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A Seventh-Century BCE Site near Tel 'En Ẓippori

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Tel 'En Ẓippori is located in the heart of a small valley near a cluster of springs named 'Ayanot Ẓippori, which comprise the main water source of upper Naḥal Ẓippori. The small tell stands close to the southern bank of the ravine, adjacent to the Ẓippori junction on the Naẓerat–Shefar'am road (map ref. NIG 2262/7378, OIG 1762/2378; Fig. 1). In his survey of Lower Galilee, Gal (1992:16) discerned several sites in the vicinity of the small valley, representing its occupational history from the Neolithic through the Mamluk periods. In addition to Tel 'En Ẓippori, two important sites discerned in the survey are worth noting (see Fig. 1): an Early Chalcolithic–EB I site located 500 m west of the tell, and an EB II fortified enclosure on the peak of Giv'at Rabbi, rising 40 m above the valley floor to the southwest. These three sites existed in close association with the valley's fertile land and the springs, which have enabled, both in the past and in the present, advanced irrigation farming (Gal 1998). Excavations conducted at Tel 'En Ẓippori revealed occupation remains from EB IV, MB II, LB I–II and Iron I–II (Dessel, Meyers and Meyers 2008). However, the best-preserved remains date to the Late Bronze Age, providing evidence of the importance of the settlement that existed at the site during this period (Dessel 1999; Dessel, Meyers and Meyers 2001).

The site under discussion is located c. 300 m northwest of the tell, on the lower slope of a hillside that borders the valley (Fig. 2). The site was unknown until its discovery in 1998, when it was damaged during construction of the new road leading to the Ẓippori National Park. Although the architectural remains were very close to the surface, no traces were visible prior to its exposure.[1]

The excavation of this site contributes to our understanding of the settlement history of the vicinity of Tel 'En Ẓippori, and sheds new light on the Israelite occupation in Lower Galilee following the Assyrian campaign of Tiglath Pileser III in 733/2 BCE.

The Excavation

Eroded flint pieces were found scattered over the surface of the site, most of them natural flakes with only a few man-made tools that can be roughly associated with the PPNB period.[2]

Ten squares were excavated, covering an area of 250 sq m. In three squares, A4, A5 and B5, two poorly preserved walls were uncovered immediately below the surface; bedrock was

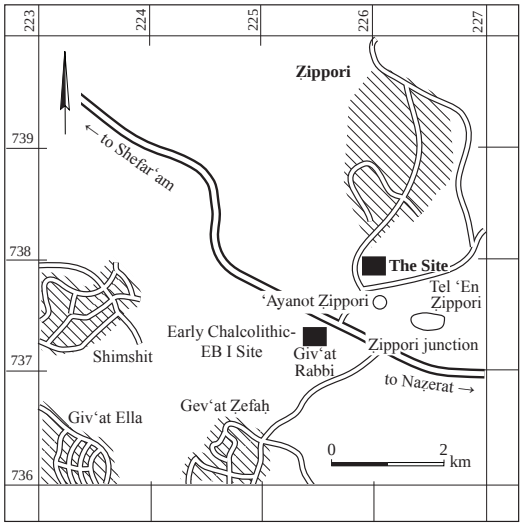
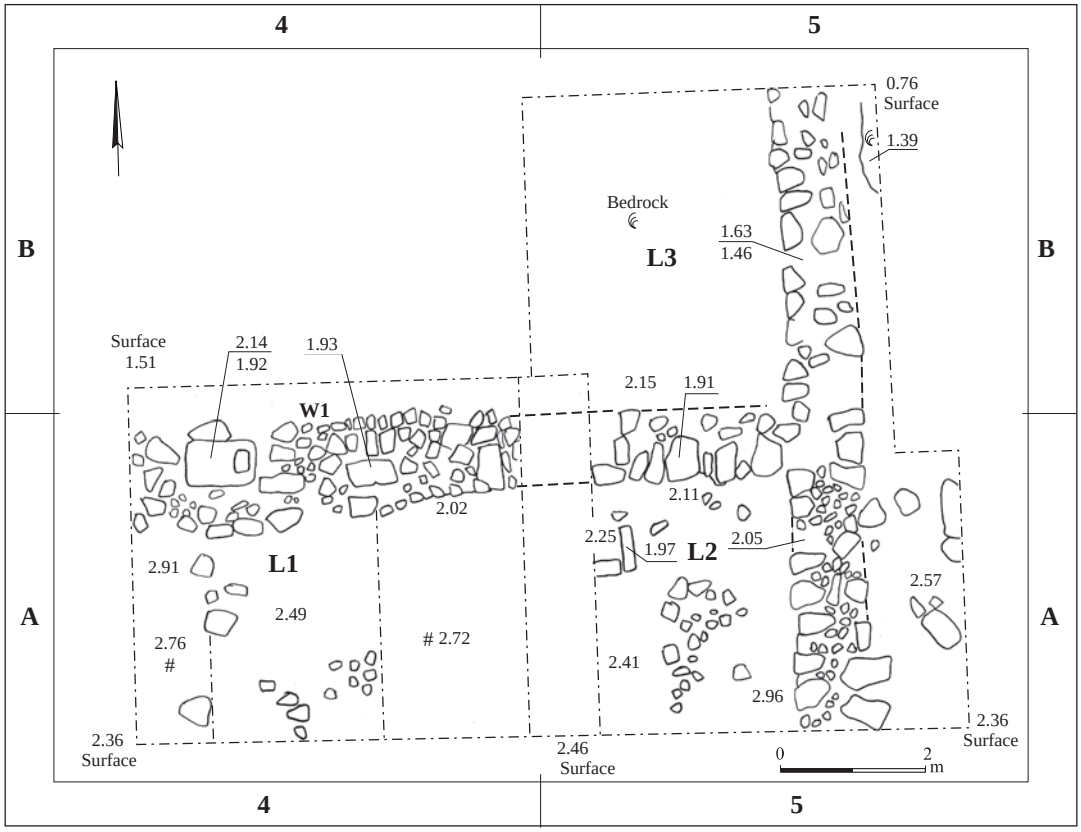


Fig. 1. Location map of the site.

Fig. 2. The site, looking north.



Plan 1. The architectural remains.

Fig. 3. The excavated area, general view. Note the shallow depth of the remains.

reached at a depth of only 0.5 m below the surface (Plan 1; Fig. 3). The walls were built of medium-sized fieldstones, 0.5 m wide, and preserved to a height of only one course. Wall 1 was oriented east–west and W2, north–south, indicating at least two rooms. A pressing stone of a domestic oil press (*bodeda*) was found in secondary use in W1. The rooms had beaten-earth floors that were covered with an ash layer containing *in-situ* pottery vessels, a loomweight and a pestle. These two rooms were apparently part of a larger structure that has not survived, as no further traces were detected in the other excavated squares. This was apparently a one-stratum occupation that left only meager architectural remains.

THE FINDS

Pottery

Pottery vessels, as well as fragments of groundstone tools, were found *in situ* within the one-period structure, built on bedrock and covered with ash. Although the evidence suggests a short life span for the site, the pottery assemblage is characterized by two groups of ware and surface treatment. The first group is made of red or pink clay with a somewhat rough surface, typical of late Iron Age II (e.g., Figs. 4:1, 2, 10; 5; 6:5, 7; 7:4–7). The second group is made of buff or whitish clay containing fine sand, with a much smoother surface (e.g., Figs. 4:5–9; 6:1, 2; 7:1–3), features typical of Persian-period pottery. It is, of course, possible that the ‘earlier’ ceramic group was residual; however, we believe that the lack of stratigraphy and the fact that the two ceramic groups were found together *in situ*, is sufficient grounds to consider them a single assemblage.

The ceramic forms of this assemblage show a close resemblance to those of coastal sites, such as Tel Kisan and Ashdod on the one hand, and inland sites, such as Ḥaẓor, on the other. Therefore, ceramic parallels from both these regions are presented below.

Bowls (Fig. 4:1–7).— Figure 4:1 has an everted rim and is almost entirely red-slipped with black bands on its upper body. A similar bowl, although with a rounded base, was found in Ashdod Stratum VII, where it was defined as an Assyrian prototype (Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005:218, Fig. 3.98:11), while another similar vessel originated in Ḥaẓor Stratum IV (Yadin et al. 1958: Pl. LVIII:5). Figure 4:2–5 are typical Iron II carinated bowls, which, with the exception of No. 2, are red-slipped. Figure 4:3 has parallels in Ḥaẓor Stratum IV (Yadin et al. 1958: Pl. LVIII:1). This type first appeared in the ninth century BCE, becoming common

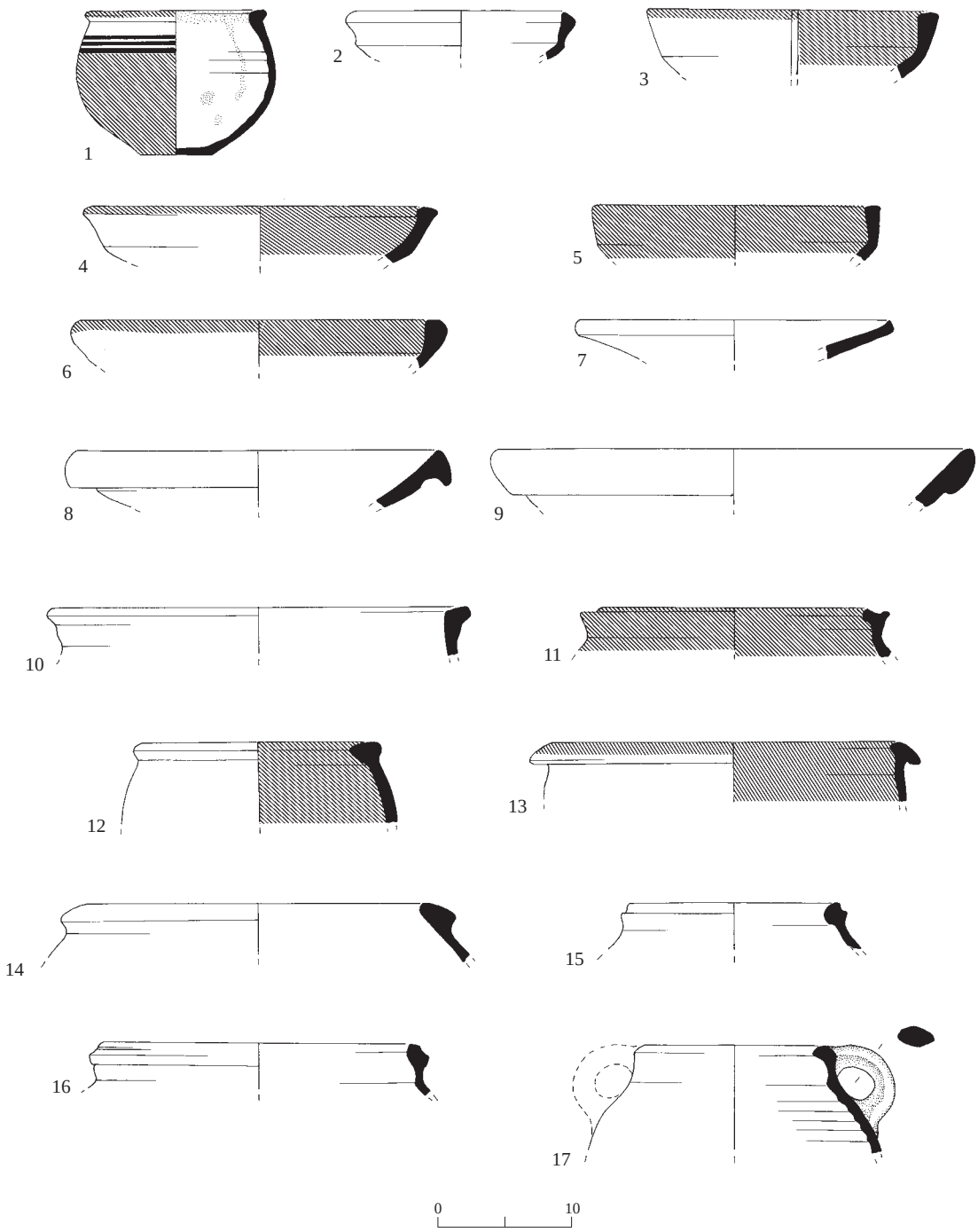


Fig. 4. Pottery.

during the eighth century BCE, as at Dan in Stratum II (Pakman 1992: Fig. 1:2) and Ḥorbat Rosh Zayit Area B (the oil press; Gal and Alexandre 2000: Fig. VI.11:10, 12), decreasing sharply later, in the seventh century BCE. A bowl similar to Fig. 4:6, although unslipped, was found in Tomb ZR XXIX at Akhziv, dated to the eighth century BCE (Dayagi-Mendels 2002: Fig. 4.21:2). Figure 4:7 is a wide, open bowl with parallels in Dan Stratum II (Pakman

◂ **Fig. 4**

No.	Vessel	Reg. No.	Locus	Description
1	Bowl	68	1	Pink clay, red slip, black bands
2	Bowl	56/6	2	Pink clay, gray core
3	Bowl	56/4	2	Buff clay, red slip
4	Bowl	62	3	Pink clay, gray core, red slip
5	Bowl	51	2	Buff clay, red slip
6	Bowl	56/5	2	Buff clay, red slip
7	Bowl	56/3	2	Buff clay
8	Mortarium	53	2	Buff clay
9	Mortarium	51/2	2	Buff clay
10	Krater	37/3	1	Pink clay, white grits
11	Krater	56/1	2	Buff clay, red slip
12	Krater	7	1	Buff clay, red slip
13	Krater	57	1	Pink clay, red slip
14	Cooking pot	51/3	2	Black clay, white grits
15	Cooking pot	56/3	2	Black clay, white grits
16	Cooking pot	56/2	2	Buff clay
17	Cooking pot	62	3	Gray core, white grits

1992: Fig. 1:1) and Ḥorbat Rosh Zayit Area B (Gal and Alexandre 2000: Fig. VI.11:24, 25).

Mortaria (Fig. 4:8, 9).— Although only the rims of these vessels have survived, they are clearly of the earlier Iron II type with a flat base, resembling those from Tel Kisan Strata 4–3 (Briend and Humbert 1980: Pls. 20:15–22; 31:1–7; 45:5; for a detailed discussion, see Gal and Alexandre 2000:190–200). The presence of flat-based mortaria is of importance as they are well dated to the seventh–sixth centuries BCE (Yadin et al. 1958: Pl. LXXIX:17).

Kraters (Fig. 4:10–13).— Parallels to Fig. 4:10, 11 are found in Ḥaẓor Stratum V (Ben-Tor et al. 1997: Figs. II.49:19 and II.45:17, 18 respectively). Vessels similar to that in Fig. 4:12 were retrieved in Dan Stratum I (Pakman 1992: Fig. 4:3) and Ḥaẓor Stratum V (Yadin et al. 1958: Pl. LXXII:9). The krater in Fig. 4:13 has a holemouth rim, similar to vessels from Dan Stratum II (Pakman 1992: Fig. 2:2) and Ḥaẓor Stratum IV (Yadin et al. 1958: Pls. LXX:1; LXXII:9).

Cooking Pots (Fig. 4:14–17).— Two of these vessels (Fig. 4:15, 16) have the typical ridged rim of Iron II pots; the absence of handles may be simply accidental. Similar vessels originated in Strata VI–I at Megiddo (Lamon and Shipton 1939: Pl. 39:1–12). The pot in Fig. 4:17 is different in shape and no exact parallels were found, although it can be compared in general to examples from Tel Dor Stratum 2 (Stern 1995: Fig. 1.5:16) and Ashdod Strata VII–VI (Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005: Figs. 3.101:2; 3.107:5), dated to the seventh century BCE, and from Tel Kisan Stratum 4 (Briend and Humbert 1980: Pl. 34:2, 5).

Storage Jars (Figs. 5, 6).— The jars in Fig. 5:1, 2 are ‘torpedo jars’, which first appeared in the eighth century BCE, becoming more carinated and wavy with a differently shaped rim during the Persian period (see discussion in Gal 1992:68–71). Figure 5:1 has a shorter neck with a cylindrical body that can be compared to vessels from Tel Kisan Stratum 3 (Briend and Humbert 1980: Pl. 18:1, 3, 5–7), Megiddo Stratum IV (Lamon and Shipton 1939: Pl. 14:72) and Dan

Fig. 5. Storage jars.

No.	Reg. No.	Locus	Description
1	58	1	Pink clay
2	51	2	Pink clay, white core, white surface

No.	Reg. No.	Locus	Description
3	57	1	Pink clay, white core
4	68	1	Pink clay, buff surface

Stratum I (Pakman 1992: Fig. 6:4). Figure 5:2 already has a flattened rim with a wavy body resembling Persian jars, as in Stratum 4 at Tel Kisan (Briend and Humbert 1980: Pls. 25:7, 8; 27) and Dan Stratum I (Pakman 1992: Fig. 6:3).

The two oval jars in Fig. 5:3, 4, and the rims in Fig. 6:2–4 of the same general type, retain some of the earlier, Iron II characteristics (see, for example, Ḥaẓor Strata V–IV, Yadin et al. 1958: Pl. LXVIII:3; Ben-Tor et al. 1997: Fig.

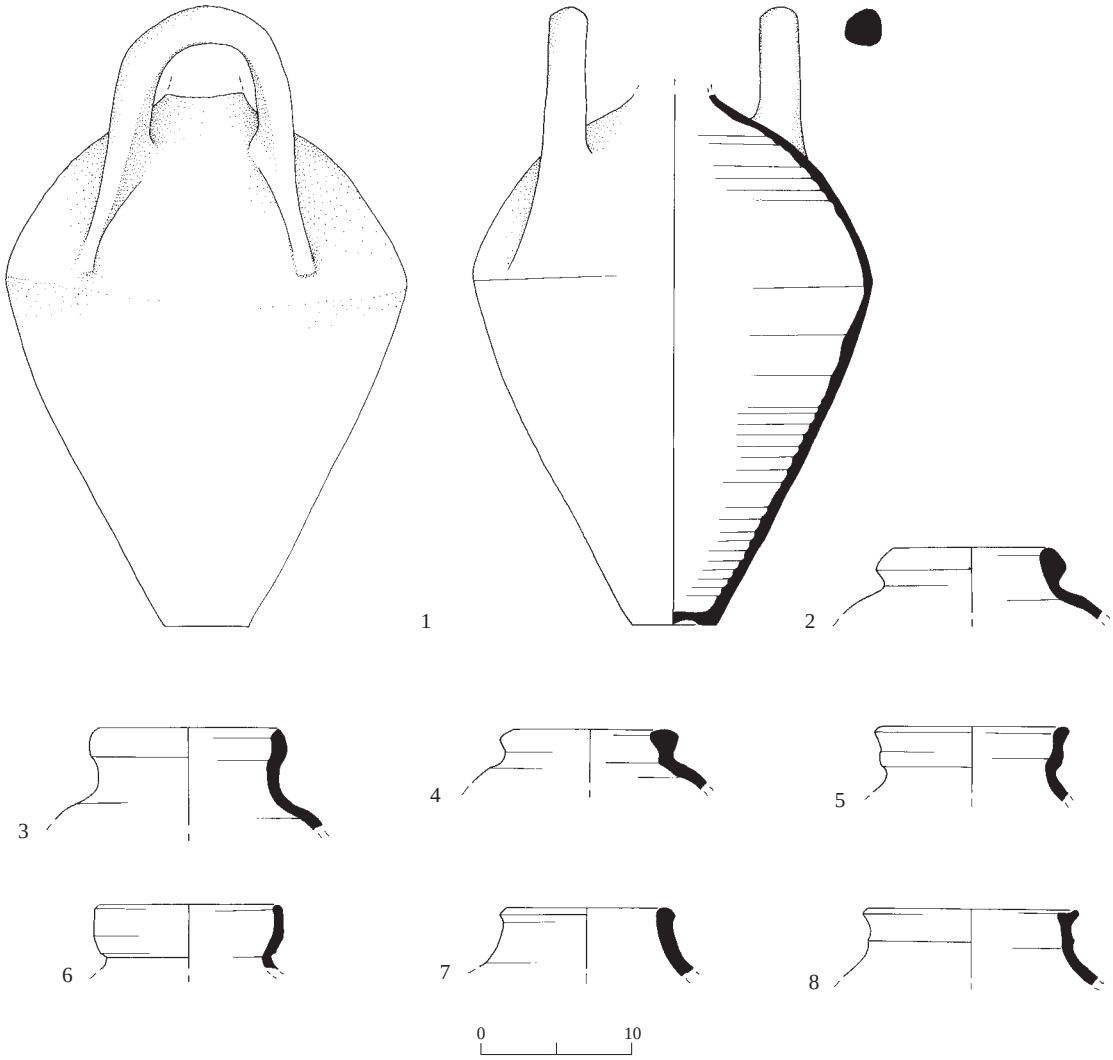


Fig. 6. Storage jars.

No.	Reg. No.	Locus	Description
1	28	1	Buff clay
2	64/2	1	Buff clay
3	33/1	1	Pink clay, gray core
4	37/2	2	Buff clay

No.	Reg. No.	Locus	Description
5	37	1	Pink clay
6	39/4	1	Pink clay, gray core
7	21	2	Buff clay
8	40	2	Brown clay

II.55:4; Ḥorbat Rosh Zayit, Gal and Alexandre 2000: Fig. III.86:10–12, the ‘hippo’ jars of the fort, and Fig. VI.12:15, 21 of the eighth-century BCE village). However, such jars are also common in Tell el-Far‘ah Stratum VIId (Chambon 1984: Pl. 45:4).

The basket-handled jar (Fig. 6:1) with a flat base is identical to jars of Stratum 4 at Tel Kisan (Briend and Humbert 1980: Pls. 23; 24) and Stratum I at Dan (Pakman 1992: Fig. 6:7). The rims in Fig. 6:5–8 also belong to jars of this type. The presence of this type is significant for

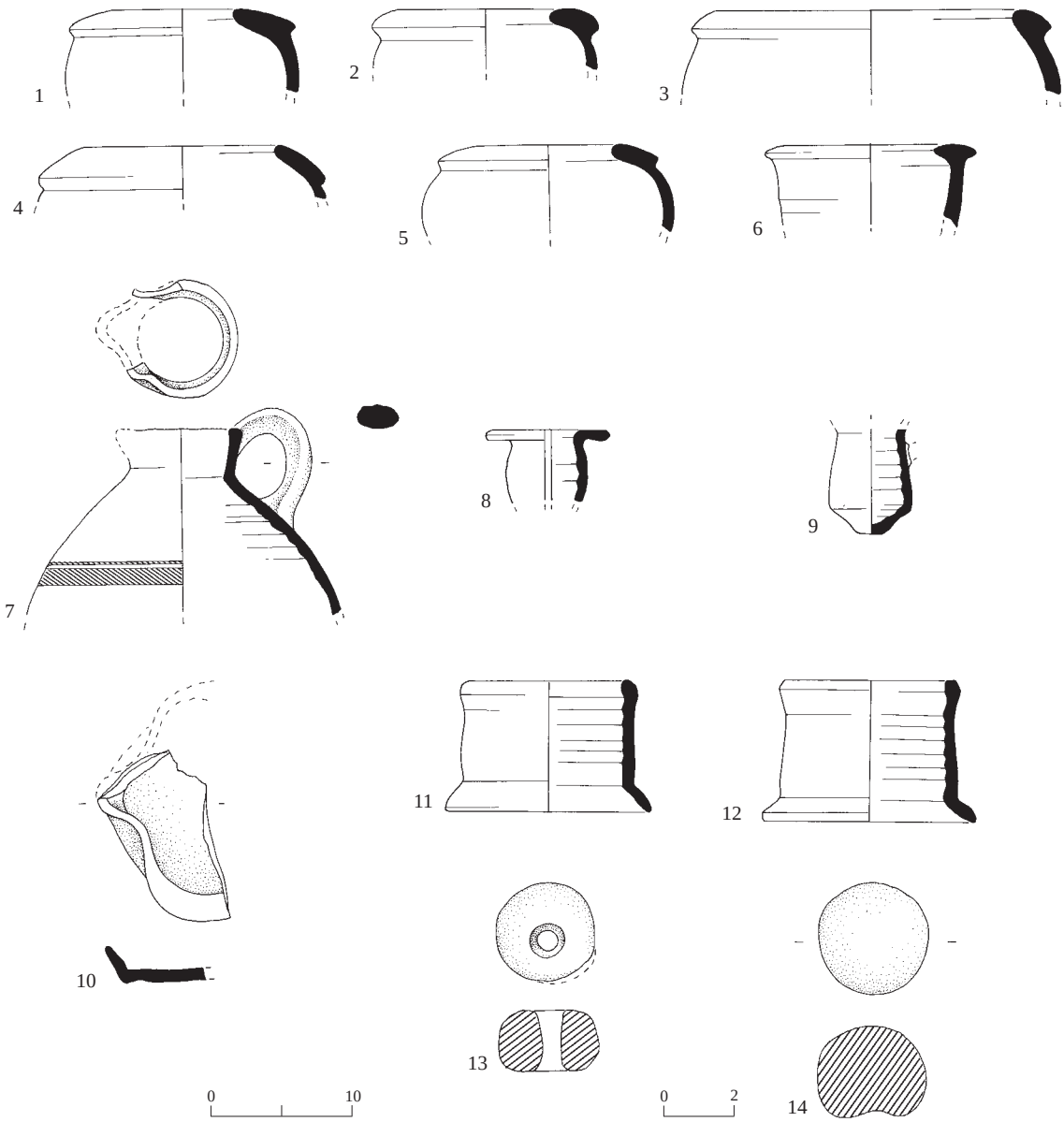


Fig. 7. Pottery and miscellaneous finds.

No.	Vessel	Reg. No.	Locus	Description
1	Holemouth jar	21	1	Buff clay
2	Holemouth jar	51/7	1	Buff clay
3	Holemouth jar	56/7	2	Buff clay
4	Holemouth jar	33/2	1	Pink clay
5	Holemouth jar	37/2	1	Pink clay
6	Jug	64	1	Pink clay
7	Jug	57	1	Pink clay

No.	Vessel	Reg. No.	Locus	Description
8	Jug	21/2	1	Buff clay
9	Juglet	60	1	Pink clay
10	Lamp	67	2	Pink clay
11	Stand	59/1	3	Buff clay
12	Stand	59/2	2	Pink clay
13	Loomweight	54	1	Brown clay
14	Pestle	47	1	Limestone

dating the assemblage to the seventh century BCE.

Holemouth Jars (Fig. 7:1–5).— This type of holemouth jar is considered a ʻsouthernʼ form of the seventh–sixth centuries BCE. Although they are almost totally absent at northern coastal sites, they are found at northern inland sites, such as Ḥaẓor Strata V–II (Yadin et al. 1961: Pl. CXC:13) and Megiddo Strata IV–I (Lamon and Shipton 1939: Pl. 11:54, 57). In Area B at Ḥorbat Rosh Zayit, an unusually large number of these jars were found in association with stands like those in Fig. 7:11, 12 (Gal and Alexandre 2000:173–174, Fig. VI.13:1–10), suggesting that they played a role in olive-oil production (see below).

Jugs (Fig. 7:6–8).— The rim in Fig. 7:6 resembles, in general, that of the seventh-century-BCE ʻSyrian bottlesʼ found in Stratum I at Dan (Pakman 1992: Fig. 5:5) and Stratum 5 at Tel Kisan (Briend and Humbert 1980: Pl. 37:10). Figure 7:8 retains the Iron Age Phoenician mushroom-rim tradition, although its ware is clearly ʻPersianʼ. No exact parallel was found for No. 7.

Juglet (Fig. 7:9).— A similar juglet was found in Stratum 4 at Tel Kisan (Briend and Humbert 1980: Pl. 33:3) and in Tomb ZXVIII at Akhziv (Dayagi-Mendels 2002: Fig. 3.14:11).

Lamp (Fig. 7:10).— This lamp fragment with a flat base is clearly associated with Persian-period types, resembling lamps from Tel Kisan Stratum 4 (Briend and Humbert 1980: Pl. 32:8, 9) and especially from Stratum 3 (Briend and Humbert 1980: Pl. 21:1–5).

Stands (Fig. 7:11, 12).— Similar stands, although with slightly more in-curving walls, were found at Tel Kisan in Strata 5–4 (Briend and Humbert 1980: Pls. 45:7–11; 32:7), and numerous examples were found at Ḥ. Rosh Zayit Area B, dated to the eighth century BCE, where they were associated with oil production (Gal and Alexandre 2000:176, Figs. VI.13: 22–25; VI.17–18).

Other Finds

Loomweight (Fig. 7:13).— This is a small loomweight of typical Iron II shape.

Grinding Stones (Fig. 7:14).— The small limestone pestle was the only intact domestic groundstone object recovered in the structure, along with a few fragments of larger grinding stones (not illustrated).

Conclusions

Although the site is small and poorly preserved and its excavation was of limited scope, it has provided, for the first time, clear-cut evidence of occupation in the hill country of Lower Galilee during the seventh–early sixth centuries BCE.

The pottery assemblage is characterized by both coastal and inland ceramic traditions, thus comparative material is found at sites, such as Tel Kisan and Akhziv on the one hand, and Megiddo, Ḥaẓor and Dan on the other. Moreover, it comprises forms typical of the late Iron II repertoire, as well as types that later become typical of the Persian period. The bowls and most of the cooking pots are common Iron II vessels, while the mortaria and the basket-handled jars are the forerunners of these Persian vessels. Although the bases of the mortaria are not preserved, they were most likely flat, precursors of the high ring base of the Persian period. Similarly, the basket-handled jars also had flat bases and high necks, which preceded the pointed bases and neckless holemouth rims of the Persian-period jars of this type. In a recent article, Tubb (2007) presents evidence of a sixth-century BCE occupation at Tell es-Saʻidiyeh. It is interesting that certain pottery types of Phase IIID (sixth century BCE; Tubb 2007: Fig. 7) and Phase IIIB (early fifth century BCE; Tubb 2007: Fig. 5) closely resemble vessels in the present assemblage. In addition, the assemblage from Tell es-Saʻidiyeh

Phase IIID, like that of our site, does not include Attic ware (Tubb 2007:284, 288), indicating an early phase within the Persian period.

As pottery of both Iron II and Persian traditions were found together on the floors of a building that was established on bedrock, abandoned following a violent destruction and not subsequently reoccupied, this assemblage reflects a short transitional period that should be assigned to the seventh–early sixth centuries BCE. The inhabitants of this site, like those of earlier sites in the vicinity of this valley, based their economy on agriculture (Gal 1998). The holemouth jars, clay stands and stone press attest to the cultivation of olive groves and the production of olive oil.

In view of the evidence presented here, we suggest that following the destruction of the eighth-century BCE settlement at Tel ʻEn Ẓippori by Tiglath Pileser III in his 733/2 campaign, a small group of squatters settled in close proximity to the tell, sometime at the end of the eighth century BCE or the beginning of the seventh century BCE. The fact that these inhabitants did not reoccupy the ancient tell suggests that there may have been a time gap between the destruction and the new settlement, or perhaps the settlers were not the original occupants of Tel ʻEn Ẓippori, but came from elsewhere in the region.

Based on his survey of Lower Galilee, Gal (1992:108–109) argued that the 733/2 BCE campaign of Tiglath Pileser III brought an end to the Israelite occupation in the Galilean hill country in general, and Lower Galilee in particular, and that the region remained deserted until the Persian period. The excavation of this site provides the first archaeological evidence of a post-Tiglath Pileser occupation of the region, and support for the biblical record of Israelites who survived the 733/2 BCE Assyrian destruction and deportation, maintained close ties with Judea (2 Kings 21:19; 23:36; 2 Chron. 30:10–11, 18; 34:6) and were ultimately integrated into the Phoenician population that occupied the region in the Persian period (Stern 1982:236). The fact that this new settlement was not located on the ancient tell, and left no traces on the surface, explains why it was not previously encountered.

NOTES

[1] The excavation was conducted in November 1998 (Permit No. A-2962) on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority, directed by Aviram Oshri with the assistance of Yardenna Alexandre (survey), Lea Porath (restoration) and Hagit Tahan (drawing).

[2] A pit containing PPNB lithics was found one kilometer southeast of the site (Ofer Marder, pers. comm.), and similar artifacts were retrieved recently in the fills of the shaft in the spring house of ʻAyanot Ẓippori (Jacob Sharvit, pers. comm.).

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