



# 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.

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Cover: Detail of the kernos from Tel Sasa

IAA collection, Photo:  $\ensuremath{\mathbb{C}}$  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 reburied 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



# Iron Age Objects from the Azor Cemetery at the Israel Museum

and their Contribution to the Study of Philistia's Periphery

#### **Abstract**

This article presents the results of the study of a collection of looted artifacts (34 pottery vessels, a figurine and two bronze bracelets) from the Iron Age cemetery at Azor, which are located at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem. As part of this research, the provenance of the objects is explored transparently and the long route they took before arriving at the Museum is considered for the very first time. Most of this group (34 out of 37 objects) is dated to the Iron Age I, during which, burial activity in the Azor cemetery was at its zenith. Some of the most elaborate Philistine style vessels ever found were unearthed there and are part of the Museum's principal collection of that material culture, yet others reflect special pottery types that merge Philistine, Canaanite and Egyptian elements into hybrid forms and decorative motifs. Here, the unique Iron I Philistine pottery repertoire from Azor is defined and discussed and it is suggested that the Lower Yarkon River Basin served as a frontier zone between the Philistine heartland and its Canaanite counterparts. This geographical area possessed economic benefits that led to its floruit during a rather limited time in the Iron Age I.

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#### Introduction

This article presents thirty-seven objects, mainly pottery vessels, from the Iron Age cemetery of Azor, all of which are located today at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem. These objects

were not found in any of the scientific excavations conducted at the site (Pipano 1984; Buchennino and Yannai 2010; Ben-Shlomo 2012), but were illicitly removed and later received by the Israel Museum or the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA).¹ Some of these objects are presented here for the first time (most of the vessels in Fig. 1A), while others were published in the past on different occasions. Most of the latter examples are exquisitely decorated and were initially published by Trude Dothan in her seminal book on Philistine material culture (1982), and thus became *the* archetypes of Philistine pottery (Fig. 1B).

Given the circumstances of the discovery and acquisition of these artifacts, I was initially ambivalent regarding the actual contribution of this study. Most of the important vessels had already been published previously and the entire collection comprised looted, uncontextualized artifacts of a medium-size group from an otherwise well-excavated site, where hundreds of objects were uncovered and meticulously researched and published. Moreover, I was concerned that the actual publicizing of the looters' acts might cast a positive light on their illegal, unethical and destructive actions—perhaps offering some form of absolution for the perpetrators. Considering this reluctance, what then is actually the importance of this study and its goals?

As part of the curating and maintenance of its collection, the Israel Museum, like any proper museum, is obliged to publish the objects in its possession. This study will complete the formal publication of its Iron Age Azor finds, which have been at the Museum for quite some time.

Although some of the objects dealt with here have been previously published, they often lack a provenance or are missing details. Even as member of the Museum staff, until a thorough investigation was conducted, I was completely unaware of some of the provenance information reported here. Thus, this study presents up-to-date biographies of the looted objects from Azor presently in the Israel Museum.

Previous publications of many of the vessels suffer from inaccuracies in morphology, size, decoration, etc.; many of them were published without a scale. Hence, even the previously

published vessels were redrawn to a high standard of precision and are presented here with highest professional standards.

In addition, this study seeks to assess the archaeological contribution of these objects, despite their problematic provenance given the fact that full archaeological reports of the proper scientific excavations at the site have already been published. Therefore, the Museum's objects are studied here both as individual artifacts but also as a group, the nature of which might contribute to the conclusions based on those excavations.

In any case, this article does not extol the looters of Azor, who suffered from the same mania to collect as every other collector (e.g., Belk 2006: 534–535). On the contrary, it raises ethical and professional questions regarding publishing robbed material. I believe that our goal as curators and scholars who deal with archaeological museology is to return these objects to the general public and the academic community, not only in terms of exhibition, but also in transparent research that affords full accessibility to all available details of provenance.

#### **Provenience: Azor and its Looting**

Tel Azor is located c. 6 km southeast of central Tel Aviv on the old Jaffa–Jerusalem Road. Today, it is located in the heart of the densely populated modern Azor Local Council. The site comprises the main tell, with strata dating from the Chalcolithic to the Late Islamic Periods (a Crusader fortress is located on its summit), but statutory salvage excavations in the area c. 100–200 m to the south of tell also revealed antiquities (Golani and van den Brink 1999: Plan 1 and Appendix 1). The main site in this area is the "Hill of Tombs" or the "cemetery", located c. 200 meters to the south of the tell. This is a small mound, some 4 dunams in size, rising to a height of only 3.5 meters above its surroundings. The objects reported in this article derive solely from the cemetery of Azor.

All of the proper excavations of Tel Azor were salvage projects, the principal one of which was directed by Moshe Dothan on behalf of the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums



 $Fig.\,1A.\,Selected\,Iron\,Age\,I\,and\,Iron\,Age\,IIC\,vessels\,from\,the\,Museum's\,Azor\,collection\,(Photo\,@\,The\,Israel\,Museum,\,Jerusalem,\,by\,Vladimir\,Naikhin).$ 



Fig.~1B.~Selected~Iron~Age~I~Philistine~vessels~from~the~Museum's~Azor~collection~(Photo~@~The~Israel~Museum,~Jerusalem,~by~Vladimir~Naikhin).

(IDAM), during 1958 and 1960 (Dothan 1961; Ben-Shlomo 2008; 2012). Four excavations areas were opened (Areas A–D); the cemetery, which was the primary excavation, was labeled Area D (Ben-Shlomo 2012: 27–164). The excavation of Area D was limited by the late nineteenth to early twentieth century CE Muslim cemetery of the Arab village Yazur, located on the southern part of the hill (Ben-Shlomo 2012: 27). In 2001–2002, additional salvage excavations were conducted in the cemetery on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority (Pipano 1984; Buchennino and Yannai 2010). All excavators reported very similar results: dense burial ground of the twelfth–eleventh centuries BCE showing diverse burial customs. Only a few tombs from the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age II were found in the cemetery, and sporadic Islamic burials were also uncovered (Ben-Shlomo 2012: 1–4).<sup>2</sup>

The cemetery of Azor was an easy target for antiquities looters owing to the massive modern urban development. The rich Philistine Iron Age tombs that attracted the robbers could have been found close to the surface and, hence, easily looted. Moreover, the northern slopes of the hill were destroyed by rows of modern construction (Ben-Shlomo 2012: 27), allowing the robbers even more effortless access to tomb offerings. During the 1950s and 1960s several treasure hunters were looking for easy "pickings" on this hill; apparently, they found what they were looking for.

This article presents the Iron Age objects from the cemetery of Azor from two private collections that eventually reached the Israel Museum and the Israel Antiquities Authority. The first and most famous is the Moshe Dayan collection, while the second and less well-known source was Prof. Dan Barag from the Hebrew University. Additional unprovenanced objects were also found at Azor, but are not reported in this article: approximately twenty vessels are part of the Jacob Meir Weisenfreund Collection, today at Hecht Museum, University of Haifa. Some of these objects were published by Dothan (1982: 248, Pls. 31–32) and were displayed in a temporary exhibition on the Philistines in the Israel Museum in 1970–1971 (Hestrin 1970: 1). Additional objects from the Dayan Collection were scattered elsewhere in Israel and abroad, and are not in the

Israel Museum today (see below). Other objects from Azor were collected on the surface of the site by Moshe Dothan (e.g., IAA 1956-1911 to 1956-1914) prior to his excavation at the site and by IDAM antiquities inspectors, such as Jacob Ory (e.g., IAA 1956-6 to 1956-24), Yariv Shapira (e.g., IAA 1965-435), and Josef Naveh (e.g., IAA 1971-325) on various occasions. Additional objects were collected by residents of modern Azor and found their way to a small local museum, and only much later were registered in the IAA (see Hausen 1992). Thus, it would not be surprising if other objects from Azor are still in private hands or in other museums (e.g., Dothan 1982: Fig. 19, Pl. 39.1 in Eretz-Israel Museum).

All of these vessels are mute evidence to the massive looting and destruction of the site in modern times and the irreversible removal of those objects from their archaeological contexts.

#### Moshe Dayan

The scandalous archaeological offences of Moshe Dayan (1915-1981), the erstwhile Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff, Minister of Defense and Minister of Foreign Affairs, have been detailed at length (Kletter 2003, 2006: 150-164; Arie 2021; Lash, Goldstein and Shai 2021), but remain a vast subject for future research. Moreover, the strong connection between Dayan and Azor have been treated specifically before, primarily because Dayan almost lost his life there in 1968, while illicitly digging a Chalcolithic burial cave that collapsed (Teveth 1972: 320-321). However, his visits to Azor began a decade before, as thoroughly reported by Kletter (2003: 2.5) in his systematic archival research. Kletter details the frequent visits of Dayan to Azor, the different areas he robbed, his working method, especially with a local boy (Aryeh Rosenbaum; see also Teveth 1972: 320) who informed him about new looting opportunities and how he avoided the IDAM inspector who tried to stop him. Even today, more than sixty years after these events, while reading these accounts, one can only feel outrage and shame.

While it is generally thought that the Israel Museum bought the entire Dayan Collection in 1982 after Dayan passed away in October of the previous year, the situation is far more complex (Arie 2021). As documented by Kletter, Dayan not only excavated illicitly to satisfy his hunger for antiquities, he also bought, exchanged and sold them. Thus, prior to his death and the acquisition of his collection from his widow Rachel, many objects had already been scattered around. As early as 1968, the Israel Museum bought a group of eighty-three objects from him (registered in the Museum as 68.32), with an additional group of thirty-eight objects in the following year (registered as 69.9) (Arie 2021: 14). The first group included nine objects from Iron Age Azor and the second one had an additional two objects. These artifacts included some of the most important objects from Azor in Dayan's collection (e.g., Figs. 1:7–9; 5:6; 7:1, 3–6). The "complete" collection bought in 1982 (registered as 82.2), included only four additional vessels from Iron Age Azor.

Where are the remainder of the objects from Iron Age Azor looted by Dayan? I was able to trace three Philistine vessels that were sold by Dayan to Dr. Reuben Hecht, which are displayed today at the Hecht Museum in the University of Haifa (Gilboa 1998: Figs. 2, 5, 8). One additional cyma-shaped undecorated bowl (IAA 2018-2149) was recently brought to the National Treasures Department of the IAA by the daughter of Dayan's driver among a group of some thirty pottery vessels (Hemo 2018). She explained that, from time to time, Dayan gave an object to her father in acknowledgement of his service. Certainly, this practice was not limited to Dayan's driver. We know that Dayan gave archaeological objects as presents to his friends, colleagues, various diplomats and foreign politicians on his official and private visits abroad (a broader study on Dayan and Israeli archaeology is in preparation by the present author; see also Kletter 2003: 5.2). It is logical to assume that other objects from Azor (both from the Iron Age and other periods) were spread all over the world. For example, a Chalcolithic ossuary from Azor, a personal present from Dayan to the Louvre Museum in Paris (Reg. No. AO 21123), is still exhibited today in the same hall as the famous Mesha Stele and can be readily found on the Museum's website.

Additional Azor finds from the Dayan Collection were confiscated by IDAM. Trude Dothan (2008: 22) describes a visit to Dayan's house in Tel Aviv with several archaeologists during which he was informed that he must turn over some of his finds to the authorities since they were dug illegally. I was able to locate several objects that appear in the IDAM registration diary (today in Beth Shemesh) as having been "brought from Dayan". Since these objects are some of the finest examples from his collection, it seems logical that he did not give them to the IDAM representatives freely and, hence, these might be some of the vessels mentioned by Dothan; others might be found in the future. It should be noted, however, that these confiscated objects were very few in numbers and did not lead to the cessation of Dayan's illegal activities (see also Kletter 2003: 2.5). In any event, four beautiful pottery vessels and one mourner figurine from Azor from this group are now on loan from the Israel Antiquities Authority to the Israel Museum, and are presented here (Figs. 4:1; 5:5; 7:7, 8; 10:2).

#### **Dan Barag**

Prof. Dan Barag (1935–2009) joined the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University in 1970 and continued to teach there until his retirement in 2003 (for his obituaries, see Israeli 2010; Weiss 2010). He had extensive knowledge in a wide variety of fields pertaining to the material culture of the Land of Israel, from the Hellenistic to the Byzantine Periods. His main specializations were in the fields of ancient glass and numismatics, and he also made important contributions to the fields of ancient Jewish art, historical geography, bullae and weights, burial tombs, Herodian architecture and Jewish art.

Yet, there appears to have also been a dark side to Dan Barag that naturally did not appear in his obituaries (but note a hint to it in Israeli 2010: 258), which reveals that he was also an avid antiquities collector. His father, Dr. Gershon Barag (1902–1957), a noted Freudian psychoanalyst, established the family's connection with archaeology. The latter's hobby apparently was the acquisition and his own burrowing for archaeological finds; thus, he assembled a fine collection of antiquities, which was well-known among his colleagues and friends (Gumbel 1958). There probably can be little doubt that young Dan's love of archaeology was stimulated at a very young age by his father's activities.

In the catalogue of the exhibition *The Philistines and Other Sea Peoples* in the Israel Museum in Winter 1970, the curator of the exhibition thanks Dr. G. Barag who generously lent objects to the exhibition (Hestrin 1970: 1). According to the list of objects found in the archive of the Museum only one Philistine juglet from Barag's collection was on display during the exhibition (see Fig. 7:2). The fact that Gershon had passed away some thirteen years before indicates that it was his widow, Dr. Gerda Barag (1909–1981), who must have aided the Museum.

Dan Barag inherited his parents' collection, at the very latest, upon his mother's death in 1981. Throughout the following years, until he himself passed away, he remained in close contact with the curators of the Archaeology Wing of the Israel Museum. During the early 1980s he inaugurated a tradition of donating an annual gift to a different department of the wing in memory of his beloved parents. These gifts were usually an ancient artifact or a small group of antiquities from his collection (e.g., Anonymous 1983: 85; 1986: 119).

Eventually, after he passed away, he left his entire collection to the Archaeology Wing of the Israel Museum with appropriate funds for its publication. Today, the Dan Barag Collection is part of the late professor's bequest to the Israel Museum. It is a large trove that was assembled in Israel and spans more than six decades of meticulous collection of local archaeological finds. Its principal focus is on coins and small artifacts dated to the Byzantine period with an emphasis on Christian-related artifacts (Snyder 2012: 15; Vainstub 2020-2021: 39).

Regarding Azor,<sup>3</sup> two groups of ancient objects from that site were received by the Israel Museum from Barag in 1983. The first, which was purchased from him, comprised twenty significant objects made of pottery, stone and bronze from the Neolithic Period to the Iron Age (the group was registered in the Museum as 83.26). Four decorated Philistine pottery vessels from this group are from Iron Age Azor (Figs. 2:6; 5:7, 8; 7:2). The second group, which was donated by Barag to the Museum at the same time, included seventeen additional objects: a Chalcolithic pottery jar, an Egyptian Late Bronze Age

glass vessel and fifteen Iron Age objects from Azor (the latter were registered as 83.41). Among the Azor vessels, twelve are plain or poorly decorated vessels and three are metal objects. One of the pottery vessels (Reg. No. 83.41.72) is not reported in this article since it is composed of only a few small body fragments of a small vessel and is unclassifiable. Moreover, during the research for this article, it was understood that one of the metal objects that was registered in the Museum upon its arrival as an Iron Age iron spearhead (Reg. No. 83.41.75), is a much later catapult bolt. This conclusion was based on the morphology, size, and weight of the object, which had never been studied previously. The object is much later in date and not related to the Iron Age tombs, and thus will not be dealt with here. This unexpected conclusion reflects the problematic nature of unprovenanced objects and the meticulous research they demand.

It may be assumed that all of the objects from Azor were found either by the elder Barag in the early 1950s or, by association, by his son, before the latter made archaeology his profession. In either case, it was clearly part of the illicit digging at the cemetery hill prior to Dothan's salvage excavations at the site. In total, eighteen Iron Age objects from Azor were bought or received from Dan Barag and are housed today in the Israel Museum; seventeen of these are discussed below.

#### The Artifacts

Iron Age I Potterv<sup>4</sup>

Almost all of the objects discussed in this article date to the Iron Age I and are equivalent to the early part of Phases V–IV of Moshe Dothan's excavations in the Azor cemetery, which were dated to the Iron Age I (Ben-Shlomo 2012: 32–33). In contrast to Dothan's findings, no Iron Age IIA vessels were found among the Museum's collection. Iron Age IIA vessels were also absent from the 2001–2002 IAA excavations (Buchennino and Yannai 2010), which might indicate that the Iron Age IIA cemetery was smaller and limited to only part of the "Hill of Tombs."

According to Ben-Shlomo (2012: 114), as no Philistine Monochrome pottery (Philistine I) was ever retrieved from

the site, the burial in the cemetery started only during the Bichrome phase (Philistine II). Although the absolute and the relative chronologies of the Philistine material culture are debated (e.g., Dothan and Zukerman 2003; Mazar 2005 vs. Ussishkin 1995; Finkelstein 1998), all scholars will agree that the cemetery was active from 1130–980 BCE (or slightly later).

Bowls (Fig. 2). The nine bowls that were found within this collection are the most frequent type presented here and can be divided into six sub-types: rounded, carinated (cyma and thickened-inverted), bell-shaped, and shallow. Remarkably, they represent most of the major bowl types published from the excavations at the site, both of the local and the Philistine repertoires (Ben-Shlomo 2012: 114–116, 122–126).

The rounded bowl with inverted rim and flat base (Fig. 2:1) is a simple form, which is very frequent throughout the Iron Age I (Arie 2013: 483, Type BL2). It is rather rare in the published excavations at Azor, where only four sherds of this type appear (Ben-Shlomo 2012: Figs. 4.53:13; 4.82:6, 7; Buchennino and Yannai 2010: Fig. 8:2).<sup>5</sup> One of these examples has a red band on its rim, a phenomenon that reach its peak during the Late Bronze III, but continues into the Iron Age I (Arie 2013: 483).

The carinated bowl with a "cyma" profile (Fig. 2:2) is one of the most typical bowl types during the Iron Age I throughout the southern Levant (Arie 2013: 483–484, Type BL3, with numerous parallels from the northern parts of Israel). Additional bowls of this type were published from the Dothan's excavations (Ben-Shlomo 2012: 124–125, Fig. 5.5:5, 7, with many parallels from the southern parts of Israel).

The carinated bowl with a thickened, diagonally inverted rim (Fig 2:3) is decorated with alternating black and red concentric circles. The flat rim is painted in red with four groups of black strokes. This bowl type is rather rare in the Yarkon River Basin (Mazar 1985: 43, BL14), but it appears in large numbers at Dor—albeit with different decorative schemes— throughout the Iron Age I (Gilboa 2018: 107, Types BL23c–BL23f). The bowl presented here is the only certain example of this type from Azor,<sup>6</sup> but other bowl types bear a

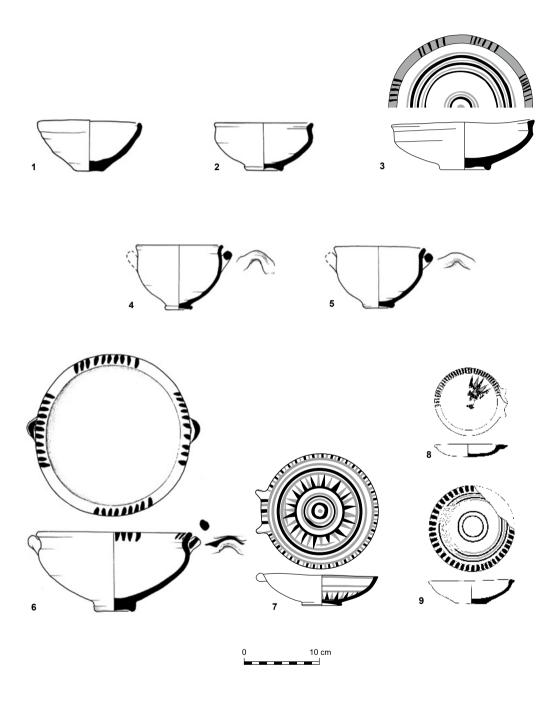
closely related decorations at nearby Tell Qasile (e.g., Mazar 1985: Figs. 22:11; 28:24, 25, 27).

Two undecorated bell-shaped bowls (also known as skyphoi) of Philistine type are, respectively, white-slipped (Fig. 2:4) and plain (Fig. 2:5). The latter seems cruder, and the design of its base is less sophisticated; hence, it might be considered as related to the degenerated phase of the Philistine repertoire (cf. Ben-Shlomo 2012: 116).

A unique bowl, which merges elements from both the cymashaped bowls and the Philistine skyphoi (Fig 2:6), was noted previously by Dothan (1982: 102–105, Pl. 5). The morphology of the vessel is of a regular cyma-shaped bowl, but the white slip and the decorated horizontal handles all originate from the Philistine repertoire.

Three small, shallow bowls are all richly decorated in black and red, two on a white slip (Fig. 2:7-9; Fig. 3:1-3). One is decorated with only a geometric design (Fig. 2:9) and a stylized lotus flower (only partly preserved) was painted inside the other two (Fig. 2:7, 8). The bowls' sizes range from 1.7-4.7 cm in height and 8.9-14.4 cm in diameter. Their profile may be rounded (Fig. 2:7) or carinated (Fig. 2:8, 9), and two have bar handles (Fig. 2:7, 8), the same ones with the lotus flowers. Two additional bowls of this type were uncovered in Dothan's excavations (Ben-Shlomo 2012: 125-126, Type BL10, Fig. 5.5:17, 18). The only parallels are at nearby Tell Qasile (Mazar 1985: 43, Types BL15 and BL15a), although those are red-slipped. Trude Dothan, who was the first to published two out of the three bowls presented here (Dothan 1982: 186, Fig. 54:2; 187, Pl. 92; 187, Pl. 91:1; see also Dothan and Zukerman 2015: Pl. 1.2.6:15), correctly identified them as a hybrid type of Canaanite, Egyptian and Philistine cultures (Dothan 1982: 185-188; and see more below).

*Kraters*: The two kraters presented here are both related to the Philistine pottery repertoire. A beautifully decorated intact large krater (Figs. 3:4; 4:1) was previously published and discussed at length by Dothan (1982: 114; 101, Fig. 6; 110, Pl. 13; See also Dothan and Zukerman 2015: Pl. 1.2.7:2), who defined it as "the finest example of a Philistine krater known". However,



 $Fig.\ 2.\ Iron\ I\ vessels: Bowls\ (Drawing\ \textcircled{o}\ The\ Israel\ Museum,\ Jerusalem,\ by\ Esther\ Stark\ and\ Michael\ Smelansky)}.$ 

Fig. 2. Iron I vessels: Bowls (Drawing © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Esther Stark and Michael Smelansky).

| No.                               | Reg. No. | Vessel  | Collection | Comments  | Photo    |  |
|-----------------------------------|----------|---|------------|---|----------|--|
| 1                                 | 82.2.667 | Bowl  | Dayan      | Light brown clay                                      |          |  |
| 2                                 | 83.41.66 | Cyma-shaped Bowl                                    | Barag      | Reddish-brown clay; thick white patina                |          |  |
| 3                                 | 82.2.383 | Bowl  | Dayan      | Light brown clay; black and red decoration;           |          |  |
|                                   |          |   |            | thick white patina                                    |          |  |
| 4                                 | 83.41.61 | Bell-shaped bowl                                    | Barag      | Reddish-brown clay; white slip all over               |          |  |
|                                   |          |   |            | (including base)                                      |          |  |
| 5                                 | 83.41.68 | Bell-shaped bowl                                    | Barag      | Brown clay; half of the vessel is missing             |          |  |
| 6 83.26.82 Bell-shaped bowl Barag |          | Dark reddish-brown clay; creamy-white slip all over |            |   |          |  |
|                                   |          |   |            | (including base) and black decoration                 |          |  |
| 7                                 | 68.32.5  | Small shallow bowl                                  | Dayan      | Dark brown clay; white slip inside only;              |          |  |
|                                   |          |   |            | black and red decoration                              | Fig. 3:1 |  |
| 8                                 | 68.32.7  | Small shallow bowl                                  | Dayan      | an Brown clay; white slip all over (including base);  |          |  |
|                                   |          |   |            | black and remains of red decoration of a lotus flower | Fig. 3:2 |  |
| 9                                 | 69.9.356 | Small shallow bowl                                  | Dayan      | Reddish-brown clay; black and red decoration.         |          |  |
|                                   |          |   |            | Outer wall well smoothed                              | Fig. 3:3 |  |
|                                   |          |   |            |   |          |  |



 $Fig. \ 3.\ Philistine\ vessels: (1)\ Small\ shallow\ bowl\ (Fig.\ 2:7); (2)\ Small\ shallow\ bowl\ (Fig.\ 2:8); (3)\ Small\ shallow\ bowl\ (Fig.\ 2:9); and\ (4)\ Bell-shaped\ krater\ (Fig.\ 4:1)\ (Photo\ ©\ The\ Israel\ Museum,\ Jerusalem,\ by\ Vladimir\ Naikhin).$ 

the line-drawing she published was not to scale and it suffers from many inaccuracies. Thus, this new publication of this vessel is so important. Moreover, previous publications did not mention the thick white post-firing plaster repairs that appear on its lower part in two rather long spots (13–20 cm). Notably, they covered ancient cracks that can be seen on the inner surface of the vessel.

Unfortunately, the second krater (Fig. 4:2), which is published here for the first time, is almost completely covered with very thick whitish patina. However, the small areas not covered by patina reveal that the entire vessel was red-slipped and decorated with black paint at least on the rim and handles. There is little doubt that this vessel should be identified with Dothan's Type 18 of the Philistine pottery repertoire (1982: 197-198), which is one of only two types that comprise the third degenerated phase of the Philistine pottery, according to her classification (see also, Mazar 1985: 45-46). Kraters of this type are rather rare and have been found primarily in the Central Coastal Plain, in the Yarkon River Basin (Tel Qasile and Tel Gerisa; Dothan 1982: Fig. 60: 1-5); only one specimen was found in the Jezreel Valley (Megiddo; Dothan 1982: Fig. 60:6). Like the examples from Tell Qasile (Mazar 1985: Fig. 46: 9, 11), the Azor krater bears a ribbon decoration on its handles. Ben-Shlomo (2012: 127, Fig. 5.6:3) identified one sherd from Moshe Dothan's excavations as belonging to this pottery type, but it is a small fragment that is more befitting a bowl and not a krater.

*Chalices*: Two chalices (Fig. 5:1, 2) are published here for the first time. They are of the same everted rim type published by Ben-Shlomo (2012: 127–128) from the excavations of the Azor cemetery.

Jugs: Seven jugs of six different sub-types are presented here (Figs. 5:3–8, 6:1), two of which are published here for the first time (Fig. 5:3, 4). A small plain jug (Fig. 5:3) with an everted rim and a single handle may have been used as a cooking jug based on the soot marks on different parts of its body, although it is not made of cooking ware. A similar example from the Dothan excavations was dated to the Iron Age I (Ben-Shlomo 2012: 132, Fig. 5.10:11).

Another jug (Fig. 5:4), which is published here for the first time, is a medium-size vessel with a folded rim (almost all of which is missing) and a handle extending from rim to shoulder. It is decorated with black and red bands on its shoulder. Ben-Shlomo (2012: 131–132, Fig. 5.10:9) published several similar examples from the excavations in Azor, where he terms them 'Bichrome jugs.' Various parallels were also found in Iron I Tell Qasile (e.g., Mazar 1985: Figs. 30:10; 41:9).

Two richly decorated Philistine jugs (Figs. 5:5, 6, 6:1, 2) with Egyptian affinity, reflected by a lotus motif on their neck. This type was thoroughly discussed in the past (Dothan 1982: 172-185, Figs. 48, 49, Pls. 88, 89:3, 4; Ben-Dor Evian 2012; Dothan and Zukerman 2015: Pl. 1.2.8:1; and see more below). To better present their decorations, they have been redrawn and published here in high quality, colored photographs. One of them (Fig. 5:5) was described by Ben-Shlomo (2012: 122) as "the finest and most richly decorated example known of an Egyptianized Philistine jug," even though its prior published illustrations suffered from many deficiencies. Moreover, one of the jugs (Fig. 5:6) was indicated in the past as originating from Tel Eton (Tell 'Eitun; Dothan 1982: 183, Fig. 49, Pl. 84:4); but according to the registration books of the Israel Museum and the 1970 catalogue of the Philistine exhibition in the Museum it was found at Azor (Hestrin 1970: Cat. No. 66). Signs of drilling on its base attest to its having been sampled for NAA analysis. Unfortunately, I was unable to locate the results of this test in any of the published research, nor in the Museum's registration, and no mention appears in any published articles containing the registration numbers of analyzed vessels, but only refer to the results in general (e.g., Perlman and Asaro 1969).

The spouted strainer jug with black horizontal linear decoration (Fig. 5:7) was first published by Dothan (1982: 149, Pl. 54). For an unknown reason, she erroneously described the jug as white-slipped, but the decoration is clearly painted directly on the clay. Both Dothan and Ben-Shlomo (2012: 118–120) discussed this vessel together with the classical richly decorated Philistine strainer jugs. However, due to the lack of white slip, the association of this vessel with the Philistine pottery repertoire should be reconsidered. To date, this is the only vessel of this type among all the known pottery from Azor.

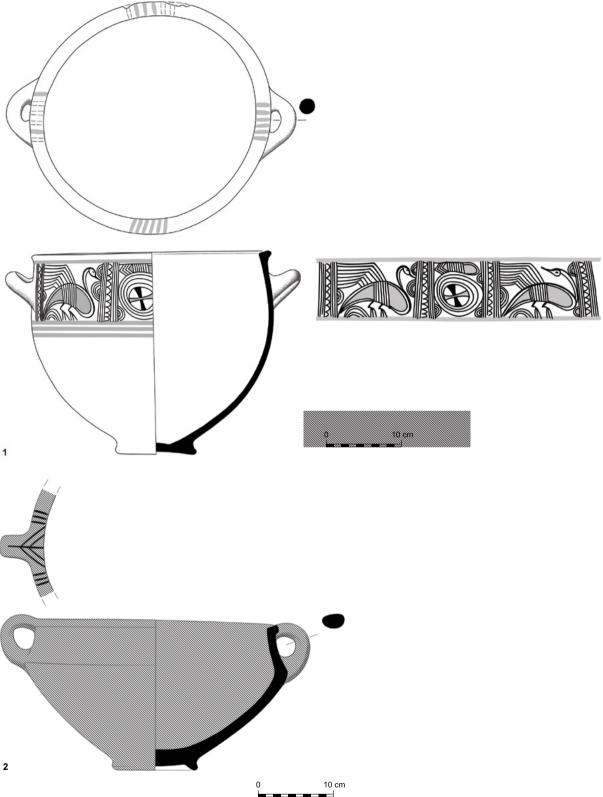


Fig. 4. Iron I vessels: Kraters (Drawing © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Esther Stark and Michael Smelansky).

Fig. 4. Iron I vessels: Kraters (Drawing © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Esther Stark and Michael Smelansky).

| No. | Reg. No. | Vessel                      | Collection   | Comments  | Photo    |
|-----|----------|-----------------------------|--|---|----------|
| 1   | 1964-360 | 1964-360 Bell-shaped krater |  | Dark reddish-brown clay; creamy-white slip;         |          |
|     |          |                             |  | black and red decoration; thick white               |          |
|     |          |                             |  | plaster repairs in two rather long spots (13-20 cm) |          |
|     |          |                             |  | applied post firing over ancient cracks             |          |
|     |          |                             |  | that are visible on the inner surface; intact       | Fig. 3:4 |
| 2   | 83.41.71 | Krater                      | Barag  | Reddish-brown clay; red slip all over;              |          |
|     |          |                             |  | remains of black decoration on rim and handles      |          |
|     |          |                             |  | below very thick white patina                       |          |
|     |          |                             | , and the second |   |          |

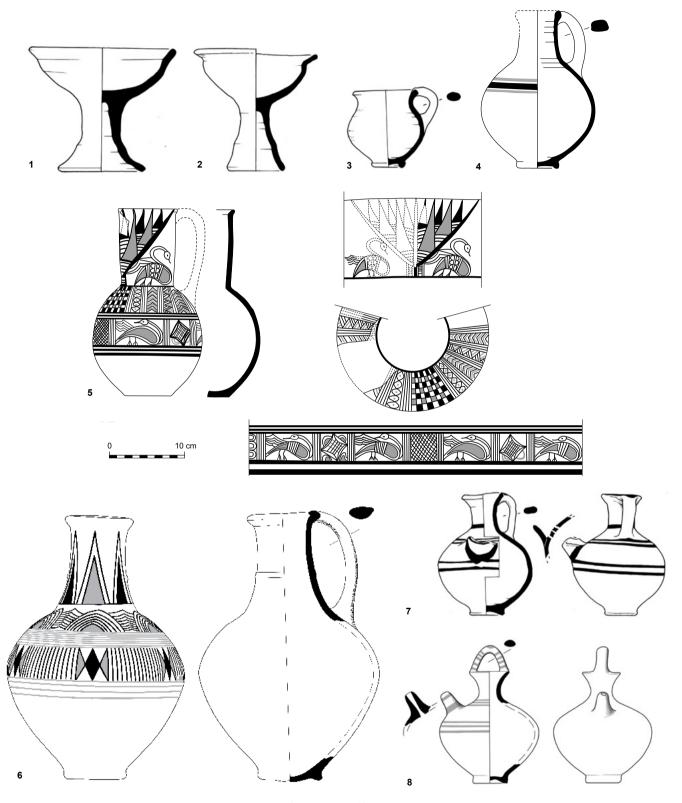


Fig. 5. Iron I vessels: (1, 2) Chalices and (3–8) jugs (Drawing © The Israel Muselow, Jerusalem, by Esther Stark and Michael Smelansky).

Fig. 5. Iron I vessels: (1, 2) Chalices and (3–8) jugs (Drawing © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Esther Stark and Michael Smelansky).

| No. | Reg. No.   | Vessel                 | Collection                              | Collection     Comments       Barag     Reddish-brown clay |          |
|-----|--|------------------------|---|--|----------|
| 1   | 83.41.64   | Chalice                | Barag                                   |  |          |
| 2   | 83.41.65   | Chalice                | Barag                                   | ag Light brown clay  |          |
| 3   | 83.41.67   | 83.41.67 Jug Barag Bro |   | Brown clay; remains of soot                                |          |
|     |  |                        |   | on body and rim; thick white patina                        |          |
| 4   | 83.41.69   | Jug                    | Barag                                   | Brown clay; black and red decoration                       |          |
| 5   | 1963-450/1   | Jug                    | Dayan                                   | Brown clay; black and red decoration                       |          |
| 6   | 6 68.32.9 Jug Dayan Reddish-brown clay; white slip a |                        | Reddish-brown clay; white slip all over |  |          |
|     |  |                        |   | (including base) black and red decoration                  | Fig. 6:2 |
| 7   | 83.26.85   | Strainer jug           | Barag                                   | Reddish-brown clay; black decoration                       |          |
| 8   | 83.26.83   | Spouted jug            | Barag                                   | Light brown clay; red decoration                           |          |



Fig. 6. Philistine vessels: (1) Jug (Fig. 5:5); (2) Jug (Fig. 5:6) (Photo © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Vladimir Naikhin).

Other strainer jugs from the site are either of the richly decorated Philistine type (Buchennino and Yannai 2010: Fig. 17:2; Ben-Shlomo 2012: Fig. 5.4:9, 10) or from the Iron IIA Late Philistine Decorated Ware, which are red-slipped and burnished (Ben-Shlomo 2012: Fig. 5.4:3, 4).

The spouted jug (also known as a 'feeding bottle') with a wide carinated body and basket handle is decorated with red stripes on the body, spout and handle (Fig. 5:8). It was first published by Dothan (1982: 157, Fig. 32:4, Pl. 68) and later also discussed by Ben-Shlomo (2012: 121). The latter claimed that most Philistine spouted jugs cannot be associated with specific phases of Philistine culture, although the carinated examples, such as the jug from Azor, seem to be dated to the third degenerated phase. This pottery type is infrequent in the Philistine pottery repertoire (Zukerman and Gitin 2016: Fig. 5.56:5, 6, although the complete example has a different type of spout); only a few additional specimens (and only one complete) were published from Moshe Dothan's excavations at Azor (Ben-Shlomo 2012: Fig. 5.4:5–8), two of which are also decorated with horizontal stripes.

A nearly complete and beautifully decorated stirrup-jar (Fig. 7:1) was first published by Dothan (1982: 125, Fig. 17:5; Pl. 29; see also Dothan and Zukerman 2015: Pl. 1.2.11:7) and later discussed by Ben-Shlomo (2012: 118). It is decorated with a dense geometric design in black and red on a white slip. As noted by Dothan, its main decoration features are unusual and do not appear on Philistine vessels outside of Azor. Indeed, only one other additional stirrup-jar from Azor, which originated in the Weisenfreund Collection, and today is in the Hecht Museum (Reg. No. H-3637) bears a close resemblance (Dothan 1982: Fig. 17:2; Pl. 31).

Juglet: Only one juglet, which was previously published by Dothan (1982: 191, Fig. 58:2; Pl. 94; see also Ben-Shlomo 2012: 122) is part of the Museum's collection (Fig. 7:2). The combination of its morphology and decoration makes it a unique vessel. Its form is related to local Canaanite jugs, although in size it should be defined as a juglet. Almost no jugs with a trefoil mouth are known in the Yarkon River Basin during Iron Age I. The appearance of the Philistine style decoration on this

vessel is even more special, making it an exception among the Iron Age pottery repertoire (and see more below)<sup>8</sup>.

Bottles: The six bottles belong to three different sub-types:

Three high neck cylindrical bottles with pierced handles (also known as "tall pyxides") are presented here (Fig. 7:3-5). All three were discussed previously by Dothan (1982: 166; 161, Fig. 34:4; 164, Pl. 73:2, 4, 5), but two are presented here for the first time in line-drawing, and the third was redrawn due to many inaccuracies in the previously published illustrations. Their attribution to the Philistine repertoire has been debated. Dothan referred to all these bottles as Philistine, while Ben-Shlomo (2012: 138) categorically rejected this identification, although elsewhere referred to one of them as Philistine (2012: 122). Indeed, this form has been assimilated, probably from Cyprus to different parts of the southern Levant (Arie 2013: 512, Type PX3, with additional references). However, one of the bottles presented here (Fig. 7:3; see also Dothan and Zukerman 2015: Pl. 1.2.13:2) can be related to the Philistine pottery repertoire owing to its decorative design, and especially due to the stylized lotus flower, which is painted in black and red on the upper register of its body (Ben-Dor Evian 2012, and see more below). Although the decoration of another bottle from Azor has almost completely vanished, leaving only vague remains of black and red decoration (Fig. 7:5), its morphology is almost identical. Moreover, this specimen is the only vessel of this type with vertical, pierced handles found in the southern Levant (in contrast to the typical horizontal handles). It seems that this feature is significant, because Cypriot antecedents have both type of handle forms (e.g., Dothan 1982: Figs. 36:3; 37:3; 39:1, 2), while Levantine examples almost always have horizontal handles.

One horn-shaped bottle that has never been published before (Fig. 7:6) is missing its rim and most of its decoration faded. However, the small, preserved portion of its decoration allows for the reconstruction of a lavishly decorated vessel: its upper part was painted in red, but most of its body was decorated with a black and red net pattern. No remains of the decoration were preserved on its lower part and handles. Another richly decorated horn-shaped bottle with a completely different decorative design

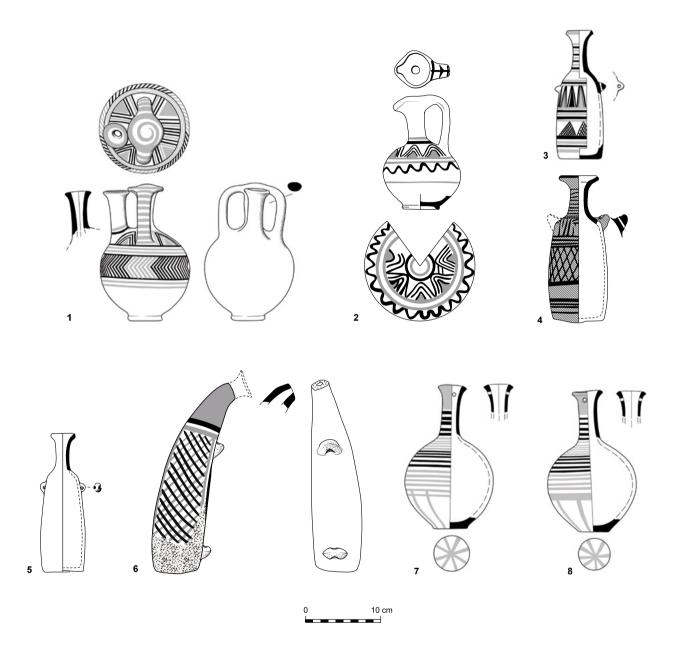


Fig.~7.~Iron~I~vessels: (1)~Jugs~(cont.); (2)~Juglet; (3-8)~bottles~(Drawing~@~The~Israel~Museum, Jerusalem, by~Esther~Stark~and~Michael~Smelansky).

Fig. 7. Iron I vessels: (1) Jugs (cont.); (2) Juglet; (3–8) bottles (Drawing © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Esther Stark and Michael Smelansky).

| Reg. No.   | Vessel   | Collection  | Comments  | Photo   |  |
|--|--|---|---|---|--|
| 68.32.2  | 32.2 Stirrup-jar   |   | Dark reddish-brown clay;  |   |  |
|  |  |   | white slip all over (including base);   |   |  |
|  |  |   | black and red decoration  | Fig. 8:1  |  |
| 83.26.84   | Juglet   | Barag   | Light greyish-brown clay; white slip all over   |   |  |
|  |  |   | (including base); black and red decoration  |   |  |
| 68.32.11   | Cylindrical bottle   | Dayan   | Reddish-brown clay; black and red decoration  | Fig. 8:2  |  |
| 68.32.13   | Cylindrical bottle   | Dayan   | Reddish-brown clay; red slip all over;  |   |  |
|  |  |   | black decoration; burnished   |   |  |
| 68.32.12   | Cylindrical bottle   | Dayan   | Light brown clay; undefined remains   |   |  |
|  |  |   | of black and red decoration   |   |  |
| 68.32.10   | Horn-shape bottle  | Dayan   | Light brown clay; black and red decoration  |   |  |
| 1963-450/2 Gourd-shaped bottle Dayan Reddish-brown clay; creamy-white slip |  | Reddish-brown clay; creamy-white slip   |   |   |  |
|  |  |   | all over (including base); black and red decoration   |   |  |
|  |  |   | (including on base); pierced neck   | Fig. 8:3  |  |
| 1963-446   | Gourd-shaped bottle  | Dayan   | Reddish-brown clay; creamy-white slip   |   |  |
|  |  |   | all over (including base); black and red decoration;  |   |  |
|  |  |   | decoration (including on base); pierced neck  | Fig. 8:4  |  |
|  | 68.32.12<br>68.32.11<br>68.32.13<br>68.32.12<br>68.32.10<br>1963-450/2 | 68.32.2 Stirrup-jar  83.26.84 Juglet  68.32.11 Cylindrical bottle  68.32.13 Cylindrical bottle  68.32.12 Cylindrical bottle  68.32.10 Horn-shape bottle  1963-450/2 Gourd-shaped bottle | 68.32.2 Stirrup-jar Dayan  83.26.84 Juglet Barag  68.32.11 Cylindrical bottle Dayan  68.32.13 Cylindrical bottle Dayan  68.32.12 Cylindrical bottle Dayan  68.32.10 Horn-shape bottle Dayan  1963-450/2 Gourd-shaped bottle Dayan | 68.32.2 Stirrup-jar Dayan Dark reddish-brown clay; white slip all over (including base); black and red decoration  83.26.84 Juglet Barag Light greyish-brown clay; white slip all over (including base); black and red decoration  68.32.11 Cylindrical bottle Dayan Reddish-brown clay; plack and red decoration  68.32.13 Cylindrical bottle Dayan Reddish-brown clay; red slip all over; black decoration; burnished  68.32.12 Cylindrical bottle Dayan Light brown clay; undefined remains of black and red decoration  68.32.10 Horn-shape bottle Dayan Light brown clay; black and red decoration  1963-450/2 Gourd-shaped bottle Dayan Reddish-brown clay; creamy-white slip all over (including base); black and red decoration  (including on base); pierced neck  1963-446 Gourd-shaped bottle Dayan Reddish-brown clay; creamy-white slip all over (including base); black and red decoration; |  |



 $Fig.\ 8.\ Philistine\ vessels: (1)\ Stirrup-jar\ (Fig.\ 7:1); (2)\ Cylindrical\ bottle\ (Fig.\ 7:3); (3)\ Gourd-shaped\ bottle\ (Fig.\ 7:7); (4)\ Gourd-shaped\ bottle\ (Fig.\ 7:8)$  (Photo © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Vladimir Naikhin).

from the Azor Cemetery that was originally part of the Dayan Collection now belongs to the Hecht Museum (Gilboa 1998: Fig. 8).

Two nearly identical gourd-shaped bottles (Fig. 7:7, 8) were published and discussed previously by Dothan (1982: 172, 174, Fig. 44, Pl. 83). Only one of them was illustrated, but that linedrawing is problematic (1982: Fig. 44), and the identity of the bottle it represents is unclear. 10 The difference between the two bottles is primarily related to the lower part of their decorations. On one of the bottles (Fig. 7:8; H 19.2 cm; D 11.4 cm), the bottom horizontal red band is very thick, and the vertical lines do not overlap with the horizontal lines. However, on the other vessel (Fig. 7:7; H 19.4 cm; D 11.6 cm), all the horizontal bands are of the same thickness, and the vertical lines cross the area of the horizontal ones. It is important to note that on both bottles the vertical lines extend on to the base and meet at its center. In any event, Dothan (1982: 172) included them in the Philistine pottery repertoire based on their foreign morphology and their bichrome decoration. Ben-Shlomo (2012: 138-139) rejected her arguments, unjustifiably in my opinion (see below). Dothan's suggestion to relate these vessels to a Cypriot origin seems reasonable even today, although with no clear ancestor. Another clue for the connection of the Azor vessels to the Philistine sphere may be found in Tell es-Safi/Gath. There, in a cultic corner dated to the late Iron Age IIA four small bottles were discovered (Szanton 2016: Pl. 11:3-6). They have a squat cylindrical shape, different from the Azor bottles, but as they were also decorated with red and black horizontal bands on white slip, and more importantly, all of them have pierced necks on opposing sides (probably in order for them to be hung).

*Flasks*: Three flasks are presented, each of which belongs to a different sub-type:

The first is a lentoid flask decorated with red concentric circles that is published for the first time here (Fig. 9:1). Although this type is a rather frequent during the Iron Age I (e.g., Arie 2013: 509–510, Type F1b), this is one of only few specimens of this type that were uncovered in the cemetery of Azor (Buchennino and Yannai 2010: Fig. 9:3; Ben-Shlomo 2012: 136, not illustrated; Fig. 4.11:5). Unfortunately, even though one of them was sampled

for petrographic examination, it did not yield any conclusive results (Buchennino and Yannai 2010: 37\*–38\*; Fig. 9:3). Most of the other flasks excavated in the site are undecorated, but some, however, have other decorative designs.

The second flask is a rare wide-lentoid flask with spoon-shaped neck with applied anthropomorphic features (Fig 9:2). This vessel was thoroughly studied previously by Ornan (1986: 29-30) and Ben-Shlomo (2012: 136-137). One feature that both lack is the decoration of black vertical lines on the back of the spoon, which must represent the hair of the feminine figure. A very good, albeit fragmentary parallel was found in an unstratified context at Tell Jemmeh (Ben-Shlomo, Gardiner and Van Beek 2014: 826, Fig. 17.10: c), and an additional recently published parallel was unearthed in a tomb at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh (Green 2014: 164, Fig. 6), although it has loop handles and not pierced handles like the specimen from Azor. An additional unpublished flask with a human face, but of low quality, undecorated and with no applied breast, was bought in 1968 from Dayan and is now part of the Israel Museum collection (68.32.14); its provenance is unknown. Three other unprovenanced and unpublished flasks with applied feminine breasts, but lacking a human face are also in the Israel Museum Collection (2013.52.430, 2013.52.432, 2013.52.433). Plain parallels (without any applied human features) of this flask-type with a red slip and black decoration, are known from the Late Bronze Age III and Iron Age I (e.g., Mullins and Yannai 2019: Pl. 3.41:9; Mazar 1985: 74; Type FL 4).

The last flask in this collection is tubular (Fig. 9:3). It is white-slipped and decorated in black concentric circles on the body and horizontal stripes on the handles and shoulder. This type is infrequent in the southern Levant, and at Azor this is its only appearance. Parallels from Philistia and its region were uncovered at Iron Age I Tel Miqne/Ekron (Ben-Shlomo 2010: Fig. 3.15:5) and Gezer (Macalister 1912: Pl. 161:3).

*Pyxis*: A black and red decorated pyxis with a high neck and a simple rim is published here for the first time (Fig. 9:4). It is similar to the pyxides found in the Dothan excavations (Ben-Shlomo 2012: 137–138, Type PX), which are dated to the Iron Age I.

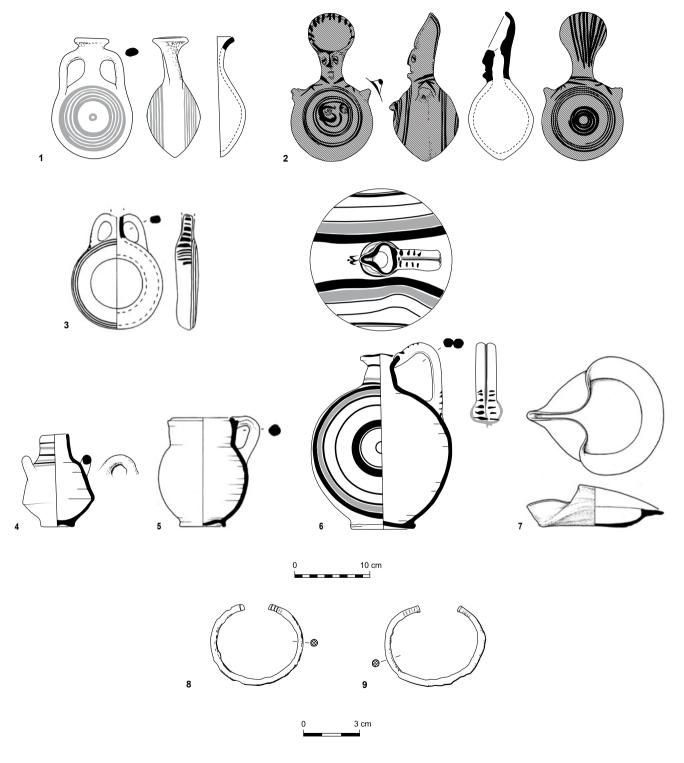


Fig. 9. Iron I vessels: (1–3) Flasks; (4) Pyxis. Iron IIC vessels: (5, 6) Jugs; and (7) a Lamp; (8-9) Bronze bracelets (Drawing © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Esther Stark and Michael Smelansky).

Fig. 9. Iron I vessels: (1–3) Flasks; (4) Pyxis. Iron IIC vessels: (5, 6) Jugs; and (7) a Lamp; (8-9) Bronze bracelets (Drawing © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Esther Stark and Michael Smelansky).

| No.  | Reg. No. | Vessel  | Collection | Comments   | Photo      |  |
|--|----------|---|------------|--|------------|--|
| 1  | 83.41.70 | Flask   | Barag      | Orange-brown clay; red decoration                        |            |  |
| 2  | 82.2.6   |   |            | Reddish-brown clay; red slip all over;                   |            |  |
|  |          |   |            | black decoration; well burnishing; plastic applications  | Fig. 10: 1 |  |
| 3  | 69.9.357 | Tubular flask   | Dayan      | Reddish-brown clay; white-creamy slip; black decoration. |            |  |
| 4 83.41.62 Pyxis Barag Li                              |          | Light brown clay; white slip all over (including base); |            |  |            |  |
|  |          |   |            | black and red decoration                                 |            |  |
| 5  | 83.41.63 | Jug   | Barag      | Reddish-brown clay                                       |            |  |
| 6 68.32.117 Cypriot jug Dayan Light greenish-white cla |          | Light greenish-white clay;                              |            |  |            |  |
|  |          |   |            | warped body (pre-firing); black and red decoration.      |            |  |
| 7  | 82.2.634 | Lamp  | Dayan      | Buff clay; no soot remains                               |            |  |
| 8  | 83.41.73 | Bracelet  | Barag      | Bronze, with heavy corrosion; Weight: 9.44 g.            |            |  |
| 9  | 83.41.74 | Bracelet  | Barag      | Bronze, with heavy corrosion; Weight: 10.42 g.           |            |  |

Figurine: an intact example of a mourner figurine is made of reddish-brown clay (Fig. 10:2). Its height is 7.7 cm and its maximum width is 5.6 cm. It was carefully studied in the past by Dothan (1982: 237–249, Pl. 25, Fig. 12:2). A reassessment of mourning figurines with many references was also published by Ben-Shlomo (2010: 39–41). Azor is known as the only site that has yielded Philistine cup-kraters, which were designed to support mourner figurines (and see more below).<sup>11</sup>

#### Iron Age IIC Pottery

Only three vessels dated to the last phase of the Iron Age II were among the pottery from Azor at the Museum; they include two jugs and a lamp.

A plain jug (Fig. 9:5) with a stepped rim is typical to Philistia only during the Iron IIB–IIC. Parallels occur at Batash III (Gitin 2015a: Pl. 2.5.9:4); Ashdod VIII–VII (Gitin 2015a: Pl. 2.5.9:6) and Tel Miqne/Ekron IB (Gitin 2015b: Pl. 3.5.9:4, 5). However, the earliest example of this type was found in Iron IIA Ashdod X–IX (Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005: 196, Fig. 3.85:7). This might have served as an indication of the Azor jug's date, but at Ashdod the context was recognized as enigmatic and possibly a later disturbance. Given that no other Iron IIB remains were found at the Azor cemetery, 12 the jug in question should probably be dated to the Iron IIC.

A trefoil-rim jug (Fig. 9:6) has a double handle that rises above the rim and is decorated with black and red concentric circles on body, black stripes on the handle, and a small black emblem on the upper body below rim. The last upper body was distorted before or during firing. The ware is Cypriot, and due to its decoration and morphology (especially its high handle) it should be associated with the Bichrome V group (Gjerstad 1948: 66–67; cf. Fig. 49: 9a). Four examples of this imported type<sup>13</sup> are known in the southern Levant in Iron Age IIC and Persian Period strata: one each at Shikmona 7 (Zemer 2008: 50) and Taanach Period VI (Rast 1978: Fig. 94:4), and two from Tell Jemmeh (Petrie 1928: 22, Pl. 60:85q, 87d). They attest not only to the date of the vessel from Azor, but also to the rather frequent imports from Cyprus during this time to the southern Levantine Coastal Plain.

A lamp (Fig. 9:7) with a long narrow nozzle and flat, wide, flanged rim is also part of this late group of pottery vessels. Vessels of this type are primarily recognized as Persian Period lamps (Stern 2015: 577, Fig. 5.1.23:1–4), although as Sussman (2007: 84-85, Cat. No. 1473–1474a) has shown, this type first appeared at the sixth century BCE, during the Babylonian conquest. No such lamps have been found otherwise at Azor. As no remains from the Persian Period were found in Azor, I prefer to date this vessel to the sixth century BCE.

#### Bronze bracelets

Only two objects from the Museum's Azor collection are made of metal, both bronze bracelets (Fig. 9:8, 9). The two are almost identical, but one (Fig. 9:9) is wider, heavier and a bit more open. Each of them was originally decorated with five circumferential incisions near their tapered ends, but at the end of one bracelet (Fig. 9:8) thick corrosion obscures them and only one is visible. This decorative design is known from other Iron Age sites (e.g., Golani 2013: Fig. 18:4). Parallels from the properly excavated Iron Age I Azor tombs (Ben-Shlomo 2012: Figs. 4.36:18, 19; 4.38:9–11) support the dating of the Museum's bracelets to that period.

Braunstein (2018: 52–53), who researched bangles from the cemeteries of Tell el-Far'ah (South) and other southern Levantine tombs during the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age I, found that bangles were associated more frequently with juveniles than with adults, and more frequently with young females than with males. Green (2007), who dealt with bracelets and anklets from the cemetery at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh, reached similar conclusions and he further opined that the socialization and ritualization of gendered identity through interpreting the symbolism of anklet/bracelet wearing structured the way in which male-female/child-adult categories and social roles were idealized, constructed, and actively reproduced.

Excavations at Azor produced four bracelets on the arm of one adult female in Tomb 58, and additional bracelets (their number is not mentioned in the report) on a female child in Tomb 56 (Ben-Shlomo 2012: 45, 49). These hint that the

bracelets from the Museum's collection were also used as burial offerings of a child or a female, perhaps of a young age. This supposition is strengthened by the narrow diameter of the bracelets from the Museum's collection. In any event, these uncertainties again reflect the limited ability to reach firm archaeological conclusions from unprovenanced objects.

# The unique Iron Age I Philistine pottery repertoire from Azor and its implications for the understanding of Philistia's periphery

In his discussion of the pottery from Azor, Ben-Shlomo (2012: 113-139) distinguishes between two groups retrieved from the cemetery: the 'Philistine' pottery and the local "Canaanite"/"non-Philistine" pottery. He defines "Canaanite" pottery as Late Bronze Age types that continue into the Iron Age, and "non-Philistine" pottery as types that first appeared during the Iron Age I, which are not Philistine nor imported (Ben-Shlomo 2012: 122). According to Ben-Shlomo (2012: 114), 18% of the complete vessels from the Iron I burials at Azor are Philistine, whereas the remainder are of the local group. He further explained that due to the extensive looting of the site and the looters' preference for Philistine decorated vessels, the actual proportion of that pottery should have been higher. I do not accept this explanation. While I agree with him that Azor's looters were mainly interested in elaborate Philistine pottery, but just as archaeologists could not know where those fancy wares can be found, neither could the looters. So why is there a higher proportion of Philistine vessels in private collections than in controlled excavations from Azor? The high percentage of Philistine vessels in looted collections indicates, in my opinion, the robbers' rationale for collecting. As previously noted, Dayan, for example, gave away some of the vessels he looted from Azor as presents. According to the evidence we have, he kept the elaborately decorated specimens in his collection, while the plain vessels were given away. Thus, as opposed to the percentage of Philistine vessels found in the excavations published by Ben-Shlomo, which might be considered a representative sample, the share of Philistine vessels in looted collections represent a biased reality. This notion is supported by the frequency of Philistine vessels at Tell Qasile, which, according to Mazar (1985: 104–105, Table 11), is 24%, 14.3% and 14.6% in Strata XII, XI, and X, respectively. These frequencies correspond well with that reflected in the published Azor excavations.

In any event, it is interesting to note that in his discussion of his local group of pottery, Ben-Shlomo discussed types that were previous considered by Dothan to be Philistine. These types include small shallow bowls richly decorated in black and red, some on a white slip (e.g., Fig. 2:7-9) and the gourd-shaped bottles probably imitating Cypriot vessels (Fig. 7:7, 8).<sup>15</sup> I prefer Dothan's view, as I assume these pottery types are part of a regional phenomenon characterizing the Philistine pottery repertoire of the Yarkon River Basin (see below). Thus, it would seem that the percentage of Philistine style pottery from the Azor cemetery should be slightly higher than 18%.<sup>16</sup>

In almost all of her references to Azor throughout her pottery typology, Dothan (1982: 55, passim) noted that the Philistine pottery repertoire has unique components that deserve special attention. Yet, neither Dothan nor Ben-Shlomo explicitly detail these elements. The following list includes the unique elements that characterize the Azor Philistine pottery, both from vessels that were discussed above and those published elsewhere. The list is arranged according to the order of the Philistine pottery-types established by Dothan (1982):

- A unique bowl which combines elements from both the cymashaped bowls and the Philistine skyphoi (Fig 2:6, see above);
- A bell-shaped krater decorated with a unique composition of Philistine antithetic spirals and a Canaanite stylized tree (Dothan 1982: 115, Fig. 10:3, Pl. 12; Ben-Shlomo 2012: 117);
- Bell-shaped kraters with unusual geometric decoration, some incorporating regular Philistine motifs (e.g., Dothan 1982: 115, Fig. 8:1, 2; Pl. 11) and some on their own alone (Dothan 1982: 115, Pl. 16; cf. Tell Qasile X; Mazar 1985: 91, Fig. 46:7);
- Exceptional decorative designs on stirrup-jars (Fig. 7:1, see above; and two additional vessels from the Weisenfreund



Fig. 10. Flask and figurine: (1) Flask with spoon-shaped neck (Fig. 9:2); (2) Mourner figurine (Photo © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Vladimir Naikhin).

Collection, Dothan 1982: 124–125, Figs. 15: 1, 17:2; Ben-Shlomo 2012: 118);

- A unique amphoriskos from the Eretz Israel Museum Collection (Dothan 1982: 130, Fig. 19, Pl. 39.1). Although two parallels occur at Tel Miqne/Ekron (Zukerman and Gitin 2016: Fig. 5.56:10, 11), one side of the vessel from Azor is of a unique lotus motif;
- A cylindrical bottle with vertical pierced handles (Fig. 7:5), probably imitating a Cypriot vessel (see above).
- Two gourd-shaped bottles probably imitating a Cypriot vessel (Fig. 7:7, 8, see above).
- Small shallow bowls richly decorated in black and red, some on a white slip (e.g., Fig. 2:7–9; see above for further parallels from Azor and Tell Qasile).
- Trefoil-mouth juglet (Fig. 7:2, see above).
- Red slip kraters decorated in black paint of the third degenerated phase of Philistine pottery (Fig. 4:2; Dothan 1982, 197-198: Type 18). As noted above, most other examples were found in Tell Qasile and Tel Gerisa.
- Cup-kraters, which supported mourner figurines (See above; Dothan 1982: 246–249, Fig. 14, Pls. 31, 32).

These unique morphological features and decorative elements together reveal the exceptional nature of the Azor repertoire, especially in comparison to the Philistine pottery from the main sites of Philistia. Moreover, additional exceptional pottery forms and decorative designs from its particular subregion, such as the nearby the Yarkon River Basin: for example a bowl from Tel Gerisa (Dothan 1982: 104, Pl. 6) and various vessels from Tell Qasile, such as a pyxis-flask (Mazar 1985: 98, Fig. 11:26, Photo 95); a pyxis and an amphoriskos (Dothan 1982: 130, Fig. 18:2, 6); two strainer jugs (Mazar 1985: 95–97, Figs. 24:19, 35:1, Photos 91, 93); and a wide-bodied bottle (Mazar 1985: 99, Fig. 17:27, Photo 96). Like Dothan, who observed special

characteristics of the Azor Philistine pottery, Mazar dealt with the unique nature of the Philistine pottery from Tell Qasile (Mazar 1985: 103). Unfortunately, due to the limited publication of the Tel Gerisa excavations, the precise nature of its Philistine pottery is still unclear.

The question of Philistine identity has been the subject of much research during recent years (e.g., Hitchcock and Maeir 2013; Maeir, Hitchcock and Kolska Horwitz 2013; Stockhammer 2013). While in the past, the Philistines were considered a consolidated society with well-defined ethnic markers, many scholars today emphasize the plurality of the Philistine culture. Moreover, different entangled and transcultural identities were observed in Philistia itself (Hitchcock and Maeir 2013: 58–59; Stockhammer 2013: 23). In any event, to gain a deeper understanding of the identity of the Yarkon River Basin population, one needs to study *all* the material culture components of the sites in the area. However, that is beyond the scope of the present article.

Despite these complexities, it seems that the population on Philistia's periphery behaved differently than in its heartland. The material culture of Canaanite sites in the vicinity of the Philistine settlements in the Judean Shephelah clearly presents a complex relationship between the two societies. Bunimovitz and Lederman (2011) pointed out the resistance of the local population of Beth-Shemesh to the material culture of the newcomers, while Faust (2015: 220) suggested that the elite of Tel 'Eton used Philistine pottery as means of boasting its connection to its peers outside of the Shephelah. Clearly, in both scenarios the low percentage of Philistine pottery in these sites (c. 5%) together with other variables considered in these articles (e.g., pork consumption) reflect the non-Philistine identity of these sites' populations (whether Canaanite in the broad sense or a local identity developed in the Shephelah).

As opposed to the Judean Shephelah, the sites of the Yarkon River Basin reveal a different story. Both Tell Qasile and Azor exhibit much higher frequencies of Philistine style pottery (c. 20%) and, as noted above, both show a rich variety of unique

forms and decorative designs, which are clearly related to the Philistine cultural world.<sup>17</sup> While most scholars have referred to the inhabitants of Tell Qasile as Philistines, with due caution and cognizance of the "pots equal people" debate, I believe these figures reflect a unique identity, that was bound to a rather small geographical area in the Lower Yarkon River Basin. Gadot (2006) referred to the entire Yarkon River Basin (from Tel Aphek to Tell Qasile) as one social and political entity, which he defined as frontier zone. Yet, the finds from Aphek reveal that it was part of a different entity, hinted also by the low frequency of Philistine pottery recovered at the site (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2011: Fig. 7). Hence, like Beth Shemesh, the population of Aphek (and probably also of Gezer) might be opposed to their western neighbors. However, the population of the Lower Yarkon River Basin, especially as represented in Tell Qasile and Azor, enjoyed the advantages of a frontier zone between these two worlds. It seems that the population of the Lower Yarkon River Basin was more open to the changes that characterized this period (among other reasons, perhaps due to the proximity to the coast). This certainly enabled good social, economic and cultural relations both with Philistia and the Canaanite sites at the foot of the mountains, which led to the flourishing and prosperity of this area during a rather short period during the Iron Age I. The emergence of the northern Kingdom of Israel and its relations with Philistia result in the decline in importance of the Lower Yarkon River Basin in a long process that brought about its almost complete desertion; during the Iron Age IIA these sites were still inhabited, but their size was reduced and they were completely deserted during the Iron Age IIB.

#### **Conclusions**

This article presents for the first time the entire collection
of looted Iron Age artifacts from the Azor cemetery (thirtyfour pottery vessels, a figurine and two bronze bracelets),
which is today at the Israel Museum. While some of the
objects were partially published in the past, the present
article, which used high standards of precision, should
be considered their full publication. All prior information

- regarding a specific vessel was referred to in the text, allowing easy access to the relevant existing data.
- 2. The present research presents a transparent and complete modern biography of the Iron Age Azor objects at the Israel Museum prior to their arrival to the Museum. The details regarding their provenance contribute to the understanding of the objects on the one hand and reveal their illicit origin and its scientific impact in a way that hopefully might deter the recurrence of such acts of looting, on the other hand. This presentation reflects one of the missions of the Israel Museum, which is obligated as a public institution to its audience (and in this case specifically the research community) to deal honestly with the provenance of the objects from its collection.
- 3. Most of the objects discussed here are dated to the Iron Age I (thirty-four out of thirty-seven objects). During this period, burial activity in the cemetery of Azor was at its peak. These looted burials produced some of the most elaborate Philistine style vessels ever found, but others reflect special pottery types that merge Philistine, Canaanite, and Egyptian elements into hybrid forms and decorative motifs.
- 4. Only three vessels from this researched group of objects date to the Iron Age IIC. However, since only two additional vessels from this period were retrieved from Dothan's excavations (Ben-Shlomo 2012: 144, Fig. 5.9:7, 8), the Museum's vessels contribute significantly to the data on this period. It seems that during the Iron Age IIC (probably the sixth century BCE; Ben-Shlomo 2012: 144) burial activity in the cemetery was very limited. Since no remains of this period were found on the nearby mound, the location of the settlement during this period remains unknown.
- 5. The unique Iron Age I Philistine pottery repertoire from Azor is defined and discussed in length. Moreover, the relative quantity of the Philistine types out of the entire ceramic assemblage is compared to the same values in

Philistia and other sites located in its periphery. It seems that the lower Yarkon River Basin, and especially Azor and Tell Qasile, enjoyed for a rather limited period, the advantages of a frontier zone, between heartland Philistia on the one hand and its Canaanite opposers on the other hand. This gave the area economic benefits that brought about its flourishing until the emergence of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which brought about the demise of this settlement system.

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#### **Postscript**

Recently, an additional report on a small-scale excavation at the cemetery of Azor was published (Elad and Eshed 2023). While not included in this paper, it supports the general conclusions presented here.

### **Notes**

- 1 The author stresses that such acquisition policies are a thing of the past and, today, the Israel Museum acts in full collaboration with the Israel Antiquities Authority according to the IAA internal regulations and statutory laws. All archaeological finds are accepted to the Museum collection only after the approval of both internal and external committees.
- Ben-Shlomo (2012: 29) differentiated in his report between tombs, which he defined as having structural remains, and burials that are either other graves or graves within a structure. In my opinion, his terminology is very confusing and, thus, throughout this article I have used the term "tomb."
- 3 This information is based on archival material from the Israel Museum, including the object cards and the registration diary of the Archaeology Wing.
- 4 In the following pottery discussion, reference is made primarily to parallels from the salvage excavations in Azor (except in the case of special vessels or types), where the reader will find a vast bibliography.
- 5 For inexplicable reasons, the examples published by Ben-Shlomo were assigned by him to different bowl types: shallow and miniature bowls.
- 6 A base of what appears to be an identical bowl with similar decoration is in the Weisenfreund Collection, now in the Hecht Museum (Reg. No. H-4003).
- 7 Ben-Shlomo (2012: 126) cites other parallels from Beth-Shean and Tel Ḥalif, but these examples are not related to this bowl-type.
- 8 Dothan ascribed another juglet from Ashkelon (1982: Fig. 58:1) to her Type 16 of these trefoil-mouth juglets, but it seems completely different and unrelated to the specimen from Azor.
- 9 No photograph is published here, because the scant remains of the painted decoration are so poorly conveyed in an image.

- That drawing was probably made from a photograph, given that the decoration on the base was not included.
- 11 A possible fragment of a krater-cup was found in Ashdod Stratum XII (Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005: Fig. 3.34:11), but the sherd is very small and might originate from another type of vessel, such as a kernos.
- 12 Note that Ben-Shlomo does refer to a few pottery vessels from the Dothan excavations as if they were from the Iron IIB, but he actually means that they are from the Iron IIC, as he dates them to the seventh and sixth centuries BCE (Ben-Shlomo 2012: 96, 144).
- 13 The vessel from Taanach and one specimen from Tell Jemmeh (Petrie 1928: 22, Pl. 60: 87d) might be related to the White Painted group (but is unclear owing to state of preservation and quality of publication). This, however, does not change my argument, since the two groups are closely related and morphologically similar.
- 14 However, it should not be overlooked that while the pottery from Azor derived from burial contexts, the Tell Qasile assemblage was found in a cultic area. This difference might also skew any comparison between the two sites.
- Cylindrical bottles (e.g., Fig. 7:3-5) are also a point of contention between Dothan and Ben-Shlomo. My views regarding this subject appear above, and at least one bottle should be considered Philistine.
- 16 Unfortunately, Ben-Shlomo did not explain how this percentage was determined; thus, I cannot recalculate it based on the present study.
- 17 Unfortunately, the existence of pork consumption at these two sites is unknown, since bones were not kept in Azor, and the zooarchaeological finds from Tell Qasile remain unpublished.

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