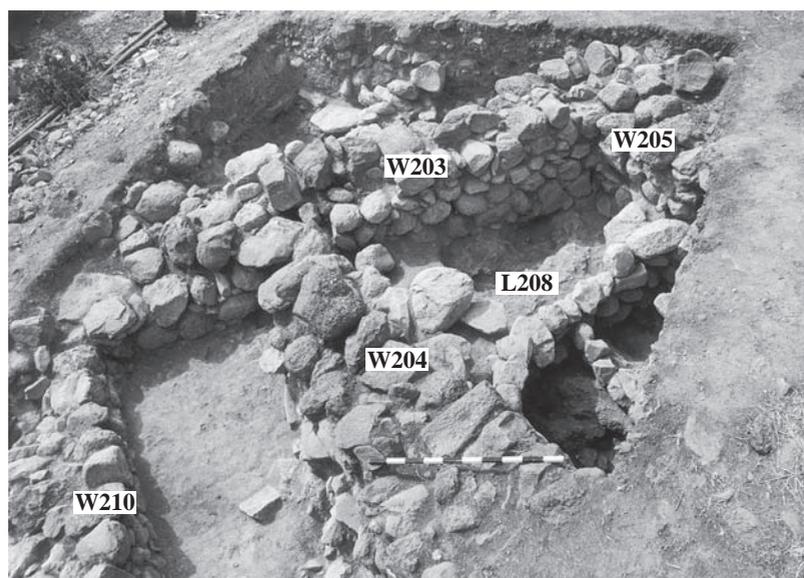


Fig. 13. Square A3, looking west; Stratum I W204 in center, traversing Stratum II L208.

rimmed cooking pots, a ridged-neck hippo storage jar and a cylindrical holemouth jar. The assemblages at Ḥ. Rosh Zayit and Ḥ. Menorim are dated according to the conventional chronology to Iron IIA, the second half of the tenth to the ninth centuries BCE (Gal and Alexandre 2000:151–152; Mazar 2005).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The site was initially settled during EB IB (Stratum III) and was abandoned at the end of this period. Additional sites in the Yavne'el Valley settled during this period include (see Fig. 1) Tel Yin'am (Liebowitz 1997), el-Tulul and Tel Adami (Gal 1992:33–34). Another contemporaneous site is located at Mt. Berenice, Tiberias,⁵ located c. 2 km north of Ḥ. Menorim, also on a cliff overlooking the Sea of Galilee. Excavations at Gane Menora (Fig. 1: inset), 1.3 km northeast of Ḥ. Menorim on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, contained substantial EB IB remains (Eli Yannai, pers. comm.). Tel Bet Yerah (Getzov 2006:7–39; Greenberg and Paz 2006: Table 1.2) and Tel Kinrot (Winn and Yakar 1984) are important sites located in the

nearby Jordan Rift Valley. There is no evidence from the limited excavation for fortifications at Ḥ. Menorim; however, the strategic location of the site with the sharp promontory on the eastern side no doubt served as a natural fortification.

The sparse ceramic evidence indicates some occupation at Ḥ. Menorim during the Intermediate Bronze Age and MB II. Yet, the lack of clearly *in situ* architecture in the excavated area suggests that settlement at the site during these periods was confined to the upper reaches of the mound. Tombs dating to the Intermediate Bronze Age were excavated approximately 3 km away at Bet Gan (see Fig. 1), a site adjoining Yavne'el (Liebowitz and Porat 1992); however, no settlement was found directly next to this cemetery. The large distance between the two sites precludes linking the tombs of Bet Gan with the settlement at Ḥ. Menorim.

The Iron IIA pottery assemblage recovered suggests the site was occupied from the second half of the tenth to the ninth centuries BCE (Strata II–I). There is proxy evidence from the excavated graves (Braun 2001:178–181) that

the site was initially settled toward the end of Iron I or the beginning stages of Iron IIA. In the Yavne'el Valley, a contemporary Iron IIA village was exposed at Tel Yin'am, where domestic units, including an oil press, were found. Additional Iron IIA sites surveyed in the vicinity include Bet Gan, el-Tulul, Yavne'el and Tel Adami, which was a fortified Iron Age enclosure.

The present excavation, the first to be conducted on the mound, provides important data concerning the occupational sequence at

Ḥ. Menorim and the region. The passage of the caravan route Darb el-Hawarna through this region, one of the main routes that connected the coastal highway with Transjordan, surely had a major influence on site location, economy and cultural connections of the Ḥ. Menorim inhabitants. Other sites in the Yavne'el Valley, more extensively excavated, such as Tel Yin'am and Bet Gan, together with information gleaned from surveys, enable us to incorporate the results of the Ḥ. Menorim excavation into a regional study of the Yavne'el Valley.

NOTES

¹ Zvi Gal refers to the site as Ḥorbat Menora; however, I favor the name introduced by Braun 2001—Ḥorbat Menorim.

² The author wishes to thank Yosef Stepansky for the preliminary results of his survey (Site 20-24/10/1).

³ The excavation (Permit No. A-3400) was conducted in April–May 2001 prior to the placement of electrical lines. The excavation, on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority and financed by Cellcom, was directed by Karen Covello-Paran, with the participation of Yossi Yaakobi (administration), Vadim Essman and Avraham Hajian (surveying),

Howard Smithline (photography), Yosef Stepansky (photography, Fig. 2) and Hagit Tahan (drawing of finds).

The levels on the plan are relative, measured from an arbitrary benchmark adjacent to the excavated area.

⁴ See Braun's description of the modern disturbances at the site (Braun 2001:171).

⁵ No architectural remains of the EB I occupation at Mt. Berenice were exposed; however, the large quantities of pottery from this period in fills below the church (Hirschfeld 2004:77) indicate occupation during this period at the site.

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