

A Late Iron Age Fortress North of Jerusalem

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Dedicated with appreciation to Professor Ora Negbi

Studies dealing with the defensive system of the Kingdom of Judah in the Late Iron Age have mentioned the fortress excavated at the French Hill, north of Jerusalem (the possibility of its use during the Persian period has also been raised). The plan and finds from this fortress have never been published, and its description has appeared in a very preliminary form. This article is the final report of the excavation carried out 33 years ago by Professor Ora Negbi, to whom we dedicate this article. Aside from a fully detailed publication of the fortress's architectural plan and the finds retrieved, our objectives are to set the chronological framework on the basis of the finds, suggest a possible geographical-historical identification according to biblical sources, and attempt to reconstruct the defensive system of the Judaeen kingdom's capital—Jerusalem.

THE SITE AND THE EXCAVATIONS

The fortress site is located in the neighborhood of Giv^cat Shapira, also known as French Hill (map ref. 17255.13440). The remains of the excavated fortress are today incorporated into a small public park located between two large concrete water reservoirs. The park is surrounded by residential buildings built along HaEzel and Ha-Hagana streets, and it is accessed from Mevo Dakar Street (fig. 1).

In the memoirs of the Survey of Western Palestine conducted by the British Palestine Exploration Fund in the 1870s, the site is mentioned as *Rūjūm el Behīmeḥ* (Warren and Conder 1884: 411). The sur-

veyors of the Fund write that the Arabic name may come from *buhmah* which means “a solid rock” or “hard stone,” but literally it means “cairns of the beast.” They stress that the name could be connected to the band of flint rock characterizing the area (Warren and Conder 1884: 412; see also Dalman 1930: 23).

The fortress is located on top of a hill, about 832 m above sea level, affording a panoramic view of Jerusalem and its vicinity. The site overlooks the northern approach of the main road that follows the central mountain spine of the country, which passes at the foot of the site to the west. The fortress also controls the road toward Anathoth, which passes north of the site.

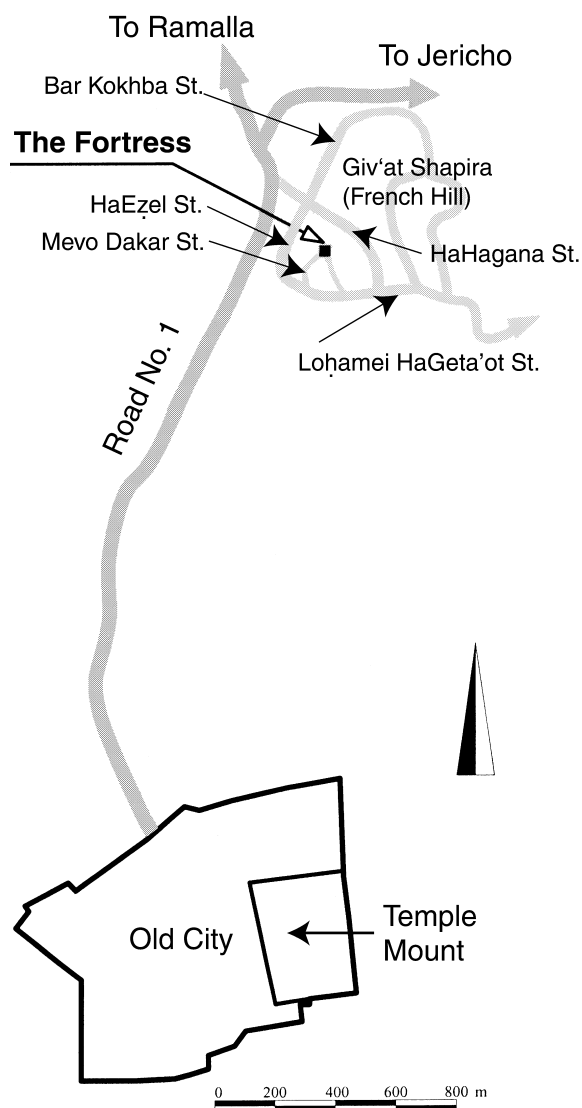


Fig. 1. Map showing location of the site.

On the slope to the east of the fortress, G. Mazar unearthed a farmhouse with a wine press dated to the Late Iron Age (Feig 2000: 405, Site no. 57, Wadi Salim). Several other sites of the Late Iron Age were discovered in the vicinity of the site (Feig 2000: 405–8, Site nos. 59, 60, 79; which are Kloner's 2001b: Site nos. 202, 215, and 201, respectively; see also Site nos. 179, 199, and 203).

The fortress is located approximately 3 km in aerial distance from the Temple Mount, upon the northern part of the Mount of Olives ridge, and at a distance of about 2 km south of the site of Gibeah

(Tell el-Fûl). The site is surrounded today by dense urban tissue, but at the time of the excavations and before, it was an isolated heap of flint rocks in the heart of an undeveloped area. Few built lines were observable within the heap of large flint blocks. From the beginning it was thought that the heap included the remains of a fortress, in light of its location and the general nature of the remains (fig. 2).

The excavation of the site was carried out under the direction of Ora Negbi, on behalf of the Department of Antiquities and Museums (later Israel Antiquities Authority), as a salvage operation prior to the construction of the residential area (License no. 203, dated 25 June 1969). The excavation lasted two weeks: one week in June 1969, and another in September of that year. Short preliminary reports were published shortly after the dig (Negbi 1969; 1970), but a final report was not published by the excavator. Since its excavation, the fortress has been mentioned as belonging to the Late Iron Age in several studies (Mazar 1982: 107; Barkay 1985: 371–72; Meitlis 1989: 26; Mazar 1990: 100, n. 35; Feig 2000: 400, Site no. 26; Stern 2001: 142), although other studies suggest it dates to the Persian period as well (Kloner 2001a: 92; 2001b: 70*–71*, Site no. 196).

ARCHITECTURE

The fortress consists of a single rectangular building, the outer measurements of which are about 18.45 × 13.05 m (figs. 3–6). It is subdivided into seven units. A central unit (Locus 4), with inner measurements of about 10.35 × 4.5 m (fig. 7), is surrounded on both the northwest and southeast sides by three units of different sizes. On the northwest, a rectangular unit (Locus 1) measures about 4.5 × 4.05 m (fig. 8); adjacent to that is a narrow unit (Locus 2) which measures about 4.5 × 1.8 m (fig. 9); and in the corner there is an additional unit (Locus 3) divided into two square chambers (Loci 3A and 3B), each approximately 2.25 × 2.25 m (fig. 10). On the southeast side, a rectangular unit (Locus 5) measures about 3.6 × 2.7 m (fig. 11); a central unit (Locus 6) measures about 3.6 × 3.15 m (fig. 12); and an additional unit (Locus 7) measures about 3.6 × 2.7 m (fig. 13).

The outer walls of the fortress, as well as the walls of the central unit (Locus 4), are 1.35 m thick on average. The fortress is built of large hammered blocks of tabular flint, dark brown in color. The gaps between the blocks are filled with smaller stones, which also originate in the flint formation exposed in the vicinity. The blocks are about 1 m in width



Fig. 2. The site during the excavations, looking northwest.



Fig. 3. Aerial photograph of the fortress (February 2002), looking northwest.

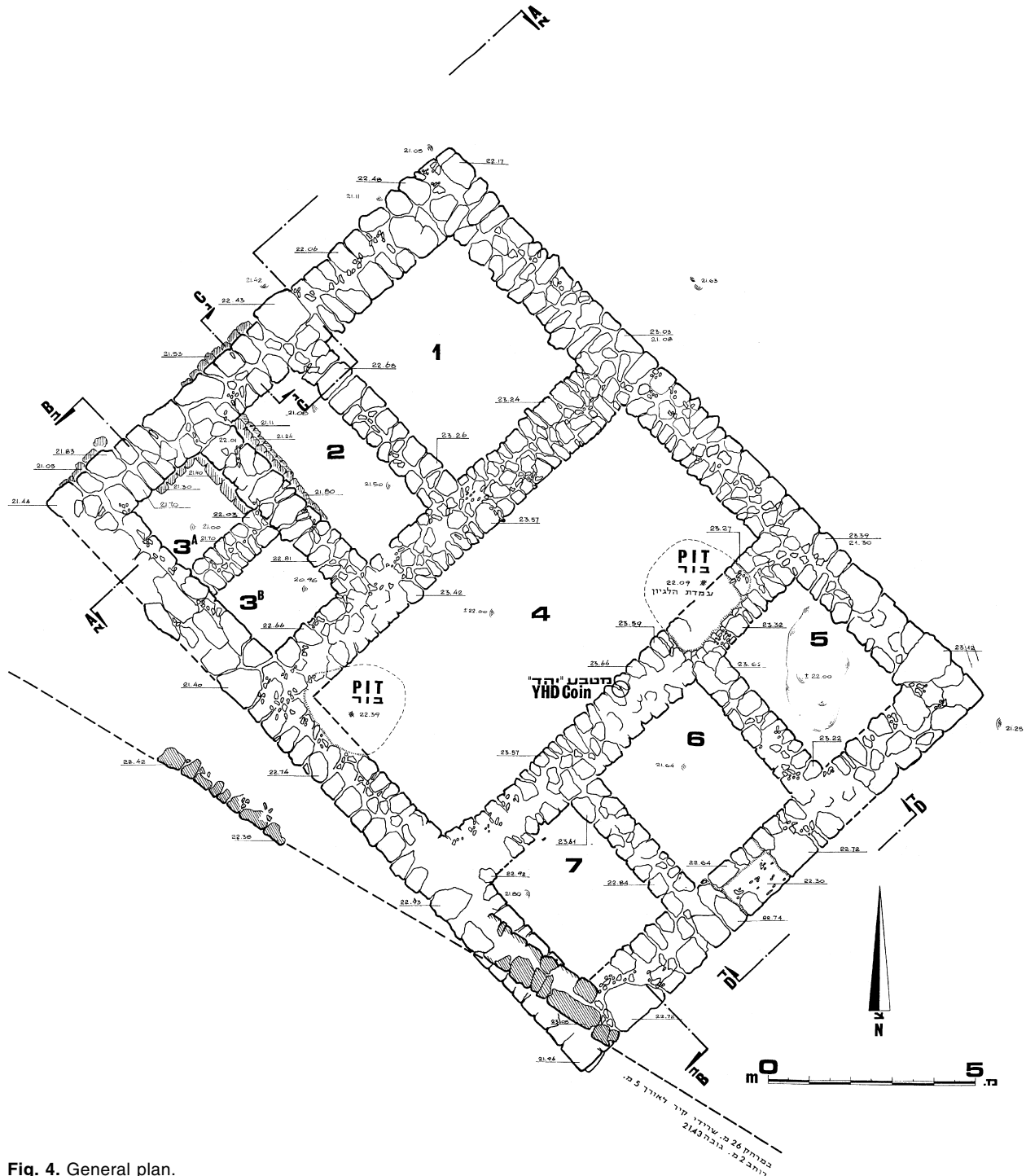


Fig. 4. General plan.

and 0.5 m in height. The outer walls are built in un-leveled courses, according to the different sizes of the blocks. The outer walls are built with two blocks forming their thickness (fig. 14). The inner walls of the fortress are 0.9 m thick on average, i.e., about three-fifths of the width of the outer ones, and they are also formed of two stones making the two faces

(as seen in figs. 7–12). Most of the walls are founded on bedrock. They are preserved to a height of four to five courses (1–1.5 m), up to a maximal preservation of about 2 m in the northwestern and southeastern outer walls.

Two late pits were dug into the walls of the central unit (Locus 4). The one in its northeastern part

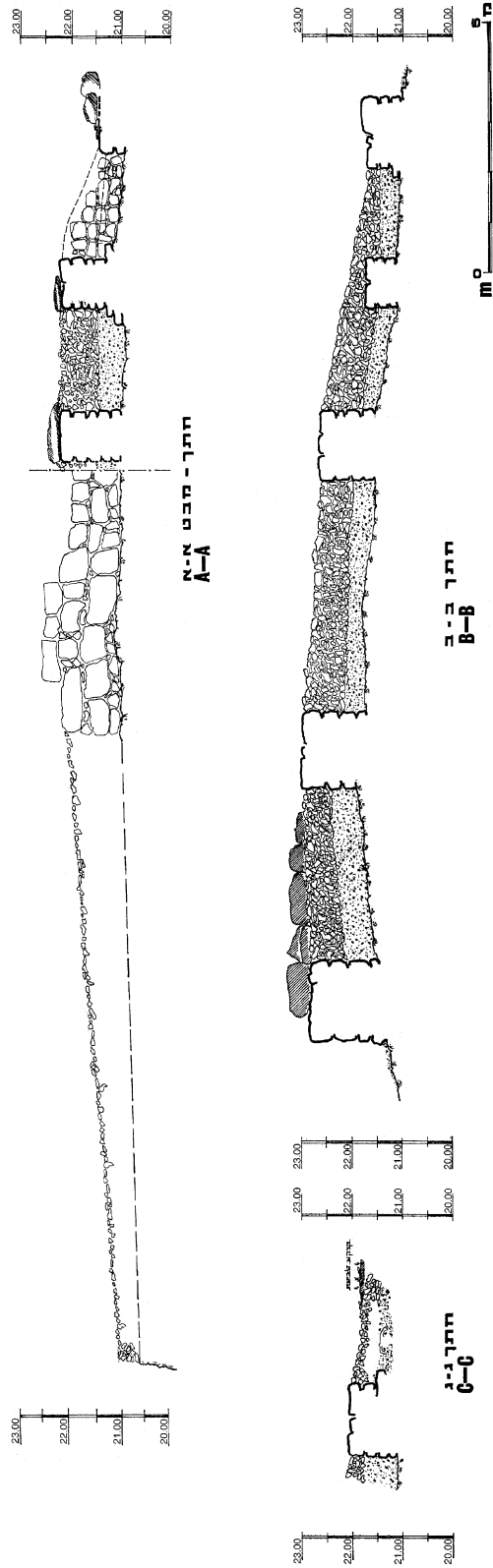


Fig. 5. Sections A-A, B-B, and C-C.

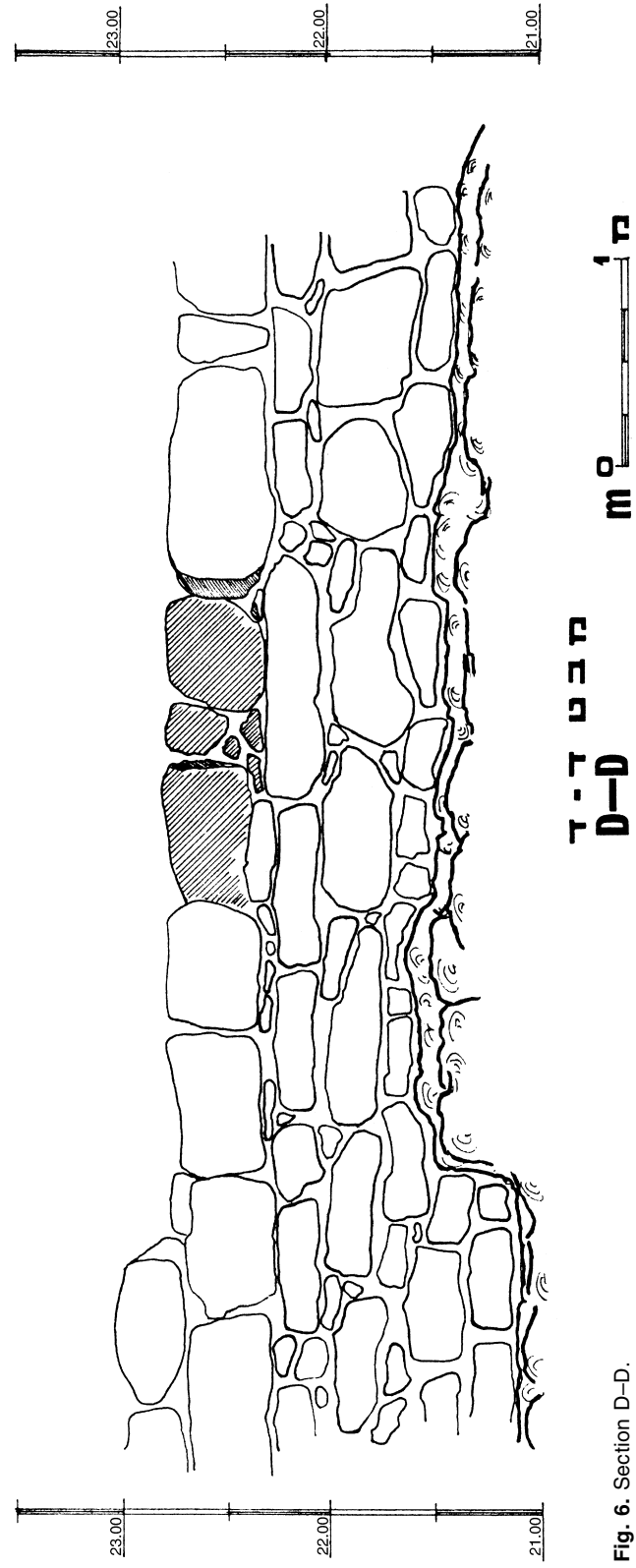


Fig. 6. Section D-D.



Fig. 7. Locus 4, looking south.



Fig. 8. Locus 1, looking southeast.



Fig. 9. Locus 2, looking southeast.



Fig. 10. Loci 3A and 3B, looking southeast.



Fig. 11. Locus 5, looking northwest, stone fills visible at the bottom.



Fig. 12. Locus 6, looking southwest.



Fig. 13. Locus 7, looking northeast, during the excavations.



Fig. 14. The southeastern outer wall of the fortress.

probably served as a “fox-hole” for the Jordanian Legion in the 1960s; the other is dug into the southwestern corner of the unit. On top of the south corner of the fortress, a late agricultural terrace was unearthed, which continued eastward and westward (fig. 4).

Inside the different units excavators found a compact fill of small stones and earth, which during the excavations was separated into an upper and a lower fill (see, e.g., fig. 12). The lower fill included small quantities of Iron Age sherds. The upper contained larger quantities of sherds, most of them of the Iron Age, but also some of later periods. The Iron Age pottery from both lower and upper fills was found to be identical. In the central unit (Locus 4) the excavation reached bedrock, which was covered by a layer of compact brown earth. Bedrock was also reached in the units on the southeastern side (Loci 5, 6, and 7). In the southern unit (Locus 7) the bedrock was overlaid with a layer of stones larger than the fill of the other units. Because of the topography sloping westward, the foundations of units/Loci 2 and 3 are wider and deeper than the other foundation walls of the fortress.

In the southeastern units (Loci 1, 2, and 3), a layer of dark-colored earth underlying the stone fill was found. A fill of small stones was unearthed along the outer walls of the structure, and on the northwestern side this fill formed a moderate slope descending northwestward.

During the excavations no openings, thresholds, or doorjambs were discovered, and no clear floors were identified, although the excavators suspected the existence of some floor remains in different points. We may assume that the structure is preserved to a lower level than its floors. Our assumption is that the excavated remains are a podium-like structure, or a foundation of a building, the superstructure of which is entirely missing. Based on the thickness of the walls, one may assume that the building was at least two stories high. It seems that the building was surrounded on all four sides by stone ramps, which were removed in the course of the excavation in order to expose the walls of the buildings (see, e.g., fig. 2). The concentrations of stones outside the structure were identified in the excavation’s logbook as “stone debris,” but the origin of this debris is unclear. Therefore, we assume that these stone ramps were an integral part of the original construction of the fortress.

The unearthed remains of the foundation were most probably identical in plan to the superstructure

of the fortress. We assume there was a single entrance which was located, according to the topography, on the northwestern side. This entrance led to the central courtyard of the fortress, which was the unit above Locus 4.¹ This unit allowed light and access into the other chambers. The foundations of the fortress are built, as mentioned earlier, of blocks of tabular flint, belonging to the Mishash Formation, which is Campanian in age. This formation is exposed in the area; its natural state is in the form of large blocks, suitable for building material. However, we know of no Iron Age buildings using this type of rock, although there are many known agricultural terraces built of this stone dating to different periods. We may assume that only the preserved foundations of the fortress were built of flint blocks, while the superstructure was made either of limestone (and later removed for secondary use), or of mudbricks that got washed away. In any case, we have no remains whatsoever of the superstructure. Of course, it is well-known that construction materials such as stone and wood were susceptible to scavenging in antiquity (for definition and discussion, see Schiffer 1987: 106–14); this may explain the lack of such remains.

The thickness of the external walls, measuring 1.35 m on average, equals three cubits, according to the standard of the short Egyptian cubit of 0.45 m; the inner walls are accordingly two cubits thick. It seems that the entire building was planned and built to the standard of the short cubit. Thus the inner measurements (subtracting the thickness of the outer walls) were designed to be 34×23 cubits, i.e., 15.3×10.35 m, and the outer measurements were 41×29 cubits, or 18.45×13.05 m. The central unit measures 23×10 cubits, and the rest of the units fit well the standard of the short Egyptian cubit. The use of this standard is well known in many Iron Age II–III buildings and in burial caves throughout the Land of Israel (see Barkay 1986).

The appearance of a sloping stone rampart surrounding the structure is comparable to a similar arrangement discovered in Fortress III at nearby Gibeah (Tell el-Fûl) (Graham 1981: 12–13), or in the fortress of Kadesh Barnea in eastern Sinai (Ussishkin 1995: 118–25, with earlier literature). The gen-

¹The excavator assumed the existence of an entrance with a threshold in the southeastern wall of Locus 6. It seems that some stones are missing there, and that there was no entrance at that point. In another place in the excavation’s logbook, O. Negbi assumed an entrance on the northwestern side, leading into Locus 2.

eral concept of the fortress's plan differs from many Judaeen fortresses constructed according to a plan based upon the Assyrian Open Court House, with a series of rooms surrounding a large central courtyard. This basic plan can be seen at Ḥ. Shilḥah (Mazar, Amit, and Ilan 1996: 194–99, figs. 2a, 2b), at Kh. Abu Twein (Mazar 1982: 89–99, fig. 3), and at Vered Jericho (Eitan 1983). Our structure is made of a central court with smaller rooms on two of its sides. This basic plan can be discerned in the Iron Age II structure excavated at ʿEn et-Turaba on the western shore of the Dead Sea (Bar-Adon 1989: 42–43). There we also find a central unit, on two sides of which there are rows of rooms of different sizes, and the entire structure is surrounded with a ramp made of stone fill. The fortress at ʿEn et-Turaba showed evidence for a superstructure built of mud-bricks (Bar-Adon 1989: 43).²

THE FINDS

Pottery

The pottery kept amounted to about 60 sherds originating from four loci (1, 3A, 5, and 6). Most of them (about 40) are rim fragments of hole-mouth jars, whereas the remainder comprises rim fragments of bowls (3), cooking pots (2), and a juglet. Storage jar handles, bases, and a body fragment were also recorded. All rims and identifiable fragments retrieved were drawn (figs. 15–17). Color notations are given individually in tables 1–3.³

Bowls. Our three examples of bowls share quite similar ware. They are high-temperature fired and made of well-levigated sandy clay, with fairly dense minute to medium-sized components of temper. They may be divided into two types. The first type, designated also as kraters (fig. 17:1–2), is character-

ized by flaring, thickened, and concave rims. The type is a rather rare variant in the Iron Age, as no exact parallels were traced. The second (fig. 17:3) has a flanged upright rim and rounded walls. It is a common Judaeen type of the Iron Age II. Comparative material has been recorded in Jerusalem, in the Ophel excavations in a mixed context (Mazar and Mazar 1989: 20, pl. 9:14), and in Lachish Levels V and IV (Zimhoni 1997: 107, fig. 3.31, with some exceptions).

Cooking Pots. Two fragments of cooking pots were retrieved. The first (fig. 15:5) is made of high-temperature fired cooking ware fabric with fairly dense, large to small-sized components of temper. It is characterized by a plain (slightly everted) rim and an elongated (sometimes multiridged) neck with a handle extending from the rim. It is a typical Judaeen type and seems to be an eighth-century B.C.E. predecessor (cf. Aharoni and Aharoni 1976: 76, fig. 2:4) of a seventh- and early sixth-century B.C.E. single-ridged elongated neck type (cf. Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001: 84–85, Type CP8, e.g., pls. 15: 22, 25: 15, 57: 21, with a detailed bibliography). The second fragment (fig. 17:4) is made of a high-temperature fired “metallic” cooking ware fabric with occasional small to minute-sized components of temper. It is characterized by an everted (sometimes ridged) rim and a handle extending from the rim. This is one of the most typical cooking pots in seventh- and early sixth-century B.C.E. contexts in Judah; it also appears in similarly dated contexts in other regions of the country (cf. Bar-Adon 1989: 48, fig. F6:1–2; Gitin 1990: 219–21, Type 106, pl. 27:11–14; Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001: 87, Type CP11, e.g., pls. 34: 9, 44: 1, 55: 3, all except Bar-Adon's with a detailed bibliography).

Juglet. Our rim and neck fragment of a juglet (fig. 17:5) is made of high-temperature fired, well-levigated sandy clay, with fairly dense minute to medium-sized components of temper. It is characterized by a plain rim and a splayed neck with a handle extending from the rim. It is a common Judaeen type of the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. with a wide distribution in the southern part of the country, although also found elsewhere (cf. Mazar, Dothan, and Dunayevsky 1966: fig. 30:1–6; Bar-Adon 1989: 48, fig. F6:8; Gitin 1989: fig. 2.12:1).

Hole-mouth Jars. Fragments of hole-mouth jars represent the bulk of the ceramic material. Their

²The general scheme of the plan resembles in its outline the plan of the foundations of Palace A of Level V at Lachish (see Ussishkin 1978: 29). We find there a central rectangular courtyard, on two sides of which there are rows of rooms. In addition there is a general similarity to the plan of the fortress of H. Rosh Zayit, Stratum IIB, in western Galilee, dated by the excavators to the tenth century B.C.E. (see Gal and Alexandre 2000: plan 4).

³According to the excavation's logbook, it seems that during the process of sorting only identifiable fragments were kept, whereas other ceramic material was discarded. In addition, the excavation logbook records ribbed pottery (of Byzantine or Early Islamic date) along with a few sherds from the Iron Age and Persian period, an Ottoman clay smoking pipe, and fragments of glass vessels found outside the building.

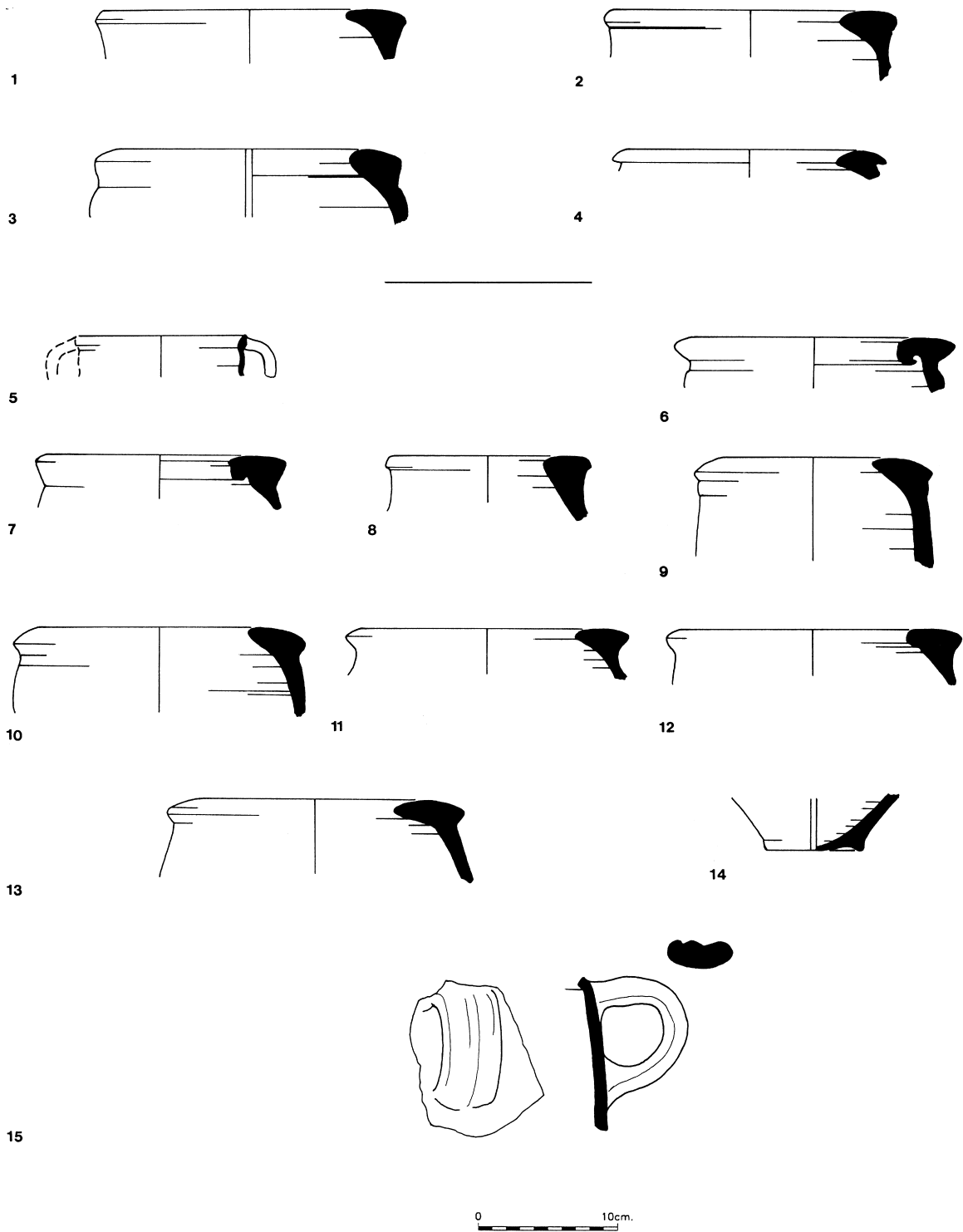


Fig. 15. Pottery from Loci 1 and 3A. See table 1 for descriptions.

TABLE 1. Pottery from Loci 1 and 3A,
Illustrated in Figure 15

No.	Vessel	Type	Locus	Color	
				Surface	Core
1.	Hole-mouth jar	1	1	Red-orange	light brown
2.	Hole-mouth jar	1	1	Red-orange	light brown
3.	Hole-mouth jar	1	1	Red-orange	light brown
4.	Hole-mouth jar	2	1	Red-orange	light brown
5.	Cooking pot	–	3A	Red-orange	light brown
6.	Hole-mouth jar	1	3A	Red-orange	light brown
7.	Hole-mouth jar	1	3A	Light brown	brown
8.	Hole-mouth jar	1	3A	Red-orange	light brown
9.	Hole-mouth jar	1	3A	Red-orange	light brown
10.	Hole-mouth jar	1	3A	Red-orange	light brown
11.	Hole-mouth jar	1	3A	Light brown	brown
12.	Hole-mouth jar	1	3A	Red-orange	light brown
13.	Hole-mouth jar	2	3A	Red-orange	light brown
14.	Base	–	3A	Red-orange	light brown
15.	Handle	–	3A	Red-orange	brown-gray

ware is essentially similar, moderate- to high-temperature fired, well-levigated sandy clay, with fairly dense minute to large-sized components of temper, mainly of calcareous origin. The term “hole-mouth jar” as it is being used here refers to small, cylindrical, neckless, handleless vessels (about 35 cm in height), common during the Iron Age II–III. Their manufacture, distribution, function, and chronology have been the subject of numerous studies (see below). It is generally agreed that these vessels are more common in the south than in the north (Lapp and Lapp 1968: 57, n. 32), having an internal typology that reflects chronological differences. Such hole-mouth jars begin to appear toward the end of the tenth century B.C.E.,⁴ although their common appearance is attested in the southern part of the country mainly in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. Since the ceramic material retrieved in our fortress is clearly of a Jerusalemite-Judahite milieu,⁵

⁴E.g., Gezer, Stratum VIIA (Gitin 1990: 132–33, Type 11A, pl. 9:5–7); Tel Michal, Stratum XIII (Singer-Avitz 1989: 80, fig. 7.3:16), and Arad, Stratum 11 (M. Aharoni 1981: 202, fig. 10:8). It should be noted that a tenth-century B.C.E. horizon is in accordance with the conventional chronology. However, using a low chronology perspective (after Finkelstein 1999, with earlier literature on the subject), their first appearance may start slightly later.

⁵A. Gorzalczany (Israel Antiquities Authority) has carried out thin-section analysis on three samples of varying colored sherds

comparisons are drawn mainly from selected Late Iron Age sites in Jerusalem and its surroundings.

Our examples may be divided into two types. The first (Type 1) is generally characterized by a bulbous rim, triangular in section and rounded to a sharpened (sometimes folded and thus creating a ridge below the rim) lip, with thick sidewalls that incline outward from the rim. The second type (Type 2) differs in its flat, oblong-in-section rim and thinner sidewalls. It is worth noting that the first, bulbous rim type was mostly restricted to Loci 1 and 3A, whereas the second, flat rim type was restricted to Locus 5. However, both types were found mixed together in Locus 6.

Parallels of both types were recorded in stratified contexts, as well as in single-period sites or in less clear contexts. Parallels to our Type 1 (see description tables) were recorded at the Ophel excavations in Jerusalem, where they originated from Locus 6015, dated to the eighth and mid-seventh centuries B.C.E. (Mazar and Mazar 1989: 50–53, pl. 27:13); Jerusalem, Armenian Garden, where they originated from a quarry fill, dated to the Iron Age III (Tushingham 1985: 18, fig. 3:9); Jerusalem, Pisgat Ze³ev, dated to the eighth century B.C.E. (Seligman 1994: 67–71, fig. 6:3); Jerusalem, Jason’s Tomb, where they were found in the porch debris and dated to the Iron Age II (Rahmani 1967: 65, fig. 2:1–2); Tell Beit Mirsim, where they originated from Stratum A (Albright 1932: 79, pl. 52:3–6; 1943: 147) and therefore should be dated to the eighth century B.C.E. (cf. Zimhoni 1997: 200–203); Tell en-Naşbeh, where they were roughly dated to ca. 700–500 B.C.E. (Wampler 1947: 11–13, e.g., pls. 25: 414–20, 26: 421); Bethel, where they were found in a nonstratified context dated to the sixth century B.C.E. (Sinclair 1968: 73–74, fig. 66:3, 9); Beth-Zur, where they originated in Stratum III, i.e., the seventh and early sixth centuries B.C.E. (Lapp and Lapp 1968: 57–59, fig. 15:1–2); Tell el-Fûl, where they were apparently related to Period pre-III A, dated to ca. 700 B.C.E. (Lapp 1981: 88–89, pl. 49:1–2, 5–6); Giloh, from the eighth to the early

from Locus 6. This study was done in the laboratory of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University. The provenance of their clay was found to be identical and defined as Moza Clay–Dolomitic Sand Group (cf. Goren 1996: 51), which is related directly to Judaean Hills sites and more specifically to the Jerusalem area. We are grateful to A. Gorzalczany for supplying his observations.

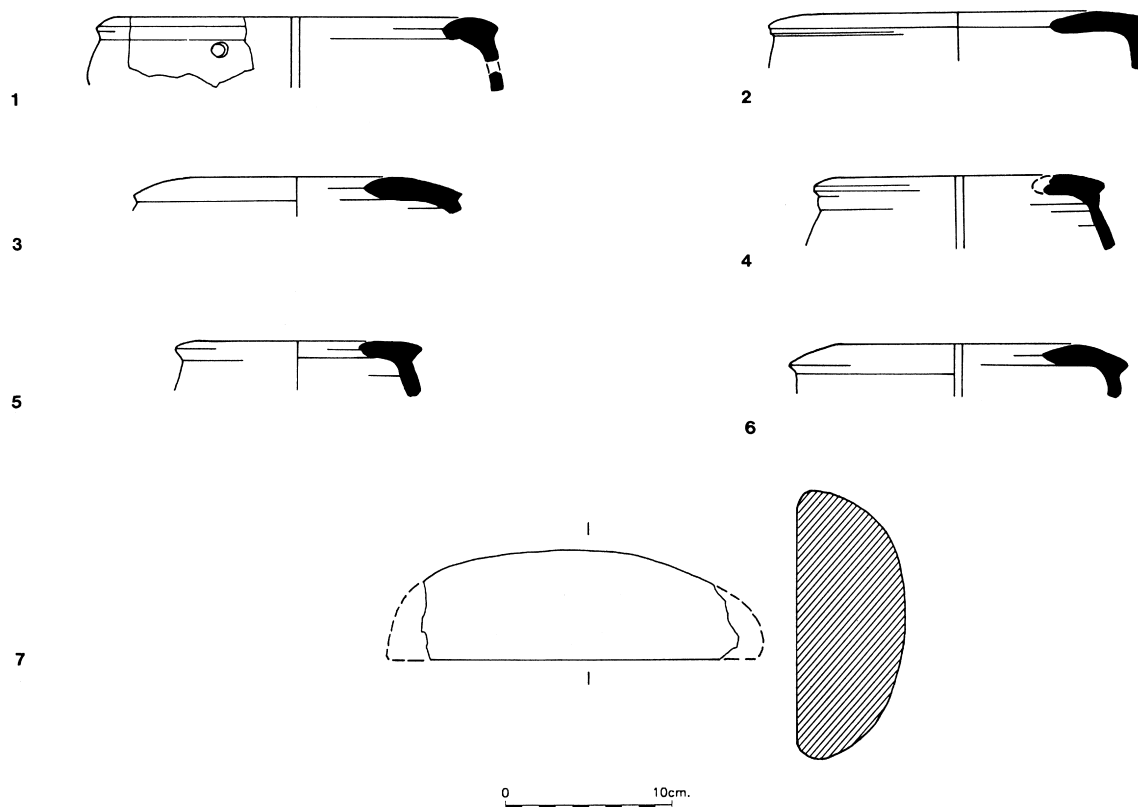


Fig. 16. Pottery from Locus 5. See table 2 for descriptions.

TABLE 2. Pottery from Locus 5,
Illustrated in Figure 16

No.	Vessel	Type	Color	
			Surface	Core
1.	Hole-mouth jar ^a	2	Light brown	red-brown
2.	Hole-mouth jar	2	Red-orange	brown-gray
3.	Hole-mouth jar	2	Red-orange	brown-gray
4.	Hole-mouth jar	2	Red-orange	brown-gray
5.	Hole-mouth jar	2	Light brown	red-brown
6.	Hole-mouth jar	2	Light brown	red-brown
7.	Grinding stone ^b	–		

a. mending hole; b. basalt

sixth century B.C.E. (Mazar 1990: 101, fig. 11:16); and Ḥ. Shilhah, where they were dated to the late seventh and early sixth centuries B.C.E. (Mazar, Amit, and Ilan 1996: 207, fig. 7b:15).

Examples similar to our Type 2 (see description tables) were recorded at Ramat Raḥel, Stratum VA,

dated to the late seventh and early sixth centuries B.C.E. (Aharoni 1962: 40–41, fig. 26:5, 29: 6–8; 1964: fig. 19:3); Jerusalem, Armenian Garden, where they originated from a quarry fill dated to Iron Age III (Tushingham 1985: 18, fig. 3:10, 12); Jerusalem, Pisgat Ze³ev, spanning the mid-eighth to early sixth century B.C.E. (Seligman 1994: 71, fig. 9:6); Jerusalem, Muristan, dated to Iron Age II (Vriezen 1994: 108, fig. IV.4:33–37); Jerusalem, er-Ras, dated to the Late Iron Age (Edelstein 2000: 47–54, fig. 13:4–5); Lachish, where they originated from Level III, dated to the late eighth century B.C.E. (Tufnell 1953: 318, Class S.11, pl. 97: Types 545, 548, 554); Tel Batash, where they originated from Strata III and II of the late eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E., respectively (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001: 105–107, Type SJ10a, pls. 47: 10, 57: 22, 61:2, 67:9); Gezer, where they originated from Stratum VIB, dated to the mid-ninth century B.C.E. (Gitin 1990: 132–33, Type 11B, pl. 12:11); Beth-Zur, where they originated in Stratum III, i.e., the seventh and early sixth centuries B.C.E. (Lapp and Lapp 1968: 57–59, fig. 15:3;

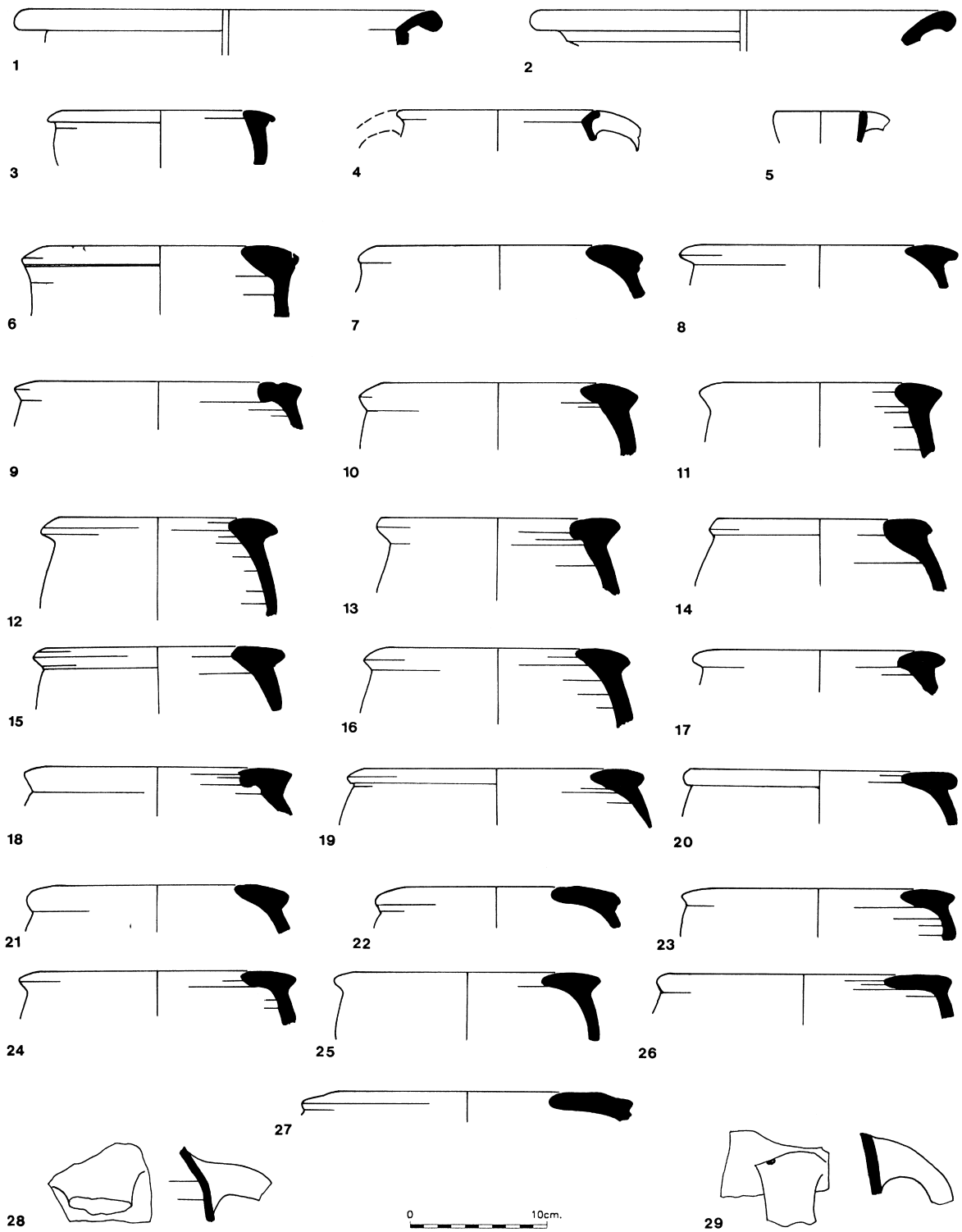


Fig. 17. Pottery from Locus 6. See table 3 for descriptions.

TABLE 3. Pottery from Locus 6,
Illustrated in Figure 17

No.	Vessel	Type	Color	
			Surface	Core
1.	Bowl	–	Orange	red-orange
2.	Bowl	–	Orange	red-orange
3.	Bowl	–	Red-orange	light brown
4.	Cooking pot	–	Red-orange	red-orange
5.	Juglet	–	Red-orange	light brown
6.	Hole-mouth jar	1	Red-orange	light brown
7.	Hole-mouth jar	1	Red-orange	light brown
8.	Hole-mouth jar	1	Red-orange	light brown
9.	Hole-mouth jar	1	Red-orange	light brown
10.	Hole-mouth jar	1	Red-orange	light brown
11.	Hole-mouth jar	1	Red-orange	red-orange
12.	Hole-mouth jar	1	Red-orange	light brown
13.	Hole-mouth jar	1	Red-orange	red-orange
14.	Hole-mouth jar	1	Red-orange	light brown
15.	Hole-mouth jar	1	Red-orange	light brown
16.	Hole-mouth jar	1	Red-orange	light brown
17.	Hole-mouth jar	1	Red-orange	light brown
18.	Hole-mouth jar	1	Red-orange	light brown
19.	Hole-mouth jar	1	Light brown	brown
20.	Hole-mouth jar	1	Red-orange	light brown
21.	Hole-mouth jar	1	Red-orange	light brown
22.	Hole-mouth jar	2	Light brown	brown
23.	Hole-mouth jar	2	Red-orange	light brown
24.	Hole-mouth jar	2	Red-orange	light brown
25.	Hole-mouth jar	2	Red-orange	light brown
26.	Hole-mouth jar	2	Red-orange	light brown
27.	Hole-mouth jar	2	Red-orange	light brown
28.	Handle	–	Red-orange	brown-gray
29.	Handle	–	Red-orange	brown-gray

see also Sellers 1933: 39, pl. 9:1–4); Tell en-Naşbeh, where they were roughly dated to ca. 700–500 B.C.E. (Wampler 1947: 11–13, e.g., pl. 26:428–29, 432) and also from Cistern 370, dated to the eighth through early sixth century B.C.E. (Wampler 1941: fig. 3:X235); Tell el-Fûl, where they were apparently related to Period pre-III A, dated to ca. 700 B.C.E. (Sinclair 1960: 31–32, pl. 23:13–14; Lapp 1981: 88–89, pl. 49:3, 7); ^cEn Gedi, where they originated from Stratum V, dated to the seventh century B.C.E. (Mazar, Dothan, and Dunayevsky 1966: 32, fig. 21:1–2, pl. 18:4, 6); and ^cEn et-Turaba (Bar-Adon 1989: 48, fig. F6:16).

Material published before the 1950s had led K. Kenyon to conclude that “holemouth jars come into use about 800 B.C., and that the eighth century type has a rounded shoulder, while the seventh century type is angular” (Kenyon 1957: 116). This chronological observation seems to be widely accepted, although not always connected with Kenyon’s suggestion (cf., e.g., Aharoni and Aharoni 1976: 83; Holladay 1976: 288–89). It was also reconfirmed recently during excavations at Tel Ḥamid in the Ayalon Valley, where the excavators concluded that the bulbous rim type (our Type 1) was replaced by the flat rim type (our Type 2) toward the end of the eighth century B.C.E. (Wolff and Shavit, in press).⁶ In our case, however, both types were found mixed together, at least in Locus 6, which is (according to our interpretation) a homogeneous construction fill for the fortress. It may be logical, therefore, to assume that both types overlapped and coexisted with each other for some time in the Iron Age. In sum, it seems that at the present state of research our assemblage points mainly toward the eighth- and seventh-century B.C.E. horizon, and there is no possibility of

⁶Here we should note that most dates for pottery assemblages from Judah published until the 1970s are referring to the pottery of Lachish Level III as dated to the seventh century B.C.E. rather than eighth century B.C.E., as proven by the renewed excavations at that site. On the other hand, Gitin’s observation at Gezer that hole-mouth jars of our Type 1 came into use as early as the late tenth century B.C.E. and of our Type 2 in the mid-ninth century B.C.E. (1990: 132–33) are attested at other sites such as Ḥ. Rosh Zayit (cf. Gal and Alexandre 2000: 173–74) and Samaria (Tappy 2001: 102–7, 217–20, and esp. 106).

An additional important observation is that our hole-mouth assemblage lacks the ridged-rim type. According to Aharoni and Aharoni (1976: 83), the ridged-rim type was replaced by the plain rim during the seventh century B.C.E. On the other hand, A. Mazar has pointed out (after a previous observation of Tufnell [1953: 317–18]) that this may be correct in some parts of Judah, though it is not the case in the Shephelah and the Coastal Plain, where the ridged-rim type is found in late seventh-century B.C.E. contexts (cf. Mazar 1985: 110, n. 16; and also Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001: 107). Recently published excavations, such as at Tel Miqne-Ekron (Stratum IB) (Gitin 1989: fig. 2.12:3), Tel Batash (Strata III and II) (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001: 105–7, Type SJ10a, with detailed bibliography), Lachish (Zimhoni 1997: fig. 5.32:5), and Meẓad Ḥashavyahu (Fantalkin 2001: 67, with detailed bibliography) have proved the correctness of Mazar’s observation. On the other hand, the ridged-rim type is mostly found in Late Iron Age sites in the Coastal Plain and the Shephelah, while its presence in Jerusalem and environs was documented (to the best of our knowledge) only at Ramat Raḥel (cf. Aharoni 1962: figs. 12:4, 29:4–5; 1964: fig. 21:7).



Fig. 18. YHD coin.

delimiting this chronological horizon more accurately (see below).

Handles and Bases. For the sake of completeness we mention three fragments of handles (figs. 15:15, 17:28–29), apparently from storage jars typical of the Iron Age, and a ring-base fragment (fig. 15:14), which most probably belonged to a jug of an Iron Age II date (cf. Amiran 1969: 262).⁷

Grinding Stone

Figure 16:6 depicts a bifacial, loaf/planoconvex type basalt handstone (following Wright 1992). Since it is not possible to distinguish between morphological changes in grinding stones during most periods, neither parallels nor analysis will clarify the chronological issue.

YHD Coin

A YHD coin of the following description was found on top of the southeastern wall of Locus 4 (fig. 4):

Israel Antiquities Authority, no. 6385 (see fig. 18)
 Ca. 380–333 B.C.E., Jerusalem Mint (Meshorer 2001: 7–8, pl. 1: 4)
 AR, ⚡ (10), 9 mm, 0.567 gr., Obol.
Obverse: Head(?), worn.

⁷Another possibility is to identify it as a roughly flattened type base of a hole-mouth jar (cf. Oakeshott 1983: 59, fig. 2:2, dated to the late eighth to the sixth century B.C.E.).

Reverse: Owl standing to right, facing olive spray with berry on top; ancient Hebrew legend YHD on bottom.

This coin is the only find of the Persian period retrieved within the structure, as no pottery or any other finds were recorded. Early YHD coin-types such as this imitate Athenian prototypes and are therefore customarily dated to the fourth century B.C.E. Coins of this particular type are rarely found in controlled archaeological excavations and so far have only been recorded in the Jerusalem area, at Mount Zion (Broshi 1976: 83), Ketef Hinnom (excavated by G. Barkay; see also Elayi and Lemaire 1991: 128), Pisgat Ze^ḥev (Nadelman 1993: 54–55), and Har Adar (Gitler 1997: 81). Two additional coins of our type were found in 1993 in excavations in the northern Judaeian Desert (Cave VII/1; Ariel, in press, with a detailed discussion). Our understanding of this find's location and meaning is described below.

THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE SITE

Before discussing the question of the ancient name of the site of the fortress discovered at Giv^ḥat Shapira, we should first address the problem of whether a site mainly consisting of a single structure can be identified in the written sources. The biblical account is the only source in which we may find place names that could be identified with our site. It seems that the question of identification with a biblical toponym may be warranted, as the cities of the

desert district of the Kingdom of Judah mentioned in Josh 15:61–62 could be identified only with sites mainly consisting of a single structure, sometimes a fortress with some houses in the close vicinity. Those sites are defined by the biblical sources as “towns” (‘arim – עָרִים) (Portugali 1984; Ofer 1998, with earlier literature).

As mentioned above, remains of an Iron Age agricultural farm were excavated close to our site on the eastern side (Feig 2000: 405, Site no. 57), and several other agricultural units are known in the site’s immediate vicinity (Feig 2000: 401–8; Site nos. 59, 60, 79). Some Iron Age pottery was also found in the British Military cemetery of Mount Scopus, located at the foot of the hill on which our fortress stands, to the south. These remains may form parts of a dispersed settlement that surrounded our fortress, which formed the core of the settlement. This supposed settlement could have consisted of a number of agricultural units spread around the fortress to a distance of up to 1 km. The site of Ḥ. Rosh Zayit in western Galilee, identified by the excavators with the biblical city of Cabul, also consisted of a hilltop fortress with several houses and farm units located on the slopes of the hill (Gal and Alexandre 2000: *passim* and esp. 196).

The site of our fortress is characterized by its superb geographical location, upon a hill that controls the road approaching Jerusalem from the north and commands a wide view that includes the Temple Mount and Jerusalem’s Western Hill. This well-chosen geographical location fits well with the identification as the biblical town of Nob. This town, according to biblical references, was south of Gibeah (Tell el-Fûl), neighbor to Anathoth (עַנָּתוֹת) and עַנְיָה (el-עַזְרִיָּה), and was located close enough to Jerusalem to be able to observe the capital city (see Kallai 1968: 684). Other sites suggested to be identified with Nob, such as עִסְאִיָּה, שׁוּעַפָּת, or Ras et-Tmim, are to be rejected, because of the absence of proper archaeological finds and because biblical Jerusalem cannot be observed from these sites (see Dinur 1987: 65).⁸ The requirement of Jerusalem’s visibility from Nob is based on Isa 10:32, where Nob is listed as the southernmost in a series of towns from north to south along the road taken by the Assyrian army in the late eighth century B.C.E. (Sar-

gon II/Sennacherib?). The destination of the Assyrian army was Jerusalem, and one may understand from the verse that the capital was visible from Nob, as it was from there that the Assyrian king would “wave his hand” toward the city.

The fortress discussed in this article was built most probably no earlier than the eighth century B.C.E., which is also the date suggested for the remains of the farmhouses in its vicinity. From that time we know of some seals and seal impressions whose owners are named נְבִי – *nby*, which is probably gentilic, the Nobite (see Avigad and Sass 1997: 513; and seal nos. 227, 379, 530, 693; cf. Avishur and Heltzer 1996: 125–26); thus the chronological and the epigraphic evidence about Nob could fit the reference in Isa 10:32. Nob is mentioned in the OT also in the Persian period, sometimes spelled נְבוּ – *nbw* (Ezra 2:29, 10:43; Neh 7:33, 11:32). The discovery of the YHD coin of the Persian period in our fortress fits well with the known existence of Nob in that period, when the superstructure walls of our fortress were dismantled. On the other hand, we do not yet have any evidence of earlier stages of the Iron Age, which would fit the mentioning of Nob in King Saul’s and King David’s time (1 Sam 21:2, 22:9, 11, 19; 2 Sam 21:16). If the identification of our site and its immediate environs with biblical Nob is not accepted, we are left with the possibility of identifying it with one of the other toponyms mentioned in Isa 10:28–32—Laish, Madmenah, or Gebim. In any case, our identification with biblical Nob is tentative.

CONCLUSIONS

The interpretation of the excavated structure as a fortress is based on several criteria. It is freestanding, with external walls of 1.35 m thick on average, and composed of an open courtyard with a row of rooms of different sizes on two of its sides. It is an isolated structure located on the highest spot in the surrounding area, overlooking a wide horizon on all sides. Its foundations are built from the hardest rock formation found in the area. The absence of table vessels (e.g., slipped and burnished bowls, decanters, juglets), which are most common in the Late Iron Age, as well as imported vessels, side by side with the dominant presence of storage vessels, point to a nondomestic assemblage, most likely a military and/or public storage facility. All these criteria combined do not leave much choice for any other interpretation of the structure. Moreover, it is well

⁸Dinur does not mention the fortress of Givעַת Shapira in his article, and thus it is not considered by him as a possible candidate for identification of toponyms mentioned in Isa 10:28–32.

integrated into the “defensive belt” of military structures that surrounded Jerusalem, the capital of the kingdom in the Late Iron Age (see below). It seems that the building could have housed a small unit of soldiers and their commander. Such structures were built by the royal administration and formed part of the system of fortresses spread all over the Kingdom of Judah. Chains of fortresses built in the Kingdom of Judah are mentioned in the biblical tradition in the days of Rehoboam (tenth century B.C.E.) (2 Chr 11:5–12), in the days of Jehoshaphat (ninth century B.C.E.) (2 Chr 17:12), and in the days of Jotham (early eighth century B.C.E.) (2 Chr 27:4). The pottery of our site, however, points to a later date than that offered by these sources. The historicity of the data in the above-mentioned sources is beyond the scope of this article.

The fortress discussed here is one in a series of fortresses discovered in the hills around Jerusalem. A small Iron Age II fort that guarded the road leading to Jerusalem from the south was discovered at Giloh, to the south-southwest of Jerusalem (Mazar 1990: 96–101). Both the fort at Giloh and our fortress have the same altitude, about 832 m above sea level.

Another fortress in the vicinity of the capital was found near Abu-dis, to the southeast of Jerusalem. It measures about 28 × 20 m, with a tower built in its southwestern corner. It was discovered during a survey (Map of Talpiyoth) directed by Y. Hirschfeld (at map ref. 1791.1291) and had Late Iron Age pottery scattered around it (Hirschfeld 1984: 58).

Yet another fortress was discovered by Z. Meshel at Ḥ. ʿEres to the northwest of Jerusalem, guarding the road to the city, which passed through the Beth Horon Ascent (see Mazar 1982: 107, 109, n. 11).

Another fortress to the northeast of Jerusalem was discovered and excavated at Pisgat Zeʿev by Y. Nadelman. It is a large fortress measuring about 70 × 60 m, surrounded by casemates, dated to the Persian period, with some architectural remains of the Late Iron Age found below the Persian-period units. The Persian-period finds included two YHD coins of the fourth century B.C.E. (Nadelman 1993).

The site of Ketef Hinnom is located in a key position on a road junction connecting the main road to Jerusalem from Hebron and Bethlehem, with a small local road leading to the city itself through the Hinnom Valley. Under the remains of a large church of the Byzantine period excavated at Kelef Hinnom (near the present-day St. Andrews Scottish Church)

there was a concentration of Iron Age finds. All the architectural remains were removed by an Early Roman (Herodian) period stone quarry, but pottery, figurines, LMLK stamps, and other Iron Age finds testify to an intensive settlement of the site in that period. Based on the strategic position of the site, located just opposite the city on the watershed line, it was suggested that the Iron Age remains could have originated from a possible fortress that once stood there and was removed by the quarries. Near the Byzantine-period church there still stands a Turkish (Ottoman) fort named Kaşr Ghazal (the Gazelle’s Fort), which serves today as the British Consulate of west Jerusalem. It could have been the functional heir of an earlier fortress located in the same area. Among the finds discovered under the remains of the church excavators also found a YHD coin of the type discovered at our fortress; thus the possible fortress at Ketef Hinnom could have continued into the Persian period. In any case, there was clear Iron Age activity that continued into post-Exilic times (cf. Barkay 2000: 85–88).

A. Mazar has suggested the existence of an entire system of fortresses built in the Kingdom of Judah and situated such that they were in visual contact with one another (Mazar 1982: 106–8, fig. 1). The site of Ramat Raḥel, with its royal palace, no doubt played an important role in the system of Late Iron Age sites in the vicinity of Jerusalem.⁹ It is located exactly midway between the City of David and Bethlehem. Our fortress at Givʿat Shapira, like the other Iron Age fortresses, was built on top of a prominent ridge, at a well-chosen location that could have had visual communication (possibly by the use of fire signals) with the other fortresses, which were visible from it—the fortress of Gibeah (Tell el-Fûl), Periods IV–III; the fort of Giloh; the fortress of Ḥ. ʿEres; and the area of Ketef Hinnom; as well as the City of David. Another fortress could have been at the site of Nebi Samwil, where the Iron Age remains were probably removed by the Crusaders’ activity, as has been demonstrated by recent excavations there (Magen and Dadon 1999: 62–65). Thus the city of Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, was surrounded by a series of fortresses, which served as a defensive belt around the capital and formed part of the kingdom’s defensive system. Such a system

⁹However, Naʿaman (2001) has most recently suggested that the citadel of Stratum VA at Ramat Raḥel was merely an Assyrian administrative center until the Assyrian withdrawal from the region.

would have been intended to sound an alert and prepare defensive procedures, rather than to fight an attacking army. One may compare this phenomenon to a series of towers and forts that surrounded Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, at the same time. These military structures, discovered in surveys, apparently guarded the approaches to Samaria, like the ones that surrounded Jerusalem (Zertal 1981: 54).

The study of the pottery allows us to suggest a more accurate date for this structure within the Late Iron Age sequence. The provenance of the ceramic material within the foundation fills serving as foundation for the building may attest to it having been a residue of an earlier period of occupation, and thus may be considered as forming a *terminus ante quem* for the foundation of the structure. In general, the pottery types retrieved tend to be dated to the eighth century B.C.E. On the other hand, there are some hints that permit dating our ceramic assemblage to a seventh-century B.C.E. horizon. Both types of hole-mouth jars (the bulbous rim type [our Type 1] and the flat rim type [our Type 2]) were found together in Locus 6, enabling us to date our contexts according to the latest datable sherds, reflected by the flat rim type. This observation is firmly supported by the presence of the everted-rim cooking pot, which is of an agreeable seventh-century B.C.E. date found in the same locus (fig. 17:4), since this type was not recorded in earlier strata in the Kingdom of Judah. The latest dated retrieved fragment (the everted-rim cooking pot) may be considered a *terminus a quo* suggesting a seventh-century B.C.E. date, or slightly later, for the foundation of the structure. It is worth noting that according to the ceramic evidence alone, and its provenance, it is not possible to set an accurate chronological frame for the duration of the

structure's occupation. Our identification of the site with Nob permits us to assume its existence as early as the days of King Saul and King David. However, the finds retrieved point to a date not earlier than the eighth century B.C.E. The suggested seventh-century B.C.E. date for the fortress's foundation is not in accordance with this structure serving as a core of the settlement (Nob) from which it expanded. It is possible, therefore, that our fortress is a later addition to an existing settlement. On the other hand, the presence of a single univocally seventh-century B.C.E. date fragment (the everted-rim cooking pot) may be intrusive, and as such does not form an integral part of the construction phase of the fortress. In this case, the date of the fortress foundation can be set in the second half of the eighth century B.C.E. In any case, we may connect its destruction to the time of the Babylonian assault, as it is located in the capital's northern outskirts, a location well fitted to the sources mentioning the advance of the Babylonian army to Jerusalem from the north.

The YHD coin can be explained in terms of sporadic rather than occupational activities. An abandoned or destroyed settlement is a potential quarry for building materials (Schiffer 1985: 28). It may be suggested that during the Persian period (or afterward) the coin was lost by a person who may have resided nearby and was engaged in scavenging or collecting activities from the ruined fortress (cf., e.g., Schiffer 1987: 106–20).

The previously unpublished Late Iron Age fortress presented in this article is an important addition to the data collected in the vicinity of Jerusalem and forms yet another building stone for the history of Jerusalem and its vicinity in Old Testament times.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our deepest thanks go to Ora Negbi for permission to publish the excavation. In the process of preparing this publication, several people assisted us whom we would like to thank: A. Rochman-Halperin, Yael Barshak, and Deborah Ben-Ami from the Israel Antiquities Authority, for supplying archival material, photographs, and pottery, respectively; and Ada Perry from the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University for the drawings of the finds. Site plans and sections were drawn by P. Zabetzki of the

Department of Antiquities and Museums. The photographs, plan, and sections appearing in this article are by courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority, except for figs. 1 and 3, which were produced by A. Tass and P. Shrago, respectively. Special thanks are given to I. Finkelstein, the Director of the Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University, for helping this research; and to S. R. Wolff (Israel Antiquities Authority) for his valuable comments on the manuscript.

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