



# An Object Lesson: Rediscovering Iron Age Artifacts from the Israel Museum Collection

Eran Arie

Israel Museum Studies in Archaeology

Volume 11 • 2023





The Israel Museum, Jerusalem



# **An Object Lesson: Rediscovering Iron Age Artifacts from the Israel Museum Collection**

**Eran Arie**

**This volume is dedicated to the  
Israel Museum's former curators  
of the Iron Age and Persian Period  
Department Ruth Hestrin and  
Michal Dayagi-Mendels.**



Israel Museum Studies in Archaeology  
Volume 11 2023

An annual publication of The Samuel and Saidye Bronfman  
Archaeology Wing, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

This volume was made possible by The Montgomery  
Securities and Friends Endowment Fund of the Israel Museum

Editors: Shirly Ben-Dor Evian and Ruth E. Jackson-Tal  
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English editor: Ezra Marcus  
Design: Masha Pozina, adapted by Konstantin Chuvashv

Printed by: Printiv Press, Zamir Bar-Lev Ltd., Jerusalem  
All correspondence and papers for publication should be  
addressed to:

The Editor  
Israel Museum Studies in Archaeology  
The Israel Museum, Jerusalem  
P.O.B. 39281, Jerusalem 9139102  
Israel  
E-mail address: [ruthjt@imj.org.il](mailto:ruthjt@imj.org.il)

ISSN 1565-3617  
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Cover: Detail of the kernos from Tel Sasa  
IAA collection, Photo: © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Laura Lachman



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# Introduction

This volume of *Israel Museum Studies in Archaeology* (IMSA) is special in its structure, content, and authorship. In contrast to this journal's usual mélange of topics and authors, this issue comprises five subjects of research on themes related to Iron Age objects from the Israel Museum Collection, all initiated and led by a single author (one co-authored with Prof. Yuval Goren). Some of these items have long been on display in the permanent exhibition of the Bronfman Archaeology Wing, while others have languished in obscurity owing to having been re-buried in the darkness of the storerooms of the Department of Iron Age and Persian Period Archaeology. I had the privilege to study these objects during the period of 2013 to 2020, when I had the honor to serve as the department's curator. The lengthy process of preparing this publication culminated after I was appointed as a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Cultural Heritage and a member of the Leon Recanati Institute for Maritime Studies, both in the University of Haifa.

These articles reflect my enthusiasm and love for archaeological artifacts, some of elite or symbolic function, but others of everyday use, lacking the requisite museum splendor and, thus, reducing their chances of ever being on display. I had the rare opportunity to have unfettered access to examine these objects closely in the department's storeroom, exploring their otherwise inaccessible parts, obtaining a tactile impression of their surface texture, searching for evidence their ancient treatment, divining their hidden secrets, and, ultimately, drawing out their innate, mute memories to reveal their long object biographies. In other words, in these studies, I sought to do what we curators do best—tell the story of objects!

Yet, some of the objects dealt with in these papers presented special challenges. Some were illicitly excavated from archaeological sites and, subsequently, via unknown intermediaries, sold or donated to the Museum. Naturally, this is a contentious issue, but I believe that since these artifacts are today in public hands, they indeed deserve publication and discussion by the archaeological community, both regarding

the ethical implications and their archaeological contribution. The articles herein do not shy away from these questions in any way. In fact, the precise provenance of some of these items is presented here for the first time.

Finally, it is my honor to dedicate this special IMSA volume to the two women who curated the Iron Age and Persian Period Department before me, Ruth Hestrin and Michal Dayagi-Mendels, and are more than deserving of public recognition for their contributions. Ruth, whom I unfortunately did not get to know, founded the department at the Museum's inauguration in 1965, and immediately understood the crucial importance of having a permanent display of the Biblical Periods, both to the Israeli audience and to world heritage culture (For more on her career, see the *Israel Exploration Journal*, Vol. 43, 1993, pp. 199–200). In the case of Michal, with whom I worked closely, she raised the profile of the department in many exhibitions and strengthened the department's connection with the general public by publishing catalogues and addressing broad and diverse topics. Michal also served as chief curator of the Archaeology Wing from 2004 to 2013 and successfully lead it through a challenging renovation process that culminated in 2010.

Moreover, in recent years, the Archaeology Wing of the Israel Museum has undergone massive changes in personnel, and, thus, I believe that there is great importance in mentioning these salient persons and their work to the younger generation. I believe that only if they are cognizant of the long journey taken by the Museum, will they be able to carry it forward along its future path. Curators mostly stand in the shadows, and museum visitors usually do not encounter them. Often the public does not realize how central is a curator's role in how they experience a display. Thus, the twenty-first century is not too late, but rather high time to acknowledge two dedicated individuals who labored at the museum for decades, and molded the public's experience we call 'The Israel Museum'.

Dr. Eran Arie, 14.3.2023







# Three Iron Age Architectural Models

from the Collection of  
The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

## Abstract

*This article presents three Iron Age architectural models from the collection of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Despite their unprovenanced contexts and ambiguous origins from private collections, their publication marks a significant addition to the corpus of Ancient Near Eastern model shrines. The antiquity of the models was authenticated by thermoluminescence dating. The first model is an unparalleled specimen, although several of its elements are well rooted within Ancient Near Eastern iconographic traditions. The second and third examples belong to the same shrine model type consisting of a high entablature, two pillars and a cubiculum; they also share the same decorative design. Their iconography and the deity to whom they were dedicated are also discussed.*

Three Iron Age architectural models from the collection of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem are formally published here for the first time. While Model No. 2 has been briefly mentioned in the literature (Kletter 2015: 41, #C5; Katz 2016: 49, Fig. 3.40), none were ever properly studied, despite the fact that two of them were added to the Museum's collection more than four decades ago. The first model was purchased in 1968, the second was donated in 1975, and the third was received as a gift in 2013.

None of these objects come from controlled excavations, thus rendering their archaeological contexts and provenance unknown.

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Fig. 1a. Model No. 1: Front (Photo @ The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Vladimir Naikhin).

Hence, each model will be discussed separately, although as Models No. 2 and No. 3 share some elements, some overlap occurs in their discussion. Although the archaeological contexts of all three remain unknown, the fact that they are complete, or nearly so, is of much value, as most of the excavated specimens tend to be found in a fragmentary condition and, therefore, poorly understood. However, in order to overcome any doubt as to their authenticity, all three of the models were analyzed using thermoluminescence dating (TL) to establish their antiquity. Three samples, taken from different parts of each model, were analyzed in the laboratories of Oxford Authentication Ltd. These results indicate that all three should be dated to the first millennium BCE.

#### **Model No. 1** (Figs. 1, 2)

*Reg. No.:* 68.32.176, bought from Moshe Dayan in 1968.

*Dimensions:* Max. H 13.7 cm; max. W 10.9 cm.

*TL Dating:* Sample no. N118a83, February 7, 2018; Date of last firing: Between 1800 and 2800 years ago. Conservators

in the Museum's laboratories drilled out three samples from the model for TL analysis from the center of the back wall (Fig. 1f), from one of the inner corners of the floor (Fig. 1c), and a third from the inner part of the model above the floor level, in a spot not visible in the accompanying photographs.

*Description:* This intact cube-shaped model is missing three "handles" at the corners of its roof (see below); the clay is brown with small, mainly black, but also white inclusions. While three of the walls are almost identical, the fourth has a central window (2.3 × 3.8 cm) beneath a small round drilled hole (D 0.8 cm). This last wall is thus identified as the model's façade (Fig. 1a). Its unique geometric design, which is different from the other walls of the model (see below), strengthens this identification. The hole above the central window may have been intended to hold an attached feature of unknown form and function.



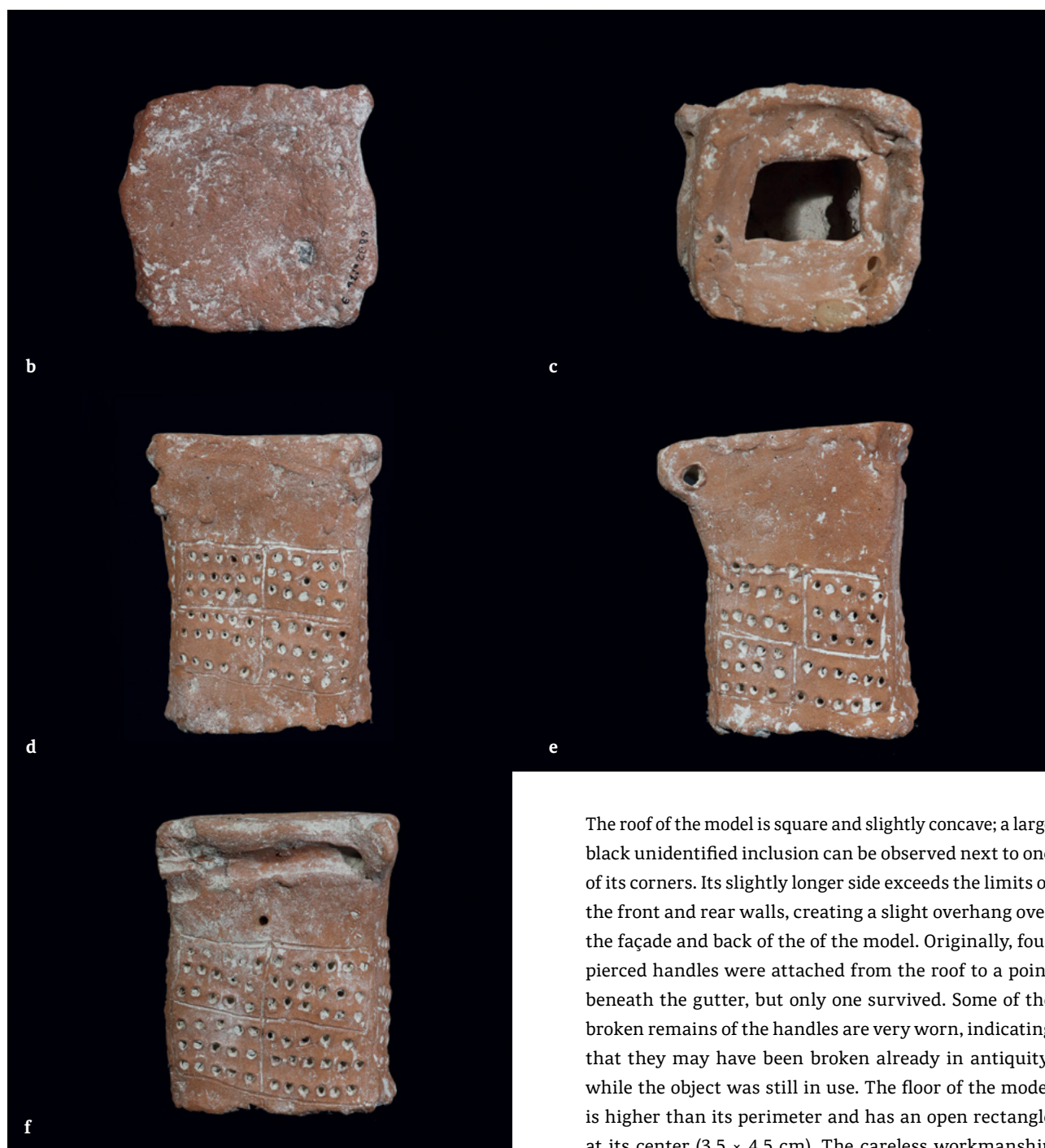


Fig. 1b-f. Model No. 1 (from the viewer's perspective): (b) top; (c) bottom; (d) right side; (e) left side; (f) back; note the modern round hole in the center that was drilled for TL sampling (Photo @ The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Vladimir Naikhin).

The roof of the model is square and slightly concave; a large black unidentified inclusion can be observed next to one of its corners. Its slightly longer side exceeds the limits of the front and rear walls, creating a slight overhang over the façade and back of the model. Originally, four pierced handles were attached from the roof to a point beneath the gutter, but only one survived. Some of the broken remains of the handles are very worn, indicating that they may have been broken already in antiquity, while the object was still in use. The floor of the model is higher than its perimeter and has an open rectangle at its center (3.5 × 4.5 cm). The careless workmanship of the floor in comparison to other parts of the model indicates that it was not intended to be seen.

The lower section of all four walls of the model is incised with a rectangular design placed diagonally from the upper left to the lower right corner of each side. The



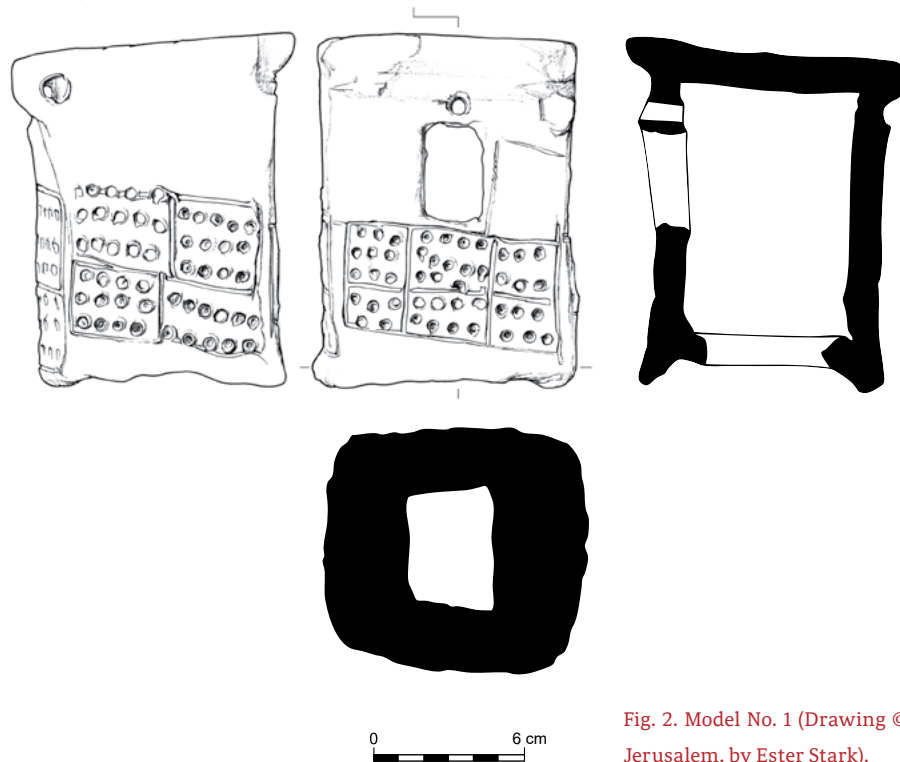


Fig. 2. Model No. 1 (Drawing © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Ester Stark).

rectangles on the side and back walls are further divided into four squares ( $2.0 \times 2.0$  cm), while the design on the façade is divided into six squares ( $2.0 \times 3.0$  cm). A varying number of rather crude, pricked holes arranged in two or three rows fill each square. The squares on the façade are smaller than those on the other walls and frame 6 to 12 holes each, while the number on the other walls ranges from 11 to 18 in each square.

The entire design (the incised rectangles, the internal squares and the punctures) is filled with a white plaster-like material. A thick layer of the same material covers the interior of the model, the inner window frame, and the drilled hole above it, as well as on the breaks of the handles. Moreover, this white material is observable on every shallow depression on the body of the model. This coverage implies that the material was not applied when the model was formed but may be related to post-depositional processes that affected the entire object. Alternatively, since its modern biography is unknown,

the white material may have been added in modern times before it reached the Museum, and possibly before it was obtained by Dayan, in order to emphasize the geometric design, in the same way it does on Tell el-Yahudiya ware.<sup>1</sup>

*Discussion:* Since the object was part of the Dayan collection, it may have been illicitly obtained from a site in Israel or bought on the antiquities market (Kletter 2003; Arie 2021). Unfortunately, no additional information was documented upon its arrival to the Museum. In order to better understand the provenience of the model petrographic analysis should be carried out in the future.

In the published corpus of Southern Levantine architectural models, Model No. 1 is unique in both its cubic shape and its geometric decoration. However, several of its elements are well rooted within Ancient Near Eastern iconographic traditions. The four corner-handles are comparable with various elements on the upper corners of other architectural models such as human heads (Muller 2002: Figs. 153, 155),



animals and animal heads (Muller 2002: Figs. 3, 146, 200) and volutes (Muller 2002: Fig. 151, 158). This phenomenon recalls the horns placed on the corners of stone and pottery altars in the Iron Age II (Gitin 1989, 1992, 2002; Muller 2002: Figs. 86–88; Mazar 2016: Figs. 21, 32, 34). Other iconographic elements of Model No. 1 that fit Near Eastern features are the façade window (e.g., *inter alia*, Muller 2002: Figs. 134–137, 146) and the combination of incised and punctured decoration<sup>2</sup> (e.g., Muller 2002: Figs. 87, 143, 166).

The dimensions of the model, its concave roof and the handles at its four upper corners might suggest that it was used as an incense altar. However, no remains of burnt materials could be discerned on the object and no parallel bearing soot remains is known. If it functioned as a votive object like many other architectural models, the open floor might have been used to insert and probably fix a figurine representing the deity to whom the shrine was dedicated. This recalls the silver-plated bronze calf from Ashkelon found inside a shrine model (Stager 2006) and Schroer's (2017: 147) suggestion that the limestone model from Khirbet Qeiyafa, housed a metal figurine of a deity.

The architecture evoked by Model No. 1 seems to be very realistic. The geometric pattern on the lower part of each side of the model may reflect stone foundations topped with plastered mudbricks (the smooth area above the geometric pattern). In my opinion, if the model replicates a monumental structure, it is preferable to interpret the geometric design as representing orthostats, which are well-known to have been incorporated in the lower courses of palaces, temples and gates throughout the Ancient Near East during the Bronze and Iron Ages (e.g., Gunnel 1983; Harmanşah 2007). Notably, Iron Age orthostats, as opposed to Bronze Age orthostats, were positioned facing the outer part of a building (and not ornamenting an inner space), as in the case of our model. Facing outwards, they could offer a field for relief decoration with cultic symbolism, as in the well-known examples from Northern Syria and Anatolia, like 'Ain Dara and Karatepe (Wright 1985: 415; 2009: 51–52, Ill. 182, 183). The two-story orthostats of the

model could be comparable to monumental orthostats that, in some cases (e.g., Tilmen Höyük), are positioned on top of a lower row of orthostats (sometimes the latter are referred to as stylobates).

The closest morphological parallels to Model No. 1 is a group of architectural models unearthed at the Heraion of Samos (Schattner 1990: 50–71, Nos. 19, 24–29, 32). It consists of eight examples of cube-shaped models (ranging in height from 8.5 to 24.4 cm) that seem to resemble the present example. The interpretation of the Samian objects as models of domestic structures (Muller 2016: 135–136, Fig. 99) is potentially helpful for the interpretation of the model under discussion. However, in contrast to the initial impressions of similarity between it and the Samian group, the latter's differences are more pronounced: flat roofs with support beams, doors, the absence of an "orthostat" design, and the fact that at least one of them was a two-story structure (Schattner 1990: 63–64, No. 26). Finally, the most significant distinction is that the Samian models are made of limestone and not of clay, which limit their value as interpretative parallels for Model No. 1.

Therefore, the publication of this unique model from the Israel Museum collection may help to better understand provenanced objects that have yet to be published or unearthed. However, the exact date and origin of this model will remain, for now, vague. It is probably dated to the Iron Age as hinted from the orthostats' position, the abundance of architectural models from this period, and its similarity to incense altars (though a Middle or Late Bronze Age date cannot be ruled out). Moreover, it is presumably from the Southern Levant (as were most objects from the Dayan collection), though a larger geographical area that includes Syria should also be considered until provenience analysis will be carried out.

#### **Model No. 2** (Figs. 3–6)

*Reg. No.:* 75.7.143, Gift of Dr. Reuben Hecht, Haifa (probably bought in Amman, Jordan<sup>3</sup>).

*Dimensions:* Max. H 36.4 cm; max. W 34.0 cm.





Fig. 3. Model No. 2 (from the viewer's perspective): (a) front; (b) back; (c) left side (Photo © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Vladimir Naikhin).





Fig. 4. Model No. 2 upon arrival to the Israel Museum, prior to reconstruction. Note the original clarity of the decoration, which has faded over the years (Photo © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem).

*TL Dating:* Sample no. N120h21, December 15, 2020; Date of last firing: Between 1700 and 2700 years ago. Three samples for TL analysis were drilled from the model by the Museum conservators in November 2020: one from the base of the model, the second from the outer left wall of the *cubiculum*, and a third from the back part of the entablature. None of the drill spots are visible in the photos published here, since these were taken before the sampling.

*Description:* This large, richly decorated shrine model is made of light brown-to-pinkish clay with rather large white inclusions. The model comprises six different elements (Fig. 7): an entablature (sometimes referred to as fronton or cornice), a secondary niche with two windows, a back handle, a *cubiculum* (an “inner room”), two pillars, and a porch. The last two elements are missing (see below). The entire front of the model is covered with a light cream slip that is unstable and flaking off. This condition includes

the front and sides of the entablature, the secondary niche and the inner part of the *cubiculum*, including its ceiling and its lintel and jambs. Patches of this slip can be seen on the back of the entablature and on the outer walls of the *cubiculum*; they probably dripped on those parts by accident when the model was slipped. The painted decoration described below was applied over this slip.

The entablature, with its maximum dimensions of 12.7 × 34.3 cm is the largest of its kind known, thus far, for a model of this type (e.g., Katz 2016: 48–51, Type 4). It is uniquely designed and lavishly decorated. The entablature is shaped to form three registers that are tapered in width from top to bottom, creating a two dimensional “stepped” structure. The edges of the two lower “steps” are cut nearly at right angles while the upper “step” is taller and its edges rounded. Each “step” is decorated by a complex geometric design in red and black. The two lower “steps” are each decorated with a single register, while the uppermost “step” has two painted registers. The registers are separated by a thick red horizontal line framed by two narrow black lines. The lower register is composed of a net pattern drawn by diagonal lines in black, oriented from top right to bottom left, and in red, from top left to bottom right. The three top registers are composed of a “complex checkerboard decoration” of alternating blank and decorated squares, the latter according to the same bichrome net pattern as in the lower register. The squares are separated from each other by a thick vertical red line framed by two narrow black lines, similar to the design of the horizontal lines separating the registers. The squares in the two uppermost registers, which decorate the upper “step”, are arranged one on top of the other, while the squares of the lower register, which decorates the middle “step”, were placed without consistent regard for the position of the upper squares. Therefore, it seems that the three upper registers together were meant to form a checkboard pattern, but the lowermost register deviated partially from this design plan, perhaps because it was not planned well enough in advance.



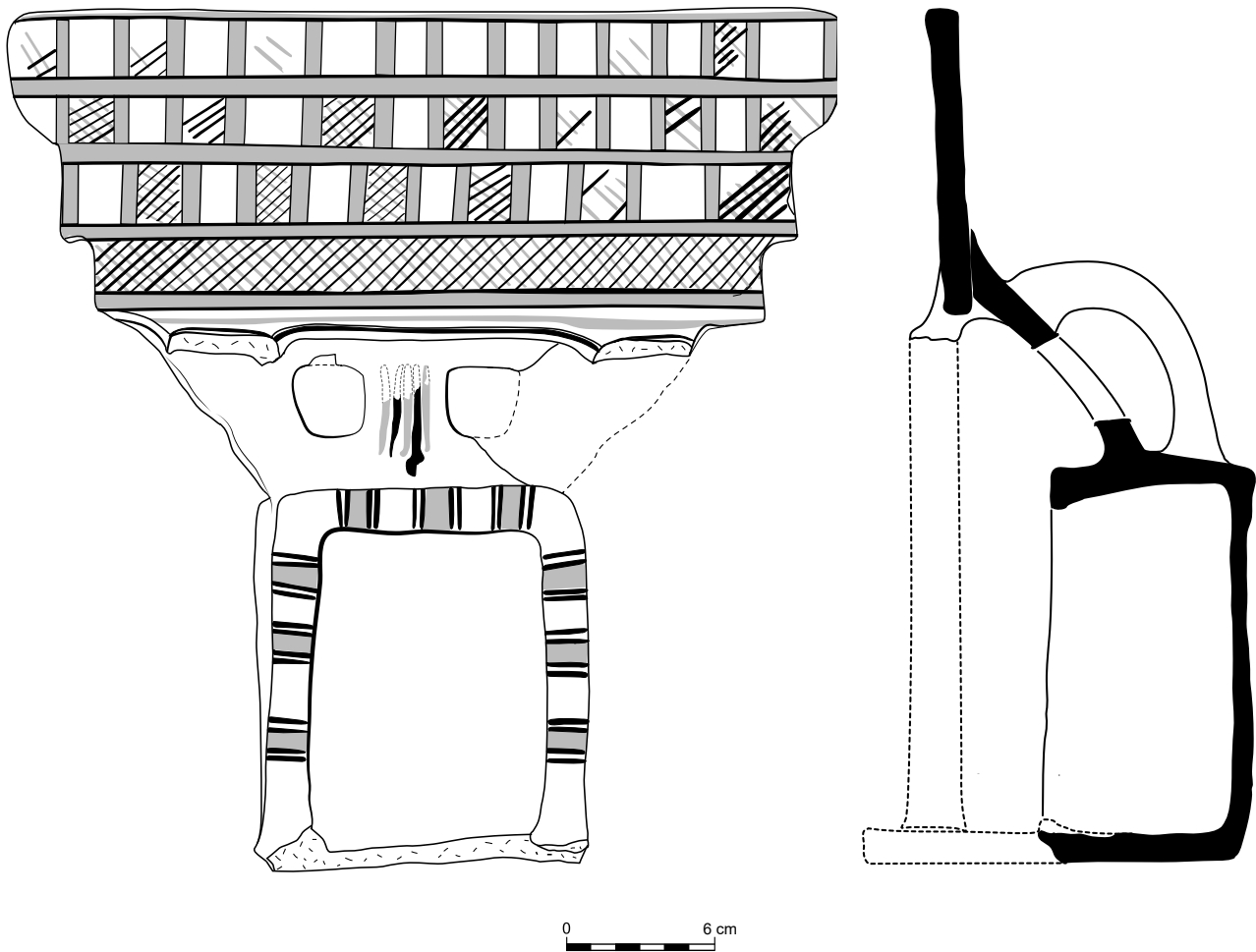


Fig. 5. Model No. 2 (Drawing © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Yulia Gottlieb).

Another clay slab is attached to the back of the lower part of the entablature, termed here, the “secondary niche”. It is obliquely positioned, and its lower part is attached to the front of the roof of the *cubiculum*. The original right side of this slab did not survive (Fig. 4) and was reconstructed using Plaster of Paris according to the shape of the left side (its upper part is wider than its bottom). Two asymmetric windows with rounded corners were cut from the slab when the clay was leather hard; the complete left one is trapezoidal. Five vertical strokes in alternating red and black were painted between them (for their suggested meaning, see below), two of the strokes dripped downwards while the paint was still fresh. Only the rightmost red stroke survived in its entirety.

A loop handle was attached from the back of the upper secondary niche (in between the two windows) to the roof of the *cubiculum*. In addition to its main functional use (see below), it probably added stability to the different elements of the model.

The *cubiculum*, which is made of five clay slabs, is the innermost part of the model. Unfortunately, only a little more than half of its floor survived, and the remainder is reconstructed with Plaster of Paris. The lintel and jambs are thickened and decorated in red and black paint. The jambs are decorated with three wide, horizontal red bands that are each framed on both sides by four narrow black lines. The lower outer part of the *cubiculum* is missing, but can be reconstructed as having a high threshold,



as is common on other models of this type (e.g., Muller 2002: Figs. 178, 180–182, and Model No. 3, below). This missing feature is also indicated here by the vestiges of the rounded lower corners of the *cubiculum* which are 1.2 cm higher than the level of the porch and can easily be seen in the lower right corner which survived a bit lower than the left one.

Two pillars, now missing, supported the entablature on both sides of the *cubiculum* entrance. Two red and black horizontal lines were painted on the lower part of the entablature; the lower black line was probably painted on the upper part of the pillar's capital. The form of the upper part of each pillar suggests that they broke off where they were originally attached to the entablature when leather hard. The rectangular break is straight, clear and horizontal, and only the remains of the clay attachments protrude beyond this line. The width of the upper part of each pillar is 3.9 cm, and their depth is 1.2 cm. This suggests that capitals were placed on top of the pillars. Presumably, these were not proto-Ionic capitals, as evinced by the straight clean break, but rather square capitals that bear the same checkboard design as the entablature, a scheme that is known from two good parallels (Weinberg 1978: Figs. 2, 15; Muller 2002: Figs. 178, 182; 2016: 28, Pl. VI). The carelessness of the workmanship behind the left capital indicates that this part of the model was not supposed to be seen. As opposed to other models of this type, in which the pillars are attached to the *cubiculum* (e.g., Muller 2002: Figs. 180, 181, and Model No. 3, below), the pillars of Model No. 2 were freestanding, as may be concluded from the fact that no attachment can be seen on the *cubiculum*'s jambs.

Even though the porch did not survive (Fig. 4), its thickness can be determined as being 1 cm based on the break in the section between the *cubiculum* and the porch, especially on the left corner of the model. The porch extended from the *cubiculum*'s side walls, as can be concluded from the lower left corner of the model and from the position of the pillars. The pillars had to be connected to the porch,

which supported the weight of the entablature, and their location enabled a clear view of both the inner part of the *cubiculum* and its decorated lintel and jambs. At present, owing to the absence of the porch, the model cannot stand on its own.

*Discussion:* Model No. 2 is an exquisite example of a shrine model in terms of its dimensions, morphology, and decoration. A suggested reconstruction of this model with all of its original elements is presented in Fig. 6. Typologically, it belongs to a well-defined group referred to as “Tabernacles à fronton” (de Miroschedji 2001: 73–77), “Édicules à colonnes avec fronton” (Muller 2002: 85–86), “Naoi with a high cornice and a secondary niche” (Katz 2016: 48–51), and “Jordanian shrine models” (Kletter 2015: 41–43). Clearly, there are diverse classification systems among the various scholars. Unfortunately, nearly all the complete models in this group are unprovenanced; hence, I prefer a morphological characterization, as opposed to Kletter's geographical one.

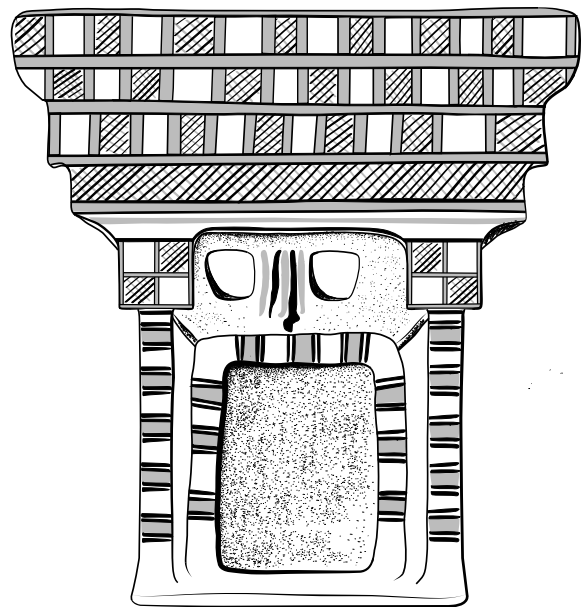


Fig. 6. Suggested reconstruction of Model No. 2 (Drawing by Yulia Gottlieb).



One of the unique features of Model No. 2 is its loop handle, commonly considered to be a means to attach the model to a wall, or preferably, in my opinion, for carrying the model from one place to another (Kletter 2015: 41, #C5; Katz 2016: 49). In this respect, other models that possess knob handles should be mentioned (Muller 2002: Figs. 114, 128; Schroer 2017: 145, Fig. 8), suggesting that they were used for carrying rather than for attachment.

The deity to whom Model No. 2 was dedicated is difficult to ascertain. While other shrine models of the same typological group present a clear iconography in their secondary niches (see below), the present model is rather enigmatic. As noted above, this model's secondary niche contains two elements: two open windows and a central painted emblem made of five vertical strokes in alternating red and black paint. Another shrine model from the Israel Museum collection belonging to the same typological group has two similar windows in its secondary niche (Muller 2002: Fig. 181; Israel Museum Collection, Reg. No. 82.24.415). Scant remains of red and black decoration were preserved on it (especially on its pillars), but not in the secondary niche; the area between the windows was not preserved and was reconstructed in Plaster of Paris. However, it may be assumed that a similar central emblem adorned its central niche, like that of Model No. 2. Interestingly, both models share a similar origin: the Phoenician coast (Katz 2016: 59, Table 3.1:13, 14, and see below).<sup>4</sup>

Although no good parallels are known for Model No. 2's entablature, its decorative scheme appears on several models. Six have been found so far, five of which are unprovenanced: Model No. 3 below; and examples at The Hecht Museum, University of Haifa (Guri-Rimon 2001: 26; Katz 2016: 49–50, Fig. 3.42), the Eretz-Israel Museum, Tel Aviv (Katz 2016: 49, Fig. 3.41), the Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Missouri (Weinberg 1978: Figs. 2, 3; Muller 2002: Fig. 182; Katz 2016: Fig. 3.45; Leonard 2010: 108–109), and in an unknown private collection (Weinberg 1978: 40, Fig. 15; Muller 2002: Fig. 178; 2016: 28,

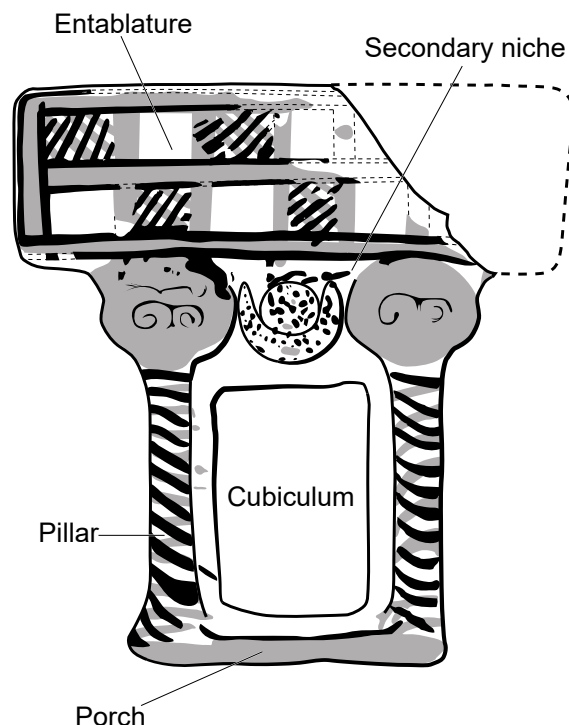


Fig. 7. Terms used for Models No. 2 and No. 3 as presented on a drawing of the better-preserved Model No. 3 (Drawing © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Yulia Gottlieb).

Pl. VI). The final parallel, which is the sole evidence that was uncovered in a controlled excavation, comes from Tall Jawa, Jordan (Daviau 2002: 81, Fig. 2.41:3). Although it is a rather small pottery sherd (c. 7 cm in length), its reliable archaeological context in the debris of Stratum VIII's Building 102 makes it crucial for dating for this entire group. As the pottery assemblage is dated to the Iron Age IIB (called by the excavators "Middle Iron II"), in terms of absolute chronology it ranges from the eighth to the early seventh centuries BCE.

Notably, whereas the "complex checkerboard decoration" model group are part of the same typological family, each may have been devoted to a different deity. This supposition is based on the different iconography on each of the models, even if not on all of these models



the symbols survived: two with doves (Hecht Museum and Eretz-Israel Museum), two with a disk and crescent motif (Model No. 3, below, and the one from a private collection), one with two female protomes (University of Missouri) and Model No. 2 with its enigmatic emblem.

Three models of this group were sampled for provenience analysis (Katz 2016: 59, Table 3.1): two were analyzed by petrography (Model No. 2 and the example from the Eretz-Israel Museum) and the third by Neutron Activation Analysis (the model from Hecht Museum). The results demonstrate that Model No. 2 was produced on the Phoenician coast (Katz 2016: 59, Table 3.1:14), in contrast to the other two models that were manufactured in Transjordan (Katz 2016: 56, Table 3.1:15, 16). Thus, clearly, the “complex checkerboard decoration” group is not the product of a single workshop, but rather reflects a broad decorative style that possessed a strong symbolic meaning.<sup>5</sup>

In summary, the Model No. 2 is a Phoenician product that dates to the Iron IIB–IIC (eighth to seventh centuries BCE). It was a marvelous object that was probably meant to be used in different locations (owing to the handle). However, the deity to which it was dedicated will remain an enigma.

### **Model No. 3** (Figs. 8, 9)

*Reg. No.:* 2013.52.439, The Louis and Carmen Warschaw Collection, Gift of Susan Warschaw Robertson and Hope Warschaw, Los Angeles, to the American Friends of the Israel Museum

*Dimensions:* Max. H 20.6 cm; max. W 19 cm (including reconstruction).

*TL Dating:* Sample no. N118a82, February 12, 2018; Date of last firing: between 1800 and 2800 years ago. Three samples for TL analysis were drilled from the model by the Museum conservators during January 2018: one from the center of the *cubiculum* roof (Fig. 8c);<sup>6</sup> a second from the base of the model; and a third from the exterior of the right *cubiculum* wall.

*Description:* This nearly intact model shrine is missing the right part of the entablature (now reconstructed with Plaster of Paris). The clay is reddish-brown with mainly large, white, but also some small black, inclusions. The model consists of five components (Fig. 7): the entablature, the secondary niche with a crescent and disk motif, the *cubiculum*, two pillars and the porch. Almost the entire model's façade is covered with a thick white slip that has flakes in only a few places. Unless otherwise mentioned, the decorations described below were painted on this slip. The only part of the façade that is not slipped is part of the crescent and a small area to its right. I assume that this was an oversight and could reflect the hasty and mundane nature of the potter's work. Further support for this notion may be indicated by the multiple drips of black paint all over the model, even on its base.

The entablature is rectangular in form with rounded corners, measuring 6.4 × 19.0 cm, including the reconstructed missing portion, which is presumed to have maintained the model's symmetry. This symmetry also allows for a reliable reconstruction of the decorative pattern. It is extensively decorated in red and black paint with two framed registers similar to the design of the upper part of the entablature of Model No. 2. However, the painting skills of the potter of Model No. 3 were inferior to those of the former model, as the strokes are wider and less precise. The frame of the entablature of the present model is made of a red thick line, bordered within and without by narrow black lines. The registers are separated from each other by a thick, horizontal red line, bordered by two narrow black lines. Each register consists of a checkerboard pattern, in which every second square is filled with a black and red oblique net pattern (the former color's strokes are drawn from top right to bottom left, and the latter from top left to bottom right), while the intervening squares were left blank. The squares are separated from each other by a thick, red, vertical line. The back side of the entablature, especially its upper part, was smoothed; its relatively crude, unfinished appearance indicates that this side was not intended to be seen while in use.





a



b



c

Fig. 8. Model No. 3 (from the viewer's perspective): (a) front; (b) left side; (c) back (Photo © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Vladimir Naikhin).



The secondary niche of the model is also the lintel of the *cubiculum* and is positioned in between the two voluted pillar capitals (see below). A central motif of a crescent and disk occupies nearly all of the niche. Both motifs were made of small lumps of clay that were attached to the clay slab when both were leather hard. The complete disk rests inside the upward pointing crescent. Both were decorated with haphazardly drawn black dots on both the white slip and, where the slip is missing, on the clay itself. The area above the motif was also dotted in black, albeit in an even sloppier manner.

The *cubiculum* of the model is made of five clay slabs whose joins can be readily seen on its interior, as well as on the exterior of the rear wall. The lintel, threshold and jambs are thickened, narrowing the doorway relative to the actual width of the *cubiculum*. Short red and black paint strokes do appear on the lintel and jambs, but they are accidental continuations of the strokes painted on the pillars (see below), and again reflect the sloppy nature of the workmanship. The inner part of the *cubiculum* is undecorated and unslipped in sharp contrast to the model's façade.

Two round pillars with voluted capitals were attached to the porch and the jambs of the *cubiculum*. Additional clay was attached on the back sides of the pillars to further strengthen their connection to the jambs (Fig. 8: b, c). The attachment of the left pillar to the jamb of the *cubiculum* is easily examined, as its upper back was flaked-off. The pillars themselves were decorated with a black and red pattern: the black lines are drawn from top left to bottom right, and the red strokes are from top right to bottom left (the reverse of the orientation of the entablature's decoration). The two volutes are nearly identical, although the left one is more clearly defined; they both curve downwards and are completely painted in red. Black stains on the upper part of the left capital probably drizzled from the decoration of the entablature, attesting, again, to the careless nature of the potter's execution.

This model's porch is rather small (1.9 × 11.4 cm). The front is framed with a wide red band and a thin black line. Its corners are rounded, and it is upon them that the two pillars were positioned. The flat base protruding from the *cubiculum*'s floor must have had a functional purpose in stabilizing the model while in use.

*Discussion:* Typologically, Model No. 3 is the same as Model No. 2—shrine models with a high entablature, two pillars, and a *cubiculum*. Moreover, as discussed above, Model No. 3 is also painted with the same “complex checkerboard decoration” as Model No. 2, although in a more modest design, due to the smaller and simpler form of its entablature and the apparently limited skills of its potter. The nearly complete state of Model No. 3 offers an opportunity to study the pair of Proto-Ionic capitals on the two pillars that adorn its façade. Parallels may be drawn from two provenanced examples from Tell el-Far’ah (North) Stratum VIIb (Chambon 1984: 66: 1; Muller 2002: Fig. 143; Ziffer 2019) and Tall Jawa (Daviau 2002: 82–83, Fig. 2.43:1; however, there is no mention of its archaeological context), and to other unprovenanced examples (e.g., Muller 2002: Fig. 143; Maeir and Dayagi-Mendels 2007). The pillars and capitals represent real architectural features made of either stone (Shiloh 1979: 32–33) or wood (Franklin 2011: 132).

The central emblem adorning the secondary niche of Model No. 3 is a crescent and disk motif. The same symbol appears on an unprovenanced shrine model that also shares the “complex checkerboard decoration” with Model No. 3 (Weinberg 1978: 40–41, Fig. 15; Bretschneider 1991: 235–236, Pl. 94; Muller 2002: Fig. 178; Muller 2016: Pl. VI). The aforementioned model from Tell el-Far’ah North bears a crescent as its central emblem and two other models from Achziv and Tyre display a complete disk (Dayagi-Mendels 2002: 160–162; Muller 2002: Figs. 130, 219). It seems that all three motifs (crescent, disk and “crescent and disk”) are non-anthropomorphic representations of deities; their identity will be briefly discussed.



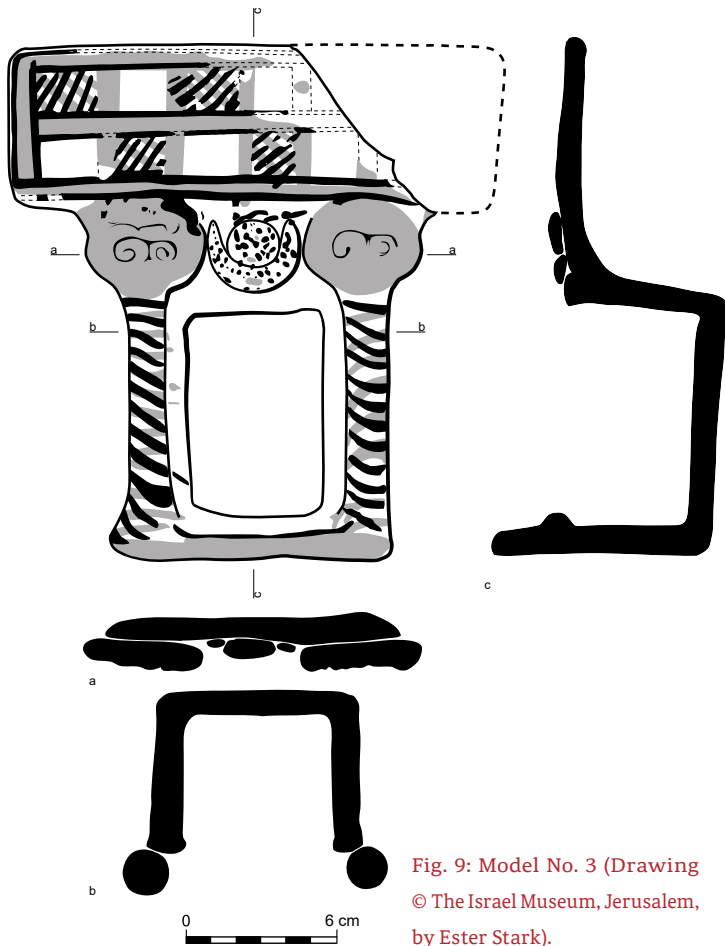


Fig. 9: Model No. 3 (Drawing © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Ester Stark).

The “crescent and disk” motif is a complex symbol that appears throughout the Ancient Near East and seems to have had various meanings in different regions and periods. Scholars have debated whether it represents the moon crescent and the sun disk (Bretschneider 1991: 235; Mettinger 1995: 76; Bloch and Peri 2016–2017: 24) or the crescent and full moon (Ornan 2005: 57, 110; 2012: 12). Moreover, the deity that the symbol represents is also disputed.

Various scholars associate it with Astarte (see, e.g., Culican 1976: 47–48; Weinberg 1978: 41; Betlyon 1985: 55; Karageorghis 1996: 58; 2000: 53; Brody 2008: 446) or a feminine deity of the genre of Astarte, Ashera, Anat or Elat (de Miroshedji 2001: 74–77), while others link

it with either a lunar or solar-lunar god (Frantsouzoff 2001; Ornan 2005: 57, 110; Bloch and Peri 2016–2017: 24). Alternatively, the crescent and disk motif has even been viewed as representing an unknown (supreme) deity (Beck 2002: 361–363; Ornan 2001: 16–17), or the heavens themselves (Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 144).

While the meaning of the crescent and disk motif is beyond the scope of this article, it should be noted that the iconography of Astarte, as well as that of other Canaanite goddesses during the Late Bronze Age, presents the deity crowned with bovine horns—not a crescent—nestling a sun disk (e.g., Teissier 1996: Figs. 79–83; Cornelius 2008: Pls. 5.3–5.5, Fig. 22). This divine attribute likely derived from depictions of the Egyptian goddess Hathor, which first appear at the Levant during the early second millennium BCE (Teissier 1996: 66–71; Matthiae 2016) and was the most influential Egyptian deity in Canaan during Egypt’s imperial rule in the Levant (Shalomi-Hen 2016: 149). The Egyptian origin of this emblem certainly connects the disk to the sun, while the crescent evolved from bovine horns that did not represent the moon (Gachet-Bizollon 2001: 30–31).

In Mesopotamia however, the same crescent and disk symbol had a long history of representing the moon god, Sin (e.g., at least from the end of the second millennium BCE, Ornan 2005: Ill. 65). Moreover, many monuments that show non-anthropomorphic representations of deities alongside the king’s figure, show Sin as a crescent and disk emblem. These are dated to about the same period as Model No. 3 (see above) and are well-known from the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Empires and from the Neo-Hittite realm (e.g., Ornan 2005: Ills. 145, 173–177, 181).

The moon god is also the deity depicted on the famous central stela from Hazor Temple C (and on a king’s statue that was found in it), presenting two hands raised towards a crescent and disk symbol (Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 51; Ornan 2012: 12–13). This example shows that the symbol was accepted in the Levant already during the second millennium BCE. Yet, Syrian, Levantine and



Anatolian glyptic scenes of that period, as well as a group of monumental statues from Late Bronze Age Hazor, attest to the complex and varied nature of the crescent and disk symbol. Various examples show the motif on its own (e.g., Teissier 1996: Ill. 192), winged while nestling a star within the disk (e.g., Teissier 1996: Ills. 190, 194; Burnett and Keel 1998: Fig. 44; Beck 2002: Figs. 10, 11; Bonfil 2011) or a rosette (e.g., Teissier 1996: Ills. 163), or even integrated into a bird's body (Teissier 1996: Ill. 196). Each of these symbols requires independent analysis, such as the thorough investigation of the crescent and disk with a star, which led to the conclusion that it represents a storm deity with lunar characteristics (Burnett and Keel 1998: 37; Ornan 2001: 17–18). By comparison, the motif on Model No. 3 lacks additional elements although it is dotted with black paint on both the crescent and the disk. This decoration is unparalleled, but I suggest treating this emblem as a crescent and a plain disk.

In any event, the symbol of the crescent and the plain disk in Ancient Near Eastern iconography must have had several different meanings. In this regard, one should mention that in all of its Near Eastern appearances the crescent appears below a plain disk. This is in sharp contrast to the appearances of this symbol in Cyprus, where the crescent hung above the disk.<sup>7</sup> A large group of Cypriot shrine models with this symbol is well known from the Cypro-Archaic Period (Caubet 1979: Pl. IX: 1; Karageorghis 1996: 57–66). Since these models are usually connected with Astarte, it should be kept in mind that the varied nature of the emblems might reflect different meanings. However, the identification of the symbol with Astarte seems too simplistic and, in my opinion, must be revisited.

In summary, Model No. 3 is one of a well-defined group of shrine models (see above, Model No. 2), and thus should be dated to the Iron Age IIB–IIC, eighth–seventh centuries BCE (see above, Model No. 2). Its precise origin will be defined by future provenience analysis, but it is well-rooted in Levantine (Phoenician? Transjordanian?) iconographic traditions. Its central emblem of a crescent and disk

might connect it either to a feminine deity, to the moon god or to an unknown supreme deity. Unfortunately, this issue cannot be resolved at present, although the plain nature of the disk and the date of the model fit better, in my opinion, with the identification of a moon god.

## Summary

The goal of this article was to present formally, for the first time, three nearly unknown architectural models from the collection of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem. All three are dated to the Iron Age, but unfortunately were not found in controlled excavations, having reached the Museum through private collectors, and thus are unprovenanced. As a measure of caution, the three models were analyzed for thermoluminescence dating to establish their antiquity.

This publication is thus a significant addition to the rich corpus of model shrines in the Levant, especially given their state of preservation, which is complete or nearly complete:

Model No. 1 is an unparalleled specimen, yet several of its elements are well rooted within Ancient Near Eastern iconographic traditions. It may help to better understand provenanced objects that have yet to be published or unearthed. The second and third models are of the same shrine model type with a high entablature, two pillars and a *cubiculum*; they also share the same decorative design. The thorough discussion of their iconography indicates that the central emblem of Model No. 2 cannot be deciphered, but the central emblem of Model No. 3—the crescent and disk—might be connected to a feminine deity, the moon god or to some unknown supreme deity. For various reasons, I prefer the second alternative, i.e., a lunar deity.

## Acknowledgements

I thank Connie Green, Andrei Vainer and Elisheva Yardeni from the Restoration Laboratory of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem for their assistance in carrying out the TL sampling, and Nurith Goshen, curator of Chalcolithic Period and Bronze Age Archaeology in the Israel Museum for her valuable insights.



# Notes

1 This phenomenon should be studied in the future.

2 These two types of decoration usually appear separately: e.g., either incised (e.g., *inter alia* Muller 2002: Figs. 118–127, 155, 222, 224) or punctured decorations (Muller 2002: Figs. 5–8, 27–29, 116, 117).

3 Katz (2016: 20) claimed that this model is from Mount Nebo, but no such information appears in the Israel Museum registration books.

4 No other models with a similar structure and iconography of the central niche could be found; hence, for now, the meaning of the windows and the vertical lines as an emblem for Model No. 2 remains indeterminate. However, two elements from other Southern Levantine shrine models that might be indirectly related should be mentioned. The first is the large Late Bronze Age model from Megiddo VIIb (Loud 1948: Pls. 251, 252; Muller 2002: Fig. 146). Its two front windows create the form of a palm tree in addition to the other palm trees that are painted on it (Loud 1948: Pl. 251:1). Should the two different elements of Model No. 2's secondary niche be similarly regarded as a single emblem? The second element that might be reminiscent of the present model was recently the focus of research, which sought to define sacred curtains in model shrines (Mumcuoglu and Garfinkel 2020). Could the central painted emblem of Model No. 2 be a sacred curtain? For now, these questions remain unanswered.

5 One of the models of this group, from the University of Missouri, was purchased in Jerusalem together with other cultic objects (Weinberg 1978; Leonard 2010), including is the broken porch of an architectural model, originally with two pillars, each of which was supported by a lion (Weinberg 1978: Fig. 4; Muller 2002: Fig. 183; Leonard 2010: 109–110). Could this porch have belonged to

Model No. 2? The suggestion is tempting, given that most of the floor of the Model No. 2's cubiculum is missing, but as only parts of the Missouri porch have survived, this hypothesis will remain just that.

6 Only this sampling spot is visible in the photos published here.

7 The only Levantine example of a crescent atop a disk was found in Tyre (Culican 1976: Pl. 6B; Karageorghis 1996: Fig. 46), yet I believe that it is a Cypriot product that was imported to the Phoenician coast (material analysis would be necessary to support this identification).



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