

# In Pursuit of Visibility

Essays in Archaeology, Ethnography, and Text  
in Honor of Beth Alpert Nakhai



edited by

Jennie Ebeling and Laura Mazow





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Plaque figurine of a mother holding a child found in a Late Bronze Age context at Tel el-Wawiyat. Drawing by Lilah Rogel after Nakhai, Dessel, and Wisthoff 1993.

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# List of Authors

## **Theodore W. Burgh, University of North Carolina Wilmington**

Theodore W. Burgh earned the MA and PhD from the University of Arizona. He is a Professor and Chair of the Department of Philosophy and Religion at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. Theodore has worked in Jordan with the Madaba Plains Project and at San Miceli in Sicily. He specializes in archaeomusicology and is the author of *Listening to the Artifacts* (T&T Clark, 2006). Beth was a member of his dissertation committee and continues to be a colleague and friend.

## **Norma Dever (z"l)**

Norma Dever earned an MA in History from the University of Arizona and was Adjunct Faculty at Pima Community College in Tucson. She spent many years contributing to excavations in Israel, including as a core staff member at Gezer and a registrar at Ashkelon, and served the W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem in many capacities. She was an Editorial Assistant for *BASOR*, a Trustee of the Albright for many years, and raised money for Albright projects as the head of the Alumni and Friends Campaign. Together with Bill, Norma established the Sean William Dever Memorial Prize for pre-PhD students of archaeology and related subjects in honor of their son, who died in 2001. Norma passed away on June 7, 2018 and is dearly missed by a generation of U of A alumni who remember her friendship and hospitality. She had a particularly close relationship with Beth.

## **William G. Dever, University of Arizona**

William G. Dever is Professor Emeritus of Near Eastern Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Arizona. He has served as director of the Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology in Jerusalem, as director of the W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem, and as a visiting professor at universities around the world. He has spent thirty years conducting archaeological excavations in the Near East, resulting in a large body of award-winning work. He was Beth Alpert Nakhai's PhD advisor at the University of Arizona.

## **Jennie Ebeling, University of Evansville**

Jennie Ebeling earned the MA and PhD from the University of Arizona and is Associate Professor of Archaeology at the University of Evansville. She co-directed the Jezreel Expedition in Israel with Norma Franklin and specializes in the study of ancient food and drink technology. She is the co-editor of four other volumes and the author of *Women's Lives in Biblical Times* (T&T Clark, 2010). Beth has been a mentor, colleague, and friend to Jennie for more than 25 years.

## **Mark Elliott, University of Arizona**

Mark Elliott received his PhD from the University of Arizona. He has taught for the Arizona Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Arizona, is editor of *The Bible and Interpretation*

([bibleinterp.arizona.edu](http://bibleinterp.arizona.edu)), and is co-editor of *The Old Testament in Archaeology and History* (Baylor, 2017). He has known Beth since 1992 and she has published a number of articles for *The Bible and Interpretation*.

### **Alysia Fischer, Independent Scholar**

Alysia Fischer earned both an MA and PhD from the University of Arizona. She spent a decade excavating at the sites of Sepphoris and Khirbet Cana in Israel and specializes in both modern and ancient glass and glass technology. She is the author of *Hot Pursuit: Integrating Anthropology in Search of Ancient Glass-blowers* (Lexington Books, 2008). Beth served as both her Hebrew professor and a member of her dissertation committee.

### **James W. Hardin, Mississippi State University**

Jimmy Hardin earned the MA and PhD at the University of Arizona. He is an Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology and Middle Eastern Cultures at Mississippi State University and Director of its Cobb Institute of Archaeology. He was a longtime senior staff member of the Lahav Research Project and currently co-directs the Hesi Regional Survey and the Khirbet Summeily Archaeological Expedition in southern Israel with Jeffrey A. Blakely. Beth has been a teacher and colleague since 1994, and she taught Jimmy to look for the under investigated, but not invisible, in household archaeology.

### **Kara Larson, University of Michigan**

Kara Larson is a PhD student at the University of Michigan studying in the Museum of Anthropological Archaeology. She earned an MA in Applied Anthropology from Mississippi State University under the guidance of Jimmy Hardin and is a staff archaeologist and Research Associate with the Cobb Institute of Archaeology. She specializes in pastoralism, herd management, food provisioning, and urbanism through zooarchaeology, isotopic analyses, and paleoproteomics in the Southern Levant. Kara also has a passion for the status of women in Levantine archaeology and is constantly inspired by Dr. Beth Alpert Nakhai's scholarship and advocacy for women in the field.

### **Abigail S. Limmer, University of Arizona**

Abigail Limmer earned her MA and PhD from the University of Arizona and is now the Assistant Director for Educational Outreach at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies there. She has excavated at Tel Miqne-Ekron and Tell es-Safi in Israel and specializes in the study of ancient jewelry. She is honored to have had Beth as a member of her dissertation committee and to have worked with Beth in the Arizona Center for Judaic Studies for many years.

### **Gloria London, Scientific Advisor, Heritage Collection of Agios Demetrios (Marathasa), Cyprus**

Gloria London trained as an archaeologist (BAs and MA at Tel Aviv University; PhD at the University of Arizona). She joined surveys of Sinai and excavations in Israel and Jordan and met Beth in Israel at Hebrew Union College (HUC). Since 1981, field work among potters in the

Philippines, Cyprus, and Jordan has guided Gloria's research on pottery technology and the roles of women in society. She is the author of six books, including *Ancient Cookware from the Levant* (Equinox, 2016) and *Wine Jars and Jar Makers of Cyprus* (Astrom, 2020).

### **Lisa Marsio, Scottsdale Community College**

Lisa Marsio earned the BA, MA, and PhD from the University of Arizona and is a Professor of Archaeology and Biological Anthropology at Scottsdale Community College. She has participated in archaeological fieldwork as a square supervisor at Tel Rehov and Abel Beth Maacah in Israel. Beth has served as an inspiration to Lisa as a woman in the field of Near Eastern Archaeology.

### **Laura Mazow, East Carolina University**

Laura Mazow is Associate Professor in Anthropology at East Carolina University, with a research focus on ancient technologies in the Near East and eastern Mediterranean. Laura earned her MA and PhD in Near Eastern Studies at the University of Arizona. During that time, she was Beth's teaching assistant and Beth served on her dissertation committee, helping to steward the dissertation to completion! In the years since, Laura has greatly appreciated and directly benefited from Beth's forceful presence at ASOR, particularly in bringing gender issues to the forefront in the profession.

### **Steven M. Ortiz, Lipscomb University**

Steve Ortiz earned the MA and PhD from the University of Arizona and is Professor of Archaeology and Biblical Studies at Lipscomb University and the Director of the Lanier Center for Archaeology. He and Sam Wolff were co-directors of the Tel Gezer Excavation Project. He is currently co-director with Itzick Shai of the Tel Burna Excavations. Beth was a member of his PhD committee.

### **Nava Panitz-Cohen, Hebrew University of Jerusalem**

Nava Panitz-Cohen holds her PhD from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and has worked as field supervisor at Tel Batash, Tel Beth-Shean, and Tel Rehov, having participated in the publication of these sites with Prof. Amihai Mazar. She currently is co-director of the Tel Abel Beth Maacah excavations and works as senior researcher, adjunct lecturer, and editor of the Qedem Monograph Series in the Institute of Archaeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Her main research interests include Bronze and Iron Age ceramics and ceramic technology as well as household and gender archaeology. Beth is an esteemed colleague and has been a cherished friend ever since a memorable Yom Kippur shared while sequestered at the Albright Institute in Jerusalem, shopping for spices and sharing our worlds.

### **Alan W. Todd, Coastal Carolina University**

Alan W. Todd earned the MA and PhD from Duke University and is a Lecturer in Religious Studies at Coastal Carolina University. He has participated in several excavations in Galilee and was most recently a contributor to the final reports of Duke University's Sepphoris

Regional Project (Eisenbrauns/Penn State University, 2018). He specializes in the study of ancient dining customs with a focus on how Jews living throughout the Greco-Roman world employed feasts to maintain individual and communal identities. Alan first met Beth in 1996 when she taught him as an undergraduate at the University of Arizona and she has helped him at various stages of his career and life ever since.

### **Daphna Tsoran, Hebrew University of Jerusalem**

Daphna Tsoran holds her MA from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and serves as chief curator of the Collection Room of the Institute of Archaeology, where her work entails curating the rich study collections and archaeological exhibitions. Her research interests focus on iconography, specifically on female figurines in the Iron Age and Late Bronze Age; the latter is the topic of her PhD dissertation. Her studies delve into issues of gender and identity and, as such, Beth's work comprises a major contribution to her research.

### **Elizabeth Ann R. Willett, SIL International**

Elizabeth Willett earned the MA and PhD from the University of Arizona and is Senior Translation Consultant for SIL International, specializing in the translation of the Hebrew Bible into the indigenous languages of Latin America. She appreciated Beth as a professor and dissertation advisor and worked with her as a Graduate Teaching Associate.

### **Charles Wilson, University of Chicago**

Charles Wilson is a PhD candidate at the University of Chicago in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. His research interests include ancient daily life, economy, household archaeology, and city planning in the Bronze and Iron Age southern Levant.

### **Sam R. Wolff, W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research**

Samuel R. Wolff, PhD (University of Chicago 1986), served as Director of the Carthage Research Institute and excavated at the Commercial Harbor and Tophet (1975-1979) and at Ashkelon, Israel (1985-1989). He was an archaeologist for the Israel Antiquities Authority (1991-2017), directing significant excavations at En Hagit, Tel Megadim, and Tel Hamid and from 2006 to 2017 he co-directed the Tandy Institute's excavations at Tel Gezer. Academic interests include Phoenician and Punic archaeology, amphoras of the Persian period, and olive- and wine-producing technologies.



## Introduction

# An Appreciation of Beth Alpert Nakhai

Jennie Ebeling, Laura Mazow, Mandana Nakhai,  
Abbe Alpert, and J. Edward Wright

### Jennie Ebeling and Laura Mazow

This volume celebrates Beth Alpert Nakhai, a truly exceptional teacher, mentor, colleague, scholar, and friend. Most of the essays were authored or co-authored by alumni of the University of Arizona who were mentored by Beth and the rest were contributed by Beth's close colleagues and friends. Given that the final work on this volume was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic with the hope that it would be published and presented to Beth



Figure 1: Beth at a pottery studio in Hebron in 1976.  
Photo courtesy Farzad and Mandana Nakhai.

during her 70th year, we, the editors, are truly grateful to our colleagues for helping us make this a reality.

Beth was born in 1951 in New York to Esther Racoosin and Seymour Alpert and is the oldest of three sisters. She attended P.S. 108 and Mamaroneck High School and some of her childhood activities included playing cello and flute, creating and editing a high school satirical magazine, participating in high school theater, and attending Hebrew School. She earned a BA in Government from Connecticut College in 1972 and spent the next decade in Boston, where she held various jobs and became a proficient potter. She enrolled in the MTS program at Harvard Divinity School, worked for Charles Berlin in the Judaica Division of the Widener Library, and studied scientific illustration with S. Whitney Powell of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. After earning her degree from Harvard in 1979, she took multiple trips to Israel to gain archaeological field experience and develop her skills in artifact illustration and cartography.

In 1982 Beth moved to Tucson to study Syro-Palestinian Archaeology with William G. Dever; she was one of Bill's first graduate students at the University of Arizona. During this period, she served as an archaeological illustrator and cartographer for numerous excavations in Israel, including Tel Dan, Tel Gezer, and Tel Miqne-Ekron, and co-directed excavations at Tel el-Wawiyat with J.P. Dessel and Bonnie Wisthoff in 1986 and 1987. She married Farzad Nakhai in 1986 and their daughter Mandana was born two years later. Beth was awarded the MA in 1985 and the PhD in 1993; her dissertation, which was published as *Archaeology and the Religions of Canaan and Israel* by the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR; now the American Society of Overseas Research) in 2001, won ASOR's G. Ernest Wright Award for Excellence in Archaeological Publication in 2003. She has taught at the University of Arizona since 1994 and is an Associate Professor in the Arizona Center for Judaic Studies.

Beth's essay in the edited volume *Women in the Society of Biblical Literature* published in 2019 (see list of publications below) provides much more specific biographical information and context for her service activities and research trajectory over the past forty years. We would like to briefly highlight here the contributions that were particularly important to us when we were early career scholars and those that are proving to have a lasting impact on the field.

Beth has done a tremendous amount of service for the profession, the University of Arizona, and the Tucson community. She currently serves as Secretary of the W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem (AIAR) and has been a member of the AIAR Board since 2015; she also co-chaired AIAR's Sean W. Dever Memorial Prize Committee 2004-2021. Beth served on the Board of Trustees of ASOR (2002-2015) and has chaired the Initiative on the Status of Women Committee since 2011. Although she was awarded the ASOR Membership Service Award in 2013, in our opinion Beth has made some of her most valuable contributions to the Society in the years since.

Beth's service to ASOR shows her sincere commitment to raising awareness about women in the profession and providing opportunities for women to mentor women. It was in 2013 that she organized the first Initiative on the Status of Women Mentoring Lunch at the ASOR Annual Meeting, an event for which Beth solicits speakers and often covers the cost of lunch out of her own pocket. She has also organized and chaired numerous special sessions and workshops



Figure 2: Beth convenes the Initiative on the Status of Women Mentoring Lunch at the 2017 Annual Meeting of ASOR. Photo courtesy American Society of Overseas Research.

at the Annual Meeting on issues of particular relevance to women in the profession. She established the Initiative on the Status of Women Facebook group to raise and discuss issues facing women in archaeology and Near Eastern studies and created a digital map, the *Women of ASOR Map*, that documents the professional work of women around the globe and serves as a networking tool for early career scholars and others. As the record clearly shows, Beth has done more than anyone within ASOR to raise awareness about women's status in the discipline and create mentoring opportunities for those at every age and stage.

These efforts came on the heels of some two decades of work Beth devoted to researching the history of women's representation and involvement in ASOR. In 2000, she introduced The World of Women: Gender and Archaeology session at ASOR after her review of ASOR Annual Meeting programs through the 1990s revealed no presentations about women. She chaired this academic session through 2012 and co-chaired it in 2013 and 2014; it is now the standing session Gender in the Ancient Near East. Presentations from the 2000 session were published in an issue of *Near Eastern Archaeology* in 2003 and others were published in her edited volume *The World of Women in the Ancient and Classical Near East* in 2008. She is currently finishing a monograph entitled *Women in Near Eastern Archaeology: Why the Present Matters, and How it Affects Our Knowledge of the Past* that will consolidate her research into the challenges faced by women in the profession and how this impacts our understanding of the past. Beth deserves tremendous credit for helping bring the lives of ancient women into focus while also bringing greater recognition to female scholars in the modern era.



Figure 3: Beth presents at the third Workshop on Gender, Methodology and the Ancient Near East (GeMANE 3) at Ghent University in April 2019. Photo courtesy Katrien De Graf.

In our opinion, Beth’s most important contributions to the discipline surround her efforts to educate ASOR members and others about field safety, particularly in the areas of gender discrimination, and gender-based harassment, intimidation, and violence. After a period of extensive research and preparation, Beth took the initiative to create the *Survey on Field Safety: Middle East, North Africa, and Mediterranean Basin* and disseminate it widely in 2014 and 2015 to document people’s experiences in the field and the lab. The ultimate objective of this project is collaboration and education through the creation of trainings, standardized policies, and essential procedures to make field projects safer for everyone involved. Beth reported on her findings in multiple presentations and publications and was featured in an episode of the Bloomberg podcast *Game Plan* entitled ‘The Harvey Weinstein in Your Industry.’ A generation of scholars admires Beth for these efforts and is indebted to her for challenging ASOR to confront its past and do the work of making it a more welcoming and inclusive organization.

Thank you, Beth, for all you did for us while we were students at the University of Arizona and for all you continue to do to support the collective ‘us’ in the discipline. We have learned so much from your leadership, passion, and dedication to the field and your brilliant scholarly work that has inspired all the contributors to this volume. It is our pleasure to celebrate this milestone with you!

## **Mandana Nakhai**

The imperative to create an effortless illusion of separate silos of ‘work’ and ‘life’ seems to me one of the higher and more unreasonable bars we ask individuals, and particularly women, to clear. As a young-ish adult striving to do meaningful work and resist the normative value of career as total identity, I’ve considered numerous influences on how I approach the infamous ‘balance.’ My mother’s philosophy of work, and the life that has flowed through and around it, substantially informs my own evolution in constructing and operationalizing the meanings of effort, passion, and commitment in the professional and personal. I believe it has also opened many eyes, beyond mine, to the multitude of ways to integrate both into a full, meaningful life.

My earliest memory of my mom as a professional archaeologist and scholar is fittingly placed in the first home we shared. The house was a cozy, historic bungalow in one of Tucson’s quirkiest and most charming neighborhoods. While it wasn’t large, it held more than enough space for imaginative play and adventure. My bedroom was also her office, where she was writing her dissertation on an old-school ‘word processor.’ Maybe it was because of this computer’s persistence in the household even after the PC first hit the market that I later made career choices centered on professional writing. With only word processing capabilities, I entertained myself by writing short vignettes long before computer games were available to me. Beth’s late night dissertation writing sessions felt like a lucky benefit, as a child who preferred not to be alone in the dark. Any frightening night creatures were surely warded away by the bright green glow emanating from that boxy screen, and by the reassuring presence of my mom, typing away about subjects mysterious and faraway.

I also recall, from early childhood, many experiences of accompanying Beth to meetings, to the library, and to professional gatherings. I felt comfortable around adults and had no problem entertaining myself quietly while important business was conducted (although I could not figure out why the University of Arizona library held so many fewer ‘fun’ books than did the public library). Sometimes I came to her classes at the University and thought her teenage or barely adult students to be unbelievably mature, though their term papers sometimes came back to them with a few precocious comments written in my red pen.

Far from feeling burdened by these inclusions of my mom’s work into my daily life, I felt proud from a young age to have a mom who had places to go and responsibilities outside of taking me to music lessons or sports games. Yes, she graciously did those things, and made ample time to play games, host sleepovers, watch movies, take bike rides, and go on trips around the world. But the way she approached her work indicated to me that its centrality in our lives was the result of its deep meaning for her. Being involved made me feel special and adult. Over many summers in the renowned museums of New York, Boston, Paris, and London, I learned firsthand about the great civilizations of the ancient Near East. In the hush of darkened exhibit halls, she would gesture authoritatively at ancient objects shimmering in display cases, telling me about the lives of the people who made them in a tone I would come to know as her ‘lecture voice.’ What I gleaned most from my privileged encounters with these treasures was not, to be honest, detailed understanding of exactly when the Iron Age (or Iron Age II) took place or what the Code of Hammurabi said. What I really remember was my mom’s own ability to vividly connect stones, pots, and inscriptions with powerful narratives

and ideas about the people who preceded us in history and what these long-lost lives mean to us now.

Unlike many children whose parents go away to an office all day, my understanding of my mother's personality, skills, interests, and relationships was expansive. She wasn't 'just' mom to me, as I regularly saw her perform the roles of teacher, advisor, learner, scholar, and community leader. As time went on, her world of colleagues became our constellation of family. During long dinner parties in Tucson, my godmother, Norma Dever, expertly recounted endless and occasionally scandalous stories about archaeology adventures around the world. I experienced what I consider to be a seminal moment in the life of any Near Eastern archaeology hanger-on of 'running into' my mother's mentor and dear friend, Bill Dever, on my brief pilgrimage to the famed Albright Institute in Jerusalem. As a fourth grader, I thought it was the coolest thing in the world to have a 'grad student' take up residence in my house and help plan my birthday party—over 20 years later, Jennie Ebeling and her family attended my wedding, along with Bill, and Ed and Keeley Wright, who, along with their children, have been present for many more milestones.

In reviewing these memories, I see an individual story that reflects a societal one about the heavy weight placed on working mothers to keep it all afloat. I also believe that the challenges and joys of simultaneously building a career and family influenced Beth's interest in and unique capacity for elevating and illuminating the overlooked nuances of the lives of women in ancient societies. Not afraid to speak up and redefine a gendered norm that needs updating, Beth's insistence on having a multifaceted life and career challenges the outdated notion, normative in male-dominated fields, that the great storyline must rest solely on professional accomplishment, that other passions and pursuits, like family, either play a supporting role or diminish the impact of one's work. Inherent to her successful efforts to make more visible women's roles in ancient religious and community life is the bold assertion that these lives and choices, as bound with care and motherhood as they were, have as much of value to teach us as those of the men whose narratives of creation and building we are more familiar with.

Sometime in the early 2000s, Angelina Jolie starred in the ridiculous movie *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*, which combined mythology about and exploration of ancient sites with saving the world from an existentially threatening robot. I watched it repeatedly and purchased a poster of the actress dressed for combat archaeology, which my mom gamely hung in her campus office. While initially a joke, the poster still hangs there today. In fact, I see it now as more relevant—and prescient—than ever, the art a metaphor for the owners' own successful journey to pursue courageously, powerfully, and clearly what's just, for family, community, and scholarship.

### **Abbe Alpert**

Beth is my older sister. As a child, I was in awe of her brilliance, talents, and generosity. I envied her organizational skills and the fact that she always got the new clothes which were then handed down to me. Now, many years later, I am convinced that the awe I felt as a child was not related to our birth positions but a natural response to the special nature of my dear sister.



In our family, along with expectations too numerous to name, two skills were highly valued: the ability to tell a good story, and the ability to read between the lines. My sisters and I understood that a condition to joining in adult conversations was a competent enough display of these skills, so we practiced a lot. Both of our parents were raconteurs. Our mother grew up with an extended family focused on issues related to Jews; our maternal relatives rescued Jewish families from the Holocaust and were instrumental in the founding of the state of Israel. Many of the stories she told us were about these topics. They were serious, framed by historical context, had activists as protagonists, and led to signposts for her vision of living a proper Jewish life. Our father's stories were very different. He grew up poor during the depression in Yiddish-speaking neighborhoods in Brooklyn, NY. He began working at age five in his grandfather's fish store where, according to him, he was filleting fish before other children had learned to tie their shoes. Our father's stories were situated locally, they were family-centered and funny, and usually interactive (he and his older brother engaged in a lifetime of arguments about the accuracy of each story). His stories connected us to a celebrated New York Jewish culture.

Beth was quick to develop her own storytelling chops. As a young person she had a marvelous ability to recount the most mundane encounters as adventures rich with human drama. She still does. Anyone who has heard her describe vacuuming her house, or the turtles living in her backyard, would agree. Over the years I have travelled with Beth to conferences around the world, where I've attended her lectures on archaeology, gender, and the ancient Near East. Sometimes she begins her lectures on women in antiquity with a story about our parents. Usually the story is funny, a catchy intro. But when she does that, I think she is also pointing out how one generation keeps alive the stories of the previous generation (like my parents did), as well as of generations long gone. How wonderful that this might be a shared goal of archaeologists and daughters.

I've often heard Beth extract stories from objects, both in her lectures and her personal life. That is a gift, born out of scholarship professionally, but also out of empathy and imagination. Right after my mother died, Beth and I went to the apartment where my mother had lived first with my father and, after he died, alone. Quietly, we walked through the rooms together, absorbing her absence. In the guest bathroom, Beth said, 'mom hung the towels' and began to cry. Later I wondered why of all we had seen and felt that day it was the towels that had brought her to tears. I have a theory. These faded and frayed hand towels, embroidered with our last name, were a wedding present to our parents. As long as I can remember, they were hung whenever my mother entertained. The day she died, despite not being well, my mother had been planning on having a few women over for lunch. She hung the towels. In them, I think Beth saw an emblem of our mother's life: the promise of her marriage, her love of people and social gatherings, the elegance of her lifestyle, her drive to have a full life despite the difficulties of aging. And because Beth saw so much in old towels hanging on a towel rack, I was able to see it too and be deeply touched.

A focus of Beth's career is her 'commitment to ensuring that women past and present are seen and heard.' In her work she tells the stories of women in antiquity and of the narrative thread tying the decades-long invisibility of these women to the generations of women archaeologists whose efforts have also often been unrecognized. As an activist she creates safe spaces for colleagues to talk about their experiences of gender-based harassment,

intimidation, and violence during excavations abroad and she is developing processes for remediating these problems. During the last several years, Beth and I have been working together to bring attention to the issue of clergy sexual abuse and gender-based harassment in Jewish institutions. We know, from personal experience, how easy it is for institutions (or families) to ignore what is happening if it conflicts with the narrative they want to tell about themselves. We believe that it's extremely important to confront this narrative when it is wrong and advocate for change.

As children Beth and I learned to read between the lines, and as adults we recognize the power and the pleasure of making the invisible visible. Personally, I feel that one of Beth's most important achievements is her success moving women from 'between the lines' to the heart of the story.

### **J. Edward Wright**

In addition to her accomplishments as a scholar, my friend and colleague Professor Beth Alpert Nakhai has also shown herself to be an outstanding educator and mentor. She arrived at the University of Arizona in 1982 to study in William G. (Bill) Dever's graduate program in Near Eastern Archaeology. Following her first year as a graduate student, she was asked to teach in the Near Eastern Studies Department's Hebrew program. After completing her PhD in 1993, she continued to teach as an adjunct in the Judaic Studies Program. That program became the Arizona Center for Judaic Studies in 2000, and Beth was promoted to a tenure-track line in 2003, and ultimately promoted to Associate Professor with tenure in 2006. Thus, for nearly



Figure 4: Beth teaching Biblical Hebrew at the University of Arizona. Photo courtesy the Arizona Center for Judaic Studies.

## AN APPRECIATION OF BETH ALPERT NAKHAI

forty years she has been teaching a wide range of undergraduate and graduate courses at the university, notably Biblical Hebrew, Archaeology of the Bible, Women in Ancient Israel, Women in Judaism, Introduction to Judaism, and The History and Religion of Ancient Israel. Several of these Judaic Studies courses are cross-listed in the Anthropology, History, Religious Studies, and Women's Studies departments. This has allowed her to have an impact on the education of a wide range of students.

A university and the Academy depend on and are guided by the work of scholars, and in this regard Beth Nakhai has been a model colleague whose service has had tremendous impact on the Arizona Center for Judaic Studies, the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, and many departments and programs at the University of Arizona. Moreover, she has long served on committees for the American Society of Overseas Research (formerly the American Schools of Oriental Research) and as a board member for the W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem. She has also served as a grant reviewer for several organizations and foundations, an external promotion and tenure reviewer for several universities, and a manuscript reviewer for several publishers. Thus, she has been a model member of the Academy in terms of the service she has given throughout her career. But it seems to me that it is in her capacity as a teacher that her impact has been perhaps the most profound.

As the Director of the Arizona Center for Judaic Studies, I review the university-mandated teaching evaluations of the Center's nine teaching faculty every year. Those evaluations attest that Beth's teaching is highly regarded by our university's undergraduates. Two of the most common remarks are that 'I enjoyed the museum visits she arranged,' and 'she makes herself

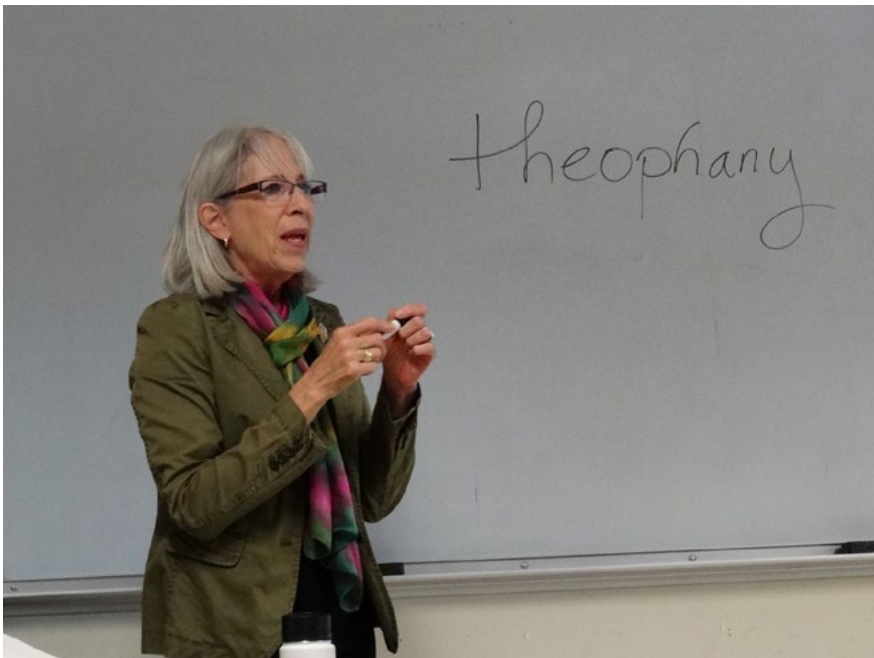


Figure 5: Beth in the classroom at the University of Arizona. Photo courtesy the Arizona Center for Judaic Studies.

available to help people outside of class.’ Another indicator of her success as a teacher is the number of her students who have gone on to prestigious graduate programs in Classics, Near Eastern Archaeology, or Biblical Studies.

In addition to her regular undergraduate courses, Beth has also taught many honors and graduate courses at the University of Arizona. I have served on the advisory board of the university’s Honors College for many years, and both the current and the former dean of the Honors College have had only praise for Beth’s many contributions as a skilled teacher and committed mentor to our honors students. Her work with graduate students is equally impressive. She has chaired one dissertation committee herself, and she also has been a reader and examiner on twenty-three other dissertation committees, most of which were in Bill Dever’s Near Eastern Archaeology program at the University of Arizona. In fact, the editors of this *Festschrift* are two of the scholars on whose dissertation committees Beth served. Moreover, many of the next generation of leaders involved in the American Society of Overseas Research are among the students that Beth taught or served as a reader on their dissertations. Thus, her impact on not just the Academy but on the lives and professions of many people is quite impressive. This *Festschrift*, therefore, is a fitting tribute to Professor Beth Alpert Nakhai’s career as an accomplished scholar, a dedicated teacher, and a valued member of the Academy.

### **Acknowledgements**

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### **Selected Publications**

#### ***Monographs***

2001. *Archaeology and the Religions of Canaan and Israel* (ASOR Books 7). Atlanta: American Schools of Oriental Research.

#### ***Edited and Co-Edited Volumes***

2015. *Celebrate Her for the Fruit of Her Hands: Studies in Honor of Carol L. Meyers*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns. Co-edited with S. Ackerman and C. Carter.

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# Tfu Tfu Tfu: Against Evil Eye Assumptions

Abigail S. Limmer

*'But God made my face; you cannot want to tear my face. Envy is a terrible sin, Mary.'*

(Arthur Miller, *The Crucible*, Act 3)

In the Middle East today and around the Mediterranean Basin, blue and white glass 'eye beads' are commonly worn to protect against the evil eye, a dangerous force believed to be emitted from the eyes of others, particularly of envious people. Similar beads have been found in the Iron Age Southern Levant, and site reports refer to them as 'eye beads' as well, presuming that the meaning behind the symbolism has not changed across three millennia. This motif has also been connected to the concentric circles decorating bone pendants from the Iron Age II (Platt 1978: 28). In addition, colors similar to those used in 'eye beads' were used to make solid-colored beads and these colors were also mandated for textiles used in ritual settings, according to the biblical authors (Elliott 2015; Limmer 2007). This study examines whether this purported continuity of evil eye beliefs and practices is justified by the evidence.

The first step will be to examine and summarize the modern beliefs and practices, and what Mesopotamians, northern Canaanites, and Egyptians believed about the evil eye in the Bronze and Iron Ages. It is worth noting that the literature discussed was produced over millennia and across a large region; we should not assume that beliefs were either stable or unified. The next step will be to see what the ancient Southern Levantine literature, i.e., the Hebrew Bible and inscriptions, say about the evil eye. The final step will be to survey and assess beads and pendants with so-called 'eye motifs' on them and suggest possible referents for them and an origin for the concept of the evil, envious eye.

## **Modern Contexts**

In the Modern Middle East and Mediterranean, the evil eye is imagined as a powerful, human-directed force of evil, and is defended against by amulets and verbal formulae. These ideas and practices are based on the extramission theory of vision, in which the eye can emit powerful rays or particles that can affect people and objects in view (Elliott 2015: 20). Maloney (1976: vii-viii) found common, cross-cultural features among the widespread evil eye beliefs: power emanates from a person's eye (or mouth), striking another person or an object of value with sudden injury or destruction. Envy is a possible cause of the evil eye, though there may be others. The eyer may not know that they have the power to cast the evil eye and may not be doing so intentionally. The victim may not know who cast the evil eye. Objects, rituals, and symbols can often deflect or modify the effects of the evil eye.

According to Abu-Rabia (2005: 246-247), Israeli Bedouins consider the evil eye—a physical manifestation of envy and ill will—'one of the most dangerous diseases... pregnant women and small children are the most vulnerable to it.' Modern Iranians consider jealousy without

evil intent sufficient to activate the evil eye (A. Betteridge, Pers. Comm., 4/4/07). Gilmore (1982, as cited in Marchese 2001:135) defined it as ‘the idea that one can bring harm to others simply by looking at them or, more precisely, envying their property.’

*Mal de ojo* or *aojo* in Spanish includes envy as a minor variant (Erkorea 2005: 392), and Fariña (1982: 290) includes ‘mal de envidia’ or evil from envy, as a synonym. Unbaptized people are among the wielders of the evil eye in Spain as are those with unibrows or other unusual features. Italians studied by Galt (1991: 739) divided the evil eye, or *malocchio*, into two types: silent envy (*affascene*), which causes headaches and dizziness, and malicious envy (*mmvidie*), which can cause illness and bad times in general. The silent type could be cured with oil and water. The malicious type was to be prevented with amulets.

Even in the US in the 20th century, boxers hired Benjamin ‘Evil Eye’ Finkle to put the evil eye on their opponents in the boxing ring. He inspired the character of Evil Eye Fleagle in *Li'l Abner*, who put single, double, triple, and even ‘interplanetary whammies’ on people using only ‘nature’s most stupefyin’ equipment—THE UNLIMITLESS POWER OF THE HUMAN EYEBALL’ (Elliott 1988: 42). As a cartoon character, Evil Eye Fleagle is given a broader set of powers than those normally ascribed to the evil eye, which is usually deadly only to infants, small children, and pregnant or nursing mothers, although it can also do extensive damage through a cascade of minor events.

Protection against the evil eye requires amulets, charms, and verbal formulae to deflect or distract the evil eye of an envious person (Marchese 2001: 135). Verbal formulae, including *mashallah* (what God has willed) after a compliment in Persian, *baruch ha-Shem* (Thank God), *b'ezrat ha-Shem* (with God’s help), and *bli 'ayin harah* in Hebrew, or *tfu, tfu, tfu, kein 'ayin horoh* (spitting sound, against the evil eye) in Yiddish are used preventatively. The Italians defend against *mmvidie* with *d'a guardie* and *benediche* (blessing). After the fact, the Greeks mutter a secret prayer to ‘un-eye’ someone (personal communication, R. W. Loumiotis 11/20/11). In some areas, Italians cure silent, envy-induced headaches and dizziness with a secret incantation (Galt 1991), and in other areas, invoke the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (Erkorea 2005).

Amulets include the open hand called ‘*id Fatima* or the hand of Fatima in Arabic, the *hamsa* in Hebrew, and the *panshtan* in Persian, as well as the *cornuto/cornuto* in Italian, which shows a closed hand with the index and pinky fingers extended. Members of the Italian community Locorotondo used horseshoes and open scissors to keep the evil eye out of buildings, and pouches filled by local witches, called *apetidde*, to protect children (Galt 1991).

One common defense against the evil eye is the eye bead, some of which are identical to objects found in Iron Age excavations. Modern Turkish people of all ages and socio-economic strata wear such beads and place them on domesticated animals and on or in vehicles. Such beads are commonly worn by babies, young children, brides, and mothers, and are believed to possess the power to prevent or deter misfortune (Marchese 2001: 35).

The extensive evidence of evil eye beliefs in the modern world does not allow us to uncritically attribute identical beliefs to ancient residents of the same region, in spite of similar-looking beads and hand symbols. The Iron Age inhabitants were not Turkish, Spanish, Arab, or Italian,

nor were they Muslim, Christian, or Jewish. Given the enormous chronological and cultural changes over time and space, we must examine the data from the Iron Age II southern Levant and its surroundings to see if such a connection is warranted.

### **Where Are They Used?**

Elliott (1988) locates the belief in the evil eye in an area from Morocco to India, spreading from there to Europe and then to the western hemisphere with the European colonies. Erkorea (2005) included an origin in central Africa and the Canary Islands as well.

Elliott (1988: 51–52) identified common characteristics among societies with evil eye beliefs. First, their economies are based on precarious crops and small-scale animal husbandry. Second, these societies are characterized by constant conflict and competition for scarce resources, including limited goods. Third, a lack of effective centralized government, combined with unequal distribution of resources and a dearth of legal constraints on the upper classes, leads to a patron-client socio-economic system and to ‘informal mechanisms of social control.’ Fourth, this tiered social and economic system leads to resentment and envy of the upper class by the lower class. Fifth, ocular aggression expresses this conflict and competition, and sixth, life overall is perceived as a struggle for survival in the face of hostile malevolent forces, some human, some supernatural. In other words, small-scale agrarian societies in marginal climates that are part of a larger economic system incorporating hereditary status and a belief in demons are likely to include an evil eye belief. This is a very broad set of criteria, however, probably too broad to be useful.

### **Ancient Texts**

Because there is little direct information on evil eye beliefs from the southern Levant, this textual section is based largely on incantations from Ugarit and Mesopotamia. I have not been able to find any incantations from the Southern Levant dated to the Iron Age II that mention the evil eye.

### ***Mesopotamia***

Long before the Iron Age, the Sumerians believed in an evil eye (Elliott 2015). Most scholars believe the evil eye was not a main focus of apotropaic literature in first millennium BCE Mesopotamia.<sup>1</sup> According to researchers such as Thomsen (1992), Wasserman (1995), and Ford (1998), the people of Mesopotamia believed in an evil eye, but it was dissimilar to modern beliefs. First, it was not the eye of a mean or jealous person, but rather the eye of a demon, such as Lamashtu or Lilitu (Wasserman 1995: 61, Ford 1998: 209–210, n. 22). Like the protective Eye of Ra or Horus in Egyptian mythology, Lamashtu’s eye could detach and roam separately (Pinch 2002).

The evil eye in most of the ancient Near East was not believed to be particularly strong. The greater danger came from witches who did evil through words, not through their gazes (Thomsen 1992: 28). Unlike modern believers in the evil eye, the people of ancient

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<sup>1</sup> Elliott (2015) disagrees, but his alternative translations do not appear to be accepted by most Assyriologists.

Mesopotamia believed the evil eye to be a mere nuisance, causing only minor accidents. Examples include: 'the cheese-making goes wrong, a tool breaks, it rains too little, clothes are torn' (Thomsen 1992: 22). Remedies prescribed in Mesopotamian literature often involved the use of relatively simple and accessible items, such as a strand of wool wrapped around one's head. Unfortunately, such artifacts are unlikely to survive in the archaeological record (Thomsen 1992: 26). There are reports of an unpublished text (Köcher 1971: xvii) that prescribes the use of stones against the evil eye (Thomsen 1992: 27), and of eye-like onyx and agate stones that were used for that purpose (van Buren 1945: 18), but such references are few and far between. Thomsen (1992: 28) suggests that the lack of references does not betray a lack of belief in the evil eye, but rather a lack of fear of its consequences. Our main source of information on Mesopotamian beliefs are thus biased toward incantation texts belonging to ritual specialists who were not needed to ward off the evil eye. Veldhuis (1992: 33–34) published three additional Mesopotamian texts against the evil eye, one of which is an incantation from the first millennium BCE requesting that a baby's screams should kill the evil eye.<sup>2</sup> This incantation is in both Akkadian and Sumerian, though they differ in details, suggesting that the texts are not direct translations of each other. Veldhuis (1992: 34) further notes that none of these references to the evil eye have sufficient context to inform us about the nature or strength of the eye, though they do show a continuity of belief in it from the third millennium Sumerians through the first millennium Neo-Assyrians.

### *Ugarit*

Late Bronze Age Ugaritic incantations defended against the evil eye, but there is no evidence for the use of beads or charms against it (del Olmo Lete 1992). It is not clear if this absence of evidence shows that only part of the actions taken against evil forces were recorded and saved, or if stones and beads were not part of the ceremony.

In a few Mesopotamian and Ugaritic texts, the roving eye of a demon hypostatized into the eye being seen as a demon itself (Ford 1998: 211). When the eye was thus hypostatized, it was more powerful. It roamed and devoured and could be slaughtered (e.g., Ford 1998: 211, n. 26; 220; del Olmo Lete 1992: 14<sup>3</sup>). However, while roaming demons such as Lamashtu and Lilitu

<sup>2</sup> 'With his screaming may he kill the Evil Eye (like?) with bronze' (Composite translation from Akkadian and Sumerian to German by Farber 1989, via Veldhuis 1992:34; translated into English by E. Cohen).

<sup>3</sup> E.g., KTU 1.96:

'The restless eye which also transforms  
the beauty of its brother, so comely,  
of its brother, so handsome,  
consumes its flesh without a knife,  
drinks its blood without a cup.  
Distort/ Face does the eye of the evil-doing man/ sorcerer,  
the eye of the evil doing woman/ sorceress does distort/ face  
The eye of the tax-collector  
the eye of the potter,  
the eye of the gate-keeper.  
May the eye of the gatekeeper revert to the gatekeeper;  
may the eye of the potter revert to the potter;  
may the eye of the tax-collector revert to the tax-collector;  
may the eye of the evil-doing man revert to the evil-doing man;  
may the eye of the evil-doing woman revert to the evil-doing woman  
[Incantation against the evil eye/ the evil-doer(?)]' (del Olmo Lete and Rowe 2014: 130).

were known in the Southern Levant for killing mothers and stealing or killing babies (Hutter 1999: 520–521; 2007: 29), there is no evidence for either demon harming people through their gaze or the use of hypostatized eyes.

Ford (1998: 235) describes the demonic devouring of flesh and drinking of blood as metaphorical acts (based on an incantation text found at Ugarit), and as a metaphor for disease. Thus, wasting diseases and infant mortality were thought to be caused by demonic consumption of the victim, as the demon sucked out the person's life force. While supernatural and dangerous, that understanding is not describing the evil eye, which harms people through its gaze. In Ugarit, as in Mesopotamia, the evil eye was weak, and more likely to be blamed for minor ailments like sprained ankles, cuts, and scrapes.

### ***Egypt***

In Egypt, it is clear that people shared the Near Eastern demon-based pathological paradigm to some degree and believed in supernatural causes of illness and ill-fortune. They had complicated beliefs about eyes and creation (Pinch 2002: 65–67). The Sole Eye, Eye Goddess, or Eye of Re got angry, took leonine form, and raged in the desert but had no clear connection to envy. When appeased, she became benevolent (Pinch 2002: 73).

Egyptians used eye-themed apotropaia extensively in the forms of the Eye of Horus (or *wedjat*) and the Eye of Re. The eyes of Horus, according to some myths, were ripped out by Seth in battle. In Egyptian mythology the eyes of Horus and Re were hypostatized, believed to be separable, and once separate, were deified. These were powerful protective amulets: the right eye represented the sun and the left eye the moon (Andrews 2001), the latter lunar eye amulet being the more common.

Faience *wedjats* are found in southern Levantine excavations, but that does not necessarily mean that the Israelites, Philistines, Phoenicians, or any of their Levantine neighbors saw them in the same way that the Egyptians did. The belief systems in the Levant were different from those in Egypt, and symbols were adapted to fit the local cultures (cf. Johnston 1995, Keel and Uehlinger 1998). The Egyptians used a very wide range of amulets, only a small portion of which have been found in southern Levantine sites (Keel and Uehlinger 1998; Limmer 2007, see appendix in comparison to Andrews 1990). It is perhaps not surprising that the eye motifs would be adopted in a wider area than other amulets like papyrus reeds, hippos, and human figures with animal heads, because, unlike those, eyes are universally present.

### ***Hebrew Bible***

Scholars have looked for information on the evil eye in the Hebrew Bible. There are few direct references to the evil eye there, and those that exist are not about envy. For example, the evil eye in Deuteronomy<sup>4</sup> is threatened to be used against those who are selfish and greedy and do not share with needy community members (Elliot 2015). However, as always, the absence

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<sup>4</sup> Deuteronomy 15:9, Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: 'The seventh year, the year for canceling debts, is near,' so that you do not show ill will toward the needy among your fellow Israelites and give them nothing. They may then appeal to the LORD against you, and you will be found guilty of sin (New International Version). In Deut 15:9, 'ill will' is a translation of *וְרָקָה עֵינֶיךָ*, and it describes selfishness, not envy (New International Version).

of evidence is not reliably evidence of absence. Some scholars (e.g., Ulmer 1994) claim to find references to the evil eye in the Bible by utilizing rabbinic interpretations, a method which is anachronistic and untenable. Others, such as Elliott (1988; 2015) and Kotzé (2006; 2017), have done so by defining the evil eye more broadly and extending their searches into Hellenistic-era writings; however, this method is also problematic.

Elliott (1988; 1991; 2015) claimed to find many references to the evil eye in the Bible by including any reference to the eye of a person who was presented in some way negatively (such as Saul), or any reference to envy, without referring to consequences for others or to eyes. Those references that fit the modern ideas of ‘evil eye’ were drawn from later, mostly apocryphal sources, particularly Ben Sirach. Throughout his four-volume work on the evil eye (2015–2017), Elliott assumes continuity of beliefs and practices among Israelites and Judeans from the Iron Age through the Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphic works, but does not support his assumption. Given the overwhelming cultural changes that took place through Hellenization after Alexander the Great’s conquest, those assumptions are untenable.

Even Elliott’s ‘apotropaia’ in the biblical text are not clearly apotropaic: the jewelry of the Midianite kings in Judges 8:21, 26, and the list of jewelry objects mentioned in Isaiah 3:18–20 are more likely insignia of wealth or status symbols (Platt 1979: 73–74). Moreover, Elliott’s claims that all jewelry was amuletic and that amulets necessarily guarded against the evil eye are unwarranted. Jewelry had other purposes (Limmer 2007). Elliott’s work relied heavily on Budge’s *Amulets and Superstitions*, published in 1930 and now largely obsolete. For example, Elliott (1988: 54) claimed that Deuteronomy 28:54, 56, *tera’ ‘eyno/‘eynah*’ was about the evil eye cast by jealous people (see note 4 above). While this passage reflects evil, referring to people eating their own children during a famine, it describes selfishness, not jealousy. Elliott (1991:159) also suggested that ‘*ra’ ‘ayin*’ (Deut. 15:9; 28:54, 56; Prov. 23:6, 28:22), Biblical Hebrew for ‘evil eye,’ referred specifically to the ‘eye of Ra’ mentioned above. Given that the cognate terms in Ugaritic, Akkadian, and Sumerian are direct translations of ‘evil eye,’ Elliott’s hypothesis that the term refers to the eye of Ra appears to be an unnecessary stretch. If anything, the closest Egyptian correlate would be the evil eye of the demonic snake Apopis (Borghouts 1973: 119, Ford 1998: 209–210).

Two interesting, albeit late, examples of possibly relevant biblical texts are Zach. 3:9 and Ez. 1:18, both of which date to the Persian period. Zechariah<sup>5</sup> describes a stone engraved with seven eyes, apparently an ornament from the High Priestly regalia (Peterson 1984: 211–212; Ulmer 1994: 3). The description demonstrates a connection between stones and eyes, and

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Deuteronomy 28:54-57: Even the most gentle and sensitive man among you will have no compassion on his own brother or the wife he loves or his surviving children, and he will not give to one of them any of the flesh of his children that he is eating. It will be all he has left because of the suffering your enemy will inflict on you during the siege of all your cities. The most gentle and sensitive woman among you—so sensitive and gentle that she would not venture to touch the ground with the sole of her foot—will begrudge the husband she loves and her own son or daughter the afterbirth from her womb and the children she bears. For in her dire need she intends to eat them secretly because of the suffering your enemy will inflict on you during the siege of your cities (New International Version).  
In Deut 28:54 ‘no compassion’ is a translation of תָּרַע עֵינָו, and in 28:56, ‘begrudge’ is תָּרַע עֵינָהּ. These acts show selfishness, not envy (New International Version).

<sup>5</sup> Zechariah 3:9: ‘See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua! There are seven eyes on that one stone, and I will engrave an inscription on it,’ says the LORD Almighty, ‘and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day’ (New International Version).



that imagery of stones with eyes was meaningful to people in the Persian period, though not necessarily the Iron Age. Ezekiel<sup>6</sup> describes a vision with eyes on wheels beside hybrid creatures. Composite creatures such as cherubs, human-headed bulls, and Bes were important in ancient Near Eastern imagery and often served to protect people or places from supernatural dangers. The relationship of protective creatures and eyes is interesting and might show an otherwise hidden connection. It is not what we think of as evil eye imagery, however, as the eye, even when connected to the term ‘evil’ in the Hebrew Bible, is not an expression of envy as it is in later times.

It is likely that the eye motifs from the Levant would fit with local belief systems. National gods and consorts make sense as protectors, so eye motifs may represent the eyes of Yahweh, Baal, or Asherah as protective devices, rather than as anti-envy charms. There is also not much evidence for what modern studies call ‘demons’ in most of the ancient Near East, including in Israel. People believed in many supernatural forces, but most were not inherently good or bad. Lamashtu, for example, did terrible things to babies and their mothers, but Lamashtu plaques were also used to protect people as apotropaia. Lamashtu’s roaming eye imagery also extended to the eyes of Yahweh, according to Ford (1998: 216, n. 45), although presumably without demonic intent. What are often called ‘demons’ may better be described as lesser gods in Mesopotamia and Syria (Hutter 2007: 24) and they were neither inherently good nor bad. Those creatures, often imagined as hybrids of more than one animal, had neutral power, until they were given a reason to exert it either positively or negatively. In the supernatural world of ancient Israel, they included the cherubim, imagined with parts of animals, birds, and humans (sometimes described as sphinxes) (*ibid.*).

Kitz (2016) notes that the dualistic image of angels and demons came from Aristotelian philosophy and was further developed in the 12th century by Aquinas. Therefore, it is not relevant to Iron Age II Israel. Instead, most of the supernatural forces that do evil in the biblical text were viewed as inherently neutral. They are among the hosts of Heaven that gather around the heavenly throne and are neither good nor evil until tasked by YHWH with delivering a message, reward, or punishment (e.g., 1 Kings 22: 19–22). Kitz (2016: 461) further describes these beings as winds or air, who can get into any corner and stay there, or can move the divine chariot. Following that logic, those demons were not responsible for killing babies, pregnant women, or new mothers, though they might be involved in handing down judgments on those who contravene injunctions to treat the poor and powerless well. Any damage done was at YHWH’s behest.

## **Jewelry**

### ***Eye Beads***

In turning to the jewelry, a caveat must first be noted: jewelry objects are under-represented in the archaeological record. First, small objects, especially beads, are very difficult to find

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<sup>6</sup> Ezekiel 1:15–18: As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the ground beside each creature with its four faces. This was the appearance and structure of the wheels: They sparkled like topaz, and all four looked alike. Each appeared to be made like a wheel intersecting a wheel. As they moved, they would go in any one of the four directions the creatures faced; the wheels did not change direction as the creatures went. Their rims were high and awesome, and all four rims were full of eyes all around (New International Version).

without wet-sieving. When dusty, they look like pebbles, and are therefore discarded without a second glance. Second, they roll around and, when we find them, are separated from each other and from their original or intended context. Third, people throughout history may have been mining local sites for jewelry as suggested by Mershen (1989), who documented the popularity of found scarabs and ancient jewelry pieces among the women of modern Jordan and their attribution of amuletic power to them.

Three object types require a more detailed treatment: 'eye beads,' bone pendants, and *wedjats*. Typically made of glass, eye beads display concentric circles of contrasting colors, such as a blue background, white or yellow large circle, and blue small circle on the top. Found throughout the Levant in a range of contexts, they seem to have originated in Egypt during the New Kingdom (Markowitz 2001), but their symbolic purpose is unknown. Even if they represented eyes (and they do look like blue eyes), we can't assume what that significance means. There are many possible reasons for beads resembling eyes. They could, for example, serve as protection against eye disease, or a reminder of the omniscience of a deity.

### ***Bone Pendants***

Incised ivory and bone pendants appeared in the late Iron Age I in the Israelite heartland: they were limited to Israelite-dominated areas and remained common there throughout the Iron Age II (Golani 2014: 275). Ivory and bone are discussed here together because they were made in the same shapes and look extremely similar. Many of these pendants bear ring-and-dot motifs, as did other Iron Age IIB bone objects. In the ring-and-dot motif, ring diameters range up to approximately six millimeters with a dot placed in the center. The most common arrangement of the rings is in vertical rows (Platt 1978: 23).

Bone and ivory pendants were found, mostly singly, in a wide range of contexts, including both tombs and living areas, and in conjunction with varied assemblages (Platt 1978: 25). Thus, while people were buried with bone pendants, they clearly wore them in life as well. These pendants were manufactured to be worn, not just placed in a tomb, but were so closely associated with the individual that they were buried with them.

The most common pendants were club-shaped: 4–9 cm long, perforated at one end, slightly wider at the other end, and with a round or oval cross section. Incised decorations included concentric bands near the ends, cross-hatching near the center, and ring-and-dot motifs (Golani 2014: 273–274). Bone 'gavel' or 'mallet' pendants were sometimes decorated with ring-and-dot motifs (e.g., Tufnell 1953: Pl. 37:8, 55:26). They were similar in size to the club pendants, made of a thin shaft, pierced at one end, and inserted into a cylindrical head at the other (Platt 1978: 24). Their size and lightweight material suggest a symbolic purpose. Unfortunately, there is insufficient information to identify what purpose(s) they served, although Golani (2014: 279) put forth the suggestion that they may have identified the wearer's profession or affiliation of some sort.

The 'calendars' (Platt 1978), better called 'plaque pendants' (Golani 2014), are flat, mostly rectangular pieces of bone, 3–8 cm long, with flanged and pierced tops. They are called 'calendars' because some of the first to be studied bore 30 holes in three vertical rows (Platt 1978: 25), although others have ring-and-dot motifs and/or incised lines and chevrons instead

of holes (Golani 2014). Many examples are extremely fragmentary, and/or do not have the appropriate numbers of holes or ring-and-dots to be monthly calendars. Skepticism of their identification as calendars is warranted<sup>7</sup> (Ariel 1990: 137).

Bone and ivory pendants have three main decorative motifs: banding, cross-hatching, and ring-and-dot motifs. The first two are so common in so many media that analysis without any textual evidence is meaningless and destined to be overgeneralized. The ring-and-dot motifs, however, are not ubiquitous. Bone pendants were incised with a lapidary drill (Platt 1978: 23), suggesting they were manufactured by the same artisans who carved symbol-laden seals and stone jewelry. Ring-and-dot motifs were also used to decorate fan handles, combs, crescent pendants, inlays, cosmetic palettes, and other decorative goods.

Interestingly, some of these bone and ivory inlays include animal images where the ring-and-dot motif was used as eyes and not simply as abstract decoration. First appearing in the Middle Bronze Age, this style of animal eye was in continual use through the Iron Age (Platt 1978: 26). Platt also mentions that animal imagery inlays were frequently associated with eye amulets, although she does not specify which type of eye amulet these were: Eyes of Horus (i.e., definitely eyes) or eye beads (i.e., probably eyes). Platt (1978: 28) concludes with the possibility that the ring-and-dot design is connected in some way with the eye motif; Golani (2014) concurs. Golani (2014: 280), however, explained the main function of the bone and ivory pendants as ethnic Israelite markers, although he did not further remark upon the reason for eye motifs on these.

The use of the ring and dot design as eyes on earlier images is the strongest connection for this symbol to refer to eyes. Thus ring-and-dots are essentially the same motif as ‘eye beads’ in different media. At its most basic, the decoration on both eye beads and bone pendants is a circle with a dot in the center. When created from contrasting glass rods, however, it was less precise and more colorful than when incised on bone with a lapidary drill (see Spaer 2001 for information on glass beadmaking techniques). Both designs could well have had the same symbolic function. None of the bone pendants were described as being colored, and no evidence has been found for color, even in the incisions where pigment might have lasted longer. This would suggest that color was presumably not the primary functional attribute. However, the blue of the glass beads might have carried additional meaning or added power, nuancing or strengthening the function of the design. For example, the blues used in the eye beads were among the same shades of blue used in solid-colored beads and pendants that correspond to the colored cloths that were biblically mandated for the ritual contexts of Tabernacle and Temple (Limmer 2007).

### ***Wedjats***

A large number of *wedjats*, almost all made of blue faience, have also been found in Levantine contexts. Thirty examples were found at Megiddo and another twenty in the Lachish tombs, making it by far the most popular type of Egyptian amulet in the southern Levant. Surprisingly, at Tel Miqne-Ekron, which fell under Egyptian influence late in the Iron Age, there are only two examples, both found in the same locus (Golani 1996).

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<sup>7</sup> The peoples of the southern Levant followed a lunar calendar with 28-day months, not 30-day months.

In the southern Levant, there was a noticeable preference for non-anthropomorphic and partially anthropomorphic Egyptian-style amulets, such as the *wedjat*, frogs, and Bes. This pattern is not seen in Egypt, where a much wider range of amulets, many of them depicting anthropomorphic gods, was found. Given that Horus was not worshipped in the Levant, Egyptian *wedjat* amulets must have had a different meaning there. Levantine wearers would have re-interpreted the symbol (see e.g., Keel and Uehlinger 1998) with reference to the local cults. In other words, the Eye of Horus, mobile and protective, could well have been re-theologized into the eye of a local deity. In an ancient parallel, Ward (1991: 97) noted that scarabs in the Levant were adopted and adapted to local beliefs.

## Conclusions

It is possible that at least some people in the ancient Near East believed that looking at a person with evil intent could have an effect, but it is more likely that the evil deeds were done by gods on their own or as sent through oral spells cast by witches. Belief in the evil eye as an expression of jealousy, as one finds today, may have been extant as well, but the information currently available does not support this.

Dickie (1995: 11–12) noted that belief in the evil eye was clearly established by and widespread among the people of the New Testament and the church fathers. He connected their acceptance of the evil eye (and arguments against it) with Greek Pagan philosophy. Given that Elliott (1988) and Erkorea (2005) described India, the Middle East, and circum-Mediterranean as its home range, and given the lack of evidence for envy as the activating force in the pre-Hellenistic periods, I would connect the evil eye with the spread of Hellenism rather than with pre-Hellenistic beliefs in most of the Near East. The Romans then spread it further, and it moved through Europe with Christianity.

It is not clear that the ‘eye beads’ found in large numbers in excavations were used to ward off the evil eye; there are no written references to beads as defenses against the evil eye, even in Mesopotamia, where there are incantations and rituals against the evil eye (Thomsen 1992), or to beads as displaying eye motifs. That interpretation relies solely on the assumption of 3000 years of cultural continuity. Thus, this identification of the purpose of these beads must remain in doubt. It is clear that necklaces were used as, or included, amulets in both Egypt and Mesopotamia, but the objects in Levantine contexts with clearly amuletic uses were not beads, but scarabs and scaraboids (Limmer 2007). While the range of colors shows that beads were made in the same color array as pendants and ritually mandated textiles, the precise power of any particular type of beads is not clear.

In conclusion, and this is admittedly speculative, I suggest that the Iron Age II Israelites may have believed in an evil eye, but it was the eye of a god, and it was directed at greedy, inhospitable Israelites. I also suggest that the eye beads most likely did represent eyes, as did ring-and-dot motifs and the *wedjat*, though the purpose of these is unclear. The colors used probably increased the ritual power of the glass eye beads and faience *wedjats*. Finally, there is no good reason to connect the Iron II artifacts to modern ‘evil eye’ beliefs. Instead, they should be connected to ancient beliefs in the southern Levant and may represent the protective eye of a local deity, saving the believers from any of the many dangers of their time.

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# **‘It’s the Pits ...’**

## **Iron Age I Economy at Abel Beth Maacah**

Lisa Marsio

Ubiquitous in early Iron Age I levels (1200–1000 BCE) at sites in Syria-Palestine are the plainly named ‘pits.’ While they are rather unique to this period (not having been found immediately prior or in later levels), the concept of human-made pits is not a new one. Pits used for storage, for example, can be traced back to the beginning of sedentary populations as early as the Mesolithic period (Perrot 1960: 18). Nor are they a uniquely southern Levantine or ‘Israelite’ phenomenon as many have been inclined to believe. Indeed, they have been found as far north as Gözlükule (Goldman and Hanfmann 1963: 6) and Tayinat in Turkey (Welton 2019: 74) and throughout Syria (Mazzoni 2000: 122) and Lebanon (Charaf 2007–2008: 71). Because they are so widespread, we must look at what was common to all and consider this a ‘human’ and not just a ‘Levantine’ or ‘Israelite’ phenomenon.

Their widespread presence at the end of the Bronze Age and into the Iron Age is due to a number of factors. The period of transition from the end of the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1550–1200 BCE) into the Iron Age I was a time of political, social, and economic upheaval that impacted the entire Mediterranean region (Dever 1986: 214). No area was left untouched, although the degree of destruction varied. The one commonality was the breakdown of central authority, whether it be the Mycenaean and Canaanite city-states or the vast Hittite Empire. Large groups of displaced people were on the move, in search of the basics of human existence: food, water, and shelter. Those not displaced physically often found themselves living a shadow of their former existence. The isolated presence of these pits in Iron Age I strata begs three questions: (1) what were they used for? (2) why now? and (3) what does their short-lived construction, use, and disposal suggest? This paper will examine the excavated pits at Abel Beth Maacah and compare them to contemporary pits at two of its closest neighbors: Dan and Hazor. In doing so, two hypotheses will be considered: (1) the pits were used for grain storage or (2) the pits were short-lived trash receptacles.

### **History of Research**

Over the years, various interpretations of Iron Age I pits have been put forward. Roland de Vaux thought they may have been latrines.<sup>1</sup> As early as 1961, based on their work with the pits at Shechem, Wright and Toombs suggested that pits were used for grain storage. Later, however, Toombs (1972: 107) modified his position, suggesting that they may have been dug to obtain garden chalk for agriculture. Others have hypothesized that pits were used for storing wine, water, or household goods, or for trash receptacles. Today, despite a dearth of evidence,

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<sup>1</sup> This comment was shared with David Currid by Edward F. Campbell of McCormick Theological Seminary, so the seriousness of this suggestion cannot be evaluated.

the most widespread interpretation of these pits is that they were used for storage, most likely of grain.<sup>2</sup>

One of the earliest extensive discussions of the use of Iron Age I pits for grain storage appeared in Currid and Navon's 1989 publication on the Grain Storage Project at Lahav (Tel Halif). The researchers found that:

1. There were two shapes of Iron Age I pits: cylindrical and beehive (also called phial- or bottle-shaped).
2. They were either lined with ash, rock, or plaster or had no lining.
3. The size of the pits was 1–2 meters wide and 2–3 meters deep.
4. The primary function of the pits was for grain storage.<sup>3</sup>

Norma Franklin further explored the function of pits found in the Iron Age levels of Jezreel. Surveys of Tel Jezreel by the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem in the 1990s uncovered over 90 bell-shaped pits (Franklin 2018: 76–80). While her thesis agreed with earlier conclusions that the pits at Jezreel were used for grain storage, Franklin added the observations that grain was (1) 'the staff of life' according to the Hebrew Bible; (2) it was used to make bread as well as beer, both staples in the Israelite diet; and (3) underground storage is the best way to preserve (and keep dormant) grain for several years. Her interpretation was most likely also influenced by the site's location overlooking a vast grain- and grape-growing region.

Extensive research on pits at two important northern sites, Dan and Hazor, has been undertaken over many years. As two of the closest sites to Abel Beth Maacah with Iron Age I remains, it seems appropriate to consider the pits at these sites when analyzing those at Abel Beth Maacah. The excavator of Dan, David Ilan, believes that the pits were used for grain storage that reflected changing socio-economic trends of the time (see further below). Yigael Yadin, who excavated Hazor in the 1950s and in 1968, also identified the pits there as grain storage pits. Doron Ben-Ami (2013: 101, 104), who excavated at Hazor in the 1990s and early 2000s, challenged this long-held interpretation and, after excavating additional pits from Hazor, identified them as 'settlement pits' or trash pits associated with people most likely living in tents or other temporary shelters in a refugee camp. According to Ben-Ami (2001: 166), there is no 'pit stratigraphy,' which suggests that these were single-use, short-term installations. This, then, presents a second viable possibility for the presence and use of these pits.

Even if we continue to assume, as many have, that the function of these pits was for grain storage, the question still remains: why now? The Iron Age I period in Syria-Palestine represents a time when people were beginning to recover from the upheaval of the events that brought an end to the Late Bronze Age. Gone were the regional centers and powers that commanded tribute as part of a redistributive economy. For a brief time in the southern Levant, between the breakdown of the Canaanite city-state system to the establishment of the Israelite monarchy and other new regional powers, people may have had more control of

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<sup>2</sup> There is very little evidence even for grain in association with these pits. At Dan, for example, out of the dozens of pits excavated, there is only one, Pit 336, that has been tentatively associated with carbonized grain (Ilan 1999: 37). The only other pits in which evidence for grain was found come from Shiloh Stratum V – Silos 1400 and 1462 (Finkelstein et al. 1993: 47–48) and Tel Keisan Stratum 9a (Kislev 1980).

<sup>3</sup> This conclusion was based on the reconstruction of pits to replicate their use.



their own modes of production and surpluses. The presence of pits could indicate a change from a tributary mode of production to a domestic mode of production.

However, Ben-Ami’s argument is intriguing and it addresses the question of why now, especially if we expand this discussion beyond the southern Levant to the wider Mediterranean. As mentioned above, a common pattern seen at this time throughout the central and eastern Mediterranean is the movement of people. If we disregard the common assumption that these pits are only associated with the early Iron Age Israelite settlement specifically, we can consider these ‘settlement pits’ as reflecting the movements of refugees in general.<sup>4</sup>

### **Pits at Dan**

Based on his work at Dan, Ilan (1999) argued that the appearance, use, and disappearance of pits could be reconstructed as follows:

1. Appearance: due to the upheaval and instability presented by the breakdown of the Bronze Age city-state model and its concomitant redistributive economies, people were faced with a new dilemma: how to store the produce over which they now had more direct control. Subterranean pits solved many problems: their stores were safe from the elements and could be concealed from those to whom they did not want to give access.
2. Use: the pits may have belonged to multi-family households (*beit av* economies).
3. Disappearance: as central authority was reestablished, household level storage was supplanted by use of larger-scale storage facilities, i.e., silos.

Pits are characteristic of the Iron Age I settlement at Dan as they have been found in all areas of the site. Similar in characteristics to those described by Currid and Navon (1989), many of the pits at Dan were stone-lined with a standard shape.<sup>5</sup> Those that were not stoned-lined were cut into the Late Bronze Age fill, which appears to have served a similar purpose to a stone lining. Some pits contained Late Bronze Age pottery, many contained restorable vessels, and some contained ash. Ilan (1999: 113) argued that the pits’ stone lining and shape precluded them from being used for waste disposal, at least as their primarily intended use. Even though none of the pits contained organic remains that would identify them as grain pits, Ilan was confident in his conclusion and believed that the pits at Hazor also fit this pattern.

### **Pits at Hazor**

As mentioned above, Ben-Ami (2001: 151–156) asserted that the pits discovered by Yadin at Hazor were used for the disposal of trash rather than for grain storage. His argument was based on the following observations:

1. The pits were simple and unlined.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Mazzoni (2000: 122) discussed a similar phenomenon at Tell Afis, using the term ‘waste-pits’ in reference to the site’s resettlement after the Bronze Age destruction, described as ‘a poor, apparently occasional recovery.’

<sup>5</sup> Most were cylindrical but some were beehive-shaped (Ilan 1999: 114).

<sup>6</sup> Yadin (1972: 130) had earlier argued that the pits were lined with fieldstones, which he claimed supported his interpretation that they were used for grain storage.

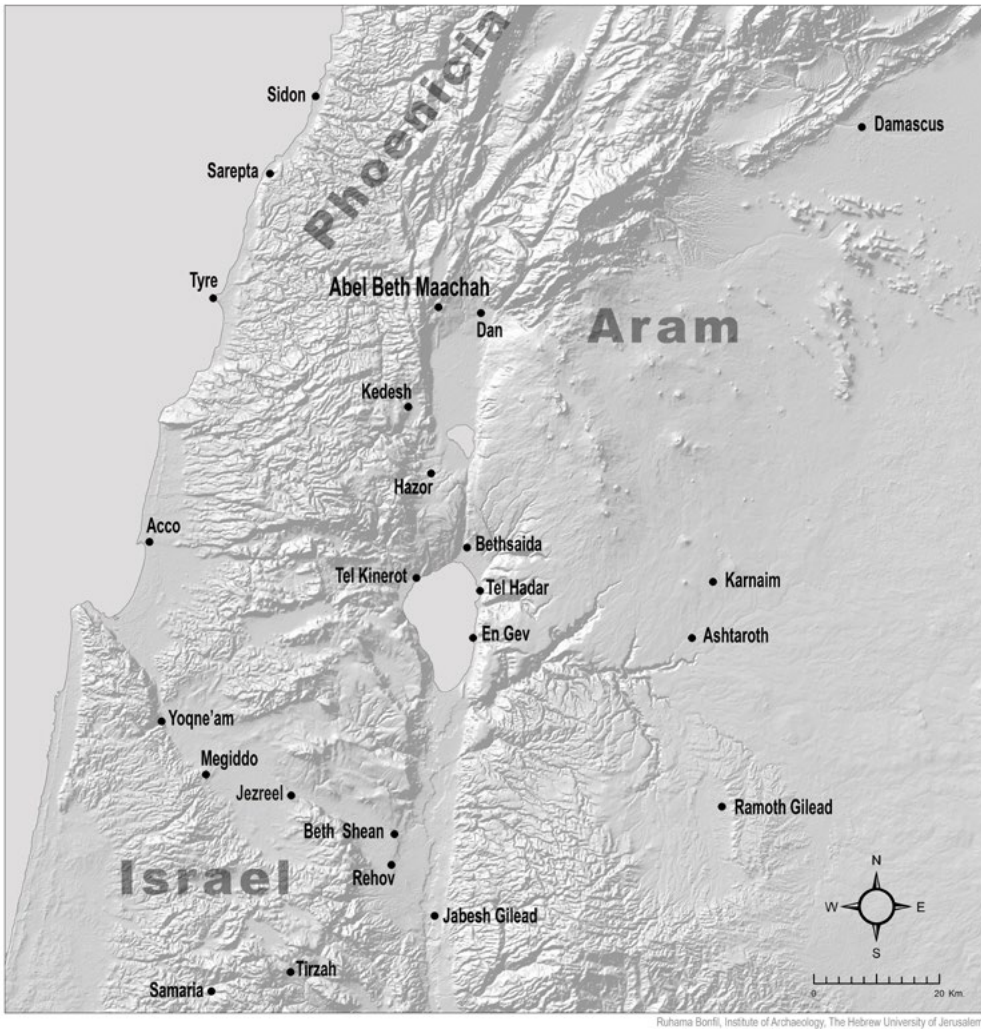


Figure 1: Location of Abel Beth Maacah. Map by Ruhama Bonfil. Courtesy of the Tel Abel Beth Maacah Excavations.

2. Most are round with an internal bell-shape and an average diameter and depth of 1 meter.
3. Many contained ash from burnt organic material.
4. There were no whole vessels found in the pits.
5. All pottery sherds found in the pits were attributed to the Iron Age I.
6. The pits were often full of broken stone items, mostly mortars and pestles.

Ben-Ami found that the pottery sherds were scattered throughout the fill rather than stratified, suggesting that the debris in the pits were from single-use, short-lived periods. The fieldstones found in them were not part of a lining; rather, they were used to seal the pits. In contrast to the pits that Yadin excavated, Ben-Ami noted no whole vessels or complete stone

objects in the pits excavated more recently. Taking all of this into account, he argues that the pits could not have been used for grain storage. Given the absence of Iron Age I structures at the site, Ben-Ami (2001: 167) believes that these pits were used for refuse by a transient population that lived in temporary structures.

### **The Case of Abel Beth Maacah**

Located approximately 6.5 km west of Dan and 35 km north of Hazor is the site of Tell Abil el-Qameh, which is identified as the biblical Abel Beth Maacah (Figure 1). William Dever surveyed the site in 1973 and published the results, but extensive exploration of the site did not begin until 2012. The current excavation project (2012-present) is directed by Naama Yahalom-Mack and Nava Panitz-Cohen of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Robert Mullins of Azusa Pacific University.

The site covers approximately 10 hectares and consists of an upper mound to the north and a larger lower mound to the south connected by a saddle of land. Five areas (A, B, F, K, and O) have been opened during eight seasons of work with major excavations in Areas F and A. The earliest levels date to the Early Bronze Age and there appears to have been continuous occupation of both the upper and lower mounds until the Iron Age II period, when the lower mound was abandoned. Abel Beth Maacah was first fortified in the Middle Bronze Age and these fortifications were reused in the Late Bronze Age. Unlike its close neighbors of Dan and Hazor, it was not destroyed at the end of the Late Bronze Age. Rather, the site appears to have been partially (and peacefully) abandoned. Those who remained into the early Iron Age (or those who may have joined them) dug pits into the old fortification system. Although remains from the Iron Age I were found in all excavation areas, Areas F and A contain the most diagnostic information concerning the socio-economic realities of the time.

Area F is located at the southern end of the lower mound (Figure 2). It was during the 2014 season of excavation in Area F that numerous pits were found in the Iron Age I strata (F1 and F2) that had been cut into the top of the Middle Bronze Age fortifications (Figure 3). These pits may have been associated with a multi-roomed building (in green on the plan) but currently there is no clear stratigraphic relationship between the pits and the building. The fifteen pits from Area F included in this study are relatively standard in diameter, clustering around 1 meter with a few outliers, and they range in depth from a shallow .25 meters to as much as 1.15 meters. In summary (see further Table 1):<sup>7</sup>

1. Some of the pits were stone-lined only along the perimeter, perhaps to delineate their outline. Others were unlined.
2. Few whole vessels were found. Most pits contained only sherds.
3. Many of the pits contained animal bones and other random detritus (flint, spindle whorls, grindstone fragments).

Area A, located on the eastern slope of the middle saddle, represents one of the richest stratigraphic sequences of Iron Age I occupation (Figure 2). It consists of two areas: the

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<sup>7</sup> The contents are currently being examined by students at Hebrew University. No sherd count, diagnostics, or detailed archaeozoological information is currently available. Preliminary analysis indicates that the animal bones are primarily from sheep and goat.



Figure 2: Aerial photo of the tell with the village of Abil el-Qameh in 1945. Aerial Photographic Archive, Department of Geography, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Photograph by the Royal Air Force. Courtesy of the Tel Abel Beth Maacah Excavations.



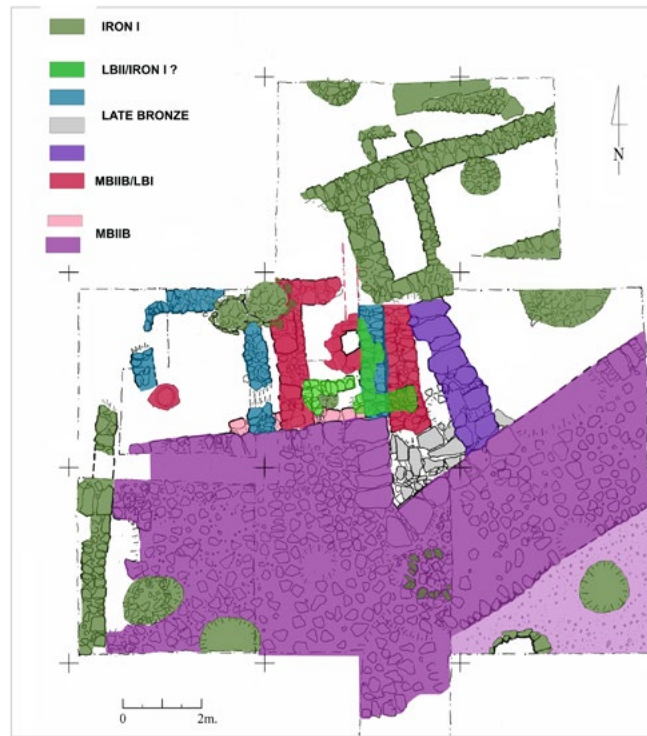


Figure 3: Plan of Area F showing pits. Courtesy of the Tel Abel Beth Maacah Excavations.

eastern (so-called ‘downtown’) and the western (so-called ‘uptown’) (Loew and Kobs 2019: 1). To date, four, perhaps five, Iron Age I levels (A2-A6) have been identified in Area A.<sup>8</sup> Each is unique in character:<sup>9</sup>

1. The earliest clear Iron Age level, A4, seems to have been cultic in nature. The settlement belonging to this phase was violently destroyed.
2. The next phase, A3, was domestic in nature, containing open areas, ovens, and other installations. There is no evidence of destruction of this phase.
3. The final Iron Age I level, A2, consisted of a large building complex that also appears to have been violently destroyed.<sup>10</sup>

A comparison of the remains in Areas A and F suggests that Area F is more temporary and domestic in nature, containing pits and silos, while Area A, especially in the earliest and latest levels, is more public and cultic (Panitz-Cohen, Mullins, and Bonfil 2015: 54). Area F contained a building and multiple pits dug into the old fortification system in the Iron Age I and seems

<sup>8</sup> At least in the ‘downtown’ area (Loew and Kobs 2019: 2).

<sup>9</sup> To date, A5 and A6 have only been exposed in small areas, so the nature of these two strata is currently difficult to assess (personal communication with Robert Mullins).

<sup>10</sup> Although it appears that phase A2 spans the Iron Age I/IIA chronological transition, the material culture in A2 dates to the Iron Age I (personal communication with Robert Mullins).

Pit #	Stratum	Contents/Characteristics
1364	F2 or F1b	Sherds, animal bones; bell-shaped; stone-lined (from abutting silo)
1320	F1b	Sherds, animal bones; 1 m in diameter, 40 cm deep; stone-lined perimeter
2340	F1b	Iron sickle blade, sherds, animal bones; 1 m in diameter and 1.15 m deep
2341	F1b	Sherds, animal bones; 1 m in diameter and 1.15 m deep
1322	F1b	Sherds, animal bones; .5 m in diameter and .2 m deep; stone-lined perimeter
1340	F1b	Sherds, bones, bronze Scythian arrowhead; .2 m deep; irregular shape
2385	F1b/2	Sherds, bones, flint; 1 m in diameter; stone-lined perimeter
2382	F1b/2	Sherds, animal bones, flint; intact pyxis; 1 m in diameter; stone-lined (?)
1310	F1b/2	Sherds, animal bones, flint, spindle whorl; 1.1 m in diameter; stone-lined perimeter
1368	F1b/2	1 m in diameter and .25 m deep; empty
1363	F1b/2	Round; 1 m in diameter and .25 m deep; empty
1359	F1b/2	Similar to 1363 in size
1365	F1b/2	1.4 m in diameter
1321	F2?	Storage jar sherds and misc. vessels plus a grindstone fragment; 1.1 m in diameter and .45 m deep
4314	F1	Iron I or IIA cooking pot rims; animal bones; possible cultic vessels = favissa?

Table 1: List of Abel Beth Maacah Pits.

to have been abandoned since no later Iron Age presence was detected. In contrast, several levels of occupation were identified in Area A. The excavators tentatively believe that Stratum F1 may correlate to Stratum A2 and that Stratum F2 may correlate with Stratum A4 or even Stratum A3 (Panitz-Cohen and Mullins 2014: 1). More concise stratigraphic correlations may present themselves in the future but, for now, one clue may be seen in the pottery: collar-rim jars found in Area F are more typical of Stratum A4 while Tyrian pithoi (which predominate in Stratum A2) have not been found in Area F. This suggests that the pits in Area F may predate Stratum A2 and align better with Stratum A4, thus supporting the idea that they belong to the period of transition between the end of the Late Bronze Age and the first stages of the Iron Age.

Since Abel Beth Maacah was not destroyed at the end of the Late Bronze Age, unlike some of its neighbors, those who fled the destruction of nearby sites like Hazor may have come to Abel Beth Maacah as refugees and set up a temporary encampment in Area F and dug pits and silos.<sup>11</sup> A cultic area existed contemporaneously in Area A (A4) that was destroyed and replaced with a domestic area (A3). Perhaps the cultic area was destroyed by the newcomers to the site who, once organized and somewhat established, decided to expand and build a more permanent settlement in Area A. The idea that new people moved into Abel Beth Maacah has been suggested by the site's current excavators, who note that the site is called 'Abel' in the Middle Bronze Age IIB Egyptian Execration Texts. It was not until sometime later that 'Beth Maacah' was added, suggesting the arrival of a new group of people to an established site (Yahalom-Mack, Panitz-Cohen, and Mullins 2018: 145).

<sup>11</sup> The lack of architecture attributed to the earliest pits at Abel Beth Maacah seems to lend some support to this idea.

The contents of the Area F pits are similar to the contents of the pits at Iron Age I Hazor and have no obvious stratigraphy. They should probably be assigned the same function as that assigned by Ben-Ami to the Hazor pits: as containers for refuse that were dug, used, and filled in by refugees.

## Conclusion

Research on Iron Age I pits presents several challenges. First, the terminology that is used by various excavators when referring to pit features is inconsistent. For example, the term 'stone-lined' is often used but it is not immediately clear if it is meant that the entire pit was stone-lined or just the perimeter. In addition, various descriptors for these installations are used, e.g., pit, silo, cistern, adding confusion. There has also been a lack of region-wide examination. Researchers in the southern Levant have done their work in 'silos,' it seems, as they have not taken a comparative look at the entire Mediterranean.

In addition, most of the research into Iron Age I pits has focused on the southern Levant; as a result, pits are associated with the settlement history of this specific area. As mentioned, we must take a more holistic view of the entire central and eastern Mediterranean when we consider this phenomenon. More research must be done keeping two things in mind:

1. The presence of pits in Iron Age I levels is not just a southern Levantine or 'Israelite' phenomenon.
2. There may be multiple uses of these pits, including grain storage and/or waste disposal.

The intent of this research is to shed some light on the everyday lives of the ancient people of this area. The Iron Age I period was a time of enormous political, social, economic, and ideological change. We tend to focus on the large-scale changes evident in the archaeological and written records and forget the impact of these changes on the average person. Today, as we watch the 24-hour news cycle cover world events that lead to the massive displacement of people, we can only imagine the impact of such events on the people living in the Mediterranean world at the end of the Late Bronze Age.

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# What's a Nice Girl Like You Doing in a Place Like This? Contextualizing an Iron Age IIA Female-Drummer Figurine from Tel Abel Beth Maacah

Nava Panitz-Cohen and Daphna Tsoran

## Introduction

Tel Abel Beth Maacah (ABM) is the northernmost Iron Age site currently being excavated in Israel, located 5 km south of the town of Metulla on the Lebanese border, in the so-called 'finger of the Galilee.' While the modern border between Israel, Syria, and Lebanon is well demarcated, the question may be asked whether such a border—politically, culturally, and economically—was viable in the early first millennium BCE between the main powers in the region at that time: the northern kingdom of Israel, the kingdom of Aram-Damascus, and the Phoenician polities. No clear answer can be offered to this question, as the complexity of such relationships is obscured by the ambiguity of the existing texts, particularly the biblical one, and the vagaries of the archaeological record. What can be attempted is to contextualize elements of material culture in order to gain insight into the broader processes and events that define such geo-political relationships. Such an item is a clay torso of a female holding a disk, commonly known as a 'drummer figurine,' which was found in the excavations at ABM. In this article, we look at the context, iconography, style, and technical tradition, with the goal of shedding light on the figurine's cultural role, both on the site and regional levels.

The engendering of archaeology greatly enriches the cultural and historical discourse and adds a critical dimension to our understanding of ancient life. Undoubtedly, Beth Alpert Nakhai is at the forefront of this endeavor and plays a pivotal role not only in formulating the framework of academic archaeological gender studies, but also in the efforts of female archaeologists to gain equal personal and professional status in what has traditionally been a man's world. We dedicate this short study to Beth as a tribute to her leadership, integrity, and dedication to us as archaeologists, scholars, and women.

## Tel Abel Beth Maacah—The Site and the Excavations

Tel Abel Beth Maacah is a large (100 dunam) site located in northern Israel, on the modern-day border with Lebanon, 6.5 km west of Tel Dan, 35 km north of Hazor, and 35 km east of Tyre and Sidon on the Lebanese coast (Figure 1). The identification of this tell with the biblical city is based on its Arabic name, Abil el-Qameh, which preserves the ancient name Abel, and on the order of cities conquered by the Arameans in the ninth century and the Assyrians in the eighth century, respectively, as related in 1 Kings 15:20 and 2 Kings 15:29. A third biblical reference includes the story of Sheba ben Bichri who rebelled against King David and fled to Abel Beth Maacah, only to be beheaded by a local Wise Woman in order to save the city from the revenge of David's army (2 Samuel 14) (Panitz-Cohen and Yahalom-Mack 2019).

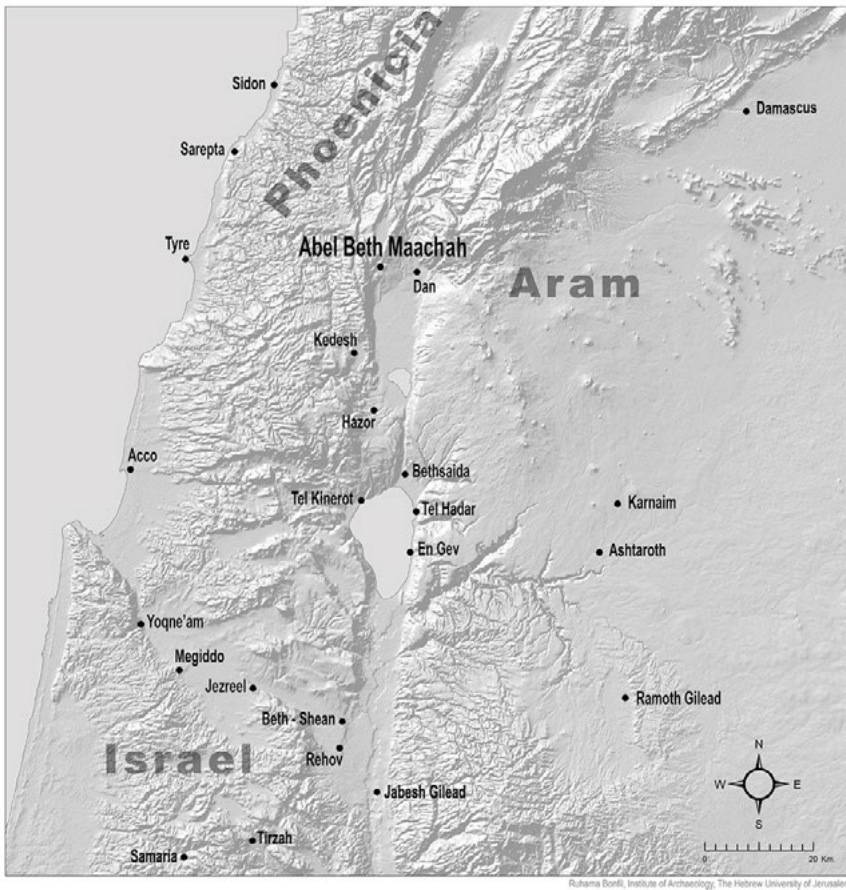


Figure 1: Tel Abel Beth Maachah: view of the tell looking east and location map (photograph by Robert Mullins, courtesy of the Abel Beth Maachah Excavations; map by Ruhama Bonfil, Institute of Archaeology, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem).

Eight seasons of excavation since 2013<sup>1</sup> have revealed rich occupation remains from the second and first millennia BCE, with a particularly robust Iron Age stratigraphic sequence covering the twelfth to ninth centuries BCE. Notably, despite the reference in 2 Kings 15 to an Assyrian conquest, to date no clear occupation layer or destruction can be assigned to this period or event. More sporadic remains have been uncovered from the Persian to the Mameluke periods. A small Arab village (Abil el-Qameh) occupied part of the tell from the Ottoman period until 1948.<sup>2</sup>

### Find Context

The figurine torso was found in Area B, located on the eastern slope of the tell's summit (Figure 2). A large building complex dated to the Iron Age IIA is the main element in this excavation area, comprising a massive casemate structure and related structures and courtyards to its north and south (Figure 3). The casemate structure had at least two phases and is dated to the late tenth and ninth centuries BCE.<sup>3</sup> Among the finds in the complex are red-slipped and hand burnished pottery, as well as fine Samaria/Achziv ware, an elaborately painted



Figure 2: View of the tell looking west, with Area B, where the figurine was found, marked (photograph courtesy of Mikraot Gedolot Haketer Project, [www.mgketer.org](http://www.mgketer.org)).

<sup>1</sup> The excavations are co-directed by Naama Yahalom-Mack and Nava Panitz-Cohen under the auspices of the Institute of Archaeology of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, together with Robert Mullins under the auspices of Azusa Pacific University of Los Angeles. The excavations and research are supported by an Israel Science Foundation grant (2017–2020, grant no. 859/17) and by generous private donors. Licenses are granted by the Israel Antiquities Authority and the Israel Nature and Parks Authority.

<sup>2</sup> For preliminary reports and articles on selected finds, see Panitz-Cohen, Mullins, and Bonfil 2013; 2015; David, Mullins, and Panitz-Cohen 2016; Panitz-Cohen and Mullins 2016a; Panitz-Cohen et al. 2018; Yahalom-Mack, Panitz-Cohen, and Mullins 2018a; b; Yahalom-Mack et al. 2018; David 2019; Yahalom-Mack et al. 2019; Panitz-Cohen 2021; Yahalom-Mack et al. 2021. Annual field reports are posted on [www.abel-beth-maacah.org](http://www.abel-beth-maacah.org).

<sup>3</sup> The date is based on a series of radiocarbon dates obtained from short-lived organic samples found in several contexts and phases measured in the Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit at the University of Oxford, and on the ceramic sequence.





Figure 3: Area B, with Iron Age IIA citadel complex; star marks the findspot of the figurine (photograph by Alexander Wiegmann and Yakov Shmidov, courtesy of the Abel Beth Maacah Excavations).

Phoenician Bichrome storage jar (Panitz-Cohen 2022), a pendant stamped with a Phoenician ship motif (Brandl and Yahalom-Mack 2022), a sherd of a Greek *skyphos*, and a spoon-shaped stone nozzle. A special find in the eastern casemate room was a faience head of a bearded elite figure (Yahalom-Mack, Panitz-Cohen, and Mullins 2018: 154; Yahalom-Mack et al. 2018: 30).

The figurine torso was found in the space to the south of the eastern casemate room, in a layer of stone and earth debris revealed below topsoil (Locus 7747). This layer runs along the southern end of an Iron IIA white plaster surface (Locus 7736). Although the findspot of the figurine torso was eroded due to the downslope of the area to the south and east, its context may be assigned to the Iron IIA, as it adjoins the stratified remains of this period. In fact, no later Iron Age remains were noted in this part of the excavation area and the abandonment of the casemate structure, dated to the late ninth century BCE, marks the end of occupation in this period.

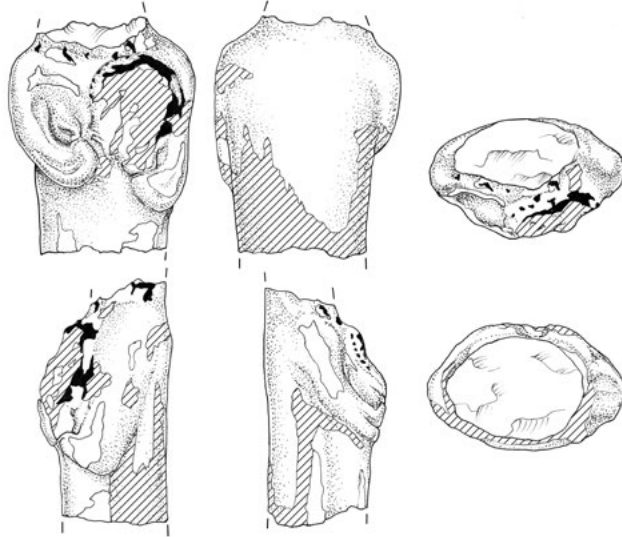
### Description

The extant fragment (Figure 4) extends from the bottom of the neck/top of the shoulders down to just below the waist (6 cm high). The body is hand-formed as a solid oval with a slight tapering towards the bottom (oval near waist: 3.3 cm by 2.5 cm). It seems that the features were added separately to the front: the arms, the exposed breast, and the disk (see further discussion below concerning the formation technique).

WHAT'S A NICE GIRL LIKE YOU DOING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS



Figure 4a: Photograph of the figurine (photograph by Tal Rogovski).



L.7747 B.77186

0 2 CM

Figure 4b: Drawing of the figurine (drawing by Yulia Rudman).

The arms descend from broad, rounded shoulders. The arms, bent under the breast line and adjoining the body, hold a round object/disk (2.2 cm diameter) pressed against and hiding the left breast.<sup>4</sup> The upper part of the right arm is rounded and protrudes from the side of the torso, while the left arm hardly does (see back view); the right arm is slightly thinner than the left. The right hand is placed on the disk, while the left hand is not visible and appears to be depicted as reaching the very bottom of the disk, positioned lower than the right hand. The right wrist clearly has two bracelets, and it appears that the left one does too; these are depicted as shallow incisions. The fingers of the right hand are spread and can be discerned, although not all five. The right arm encircles the visible breast, which has a shallow short gash at its edge, although it is not clear if this is intentional.

The figurine is painted in three colors: red, black, and white. Short, vertical, uneven black hatches surround the lower neck, just above the line of the shoulders, possibly depicting a necklace; a few small patches of white color can be seen around and under these black lines. From just below the right shoulder, a narrow white strip runs above the right breast and terminates at the disk. Faint traces of white and black paint are visible on the upper right and most of the left arm; faint traces of white paint can also be discerned on the front below the arms. The disk is covered with red paint, with a black line around its perimeter; this line is not visible where the two hands reach the disk. The layer of red and black paint is thick and peeling in some spots. The fingers of the right hand and the entire left hand (hardly visible) are also partially painted red, continuing the paint applied to the disc. A splash of red paint can be seen in the middle of the left upper arm, although this might be a spillover from the paint on the disc. Traces of a lighter red paint (or slip) are visible on the back of the torso, especially on its middle and lower parts.<sup>5</sup>

### Formation Technique and Provenance

The body appears to have been hand formed as a solid oval shape, 3.3 cm wide and 2.5 cm thick. Traces of finger pressing and vertical and diagonal smoothing and deep scraping lines are visible on the back and sides (see Figure 4). It seems likely that the missing head was a separate appendage, although no clear traces of its attachment mode are seen (i.e., there is no peg).<sup>6</sup> As noted above in the description, the arms, breast, and disk were attached separately and it can be seen, particularly in the back of the upper arms, how clay was smeared to form the attachment (Figure 5).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup>The terms 'left' and 'right' refer to the figurine's perspective, not that of the viewer.

<sup>5</sup>It is difficult to determine if the paint depicts dress or jewelry, and if the figurine was nude or partially dressed; the latter, however, seems to be the case. Mold-made figurines with incisions and reliefs are thought to be nude or partially dressed, while the painted, hollow, wheel-made figurines with outstretched arms are thought to be completely dressed (Tadmor 2006: 328).

<sup>6</sup>It is possible that the missing head was mold-made, based on figurines whose extant head appears to have been so made and then attached to a hand-made body, e.g., the figurine from site WT-13 in Transjordan cited later in the text.

<sup>7</sup>The figurine was examined by Dr. Naama Yahalom-Mack, the director of the Laboratory for Archaeological Materials and Ancient Technologies at the Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, under an optical microscope (Stemi 508, Zeiss with Axiocam 105). Microscopic comparison to a Late Bronze Age plaque figurine from the Collections of the Institute of Archaeology showed that it lacked these striations on its back, as well as the smears joining the arms to the sides and torso.

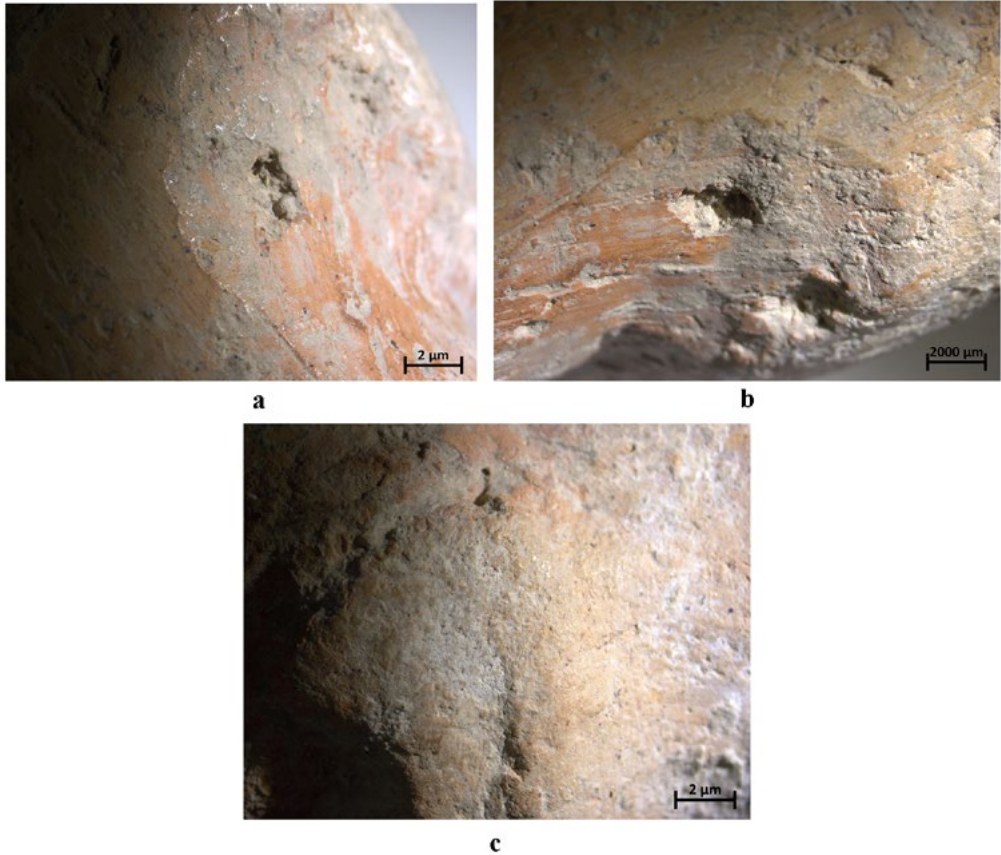


Figure 5a: View of back attachment of the right arm; b: View of back attachment of the left arm; c: Smear of clay between body and back of the left arm (photographs by Naama Yahalom-Mack, courtesy of the Laboratory for Archaeological Materials and Ancient Technologies at the Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem).

From a visual examination and preliminary petrographic analysis, the clay is most likely local, being similar to that used to make contemporary vessels.<sup>8</sup> The color is light brownish-pink with a few small black and white inclusions. A dark gray core with organic voids and fissures possibly caused by relatively low temperature during firing is visible.

<sup>8</sup> Petrographic analysis was done by Anat Cohen-Weinberger of the Israel Antiquities Authority, but the results were inconclusive as the sample was too small to unequivocally determine provenance (this due to caution in taking the sample so as not to harm the figurine). However, based on the information that could be gleaned from the thin section, as well as Cohen-Weinberger's familiarity with the local fabrics of Abel Beth Maacah, it is most likely that the figurine is a local product.

## Contextualizing the Figurine

### *Iconography*

Female figurines holding disks are well-known in numerous contexts, particularly in northern Israel, although they are also found in Transjordan; all date to the Iron Age II. They have been widely studied and discussed (e.g., Holland 1975; Tadmor 2006). There are two basic categories based on formation techniques and style: one where the figure is holding the disk close and parallel to her chest (mainly on one breast and, rarely, between the two breasts), and the other where the arms are outstretched (or not flush against the body) and the hands clutch the disk which is held perpendicular to the line of the body. In the former, the figurine is invariably mold-made, with the disk being part of the mold, while in the latter the figurine is depicted in the round and its body is mostly hollow, either hand or wheel made, while the arms and disk comprise a separate attachment.<sup>9</sup> There are also variations within these two main categories, such as the disk held at an angle just in front of the body or a hollow body with the disk flush against the chest.<sup>10</sup> Notably, in both categories as well as in the variations, the figure almost always holds the disk in the left hand while the right one overlaps it and the disk (Sugimoto 2008: 31).

Various suggestions on the identification of the disk have been offered, among them a plate or bowl, a solar disk, a cake or loaf of bread, and a drum; the first two have already been ruled out, while the last two remain the most viable possibilities (Paz 2007: 52, 60; Sugimoto 2008: 6–10). Meyers (1987: 120; 2017: 125–126) identified the pressed disk as a cake or loaf of bread in the role of a sacrificial offering, and only the type with the outstretched disk as a musical instrument (a drum). Other scholars viewed the disk as a drum, with the difference between the two categories not necessarily reflecting different meanings but rather expressing technological variations, with those who hold the disk against the body being mold made and those who hold it away from the body being hand or wheel made (or both) (Kletter 1996: 36; Sugimoto 2008: 35; Tadmor 2006: 326).

It has been debated whether or not the female figurine should be identified as a deity or as a mortal (a question pertinent to other types of female figurines as well). If a deity—which? If mortal—what is the role of such a figure? For both suggestions, there is the question of the portent of grasping a drum or bread. Sugimoto (2008: 75–82) viewed all the female figures holding disks as deities, specifically Ashtoret; for later Judean figures holding disks, Kletter and Saarelainen (2011: 24–25) claimed the identity as Asherah. Other scholars viewed the figures as mortal females who accompanied ritual activities by dancing and strumming musical instruments. This conclusion was based on examination of various scenes in other media, such as ivories and metal plates, where women holding disks are seen as participants in processions, feasts, and ritual activities (e.g., Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 166–167; Meyers 2017: 127–128; Paz 2007: 80). Related to the identity of the figure itself, its role in the lives of ancient women, whether ritual or apotropaic (or both), has also been a topic of discussion by these scholars.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Mold-made figurines are often termed ‘plaque figurines’ and those that are wheel-made are called ‘pillar figurines’ (e.g., Meyers 2017: 117).

<sup>10</sup> These are termed ‘hybrid’ by Paz (2007: 45).

<sup>11</sup> A recent suggestion (Hunziker-Rodewald 2020) to view the drum as a direct association with the phases of a



### *Regional and Cultural Context*

Although iconographically conforming to the basic ‘grammar’ of the disk-holding female figurines, the ABM figurine has several unique features. The mode of manufacture, which we surmise was made by hand, does not align with the conventional technical definition of the category of disks held pressed against the body, namely, that they are mold made. Moreover, these mold-made figurines routinely have decorative designs showing jewelry or details of dress that are incised or punctured, as well as in relief, which are an integral part of the mold (cf., two molds from Iron Age IIA Tel Rehov, Kletter and Saarelainen 2020: 27; Mazar 2020: 9). In the ABM figurine, the decorative elements, whether jewelry or clothing, are painted on.

Parallels to solid figurines with round or oval body sections and appendages (arms, breast, and disk) that were added separately are not common, and in fact are usually categorized in the literature as having been mold-made, despite those features that we suggest point to hand formation. Examples come mainly from Transjordan and include: a neck-to-waist fragment from a tomb at Irbid (Dajani 1966: 90, pl. XXXIII:16; also in Holland 1975: 196, A.10.G.3; Kletter 1996: 136, 5.E.1.1; Paz 2007: 33, A55) and a head-to-vulva fragment from Deir ‘Alla (Amar 1980: 62, No. 33, pl. 9:1; also in Holland 1975: C.6.A.7; Kletter 1996: 138, 5.E.1.40; Paz 2007: 33, A52; for a photograph, see Hunziker-Rodewald 2020: 259, Figure 5). A head-to-waist fragment found at site WT-13 in the Transjordanian plateau (Daviau 2014: 4, pl. 3.3) is described as a solid pillar with arms, breast added, like the ABM figure. The drum in this figure is not flush against the breast but rather is somewhat angled away.<sup>12</sup> A figurine torso from shoulders to below the waist that is similar to ours in many respects was found at Tell Abu al-Kharaz and assigned to early Iron IIB (the beginning of the eighth century BCE; Phase XIII). This fragment was described as being handmade, with arms, breasts, and drum attached separately (Bürge 2013: 517–521).<sup>13</sup> To these we may add a few figurines that appear similar to ours found at northern sites in Israel, e.g., Megiddo (surface find) (Peri 2013: 1024, Figure 20.1:4) and possibly Tell el-Far‘ah North (Chambon 1984: pl. 63:1, Stratum VIIB), with the drum held near the chest at an angle, clearly an added feature. These two figurines have incised decoration that appears to have been added when the figure was leather hard and not as part of a mold, further supporting the suggestion that they were hand formed. Moreover, the incisions depict simple linear motifs, as opposed to the more intricate designs often found on the mold-made items.

Parallels to drummer figurines that are painted are extremely rare and we cite here two of them. One is an example from Transjordan that was a surface find from the Amman Citadel: the hair is painted black and traces of red are preserved on her face (Amar 1980: 86, Figure 82; photo in Dornemann 1983: pl. 89:2; see also Kletter 1996: 4.A.3). Red paint that covers both the disk and the hands gripping it was found on a fragment from an Iron II(A?) context in Samaria of the type with outstretched arms holding the disk perpendicular to the body. Since it is fragmentary, it is difficult to know whether the rest of the figure was painted as

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woman’s reproductive life was based on a number of figurines wherein the drum was replaced with the figure of a baby or child (e.g., from Iron Age IIA Tel Rehov, see Kletter and Saarelainen 2020 with discussion and references).

<sup>12</sup> The photograph of this figurine shows that the head had been broken off at the line above the shoulders; the head itself appears to be mold-made.

<sup>13</sup> Bürge (2013: 520) notes a torso from Beth-Shean Level Lower V that she claims is almost identical to the example from Tell Abu al-Kharaz. From the drawing in the original publication (James 1966: 337, Figure 111:1) it is difficult to determine if indeed this item is handmade as well.

well. The small, preserved part of the body shows that it was hollow, yet handmade, making this a hybrid type (Holland 1975: B.VIII/6; Kletter 1996: 5.IV.6.24; Tsoran 2015: 24). Additional painted figurines were found mainly in Transjordan; although they are not of the drummer type, they show that the painted tradition was known at sites in that region. Examples include a torso fragment that was a surface find from Tell el-Mazar that was painted with black bands on the front (Amar 1980: 88, Figure 85), as well as several heads whose eyes and hair are emphasized by black paint (e.g., Amar 1980: 85, Figure 80, unstratified, from Sahab). It is unknown to which body type these heads might have belonged.

Painted drummer figurines, all of the type with hollow, probably wheel-made bodies and outstretched arms holding the drum, dating to the latter part of Iron Age II (eighth–seventh centuries BCE), come from sites along the southern Phoenician coast (e.g., Paz 2007: 39–40, B.3, Figure 2.4:3 from Achziv), and were also found in Cyprus, most likely under Phoenician influence (Paz 2007: 63).

### Discussion and Conclusions

This brief review of female figures holding disks, most probably to be identified as drums, places them in a clear spatial and chronological framework, namely northern Israel in the Iron Age IIA, and somewhat later reaching Transjordan, Phoenicia, and Judah. While there is marked variability in both their style and technology, it is important to emphasize the commonality of the theme itself, showing that what they represented, whether in the realm of the cultic or the apotropaic (or both), was meaningful to a wide range of end users. Despite the technical and stylistic diversity seen both geographically and chronologically, the extensive circulation of these figurines is an expression of the close cultural koine that existed in the region during the tenth to eighth centuries BCE, regardless of the geo-political division into territorial kingdoms, such as Israel, Judah, Ammon, and Moab, as well as the Phoenician cities.

The predominance of the mold-made drummer figurines during Iron Age IIA in northern Israel points to this as being the main technique for the manufacture of such objects, while the variations reflect local technical choices. The mold-made tradition has its roots deep in the Late Bronze Age, when this technology was used to produce mainly female figures who were either deities or played a central role in cultic practices. The continuing use of this technology in the Iron Age can perhaps be understood as an expression of the close cultural relationship between the technical aspect and the ideology behind the product. In Iron IIA we see the existence of several contemporary formation techniques (i.e., hand formation, wheel formation, hybrid, etc.) showing that it became legitimate to create the desired topic in different ways, detaching the technical from the ideological. It is also notable that, by the Iron IIB, the use of a mold to create these figurines declines and is gradually replaced almost exclusively by wheel making and composite formation (wheel made body and mold made head). Do these developments reflect population diversity, external cultural influences, or possibly the way in which the cultural koine of that time played out, so that it became legitimate to manufacture the same ritually meaningful object in different ways?

Our suggestion that the ABM figurine was hand formed as a solid oval with the features attached opens up the possibility that other such items, despite their routine definition as mold-made in the literature, were so manufactured as well. This suggestion should be

tested by close microscopic examination of those figurines that lack the typical mold-made characteristics. One such feature is the incised and relief decoration that depicts details such as dress, coiffure, jewelry, or the frame of the drum, which was an integral part of the mold and thus does not appear on those figurines that were hand made. When defining hand-, wheel- or mold-made techniques, we should also take into account the possibility of a combination. An example of this seems to be a unique figurine from Early Iron IIA Tel Reḥov showing a nude female who apparently was made in a mold, yet details of her coiffure and jewelry were perforated and incised by hand, and clay was added to her back and bottom after she was removed from the mold so that she could be free-standing (Saarelainen and Kletter 2020: No. 15). Another possibility is that hand-made figures such as the ABM drummer might have been part of a larger object or vessel, like, for example, a vessel handle from Tel Kinrot (Supinska-Lovset 2014: 69, Fig. 1). Note also two drummer figurines found attached to a cult stand from the Kerak region in Transjordan (‘Amr 1980: 95, Figure 104; also Paz 2007: A59–A60, Figure 2.3:7), although they appear to be mold made in this case.

The ABM figurine is distinguished by the extremely rare if not unique combination of hand formation and painted decoration. The tri-color scheme that appears on the figure is also rare as most of the painted examples at that time were in red with details emphasized in black. The combination of red, black, and white, unique as far as we know in a figurine decoration, points to the realm of Phoenician Bichrome, where such a color scheme is well-known on mostly closed vessels in the early part of Iron IIA (Gilboa 1999: 5). As ABM was located on the northern border of the Israelite kingdom of the ninth century BCE, in proximity to the major Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon, it most likely served as an interface of cultural and economic relations between the Phoenicians and the Israelite kingdom, epitomized by the marriage of Jezebel and Ahab of the Omrides, and expressed in numerous aspects of art and craftsmanship, including architecture, ivories, pottery, and more (Markoe 2000: 38). Close relations between Phoenicia and ABM are evident in the large number of Phoenician items, particularly pottery, found at the site, and it is possible that the tri-color decorative scheme on the figurine was a product of such influence.

The presence of a drummer figurine at ABM in the late tenth–ninth century BCE, albeit of a non-routine combination of technology and decoration, associates the city with the Israelite kingdom, where the majority of such items were found. Yet, on the other hand, this type of figurine is known from other contemporary contexts, so that it serves as a connection to the multi-national cultural koine that flourished in the Iron II in which the northern geo-political powers of that time were involved, including the Kingdom of Israel, the Phoenician coastal cities, the Arameans, and the territorial kingdoms of Transjordan.

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# Rethinking ‘Cultic’ Herd Management: A Preliminary Multi-Isotopic Perspective on the Proposed Iron Age IIA Cultic Space at Khirbet Summeily

Kara Larson and James W. Hardin

Faunal remains recovered from a proposed cultic space at the small Iron Age IIA administrative site of Khirbet Summeily, Israel, provide the opportunity to investigate whether or not differences exist between animals herded for consumption and commodity and animals exploited for cultic purposes within the same settlement. While there is a plethora of scholarship on the archaeological endeavor of connecting material culture to cultic activity and identifying religious practices in the Iron Age (so well demonstrated by Beth Alpert Nakhai), there is still much to be learned about cultic practices in the southern Levant.

The application of zooarchaeological analyses has been noted and discussed at a number of Iron Age I and II sites across the Levant (Ben-Tor 1980; Boer 2015; Cahill and Tarler 1993; Greer 2013, 2014; Hellwing 1984; Hesse 1985, 1986; Hitchcock et al. 2015; Horwitz 1987; Klenck, 2002; Lev-Tov 2010, 2017; Mazar 1986; Sapir-Hen et al. 2016; Wapnish and Hesse 1991). Most studies have tried to connect the animal remains back to a specific cult associated with one of the many cultural groups emerging during the Iron Age. Specifically, faunal remains from Area T at Tell Dan, as well as remains from Mount Ebal, were used to make connections to the emergence of the Israelite cult in the Northern Kingdom, while connections to Philistine cultic practices were made at Tell es-Safi and Tell Qasile. However, little research has been conducted on herd management practices in connection to cultic space, specifically if different herding practices or selection protocols were exercised when selecting animals to sacrifice and/or offer. The lack of focus on animal dietary histories in connection with exploitation practice has further limited the understanding of specialized herd management and cultic faunal deposits during the Iron Age IIA. More so, few isotopic analyses have been incorporated into understanding the animal lifeways of faunal deposits in cultic spaces in the southern Levant or beyond. A singular contemporary isotopic analysis conducted by Elizabeth Arnold at Iron Age II Tel Dan in northern Israel found no distinction between animals recovered from the identified cultic space and those recovered from other portions of the site (Arnold et al. 2021). So far, no other isotopic studies have been conducted to determine if a distinction exists between cultic and domestic consumption animals.

Stable isotopic analyses offer the opportunity to learn about animals' past dietary histories and allow for the reconstruction of animal herd management. The lack of isotopic analyses that address herd management practices of animals exploited for cultic purposes serves as the motivation for this exploratory study from the published isotopic database from Khirbet Summeily (Larson, Arnold, and Hardin *forthcoming*). Here, the authors aim to determine, through the analyses of isotopes, if animals recovered from and potentially used in cultic

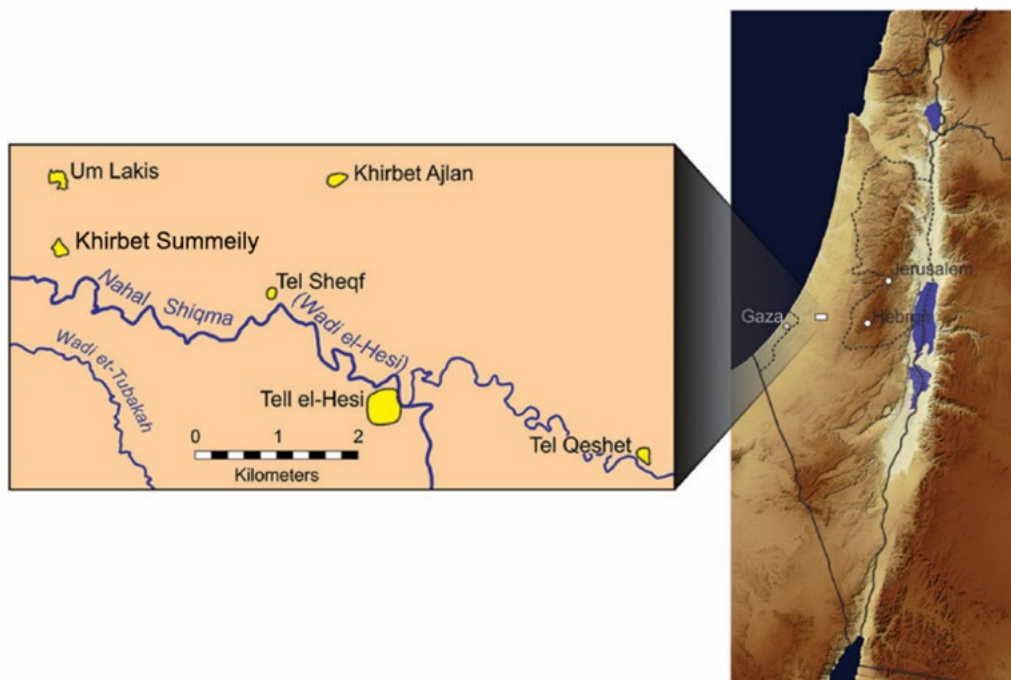


Figure 1: Location of Iron Age IIA Khirbet Summeily in the broader Greater Hesi region of the southern Levant.

spaces were herded differently from animals intended for administrative (consumption/commodity) purposes at Khirbet Summeily.

### Site Background

Khirbet Summeily is a small site, a little larger than one acre, located approximately 3-4 km northwest of Tell el-Hesi along Wadi el-Hesi (Nahal Shiqma) (see Figure 1). The site received little attention before the Hesi Regional Survey project mapped and photographed the site between 2008 and 2010 as part of its systematic survey of the Ruhama Quad (map 97) being prepared for the Israel Antiquities Authority (Blakely and Hardin *forthcoming*). Based on the materials recognized during the surface survey, the site was identified as a likely Iron Age IIA farmstead or small hamlet. Jeffrey Blakely and James Hardin, the co-directors of the survey, began excavations at Khirbet Summeily as an avenue to address research questions associated with Iron Age ethnogenesis from the perspective of household archaeology (Hardin, Rollston, and Blakely 2012). Excavations began in 2011 and continued with field seasons in 2012, 2014, and 2017.

During this time virtually no remains of domestic structures were revealed. To date, work in nine 5x5 m areas yielded evidence of four phases of remains from the Late Iron I (Phase 5) to the mid Iron IIB (Phase 2) (Hardin and Blakely 2012; Hardin, Rollston, and Blakely 2014). The best preserved and most complete remains derive from Phases 4 and 3 (Figure 2). Both



Figure 2: Top plans of the Iron Age IIA occupation layers, Phase 4 and Phase 3. Note that the potential cultic space is denoted by a red outline.



# RETHINKING 'CULTIC' HERD MANAGEMENT

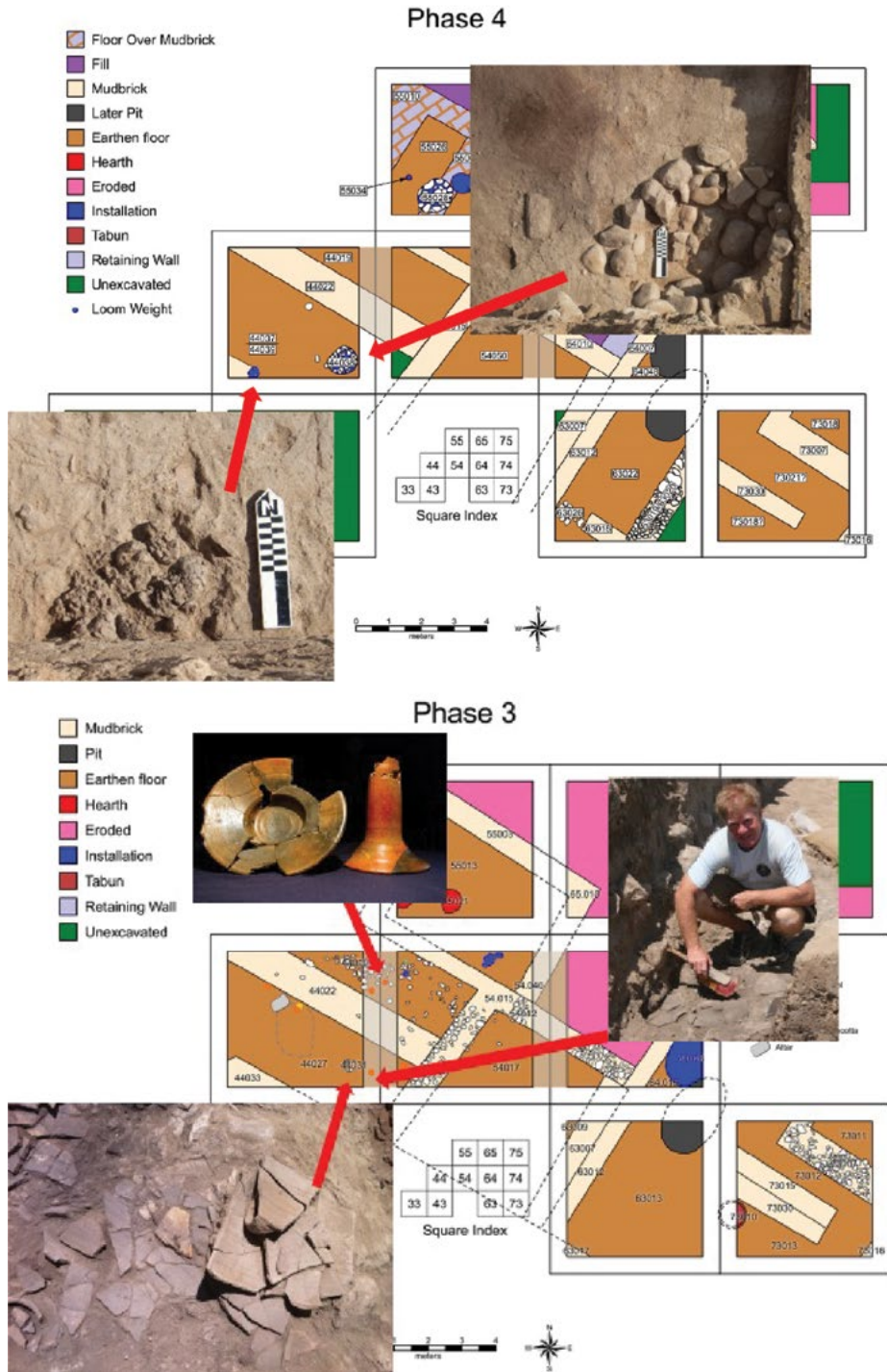


Figure 3: Important finds from Phase 4 and Phase 3 originating from the proposed cultic space.

are Iron Age IIA phases and preserve the remains of a single, relatively large, and short-lived architectural complex whose remains are the focus of the study presented here.

Phase 4, though limited in exposure, appears to be a well-planned and -constructed building with mudbrick walls built on wadi and field stone foundations (Figure 3). Based on a limited collection of ceramics found so far, archaeomagnetic samples, and the phase's relationship to Phase 3, it appears to date to the early to mid-10th century BCE (ca. 1000-940 BCE) (Stillinger 2018). Phase 3 seals the earlier Phase 4 material and consists of well-preserved, rebuilt walls of the previous phase at a higher level and with raised floor levels in some of the rooms. There are six clear structural units or rooms, all connected architecturally (see Figure 3). Dispersed throughout are broken ceramic vessels on floors; cultic materials; Egyptian remains including scarabs, pendants (including Ptah Sokar; Ludvik 2020), and figurines (including an Asherah plaque figurine; Hallote 2014); and archaeomagnetic data (Stillinger 2018). It appears that Phase 3 ended in a fiery destruction in the last quarter of the 10th century BCE and the settlement was abandoned for a time (Stillinger 2018: 160).

Based on these finds, as well as a survey of nearby contemporary sites and land use in the vicinity, we currently understand the function of Iron Age Khirbet Summeily during Phases 4 and 3 as beyond subsistence farming, and likely administrative. One key to understanding the administrative function of Summeily was, in addition to the varied nature of the remains, the discovery of at least seven burned anepigraphic bullae likely associated with one of these two phases. Two bullae have complete seal impressions, two have fragmentary seal impressions, and the others lack any remains of the seal impressions at all (Hardin, Rollston, and Blakely 2014). Another clue supporting the function of Khirbet Summeily as administrative is provided by oxygen, carbon, and strontium isotope analysis of ruminants from the site in its Iron Age IIA strata. Evidence indicates sheep and goat living their early lives in one place and then being brought to the Summeily region only after the forming of their third molar (Larson, Arnold, and Hardin *forthcoming*). This is suggestive to us of provisioning. Sheep and goat not native to the area had connections with more arid regions (Arabah, Egypt?) and the Shephelah but not the coastal plain (Larson, *forthcoming*; Larson, Arnold, and Hardin *forthcoming*). In addition, Edward Maher identified Nile perch in the faunal assemblage (2012). Other remains include the relatively large quantity of Egyptian scarabs and amulets mentioned above, likely prestige goods associated with social status. Thus, the senior staff of the project see these materials as the possible beginnings of a renewed regional contact with larger geographical areas from the Shephelah and Mediterranean coast to the Arabah and Egypt (Hardin and Blakely 2019). It is likely that the administrative activities of Khirbet Summeily were associated with trade, border maintenance, or perhaps exploitation of the Hesi region as pasturage.

Regardless of which of the administrative functions Khirbet Summeily served, one room in the building likely served a cultic function in both phases. The earlier Phase 4 incarnation of the room included a jar stand with a large adjacent oil stain, a central large wadi stone embedded in the floor, loom weights, *astragali*, and a series of thin white plaster floors (Figure 4). The Phase 3 remains included a series of thin white plaster floors as well as the same jar stand built higher; an accompanying huge oil stain in front of it; a *kurkar* altar; a storage jar/amphora; a chalice; bowls; and a large, terra cotta zoomorphic head, likely of a lion (Figure 4). Several faunal remains were uncovered in the cultic area as well.

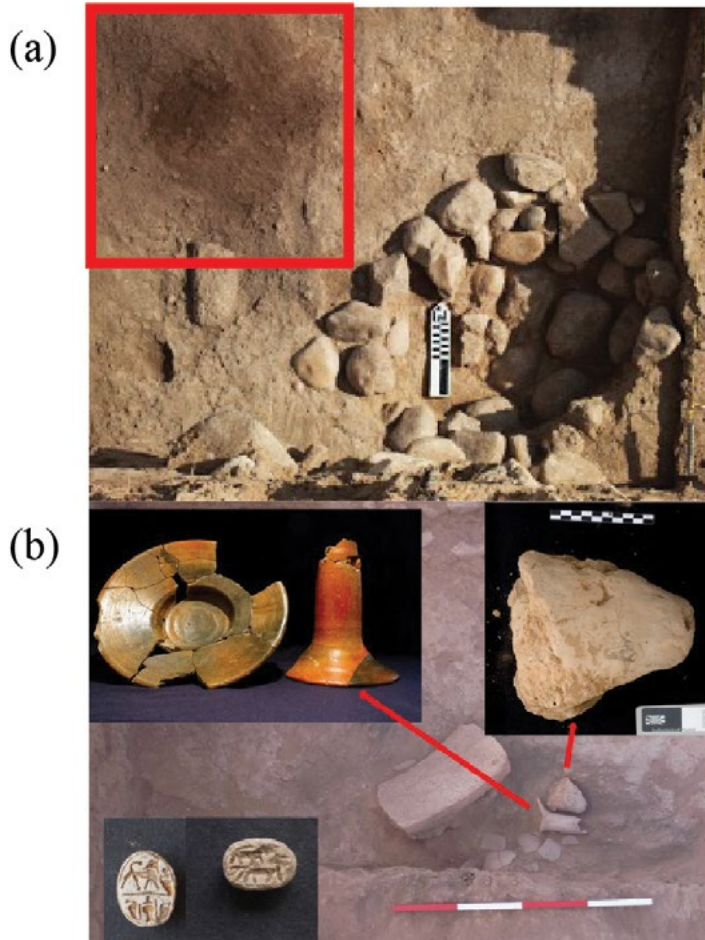


Figure 4: (a) The stained soil (sectioned out in red) in square 44, interpreted by the excavators as an oil stain, and (b) recovered chalice and zoomorphic lion head from square 44 along with recovered Egyptian scarabs.

Of particular note, three *astragali* bones were uncovered as a cluster from the suggested cultic space (Figure 5). These remains were highly polished, suggesting heavy human handling or deliberate polishing activity, and all displayed cut marks on the distal portion, suggesting these were originally discarded during the animal butchery process. Archaeologically recovered *astragali* are an interesting phenomenon in the archaeological record and are particularly prominent in archaeological sites in the Near East. Gilmour (1997) provides an extensive and thorough review on the nature and function of *astragali* bones from across the Near East and Mediterranean region, with particular emphasis on sites from Israel (Megiddo, Lachish, Taanach, Tell el-Hammah, Tel Miqne-Ekron, and Tell Qasile). Here, it was concluded that the caches of *astragali* bones were likely used as game pieces, but they may have also served a ritual function. Further, Gilmour (1997) suggests that the recovery of *astragali* bones, in appropriate cultic contexts, can be signalers of ritualistic activity. We conclude that the three recovered pieces from Khirbet Summeily were likely used as ritual or divination pieces



Figure 5: Recovered highly polished ovicaprine *astragali*, interpreted as possible divination pieces used for ritual activity.

rather than game pieces based on their context of recovery and associated material goods. However, a distinct interpretation of these remains is beyond the scope of this review.

The material remains recovered from the room covering much of Square 44 separate this space from the remaining space and indicate its use for cultic or ritual activity. However, while the material remains indicate the room was used for cultic purposes, questions still remain on the potential use of animal goods in the space. Of interest here is the possible separation of animals to be used in ritual activity from animals used as commodities or for consumption. While the literature is saturated with zooarchaeological case studies on the use

of animal goods in such spaces, the authors question if a differential relationship existed between animals used in cultic space and profane animal herd management. Nearby regions, such as Anatolia and Mesopotamia, provide evidence spanning various periods of special requests from temples or cultic groups for animals not from the everyday consumption stock (Collins 2002a, 2002b; Kozuh, 2014; Miranda 2019; Mouton 2017; Scurlock 2002; Schwartz 2017). However, it is unclear if such demands were established in cultic practices in the southern Levant, and, more specifically, in the Greater Hesi region, during the Iron Age. As mentioned earlier, isotopic work looking at cultic herd management is scarce and poorly established in the literature across the southern Levant. However, by looking at the recent study of isotopic data from Khirbet Summeily, the authors hope to address these gaps in the literature. This exploratory analysis provides an important glimpse into understanding the complex relationship between herd management and cultic practices that may justify further analyses.

### Isotopic Study

The isotopic data employed for this study originated from the work conducted at Khirbet Summeily by the authors and their colleagues during the summers of 2018 and 2019 (Larson, Arnold, and Hardin *forthcoming*). In summary, twenty mandibular molars from domesticates (*Capra hircus*, *Ovis aries*, and *Bos taurus*) were selected for sampling from well stratified contexts and floor layers from the Phase 4 and Phase 3 occupations. A total of seven *Capra hircus* (goat), nine *Ovis aries* (sheep), and four *Bos taurus* (cattle) were identified and sampled (Zeder and Pilaar 2010). The molars were sequentially sampled following methodology established by Bocherens et al. (2001) and were pretreated following Balasse (2002) prior to being analyzed for carbon, oxygen, and strontium at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. For a full review of the methodological details of the study and the full result report, we direct readers to Larson, Arnold, and Hardin (*forthcoming*). The concluding argument suggested that Khirbet Summeily was integrated into a regional exchange network, likely using an indirect provisioning system for the recovered and sampled domesticates. However, the results

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Carbon	Species	Tooth	Side	Phase	Square	Locus	Association
OC #1	Capra hircus	M2	Left	4	44	37	Cultic
OC #2	Capra hircus	M2	Left	3	54	5	Cultic
OC #3	Ovis aries	M3	Left	3	44	19	Cultic
BOS #1	Bos taurus	M2	Left	3	44	26	Cultic
OC #4	Ovis aries	M3	Left	4	55	15	Administrative
OC #5	Ovis aries	M2	Right	4	55	26	Administrative
OC #6	Capra hircus	M3	Right	4	55	26	Administrative
OC #7	Capra hircus	M3	Right	4	55	36	Administrative
OC #8	Capra hircus	M3	Right	4	73	18	Administrative
OC #9	Capra hircus	M3	Right	4	73	28	Administrative
OC #10	Ovis aries	M2	Right	4	73	28	Administrative
OC #11	Ovis aries	M3	Right	3	63	13.1	Administrative
OC #12	Ovis aries	M2	Right	3	63	13.1	Administrative
OC #13	Ovis aries	M3	Left	3	63	13.1	Administrative
OC #14	Ovis aries	M2	Right	3	73	12	Administrative
OC #15	Ovis aries	M2	Left	3	73	12	Administrative
OC #16	Capra hircus	M3	Left	3	73	12	Administrative
BOS #2	Bos taurus	M1	Right	4	73	28	Administrative
BOS #3	Bos taurus	M2	Left	4	73	28	Administrative
BOS #4	Bos taurus	M3	Left	3	73	12	Administrative

Table 1: Selected Faunal Molars for Isotopic Analyses

Individual	Species	Tooth	# of Samples Along Tooth	$\delta^{13}\text{CvPDB}$ Maximum	$\delta^{13}\text{CvPDB}$ Minimum	$\delta^{13}\text{CvPDB}$ Range	$\delta^{13}\text{CvPDB}$ Mean
OC #1	Capra hircus	M2	7	-2.8	-9.5	6.7	-6.1
OC #2	Capra hircus	M2	5	0	-6.4	6.4	-3.9
OC #3	Ovis aries	M3	4	-10	-11.1	1.1	-10.6
BOS #1	Bos taurus	M2	3	-8.7	-11.8	3.1	-9.7
OC #4	Ovis aries	M3	5	-9.7	-11.8	2.1	-10.7
OC #5	Ovis aries	M2	2	-9	-10.3	1.3	-9.6
OC #6	Capra hircus	M3	6	-5.7	-10.6	4.9	-7.6
OC #7	Capra hircus	M3	4	-6.4	-10.6	4.3	-8.1
OC #8	Capra hircus	M3	6	-8.9	-10.7	1.8	-9.9
OC #9	Capra hircus	M3	11	-8.1	-11.8	3.7	-9.4
OC #10	Ovis aries	M2	5	-3.5	-11.5	8	-8.3
OC #11	Ovis aries	M3	7	-9.7	-11	1.3	-10.3
OC #12	Ovis aries	M2	5	-9.1	-11.2	2.1	-10.3
OC #13	Ovis aries	M3	7	-7.5	-13.3	5.8	-10.3
OC #14	Ovis aries	M2	1	-2.5	-2.5	0	-2.5
OC #15	Ovis aries	M2	5	-5.2	-9	3.8	-6.8
OC #16	Capra hircus	M3	9	-9.5	-11.5	2	-10.4
BOS #2	Bos taurus	M1	4	-8.8	-9.3	0.5	-9.1
BOS #3	Bos taurus	M2	9	-8.1	-10	1.8	-9.1
BOS #4	Bos taurus	M3	9	-9.1	-10.2	1.1	-9.8

Table 2: Carbon results

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Individual	Species	Tooth	# of Samples Along Tooth	$\delta^{18}\text{O}_{\text{vPDB}}$ Maximum	$\delta^{18}\text{O}_{\text{vPDB}}$ Minimum	$\delta^{18}\text{O}_{\text{vPDB}}$ Range	$\delta^{18}\text{O}_{\text{vPDB}}$ Mean
OC #1	Capra hircus	M2	7	5.9	2.8	3.1	3.9
OC #2	Capra hircus	M2	5	6	3.8	2.2	5
OC #3	Ovis aries	M3	4	4	1.5	2.5	3
BOS #1	Bos taurus	M2	3	2.9	-1.2	4	0.7
OC #4	Ovis aries	M3	5	1.7	-0.3	2	0.8
OC #5	Ovis aries	M2	2	5	3.8	1.1	4.4
OC #6	Capra hircus	M3	6	4.1	-0.1	4.2	1.4
OC #7	Capra hircus	M3	4	3	1	2	1.7
OC #8	Capra hircus	M3	6	5	3.2	1.8	3.9
OC #9	Capra hircus	M3	11	4.4	-0.2	4.6	1.5
OC #10	Ovis aries	M2	5	5.2	2.2	3	3.8
OC #11	Capra hircus	M3	7	5.3	2.5	2.9	3.6
OC #12	Ovis aries	M2	5	8.2	4	4.1	6.6
OC #13	Ovis aries	M3	7	3.5	-1.3	4.8	0.9
OC #14	Ovis aries	M2	1	1.2	1.2	0	1.2
OC #15	Ovis aries	M2	5	3.5	1.1	2.4	2
OC #16	Capra hircus	M3	9	5.1	2.3	2.8	3.3
BOS #2	Bos taurus	M1	4	2.3	-2.5	4.8	-0.1
BOS #3	Bos taurus	M2	9	2.8	-0.1	2.9	1.5
BOS #4	Bos taurus	M3	9	1.2	-1.9	3.1	-0.4

Table 3: Oxygen results

Individual	Species	Tooth	# of Samples Along Tooth	$^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$ Maximum	$^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$ Minimum	$^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$ Range	$^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$ Mean
OC #1	Capra hircus	M2	7	0.70792	0.70787	0.000054	0.7079
OC #2	Capra hircus	M2	5	0.70777	0.70766	0.00011	0.7077
OC #3	Ovis aries	M3	4	0.70847	0.70834	0.00013	0.70842
BOS #1	Bos taurus	M2	5	0.70831	0.70827	0.00005	0.70829
OC #4	Ovis aries	M3	4	0.70832	0.70827	0.000045	0.7083
OC #5	Ovis aries	M2	4	0.70833	0.70827	0.00005	0.7083
OC #6	Capra hircus	M3	7	0.70832	0.70827	0.00005	0.7083
OC #7	Capra hircus	M3	7	0.7083	0.70825	0.00005	0.70828
OC #8	Capra hircus	M3	7	0.70833	0.70827	0.00006	0.70829
OC #9	Capra hircus	M3	11	0.7083	0.70827	0.000027	0.70829
OC #10	Ovis aries	M2	6	0.70831	0.70826	0.00004	0.70828
OC #11	Ovis aries	M3	6	0.7083	0.70826	0.00004	0.70828
OC #12	Ovis aries	M2	6	0.70831	0.70824	0.00007	0.70826
OC #13	Ovis aries	M3	7	0.70827	0.70822	0.000051	0.70824
OC #14	Ovis aries	M2	6	0.7083	0.70829	0.00001	0.70829
OC #15	Ovis aries	M2	6	0.70828	0.70824	0.00004	0.70826
OC #16	Capra hircus	M3	8	0.70837	0.70825	0.00012	0.7083
BOS #2	Bos taurus	M1	4	0.70838	0.70836	0.00002	0.70837
BOS #3	Bos taurus	M2	9	0.70838	0.70832	0.00006	0.70835
BOS #4	Bos taurus	M3	10	0.70839	0.70836	0.000029	0.70837

Table 4: Strontium results



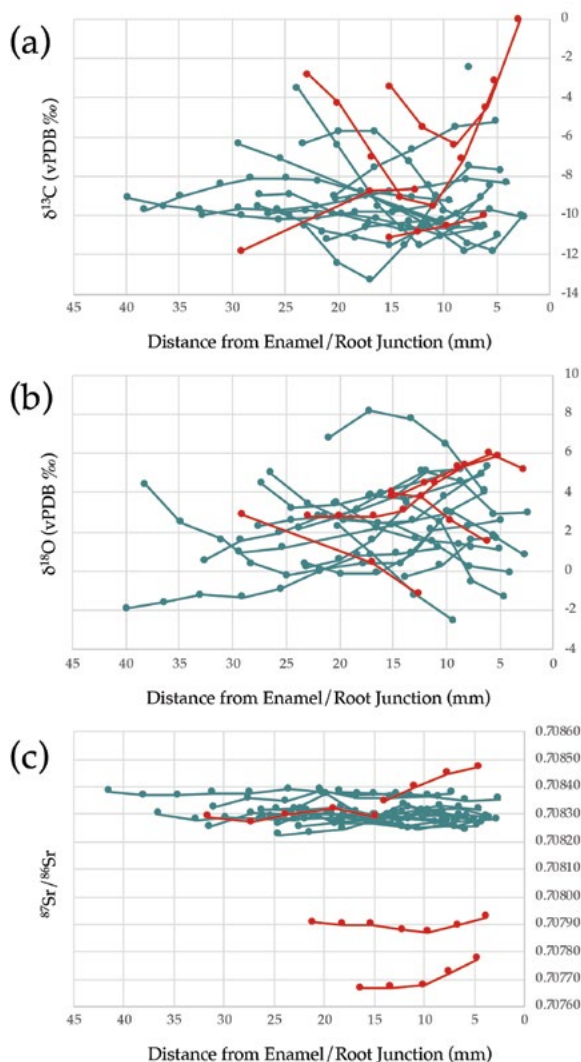


Figure 6: Overall carbon (a), oxygen (b), and strontium (c) results mapped by intra-tooth sample. Administrative individuals are mapped in blue and cultic individuals are mapped in red.

were not used to determine isotopic differences between faunal recovery locations (i.e., administrative versus cultic). This preliminary study uses the isotopic results to investigate differences between the animals brought into Khirbet Summeily for consumption and commodity purposes and animals associated with the cultic space. Here, the authors have separated the individuals based on recovery location, distinguished by 'cultic' for animals recovered from the cultic space and 'administrative' for animals recovered from the other rooms in the building. We will note that the cultic space, and subsequently the 'cultic' specimens, are technically a component of the larger administrative space. However, the different function of this space merits a distinction. All the labeled 'administrative' specimens are inherently non-cultic. Based on this distinction, four of the individuals are designated as 'cultic' and the remainder are 'administrative.' These distinctions are noted in Table 1. A summary of the carbon, oxygen, and strontium results for the ovicaprine (goat and sheep) and *Bos taurus* samples are presented in Tables 2–4. The intra-tooth results for the ovicaprine and *Bos taurus* specimens are presented in Figure 6.

## Discussion

The isotopic results provide dietary, environmental, and mobility data that demonstrate key differences

between the specimens recovered from the cultic space and those recovered from other areas of the administrative structure. As such, the carbon, oxygen, and strontium results will be discussed as a dichotomy between the individuals recovered from the administrative space and the individuals recovered from the cultic space.

### **Administrative Space**

The carbon results from a majority of the specimens recovered from the administrative space suggest the ingestion of a primarily  $C_3$  plant diet with minimal  $C_4$  inclusion. Most of the *Capra hircus*, *Ovis aries*, and *Bos taurus* specimens demonstrate similar carbon values ranging between -13.3‰ and -5.2‰, reflecting the consumption of local Greater Hesi region  $C_3$  vegetation (Cerling and Harris 1999; Hallin, Schoeninger, and Schwarcz 2012; Hartman 2012; Vogel, Fuls, and Danin 1986). However, *Ovis aries* specimens, OC #10 and OC #14, display a mixed  $C_3/C_4$  plant diet with a high proportion of  $C_4$  vegetation. This departure in the *Ovis aries* specimens indicate the combination of ovicaprine animals from different herds coming to Khirbet Summeily. Thus, it seems appropriate that overarching similarities in the specimens recovered from the administrative space would not be present due to the arrival of animals from different specialized pastoralists, as previously discussed (Larson, *forthcoming*).

The oxygen values from the administrative ovicaprine and *Bos taurus* specimens display a high degree of variation, ranging from mean oxygen values of -2.5‰ to 5.3‰. While most of the *Capra hircus*, *Ovis aries*, and *Bos taurus* specimens display seasonal fluctuations of oxygen values signaling water intake from a naturally occurring source, several outlier specimens resulted in oxygen values that reflect a more controlled water provisioning system. These animals include OC #5, 8, and 12, as reflected by their  $M_2$  and  $M_3$  isotope values. Previous interpretation linked the elevated oxygen isotope values to specialized pastoralists providing water that was subjected to prolonged evaporation via trough or cistern (Larson, *forthcoming*). This divergence, coupled with the administrative carbon results, indicates that a combination of ovicaprine animals from different specialized herds were brought to Khirbet Summeily and supports the interpretation of the large building's function as an administrative outpost.

The strontium from the administrative specimens is tightly correlated with a mean strontium range between 0.70822 and 0.70839, with minor shifts towards the latest-in-life  $M_3$  samples. The administrative specimen strontium values are within the reported strontium signature for the Greater Hesi region based on regional isotopic and environmental comparison studies (Arnold et al. 2016; Arnold et al. 2018; Gregoricka and Sheridan 2017; Hartman and Richards 2014). While these animals may have originated in the Greater Hesi region, the slight shifts in later  $M_3$  samples suggest slight movement to Khirbet Summeily, aligning with the interpretation that animals were brought into the settlement by specialized pastoralists.

### **Cultic Space**

The sampled cultic specimens demonstrate distinct isotopic differences when compared to their administrative counterparts (Figure 7). The carbon results from the two cultic *Capra hircus* specimens, OC #1 and OC #2, had mean carbon values of -6.1‰ and -3.9‰ respectively, with a higher degree of variation between sequential samples along each molar. The cultic *Capra hircus* carbon values are indicative of a mixed  $C_3/C_4$  plant diet with a high proportion of  $C_4$  vegetation incorporated into the specimens' diet during their first year of life, as reflected by their  $M_2$  isotope values. The mixed  $C_3/C_4$  diet of the two cultic *Capra hircus* individuals are different than the  $C_3$  diet of the administrative specimens, suggesting different vegetation intake between the two sets of animals. The *Ovis aries* specimen, OC #3, resulted in an average carbon value of -10.6‰ and does not differ from the administrative *Ovis aries* specimens. *Bos*



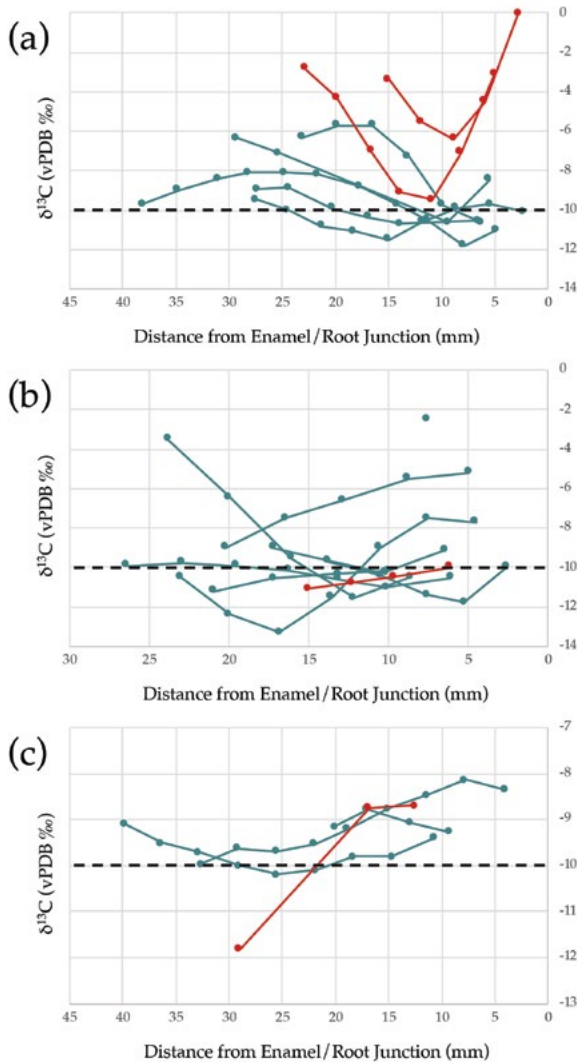


Figure 7: Overall carbon results separated by *Capra hircus* (a), *Ovis aries* (b), and *Bos taurus* (c) results mapped by intra-tooth sample. Administrative individuals are mapped in blue and cultic individuals are mapped in red.

*taurus* specimen, BOS #1, appears to have started with a slightly lowered carbon value when compared to the other administrative *Bos taurus* specimens. However, the specimen seemed to have transitioned toward a similar vegetation intake source as the other *Bos taurus* specimens slightly later in life (mean carbon value of -9.7‰). While, collectively, the carbon values from the cultic animals are varied, the *Capra hircus* and, to a lesser degree, the *Bos taurus* cultic specimens deviate from the other administrative species.

The cultic *Capra hircus* specimens displayed elevated oxygen values compared to the administrative *Capra hircus* specimens. OC #1 had a mean oxygen value of 3.9‰, with a maximum oxygen value of 5.9‰, and OC #2 had a similarly high mean oxygen value of 5.0‰ and reached a maximum oxygen value of 6.0‰. Like the high oxygen values observed in several administrative specimens, these specimens may have been provided water via trough or cistern by specialized pastoralists during their first year of life, prior to arrival at Khirbet Summeily (inferred due to the decrease in oxygen values in sampled  $M_3$  specimens). In contrast, neither *Ovis aries* specimen, OC #3, nor *Bos taurus* specimen, BOS #1, displayed any notable oxygen deviation from their administrative counterparts (Figure 8).

The strontium signatures from the cultic specimens display a strong case for differential herding of cultic animals. The cultic animals appear to have been herded in a different grazing location than their administrative counterparts (Figure 9). The sampled *Capra hircus* specimens, OC #1 and OC #2, resulted in a strontium mean of 0.70790 and 0.70770, significantly lower than the administrative *Capra hircus* strontium mean of 0.70829. The strontium values present in the cultic *Capra hircus* molars indicate grazing locations outside reported strontium values for the southern Levant, and align more closely to strontium values reported across

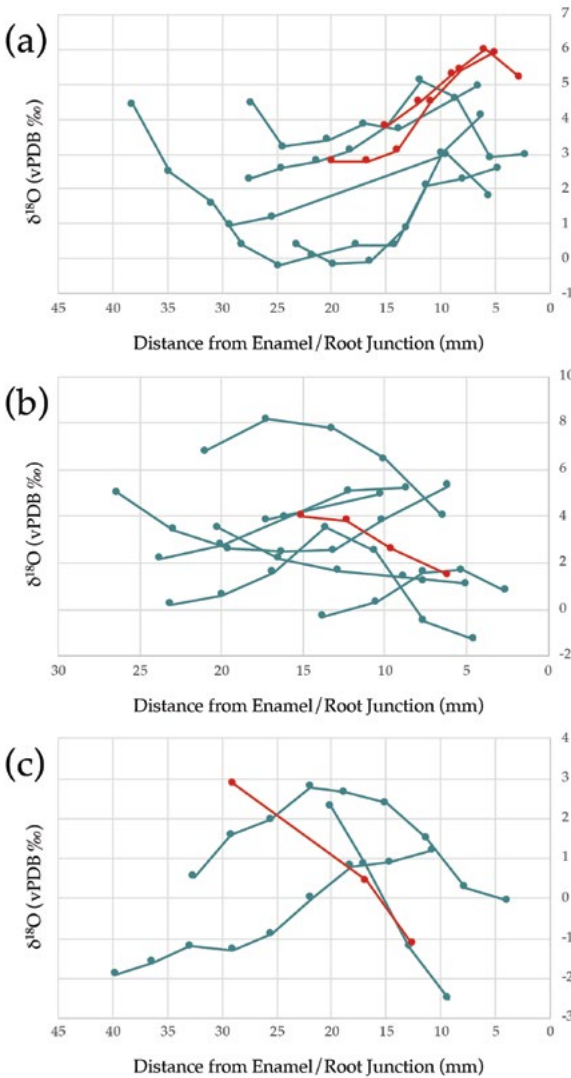


Figure 8: Overall oxygen results separated by *Capra hircus* (a), *Ovis aries* (b), and *Bos taurus* (c) results mapped by intra-tooth sample. Administrative individuals are mapped in blue and cultic individuals are mapped in red.

the Nile River valley and the Faynan region (Arnold et al. 2016; Arnold et al. 2018; Beherec et al. 2016; Buzon and Bowen 2010; Buzon and Simonetti 2013; Buzon, Simonetti, and Creaser 2007; Gregoricka and Sheridan 2017; Iacumin et al. 1996; Perry, Coleman, and Delhospital 2008; Perry et al. 2011; Stantis et al. 2020a; Stantis et al. 2020b; Thompson et al. 2005; Thompson, Chaix, and Richards 2008). This suggests that the sampled *Capra hircus* M<sub>2</sub>'s reflect grazing locations that were not localized around Khirbet Summeily during the first year of life but were instead brought to the site prior to exploitation (Larson, *forthcoming*; Larson, Arnold, and Hardin, *forthcoming*). The *Ovis aries* cultic specimen, OC #3, appears to have been herded in a different location when compared to the other administrative *Ovis aries* specimens (strontium average of 0.70842), indicating a different herd management style from the other *Ovis aries* samples during the second year of life. This specimen also displays a greater degree of mobility than the comparative *Ovis aries* specimens (0.00013 vs 0.000043). While the administrative *Ovis aries* specimens largely reflect mobility and grazing within the Greater Hesi region, OC #9 appears potentially to have originated from farther north in the Shephelah region of Israel, further indicating OC #9 was herded separately from the administrative specimens (Arnold et al. 2018; Hartman and Richards

2014; Larson, *forthcoming*; Larson, Arnold, and Hardin, *forthcoming*). The last cultic specimen, BOS #1, also deviates from the other sampled *Bos taurus* specimens from the administrative space (mean strontium of 0.70829). The lower strontium values in BOS #1 suggest a different grazing location from other sampled *Bos taurus* specimens, but the strontium values are not significant enough to indicate a non-Khirbet Summeily hinterland grazing location. However, it is suggested that BOS #1 was herded separately from the other *Bos taurus* samples, indicating multiple pastoral herders bringing their animals into Khirbet Summeily (Larson, Arnold,

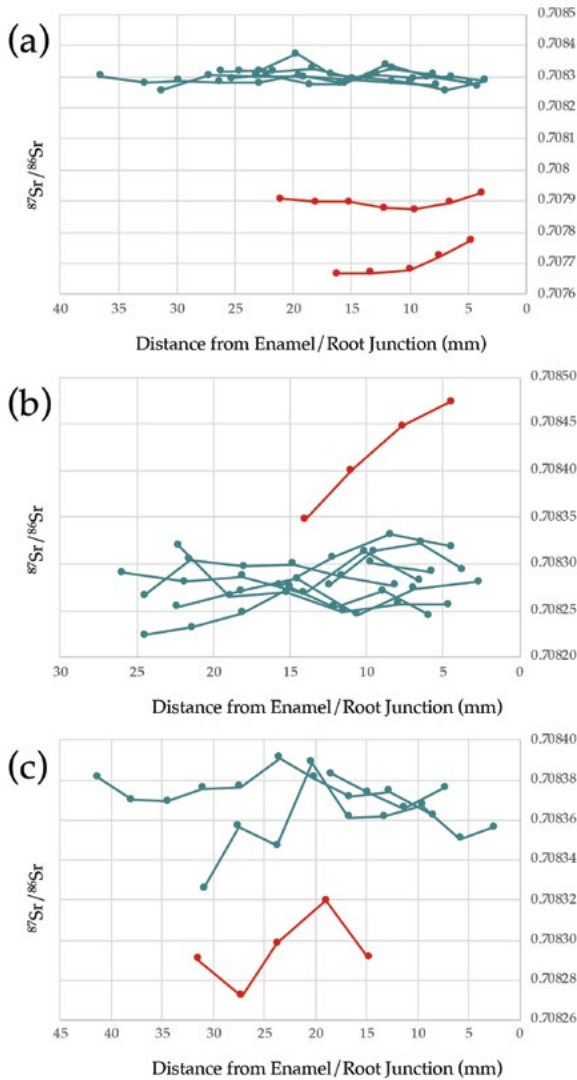


Figure 9: Overall strontium results separated by *Capra hircus* (a), *Ovis aries* (b), and *Bos taurus* (c) results mapped by intra-tooth sample. Administrative individuals are mapped in blue and cultic individuals are mapped in red.

and Hardin, *forthcoming*). While the strontium values from the three cultic animals are collectively varied, the strontium values do deviate significantly from their respective administrative species, suggesting the cultic animals originated from herds that were separate from the administrative specimens.

### Potential for Cultic Herd Management

The results of the carbon and oxygen isotopic analyses highlighted some differences between the cultic and the administrative specimens, particularly in the *Capra hircus* and *Bos taurus* carbon values. However, they do not provide a strong distinction when compared to other sampled specimens from the administrative building. Since the carbon and oxygen data from the cultic specimens do not deviate significantly from the administrative specimens, we believe both consumed a similar vegetation mixture and similar water source in the same region. However, the strontium isotopic analysis demonstrates a distinct difference in grazing locations of the three cultic animals when compared to their species counterparts recovered from other areas of the administrative building. This suggests that the specimens recovered from the cultic room were herded separately from the consumption and commodity animals, suggesting differential herd

management. The carbon, oxygen, and strontium data cannot distinguish whether cultic animals used at Khirbet Summeily originated from herd management specifically *designed* for cultic activities or if cultic practices dictated animal *selection* from herds not normally used for consumption and commodities. However, based on the partial carbon deviation and notable strontium deviation, the results from the sampled cultic specimens suggest a level of differential treatment. This is the first isotopic evidence from the Iron Age southern Levant that suggests differential treatment of animals used for cultic purposes.

If a similar pattern of differential treatment of animals is identified at other Iron Age cultic sites in the southern Levant, this could be a significant development in our understanding of ancient Iron Age cultic activity. If the pattern of differential treatment cannot be established at other locations in the southern Levant, this may also be telling. More generally, the isotopic data, as used here, provide another line of evidence to help identify differences in the use of space and demonstrate the significance of context. Many of the other artifacts found in the room identified by the excavators as cultic/ritual, when taken by themselves, are not necessarily suggestive of cultic/ritual activity. Examples include the loom weights, a store jar, and bowls. However, when these are joined with the zoomorphic terra cotta head (likely a lion), an altar stone, 'greasy' soil over two use phases, *astragali*, and specialized preparation of floors with plaster, the entire corpus suggests a more specialized use associated with cultic/ritual activity. Adding an additional line of evidence that can demonstrate that animals from this room were treated differently than those occurring in other parts of the large building further supports the excavator's original conclusions. While more work and further testing remain to be done, the results of this study provide a compelling argument for further investigation into cultic herd management.

### Acknowledgements

This exploratory research into one of the facets of cultic practices in the southern Levant during the Iron Age would not have been possible without the trailblazing work conducted by Beth Alpert Nakhai. Larson would also like to thank Beth Alpert Nakhai for helping pave the way for female representation in Near Eastern archaeological scholarship for, without such work, this author would have not been provided the proper steppingstones to succeed in this discipline. With regard to the research described in this essay, both authors would like to thank Elizabeth Arnold and D. Shane Miller for their guidance during the early formation of this research project. Further thanks go to Edward Maher, the entire staff of the Joint Archaeological Expedition to Tell el-Hesi, and the crew who excavated at Khirbet Summeily.

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# Two-Handled Pillar Jars at Gezer

Charles Wilson, Steven M. Ortiz, and Sam R. Wolff

The recently-concluded renewed excavations at Gezer (2006–2017) recovered an impressive mid-eighth century BCE pottery assemblage from the northwest end of the project's field, where a large four-room house (c. 124 m<sup>2</sup>; Figure 1) had narrowly escaped R.A.S. Macalister's earlier heavy-handed excavation at the site.<sup>1</sup> The assemblage belongs to Stratum 6, a level whose fiery destruction is most frequently attributed to Tiglath-Pileser III (Wolff 2021). While all of the recovered vessels have obvious parallels, we present in this paper one form in particular, a pillar-handled jar, on account of its being a unique variant, featuring two handles instead of the standard three. We happily dedicate this paper to Beth Alpert Nakhai in recognition of her distinguished career.

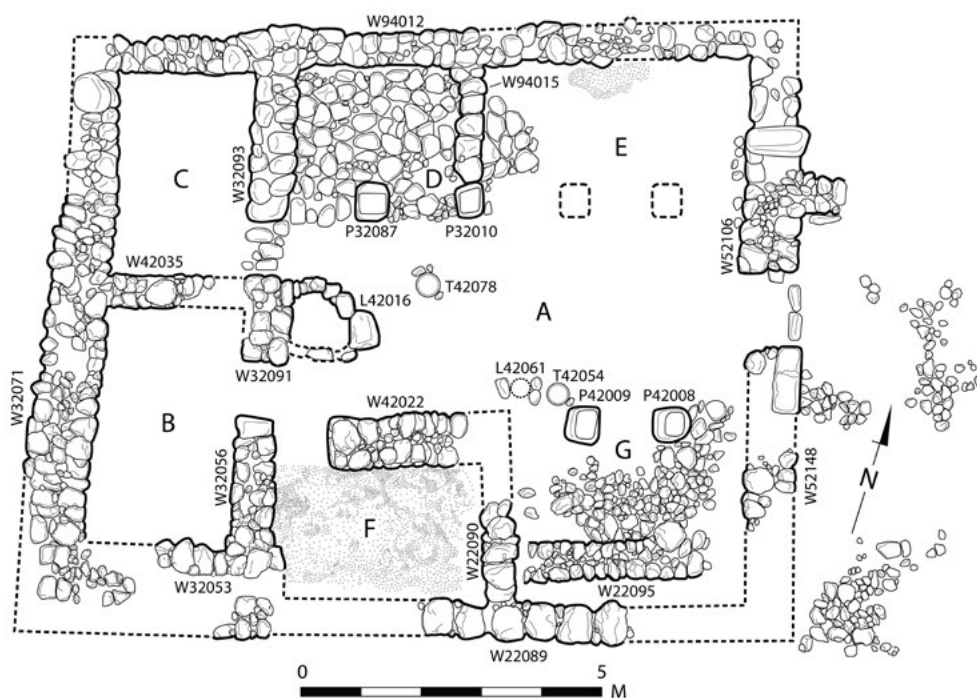


Figure 1: Plan of the recently excavated four-room house located at the northwest corner of the excavation field (plan drawn by Charles Wilson).

<sup>1</sup>For a recent summary of excavation results see Ortiz and Wolff 2017. For an overview of the four-room house see Wilson 2017: 61–102. Regarding Macalister's toll on Stratum 6 in most of the project's excavated field see Wolff, Arbino, and Ortiz 2015: 43–49.



## Pillar-Handled Jars

Jars with attached dipper-juglet stands have been published under a variety of names, including amphora (e.g., Mazar 2006:358–359), spouted jar (Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2015: 217), pillar-handled jar (e.g., Tappy 2015: 192; Gilboa 2015: 308), filler spout or false spout jars, and simply jar/storage jar (Zimhoni 2004: 1835, Figure 26:19:1). Here we adopt the term pillar-handled jar because it highlights the seat-like role of the juglet stand (i.e., the pillar) without presuming additional functions that terms such as spout and funnel imply, which are inapplicable to over half of all juglet stands (by Seymour Gitin's estimation) that are not perforated (Chambon 1984: 195, pl. 46: 9–10; Crowfoot 1957: 191, Figure 31: 1, 1a, 1b; Gitin 1990: 137, 140; Mazar 459, pl. 38: 1–2; Yadin 1960: LXXXIV: 3). Pillar-handled jars are first attested in the Early Bronze Age I (Amiran 1970: 49, Figure 44; Badè 1928: pl. 9:130; Marquet-Krause 1949: pl. LXXIII: 931; de Vaux and Steve 1949: 56.1:127, pl. X:4), after which they seemingly disappear from the archaeological record for roughly two millennia, resurfacing in the late Iron Age IIA (Fritz and Kempinski 1983: pl. 150:8; Kleiman 2015: 202, Figure 21:8; Singer-Avitz 2016b: Figure 11.39:12)<sup>2</sup> and reaching their floruit in the Iron Age IIB.

Iron Age pillar-handled jars typically have shallow ring bases and globular bodies c. 35 cm tall and 30 cm wide. Other common features include a rounded shoulder, a high, ridged neck, and thickened rim (sometimes hammerhead shaped). As previously alluded to, many scholars believe that the attached 'pillar' was designed to hold dipper juglets for ease of meting out the attendant jar's contents, commonly thought to be oil. For those jars whose juglet stands were pierced, residual liquid left on the dipper juglet's exterior would gradually settle back into the jar (Amiran 1970: 241; Crowfoot 1957: 193). The utility of juglet stands appears to have caught the imagination of potters in the Iron IIB in the southern Shephelah/northern Negev where stands appear on a variety of kraters as well (Frank 2018: 93, 94: Figure 60; Oksuz, Hardin and Wilson 2019: 151.3–4: 230, Figure 7; Singer-Avitz 2016a: 601–603, 960, Figure 12.205:5; 961 Figure 12.206:1, 4).

A few variant forms of pillar-handled jars exist. These include specimens with one-, two-, and even four-loop handles.<sup>3</sup> The three-handled variant is the most commonly attested form with three loop handles attached at the rim and shoulder, typically spaced about 90 degrees apart, and the dipper-juglet stand located where one might otherwise expect a fourth handle (Avisar and Maeir 2012: 372, SJ 504; Gitin 1990: 137, Type 12; Hardin 2010: 66: Table 3.1:10). Pillar-handled jars are too common to list here all of their find spots, but regionally they are attested in the Northern Valleys and Upper Galilee, Samaria, Judah, and the Negev (Ben-Tor and Zarzecki-Peleg 2015: 143; Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2015: 192), with a general absence in the coastal regions,<sup>4</sup> the Transjordan, and Phoenicia (Gitin 1990: 137–140). In the Shephelah, pillar-handled jars are known from Beth Shemesh (Grant and Wright 1938: pls. XLVI:15, 16,19; LXV:14, 15), Tel Goded (Tell ej-Judeideh) (Bliss and Macalister 1902: 102, pl. 49:3), Tell Beit

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion on the earliest Iron Age appearances of pillar-handled jars, see: Gitin 1990: 139.

<sup>3</sup> A one-handled cup-spouted jar was found at Beer Sheba, see Singer-Avitz 2002: 903, Figure 12.165: 2, Type SJ-19; a four-handled spouted jar was recovered from Tell el-Far'ah (North), see Chambon 1984: pl. 46: 11.

<sup>4</sup> Though note exceptions at Tell el-Hesi and Tell Jemmeh, contra Herzog and Singer-Avitz's claim that pillar-handled jars are not attested in the southern coastal region: Petrie 1891: pl. IX: 190; Petrie 1928: LV, 44f, 44g; Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2015: 221.

Mirsim (Albright 1932: 80, pls. 34:1–5; 53:1, 3; 54:1–3), and Lachish (Zimhoni 2004: 1835: Figure 26.19:1; 1840, Figure 26.22:1; 1844, Figure 26.25:5; 1858, Figure 26.34:9).

### Two-Handled Variants at Gezer

As mentioned at the outset, Gezer’s Stratum 6 yielded two rare pillar-handled jar variants, featuring two handles (Figure 2) instead of the typical three. The two specimens were found in association with the large four-room house at the northwest end of the excavation field. The first (Figure 2.1; B32537) is complete and was discovered in the 2008 season inside Room B (the south broad room) located immediately to the right-hand side upon entering the room (Figure 3). In addition to the pillar-spouted jar, Room B yielded among other things 15 storage jars, kraters, bowls, a lamp, and lower grinding stones. Clearly the room served in a storage capacity. The fact that the pillar-handled jar was found just inside Room B not far from a food preparation area at the west end of Room A (notice oven T42078) is in keeping with Frank’s observation that such jars were likely used for ‘short-term storage, when liquids could regularly be taken out of the jar’ (2018: 93), most often, it would seem, for food preparation and refilling oil lamps. Such is suggested from domestic contexts at Beth Shean (House 28636), Tell Halif (K8 House), Lachish (Lower House West), and Beer-Sheba (House 75) (Frank 2018: 127, 129, 131, 160).<sup>5</sup>

The jar measures 30 cm wide and 36 cm tall. It has a ring base, a globular body, a slightly inwardly inclined neck, with a ridge about a finger’s width below a thickened, bulbous rim. The jar is widest below the shoulder, gradually narrowing towards the base. The cup-shaped juglet stand has a straight, inward-slanting rim, with a slight groove immediately below it. The tops of the jar handles are flush with the jar rim and attach at the indentation left between the

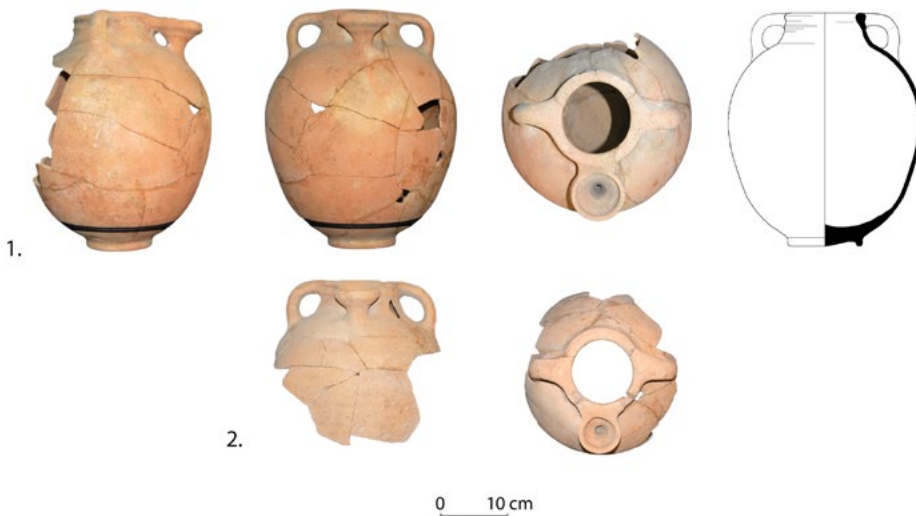


Figure 2: Pillar-handled jars from the four-room house (photos taken and figure prepared by Charles Wilson).

<sup>5</sup>For an interpretation of the domestic context at Lachish, see also Shafer-Elliott 2014: 69–70.



Figure 3: In-situ pillar-handled jar from Room B of the four-room house (photo by Samuel R. Wolff).

rim and high-neck ridge, with the handle bottoms attaching to the upper shoulder. The neck ridge and the stand groove appear to join in a manner that Gitin describes ‘as a “male jack” [locking] into the “female groove” of the spout’ (Gitin 1990: 137, Type 12, Class 1). This feature is relatively well-attested with examples at Hazor, Beth Shean, and Shechem (FitzGerald 1930: 33; Holladay 1966: 422, Figure 93:A, A’; James 1966: 31:14; Yadin *et al.* 1961: CCXV, 23), though it is worth noting that not all specimens with ridged-necks and grooved juglet stands neatly interlock in the manner described (Crowfoot 1957: 191, Figure 31:1; Fritz 1990: 94, 222, pl. 38: A; 285, 75:9; Mazar 2006: 459, pl. 38:2), nor does this particular feature seem regionally diagnostic.<sup>6</sup>

The two handles on the Gezer examples are diametrically opposed, with the cup-shaped funnel attached at mid-arc length between them. The entire rim and shoulder are extant on both specimens making it possible to securely identify each as a two-handled subtype, i.e., there is no evidence of a third handle (e.g., a broken handle stub) opposite the juglet stand or otherwise. In both cases, the juglet-stand bottoms are perforated, allowing liquid to funnel to the jar interior. The complete jar has an estimated capacity of 13 liters when filled to shoulder level, about even with the bottom of the funnel (Laboratoire de l’Image 2011).

The second pillar-handled jar (Figure 2.2; B52630) is missing its base and much of its body. It was discovered in the 2011 season on cobble paving less than two meters in front of the house entrance. Though this jar fragment’s locus was disturbed, surrounding baskets yielded characteristic eighth-century pottery, including two-fifths of the rim of a ridged-rim

<sup>6</sup> An example is found as far south as Tell Jemmeh, for instance (Petrie 1928: pl. LV, 44g).

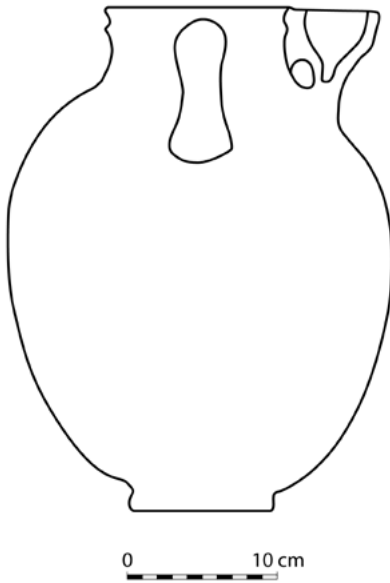


Figure 4: A pillar-handled jar (two-handled variety) from Tell Jemmeh (after Petrie 1928, pl. LV: 44g).

cooking pot and eighth century everted bowl fragments. All of the observations from the first jar concerning its upper body apply to the second. The rims are identical in diameter, measuring 12.4 cm (exterior). Considering these identical traits, it is reasonable to assume that the fragmented jar had a similar capacity to its complete counterpart, *c.* 13 liters, and furthermore that the second jar is best understood in the context of the nearby four-room house, despite belonging to a disturbed locus.

While pillar-handled jars frequently have decorative grooves, or painted lines, the Gezer specimens are plain. One pillar-handled jar fragment was previously recovered at Gezer from Field VII (Gitin 1990: 137–140; pl. 19:15). The fragment consists of the juglet stand (unperforated) and one handle to the stand's right. The neck lacks a ridge, and the juglet stand protrudes above the rim line. Together, these characteristics are different enough

from those of the recently excavated jars that they are unlikely parallels.

### Parallels

Examples of two-handled pillar jars are rare. The closest parallel to the Gezer specimens comes from W.M. Flinders Petrie's excavations at Tell Jemmeh, which yielded a two-handled jar measuring *c.* 26 cm wide and 34 cm tall (Figure 4). Its body is widest just below the shoulder. Like the Gezer examples, a subtle groove on the juglet stand seems to pair and join to the ridge on the jar's neck. The handle tops, by contrast, are not flush with the rim. They attach instead to the neck ridge, rather than the groove between the rim and neck. Petrie described the jar as 'brown with white chip, drab facing' (Petrie 1928: 21 *§*pl. lv; pl. LV: 44g).

Arad Stratum XI, dated to the first half of the eighth century, yielded a pillar-handled jar fragment that was drawn with only two antipodal handles (Singer-Avitz 2002: 113, Figure 5:7); the rim and neck of the jar were missing on the side opposite the juglet stand, so rather than interpolate a third handle, it was merely omitted from the illustration. Lily Singer-Avitz believes that the jar probably originally had a third handle (personal communication).<sup>7</sup> In terms of form, the Arad pillar-handled jar differs from those at Gezer in that its neck curves outward and includes painted lines on the jar shoulder and neck.

SJ 504 from Tell es-Şafi/Gath Stratum A2, while described as 'a storage jar with three handles and a triangular spout in place of a fourth handle' (Avisar and Maeir 2012: 372, SJ 504) may

<sup>7</sup>Lily Singer-Avitz, e-mail message to author, May 16, 2017.

actually be an unusual two-handled variant. The specimen is drawn with two handles attached to the neck and shoulder and spaced only 90 degrees apart (Avissar and Maeir 2012: pl. 15.11:1; pl. 15:12), with one of the handles opposite the juglet stand in contrast to the antipodal handles on the Gezer examples. Maeir has clarified (personal communication) that SJ 504 is actually ‘a two-handled jar with a spout.’<sup>8</sup> In this case, the handles are placed to the right and opposite the spout, with no sign of a third handle on the left-hand side. It is worth noting from this unusual example that in a case where not all of the sides of a pillar-handled jar fragment are preserved, merely having a handle opposite the juglet stand is not indisputable proof that the original jar had three handles, even if the three-handled modality is the most probable one.

## Conclusion

Further exposure of Stratum 6 by the renewed excavations yielded two pillar-handled jars in association with a large four-room house at the northwest end of the excavation field, each jar a rare two-handled variant. The findspot of the complete jar in the entrance of Room B—a storage room just around the corner from a food preparation area in Room A—is consistent with the suspected short-term storage function of pillar-handled jars.

The three-handled jar variant is so common that it is understandable when jar fragments of uncertain modalities are interpreted as three-handled jars (such as the example from the HUC excavations at Gezer) or mischaracterized even when the form is unambiguous (as with the two-handled specimen from Tell es-Şafi/Gath). With a number of possible pillar-handled jar variations now on offer—ranging from one to four handles and in various arrangements—one takeaway is that pillar-handled jar reconstructions should be interpreted with caution. Between the recently discovered two-handled pillar jars at Gezer and the examples at Tell es-Şafi/Gath and Tel Jemmeh, the two-handled variant is now securely attested. Based on these parallels and their find spots, it is possible to speculate that the two-handled pillar jar is a southern and/or coastal form. Whatever the number of handles, there can be little doubt that these jars all served the same basic function of dispensing small quantities of liquid (most likely oil) by means of a dipper juglet.

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<sup>8</sup> Aren Maeir, e-mail message to Wilson, May 11, 2017.

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## TWO-HANDLED PILLAR JARS AT GEZER

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# Greco-Roman Dining Practices, Feasts, and Community Structure at Qumran

Alan W. Todd

One of the most visible mechanisms of group identification that the *Yahad* used at Qumran was the convening of feasts. The *Yahad* were the inhabitants of Qumran from c. 100 BCE until 68 CE, when it was destroyed by fire during a Roman offensive in the region to squash the First Jewish Revolt. The *Yahad* used feasts to solidify communal bonds while reifying the extant hierarchies of its individual members. My analysis of the Jewish group's feasts is based largely on 1QS (*Serek Ha-Yahad*, or the 'Community Rule'), composed c. 100–75 BCE, the archaeological remains from the site of Qumran, and contemporary literary descriptions (Cross 1994; Metso 1997; Schofield 2008b; Schofield 2009). The basic reconstruction of the *Yahad*'s dining practices at Qumran is largely in line with the scholarly consensus. In this study I build on this reconstruction by situating the development of the *Yahad*'s organizational patterns and dining practices within their broader Greco-Roman context. Before explicating the form and function of the *Yahad*'s organizational patterns and dining practices, I provide a brief overview of the archaeological and textual evidence that helps us characterize the *Yahad* and the socio-religious significance of the Jewish group's dining practices.

## Qumran and the *Yahad*: An Overview

Qumran is situated on the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea, approximately twenty-one kilometers east of Jerusalem and twelve kilometers south of Jericho. Initially occupied during the eighth or seventh century BCE, the site was inhabited until the Neo-Babylonians destroyed the First Temple in Jerusalem along with many nearby sites (including Qumran) in 586 BCE. The site was resettled near the end of the second century BCE (Crawford 2019; Magness 2012; Meyers 2010; Meyers and Chancey 2014). More than nine-hundred manuscripts discovered in several caves just meters from the site are collectively referred to as the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS). These manuscripts include several versions of books from the Torah written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek; several works that were eventually excluded from the Jewish canon, such as the work of Ben Sira; records of commercial transactions; and texts that reflect the central tenets held by a group that referred to itself as the *Yahad*.

These latter texts include biblical commentaries, liturgical works, apocalyptic visions, and rules and ordinances for communal organization. Collectively, the texts have enabled scholars to come to the general consensus that the *Yahad* initially consisted of members of the Zadokite line of priests and like-minded scribes, or perhaps better, priests who were also scribes (Crawford 2019: 77–115; 166–194). These Temple officials had come to reject the sacrificial system, believing it was defiled upon Jonathan the Hasmonean's usurpation of the office of the high priest in 152 BCE and his initiation of a number of sacrificial reforms (Collins 2009: 56–67, 79–97; Eshel 2008; Taylor 2012: 22–108). Then, around 100 BCE, some members of the *Yahad* retreated to the desert east of Jerusalem in order to become a new Israel (1QS II, 21–22;



CD XIII, 1), a move seemingly motivated by the religious significance of the wilderness in many biblical texts (e.g., Num 1–2; Exod 18:21–22; Isa 40:3) (Schofield 2008a; Wardle 2010: 139–161). This group saw itself as a priestly-scribal community that would, at least temporarily, replace the Temple in Jerusalem (1QS VIII, 1–16a and IX, 3–11).

Archaeological and textual sources have allowed scholars to paint a rather vivid picture of daily life at Qumran. Magen Broshi and Hanan Eshel have argued that between 150 and 200 people may have lived in the area, including in nearby caves and tents (Broshi 2000; Broshi and Eshel 1999; Patrich 2000). Excluding those who dwelt near the site, others have suggested that between twenty and seventy people may have been able to live within Qumran's building complex (Hirschfeld 2004: 65; Patrich 1994: 93–94). This low estimate for the population of Qumran, in conjunction with descriptions in the DSS, has led some scholars to infer that elite members of a larger Jewish group that referred to itself as the *Yahad* permanently occupied the site from ca. 100 BCE until its destruction in 70 CE (Collins 2009: 69–78). Partial excavations of the cemetery just east of the site's living quarters suggest that only men inhabited Qumran.<sup>1</sup> The complete absence of decorations such as mosaics, frescos, and architectural moldings implies a community that lived in austerity. In addition, the inhabitants of the site appear to have been engaged in Torah study and scribal activity. A room with narrow built-in benches along its walls has been suggested as a meeting place for the study and exposition of Torah. Remains of long, narrow, low benches (5 meters long, 40 centimeters wide, and 50 centimeters high) and two inkwells (a rare find from this period) have also been discovered at Qumran. The benches and inkwells have led some scholars to suggest that one of the rooms was a scriptorium in which scribes copied many of the manuscripts that were found at the site. Several ostraca have also been discovered at Qumran, including an abecedary and one that likely refers to the *Yahad* (Cross and Eshel 1997; 1998; Lemaire 2003; Magen and Peleg 2006: 72). Relatedly, ink used for the Thanksgiving Scroll (a document associated with the *Yahad*) has recently been shown to contain water from nearby sources (Rabin 2013; Rabin et al. 2009: 97–106).

Perhaps one of the most striking features of Qumran is its number of *miqva'ot*. Although ritual baths begin to be common features in towns and cities at this time, the number and size of *miqva'ot* at Qumran is quite unusual and speaks to the members' heightened concern with maintaining ritual purity. *Miqva'ot* appear adjacent to places throughout Qumran where a resident or visitor could contract or spread ritual impurities: near the exit of the cemetery, adjacent to the latrine, and near the entrance to the dining hall (discussed below) (Magness 2002: 147–158; Reich 2000). This concern with ritual purity is attested in other archaeological features at the site dating to the first century BCE through first century CE. For example, jars found at the site have been shown to be ideally suited for the protection of foodstuffs and stored scrolls as described in the DSS (Magness 2004a). In addition, a low wall (not exceeding 1.4 meters in height) that runs from north to south for approximately 140 meters along the

<sup>1</sup> As many as eight women and five children may have been buried at Qumran during this period, although the evidence is far from conclusive. According to Zias (2010: 225–238), the alignment and accompanying burial materials of the remains that are thought to be of five women and children appear to come from a later extension of the cemetery by a group of Bedouin. In any case, the textual evidence does not speak exclusively of male membership in all quarters of the *Yahad* community. On the one hand, 1QS does not refer to female members and Josephus describes the majority of Essenes as celibate males. On the other hand, the *Damascus Document* describes married members with children living in 'camps' and Josephus describes 'another order of Essenes' who marry and have children (J.W. 2.160–161).

eastern side of the settlement appears to have separated the site proper from the cemetery. One could easily climb over it, however, suggesting that the wall's function was largely symbolic. Jean-Baptiste Humbert (2006) and Joan Branham (2006) have argued that this wall was meant to demarcate the pure, holy space of the settlement from the impure space of the cemetery. Branham (2006: 130) also notes that a small opening in the wall at loc. 63 provides direct access to the site's largest *miqveh*, which would have allowed a burial party to regain ritual purity before entering the living quarters.

Roland de Vaux's excavations revealed a rectangular room (loc. 77) of approximately 22 x 4.5 meters (de Vaux 1973: 11–13). Archaeological remains associated with this room support the notion that members of the *Yahad* used it for communal meals. Along with the discovery of dozens of jars filled with animal bones buried outside the room (loc. 65, loc. 73, loc. 80, loc. 92), the room adjacent (loc. 86) and the opening into the rectangular hall contained approximately one thousand dining vessels (Humbert and Pfann 2003: 38, 41, 50). A large ritual bath was also located outside the room, an arrangement that matches literary descriptions about features associated with the dining room at Qumran. As 1QS V, 13–14 states: 'They shall not enter the water to partake of the pure meal of the men of holiness, for they shall not be cleansed unless they turn from their wickedness' (Magness 2011: 140).<sup>2</sup> According to Josephus: 'After dressing in linen, they bathe themselves in cold water. After this purification they assemble in one room to which no one is admitted who do not share their beliefs; they themselves only enter this dining room if they are pure, as though into a holy precinct' (*J.W.* 2:129) (Magness 2011: 140). Thus, both archaeological and textual evidence identifies this room as a dining hall.

More may be inferred about the community from the finds associated with the dining hall. Among the vessels discovered in the pantry (loc. 86) connected to the dining hall, approximately 279 were shallow bowls, 798 were hemispherical cups and 150 deep cups, and 65 were vessels used for serving or storing food (Humbert and Pfann 2003: 41, 50). From the quantity and type of kitchenware, we may conclude that each dining member would have had a complete, identical set of dishes for dining at every meal.<sup>3</sup> That each member had dining vessels of the same size suggests that they also consumed the same amounts of food. That members were served the same amount of food may be supported by the statements made by Josephus, who comments that the members consume their meal in silence due to 'the fact that they are always sober, and the same amount of food and drink is allotted to each of them in a way that they are all satisfied' (*J.W.* 2: 133). Although his comments are only suggestive, Philo seems to support Josephus. In Philo's description of the Essenes' daily life, he highlights their remarkable proclivity for communality (*κοινωνία*) based on inculcating equality among all members (*Good Person*, 85). Philo comments that the Essenes demonstrated their devotion to equality by sharing a home and drawing from pooled resources to equally share clothes and food. The shared food, Philo states, is consumed at their common meals (*συσσίτια*) (*Good Person*, 86; see also Philo, *Hypothetica*, 11–12).

<sup>2</sup> Magness notes that 4Q512, frg. 9 states that Qumran members who suffered a genital flux had to purify themselves before eating and drinking. She also observes, however, that 4Q512, frg. 9 seems to pertain only to individual meals, not communal ones.

<sup>3</sup> The number of serving vessels were fewer because they were not needed for individual use; food and liquid would have simply been dished out from these vessels into the bowl and cup and onto the plate of each member.

The textual and archaeological evidence also strongly suggests that those living at Qumran sat while they ate. The DSS consistently use the verb יָשַׁב (to sit) to describe the members' dining postures (e.g., 1QS VI, 2–5) (Schiffman 1989: 56). Moreover, 1QS VII, 15b states that members were fined if they reclined during their meals: 'A man who sends forth his left hand in order to recline (לִישֹׁב) on it will be punished for ten days.'<sup>4</sup> Josephus' account of the Essenes' communal meals supports this evidence. Despite his frequent mention of Jews as well as non-Jews reclining at feasts (e.g., *Ant.* 12:96–97, *Ant.* 15:21. *Ant.* 15:241), and comments on reclining couches (*Ant.* 12:96–97), Josephus also remarks that the Essenes 'sit themselves down (καθισάντων)' upon entering their dining room (*J.W.* 2:130).

The archaeological evidence for dining posture at Qumran fits well with these textual witnesses. On the one hand, there is no evidence for stone reclining benches along the outer walls of Qumran's dining hall. Wooden reclining couches would not likely survive (Magness 2011: 126), but, if couches were used, we would expect to find mosaics indicating where the couches were to be aligned. Unfortunately, there is no evidence of mosaics (Dunbabin 2004: 36–71). On the other hand, there may be evidence for larger, high tables at which diners could have sat to eat their food. De Vaux discovered three square pillars erected in a row in the southeastern half of the room and a fourth pilaster in the wall of the southeast corner of the room in line with the pillars. The pillars and pilaster were made of mud brick and covered with plaster. Jodi Magness (2011: 122) has suggested that these pillars were bases for wooden beams used to support a second story. Stephen Pfann (2006: 166) rejects this interpretation based on the alignment of the pillars relative to the hall's entrance, which he argues would weaken the structural support for a second story. Instead, he suggests the evenly spaced pillars supported one or more wooden tabletops of mortise-and-tenon construction. Some charred wooden remains around the pillars may support his conclusion (Pfann 2006: 166–168). In the end, using only archaeological evidence (or lack thereof) to prove that reclining couches were not used is largely an argument from silence. Still, the lack of relevant archaeological evidence (with the possible exception for the evidence of high tables) along with the statements made in 1QS and Josephus about the *Yahad's* dining posture strongly suggest that dining couches were not used at Qumran.

Finally, many scholars have suggested that the *Yahad's* communal meals held at Qumran were meant to emulate or replace, at least temporarily, sacrificial meals conducted within the Temple. The ritual bath located just outside the dining hall illustrates the *Yahad's* rule that each member must be ritually cleansed before meals, which imitated the requirement that the Temple's priests consume their portion of sacrificial meat in a state of ritual purity. In addition, 1QS VI, 3–5 states: 'Wherever ten men belonging to the party of the *Yahad* are gathered, a priest must always be present... When the table has been set for eating or the new wine readied for drinking, the priest shall be first to stretch out his hand to bless the first portion of the bread and the new wine.' Once again, Josephus' remarks are nearly identical: 'A priest says grace before the food, and it is unlawful for anyone to taste the food before grace is finished.' (*J.W.* 2:131). Jodi Magness (2011: 84) goes a bit further, arguing that having dishes

<sup>4</sup> Philip S. Alexander and Geza Vermes (1998) suggest that the verb לִישֹׁב may be problematic and argue that it might be emended to לִישֵׁב [to talk, to hold a conversation]. I see no reason to accept such an emendation. First, לִישֵׁב would result in a sentence with odd semantics. Second, Alexander and Vermes do not provide any reason for why לִישֹׁב is problematic. It seems לִישֹׁב would only be problematic if we assume that those at Qumran were unfamiliar with the practice of reclining. Yet, as I indicate, this is highly unlikely.

of the same size suggests that each member of the Qumran community could be assured of receiving the standardized measurements specified for *terumah* (tithes allotted to priests) described elsewhere in the DSS.<sup>5</sup> In a more recent article, Magness (2016: 5–34) shows that the purposeful and careful burial of animal bones at Qumran, evidenced in the remains of mixtures of ash together with bones of sheep, goat, or cattle found on the ground among large potsherds or inside jars in the open-areas of the site, is quite similar to the sacrificial practices seen at contemporary ancient sanctuaries around the Mediterranean world and Near East. This evidence, along with references in the DSS, leads Magness to conclude that Jews at Qumran offered animal sacrifices at the site in accordance with the biblically mandated sacrificial laws for the tabernacle at the center of the camp of Moses and the Israelites following the Exodus. The bone burials, however, do not provide solid evidence of sacrificial practice (Cross 1995: 85–86; Humbert 1994: 184–191, 199–201; Elgvin and Pfann 2002: 20–33; Magness 2011: 116–128, 132–133; Schofield 2016). First, there is no known Jewish sacrificial custom requiring such burials. Second, no sacrificial altar has been uncovered at Qumran. The incense altar alleged to have been discovered there is too small to have been of any use in communal worship.

Notwithstanding the difficulty of surmising what the burial of the animal bones may suggest, the *Yahad* was highly motivated to consume its meals in a state of ritual purity and in the presence of a priest. In addition, *Yahad* members appear to have considered their food and drink to be ritually pure [*terumah*]. Jonathan Klawans (2006: 171) has recently referred to the evidence for the nature of the *Yahad*'s communal meals (along with the community's scribal activity, Torah study, a heightened attention to purity, and many cultic terms applied to the community itself throughout the *Yahad*'s texts) as the 'sacrificialization' or 'templization' of daily life to compensate for the *Yahad*'s self-isolation from the Temple. The *Yahad*'s communal meals were thus an integral component of emulating and temporarily replacing the Temple's sacrificial system and priesthood.

### The Socio-Religious Functions of the Feasts at Qumran

In addition to highlighting the *Yahad*'s devotion to living life in a way that imitates priestly activity at the Temple, the *Yahad*'s communal meals helped to create external and internal boundaries. Accordingly, 1 QS 5:15c–17b states:

None belonging to the *Yahad* is to discuss with the wicked matters of Law or legal judgment, nor to eat or drink what is theirs, nor to take anything from them unless purchased, as it is written 'Turn away from mere mortals, in whose nostrils is only breath; for of what account are they?'

The *Yahad*'s communal meal was the primary site of differentiation between 'Us' (the *Yahad*) and 'Them' (those outside the *Yahad*). Members held conversations and engaged in commercial transactions with non-members but did not share their table with them; those who belonged to the *Yahad* dined only with one another. Thus, the *Yahad*'s communal meals allowed the group, as Claude Grignon (2001: 29) remarked, 'to make itself visible and concrete to itself.'

<sup>5</sup> Magness (2011: 83) also argues that the individual sets of dining ware indicate a concern that ritual impurity could spread through food and drink. If this were the case, individual dining vessels and servings could have ensured that a single member's ritual impurity did not defile the community's food and drink.

Their meals allowed them to establish ‘solidarity and a sense of social continuity’ (Grignon 2001: 24).

At the same time, the communal meals served to establish and maintain internal hierarchies.<sup>6</sup> 1QS VI, 13–15 describes a mandatory examination process before admission into the community. If the one being tested was accepted, 1QS VI, 16–17 stipulates: ‘He must not touch the pure food of the general membership before they have examined him concerning his spiritual fitness and works, and not before a full year has passed.’ If the candidate gained sufficient ‘spiritual fitness and works’ after one year, he could consume solid food with the rest of the community (1QS VI, 17–20). However, the initiate was still excluded from drinking with higher-ranking members until a second year had passed (1QS VI, 20–21). An explanation in 1QS VI, 22–23 specifies that if the initiate demonstrated appropriate knowledge of God’s Law and jurisprudence after two full years, he was then awarded full membership. As a full member he was welcome to participate completely in the common meal, which meant consuming both food and drink with the ‘general membership of the *Yaḥad*.’

Neither full membership in the *Yaḥad* nor access to the community’s food and drink were irrevocable. For example, a member caught lying about money was not only denied access to the general membership’s meals for one year but was also deprived of twenty-five percent of his bread ration (1QS VI, 24–25). Restrictions applied to the *Yaḥad*’s after-meal meetings could result in partial exclusion from the community and its meals: members were not to speak disrespectfully to each other, voice disapproval of the community’s priest, accuse comrades of sin without evidence, speak foolish words, lie down to sleep, depart without reason, be insufficiently covered, spit, expose themselves, laugh, recline, gossip about fellow members, or deviate from the secret teachings of the *Yaḥad* (1QS VI, 26–7:20; VIII, 16–20). If a member did any of these things, depending upon the transgression he would be barred from the community’s meal for a specified time. Thus, demotion within the community, like promotion, was actuated primarily through access to the community meal.

Even if a member did not transgress the community’s rules, hierarchies were maintained through one’s bodily location at the table relative to other dining members. According to 1QS VI, 3, at meals ‘the men shall sit before the priest by rank, and in that manner their opinions will be sought.’<sup>7</sup> Benedict Eckhardt (2010) is the most recent scholar to note that 1QS VI, 3 is very likely meant to highlight the status of the priests within the *Yaḥad*. He argues that the passage was meant ‘to secure for the “priests” (whoever that is) the status which they cannot secure through their role in temple sacrifice... The meal presents an opportunity to display and reinforce hierarchies which does not require the temple cult’ (Eckhardt 2010: 207–208;

<sup>6</sup> Josephus reports that the Essenes were so hierarchical that a low-ranked member was forbidden to touch one ranked above him; if such contact did occur, the latter was required to purify himself (*J.W.* 2.150). The scrolls contain no evidence for such a practice, but 1QS V, 12–14 states: ‘He will bring against them weighty judgments, eternal destruction with none spared. None of the perverse men is to enter purifying waters used by the Men of Holiness and so contact their purity. Indeed, it is impossible to be purified without first repenting of evil, inasmuch as impurity adheres to all who transgress His word.’ ‘Perverse men’ can be understood to include those who had not completed their initiation process (i.e., initiates would be prohibited from physical contact with the Men of Holiness).

<sup>7</sup> Josephus may be speaking about the ranking system when he that states that after each member was seated for the meal, ‘the baker serves the loaves in order (ἐν τάξει), whereas the cook serves one dish of food to each person’ (*J.W.* 2.130).

see also Grappe 2004: 102; Himmelfarb 2006: 126; Schiffman 1979: 51).<sup>8</sup> In addition, the passage differentiated non-priestly members of the *Yahad* from one another at the table based on their rank within the community. Although priestly status is highlighted, each member possessed his own rank and sat accordingly.

This socio-religious hierarchy affirmed at the table contrasts with the *Yahad*'s valorization of equality. On the most basic level, communal meals provided opportunities for members of different statuses to dine, pray, and deliberate together (discussed further below). In addition, as Dennis E. Smith (2003: 9–10) argues, the simple 'act of dining together is considered to create a bond between the diners. In the ancient world this symbolism was carried by various elements of the feast, such as the sharing of common food or sharing from a common table or dish. But above all it simply derived from the fact that the diners shared the event together.' Thus, boundaries based on knowledge of God's Torah may have been blurred, at least for a time, as all members sat together at the table.

### **Yahad at Qumran, Associations, and Greco-Roman Feasts**

Benjamin G. Wright (2017: 356–360) laments that Qumran studies have by and large started from the assumption that the *Yahad* was an isolationist Jewish sectarian group. As such, and with a few notable exceptions, including studies that have identified similarities between the organization of the *Yahad* and Greco-Roman associations (see below), scholars have generally failed to examine the DSS and the archaeological evidence from Qumran with the goal of determining the extent to which the *Yahad* engaged with the Mediterranean-wide Hellenistic cultural discourses. Wright (2017: 362) explains:

Even if the group at Qumran could be characterized as [a sect], sociological research shows that its members might still be deeply affected by the surrounding culture and society. Taking this kind of approach pushes scholars to rethink such basic questions as which texts among the scrolls we might label 'sectarian,' a reconsideration that would have the potential to reshape how we understand the texts and those who collected them.

To move forward, Wright proposes breaking down the beliefs and practices of the *Yahad* into their constituent parts to allow scholars to better see if any of them can be shown to draw on or develop ideas and concepts that were part and parcel of the Hellenistic cultural milieu. Wright then proceeds to do just that. In the rest of his article, he shows that members of the *Yahad* were steeped in beliefs and practices that only find comparable examples in the intellectual and scholarly circles of the Greco-Roman world; from the *Yahad*'s collection of texts, which appear to best fit the model of the archival practices of Greco-Roman 'libraries,' to the members' scientific knowledge (namely, that of astronomy and astrology/ physiognomy), their 'encyclopaedism,' and their hermeneutics (Wright 2017: 364–377). As noted above,

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<sup>8</sup> Martha Himmelfarb (2006: 126) states of 1QS: 'The fact that the priests are singled out for mention is an acknowledgment of their status, but it is ultimately an acknowledgment without content.' Himmelfarb attempts to show that the priestly status was transferred to the community as a whole, which may in part be true but still underestimates the explicit in-group hierarchies attested from this passage. Even priests in Israelite and Jewish traditions could have different statuses (e.g., high priest vs. the rest of the priests; ritually pure priests vs. ritually impure priests, etc.).

however, Wright acknowledges that a few scholars have also entertained the possibility that the *Yahad* modelled itself on the Greek voluntary associations that had become one of the most important social institutions of the Mediterranean world, an institution that also provided the basic model for Jewish synagogues in the diaspora just prior to or around the same time as the *Yahad* established itself at Qumran. It is to this topic that I now turn.

I begin with the evidence outside of Qumran that suggests the *Yahad* organized itself like any other association. First, it is important to note that for Jews and others in the Greek-speaking world, the word ‘synagogue’ (derived from the Greek word συναγωγή) was interchangeable with other well-known words for associations. Philo, for example, states: ‘There are numerous societies (θίασοι) in the city [Alexandria]... Synods (σύνοδοι) and dining couches (κλῖναι) are the particular names given to them by the people of the country’ (*Flacc.* 136). Philo also writes that, when defending the gathering of Jewish groups, Augustus decreed that ‘Judeans alone are to be permitted by them [the governors] to assemble in synagogues (συναγωγία).’ These synods (σύνοδοι), he said, ‘were not based on drunkenness and carousing to promote conspiracy...but were schools of temperance and justice’ (*Embassy*, 311–313). For Philo, then, the terms θίασοι, σύνοδοι, κλῖναι, and συναγωγή are transposable. The same is true for Josephus, who uses the term θίασοι to refer to outlawed associations in Rome (*Ant.* 14:215–216) but σύνοδος to refer to the association of the Jews of Sardis (*Ant.* 14:235). More often, though, Josephus refers to συναγωγή when speaking of Jewish associations located in Roman Palestine (see, e.g., *J.W.* 2:285–6; *Ant.* 16:164, 19:300). Yet it is important to note that Philo uses the same vocabulary to describe the Essenes as forming associations when he remarks that the Essenes gathered in συναγωγάι (*Good Person*, 81) while they formed θίασοι (85). Although the former term refers to the building in which Essenes assembled, the latter term refers to Philo’s perception that they formed associations. While Josephus does not use these terms to describe the Essenes, he does describe the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes as philosophies and ‘parties/schools’ (αἵρεσις) (e.g., *J.W.* 2:119; *Ant.* 13:171; *Ant.* 13:298). Significantly, contemporary textual evidence and inscriptions show that members largely belonging to philosophical associations used the term ‘αἵρεσις’ to refer to themselves (Mason 1996).<sup>9</sup> Philo’s nomenclature for the Essenes shows that he, at least, thought that the Essenes formed associations. Josephus’ use of terms affiliated with philosophical associations in textual and inscriptional evidence may suggest that he also understood the Essenes to have structured themselves as a type of voluntary association. The details that emerge from the DSS about the *Yahad*’s communal organization align well with Philo and Josephus.

Moshe Weinfeld (1986) was the first scholar to produce a comprehensive study that compared the *Yahad*’s organizational features described in 1QS with those in ancient descriptions of other Greco-Roman associations. He demonstrated that many of 1QS’s organizational elements were similar to those of Greco-Roman associations, including their appellations, descriptions of leadership organization, procedures for the acceptance of new members, laws and penalties taken on by members, discussions of the probationary period for prospective members, and descriptions of membership renewal ceremonies (Weinfeld 1986: 10–45).

<sup>9</sup> See CIG 3069 = OGIS 326 (Ionia, Asia Minor, 146–133 BCE); AGRW 213 = OGIS 573 = LSAM 80 (Cilicia, Asia Minor, 27 BCE–14 CE); and SIG<sup>3</sup> 1000 (Bithynia, Asia Minor, undated).



Yonder Moynihan Gillihan (2007) has recently added to Weinfeld's initial work. He begins his massive study of all of the *Yahad's* regulations (collected from their manuscripts) by arguing that the social theories of Max Weber and Georg Hegel, as well as theories found in the philosophical treatises of Plato and Aristotle, indicate that, as voluntary associations form, they duplicate the rules, regulations, and even the language of the state (Gillihan 2007: 67–77). For Gillihan, the 'state' upon which most Greco-Roman associations based their organizational patterns was the local *polis*; for other associations, the 'state' was a utopian vision of the *politeiai* crafted within some philosophical schools. In any case, if 'associations are formed on real or utopian visions of the state, they will tend to have similar "state-like" features, from the names of officers to organization of administrative councils, public cults, or the military' (Gillihan 2007: 641).

In his exhaustive comparison of rules and regulations in CD, 1QS, 1QSa, along with associational legal codes and philosophical treatises, Gillihan (2007) attempts to demonstrate that *Yahad* adopted the civic ideologies of the Greco-Roman world and associations in particular. In 1QS Gillihan locates a statement of purpose, instructions for new members, general group protocol, rules for meetings and for the governing body (the 'Many'), regulations for the initiation process, a penal code (including unseemly behavior, slander, and murmuring during sessions of the Many), and rules for the *Maskil*, all of which he claims are analogous to typical associational and Greco-Roman civic organizations (Gillihan 2007: 371–581). In contrast, 1QS's rules for meetings and for the governing body, regulations for the initiation process, and the penal code for communal meetings find no parallels in biblical documents. Gillihan's conclusions, if correct, offer strong evidence that members of the *Yahad* drew on the same basic structuring mechanisms that voluntary associations throughout the Mediterranean used to organize their own groups.

A number of rites related specifically to the *Yahad's* communal meals found throughout 1QS also suggests that Greco-Roman associational dining protocol was integrated into the *Yahad's* organizational schema. Controlling access to food and drink or the amount of food and drink received according to members' knowledge of groups' esoteric beliefs appear to have been common practices among associations devoted to mysteries (McLean 1993). In addition, several scholars note that a number of the rules listed in 1QS VI, 24–VII, 20 are also attested in many inscriptions of the rules and regulations of other associations (Eckhardt 2010: 205–206; Gillihan 2007: 499–530; Smith 2003: 155–156; Weinfeld 1986: 42–43). As described above, these rules mandate that members are not to speak disrespectfully to each other; voice disapproval of the community's priest; accuse comrades of sin without evidence; speak foolish words; lie down to sleep during meetings; depart without reason; be insufficiently covered; spit; expose themselves; laugh; gossip about fellow members; or deviate from the secret teachings of the *Yahad*. If a member did any of these things, he would be barred from the community's meal for a specified time depending on the transgression. For comparison, we turn to the regulations described on an inscription of the association of Zeus Hypsistos (ca. 69–58 BCE) in Egypt. There we read that members may not use disrespectful language, disapprove of their priest, accuse fellow members of wrongdoing without evidence, gossip about fellow members during communal meals, or speak about the association's rites to those outside their group.

Depending on the offense, the member was fined or denied access to sacrificial communal meals for a specified period. Numerous other inscriptions explicate very similar rules.<sup>10</sup>

Matthias Klinghardt (1996: 227–244) also suggests that the standard tripartite division of the Greco-Roman feasts provided the model for the *Yaḥad*'s own three-part communal feasts described in 1QS VI, 2c–3. A typical Greco-Roman feast was divided into the meal proper (*deipnon*) followed by a libation of wine typically accompanied by a prayer and the singing of hymns, and concluded by an extended period of drinking, entertainment, and/or conversations (the symposium proper). In 1QS VI, 2c–3, we read: 'They shall eat together, bless together, and deliberate (*ywa'āšû*) together.' Klinghardt (1996: 227–244) argues that the Hebrew verb 'to deliberate' is cognate with Greek verbs used in texts about the symposia of philosophical schools, which often took the form of conversations led by an expert and commonly involved question-and-answer sessions. Such sessions are described in 1QS VI, 3b–4b and 1QS VI, 7b–13. According to Klinghardt, it is obvious that the three communal activities of 1QS VI—even in correct order—relate to this very kind of [meal] assembly.

Gillihan (2007: 417–419), however, has recently challenged Klinghardt's description of 1QS VI, 2c–3. Gillihan (2007: 417) argues that, because 1QS VI, 4c–5a describes a priest blessing the meal prior to its consumption, 1QS VI, 2c–3 does not refer to the order of the meal but instead 'surveys the type of activities in which members typically engaged: eating; worshipping; deliberating.'<sup>11</sup> Moshe Weinfeld (1992: 427–440) has convincingly argued that 4Q434a (dated to the first half of the first century BCE, i.e., contemporaneous to 1QS) presents an early liturgical formula of the *grace after meals*, once thought to have been developed in later rabbinic literature. In addition, Josephus states: 'A priest says grace before the food, and it is unlawful for anyone to taste the food before grace is finished. When he [the priest] has finished his meal, the same priest says grace again (*J.W.* 2.131).'<sup>12</sup> The evidence from 4Q434a and Josephus suggests that the reference to 'blessing together' in 1QS VI, 3 indeed refers to a second blessing over the food, and that this second blessing was offered after the community had eaten together. In this case, the statements in 1QS VI, 2c–3 are meant to denote three consecutive activities. Given the evidence suggesting that the *Yaḥad*'s basic communal regulations and those governing their communal meals were analogous to the regulations of many other associations, it seems at least plausible that 1QS VI, 2c–3 reflects a tripartite division similar to the typical Greco-Roman feast.

The evidence brought forth by Weinfeld, Gillihan, Klinghardt, and others appears to suggest that the *Yaḥad* was, at least on the most basic level, one type of Jewish association among others. Although they thought of themselves as a community of priests (which many were)

<sup>10</sup> E.g., AGRW 19 (Piraeus, Attica, Greece, and Macedonia, 183–174 BCE); AGRW 299 (Tebtynis, Fayum region, Egypt, 158/157 BCE). AGRW 30 (Physkos, Central Greece, Greece, and Macedonia, 150 BCE); AGRW 121 (Philadelphia, Lydia, Asia Minor, late second century BCE); AGRW 300 (Tebtynis, Fayum region, Egypt, 14–37 CE); AGRW 310 (Lanuvium Campania, Italy, 136 CE); AGRW 8 (Liopesi, Attica, Greece, second century CE); and AGRW 9 (Liopesi, Attica, Greece, second century CE).

<sup>11</sup> Lest we imagine that saying a blessing before the meal is specific to Jewish communities, it is important to note that many Greek and Latin sources speak of similar practices (Leonhard 2007: 309–326).

<sup>12</sup> Smith (2003: 153) refers to the order of the meal blessings described in 1QS VI, 2c–3 and *J.W.* 2.131, but does not explicitly link the order to that of the typical Greco-Roman symposium. Instead, he argues that the ensuing lines (1QS VI, 6–7) that mention the need for a quorum to continually study the Law resemble the philosophical symposium that follows the meal. In this interpretation, 1QS VI, 6–7 is related to a new topic rather than to the preceding lines.

intent on replacing the Temple and its sacrificial system, this does not negate the idea that they were also shaped by Greco-Roman cultural elements. Steven Fraade (2009: 450), however, questions the notion that the *Yahad* should be considered alongside other associations. He states that, although we may find ‘many similarities between the organization and rules of the *yahad* and those of the Roman groups,’ we must be careful about attributing those similarities to cross-cultural influences. He also notes that ‘the other groups cover such a broad chronological and geographical spread that it is difficult to know what sorts of contacts would have been responsible’ (Fraade 2009: 450). I suggest that finding the ‘sorts of contacts’ is not as difficult as Fraade suggests as long as we know where to look: namely, in Jerusalem itself.

### Before Qumran and Necessary Contacts

As noted above, the *Yahad* was formed from a group within the Zadokite priestly line shortly after Jonathan the Hasmonean usurped the office of the high priest in 152 BCE. After taking office, Jonathan instituted a set of reforms to the Temple’s sacrificial system.<sup>13</sup> Shortly after these reforms, we read in several of the DSS about the ‘Teacher of Righteousness’ who opposed the ‘scoffer,’ the ‘Liar,’ or the ‘Wicked Priest’—presumably Jonathan.<sup>14</sup> Most scholars believe the Teacher of Righteousness was a Zadokite priest alienated from the Jerusalem priestly establishment by Jonathan’s usurpation, and perhaps even the legitimate claimant to the office of high priest (Baumgarten 1997). After some years of opposition, the Teacher of Righteousness and/or his priestly group of followers founded the *Yahad* at Qumran (Collins 2009: 69–89). In short, the founder of *Yahad* belonged to a long line of priests who had held the office of high priest in Jerusalem. It seems like it would be a good idea, therefore, to see if there is evidence from Jerusalem dating prior to the split between the Hasmoneans and the members of the *Yahad* that might provide the ‘sorts of contacts,’ as Fraade requires, responsible for the basis of many regulations found within 1QS.

The non-canonical book of *Sirach* provides us with some of the evidence we are looking for. The scribe Ben Sira originally composed *Sirach* in Hebrew during the early second century BCE (c. 200–180 BCE). The book appears to have served as a kind of training manual for scribes and possibly priests in Jerusalem about the significance of Torah learning in addition to ethical instructions on such topics as how to behave at symposia. Among the latter instructions, Ben Sira discusses the correct manner of ranking feast guests (12:12), how to properly carry oneself during the meal (37:29–31), how to act as a good symposiarch in order to justify praise (32:1–2; cf. 31:31), and how to correctly conduct ‘table talk’ during the symposium proper (32:7–12). *Sirach* thus demonstrates that typical Greek feasting practices and their associated values were familiar to at least some intellectual circles living in Jerusalem. Moreover, these

<sup>13</sup> I leave aside the issue of whether or not the *Yahad* formed because they felt that the Hasmoneans did not come from the traditional line of Zadokites. First, Alison Schofield and James VanderKam (2005: 74–87) have argued that the Hasmoneans were Zadokites. Second, ‘proto-*Yahad*’ documents found at Qumran seem to be concerned with matters other than priestly lineage (Collins 2009: 56–67).

<sup>14</sup> For references to ‘Teacher of Righteousness,’ see, e.g., CD I, 11; XX, 32; 1QpHab II, 2; V, 10; and 4Q171 I, 27. For the connection between the ‘Teacher of Righteousness’ and ‘the priest,’ see, e.g., 1QpHab II, 8; 4Q171 II, 19; III, 15. For references to ‘the scoffer’ see CD I, 14; for ‘Liar’ see 1QpHab II, 1–3; V, 9–12; for ‘Wicked Priest’ see 1QpHab XI, 4–8; and 4Q171 IV, 8–10.

groups appear to have been scribes and priests, or perhaps priests who were also scribes. While some scholars have argued that scribes and priests constituted separate groups at this time, others contend that scribes and priests were one and the same during the Second Temple period (Bickerman 1962: 67–71; Cohen 1984; Cohen 1987: 102, 160–161, 218; Gray 1993: 53–58; Hengel 1974: 78–83; Olyan 1987; Saldarini 1988: 241–276; Sawyer 1982; Stadelmann 1980: 40–176; Tcherikover 1966: 124–125, 197).<sup>15</sup> In any case, all scholars agree that Ben Sira operated within the inner circles of priests (Wright 1997: 189–222; 1996: 133–149). Ben Sira's social location may best be exemplified by his ardent support for the priestly establishment and his passionate praise for Simon, the Zadokite high priest of his own day.<sup>16</sup>

There is more evidence from Jerusalem. Sometime between 175–172 BCE, Jason the high priest supervised the official entry of two Hellenistic institutions into Jerusalem: the *gymnasium* and the *ephebate*. The gymnasium was the fundamental educational organ in a Greek city; the *ephebate* was the body of youth trained in the gymnasium to become Greek citizens (Hadas 1959: 65–67; VanderKam 2004: 204–210). According to Victor Tcherikover (1966: 162), 'education in the *ephebeion* was bound up with no small expense and therefore became in the Hellenistic period more or less the monopoly of the sons of the wealthy.' This group would have included Jerusalem's priests. Finally, even as the Jewish priestly family of the Hasmoneans successfully led the revolt against Antiochus IV Epiphanes beginning in 167 BCE, they too adopted many elements of Greek culture. To be sure, the Hasmoneans appear to have been culturally conservative in many ways. The lack of images of people or animals on their coins or architecture from this period seems to represent a determination to (re)-claim a particular Jewish identity (Fine 2005: 60–81). This embrace is apparent in the way they organized their internal political structure, the Hellenistic-style monumental tomb built by Simon in Modi'in described in Maccabees, and the Greek architectural elements at their palaces at Jericho, which included Roman-style dining rooms, or *triclinia* (Rooke 2000: 266–302). Evidence for Rhodian jar handles discovered in Jerusalem dating to the mid-second century BCE also demonstrates that some wealthy Jerusalemites, if not the Hasmoneans themselves, drank imported wine (Ariel 1990: 13–15). All of this together highlights the fact that in Hasmonean-period Jerusalem one probably could find scribes and priests (if not the Zadokite priests themselves) convening symposia, spearheading a Greek educational system, and establishing or participating in Greek-style political structures (among other elements of Greek culture). This suggests that the founder of the *Yaḥad*, a Zadokite priest from Jerusalem, as well as many of its initial members, had likely been exposed to the Greek dining culture and civic institutions upon which many other associations, including Jewish ones, had modeled their basic organizational patterns. It is possible, and even likely, that the basic organizational patterns and the apparent sympotic-like meal pattern of the *Yaḥad* were developed (consciously or not) from contact in Jerusalem with Greek-style feasts and socio-political structures. At the same time, exposure to these Greek cultural elements may have led to a conscious rejection of some of them.

<sup>15</sup> A number of scholars who have challenged the assumption that a class of popular lay scribes arose in Second Temple times imply that Ben Sira must have been a priest as well as a scribe (Sanders 1992: 380–412, 458–490; Fraade, personal communication).

<sup>16</sup> Two long panegyrics end *Sirach*. In the one devoted to the ancestors of Israel (45:6–22), Aaron receives more attention than Moses, David, or any other figure. The amount of praise devoted to Aaron is only surpassed by that devoted to Simon, the Zadokite high priest of Ben Sira's own day.

## Declining to Recline and the Rejection of Opulence

As noted above, the textual and archaeological evidence indicates that residents of Qumran sat while they ate. Indeed, we learn from the 1QS that diners were fined if they reclined during the *Yaḥad*'s communal meals (1QS VII, 15b). Lawrence Schiffman (1989: 56) and Jodi Magness (2004b: 106) have argued that those living at Qumran adopted the posture of sitting at meals to identify themselves with a 'biblical' meal posture in accordance with the community's goal of ridding itself of the corrupting influence of Hellenism. Although it is difficult to determine whether 1QS's stipulation that all diners must sit was based on biblical precedent, the stipulation would make sense as a rejection of typical Greco-Roman dining practices. As argued in the previous section, it seems plausible that the founder and many early members of the *Yaḥad* were exposed to or aware of typical dining practices of the elite in Jerusalem. Then, when the group formed, it was completely at odds with the new Hasmonean priests who had embraced many features of Greek culture. It appears that the members of the *Yaḥad* came to associate these features with the Hasmoneans themselves and one way for them to distinguish their group from the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem was to stipulate different behaviors. Allowing those in attendance at the *Yaḥad*'s communal meals to sit while eating might have functioned to differentiate this group from the Hasmoneans and their way of life, which members of the *Yaḥad* very likely understood to be related in some way to the now-defiled Temple in Jerusalem.

Another reason for the *Yaḥad*'s rejection of reclining at meals could also have to do with the well-known significance of the dining posture itself. As Matthew B. Roller (2006) has demonstrated, reclining at Greek and Roman feasts symbolized *otium* and related aspects of pleasure, leisure, and luxury. Significantly, he also shows that some generals, statesmen, and Cynics refused to recline as a way of communicating their opposition to the luxurious lifestyle that reclining signified (Roller 2006: 88–92). Refusing to recline during meals, and thus concomitantly rejecting a significant feature of Hellenistic feasting practices, may have allowed the *Yaḥad* to demonstrate their group's ascetic ideology. This ideology is readily apparent at Qumran, where there is a complete absence of decorations such as mosaics, frescos, and architectural moldings. This austerity seems to derive from the central tenets of the *Yaḥad*; for example, 1QS emphasizes that members were to live a materially egalitarian lifestyle (Murphy 2002). According to Catherine M. Murphy (2002: 449), offering one's personal wealth for equal redistribution in the community allowed a member to join 'a single entity, a *yaḥad*, united in fidelity and purpose, no longer torn by the greed and violence that characterized the external economy.' Ultimately, Murphy (2002: 455) remarks, this self-sustained economy was a radical attempt by the community to conduct itself as a people bearing witness to 'divine munificence and to the possibility that humanity, or at least a remnant of it, could be redeemed.' By sitting instead of reclining at their meals, the *Yaḥad* may have also been signifying their devotion to rejecting the sensual pleasure, leisure, and luxury they identified with the 'external economy.' This behavior that the *Yaḥad* associated with the 'greed and violence' of the 'external economy' was a hallmark of the domestic feasts convened by the elites of Jerusalem just prior to the Hasmonean Revolt and the subsequent self-exile by leading members of the *Yaḥad*. Ben Sira exhorts his fellow scribes living in Jerusalem 'not to become poor by feasting...' (18:33), for '[the rich person] has no need of you and he will deceive you, smiling at you and giving you hope; he will speak nice things to you... But he will shame you with his foods until he cleans

you out two or three times, and at last he will mock you; after these things, he will see you and leave you and will shake his head at you' (13:6-7).

## Conclusion

As Carol A. Newsom (2004: 1-29) notes, the *Yahad* was involved in dialogue with religious leaders of Jerusalem as well as with broader Jewish traditions. Similarly, as Alison Schofield (2009: 275) argues:

Even outlying traditions are never completely isolated from primary cultural centers. Even as the *Yahad* members codified their own traditions—and identity—they were still in a dialogic exchange with the center [Jerusalem]. Literally, we find this conversation spelled out in *MMT* (cf. *Prayer for King Jonathan*), and indirectly, we find they were not shut off from most widely known Jewish literary traditions, as they retained texts such as *Jubilees*, *Enoch*, *Sirach*, and multiple biblical versions... In the ideological sense, they were increasingly—but never fully—isolated from the religious Other(s) of their day.

That the founders of the *Yahad* were in dialogue with their 'cultural center' also means they came into contact with elements of Greco-Roman culture. I argue that, in Jerusalem, one could find scribes and priests reclining at symposia, Greek educational systems, and Greek-style political structures. That these were features of life in Jerusalem suggests that the founder of the *Yahad*, a Zadokite priest from Jerusalem, as well as many of its initial members, were familiar with Greek dining culture and similar civic institutions upon which many other associations were basing their fundamental organizational patterns. It is possible that these basic organizational patterns, including the apparent sympotic-like meal pattern evidenced in 1QS, were developed (consciously or not) from contact with the extant Greek-style feasts and socio-political structures in Jerusalem.

Analyzing the meal practices of the *Yahad* in light of associational and broader Greco-Roman cultural practices and dining customs allows us to see how the *Yahad* utilized the lexical elements that also shaped other Greco-Roman social institutions. While the basic form of the organizational schema and the order of meals appear to be analogous to other Greco-Roman associations, this particular group rejected one major element: reclining. By doing so, the *Yahad* may have been attempting to reject a pronounced Hellenistic element they associated both with the Hasmoneans and a wealthy lifestyle they abhorred. By refusing to recline, members of the *Yahad* were able to express a particular identity during their communal feasts, which also functioned to solidify communal bonds between its members while reifying their extant hierarchies. These efforts speak to a more complicated phenomenon of cultural negotiation and identity formation on the part of the *Yahad* than the assumption that the group formed in isolation or simply in opposition to Hellenistic culture.

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I was humbled and honored when the editors asked me to contribute to this volume celebrating the work and life of Beth Nakhai. Put simply, I would not be where I am today if it were not for Beth Nakhai. That last sentence is not some ostensibly obligatory, but nevertheless vapid, statement of praise one might find written by a contributor to any *Festschrift*. Let me explain.

I first met Beth in the spring of 1997, the second semester of my freshman year in college. The previous fall I took the first of two introductory courses about ancient Israelite/Jewish religion. This course was taught by William G. Dever and covered the history of the ancient Near East and Israelite history up to the destruction of the First Temple. As can be imagined, it ended on a bit of a cliffhanger, so I decided to take the follow-up course, which covered the Second Temple Period, that was taught by Beth the next semester. These two courses convinced me to pursue graduate studies focused on some aspect of ancient Jewish history. Although I took my time beginning and completing these studies, earning my PhD from Duke University in 2014, there were a few hours in the year 2000 when I was not sure I would even graduate with a bachelor's degree from the University of Arizona. I was preparing to graduate in 2000 after completing my last course of that semester, an upper-level course on the archaeology of Mesopotamia taught by Dever. Due to an innocent mistake, however, Dever initially gave me an 'F' for my final grade, although I was supposed to receive an 'A.' Unfortunately, when I attempted to contact him, I was told he had already left for Israel for the summer. Panicked, I called Beth. She quickly located Dever, who turned out to still be in Tucson, and set up a meeting with the two of us so he could confirm and change my grade. He did, and I graduated. Although it likely would have worked out one way or another, it was Beth's help that enabled me to earn the credits I needed to graduate. Thank you for this, Beth, and for so much more over the years!

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# They also Dug! Archaeologists' Wives and their Stories<sup>1</sup>

Norma Dever†

*'What we need most of all is a wife.'*

I first heard this statement some forty years ago from the well-known classical archaeologists Saul and Gladys Weinberg when Saul was Archaeological Director of the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem. As an academic couple, they appreciated how difficult it was to do everything on a dig, and wished they had a 'wife' to handle all the non-academic excavation responsibilities. In addition, in those early days of co-ed excavation, directors' wives were also burdened with the role of housemother and chaperone. Accordingly, Albright advised in his *Archaeology of Palestine* that 'where expeditions are mixed it is highly desirable to have the Director's wife present, both to provide a feminine social arbiter and to avert scandal' (Albright 1949: 13).

## **Famous Women—Sophie Schliemann and Agatha Christie**

Sophie Schliemann's face is more recognizable than her contribution to Schliemann's archaeological work. A stunningly beautiful Greek woman, Sophie is principally remembered today for serving as a 'model' for displaying her husband's more spectacular finds—but she might have played a more active role than that in retrieving the ancient treasures of Troy.

She married Heinrich Schliemann, who was already an established archaeologist, in 1869. Schliemann was a wealthy man, and he used his great resources to look for Homer's Troy, a task that soon absorbed Sophie as well. The day before the last dirt was to be removed at Troy, Heinrich was accompanied by his wife, when he saw gold. He seized her arm and said, 'Get your red shawl,' which he proceeded to fill with gold that he thought was Priam's. The Schliemanns took the gold to their hut and spread it out, and it was then that he adorned his wife with his discovery. Aided by his wife's relatives, they smuggled the gold out of the country to Athens. According to C.W. Ceram, Sophie continued to work with a pocketknife for almost a month, to help him dig up the famous gold masks, as well as other more mundane objects (Ceram 1966: 51–60).

Recently, it has been suggested that much of Schliemann's account was fictitious and that Sophie was in Athens the day that 'Priam's treasure' was discovered (Trail 1999: 14–21). Although the truth may never be known, it is clear that Sophie provided much of the inspiration for her husband's more spectacular archaeological triumphs.

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In contrast to the enigmatic Sophie, Agatha Christie was an archaeologist's wife whose renown exceeded her husband's when they met. Agatha ran across Sir Max Mallowan at Ur in 1928, and within three years they married, when Agatha was 40 years old. Agatha spent three or four months at a time on digs in Syria and Iraq, where she washed pottery, took photographs, and worked on her mystery novels. It is said that when Mallowan asked her if she minded that he spent his time 'digging up the dead,' she replied, 'Not at all, I adore corpses and stiffs' (Mason 2001: 46–52). Famously, Mallowan also quoted her as saying that 'an archaeologist is the best husband any woman can have; the older she gets, the more interested he is in her' (Andrews, Biggs, Seidel, et al. 1996: 123–131). But she never admitted to having said that herself.

Agatha loved Ur, the tells, and the ancient sites of Nineveh and Nimrud in Iraq and Chagar Bazar and Tell Brak in Syria. She shopped in the bazaars for Persian rugs, bedspreads, furniture, and ornaments, which she took back to England. At Chagar Bazar, Agatha was responsible for the food for the expedition, even for cooking. Her mystery novels—including *Appointment with Death* and *Murder in Mesopotamia*—give much of the flavor of the Middle East of her time.

### **The Early Days—the Petries and the Albrights**

A woman whose labor unquestionably contributed to archaeology is the indomitable Lady Hilda Petrie. Acknowledging this, Sir Flinders Petrie dedicated his book *Seventy Years in Archaeology*, 'To my wife on whose toil most of my work has depended' (Petrie 1969: v). Petrie noticed Hilda for the first time when she was a young woman (he was 42 at the time) at University College, London, where she was studying with the famous artist Henry Holiday. They were attracted to each other and talked about going to Egypt, and for a year thereafter he sent his journals to her. In 1897 they married, spending their honeymoon in Egypt.

He wrote later about Hilda's work that 'I will only say that it was entirely due to my wife that the resources of the British School were raised, to enable work to be carried on by me and our students' (Petrie 1969: 176). Hilda drew many of his plates and plans for publication and was the chief manager of Petrie's excavations, paying hundreds of workers at Abydos and other Egyptian sites. She also copied 2000 signs in the cemetery of Denderah.

In 1935, the Petries moved into the American School of Oriental Research, which is now the Albright Institute in Jerusalem, where they lived until 1942 when Sir Flinders died. It seems that Hilda's training in Egypt, as the one individual responsible for controlling the purse-strings of her husband's excavations, stayed with her. The long-term cook of the American School in Jerusalem, Omar Jibril, said that Lady Petrie would keep canned foods in the back until they spoiled and exploded and that she hoarded sugar by taking it from the dining room (O. Jibril 1970). She was Petrie's loyal companion to the end.

When William Foxwell Albright heard Ruth Norton read a paper on 'The Life-Index in Hindu Fiction' at the American Oriental Society meetings in Philadelphia, he became interested in her, mentioning to his mother her intellect, attractiveness, good upbringing and vivaciousness. Ruth was two years away from getting her PhD in Sanskrit at Johns Hopkins, when she came to Jerusalem to marry William at the St. George's school in 1921. In 1925, the Albrights moved into a wing of the American School—alternating their living quarters between Jerusalem and Baltimore. They had two sons born in each city.

Ruth Albright's primary role was taking care of William (who did not live in the real world), raising their sons, and shielding him from the mundane facts of life. After he died, Mrs. Albright came to visit the Jerusalem school in 1972 and told us wonderful stories of her life with him. A beautiful Bezalel silver box was given to the Albrights by the Palestine Oriental Society when they left Jerusalem in 1935, and Mrs. Albright brought it back to the Jerusalem School. During that visit, she told us that she had, characteristically, protected William from visitors who wanted to see him in his last days because she couldn't let them see William when he was ill. She also said Albright had two categories of Hopkins' PhDs, one for degrees that were real—namely those for his students—and one for doctorates received under the direction of 'others.' On one of his last lucid days, while Ruth was with him in the hospital, she told us that he said, 'But yours wasn't a real PhD, was it?' (R. Albright 1972, personal communication).

### **American Archaeological Couples**

Unlike some other archaeologists' wives, Emily Wright (the wife of G. Ernest Wright) was not comfortable in field archaeology. She did work with Ernest in founding and producing this journal (editors' note, *Near Eastern Archaeology*) under its original title, *The Biblical Archaeologist*, which was launched in 1938 but, as far as I know, Emily did not travel to the Near East with Ernest until 1964, when she came to the Hebrew Union College in Israel. Coincidentally, this was also my first year there. That was a wonderful year with Ernest, Emily, and two of their four children, Danny and Carolyn. In the fall of 1964, when the first small Gezer dig took place, the sherds were brought back to Hebrew Union College for Emily and me to wash and dry. The following spring and summer when Ernest became the advisor to Gezer, however, Emily did not participate in the excavation. When I asked her why she had not gone with Ernest, she replied, 'there were no proper bathrooms' (E. Wright 1965, personal communication). Emily was a loyal, supportive wife, but the rigors of the field were obviously not for her.

It seems to me significant that, even after much research, the first name of Elihu Grant's wife could not be found. In 1930, Grant decided to return to Beth Shemesh (Ain Shems) and found it too late to recruit staff from America or Europe, so he proceeded with staff from Palestine. Dr. Grant appreciated the 'pleasant air of home and housekeeping' that his wife brought to the excavation, but he worried about her overworking and suffering from exhaustion if she helped with the 'real' archaeological work. Speaking of his wife he wrote, 'she did many errands in the city, watched over our interests in camp, marked many hundred pieces of pottery and performed secretarial services, besides taking charge of the women's payroll' (Grant 1931: 57). Mrs. Grant also sent 300 cucumbers to the camp to give some variety to breakfast, and she added soap and a towel as a gratuity to the wage of each woman working on her husband's excavation.

In contrast to the Wrights and the Grants, Helen and Nelson Glueck were a professional couple—albeit in markedly different professions. Albright said that their marriage in 1931 was the most important event in Nelson's life (Running and Freedman 1975: 422–434). Helen Glueck was not involved in Nelson's career as an archaeologist. However, she helped him achieve his goals as an explorer and adventurer. Shortly after their marriage, Nelson went to Palestine, but Helen stayed behind to complete her medical degree and only joined Nelson in 1934. They lived at the American School, and Helen took an interest in the Director's house and

in other parts of the school. She bought several pieces of furniture, rugs, and wall hangings that remain there to this day.

### **Women Present at the Birth of Israeli Archaeology**

Yigael Yadin, perhaps the most famous Israeli archaeologist in the world, met his wife Carmella in high school. They married at a young age and had two daughters. In 1963–1964, Carmella helped to organize a volunteer dig at a site that had been previously unexplored—Masada. She handled all the requests for volunteers, and Yadin wrote in his book on the site, ‘I should like to thank Carmella, my wife, who single-handedly in our “rear headquarters” in Jerusalem dealt with all our correspondence and thousands of volunteer applications. That this book in its present form is better than when I wrote it is mainly due to her’ (Yadin 1966: 8).

In other books, Yadin expressed similar sentiments writing in *Bar Kochba* that, ‘I am grateful to Carmella my wife, who not only shared the prosaic worries of pre- and post-expedition burdens, but rendered my poor English style readable’ (Yadin 1971: 13) and in *Bar Kochba* and *The Cave of Letters* that ‘I am grateful to my wife...for editing the first draft but also for her help in clarifying some of the problems concerning the weaving techniques of the textile finds’ (Yadin 1963: x). In *The Temple Scroll* he wrote, ‘Carmella typed the initial draft of my manuscript, polished it, and devoted considerable efforts to translate the text of the scroll into English. For nearly nine years we worked together on this text’ (Yadin 1977: xii).

As these grateful acknowledgements attest, Carmella was a good copyeditor, a job that has been performed by other archaeologists’ wives over the years, but she was useful to her husband in many other ways. According to Josef Aviram, a close friend of the Yadins, Yadin, responding to criticism at times, would write angry letters to editors or others, but Carmella would convince him to wait and not mail the letter until he cooled off. Aviram says that Yadin did not take one step without her, that she was ‘in the picture one hundred percent,’ and that she was clever, honest, and a considerable partner in Yadin’s work (J. Aviram 2001, personal communication).

Josef Aviram was well acquainted with the Avigads, as well as with the Yadins and said that Shulamit Avigad accompanied her husband everywhere and was very helpful in his work. She worked from 1953 to 1955 at Beit Shearim and typed and retyped the manuscript for the excavation, as well as helping with food for the staff. She also worked in 1969–1984 on the Ein Gedi Judean Caves volumes, as well as the Jerusalem excavation publications, typing and selecting illustrations (J. Aviram 2001, personal communication).

Tamar (Tami) and Yigal Shiloh met when they were in school and worked together on the excavations at Arad, Nagilah and Hazor. Tami almost studied archaeology, but she decided to study Bible instead since she thought that two married people with the same vocation could not have a healthy relationship. When Yigal became the director of the archaeological dig of the City of David in 1978 for eight summers, Tami became completely involved. She was in charge of the staff, the registered finds, and the dig camp, ordering supplies and helping in public relations. People found their own lodging and brought their own breakfast. Drinks were provided, however, and lunch was served for those who worked in the afternoon. All of this took tremendous organization, especially as the personnel and volunteers changed a



great deal. Tami said in my interview with her in 2001 that she and Yigal were a team. While the excavation of the City of David was in progress, she organized classes of school children to visit the site and, when Yigal had to go to war in Lebanon in 1982, he turned everything over to her. Later, after his untimely death of cancer at the age of fifty, she traveled to the United States, lecturing about the City of David. Tami stated that when she and Yigal were 'hot and dirty together,' she felt that it gave an extra quality to their life (T. Shiloh 2001, personal communication).

### **American 'Archaeological Couples' in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s**

Bob and Vivian Bull met in Jerusalem in 1957, and after they married, Vivian joined the group excavating at Shechem taking over the books and the administration of the camp. Vivian worked again at Shechem and Tel er-Ras at various times from 1960 to 1968, helping to buy supplies, working on the registry, and assisting in treating medical problems in the village. In the spring of 1967, Vivian was camp manager at Pella, which proved to be exceptionally rough, as rains caused their tents to sink into the mud, forcing the Bulls to live in their VW bus. It is true that their son, Camper, was conceived in this bus, but not true he was named 'Camper' after the bus! (He was named after his maternal grandmother).

In 1970, Bob became Director of the Albright and received much help from Vivian. From 1971 to 1994 and again in 1996, Vivian was deeply involved in the excavation at Caesarea Maritima. She worked in all the non-archaeological tasks, making arrangements with the kibbutz, doing the bookkeeping, registering pottery and objects, managing the schedule, and working with the volunteers. During the first season there, she took a trip to get supplies in Jerusalem, during which her son Carlson arrived ahead of schedule. When Carlson was three weeks old, Vivian went back to the excavation, and she continues to be involved in archaeological work (V. Bull 2001, personal communication).

In 1958, Al Glock brought home a number of trays of sherds from Jericho, Tell en Nitla and other sites and told Lois to sort them and find parallels. For the next twenty years, Lois did similar sorting for Taanach and Jenin. In 1963, 1966, and 1968, Lois left her four children with relatives to work at Taanach where she served as registrar, photographer and curator of material remains for the twelve-week season and follow-up in the United States. After the death of colleague Paul Lapp in 1970, Glock was to direct the publication of the Taanach excavations, so the couple moved to Jerusalem to work on the material which was then in the basement of Albright. Lois worked full time on this enormous project, supervising vocational students as they cut sherds and drew pottery. She was copyeditor, proofreader, and photographic-plates-marker for the publication of Walter Rast's *Taanach I* volume. After her husband became the Director of Albright in 1978, I remember seeing Lois planting and watering the trees at the Institute in addition to her other duties. From 1976 to 1980, Lois worked in different libraries, compiling relevant research for the Taanach staff and assisting Al when he excavated at Jenin. She also taught students at Birzeit University, where Al was establishing a Department of Archaeology. She worked tirelessly on Al's excavations and with Bir Zeit students even after Al Glock's tragic death.

Ora Van Beek, trained as an ethnologist and fluent in Hebrew, worked with Gus Van Beek at Tel Jemmeh for twelve field seasons from 1970–1990, serving principally as a liaison for the dig

with Israeli institutions, including the Kibbutz Re'im, the Israeli army, the Regional Council, the Department of Antiquities, and the Israeli press. When the kibbutz could no longer feed the excavation workers, Ora and two volunteers shopped for and even prepared food. She also helped set up camp and took people to the hospital in Beersheba when they were ill. Gus and Ora traveled to Iran, Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan, and Yemen, among other places, to do research about earthen architecture. Ora collected data about the interiors of women's quarters, while Gus researched the building's exteriors. Gus writes that he could never have excavated Jemmeh without Ora's support and help and says, 'she is also the best traveling and working companion that I could imagine' (G. Van Beek 2001: personal communication).

Sara Callaway said that when she first learned that Joe was asked by the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, where he was working, to teach archaeology, she cried. Knowing that he would be gone each summer for long periods of time, she asked Joe to take her with him and reported that he had responded by asking, 'But what can you do?' She promised that, if he would take her, she would find a place on the dig, and on her first dig with Kathleen Kenyon at Jericho, she was given linens to mend. The next dig was at Shechem where she worked on the pottery. When Joe Callaway became the director of his own dig at 'Ai, Sara ran the dig house and cooked for eleven people on two primus burners. When the number of workers on that excavation increased to 75 people, Sara got a bit more help, but she managed mostly on her own. After their first experience, Joe never thought of leaving her at home, undoubtedly because, as she recalls, 'I think my greatest contribution was being flexible and able to fit into the situation' (S. Callaway 2001, personal communication).

Jack and Phyllis Holladay always worked together, beginning with his seminary days, but Phyllis began to take a more active role in archaeology in 1971, processing the pottery of the Gezer Gate while Jack was in Jerusalem working at Hebrew Union College on a grant. In 1972 Phyllis went to Egypt with Jack and Donald Redford, where she helped to process the pottery from the Akhnaten Temple Project, and from 1977 to 1985, she helped to plan the project at the Wadi Tumilat. While working full-time on a tremendous corpus of Egyptian pottery, she was also responsible, for all but two years, for running the camp and the kitchen. During the eight years following the last field season in 1985, Phyllis ran the Wadi Tumilat Project Laboratory at the University of Toronto and also worked on older material from Shechem and Gezer, all the while battling cancer, to which she finally succumbed in 1993. In Jack's own words 'a quiet, determined feminist, she was also a loving wife, incredible mother, loyal friend to hundreds, and an outstanding archaeologist in her own right' (J. Holladay 2001, personal communication).

For sixteen years from 1985 to 2001, Carolyn Strange worked as the camp manager for the University of South Florida's excavations at Sepphoris, where she was especially involved in arranging for food (including the second breakfast in the field every day). She was also a memorable 'hostess,' for, in addition to her many day-to-day duties, she arranged for parties and recreational activities for both the volunteers and the members of the kibbutz. There was the 'First Friday Party' and 'Fourth of July Party', the latter complete with costumes, parade, and apple pie with ice cream for all the 'kibbutzniks' (C. Strange 2001, personal communication). Each Friday night, Carolyn also bought wine, bread and candles for Sabbath blessings. She made all the arrangements for weekends in Jerusalem and provided food for two Saturday or Sunday educational trips to other archaeological sites.

Sue and Jim Sauer met in Jordan at the Hesbon excavation in the summer of 1973, when Sue was only nineteen years old, and they quickly decided that they wanted to get married. Sue went to the United States to speak with her parents, returning to Jordan in September to marry Jim, who was the Annual Professor at the American Center for Oriental Research (ACOR) (editors' note, now the American Center of Research) in Amman. In July of 1974, Jim became the Acting Director of the center and, later, the Director. Sue helped Jim start the hostel at ACOR and established its library, beginning with the G.E. Wright collection. She became the librarian in addition to managing the hostel. When Mohammed Adawi, the cook, took a vacation or was absent, she shopped and cooked for the group. When the school was moved to new quarters in 1977, Sue was responsible for moving and setting up the library. The Sauers' two children, Tom and Katie, were both born in Jordan. Sue recalls that when Katie was only two days old, she gave a dinner for the Board of Trustees. When Jim was away in Yemen or on lecture tours, Sue was left in charge of the Institute, but after they returned to the United States, she said she did not get much involved in Jim's work (S. Sauer 2001, personal communication).

### The Devers—My Own Story

Bill and I met in college and were married almost two years later, at the age of nineteen. For the next five years, I taught school in Tennessee and Indiana, while Bill got a BD and an MA at the Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. In the summer of 1957, Bill went to Israel, visiting the dig in progress at Hazor. He was not particularly interested in archaeology at the time but became interested in the writings of G.E. Wright at Harvard. We moved to Boston in 1959. Bill began his studies at Harvard in the fall of 1960, and I taught school (again!).



Figure 1: 'Dig wives' in the twentieth century had many active roles to play on excavations. This photo from the Gezer excavations shows Norma Dever identifying pottery with William Dever and G. Ernest Wright.

NORMA DEVER



Figure 2: Norma Dever (at Gezer), working on reports with William Dever.



Figure 3: Norma Dever (at Gezer), washing pottery with Carolyn Wright, Marion Beegle and an unidentified woman.



Figure 4: Norma Dever (at Gezer), sorting sherds.



Figure 5: William G. Dever, the author, and their son, Sean, at Gezer in 1971.

In the summers of 1962 and 1964, Bill went to Shechem with Wright. In 1964, I joined Bill in Beirut, and we drove to Jerusalem, which was a thrill for a girl from southwestern Virginia. We crossed the Mandelbaum Gate to be at the Hebrew Union College in Israel for the school year. While in Israel, I helped Bill with research on his PhD thesis and that fall Wright and Glueck thought that it would be great to probe the site of Gezer. Bill, Darrell Lance, and Wright located the tell and started a small dig, driving out every day from Jerusalem with several volunteers, bringing the material finds back to Hebrew Union College. This was my first involvement with what turned out to be a seven-year, mostly-unpaid job with the Gezer excavation, joining the core Staff as Pottery Registrar, Camp Manager, and Financial Officer. In the spring of 1965, we cleaned out a large building that the kibbutz did not use. That season was successful, so a larger excavation was planned. The kibbutz gave us another building to clean and use that summer. We had to build a camp or renovate the entire kibbutz!

After one year back in the United States, where I taught school (again!) and typed Bill's thesis (despite the fact that I said I never would), we returned to Jerusalem for Bill to direct the Gezer dig. I worked full-time in the Gezer office in the off-seasons from 1966–1971. In 1969, Sean William was born, and we later moved to Cincinnati for the school year. In addition to taking care of infant Sean, I ran the Gezer volunteer office from home, recruiting over 120 volunteers for the next season. Sean often played in the wastebasket while I worked or he amused himself with toys.

Returning to Jerusalem in 1970, I once again went back to Gezer, while Sean stayed with an American family in Jerusalem during the week. In the summer of 1971, we moved to the Albright Institute in East Jerusalem. Bill went to Gezer, and I basically managed the Albright for the summer. For the next four years, I was Bill's secretary, was in charge of the day-to-day running of the hostel and entertained many visitors to the school in the Director's house.

After moving to Tucson, Arizona, I went back to the third season of Be'er Resisim in 1980 to run the camp, supervise the schedule and handle the money. For the first time, we took Sean to the dig. This was certainly a challenging season in the Negev Desert. Over 70 people lived in tents, three hours from Beersheba, where we purchased all our food, and one hour from the Israeli army camp that gave us water, which we hauled constantly.

In 1984 we went back to Gezer with a large group, camping on the edge of the kibbutz. While in Arizona, I worked a great deal for Bill, typing articles and helping with the *Bulletin of ASOR* when he was editor. On Bill's sabbatical in 1981–1982, I typed the manuscript for *Gezer IV* at the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem. In the last few years since our divorce, I am again typing for Bill, but now he pays me!

Of course, these are only a few of the many resolute women of the past century who braved the rigors of dig life. I think I can speak for all the wives mentioned here, as well as others unnamed, that being involved in archaeology has been both challenging and rewarding. We would not exchange these experiences for any others. Now that archaeology is trying to understand the role of women in ancient societies more and more, I want the names of these modern women to be added to those of their better-known husbands, who were the primary archaeologists, and say 'They also dug!'

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# Making Space: Women and Ovens in the Iron Age Southern Levant

Jennie Ebeling

Clay ovens are found in a variety of locations in and around Iron Age houses in the southern Levant, including interior rooms, entryways, and courtyards and other outdoor spaces, and many are found in close association with artifacts used in everyday food preparation and textile production activities. Researchers have looked to ethnographic sources and ethnoarchaeological studies to understand the spatial organization of these installations and identified comfort—especially as it relates to smoke dispersal—and accessibility as the primary reasons governing oven location. While these studies have offered some important insights into the locations of Iron Age domestic ovens, few have considered the agency and choices of the individuals—most likely women—who made and placed them and thus were responsible for determining and defining the use of household space.

In this essay I argue that ovens in domestic contexts represent not only female-gendered spaces but also individual women's labor, expertise, and agency. After providing a brief overview of clay ovens in the Iron Age southern Levant from biblical and archaeological sources, I will offer insights gleaned from recent ethnographic and ethnoarchaeological studies that document oven making and placing. I hope to illustrate how generalizing about domestic artifacts and installations—particularly those convincingly associated with women—limits our understanding of the creativity, intentionality, and resourcefulness of the active individuals who made and used these essential tools of daily life.<sup>1</sup>

## Clay Ovens

Although fixed thermal installations made of clay are ubiquitous in archaeological contexts in the region, they have only recently become a topic of interest to archaeologists and other researchers. This is due to a number of factors, including the poor state of preservation of many of them and their incomplete documentation in most archaeological site reports. The latter is likely a result of 'a well-entrenched disinterest in domestic archaeology—that is, the archaeology of venues in which women were most likely to leave tangible traces in the archaeological record' (Nakhai 2018: 291) among archaeologists working in the region. An

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<sup>1</sup> This essay honors Beth Alpert Nakhai's outstanding contributions to the study of women in ancient Israel. My interest in women's daily life activities is a direct outcome of Beth's mentorship while I was a graduate student at the University of Arizona 1995–2001. Beth offered me the large assemblage of ground stone tools excavated at Tel el-Wawiyat (Beth Alpert Nakhai, J.P. Dessel, and Bonnie Wisthoff, co-directors) for study in 1997 and this led me to focus my research on ground stone artifacts specifically and cooking technologies generally. I owe Beth so much and I am grateful for her support and friendship these last 25 years. I am also pleased to develop some of the ideas in Aubrey Baadsgaard's excellent study of Iron Age ovens in Beth's important edited volume *The World of Women in the Ancient and Classical Near East* (Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008) and honor the groundbreaking work of one of my other mentors at the University of Arizona, the late Carol Kramer, in this essay. Some of the ideas in this essay were included in my presentation at the 2018 Annual Meeting of ASOR entitled 'Circles on Plans: New Insights into Iron Age Ovens.'



additional problem is the fact that researchers have been obsessed to the point of distraction with oven nomenclature. Rather than simply referring to these highly variable clay installations as ‘ovens’ and leaving it at that, many have assumed on the basis of little evidence that a) they were used solely to bake bread and should thus be called ‘bread ovens’ and b) they should be identified with reference to certain types of ovens attested in nineteenth and twentieth century ethnographic sources called *tannur* (pl. *tannaneer*) and *tabun* (pl. *tawabin*) (see recent discussions in Shafer-Elliott 2013, Zukerman 2014). In addition to the incorrect and troubling conflation of ancient and modern ovens, this has resulted in a very limited understanding of clay oven construction, placement, and use in ancient Israel (see further Ebeling and Rogel 2015).

### Ovens in the Hebrew Bible

The Hebrew Bible offers very few insights into ancient ovens. The Hebrew word *tannur* (oven) appears only fifteen times in the biblical text; of these, *tannur* refers to an oven used to bake bread in only seven verses (Exod 8:3; Lev 2:4, 7:9, 11:35, 26:26; Hos 7:4, 6–7) (Baadsgaard 2008: 221). Only a single passage (Lev 26:26) specifically describes women using ovens, and in no passage is the form or location of household ovens described. The absence of detailed accounts of this essential installation of daily life clearly shows the biblical writers’ lack of interest in everyday household activities. Since bread and other grain-based food and drink were staples in the ancient Israelite diet (Ebeling 2021) and no public bakeries dating to the Iron Age have been identified archaeologically in the region, we would expect that nearly everyone who lived in ancient Israel either operated or witnessed the operation of a household oven to make bread (and other foods) on a regular basis. Simply put, the Hebrew Bible provides no information about the character and use of ovens in ancient Israelite domestic contexts. Instead of looking to the Hebrew Bible as a source, then, we must look to the many archaeological clay ovens and try to interpret them using insights gleaned from ethnography, ethnoarchaeological studies, and other sources.

### Iron Age Oven Locations and Associations

Although the remains of clay ovens have been found in nearly every excavated Iron Age site in the southern Levant, very few studies have focused on oven assemblages within a specific site (Daviau 2016; Gunneweg 1983; van der Steen 1991; Zukerman 2014) and only one (Baadsgaard 2008) investigates Iron Age ovens beyond the site level. While more information can be found in recent household archaeology studies (e.g., Hardin 2010; Oksuz et al. 2019; Shafer-Elliott 2013; and essays in Yasur-Landau, Ebeling, and Mazow 2011), there remains much work to be done (Ebeling and Rogel 2015: 347). The following brief discussion focuses specifically on what existing studies have revealed about oven location and the association of artifacts and other installations with Iron Age ovens in domestic contexts.

In the most comprehensive study of ovens in the Iron Age southern Levant, Baadsgaard (2008: Table 2-1, 2-2) analyzed 235 ovens from 18 sites with a specific focus on oven location, size, construction method, and associations with features and small finds. She found that more ovens were found inside houses than in any other context (55%); 21% were found in exterior courtyards, 13% were found in other outdoor spaces, and 5% were found in public buildings. She looked closely at ovens from three sites (Tell es-Sa’idiyeh, Tell el-Far’ah (N), and Beer-

Sheba) to examine how ovens were distributed spatially within individual domestic units and found that there was great variability in oven placement. Ovens are found in just about every possible type of indoor ground floor space, from roofed and unroofed long rooms in typical four-room houses to smaller, presumably roofed, rear rooms. A number of houses were found to have more than one oven associated with them. Baadsgaard (2008: 41–42) also identified a tendency for ovens to be located in spaces with easy access to entryways and in shared spaces between houses. She interprets this as evidence for cooperative cooking activities between women of the same and different households (see further below).

Studies published more recently also show variability in Iron Age oven location. This can be seen, for example, in several of the houses excavated at Tel Halif, a site not included in Baadsgaard's study. Two relatively well-preserved houses that were destroyed in the context of the Neo-Assyrian conquest of Judah in the late eighth century BCE, Building F7 and Building K8, have been the focus of several recent studies (Hardin 2010; Oksuz et al. 2019; Shafer-Elliott 2013). Two ovens were found within Building F7, a meticulously recorded and published pillared building (or 'four-room house') with five rooms (Hardin 2010). The remains of a poorly preserved oven were found in Room 1, the smaller of two secluded broad rooms in the rear part of the house. A better-preserved oven was found in adjacent Room 5, the northernmost of three long rooms in the front part of the house and the largest open space on the ground floor. Only one oven was found in nearby Building K8, another pillared building (this one with six rooms) (Oksuz et al. 2019). This oven is located in Room 7, the central of three long rooms, in a space that is accessible from other areas on the ground floor. It is important to note that both houses were damaged by later activity and it is thus possible that either or both originally contained more ovens. Any evidence of ovens in attached courtyards or other outdoor spaces is unknown.

Baadsgaard (2008: 30–31; Table 2-4) also found that artifacts and installations related to food preparation and textile production clustered around ovens. She specifically identified grinding implements, loom weights, ceramic storage and cooking vessels, and storage bins in oven areas and concluded from this evidence that 'cooking occurred in concert with other domestic tasks' (30). She also suggested that walls did not define areas of specialized domestic activities; rather, specialized domestic activities occurred in relation to ovens (42).

The remains from Buildings F7 and K8 at Tel Halif support her findings. The microartifacts recovered from Room 1 in Building F7, where a poorly preserved oven was found, suggest that the main activity performed in this room was food preparation; the presence of six large storage jars and other vessels in this small room, however, led Hardin (2010: 131) to suggest that this food preparation space was used for storage immediately prior to the house's destruction. In Room 5, where a better-preserved oven was identified, related features, artifacts, and microartifacts are strongly associated with food preparation activities (158). The same can be seen in Building K8, where evidence of food preparation activity was identified in close association with the oven in Room 7; in addition, a spindle whorl was found a few meters away from the Room 7 oven within the covering destruction debris (Oksuz et al. 2019: 234–237). The locations of the ovens in Room 5 in F7 and Room 7 in K8 support Baadsgaard's assertion that ovens rather than walls define areas of specialized domestic activities in these houses.

Before turning to an examination of how ethnographic and other sources can be used to assess aspects of Iron Age ovens, it is important to consider the evidence for women's close association with them in ancient and recent times.

### **Interlude: Women and Ovens**

Based primarily on passages in the Hebrew Bible and ethnographic information, researchers have long asserted that domestic food preparation activities were performed primarily by women in the Iron Age (see Baadsgaard 2008: 14, note 5). As mentioned above, only one biblical passage—Lev 26:26—specifically describes women using a *tannur* in a domestic setting. However, women are closely associated with grinding grain (Ex 11:5; Isa 47:2; Job 31:10) and baking bread (Gen 19:3; Lev 26:26; 1 Sam 8:13; 2 Sam 13:8; 1 Kgs 17:12–13; Isa 44:15; Hos 7:4) in the biblical text (Ebeling 2010: 48–53; Meyers 2007: 73–75). Although women are not explicitly associated with ovens in the Hebrew Bible beyond a single verse, their close connection to grinding and baking throughout the biblical text suggests that they were the primary users of household ovens.

Women are described as the primary users of domestic clay ovens in most nineteenth, twentieth, and early twenty-first century CE ethnographic descriptions in the Middle East. Baking bread in a *tabun*, for example, was and still is the responsibility of women in Palestine and Jordan (Ebeling and Rogel 2015 and references therein), and sources from elsewhere in the Middle East and the surrounding region overwhelmingly associate women with oven use (see further below). After reviewing the ethnographic, textual, and iconographic sources in her essay on women and bread production, Meyers (2003: 75) concluded that 'the various steps in the daily production of cereal foods can be attributed to women' in ancient Israel. This includes the use of household ovens.

### **Ethnographic Oven Location**

In the archaeological studies cited above, researchers looked to ethnographic and ethnoarchaeological sources to interpret the spatial locations of ancient ovens. Like the archaeological examples, ethnographically documented ovens are located in a wide range of spaces both inside houses and in associated outdoor areas. In addition, some ethnographically attested ovens are in designated oven rooms located either near the house or on the village periphery (Figure 1). The locations of low, dome-shaped ovens that are primarily heated from the outside (called *tabun* in the southern Levant) in designated oven rooms are less relevant to this study since this type of oven—which is freestanding and requires plenty of space around it for fuel—is not attested in the Iron Age (Ebeling and Rogel 2015: 343) (Figure 2). Oven researchers have had more success looking to the classic ethnoarchaeological studies in Iran conducted by researchers like Carol Kramer (1979) and more recent studies in Turkey and Uzbekistan (Parker 2011; Gur-Arieh et al. 2014) where tall, cylindrical, internally heated ovens that are often built against walls or in corners (*tannur* and *tandir*) are the norm. These ovens seem to share similarities with many excavated Iron Age ovens.

Such is the case with Baadsgaard (2008: 22–23, 25, Table 2-3), who looked primarily to ethnographic studies in Iran and Iraq to identify three reasons why archaeological ovens might be located outdoors: 'to accommodate seasonal weather changes and patterns of smoke



Figure 1: A freestanding *tabun* room in a village in northern Jordan (2012).  
Photo by the author.



Figure 2: A woman bakes bread in her *tabun* room in northern Jordan (2012).  
Photo by the author.

dispersal, and also to facilitate the sharing of ovens by women from multiple households.’ She discusses the last reason at length since identifying evidence for women’s cooperative labor is the focus of her essay. She suggests that the greater average diameter of outdoor ovens means that they were shared across the community. The differences in average outdoor oven diameter among the Iron Age examples are not great, however, and it is impossible to prove that this is the reason why any specific oven is situated in an outdoor area or near an entryway in an archaeological context.

Her suggestion that ovens might have been used seasonally—indoor ovens used in cold weather months and outdoor ovens used during the summer—is also derived from the traditional ethnographic sources (see discussion in Baadsgaard 2008: 29). Other oven researchers have also suggested that seasonal use explains cases in which a house has an indoor oven as well as one or more ovens located close to entryways or in a nearby outdoor space (e.g., Zukerman 2014: 649). This does not explain cases in which multiple ovens are found inside the same house—sometimes even within the same room—however, nor does it take into account the great variability that exists among Iron Age house plans and associated outdoor spaces.

The idea that smoke dispersal must have governed oven placement is also problematic. Singer-Avitz (2011: 287) goes so far as to base her reconstructions of roofed and unroofed spaces in Iron Age houses at Beer-Sheba on the presence of ovens, assuming that ‘an oven emits smoke and must therefore be located in exterior areas, or at least in unroofed space.’ Interestingly, however, she goes on to cite ethnographic sources from Iran describing ovens in roofed outdoor spaces. Her assumption that ovens must be located in unroofed or open spaces because of the unpleasant smoke, then, seems to be an ethnocentric explanation rather than one based on actual (in this case, limited) ethnographic analogy (see also Shafer-Elliott 2013: 123).

As so often happens when interpreting archaeological remains, we are presented with the problem of equifinality. There are many ethnographic explanations for oven location that offer possible interpretations for the locations of ovens in Iron Age houses, but we cannot prove any of them. Rather than continuing to seek functional explanations for oven placement that cannot be proven, I suggest that we consider the agency behind some of these decisions and choices. Baadsgaard (2008: 42, 41–44) notes the clustering of certain domestic artifacts and installations associated with food preparation and weaving with ovens, and makes the bold claim that ‘walls did not define areas of specialized domestic activities; rather, such activities occurred in relation to facilities and features.’ She identifies oven areas as women’s space and states that ‘[v]ariation in oven location suggests that women could arrange the spaces used for domestic activities to accommodate...cooperative networks and according to practical and personal considerations.’ Since she focuses primarily on the former, I would like to develop the latter idea by suggesting that women made household ovens in the Iron Age and placed them according to practical and personal considerations.

### **Women Make and Place Ovens**

Several recent ethnoarchaeological studies specifically document the roles of individual women in decisions related to oven manufacture and installation. Although ethnographic ovens, like archaeological ovens, show great variation in form, there are only two ways they

can be constructed: they are either built directly in place or components are manufactured elsewhere and installed. This is true of all clay ovens, including but not limited to cylindrical, internally heated ovens (called *tandirs* and *tannaneer* in the region under discussion) and lower, dome-shaped externally or internally heated ovens (*tawabin*).

Parker's (2011: 606, 607–608) ethnoarchaeological study of ovens in rural southeastern Anatolia is instructive. *Tandir* installations are located in various covered spaces in domestic areas and are comprised of a clay core and a surrounding structure made of mud or mudbrick. The quality of core construction is very important because bread dough is stuck to its inner surface for baking; higher quality cores have a lower rate of bread loss. Parker and his colleagues identified two locations in the study region where *tandir* cores are manufactured. In all cases observed, the fairly standardized cores were made by female specialists who worked seasonally in the warm and dry summer months. The only activities in the process that men played were gathering clay from the source, transporting the clay by tractor for processing, and overseeing the selling of the finished cores. The specialized, female-gendered knowledge of *tandir* core production was reportedly passed down from mother to daughter and female elders were observed supervising their daughters and daughters-in-law.

Women were responsible not only for making oven cores, but also for setting a core in place in its permanent location, usually in some kind of covered shelter (Parker 2011: 610). Sun-dried *tandirs* are usually sold directly to consumers who often travel great distances to buy them, although sometimes dealers buy them in bulk and transport them up to 200 km for sale (Parker 2011: 609). Parker and colleagues observed one *tandir* installation during the course of their research. In this case, six men were required to lift and carry a core (*tandirs* can weigh between 60 and 70 kg) to the desired location in the household compound, on top of the remains of a dilapidated *tandir* installation. The family matriarch instructed the men to tip the core approximately 25 degrees forward to allow for easy access and cleaning from the top hole, where the bread is inserted. Once the *tandir* was placed, women completed the construction of the installation by surrounding the core with layers of mud and straw. The matriarch then set an intense fire inside the newly installed oven in order to permanently fire the sun-dried core. *Tandirs* are used almost exclusively to bake bread in the study region and bread making is considered women's work (Parker 2011: 609–611).

In their ethnoarchaeological study of cooking installations in two villages in rural Uzbekistan, Gur-Arieh et al. (2013: 4337–4338) observed similar *tandir* ovens to those studied by Parker in southeastern Turkey. According to their informants, unbaked cores made of fine carefully smoothed soil are bought from a local professional builder and set into a roofed structure dedicated to cooking in the household. As in southeastern Anatolia, women took charge of the placement of the *tandirs* in these structures and applied an outer layer made of local soil with coarse rock fragments, chaff, and sometimes goat hair over the oven core. Women also determined the orientation of the main opening according to their specifications: it was either oriented vertically, so that the opening faced the roof and 'women have to bend over the opening in order to bake,' or it was set at an angle so that the opening is 'fixed at a height that fits the chest height of the average person [so that] it does not require bending in order to insert or take out the bread'. As in southeastern Turkey, women are solely responsible for baking and cooking in the two villages studied in Uzbekistan.





Figure 3: Three *tabun* ovens made by a woman in northern Jordan dry in the sun in front of her house (2012). Photo by the author.

Although the *tabun* is a very different type of clay oven that has no parallel in the Iron Age, insights gleaned from recent ethnographic and ethnoarchaeological studies of *tabun* manufacture and placement in Jordan inform this discussion. In my study of *tawabin* in villages in northern Jordan (Ebeling 2014a; 2014b), most of the women interviewed built ovens for their own household use, which resulted in great variability. I documented two women who made *tawabin* for themselves and for family members and neighbors. The women built the ovens out of clay they had sourced locally in outdoor spaces close to the house rather than in specially designated work areas. In one instance, the oven maker worked in front of her house under shade and the finished *tawabin* were placed in the sun nearby to dry (Figure 3); in the other, the oven maker worked under a balcony in a storage space in front of her house just off the street. In both cases, family members and visitors assisted with various aspects of production or simply kept the women company. Similar practices were observed by other researchers elsewhere in Jordan during the last few decades (e.g., Ali 2009: 15; Daviau 2016: 468). As in southeastern Anatolia, knowledge about oven making is passed from mother to daughter and household bread baking is considered women's work.

Most ethnographically documented *tawabin* are located in designated *tabun* houses or rooms that are usually located some distance from the house, either in the courtyard or farther away on the edge of the village (Ebeling and Rogel 2015: 335). As mentioned above, *tawabin* must be located in sheltered areas because they are externally heated and require plenty of space

for fuel, unlike *tannaneer* and *tandirs*, which are internally heated and often built against walls and in corners. While neither *tabun*-like ovens nor designated oven rooms are known in the Iron Age, there is one aspect of *tabun* placement within modern *tabun* rooms that might be relevant here: the orientation of the baker in relation to the oven is always the same. In every case of some two dozen *tawabin* documented in northern Jordan (Ebeling 2014a; 2014b), the baker was seated on the right-hand side of the oven facing the entrance, usually on a low concrete block (see Figure 2). The baker then used her right hand to reach across her body and into the top hole of the oven to place the dough on the floor of the installation and remove the baked loaves. It is not clear if this pattern relates to right-handedness or the custom of using the right hand for eating and the left hand for other things; however, this preference dictated the use of the very limited space inside designated oven rooms.

To summarize, several practical and personal considerations can be identified in recent ethnographic and ethnoarchaeological research that may impact our understanding of Iron Age oven placement. Unsurprisingly, ease of use governs the decisions behind oven placement in Anatolia and Uzbekistan, where women placed and finished *tandir* installations in household spaces. In both areas, women determined how best to position the *tandir* to make it more efficient for the female baker to use. In Anatolia, a *tandir* was observed tilted about 25 degrees forward to allow easier access to the main opening, while in Uzbekistan, it was observed that the main opening might be fixed at chest-height so that the baker does not have to bend over when inserting dough or removing baked loaves. Likewise, in Jordan, women positioned the ovens they usually made themselves in the center of designated oven rooms and sat in a way that allowed for easy dough insertion and bread removal with the right hand. Since clay oven manufacture can occur just about anywhere and leaves little trace, it is difficult to identify specific evidence connecting women directly to oven production in the past. However, individual agency might be easier to detect archaeologically in the placement—angle, height, relation to walls and other built features, etc.—of domestic clay ovens.

## Conclusion

Using insights gleaned from ethnographic and ethnoarchaeological data, I suggest that women possibly made and likely installed household clay ovens during the Iron Age according to specific practical and personal considerations related to, among other things, ease of access to the inside of the oven, body size/height, and a preference for using the right hand. Since they are permanent features in and around most Iron Age houses, unlike portable artifacts associated with women's domestic activities, which move around by definition, ovens offer uniquely well-preserved evidence for individual women's labor, expertise, and choices. Rather than continue to generalize about domestic artifacts and installations associated with women, archaeologists should use insights gleaned from multiple sources of evidence to assess women's agency in designing and building specific household spaces.



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# Gender and Glass: An Historical and Contemporary Consideration

Alysia Fischer

Cross-culturally, glassblowing has historically been a male profession. As someone with an undergraduate degree in glass, who has worked as a professional in glass,<sup>1</sup> and who often studies glass and the people who make it, I wanted to further investigate why this might be the case. There have been many barriers to women becoming glass-blowers, including cultural beliefs about women's roles in society and assumptions about women's physical abilities. Beginning in the 1960s, studio glassblowing was practiced in North America within an art, rather than craft, context, making it more acceptable for women to take part. Although improvements in female participation have been made, this kind of cultural change is slow. Sixty years later, the field continues to retain a male bias. In an attempt to understand this bias, this paper focuses on the gendering of the occupation of glass-blower and the gendering of the space of the glass hot shop. This research draws, in part, from my own experiences as a glass-blower. While Keller and Keller (1996) discussed the possible pitfalls of this type of research in Charles Keller's work as a blacksmith-anthropologist, the authors point out that, in order to answer certain questions, 'the investigator must draw on knowledge rooted in experience as well as observational insights' (1996: 169).<sup>2</sup>

## Women and Technology

For a long time, there has been a pervasive belief in Western cultures that women do not work well with technology and have not been instrumental in discovering or engaging in new technologies. One need only consider books on the history of technology to see that this is the case. This is relevant because glass is seen as a highly technological art/craft.

Oakley's *Man the Tool-Maker* (1949) is an excellent example of the biases concerning women and technology. In this book, Oakley did not say that man is a tool-maker and women are something else; in fact, he never even mentions women or females. He is not setting them apart, but rather not setting them anywhere, as if they are not worthy of scholarly attention. In his view, anything worth doing, anything worth remembering, and any activity that would even leave a trace in the archaeological record, must be done by men. The only woman noted in the 1966 edition of his book is Sue Allen, who designed the cover.

George Basalla's 1997 *The Evolution of Technology* has slightly more coverage of women. To start with, he thanks Catherine E. Hutchins for editing the text and Marie Perrone for typing the

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<sup>1</sup> I worked for glass artist Stephen Rolfe Powell in Danville, KY as an undergraduate student (1991–1993) and in 2001–2002, which included a trip to do glassblowing demonstrations at the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, UT. I also worked with glass caster Leah Wingfield in Tucson, AZ from 1994–1996.

<sup>2</sup> Portions of this paper were presented at the 2010 Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, including the data regarding the Glass Art Society.

manuscript (Basalla 1997: viii). Within the book, he shows a woman spinning thread, although the focus is on the technology, not the person using it (Basalla 1997: 68). There is one other depiction of a woman in his book, but it is an ornament on a fantasy vehicle (Basalla 1997: 72). To be fair, he does mention women engaged in technology: he includes a short discussion of Lila M. O'Neal's 1930s observations of 'Yurok-Karok women weaving baskets' (Basalla 1997: 104) and mentions Maria Martinez, a potter in New Mexico (Basalla 1997: 105). It seems that, in the 48 years between Oakley's and Basalla's work, women had gained at least that.

Although women are shown working with technology in Basalla's text, sometimes they are seen as simply an extension of the machinery:

'Grinding flour by hand is a long and laborious task. In modern-day India a woman preparing enough flour for a single meal will spend two hours grinding grain in a hand mill similar to the one used in antiquity. Mills with larger and heavier grindstones can process grain more efficiently but require the expenditure of considerably more power, usually provided by donkeys or horses. Both methods require constant attention: Donkeys and horses needed to be fed and supervised, as did the women or slaves' (Basalla 1997: 144-145).

In this passage, women are clearly equated with slaves, who are equated with beasts of burden.

This tendency to view women as lacking agency is seen in other discussions of the history of technology. For example, Cardwell's (1995) history does not contain any 'notable' women. He asks,

'[W]hy have there been, at least until recently, so very few notable women technologists? In fact female technologists of any distinction are hard to find (this is true of all nations). Women, equally with men, are users of technology. Unless one accepts a male conspiracy theory the only plausible explanation is that up to now the influential members of society—women as much as men—have not regarded technology as a suitable career for women and that families have followed this lead' (Cardwell 1995: 506-507).

This gendering of particular occupations is likely the culprit and can be seen cross-culturally. Barbara Frank (1998) noted that, among the Mande of West Africa, 'certain artistic activities are gender specific' and this notion is 'deeply embedded' (16). It is useful to consider how glass-working occupations have been viewed historically in terms of gender.

### **The Gendered Origins of Glass-blowing**

Glass-blowing has been around for at least 2000 years, potentially originating in the eastern Mediterranean region in the first century BCE from the related technologies of glass casting and ceramics. The use of glass as a specific medium dates back to at least 3600 BCE in Mesopotamia. Prior to that time a similar substance was used as a glaze on ceramics. For millennia, glass was either cast in molds or worked into solid forms while hot. This was particularly true for bead construction. It was not until sometime around the 1st century BCE that glass was inflated while hot, which significantly altered the shapes that could be produced and sped up the

process of object creation. All available evidence suggests that it has been considered a male-oriented craft since the beginning, including images of glass-blowers on first-century ceramic oil lamps and a 3rd-4th century CE sarcophagus at the site of Aphrodisias in Turkey (Fischer 2008: 23). Once the craft was established, it became an important part of the economy in the Mediterranean region. We know that, as early as the 5th century CE, under Theodosius II, glass-blowers were exempted from personal taxation (Vose 1984: 53)

Any references to or depictions of glass-blowers prior to the late 20th century have described them as men. We can look at cultural explanations for why this might have been the case. In the Mishnah, which dates to the 3rd century CE, we read about how glass-blowers' furnaces can become ritually unclean (Kelim 8–9). This was likely intended to make 'the wares of Gentile competitors suspect to the orthodox Jews,' but would have also served to keep women from the craft (Avi-Yonah 1976: 24). Judaism was not the only religion that constricted women's activities: Christianity and Islam did as well. Frank (1998: 17) reminds us that there are those who believe that 'Islam is partially responsible for causing a major shift in gender roles by excluding women from certain artistic processes. As the mobility of craftsmen increased and opportunities for trade expanded, Islamic restrictions limited the participation of women in certain craft specializations.' While that may be true for West Africa, in the Middle East, women's roles were constrained prior to Islam and likely continued much as they had been before.

Any time we see a reference to glass-blowers in Hebrew or Arabic, the term used is always masculine. Mishnaic passages refer to a maker of glassware as *zagag*, while a similar term in Arabic, *zajjaj*, was used to describe a glass-maker in 13th century Jerusalem (Burgoyne and Richards 1987: 62). Cohen (1973: 31) has pointed out that the use of the *nisba* al-Zajjaj or al-Zajjaji refers to a male's occupation as a glass-blower beginning at least as early as the 8th century. The term *vitrearum* was used in Latin (Nicholson 1993: 65).

A particularly strong glass tradition grew up on the island of Murano near Venice, Italy. In 1291, the glass-blowers were moved there from Venice '[i]n order to more closely supervise the industry, to guard its secrets and to break the contact of the workmen with foreign countries' (Macbeth-Evans 1920: 16). This well-known site of glassblowing has been full of secrecy and was isolated for centuries. The Venetians were serious about maintaining their monopoly on the glass trade and passed laws to do so:

“If a workman carries his art into a foreign country, to the detriment of the republic, an order to return will be sent to him. If he does not obey, his nearest relations will be put in prison. If in spite of the imprisonments of his relations he should persist in remaining abroad, an emissary will be charged to kill him.” In order to prove that this law did not stop at simple intimidation, M. Daru adds that in a document in the records of foreign affairs, there are to be found two cases of assassination, of which the victims were workmen whom the Emperor Leopold had attracted to Germany' (Sauzay 1885: 45).

Du Maurier wrote, 'The glass world was unique, a law unto itself. It had its own rules and customs, and a separate language too, handed down not only from father to son but from master to apprentice, instituted heaven knows how many centuries ago wherever the glass

makers settled' (Collins 1997: preface). Here we see a description of an insular culture, one in which skills are passed from father to son.

This industry would eventually make it to what would become the United States. There are many histories of early glass in America, and one description is much like another:

'In 1607 the first glass furnace was erected about a mile distant from Jamestown, Va. The product was confined to bottles. The second plant was erected in 1620 to manufacture glass beads, which were used extensively at the time in trading with the Indians. Both works were destroyed in the great massacre of 1622' (Macbeth-Evans 1920: 19).

Although these first two furnaces were destroyed, many others followed. By the mid-1800s, there were enough glasshouses in the United States for there to be generally held ideas about working conditions. Those ideas were not positive and Jarves points out that '[a]n impression is very prevalent that glass-making is an unhealthy occupation' (1865: 88-89).

Jarves was undoubtedly referring to the toll that the heat and long hours took on the glass-blowers. However, there is another piece to the puzzle. Evidently, glass-blowers also had a bit of a reputation for drinking, at least during the late mid-1800s. Jarves pointed out in 1865 that:

'...the habit of drinking, believed at that time necessary as consequent upon the nature of the employment, is, at the present day, confined to the ignorant, dissolute, and unambitious workmen. The habit will, doubtless, ere long be done away. Still, so long as the workmen of the present day cling to their conventional rules,—act as one body, the lazy controlling the efforts of the more intelligent and industrious,—so long will the conduct of the dissolute few affect the moral reputation of the entire body. They must not forget the old adage, that 'One bad sheep taints the whole flock'' (1865: 24).

This reputation would have also served to keep women from working in the glass factories, as womens' reputations might be affected by their proximity to those with problematic moral character. The more one knows about glass-working, the clearer it becomes that glassblowing is not what a 'nice girl' would do. It is hot and sweaty work, which tends to mean it is considered masculine within American culture. So, what is a feminine job? Brown notes the following characteristics of feminine jobs, which carry an assumption of compatibility with child-rearing: 'they do not require rapt concentration and are relatively dull and repetitive; they are easily interruptable...and easily resumed once interrupted; they do not place the child in potential danger; and they do not require the participant to range very far from home' (quoted in Barber 1994: 29-30).

### **Women and the Studio Glass Movement**

It was not until the 1960s that glassblowing moved from being a craft occupation to having the potential of being used in the arts in North America. What is particularly interesting about glassblowing outside of industrial factories in the US is that it happened quite recently. In large part, those who began the Studio Glass Movement, as it is generally known, are still with us. And so, we can study the movement from the factories to the academy and the art studios at a level of detail that is not always available when studying the deeper past.

As Frantz has pointed out:

[T]he term “studio glass” describes glass designed and worked in a molten state (usually blown) by a single artist working in a studio rather than a factory. For several years, this term only included glass made after March, 1962, when the first glassblowing workshop for artists was held at the Toledo Museum of Art in Toledo, Ohio’ (1989: 11).

However, there are two events that occurred prior to that time which are important for this discussion. One was the First Annual Conference of American Craftsmen of the American Craftsmen’s Council meeting at which ‘glass for the artist-craftsman’ was publicly discussed (Frantz 1989: 32). This took place in June 1957. The second event was an exhibition put on by the Corning Museum of Glass entitled *Glass 1959*. This exhibition had 292 pieces of glass artwork from around the world, fewer than 50 of which were produced by individuals rather than factories (Frantz 1989: 36)

Interestingly, women were present from the very beginning of the Studio Glass Movement. The only American artist ‘to produce glass sculpture in a hot state’ for the *Glass 1959* exhibition at the Corning Museum of Glass was Edris Eckhardt, who had also been a speaker at the 1957 conference (Frantz 1989: 36). She was a ceramicist who applied her knowledge of that technology to glass. There was also a blown vase by Lucrecia Moyano de Muiz of Buenos Aires in the *Glass 1959* exhibit, but she was seen as an ‘eccentric offshoot’ rather than a forerunner (Frantz 1989: 43). And finally, there was a husband-and-wife team, Frances and Michael Higgins, who were working in glass and who spoke at the 1957 conference.

Even though these were the events and artists who would light a fire under those who are considered the ‘founders’ of the Studio Glass Movement, we do not often hear about them. Instead, historians focus on men like Harvey K. Littleton and Dominick Labino when speaking of the beginnings of glass art in the United States. One of Littleton’s early works is a classic female torso. I find it interesting that one of the first images in US studio glass is a naked woman with no arms, legs, or head. Even more notable are the recent auction prices for Eckhardt’s and Littleton’s work. Eckhardt’s work can be had in the \$400–\$1800 range while Littleton’s commands at least ten times those prices.

Frantz has argued that women have had equal footing with men in glass since the 1970s and 1980s. She credits the women’s movement with spurring this on:

‘The women’s movement changed any number of stereotyped attitudes; women were on their way to becoming an equal force in glass art. A significant point was reached when all executive offices of the Glass Art Society board of directors for 1984–85 and 1985–86 were held by women, with Susan Stinsmuehlen acting as the group’s first female president’ (Frantz 1989: 115).

I think she is being overly positive when considering this history. The Glass Art Society (GAS), of which I have been a member on and off since 1991, was founded in 1972. From 1974–2004, only four presidents were women (Susan Stinsmuehlen-Amend, Susan K. Frantz, Ginny Ruffner, and Bonnie Biggs) (GAS 2003: 169). That does not appear to be equal to me, nor are the prices fetched at art galleries for women’s pieces comparable to the prices of men’s work. You

will notice Frantz (cited above) was one of the four female presidents of GAS. Over the years, the organization has claimed to be working hard to increase its gender and racial diversity, though it has not reached true parity. It should be noted, however, that all five current officers of GAS are female, as was also the case in the mid-1980s.

### Glass in Popular Culture

Strides made by GAS notwithstanding, the historical expectation that glass-blower = male has been reflected over and over again in popular culture. Prior to the Studio Glass Movement, women were mentioned as users of glass items rather than producers of them. Jarves (1865) is a good example of this:

‘We have shown that glass, while it has contributed so largely to the material well-being of man, has also administered profusely to the pleasure of woman. The belle enjoys the reflection of her beauty in its silvered face.—a pleasure peculiarly her own, as we all know,—and if we many believe poesy, the mermaid, her rival of the coral groves in the fathomless ocean, looks with equal satisfaction upon her dubious form, as seen in her hand-mirror. And what would Cinderella be to the nursery without her glass slipper!’ (51).

Sauzay (1885) further suggests that it is in women’s nature to use glass to gaze upon themselves by noting:

‘The use of mirrors, abstracting them from their material, and considering them merely as rendering, by reflection, the exact image presented to them, goes back to the commencement of the human species, if we are to believe Milton, as Eve was the first to use them’ (89).

He also states, however, that some activities within glass production were suitable for women. In particular, he notes that when false pearls were made of glass, ‘workwomen’ were employed to color them (Sauzay 1885: 250). In another example, John Singer Sargent’s painting *Venetian Glass Workers* of 1880/82 shows women engaged in working with glass canes. It seems that women can work with glass as long as it is cold.

Moving to the present, women are almost invisible in glassblowing in popular culture. The focus on male glass-blowers continues; one need only walk into the kitchen section of the West Chester, Ohio, IKEA to be reminded of it (Figure 1). Cortese (2007: 13) points out the importance of advertisements like these:

‘[A]ds are highly manipulated representations of recognizable or institutional scenes from ‘real life’. Ads tell us a lot about ourselves, about the link between fashioned image and ‘natural behavior’. Ads tell us about the way self-image is developed and socially determined. Advertisements affirm existing social arrangements.’

When we constantly see representations of men as glass-blowers, it reinforces the male dominance of the craft. Advertisements do not *create* the perception that this is a male occupation, rather they play upon, magnify, and reinforce it:





Figure 1: IKEA, West Chester, OH: Kitchen Wares.  
Photo by the author.

'Ads try to tell us who we are and who we should be. Although advertisements appear to display real people, they are actually displaying depictions of ethnic and gender relations as they function socially. There are two basic points concerning gender here. First, ads tell us that there is a big distinction between appropriate behavior for men or boys and that for women or girls. Second, advertising and other mass media reinforce the notion that men are dominant and that women are passive and subordinate' (Cortese 2007: 13).

When you never see images you can relate to, it makes it hard to imagine yourself in the role depicted. Since little girls never see women depicted as glass-blowers, they do not imagine inhabiting the occupation themselves.

So, who do we see in media representations of glass-blowers? Dale Chihuly is the most recognizable glass artist in North America. His images are everywhere. Is it his fault that he is so successful and a male symbol of success? No, but he is ubiquitous. Few glass artists, male or female, have come close to achieving this level of success. What is interesting about Chihuly is that, due to an eye injury, he has spent the majority of his career as a glass designer rather than a glass-blower. The public at large does not seem to realize this and are often disappointed to learn he does not personally fashion the glass pieces.

The fictional and real-life examples can overlap in ways which show the strength of their mutual reinforcement. A good example is the description of glass-blower William (Billy)

Morris in the poem *The Glass-Blower* by Jan Struther (1941: 11). We need not go beyond the first two lines of her poem to get the gist of this depiction:

‘By the red furnace stands Apollo mute,  
Holding in upraised hands his iron flute.’

Here we have a glass-blower described as a Greek, god-like male, and William Morris certainly personified this description. The movie *Creative Nature* (2008) made about him and his art is full of images of him shirtless, rock-climbing, and otherwise displaying his ideal physique. The film itself was quite a feat by the filmmakers as he is notoriously reclusive. In 2007 he announced he was retiring from glass at the age of 49, causing James Yood to write an article in *Glass* magazine entitled ‘Exit the Warrior.’ This, of course, simply enhances the glassblower-as-Greek-god depiction. Yood (2007) also describes William Morris as a ‘founding Prince’ of Pilchuck glass school and he can be seen as the first glass-blower depicted in the book *Clearly Art: Pilchuck’s Glass Legacy* (Herman 1992: 6).

There are also numerous children’s books with male glass-blowers (Gripe 1973, Kranzler 1988, McDonald 2000, Scheidl 1993, Winston 1955). These books all reinforce that the proper role for men is blowing the glass, though women may be allowed to help out with other tasks in the workshops, such as sweeping (McDonald 2000: 59). There is also at least one work of fiction written for adults that includes a female glass-blower, although she has to fight the male dominance of the craft and is told that glassblowing is ‘a man’s profession’ (Fiorato 2008: 67).

In addition to the literary examples is the 2002 movie with a male character who makes glass art with lightning: *Sweet Home Alabama*. Although it is not actually possible to make glass art with lightning and sand, it is evidently plausible enough for American audiences to accept this. When we do see a woman as a glass-blower, she is clearly seen as a transgressor of gender and sexual norms. On YouTube, one can visit a section of *Artsworld* called ‘Tunisian Glass Blower’ about the female artist Sadika, who has brought the craft to her country despite the fact that it is considered a male occupation, and one can watch a ‘Women with Unusual Professions’ clip about Jacqueline Knight of South Australia in *Metacafe*. In the latter segment, Jacqueline notes that she loves ‘the danger aspect of it’ and that people think ‘that you must be very strong to be a glassblower...but I don’t believe it’s true at all’ (Women with Unusual Professions). A recurring theme in glassblowing is that you must be strong to do it and women are simply not strong enough. In truth, all one really needs is a good understanding of leverage.

The final pop culture reference I will mention is the female glass-blower depicted by Neve Campbell in the 1999 movie *Three to Tango*. Her more important role in the film, however, is as the mistress of Dylan McDermott’s character; in fact, we only see her actually glass-blowing for about two minutes of the movie. What her character suggests is that it is okay for a woman to be a glass-blower if she is of questionable morality.

### **Entering the University**

Now that I have considered glass-blowers in popular culture, I would like to describe what happened when glass-blowers entered the University. First, we should note that things changed considerably when glass left the factories and entered the craft/art realm. Some of

	<b>Roman/Byzantine</b>	<b>Venetian/US Factories</b>	<b>Studio Glass Movement</b>
Affiliation	Independent or Attached	Attached (to factories)	Independent or Attached (to studios or Universities)
Nature of the Product	Primarily utilitarian, produced for market	Primarily utilitarian, with some luxury items, for market	Primarily luxury items for specialized market
Intensity of Specialization	Full-time or Part-time	Full-time	Full-time or Part-time
Scale of Production	Workshop	Large-scale Industry	Household to Workshop level
Volume	High per individual Standardized	High per individual Standardized	Potentially low per individual, ideally not standardized

Table 1: Table using Brumfiel and Earle's (1987) variables.

the important changes included who the glass-blower answered to and the intensity of their output. To look at this more in-depth, it is useful to consider Brumfiel and Earle's (1987: 5) variables relating to specialization. As seen in Table 1, studio glass artists operate under three possible scenarios. In one system we find the independent specialist (Stein and Blackman 1993: 30) who operates their own hot glass shop and is producing goods for the market. Within this system we also find attached specialists, those who work for the hot shop owner and are not the owners of the fruits of their daily labors. These workers are typically allowed to use or purchase times to make their own work, thus taking advantage of the equipment owned by the shop owner. The majority of their time, however, is spent making goods for someone else to bring to market.

The third scenario is a hybrid independent/attached specialist, but in this case the university or college acts as the centralized institution. The 'products' in this case are very different, as the glass-blower is not required to make work for sale. Thus the glass-blower is independent in terms of retaining 'rights of alienation over his own produce' (Clark and Perry 1990: 298), but attached in the sense that they are 'contractually bound to the patrons for whom they work, and frequently, the patrons insure that all the specialists' basic needs are met' (Brumfiel and Earle 1987: 5). While the University does not have the right to the glass products, they do retain rights of 'allocation' and 'authorization' (Giddens 1984 cited in Clark and Perry 1990: 298).

For many years, in order to be a successful glass artist, the support of a university or college was a key component. Although there have always been a handful of artists who could make it on their own, the expensive nature of glass production—particularly fuel costs—have meant that the ability to use a studio that one did not have to maintain financially was a great benefit. Today, this is no longer the case, as the administrative and teaching loads expected of faculty make it difficult for many professor-artists to devote time to their own artistic production.

## Gendered Space and Language

In 1991, at the age of 19, I attended Pilchuck Glass School in Stanwood, WA, a necessary step in one's glass pedigree. Herman (1992: 8) makes this clear when he states, 'nearly every significant artist using glass in America, and many from abroad, have taught in the school's fifteen-week summer program.' Billy Morris was working there at the time. The tension between male and female glass-blowers played out in the Pilchuck hot shop. I clearly remember Morris getting very angry while working, yelling expletives at people and throwing equipment. This behavior was tolerated because he was such a glass genius, apparently. What fascinated me more was when, on the following day, a group of women, including Karen Willenbrink, who worked with Morris, came into the same space wearing heels and dresses and worked without any of the histrionics. It was a clear claiming of the space and illustration that the previous day's behaviors were not necessary for the production of glass art by world-class artists.

While at Pilchuck, I wrote two things in my journal relevant to this discussion of women and glass. The first dealt with the sexualized nature of conversations about glass. One woman said the following while describing to another woman how glass-blowers communicate to each other: 'Marver<sup>3</sup> out a big schlong shape' (Fischer 1991: 128). The second speaks to the way women continued to feel discriminated against in the glass world: 'Too often in life I said—oh I want to do that and they say—you can't do that, you're a girl—go play with your dolls—it's still happening' (Fischer 1991: 12). I was also sexually harassed by one of the male studio assistants. When I brought this to the attention of the administration, it was suggested that I had given him confusing signals and it was my fault. It is a testament to how things have changed that the same behavior would absolutely not be permitted today at Pilchuck or any other art school.

Did the move into the University change any of this for women? Here it is useful to consider gendered space and language. The feminist artist Judy Chicago, best known for her work *The Dinner Party*, began working in glass in 2003. I asked her what she thought about the small number of women in academic positions in glass. She responded, '[o]f course there are so few women; glass entered the universities via the hot shop, which is clearly a male space' (personal communication, 4/9/10).

This begs the question: what is a hot shop like? Obviously, it is very hot, hence the name, as the glass is held at 2300° F in the furnace. It is very loud, mostly because of the equipment, but also because of the loud rock music that is often played to drown out the sound of the equipment. This means that, when people need to communicate, they have to yell. And, of course, there is an element of danger, as it is possible to be severely burned by the glass as well as by the metal tools. Hot, sweaty, loud, and dangerous—that pretty much sums up the hot shop.

In some ways, glass shops have not changed in a century-and-a-half. In 1866, Douniol (cited in Sauzay 1885: 91) described a hot shop in this way:

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<sup>3</sup> A marver is a metal table used to cool and shape hot glass. In this case it is being used as a verb, describing the action of rolling the glass over the metal surface.

‘When one enters for the first time into one of the vast glass-houses of St. Gobain at night, the furnaces are closed, and the dull sound of a violent though captive fire alone interrupts the silence. From time to time a workman opens the *working-hole* to look into the flames then light up the sides of the annealing ovens, the blackened beams, the heavy flattening tables, and the mattresses in which half-naked workmen sleep quietly.’

Douniol was not the only writer of the era to describe the half-clothed condition of the glass-blowers; Jarves did as well (1865: 27). This image has been repeated in the current day in statuary, although only in England thus far to my knowledge. Examples include the bronze statues *Glass Blower* by Vanessa Marston and *Glassblower* by Jack McKenna. Again, we see the image of the male glass-blower reinforced, in one case shirtless.

Further evidence that the hot shop remains a male domain is revealed in a listing of glass workshops in 2006. Debra May, a well-known glass-blower, offered a ‘Women Only Glassblowing’ class (Sonoran Glass 2006). Why would such a course be necessary? Similar to businesses like *Curves*, it recreates a male space as female-only, thus making it safe. What is ironic is that, in her description of her experience, her pedigree if you will, she lists six male glass-blowers she has worked with, again reinforcing the idea that the ‘real’ glass-blowers are men.

As with many other specialized activities, glassblowing comes with its own jargon. In order to converse with other practitioners, it becomes necessary to learn the proper terms for the equipment and activities to be accepted among your peers. Through the use of jargon, glass-blowers signal their competence to other practitioners, as well as to potential customers. Can

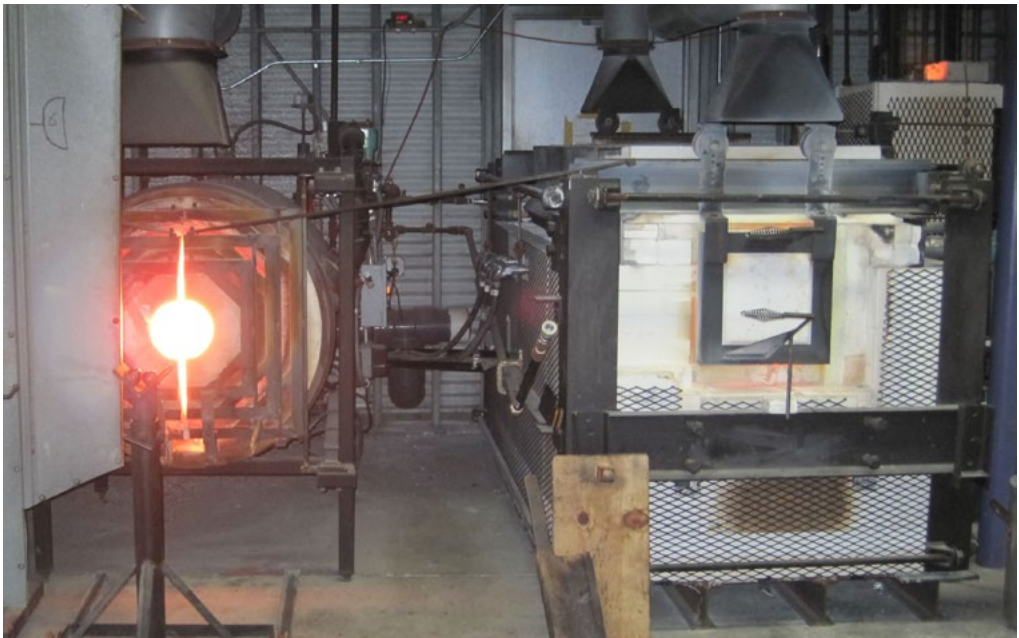


Figure 2: Working hole/glory hole on the left, furnace on the right. Photo by the author.

jargon be gendered? Certainly. Some of the jargon used by Americans engaged in the Studio Glass Movement came from Italy, and some of it did not.

When we look at an 1885 description of the glass factories, we come upon two terms that are relevant to this discussion. The first is ‘Boy—name indiscriminately given to the workman who assists the blower’ (Sauzay 1885: 71). This entry reinforces the assumption that the individual making their way up the ranks is male. The second is ‘*Working-hole*—Name given to a kind of small windows which, opening and shutting at will, are placed over the pots in order that the workman may in succession introduce and withdraw the vitrifiable matter which he requires” (Sauzay 1885: 73) (Figure 2). This is important because this term will change over time.

Beginning in the early 1900s, the term ‘glory hole’ was used to describe the piece of equipment previously known as a ‘working-hole.’ ‘Glory hole’ had been used previously to describe equipment used in the annealing stage of glass-working (Pellatt 1849: 65) and the openings in furnaces that allowed one to see ‘directly into the flames’ (Harper’s 1889: 230). Neither of these refer to the equipment we now call a glory hole, however. The meaning of this term changed sometime before 1903, when the *New International Encyclopaedia* refers to a portion in the glassblowing process during which ‘the jagged mouth is then rounded in the glory-hole’ (1903: 429). By 1948, this term was recognized as one of many referring to this piece of equipment. Italians refer to it as a ‘*bocca*,’ or mouth (Gros-Galliner 1970: 26). McKearin (1948: xv, 14, 21) describes it variously as ‘*bocca*,’ ‘nose or bye hole,’ and ‘working hole,’ in addition to ‘glory hole.’

This is how to work with this piece of equipment. The glass-blower gathers glass onto the end of a hollow metal blowpipe, which is usually about four feet long. At some point the glass becomes cold and hard and needs to be reheated to continue working it. To reheat it, you place this long, cylindrical item into the opening at the front of the piece of equipment. You then push the blowpipe into the heated chamber and remove it when it is hot enough to continue working.

Some have suggested that there is more going on here than simply a name. The term ‘glory hole’ also refers to holes in the partitions between stalls in men’s restrooms through which one can have anonymous sex. Although I have yet to come upon comprehensive sources that document the beginning of this particular use of the term, it was apparently used in the early 1900s in London to refer to these bathroom holes and in the U.S. shortly thereafter.

By the time the Studio Glass Movement had gained a hold in the United States, the preferred term for the glass-reheating equipment was glory hole. In 1977, Newman (137) defined a glory hole as:

‘[a] hole in the side of a glass FURNACE, used when reheating glass which has already been molten and is in the process of being fashioned or decorated, or ware which, having been MOULD-BLOWN, is FIRE-POLISHED to remove imperfections remaining from the mould. See BOCCA; BYE-HOLE; SPY-HOLE.’

So, what is the relationship between the two terms? It is clear that some people, including many glass-blowers, feel there is a connection. In a November 2009 episode of *Dirty Jobs*



Figure 3: 'Jacking' the piece off the pipe. Photo by the author.

with *Mike Rowe* on the Discovery Channel, Mike goes to the Fenton Art Glass Factory in West Virginia and does a double take when he learns that the reheating equipment is called a glory hole. The exchange makes it clear that both Rowe and the glass-blower are aware of the sexual meaning of the term.

Michelle Madge, a glass-blower in New York City, was asked: 'Is there any kind of macho associations in glassblowing?' She responded, 'Are you kidding me? The Glory Hole? You stick the pipe into the Glory Hole to get it nice and hot and you "jack off" the glass with jacks. I think it's hilarious' (Frank 2005).

This leads to another glassblowing term that did not have sexual connotations originally, but that people suggest does now. One of the hand tools glass-blowers use is called *jacks* (Figure 3). It is 'a steel spring tool used to widen or narrow openings, to apply pressure, or to elongate a piece of hot glass' (Corning 1980: 4). As Madge noted, one speaks of 'jacking the glass' or 'jacking off' a piece of the glass. This is often done with an up-and-down motion of the hand, and it is possible to see a parallel between this action and male masturbation. Is sexual imagery inevitable in an activity that involves long poles being swung around by sweaty, half-clad individuals? Perhaps. However, the terminology came to be, the way it is used illustrates something of a locker-room-level of discussion that is acceptable within the hot shop.

## Glass-Blowing and Women Today

Amber Hauch, who, after graduating in 1993 with a degree in glass, moved to Murano to become one of the first long-term female apprentices there, had this to say about being a woman in glass:

[T]he mentality that a female – it's not her place. She should be doing other things. She doesn't have the ability, the strength, it's physical. Basically we're not on the same level and my opinion now is still the same. They don't believe we're on the same level. It's in their blood' (Woman's Hour).

Rosa Barovier, who comes from a Murano glassblowing dynasty, was not able to become a glass-blower and became a glass historian instead. She has pointed out that it is typically foreign women who come in and get trained in the glass factories (Woman's Hour). This shows that the old ways still stand in Italy, although women who are perceived as outsiders are able to break through the centuries of discrimination and work as glass-blowers, if not as equals.

The field of glass-blowing has made significant strides toward gender equity of late. One excellent example is the Canadian television show *Blown Away*, a reality competition series that aired on Netflix in 2019 and 2021. Glass artists compete under the watchful gaze of Katherine Gray, the chief judge who is also a professor at California State San Bernardino, and a different 'guest evaluator' each episode. The first season was won by Deborah Czeresko, although in each season only four of the ten competitors were female. Only four of ten guest evaluators were female in the first season, and only three of ten guest evaluators were female in the second season, including reigning champion Czeresko.

The last decade has also seen significant gains in the numbers of women engaged in the art of glass, from full-time artists to college professors. This is not a reason to stop investigating the gendered history of the craft, however, as it is still a male-dominated profession. I hope that an investigation of glass-blowers in 2030 or beyond will show even more significant gains.

## Acknowledgments

I was fortunate in my time as a graduate student at the University of Arizona to have Beth Alpert Nakhai on my graduate committee. Her support, along with that of Carol Kramer, made navigating graduate school while also giving birth to my first child and engaging in fieldwork feel possible. This is in stark contrast to the comment of another female faculty member at the time who, upon learning I was pregnant (and ABD), said in a judgmental tone, 'Oh Alysia, I thought you were serious about becoming an archaeologist.' Beth's championing of fellow women and insistence upon the investigation of issues of gender in the past have served the many students who have been fortunate enough to cross her path.



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# Female Elders, Professional Potters, and Heritage Collecting

Gloria London

Beth Alpert Nakhai has impacted the questions archaeologists address by creating a space at ASOR Annual Meetings dedicated to the study and discussion of gendered research. Until 2000, the discovery of a cooking hearth might induce perfunctory reiterations about artifacts associated with women. For example, according to biblical and Assyrian texts penned by men, we are told that soups and stews sustained our ancestors (Shafer-Elliott 2013: 145; 153; 162; 2018: 461–462). The pronouncement remains ‘commonly argued, [that] stewing was the most common meat preparation method in Judah during the Iron II period’ (Fulton 2020: 92), ostensibly supported by the sparse findings of burnt marks on excavated animal bones. However, ethnoarchaeological research among Golan Druze communities explains the reasons for a dearth of roasted bones: ‘*Shishlik* is prepared by men over open fires outdoors in courtyards or porch areas. ... [afterwards the] bones are discarded within the courtyard or nearby alleyways’ (Grantham 2000: 43) where pets and insects can indulge. Burnt bones become part of the food chain and were dragged off site by animals, leaving little to excavate. Consequently, the minimal evidence of ancient roasted bones need not imply a predominance of soups or stews.

Without the influence of female archaeologists, traditional examination of the ancient world tends to ignore, obfuscate, and repress women – from mothers, slaves, and scribes to goddesses. Women lack a place in history as contributing members of society. Too often, the texts mentioning women present us as somebody’s mother, wife, or sister. The emphases on large scale buildings, weapons of war, trade, and subsistence economies have been treated as the exclusive efforts of work carried out by men (Nakhai 2008: x). Studies of ancient technologies have ‘often considered and given priority to those activities characteristically involving males while side-lining female involvement in manufacturing strategies that have been regarded as having little consequence to society.... Sensitivity to and awareness of the value of even mundane objects are critical in assessing gendered activities...’ (Bolger and Serwint 2002: 6–7). Too often, economic behavior is treated as genderless (Kelly and Ardren 2016). Rather than provide a women’s history, the goal should be a gendered history.

Even when the roles of ancient women have been literally written in clay or chiseled into stone, scholars have diminished female expertise. The early Sumerian texts did not consistently indicate a female determinative for a scribe (DUB-SAR), but Akkadian tablets sometimes listed (SAL.DUB.SAR) for a female scribe (Meier 1991: 541). In Cyprus, the neglect of first millennium CE female names (Bazemore 2002) was paralleled by Roman and Byzantine era texts incised or painted on marble plaques, columns, and tombs. Throughout the Mediterranean basin, Greek and Latin inscriptions dating from 27 BCE to the sixth century CE assert that women held prominent positions. The writings designate women as ‘head of the synagogue,’ ‘leaders,’ ‘elders,’ and ‘priestesses.’ Bernadette Brooten (1982: 1) challenges the conventional notion

that the appellations were honorific titles, implying an honor granted or awarded rather than a job title. Although the literature suggests that functional titles automatically reverted to embellishments for the names of women, nothing indicative of honorific titles in ancient synagogue leadership existed according to Brooten. She views the designations as fully operative and earned or achieved by the women. For example, a Jewish catacomb at Venosa, Apulia, refers to three elders named Mannine, Faustina, and Beronikene in southern Italy.

The role of elders as defined in the Hebrew Bible ranged from a political leadership connotation (Numbers 11:16–30 and 2 Samuel 3:17; 5:3) to judicial functions (Deuteronomy 19:12; 21:2–9, 19–20; 22:15–21; 25:7–9). Brooten (1982: 46) cites a Talmudic saying, ‘elder means nothing other than scholar.’ Apulia had Beronikene and ASOR has Beth Nakhai, a modern day elder, thankfully very much alive. Her contributions mean that, at ASOR meetings, ‘women finally outnumbered pigs as a topic worthy of professional consideration’ (Nakhai 2008: ix). Our voices reshape the research funded by ASOR, however modestly, including my studies of female potters, which have been funded by support from multiple U.S.A. government grants administered through ASOR offices.

### **Ceramic Ethnoarchaeology**

Thirty-five years ago, after completing my PhD in 1985 at the University of Arizona, I spent six months at the University of Washington in Seattle before beginning my research in Cyprus. A Fulbright Award, administered by the Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institute (CAARI), one of the overseas organizations under the ASOR umbrella, made my research possible. The Fulbright Award application title, ‘Cypriot Ceramics: Past and Present,’ embodies my ethnoarchaeological research, which endeavors to create working templates for understanding the diversity of ancient artifacts and the organization of the pottery industry. Previously I had carried out a field project involving female potters in the Philippines (London: 1991b) under the guidance of W.A. Longacre. In Cyprus, I could test my hypothesis about craft specialists in a second cultural setting.

The pioneering survey work conducted by Roland Hampe and Adam Winter (1962) guided my project in Cyprus. I revisited the four pottery-producing villages that were home to female potters 25 years earlier. I found active potters in three of the villages and in a fourth community, Kaminaria, which had not been previously mentioned in the archaeological literature. The women coil-built the traditional repertoire from local clay and sold their wares to local customers. Few tourists bought the heavy jugs, juglets, jars, beehives, cheese jars, *pitta* plates, incense burners, goat-milking pots, ovens, and decorative pieces. Huge wine fermentation jars, requiring 45–80 (depending on size) days to shape, dry, and fire in a kiln, were made until 1972 and, accordingly, were not part of my initial study of potters in action (London 2020: 81).

To record the pottery industry, I lived full-time in the two villages with the largest number of working potters (London 1989–2018). Following the approach that W.A. Longacre detailed in his classes and lectures at the University of Arizona, I informed local officials of my research and conducted it with their consent. In each community, I suggested the importance of a museum to house the pottery and preserve what remained of the industry. The number of

potters was dwindling steadily. Their descendants regularly discarded any clay-encrusted old tools and broken pots without hesitation.

The proposal to create a museum was considered to be preposterous at Agios Demetrios (Marathasa), one of the three centers of pottery production along with Fini and Kaminaria in the Troodos Mountains. Men sitting at the now-defunct café scoffed and laughed at the idea. ‘Put the pots made by old women into a museum?’ they sneered. Their own grandmothers, mothers, sisters, aunts, and wives had supported their families by making and selling pots. During the dry season from April until late October, those same men, as youngsters, awoke to the sounds of crowing roosters, braying donkeys, and people pounding clay. Their parents manually crushed the clay clods with a bent tree branch in the early morning before the summer temperatures made the work even more onerous. Later in the day, after coming home from school, the children were required to trample the pounded clay powder with water to make a malleable clay body. On their long walk to or from school, a parent or neighbor might



Figure 1: Bust mounted above the names of potters at Agios Demetrios.  
 Photograph by Father Dometios, 2020.





Figure 2: The side of the Agios Demetrios monument lists people who have helped preserve the industry. My name appears six lines from the bottom in English. Photograph by Father Dometios, 2020.

ask them to strike the clay a few times with the pounding tool (personal communication, G. Makrides 2018). The men recalled trampling clay with their bare feet in a village without enough water to drink, irrigate the fields, or wash. As children they had carried water jugs from the source to the house several times daily.

Despite the initial skepticism, a heritage collection of pottery now fills the former school building. A newly created monument marking the entrance depicts the bust of an anonymous female who represents all of the hard-working village women (Figure 1). She is proudly poised above the names of the potters since 1891, the year that a 12-year-old girl brought the craft to the village. The shrine also thanks ‘Archaeologist Gloria London’ (Figure 2). A few years earlier in 2016, in the lowlands near Nicosia, the Kornos community organized an event to honor resident potters for the first time (Figure 3). In acknowledgement for my contributions, I received a wooden plaque and a book made of clay. Kornos potters remain active as of this



Figure 3: Ceremony in Kornos to honor local potters, including potter Theognosia and archaeologist Gloria London. Photograph by Marcel den Nijs, 2016.

writing but did not work during the COVID-19 outbreak (personal communication, M. Savvas, May 2020).

### **Rural Potters in Agios Demetrios (Marathasa)**

Of the four pottery-producing villages, Agios Demetrios was the most remote and obscure location, concealed in a dense forest. In 1986 it had two coffeehouses and one telephone next to a shop that sold a limited range of packaged and dried foods. Fresh rustic round breads arrived from a bakery twice weekly. The female potters qualify as craft specialists, involved with a 'production above the needs of the household for purposes of exchange' (Spielmann 1998: 1). A few men made pots in 1986. More often they mined and prepared the clay and collected wood and bark to fire the kiln which they stacked and unloaded. Women do all of these tasks in addition to potting, as I observed in 1986 while living in the village for one



Figure 4: Mrs Paraskivi together with her husband, Mr Hadjinicholas, the Secretary of the Kornos Pottery Cooperative, lift the lower body of an oven from the turntable to place it on the floor. More coils will increase the height comparable to the other two ovens. Photograph by the author, 1986.

month and for another month in 2000. Traditionally, both men and women sold most of the pots to people in villages and towns.

The female descendants of the first- and second- generation potters continued the craft. A drop-off occurred for subsequent birth cohorts. This backbreaking, dirty occupation caused lung problems as a result of inhaling the clay powder while pounding and sieving it and again when mixing it with water. Working at or slightly above ground level to shape the pots meant many hours stooped over, leading to painful spine conditions (Figure 4).

Two difficulties during my field work involved the women themselves. The lone potter who questioned my motives had cooperated with other researchers and failed to meet her publication standards. The second problem involved potters in all villages. The sound of cracking vertebrae as potters stood up from their work was distressing as I watched in order to learn unequivocally that women did the heavy tasks of pounding and carrying clay or pots as well as stacking and firing the kiln. In my role as an observer, I never helped. My aim was to minimize any interference in the work, although my presence alone impacted the potters. After weeks of watching, I tried to swing the wooden stick to beat the clay once before the villagers took it from me to prevent an injury.

### **Manufacture of Pottery**

Work on pots began with the lightweight turntable positioned on the ground (Figure 5) after which each pot was moved to the ground where it dried slightly (not leather-hard). Later it





Figure 5: During stage 2 of the work, Mrs Kyriakou rewrapped a piece of string around the lower body of a jug on a turntable at Kornos. Stage 1 jugs with pinched rims stand on the ground until they will be lifted to the turntable to receive a handle. The potter has removed one slipper as she rotates the turntable with her left foot. Photograph by the author, 1986.

was lifted back to the turntable for further work and, as the pot grew in height, the weight increased. Fired jugs weigh 3-6 kg, goat-milking pots weigh 6 kg, and jars start at 9 kg. Large jars and ovens, too heavy to lift, required that women bend over each as they walked around it backwards to add coils and smooth the surface.

No one finished a pot from beginning to end in one sitting. Jugs, cooking pots, and incense burners were usually coiled from base to rim in stage 1, followed by a drying period. The next work, such as adding handles and rounding the base, came hours or days later. This interrupted technique of manufacture involved hands-on work followed by multiple breaks in the action before the shaping work resumed. Cooking pots or jugs took two-to-five days to complete, depending on their size, the humidity of the air, and other tasks required of the potter, such as agricultural work. Regardless of the number of days from start to finish, the physical manipulation of jugs and cookware lasted only 30 minutes. Ovens and jars required over an hour to finish but could take a week to complete.

In 1986, four kilns functioned all summer in Agios Demetrios and served five potters who belonged to two families of sisters. A decade later, road work destroyed one kiln and covered another. Two others remained standing but inoperable by 2020.

### **Persistence of Handmade Red Pottery into the 20th Century**

Until the mid-20th century, unglazed red wares constituted kitchen and courtyard essentials. Local traditional wheel-thrown glazed or plain jugs, jars, and cookware never replaced the red coarse wares. The two traditions coexisted (London 2016: 91; 169). Only the red, unglazed, porous jugs sweated their contents to convert the warm, mineral-rich water into a sweet and cool beverage (London 2016: 91; 126). Only red wares fermented raw food into shelf-stable products for transport, barter, or long-term storage. For archaeologists, the inference is that the indispensable handmade red clay jugs persisted alongside wheel-made painted or glazed jugs. Handmade water jugs out-performed those thrown on a wheel. Although water cools and tastes sweeter when stored in handmade porous jugs, less porous wheel-thrown water jugs found market share. People might have preferred the color or decorative surface treatment, but jugs made on a fast wheel resulted in a slightly bitter-tasting warm water. Furthermore, instead of the porous-walled jars that also performed as yogurt machines, dairy products could have been processed as in Syrian villages each spring, when professional cheesemakers brought wooden containers, three feet in diameter and one foot deep, to make cheese from excess milk they bought from villagers (Sweet 1960: 103). Any comparable wooden containers disintegrated long ago.

### **Experimental Archaeology with Pottery Made in 1986 and 1999 at Kornos Village**

To test vessel porosity, I carried out two experiments with new Kornos pots made in 1999 and unused pots made in 1986 that I had previously donated to CAARI (London 2020). After filling cookware and jugs with water, the newer versions leaked their contents faster than the 1986 pots. By 1999, the Kornos clay source had shifted to a location not far from the previous deposits on the slopes of Stavrovouni Monastery. Nothing had changed in the preparation technique. The raw and fired clay looked superficially identical to that used in 1986.

In a second experiment, prior to cooking, I followed the potters' instructions regarding the preparation or tempering of a cooking pot (London 2016: 105). The two secrets to cooking in porous clay pots involve: 1) pretreating the surface and 2) cooking with very little water (London 2016: 105–110). As a result of those two precautions, nothing leaked when I baked food in a handmade clay cooking pot. Consequently, there is no reason to conclude that ancient women cooked predominantly stews or soup in similar-looking handmade pots. After food to feed a family (and others) cooked in a relatively dry state, boiling water could be added to create a broth at the last minute. A similar practice produces soups reconstituted from dried dairy cubes that are consumed from Eastern Europe to Central Asia (London 2016: 121–122; personal communication V. Matthews, November 2019).

### **Heritage Collection of Pottery and Tools in Agios Demetrios (Marathasa)**

Decades of out-migration by young people for homes and professional jobs in the urban centers leaves Agios Demetrios with a few dozen full-time residents. Expats who return on the weekends and community leaders recently embraced the idea of a permanent heritage collection. For decades they had tired of directing local and foreign visitors to neighboring Fini, which has had a museum devoted to folk art and local industry since 1980.

The concept of a heritage collection as a village responsibility launched after the grandson of a potter, Father Dometios, began to collect pots. Although his mother, who was married to the former Police Chief of Cyprus, was not a potter, his grandmother, aunts, and cousins were part of the local industry. As an icon painter, Father Dometios (2014) realized the intrinsic value of preserving the unique traditional craft for posterity. In response to his 2013 request, I devised an acquisition form for the artifacts donated by the villagers who made and/or used them. He recorded the name of the pots, users, makers, and more (London and Dometios 2015). Fifteen tools and 125 pots, initially housed and displayed in rented space at the former café, were temporarily moved to a structure on church property before landing in a new secure community center under the protection of local authorities.

More recently, thanks to community support, the heritage collection was put on display in the former school building. As a result, the structure itself has not been converted into any other use or destroyed. Pottery made in the village will stay in the village under local control thanks to the involvement, engagement, and participation of the Chairman of the Community Council, Mr. Rodosthenis Makrides, and a committee dedicated to preserving local history. In contrast, the pieces that I bought at three pottery-producing communities, and the tools I collected from retired Kornos potter Maroulla in 1986, did not remain where they originated. I donated them to the Cyprus Museum. Mrs. Evi Fiouri established a comprehensive exhibit at the Geriskipou Folk Art Museum, where fifth-grade schoolchildren learn about Cypriot traditional culture. I also created a coloring book to teach about the pottery on display (London 2015).

My original goal to launch a permanent public repository for Agios Demetrios pottery, open to all and locally maintained, contrasts with the Fini Pilavakion Museum, a privately-owned endeavor founded by local resident Mr. Theophanis Pilavakis (personal communications, 1986, 1999, and 2017). Once a destination for tourists and schoolchildren, it has been shuttered for decades. The premature death of the originator's son from brain cancer leaves no one responsible for the collection after years of neglect by its 96-year-old founder (b. January 6, 1924). At Agios Demetrios I encouraged village ownership unlike the well-intentioned, but languishing, Fini museum.

### **Heritage Collecting as a Process**

As I came to realize, rather than a collection of objects or sites, heritage 'is a process' (Ashworth 2014: 3). Decades after initiating my research, the community accepts sponsorship of a local heritage collection. The responsibility and direction emanate from the community. In my role as Scientific Director, I have documented the material generously donated by villagers. I advocate for collecting broken pots and sherds as samples for chemical or mineralogical testing and residue analysis. Specific pots held either dairy or meat foods (London 2016: 119–133).

W.A. Longacre emphasized the benefits and imperative of collaboration in ethnoarchaeological research. My appeals to join forces with a Cypriot archaeologist or student were not sufficiently persuasive at the beginning of my field work. My village hosts and others offered help, for example, by proposing precise locations for display cases on publicly owned village land. Nothing about the equipment for making pottery is appealing. Only the turntables

and kilns are unique. Abandoned kilns become dangerous, dark, and dirty places. Nearly all tools are perishable. Women sit on the traditional wooden chairs with plaited seats known for their durability that can be found in every village. The one difference that makes the chairs unique is their shortened legs to enable work close to the ground. Worn or broken wooden rubbing rods, sticks to incise the surface, and the platforms ('bats') on which each pot is made, were burned in the kiln once a potter retired. Clay-drenched cloth strips, which were wrapped around the lower bodies of pots early in the manufacturing stage, replaced the more traditional strips of mulberry bark. None of the latter has been preserved. One woman curated a unique piece of leather used by her mother to sift clay powder. It had short linear slits cut into it. Metal mesh sieves replaced traditional sifters by 1986. Broken or chipped pots were recycled in gardens as planters until they became buried and disintegrated into the earth.

### **Female Archaeologists in the Field**

After a visit to Kornos and the heritage collection in Agios Demetrios in 2017, Australian archaeologist Beatrice McLoughlin concluded that my ethnoarchaeological research had elevated the perception of rural female potters in the eyes of their own families and fellow villagers. Female archaeologists make a difference in the field. Cypriots now regard the potters with respect and honor. Villagers view the heritage collection with pride as they examine the pots made by their mothers and grandmothers. They willingly sign the guest book. They bring grandchildren to relay their family and community history through the pots and tools. The assemblage enhances a sense of community by focusing on something that is exceptional to the residents. The collection brands the place as special and distinct. Furthermore, it brings together people from neighboring communities who belong to the narrative in one way or another. Some qualify as former customers who met the potters at seasonal events to exchange food for pots. Others might be related to the potters. Women from surrounding villages have come to Agios Demetrios to learn to make pots in recent years (Dometios and London 2015: 31). Tour buses carrying foreign visitors make unscheduled stops to see the collection as do urban Cypriots since 2014. The assemblage of pots promotes social inclusion by incorporating a century of experiences of women as well as their male descendants who dug and beat the clay or who packed the trucks and buses with pots to sell. Villagers invite urban family members to a place where the voices of women resonate in their pots. Female potters are no longer silenced or smothered.

### **Naming Names**

The early policy adopted in my publications sought anonymity for the potters. Government officials would not learn about individual or community productivity from my findings on the weekly output. Names went unmentioned although I obtained written permission to quote people and to publish their photographs (Figure 6). I did not invent names for the pottery-producing communities as was the practice in the early resurgence of ethnoarchaeology or 'action archaeology' (Watson 1979: xii; 9). Kornos and Agios Demetrios (Marathasa), are authentic village names. Three other communities more centrally located and named for the same saint exist outside the Troodos Mountain region of Marathasa. I changed my policy of not identifying the potters when they and their families asked why I had not published their names. They worried that I had forgotten their names. People want to see their full names in writing. They take pride in the work of women.



Figure 6: Members of the Kornos Pottery Cooperative stand in front of the workspace: Theognosia, Suzzana, Anthoulla, Theordora, Eleni Alecou, (from left rear), Paraskivi, Eleni Magirou, Maroulla, private potter Kyriakou with her husband, and the Secretary of the Cooperative.  
Photograph by the author, 1986.

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# The Host and the Hosted: Commensal Politics and Cultural (Mis)understandings at Samson's Wedding

Laura Mazow

The Hebrew Bible preserves very limited information on the Philistines and their culture but, throughout the text, the stories reflect an attitude of Philistine otherness from the perspective of the Israelite norm. Whether or not biblical references in Genesis are anachronistic, a common feature is the identification of the Philistines as one of the non-Israelite populations living in the land. While most biblical accounts describe enmity between the two peoples, famously remembered through the stories of Samson and Delilah, David and Goliath, the capture of the Israelite Ark, and the Philistine monopoly over metalsmithing, competitive rivalry is woven even into the earliest traditions of the patriarchs, with stories recounting contentions over land and water rights (Genesis 21:22–34 and Genesis 26:15–33) and descriptions of the covetous nature of the Philistines, who initiate conflict because they are envious of Israelite productivity (Genesis 26:14). While these stories may not reflect historical events, they imply an atmosphere of inter-group antagonism and reflect perceived cultural distinctiveness.

While the overall tone in the biblical narrative implies a strict cultural divide between Philistine and Israelite, a close reading of the biblical accounts shows some measure of social interaction between the two groups, albeit tense. The adventures of Samson as narrated in the book of Judges are good examples. As Exum (1992: 954) remarks, 'The fact that the Danite Samson can marry a Philistine suggests that the Israelites and Philistines managed to live side by side in the Shephelah with some measure of harmony' that must have included an ability to communicate and the capacity and willingness to overcome cultural barriers. Yet, at the same time, these moments of amity, such as at Samson's wedding feast, erupt in conflict with disastrous endings that amplify the enmity. As Exum (1992: 954) continues, Samson's 'parents' objection to the marriage and its disastrous consequences...illustrate the extent of hostilities between the two people.'

Feasting has been a popular research topic for several years now because of its ability to model socio-politics in action and for the visibility of feasts in the textual and archaeological record. Feasts are culturally prescribed activities based around communal eating and drinking (Dietler 2001: 72). While domestic cooking technologies and eating practices are recognized as areas where *habitus* can be identified and studied, feasts operate in a more symbolic arena, often entailing specialized behaviors and equipment, including vessels and foods, whose distinctiveness from the quotidian may be identifiable in the archaeological and iconographic records.

Studies on commensal politics in the ancient Near East have focused on feasting's role in enhancing intra-group solidarity, promoting shared cultural identity, and even bridging inter-group differences. As Nakhai (2014: 64) explains, '[f]easting, the ritual display of largesse and the sharing of sacred meals, was vital for maintaining clan and familial ties. Feasting



was one important way in which social standing was expressed and social ties strengthened, obligations created and met, festivals celebrated, and more.’ In doing this, however, feasting protocols also create and delineate boundaries (e.g., social, political, religious, economic) by demarcating inclusivity and exclusivity among the invitees and outlining the different roles of the feast, the most important of which are host and guest. According to Dietler (2001: 88) ‘... nearly all feasts actually serve in some ways to define social boundaries while simultaneously creating a sense of community. That is, nearly all feasts serve to mark, reify, and inculcate diacritical distinctions between social groups, categories, and statuses while at the same time establishing relationships across the boundaries which they define.’

Competitive feasting—a means by which individuals and groups gain control over production, acquire surpluses, transform those into resources, and use those resources to establish further alliances—has the potential, however, to erupt into conflict (Hayden 2014). As cultural constructs, feast participants generally assume a shared base of normative traditions and rules of behavior, but this may not be so, and feasts can be explosive in contexts where groups approach the event with different cultural codes and behavioral expectations (Dietler 2001). In this study, I argue that it is cultural differences between Israelite and Philistine protocols—who is the host and who the hosted—that is the source of the tension in the story of Samson’s wedding in Judges 14, a tension that is exacerbated when Samson uses the feast to challenge social conventions and renegotiate power structures. Viewing the wedding party through the lens of commensal politics enables us to recognize intimate differences between Israelite and Philistine cultural behaviors that are not necessarily possible to perceive in the archaeological record and offers a unique opportunity to view individual agency and visualize feasting politics at work.

### **Background to the Party**

The conflict over land is the focus of events in the books of Judges and Samuel. Among the descriptions of battles and shifting power relationships, the stories centered on Samson and his numerous liaisons stand out as incongruous, his adventures fall outside the norm. In lieu of territorial disputes and boundary negotiations, we are presented with tales of romantic trysts. While the story’s framework is patterned after other judge cycles—Samson shares a similar birth story to Samuel, with the commonly used trope of hero born to barren woman; the spirit of the Lord stirred in Samson, as it did in other judges; and his story concludes, as do others, with the length of his judgeship—Samson’s character lacks many of the elements, both positive and negative, that are generally associated with Israel’s judges. He does not provide wisdom or arbitration of any kind. He does not lead men to battle. He is not described as head of house, clan, or tribe, or have other loyal following. In fact, he is depicted as bereft of close comrades. While Samson does kill his share of the Philistine enemy, his murderous rages and bouts of fury are like childish temper tantrums when the game is lost. Only in his final stand, when he must take his own life to defeat the enemy, do his actions approach anything resembling heroic. Endeavors to align Samson’s redemptive program with those of other judges are generally unconvincing, so that some scholars have suggested Samson is best viewed as anti-hero whose place as Israel’s last judge exemplifies how far she has fallen (e.g., Brettler 1989: 407; Niditch 2008: 154; Pressler 2002: 224; Schneider 2000: 193–227).

Attempts to narrate the events of Samson's life as a complete story first must recognize the complex history of the narratives that probably derive from multiple authorship, various sources, and different origins (Brettler 2001: 59–60; Niditch 2008). Reappearing motifs bind the stories together—the best-known being Samson's feats of strength and his problematic love affairs—but efforts to find a coherent thread have been largely unsuccessful.

The story of the adult Samson is told in Judges 14–16. In these chapters, Samson is involved in three different affairs with Philistine women. Delilah,<sup>1</sup> the most famous, is the object of Samson's third romantic liaison. It is in his first encounter that a wedding feast is anticipated. The story begins with Samson requesting his parents' permission to marry a Philistine woman. Samson's wishes overcome parental objections, which are focused on the otherness of the Philistines as reflected in his parents' appeal that he should find a wife among his own. His parents eventually concede, and the family goes to the betrothed's home to arrange the marriage. A narratorial spoiler declares that the outcome of the story is controlled by external forces unknown to the players and the audience is reminded of the Philistine/Israelite conflict that is the story's background, with an updated score that the Philistines currently are in the lead. This notice is significant as it sets the initial tension—that these events, too, are part of the stories of conflict and shifting power relations between the Israelites and Philistines that is the framework of the book of Judges.

The verses containing the marriage negotiations are interwoven with a tale illustrating Samson's incredible strength. The story of Samson wrestling a lion, the dead carcass of which will have bees whose honey Samson will enjoy and share with his parents, becomes the pretext of a riddle he will later pose at the wedding feast. It is important to the narrative that no one else knows from where the honey came, emphasized by the author's insistence in a thrice repeated line that *Samson did not even tell his parents* (Judges 14:6, 9, 16).<sup>2</sup> Some interpret this as a necessary parental deception over their displeasure that Samson broke his Nazarite vows by being in a vineyard and/or coming in contact with a carcass (Brettler 1989: 407; 2001: 59; Matthews 2004: 146; Pressler 2002: 224; Schneider 2000: 205, 207; Younger 2002: 302), but this interpretation seems unnecessary here as its outcome, the breaking of his Nazarite vows, makes no further impact on the narrative. There is no consequence to this crime. Significant to the story is the point that there was no witness to the event and thus the riddle Samson will eventually tell is unsolvable to all but him.

The narrative picks up again a few days later when Samson returns to marry the Philistine woman. The final arrangements are concluded between his father and the woman, following which (Judges 14:10–11),

ויעש שם משתה כי כן יעשו הבחורים  
ויהיו מרעים שלשים ויקחו אותו כראותם ויהי אתו

<sup>1</sup>Delilah, the object of his third tryst, is not specifically identified as Philistine but she lives in the Sorek valley, which lies within Philistine controlled territory according to these stories, and for a price she offers loyalty to the Philistines. Additionally, the Samson stories suggest that it is Philistine women to whom he is attracted.

<sup>2</sup>It is probably this emphatic repetition which causes confusion in the text at this point, as the subject jumps from plural, e.g., *he and his parents* go down to Timnah and *they* came to the vineyards of Timnah, to singular when it is only Samson (*he*) who confronts the lion (Judges 14:5).

...and Samson made a feast there as the young men were accustomed to do. When the people saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him.<sup>3</sup>

### Feasting with Customs and Companions

The designation of the feast as according to what the ‘young men were accustomed to do’ is an interesting adjunct of which there has been little consensus of meaning. Although the phrase may be inconsequential, provided merely as part of the storyteller’s *métier*, its endurance in such a heavily redacted narrative suggests it provided information useful to the storyline. The phrase appears intended to add information to Samson’s role in making the feast, but the maddeningly vague expression ends up leaving us frustrated. Whose custom? Which young men? While the words suggest reference to the groom (and his family)’s hosting of the event, is doing so an Israelite custom or is Samson adopting here a Philistine practice that requires the groom’s family to host the event? Or is it the location—bride’s home or groom’s—that is disputed? It is difficult to know now which meaning was intended and multiple readings may have been accepted, identified only by the reader’s emphasis. If we presume that this information is relevant to the storyline, what is the impact of the different interpretations on the narrative?

Not a lot of information can be gleaned from the Hebrew Bible about Israelite wedding rituals. From a few verses, it has been surmised that Israelite custom dictated some form of ritual marking marriage that probably included a feast (King and Stager 2001: 55–56; Mathews 2003; Meyers 2016: 516; Younger 2002: 303). We have even less information on Philistine traditions, barring the rather complicated assumption of referencing Mycenaean or later Greek behaviors as representative of Philistine customs (Azzan 2002: 416–418; Burkert 1991: 15–16). The Samson narratives, and particularly his wedding to the Timnite woman, have been analyzed intently for details on wedding practices and have been used alternatively as illustrating either Israelite or Philistine practices (Gruber 1995: 644–645).

The reading that Samson is following Philistine custom lends itself to interpretations of Samson’s failings as resulting from his adoption of foreign ways and the forbiddance of intermarriage (Boling 1993; Schneider 2000; Pressler 2002; Mathews 2004: 114). Schneider (2000: 214–215) proposes that a significant theme in this story is the unacceptable, even illegal, behavior of the Philistines (from the Israelite point of view) for which Samson is forced to seek revenge, that the story ‘provides a platform to describe what the Israelites should not be doing,’ with a sub-theme being the problems associated with intermarriage. With the eventual breakdown of the marriage partnership, the story presents evidence for condemning intermarriage as leading to following others’ traditions that the biblical authors rally against (Schneider 2000: 206–207). While there is certainly Deuteronomic precedent condemning intermarriage (e.g., Solomon), biblical examples of successful unions with foreign women, such as Ruth and Boaz, suggest that the Bible does not promote one common message on the subject. Furthermore, the ensuing tit for tat between Samson and the Philistines that results in the burning of the Philistines’ fields and the loss of a thousand men and ends with the summative judgment that Samson ‘judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years’ (Judges 15:20) is difficult to assess. Are Samson’s actions to be understood as retribution,

<sup>3</sup> English translations of biblical texts are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise stated.

i.e., justice served, or retaliation, as in acts of vengeance? Is Samson revealed here as hero, avenging Israelite honor by condemning Philistine practices, or is he anti-hero and model for what the Israelites should not be doing? Furthermore, each of Samson's violent reactions is specifically tied to an initial Philistine action: the Philistines plowed with his heifer/wife, Samson killed 30 men (Judges 14:19); his wife was given to another and her sister offered in her stead, Samson burned the fields of the Philistines (Judges 15:3–6); the Philistines immolated Samson's wife and her father, Samson 'struck them down hip and thigh with great slaughter' (Judges 15:6–8). Yet to return to our initial point of departure, interpreting Samson's choice to host a feast as following in foreign footsteps and the Philistine response to attend the party seems out of sync with these later aggressions. Not only is Samson's agency here not a reaction to Philistine actions, but also it lacks Samson's emotive response that is so significant to these other examples. In his vindictiveness, Samson is overtaken by the spirit of the Lord. He is not to be blamed for his actions. He swears revenge. His pursuit of Philistine feasting customs, on the other hand, reads more as contextual information.

Azzan's (2002) interpretation of the story, which focuses on the riddle that ensues at the wedding feast, proposes that Samson is so well-versed in Philistine culture that he is furious because the Philistines refuse to accept him as one of their own. As opposed to the wedding reflecting cultural conflict, Azzan (2002: 426) suggests 'The *hîdâ* narrative bespeaks cultural coexistence, rather than political strife...[Samson] is enraged by the Philistines not because they dominate Israel politically...He becomes their enemy because they refuse to recognize that he has bested them at their own game, that he has achieved a greater mastery of Philistine culture than they.' While an interesting analysis of the gaming contest, Azzan's explanation relies on the assumption that the biblical narrator had sufficient knowledge of Philistine customs to craft a story arc centered on this event. Given the limited knowledge biblical narrators demonstrate for other aspects of Philistine culture (Emanuel 2016), this assumption is difficult to accept. Furthermore, the setting of the story, which opens the initial tension, is the fact of Philistine over-lordship at this time, announced immediately following Samson's request for the Philistine women (Judges 14:4). Further is that somehow Yahweh is using these affairs to change the course of events. Therefore, Azzan's interpretation, which implies that Samson's affront is personal, is not well-aligned with the story's framework.

The alternative interpretation, and what seems to be the default reading in that these verses are often alluded to in general descriptions of Israelite wedding traditions (e.g., King and Stager 2002: 55–56; Meyers 2016: 516; Zevit 2005: 665), implies that Samson is following an Israelite custom in hosting the feast. Interpretations that follow this explanation tend to shift the story's tension from the negotiations around differences in custom to the Philistine's response in bringing thirty companions. For example, Boling's (1993: 394) commentary adds that, as most Israelite families would not be able to afford to host such a feast, hosting the event reflects Samson's elevated social position. Focusing on the word 'בהורים' or 'young men,' to whom the custom is ascribed, Boling (1993) defines it as 'chosen or choice ones who composed a military elite.' Together with Samson's presumed 'physical stature,' this provides rationale for the Philistine response. Samson's actions 'arouse suspicion and recommended surveillance' (Boling 1993: 394) so when the Philistines see Samson, they arrive *en garde* with thirty companions to be with him.

The reference to *companions* in Judges 14:10b is another phrase that appears initially innocuous but has come to be laden with multiple meanings. Are these thirty *companions* meant as a demonstration of strength in the face of possible conflict? Most argue that it was fear of Samson's physical prowess and long-haired wild looks, in addition to the presence of a foreigner in a Philistine city, that prompted a defensive reaction, and further suggest that the verbs 'to see' and 'to fear,' are linguistically related, i.e., when the people saw Samson, they feared him, an interpretation supported by the Old Latin manuscripts (Boling 2005; Niditch 2008: 152; Schneider 2000: 207). How much, however, is this interpretation influenced by knowledge of future events? Although certainly the ability to tear apart a lion barehanded reveals superhuman strength, Samson's strength is not the focus of this episode (nor even of the riddle) as it is in later narratives. Assuming the Samson stories also circulated individually (Niditch 2008: 154; Soggin 1987: 230–231), there is nothing in the present narrative, exempting this interpretation, that requires knowledge of his long hair. According to the timeline, Samson is arriving as a groom to his wedding. Would he really have appeared with threatening posture to host his own wedding feast for his bride's friends and relatives?

The term *companion* is used elsewhere in biblical texts as a synonym for *friend* and *assistant*, meanings that are reflected later in the story when Samson's bride is given למרעהו/ to his companion who had רע לו/ companioned him.<sup>4</sup> This latter usage typically is understood to reference a *best man*, a role common in modern marriage ceremonies, or suggest it is an allusion to later Greek customs of a groom's attendant. The repetition of the word and the reference to a previous time when this person had *companioned* Samson suggests that the term refers here to someone who had been among the earlier *companions* with Samson at the wedding feast. Recognizing, however, the need to justify the difference in tone between these two uses of *companion*—the thirty companions of the Philistine's defensive response and Samson's companion—Boling (1993) suggests that the added description in verse 20 of the one *who had companioned him* sets the latter usage apart from the original thirty, whom Boling (1993) implies have a tactical function and therefore could not be considered as friends from whom could be drawn a best man for the groom.

Identifying the term רעה as *best man* may be modernizing the terminology more than can be justified. I suggest, however, that the use of the term in both places in the story should be interpreted similarly. What if we assume no initial ill will on the part of the Philistines at the beginning of events? That they, seeing Samson ready to throw a party, brought thirty guests to the table. Alternatively, an emendation to the text in verse 11 can be proposed for reading אחר/with him as *with her*. In other words, when the Philistines saw the bridegroom approach, they brought thirty companions to be with the bride. This reading can be supported with biblical references (e.g., I Maccabees 9:37–39; Psalm 45:15–16) and ethnographic parallels of the bride being accompanied to the marriage tent (Ebeling 2010: 85; Granqvist 1931: 93; King and Stager 2001: 55; Schiffman and Achtemeier, 1985: 608) (Figure 1). Consequently, there is no perceived need at this juncture to identify the story's tension in the Philistine's response to the invitation to the party.

<sup>4</sup> NRSV translates this verse as 'And Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man.' My translation, used here, recognizes that the same Hebrew root word is used for both 'companion' and 'best man.'



Figure 1: “Bedouin Wedding Procession” in the Jerusalem section of the Pike at the 1904 World’s Fair. Missouri History Museum. <http://images.mohistory.org/image/E6D17E92-0707-764D-43F9-4CED107B6D0E/original.jpg>

### Feasting and Social Jousting, Negotiating for the Position of Host

The idea that there was significance to these verses—that they contained essential information—suggests that a key aspect of the story, recognized also by the audience, is that the participants arriving at the feast came from different cultural backgrounds with different customs and that these customs included the roles of host and guest as important attributes of the feast. The irony is that the current ambiguity hidden in these verses actually serves to highlight this. The lack of clarity and the possibility that players might choose among different options may even allow that there was room for negotiation around the roles of host and guest. In other words, what if Samson’s, i.e., Israelite, tradition suggests the groom as host, and the bride’s, i.e., Philistine, tradition suggests the bride’s family as host, and both parties are forced to jockey it out? Although this may be reading too much into the story, we are provided two pieces of information: the groom is making the party and it is happening in the vicinity of the bride’s home. If we can use the few examples we have of biblical weddings as illustrative, wedding feasts may have been hosted by the bride’s father, as did Laban for his daughters Leah and Rachel (Genesis 29: 21–23), or at the groom’s home (King and Stager 2001: 55–56). What we may have here is an alternate state of affairs for which there was little

precedent and which enables Samson to take control and play host to the event. This shift in expectations, with the Philistines now guest to Samson's host, may have led to them being caught off-guard and could explain any intended emphasis on the late-to-the-party gathering of their or her *thirty companions*.

Anthropological studies describe the dynamic role of competitive feasting and drinking rituals in contexts where issues of identity, status, and social boundaries are expressed and negotiated (Bray 2003; Dietler 2001; Mills 2004). Attendant rituals—including resource procurement, food preparation and consumption, and design and event planning—publicly and visibly highlight these relationships (Bray 2003). Thus, feasting politics can be prime movers, an 'arena and instrument of political action by individuals and social groups pursuing economic and political goals and competing for influence within their social worlds' (Dietler 2001: 104). With specified (and opposing) roles of 'host' and 'guest,' feasts act as a means of defining and legitimating social positions and power relations. As '[t]he relationship of giver to receiver, or host to guest, translated into a relationship of social superiority and inferiority unless and until the equivalent can be returned' (Dietler 2001: 74), host and guests could acquire and maintain both real and symbolic capital (Hayden 2014; Matthews 2003: 161–162; Wright 2010b: 347). Yet the context of the feast can often mask these imbalances. '...[T]he special attribute of feasting is that, because of the intimate nature of the practice of sharing food and the symbolic power of the trope of commensality, of all forms of gift prestation it is perhaps the most effective at subtly euphemizing the self-interested nature of the process and creating a shared "sincere fiction" (in Bourdieu's apt phrase) of disinterested generosity' (Dietler 2001: 75). In sum, 'the potential of hospitality to be manipulated as a tool in defining social relations, lies the crux of commensal politics' (Dietler 2001: 74).

In biblical and archaeological studies, the literature on feasting has tended to focus on its community building aspect, that feasting rituals and associated symbols express a shared identity that can be used to establish alliances and/or strengthen group solidarity (Bunimovitz 1999; Dietler 2001; Joffe 1998; 1999; S. Smith 2003; Steel 2002; J.C. Wright 1996; 2004; J.L. Wright 2010a; 2010b). Within Philistine archaeology, a model of elite dining in feasting contexts has been applied to explain the continuity over time in the decorated Philistine-style ceramic assemblage, i.e., those vessels, such as bowls, kraters, and a few specialized pouring vessels, that are associated with dining wares and used in presumed feasting contexts (e.g., Bunimovitz 1999; Bunimovitz and Lederman 2011: 46; Hitchcock and Maeir 2014; Killebrew 2005; Killebrew and Lev-Tov 2008; Maeir et al 2015; Mazow 2014; Yasur-Landau 2002). The Philistine decorated kraters, for example, are thought to be display pieces, through which 'they were used by hosts wishing to convey messages of ethnicity and common ancestry' (Yasur-Landau 2010: 251), and the feasting events associated with this material culture thus promoted a sense of shared Philistine identity (Mazow 2014).

Feasting politics, however, with their competitive underpinnings, can also erupt in tension, particularly 'if hosts and guests are members of different ethnic groups who do not share the same cultural codes and behavior expectations' and so 'approach the feast with different understandings of its political logic' (Dietler 2001: 94). Alternatively, an individual or group who is quite aware of the conventions can use the precepts of the feast to manipulate the process, to challenge the authority of the host (or patron), and turn the host-guest relationship on its head—what Dietler (2001: 94) refers to as converting a 'patron-role' feast to an 'empowering'

feast, or, alternatively, a ‘festive revolution.’ Applying this to the Samson vs. Timnite woman/Philistine wedding feast, we can begin to anticipate the conflict that creates tension in the story. Whether Samson is adopting Philistine traditions, or the Philistines are entangled in an Israelite custom, this reading suggests that Samson, in making the feast, is accepting for himself the challenge of host.

This social jousting for host continues through the central action of the feast when Samson poses a riddle and associated wager (Judges 14:12–14),

ויאמר להם שמשון אחודה נא לכם חידה אם הגד תגידו אותה לי שבעת ימי המשתה ומצאתם ונתתי לכם שלשים סדינים  
ושלשים חליפות בגדים  
ואם לא תוכלו להגיד לי ונתתם אתם לי שלשים סדינים ושלשים חליפות בגדים ויאמרו לו חודה חידתך ונשמענה  
ויאמר להם  
מהאכל יצא מאכל ומעז יצא מתוק  
ולא יכלו להגיד החידה שלשת ימים

12 Samson said to them, ‘Let me now put a riddle to you. If you can explain it to me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty festal garments. 13 But if you cannot explain it to me, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty festal garments.’ So they said to him, ‘Ask your riddle; let us hear it.’ 14 He said to them,

‘Out of the eater came something to eat.  
Out of the strong came something sweet.’  
But for three days they could not explain the riddle.

The riddle, presumably stemming from Samson’s earlier experience with the lion, is impossible for the Philistines to solve. As a result, the Philistines’ concern that this feast at which they are guests will impoverish them (Judges 14:15) is a reversal of the typical host/guest relationship. Some see the unfair way that this situation reflects on Samson’s character indicates that the riddle is unrelated to the earlier episode of Samson procuring honey from the lion’s carcass. Alternatively, why should we assume that Samson must play fair? The awkward phrasing of these verses, that the riddle is something that must both be *explained* אותה תגידו and *found* ומצאתם, may function to emphasize that the key to unlocking the riddle is uncovering hidden evidence, even possibly finding the lion’s carcass and the source of the honey.<sup>5</sup> While this is a wedding, it is set in the context of the Philistine/Israelite conflict, as our narrator reminds us early on. This then may reflect another moment, like choosing to host the event, when Samson is crafting an opportunity to gain influence over the Philistines.

The Philistines’ only option for success in the game is to play on the loyalties of the new bride—to her new husband or to her natal group. After much weeping and inveigling, she

<sup>5</sup> Most translations translate ומצאתם as ‘find it out,’ understanding the word as added emphasis of the requirement to explain the riddle. In support of my suggestion that it refers to finding the lion’s carcass with the honey inside is the fact that there is no parallel clarification associated with the possibility of the Philistines not explaining the riddle. Alternatively, the common translation is supported with its parallel use in Judges 14:18, when Samson retorts ‘If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have found out מצאתם my riddle.’



convinces Samson to disclose the answer, which she immediately imparts *to her (or my) people* (Judges 14:16–17), a phrase twice used in these verses to emphasize the bride’s allegiance. Samson condemns the Philistines and storms off to Ashkelon, where he kills thirty men and uses their possessions to pay up his end of the wager. Thus, Samson’s attempt to host the feast, to assume the head seat at the table, to build his alliances and display his assets, goes terribly awry. Instead of using the feast to construct social and political capital, the feast indebts him to his guests.

### **Building and Fragmenting Alliances, Judging Israel**

It cannot be assumed that the series of events outlined in this pericope—the marriage negotiations between groom’s father and bride, the groom’s hosting of the feast at the bride’s home, the length of time the feast lasted, and the gaming activities at the feast—typifies Iron Age weddings and, from this heavily redacted narrative, it may no longer be possible to conclude to which cultural practice, Israelite or Philistine, these traditions can be ascribed. At the same time, the context of the story, the Israelite/Philistine political and cultural conflict, is significant to the unfolding of events. A marriage alliance and ensuing wedding feast aimed at uniting opposing forces could be used to bridge these differences. Marriage commitments create alliances between peoples that include establishing social parity, creating economic advantage, and expanding kinship networks (Hayden 2014: 355). Wedding ceremonies, although not universally practiced, ritually and often publicly symbolize that commitment. They tend to be tightly orchestrated affairs, combining local customs and societal rules that can carry religious and legal authority. But in this unfolding of events, the wedding rituals drive the two groups farther apart.

Most interpretations of this text recognize the story as a clash of cultures but struggle to find purpose in the events and assess Samson’s role. Is he solely at the mercy of his passions for foreign women (Crenshaw 1978; Exum 1993: 62; Younger 2002: 299)? Is the story meant predominantly as a warning to Israel against intermarriage with non-Israelites (Mathews 2004: 144; Pressler 2002: 214; Schneider 2000: 213)? Does Samson have agency, is he actively going against the wishes of his parents or is he a passive agent of Yahweh’s plan? How do these balance with his role as judge?

Feasting is political. Reading Samson’s exploits to host the feast as an attempt to challenge the current power dynamics positions him as an agent of change, regardless of the eventual outcome. Dietler (2001: 75) recognizes that ‘... feasting may be strategically used by individuals either to complement or to compete against forms of prestige and power derived from other domains of competition for symbolic capital, such as warfare, magic, gift-giving, public oratory, etc....’ an interpretation that aligns with C. Smith’s (1997) discussion of power dynamics in the later story of Samson and Delilah. Her analysis, which also examines the larger context of Judges 13–16, proposes that the Samson narratives demonstrate who has power, how power in its varied guises is used, and the consequences that can result from its use.

Feasts can be risky business. In many aspects, they are catastrophe-prone affairs whose success or failure reflects on both host and guest (M. Smith 2015). M. Smith (2015: 1230) describes feasts as,

demonstrations of individuals' and households' ability to mitigate failure, to demonstrate their resilience in the face of anxiety and stress, and to manage the memory-making of events after the fact. Despite their considerable costs to hosts and potential costs to guests, feasts can be interpreted as forestalling problems by enabling social relationships to be worked out in circumstances that have relatively low stakes.

In the case of Samson's wedding feast, attempts to mitigate social problems were unsuccessful and memories made were the opposite of the audiences' expectations. This reading shifts the decisive action to the moment Samson chooses to host the feast and continues with his manipulation of the gaming contest. It leaves unanswered the question of whose tradition Samson is following but strongly suggests that these groups had different customs, a reality of which Samson takes advantage.

As much as archaeologists believe we have moved beyond the theoretical 'pots equal people' paradigm, the reality is that we are left with little choice. Unless we are excavating a Pompeii or frozen time capsule, the pots are no more than static reflections. The coming together of these groups as told through the tale of Samson's wedding feast enables us to see that cultural differences were recognized between Israelites and Philistines. Samson's story provides an intimate portrait of feasting politics and individual action in the intricate mediation of interpersonal social relations. This may be how Samson judged in biblical Israel.

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# Asherah: Everyone's Favorite Girl

Theodore W. Burgh

Asherah, typically understood to be a Semitic mother goddess of the ancient Near East, is a fascinating and mysterious deity that remains enigmatic. The name is mentioned approximately forty times in the Hebrew Bible, where primarily it seems to reference a female deity who is often paired with male consorts, but sometimes it is used to reference objects used in animistic practices.<sup>1</sup> For example, the context of certain biblical verses suggests that the word *Asherah* sometimes referred to a cultic or symbolic item (e.g., 1 Kgs 16:32–33):

He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. And Ahab made a *sacred pole*. Ahab did more to provoke YHWH, the God of Israel, to anger than had all of the kings of Israel who were before him (*emphasis mine*).<sup>2</sup>

In other instances, it is clearly the name of a specific goddess (e.g., 1 Kgs 15:13):

He also removed Maacah his mother from being queen mother, because she had made an abominable image for *Asherah*; Asa cut down her image and burned it at the Wadi Kidron (*emphasis mine*).

The deity appears throughout the ancient Near East in different, unique nomenclature. As a goddess, she was extremely popular and had no shortage of deified male counterparts. The biblical writers share that *Asherah* (goddess or object) was worshiped unquestionably by groups in Israelite culture:

The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of YHWH, forgetting YHWH their God, and *worshiping the Baals and the Asherahs* (Judg 3:7 *emphasis mine*).

But it is also clear that there were groups within Israelite culture who despised worship of the goddess or any object connected to her.

When the townspeople rose early in the morning, the altar of Baal was broken down, and *the sacred pole* beside it was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar that had been built. So they said to one another, 'Who has done this?' After searching and inquiring, they were told, 'Gideon son of Joash did it' (Judg 6:28–29 *emphasis mine*).

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<sup>1</sup> Plural: *asherim*. See van der Toorn, Becking and van der Horst, eds. *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 100. *Brown-Driver-Briggs* defines *Asherah* as: a. a Canaanite goddess of fortune and happiness; b. a symbol of this goddess, a sacred tree or pole set up near an altar; c. the goddess; d. sacred trees or poles. It is generally understood that when the definite article appears in conjunction with the word *asherah*, it is meant to be understood as the symbol or object and not the name of the goddess as personal names in Hebrew do not take a definite article.

<sup>2</sup> Biblical translations used in this discussion are from the NRSV.

What made this particular goddess and representations of her both hated and revered within the same culture? This paper will briefly explore this question.

### Meaning of Asherah and Her Presence in the Ancient Near East and Among its Peoples

There are several etymological possibilities when it comes to the name of the goddess, but nothing is completely clear regarding the name's origin. Even translations of her name vary widely, and include 'happy,' 'wife,' and 'consort.'<sup>3</sup> Yet, the varying cognates and appellations indicate how ubiquitous Asherah was in the ancient Near East. For instance, she appears in North African pantheons and in Sumer with the god Anu. Her presence also extends to the coastal region of Phoenicia, birthplace of the infamous Jezebel, wife of King Ahab and dreaded enemy of the prophets Elijah and Elisha. At Ugarit, the goddess is called Athirat and Elat (van der Toorn, Becking and van der Horst 1999: 99). Regarding the many appellations for the goddess in this area, John Day (1986: 387) explains:

The Ugaritic texts from Ras Shamra on the Syrian coast, written in alphabetic cuneiform, are our single most important Northwest Semitic source about the goddess Asherah. She is there referred to as *'atrt*, which is generally vocalized as Athirat, and appears as the consort of the supreme god El. As befits El's consort, she is sometimes called *'ilt* (Elat), literally 'goddess' (CTA 4.1.23, 4.III.26, 30, 32, 35, etc.). She is mother of the gods and as such is referred to as *qnyt 'ilm* 'the procreatress of the gods.'

#### Ugarit

With the apparent exception of Baal, whose parentage is uncertain, all gods of the Ugarit myths were born to El and Asherah (Eliade 1978: 150–151). Although El had two wives, Anath and Asherah, it was Asherah alone who nursed the newborn gods (van der Toorn, Becking and van der Horst 1999: 151; Grimal 1965: 87). The act of nursing, figuratively providing life to others, may have contributed to her popularity in certain cultures and possibly resonated with specific groups. For example, in Ras Shamra she is understood to be the mother of the gods (Day 1986: 387). In Late Bronze Age Canaan, Asherah was sometimes represented as a nurturing, nursing mother, symbolizing reproductive powers and human fertility (Arthur 2014: 70).

'In the 'Baal cycle' of myths KTU 1.1–6, she is a great goddess, mother of the minor gods of the pantheon referred to as "the seventy sons of Athirat." She intercedes for Baal and Anat before El and supplies a son to reign following the descent of Baal into the netherworld' (van der Toorn, Becking and van der Horst 1999: 151). She is also identified as a possible seductress. 'In one obscure episode (cf. KTU 1.4 ii:1–11 with 4 iii: 15–22), it is possible that she attempts to seduce Baal, or is thought by him to have done so' (van der Toorn, Becking and van der Horst 1999: 151). In addition, the goddess may have stories connected to her executing the

<sup>3</sup>The etymological possibilities are considerable. South Arabic *atr* means "shining"; Hebrew *'aser* means "happy" (cf. the tribal name Asher, which may be a divine name in origin), or "upright" (which is consonant with the probable pole-structure of the cultic object, the asherah); Hebrew *'asar* and Ugaritic *'atr* may mean to advance, walk (applied in explanations of the goddess as "walker" or "trampler"); the common noun *'atr* (*'asr*) meaning "(sacred) place" is widely attested in the Semitic languages and perhaps offers the least difficulties in being able to stand on its own; of a wife "following" her husband (Ugaritic *atr* = "after") and therefore as a denominative "wife," "consort" (van der Toorn, Becking and van der Horst 1999: 99).

magnificent feat of walking on water. 'The goddess' name appears to be the longer title *rbt atrt ym*, meaning perhaps "the Great Lady who walks on the Sea" (the name therefore apparently abbreviated as "Walker") (van der Toorn, Becking and van der Horst 1999: 100–101).<sup>4</sup> It should be understood that, although this is an interesting and tempting depiction of the goddess, the origin of her name, as discussed above, remains unclear.

### ***Mesopotamia***

In Sumerian culture, the goddess is recognized as the goddess Asratum; she is identified as Ashratu in Akkadian literature (Boder and Olyan 2012: endnote 11). Her earliest reference is in a votive inscription in Sumerian from Hammurabi's time (18th century BCE), BM 22454. Epithets referencing her include 'daughter-in-law of An,' 'Lady of voluptuousness and happiness,' and 'Lady with patient mercy.' In addition, she is found on a number of cylinder seals and seal impressions, as well as in a number of god-lists, e.g., the list K. 3089 that indicates that she had a temple in Babylon (Boder and Olyan 2012: endnote 11).

### ***Canaanites***

In Canaan, animistic practices may have been connected with the goddess as reflected in the possible worship of her in the form of a tree or grove of trees. The biblical text provides insight regarding these customs when describing King Jehu's rebellion. Jehu's insurrection failed in establishing exclusive worship of Yahweh, nor did the king eradicate all other cultic practices. Isserlin explains, 'Asherah worship, centered probably on the sacred tree symbol of the Canaanite goddess of that name, continued under his successors' (Isserlin 1998: 85). In other words, Jehu's valiant attempt more than likely did not stop the worship of Asherah.

Nakhai also offers essential information regarding Asherah in Canaan, offering a comparison of her animism with that of other area goddesses: 'The triad of major Canaanite goddesses, Asherah, Astarte, and Anat, their Egyptian hypostatization Qudshu and the Egyptian goddess Hathor shared many characteristics. Among them was an association with snakes and with lions' (Nakhai 2001: 146).

### ***Hittites***

A form of Asherah also appears in Hittite culture. A Hittite text contains the myth of Elkunirsha and Ashertu, in which 'Atirat appears as Ashertu (also Aserdu). The text explains how the goddess tries to seduce the storm-god (Teshub = Baal/Hadad). When Baal/Hadad reports this to Elkunirsha, Baal/Hadad is told to humiliate the goddess, which he does both sexually and by telling her how he killed her children (Smith 1990: 82; van der Toorn, Becking and van der Horst 1999: 100).

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<sup>4</sup>[B]ut this should not be understood to point to the true etymology..., and is not falsified by an appeal to etymology, being perhaps an example of "popular" (rather "hieratic") etymologizing' (van der Toorn, Becking and van der Horst 1999: 100–101).

### **Philistines**

Tel Miqne-Ekron has produced dedicatory inscriptions that contain the goddess' name as 'srh. 'The inscriptions were engraved on jars whose contents probably were destined for the cult of the deity or her symbol... A royal dedicatory inscription from Ekron mentions in line three a goddess *Ptgyh*, who has not yet been identified. Her epithet 'dth, his lady (Adat), might indicate that she was identified with the local Semitic deity Asherah' (van der Toorn, Becking and van der Horst: 1999: 100 *after* Gitin, Dothan and Naveh 1997).

### **Egypt**

In Egyptian culture, the goddess Athirat is connected to Qudshu. This link appears in KTU 1.2 I:21 (the phrase *bn qds* is usually translated as 'the sons of Qudshu' but a better reading is probably *Qudshu*), and thus a link is made between her and the so-called Qudshu stele from Thebes. In the stele depiction, the goddess stands nude on the back of a lion. She displays a Hathor-like hairstyle and holds a snake in her left hand and a lotus flower in her right. The objects are connected to creation, an attribute of Athirat. However, the identification with Athirat remains controversial (van der Toorn, Becking and van der Horst 1999: 100).

### **Khirbet el-Qom and Kuntillet 'Ajrud Inscriptions**

Much has been written about and debated regarding the finds at the sites of Khirbet el-Qom and Kuntillet 'Ajrud; only information germane to this discussion will be presented. The famous inscription found in a burial cave near Khirbet el-Qom (biblical Makkedah), located west of Hebron, offers insight regarding an aspect of Asherah. The inscription sits above a stylized hand.

It is located above and to the right of two small lamp niches carved into the wall and would have been the first text that visitors saw. The hand and inscription would have emerged from the darkness as a person placed a lamp into a carved niche in the cave wall. An alternating pattern of darkness and light cast by the flickering lamp animated the cursive Hebrew letters of this text (Mandell and Smoak 2018).

The artifact is badly damaged but reveals six lines. The damage has made translation difficult. There are four main lines, with two fragmentary ones at the bottom, which may have been added by the original writer as an afterthought or by a later hand as the four main lines could be considered complete in themselves (Hadley 1987: 50–51).<sup>5</sup> Scholars have presented numerous ideas and thoughts regarding the proper translation of the inscription (Zevit 1984: 39–47). However, most agree that lines three, five, and six discuss actions involving Asherah. Zevit (1984: 39–47) translates the inscription:

1. Uriyahu the governor wrote it.
2. May Uriyahu be blessed by his Asherah.
3. my guardian and by his Asherah. Save him.
4. (save) Uriyahu.

<sup>5</sup> Scholars William G. Dever, Joseph Naveh, Andre Lemaire, Patrick Miller, Ziony Zevit and numerous others have produced a plethora of scholarship on this topic.



Hadley interprets the lines:

1. Uriyahu the rich wrote it.
2. Blessed be Uriyahu by Yahweh
3. For from his enemies by his (YHWH's) asherah he (YHWH) has saved him
4. \_\_\_\_\_ by Oniyahu
5. \_\_\_\_\_ and by his asherah
6. \_\_\_\_\_ his a[she]rah

Of course, there are differences in the scholars' translations, but note that, when discussing Asherah, the activities associated with the name involve blessing and protection. It is uncertain if Asherah's abilities are possibly apotropaic and can ward off physical danger, or if they were generated or increased when connected with YHWH. Nevertheless, it appears that Asherah protects and blesses. A goddess or object thought to have these kinds of faculties and strengths would have been extremely popular among many in the culture and garnered much attention and adoration. This deity who protected and blessed may have been viewed as the goddess who addressed people's needs, provided them with what they desired, and kept them from danger.

Kuntillet 'Ajrud, located in the Sinai Peninsula, has been identified as a 9th–8th century B.C.E. shrine, fortress, and religious center, among other things (Meshel 1978: 50–54). Excavations at this site also produced valuable artifacts that provide information about the goddess and other known deities in Israel. Dever states that the 'corpus of Hebrew inscriptions [at the site] contains clear references to at least four deities: Yahweh, El, Ba'al, and Asherah' (Dever 2005: 162). Meshel states that a trove of artifacts was found in the rectangular courtyard of the site. For this study, primary attention is on the inscriptions found on select vessels and walls in the bench room. According to Dever (2005: 162), a wall inscription reads:

To [Y]ahweh (of) Teiman (Yemen) and to his Ashera[h] (Dever 2005: 162).

In this inscription, the god and goddess are combined and appear to be part of a possible cultic system.

A large storejar ('Pithos A') has a long inscription that ends: 'I [b]lessed you by (or 'to') Yahweh of Samaria and by his Asherah.' Interestingly, there are images on 'Pithos A' that may present a physical depiction of the goddess. A seated figure to the right of two standing apparently male figures sits on what may be a 'lion throne' (Dever 2005: 164–165). The 'throne' has splayed, claw-like feet, and a small, tilted back. Although it may be the style of the artist, the figure's feet do not touch the ground, which may indicate the size of the chair. What is also intriguing is that the figure is holding or playing a lyre. It is important to keep in mind that the act of singing is not always shown in artistic scenes or iconography, but it should be considered. Thus, the figure may be singing and accompanying herself. This chordophone that was popular in the ancient Near East in general and Israel in particular may have been the preferred instrument of the deity.

A second storejar ('Pithos B') from Kuntillet 'Ajrud is similar in construction and also had an inscription. This one reads: 'Yahweh of Teiman and his Asherah' (Dever 2005: 162–163).

Dever also notes that a third storejar contains a blessing on the outer surface that reads: 'May Yahweh bless you and keep you and be with you.' He suggests this vessel was probably placed in the shrine at the gate as a votive or 'stand-in' for the worshipper (Dever 2005: 128).

The texts and depictions present a goddess who was potentially empowered with the ability to bless and protect; she may have enjoyed or played the lyre and sang, as well as been a key component of the Israelite pantheon.

### **Possible Asherah Representations in Other Artifacts**

Excavations in what has been identified as a cultic room at the site of Tel Ta'anach produced a 10th century B.C.E. ceramic stand most likely connected with Asherah. The stand discovered at Ta'anach by Lapp in 1968 displays worship of a goddess. Dever and Hestrin identify the figure as Asherah; Smith agrees but says the figure might also be Astarte. Keel and Uehlinger recognize her as Anat-Astarte (Nakhai 2001: 178).

Dever shared his interpretation of the Ta'anach stand with its four registers containing a sun disc, a sacred tree, and a nude female holding two lionesses by the ears. He explains, 'Few scholars have commented on the remarkable iconography of this Israelite-offering stand. But there is growing evidence that the female is none other than the Mother Goddess Asherah, consort of El and the great goddess of sex and fertility in Canaan, one of whose principal epithets was "the Lion Lady"' (Dever 1990: 135).

Moreover, according to Dever (2005: 176–177), a particular type of figurine is found throughout Israel that may have also depicted the goddess Asherah.

Figurines from the 10th–9th century B.C. depict a frontally nude female with long hair, her arms at her side or her hands at the breasts. These would appear to continue a Late Bronze Age Canaanite tradition of plaque figures, either standing (votives?) or lying on a couch (mourners or deities). Most scholars identify the standing figurines with the well-known Late Bronze Age goddess Asherah, especially those with the distinctive bouffant wig worn by the Egyptian goddess Hathor, whom the texts clearly equate with Levantine Asherah as "Qudshu, the Holy One."

Plaque figurines often thought to be depictions of Asherah also display similar female figures with a disc. Dever explains 'Also mostly from the 10th–9th century B.C. in the north are a number of figurines that show a female holding at one breast a circular object that has been variously interpreted as a "frame drum," or possibly a molded bread cake. These may be nude or wearing a skirt' (Dever 2005: 177). If the figure is identified as Asherah, the frame drum may have been another instrument associated specifically with the goddess. There is some debate over whether or not the figures are depicted playing the drum. I suggest that they are holding the drum in a playing position (Burgh 2004: 128–136). Also regarding the figurines:

Many are rather stylized, but all of them present a nude female figure frontally, with wide hips and full breasts. Sometimes the pubic triangle is exaggerated and graphically portrayed. The figure often wears a necklace, occasionally an arrow-quiver with crossed chest-bands. She may hold lotus blossoms, snakes or even sacrificial animals in

her outstretched hands. Very often she is riding on the back of a lion (or sometimes a war-horse) (Dever 2005: 185).

### **Who were Asherah's Consorts in Ancient Israel?**

Some of the most well-known pairings of the goddess with gods in the ancient Near East include but are not limited to the Sumerian god Anu, the Ugaritic/Canaanite gods Baal and El, and at times, YHWH. The biblical writers often mention Asherah with Baal. For example, in the infamous battle for supremacy in Israel, the prophet Elijah presents YHWH against Baal and Asherah.

Now therefore have all Israel assemble for me at Mount Carmel, with the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table (1 Kgs 18:19).

This dramatic battle on a famous mountain further illustrates the deity's popularity in Israelite culture. A confrontation of this magnitude demonstrates the diverse perspectives in the culture. To have a showdown between these deities is apparently the zenith of tension in cultic practices.

For some, Asherah was not a deity that would easily be abandoned. Not only was she powerful, but she was also connected to Baal and El, and this may have given her additional value and status. Moreover, she may have been viewed as a threat to the faction who desired Yahwistic monotheism. The practice of polytheism or possibly henotheism against Yahwistic monotheism would have created issues not only in cultic practices, but also created economic ramifications within the culture. Worshipers giving financial support, agricultural first fruits and other offerings, or time and energy to Asherah or any deity other than YHWH would have been problematic to pro-Yahwistic monotheists.

### **Asherah—Hated or Loved? Why?**

In the period of the Hebrew monarchy, the monotheistic point-of-view is even more stringent, so that all non-monotheistic forms of popular worship are consistently and unrelentingly referred to only with derision, condemnation and the reproach of idolatrous backsliding (Patai 1965: 37–52).

It must be understood that while the prominent voice of the Hebrew Bible is pro-monotheism, reading against the grain demonstrates that sectors of Israelite society had no issue with polytheism or various forms of henotheism. Consider Israelite King Manasseh and how the biblical writers describe his reign:

Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign; he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah. He did what was evil in the sight of YHWH, following the abominable practices of the nations that YHWH drove out before the people of Israel. For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had destroyed; he erected altars for Baal, made a *sacred pole*, as King Ahab of Israel had done, worshiped all the host of heaven, and served them (2 Kgs 21:1–3 *emphasis mine*).

It appears the biblical writers have a bias against Manasseh and his cultic actions. They describe his practices as evil. He conducts his affairs differently from the previous King Hezekiah, erecting altars for deities other than YHWH and worshiping the host of heaven—a pantheon of deities. Specifically, Manasseh made a sacred pole, which more than likely represented the goddess Asherah. Note that the writers do not state that Manasseh abandoned YHWH or turned his back on Yahwism. His cultic practices were simply not the same as those of his predecessor. Again, according to the writers, this is evil. However, there is a group whose voice is not readily heard or presented in the text. For them, Manasseh's practices were not necessarily bad or abominable.

Scholars continue to work diligently to understand lost aspects of Israelite culture. This is a perplexing task as much of the data are fragmented, damaged puzzle pieces. Thus, gaining a clear understanding of areas we identify as cultic remains challenging. Researchers must construct careful questions to investigate and employ these texts and artifacts. In this example, the writers describe non-Yahwistic cultic activities that took place during the reign of Manasseh. Although other voices and perspectives are not clearly present, the writers' views are certainly not the only ones. It is uncertain how many other views there were, but it must be recognized that they existed. One approach is to read against the grain. For example, according to the text Manasseh reigned 55 years. It must be recognized that, although practices during his reign were considered evil by some, his long reign suggests there was something effective and positive about his time as king. Given the many examples of assassinations and usurping of the throne in Israel and Judah (e.g., 1 Kgs 16:9–14), it is perplexing that a king would have remained on the throne if he were not effective.

If we accept the biblical writers' statements regarding Manasseh, to maintain 55 years of worship of the host of heaven and the activities that went along with them is astounding. If Manasseh's reign was completely evil, 'he did what evil in the site of YHWH,' would he have had 55 years as king with no coups or assassination attempts? I offer that the biblical writers were not fans of Manasseh and his actions. This is a problem with the biblical text. It is not objective and only presents the perspective of the writers. In this case, we read the views of monotheists and those who opposed Manasseh but not the views of those for whom the worship of Asherah was not a problem. For some it was not acceptable for groups within the culture to practice polytheism, henotheism, or to have Asherah associated with YHWH or another male consort.

Also consider King Ahab:

In the thirty-eighth year of King Asa of Judah, Ahab son of Omri began to reign over Israel; and Ahab son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. Ahab son of Omri did evil in the sight of YHWH more than all who were before him. And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, he took as his wife Jezebel daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians and went and served Baal, and worshiped him. He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. Ahab also made a sacred pole. Ahab did more to provoke the anger of YHWH, the God of Israel, than had all the kings of Israel who were before him (1 Kgs 16:29–34).

Ahab has the same issue as Manasseh. He also reigns a significant length of time (ca. 22 years). The writers are also biased in their presentation of him and his undertakings, with his most prominent provocation coming from the prophets Elijah (e.g., 1 Kgs. 18:17) and Micaiah (1 Kgs 22:12).

The goddess is without question ubiquitous throughout the ancient Near East. She is a member of known pantheons and paired with male consorts who are often linked to nature (e.g., moon, sea). In Israel, Asherah is connected to fertility and childbirth specifically. The desire for conception and giving birth is an important theme in a number of Hebrew Bible stories (e.g., Gen. 18:11–14, Abraham and Sarah; 1 Sam. 1:1–2:21, Elkanah and Hannah).<sup>6</sup> The biblical text indicates that there was tremendous pressure on women in Israelite culture to conceive (especially a male child) and any assistance would have been welcomed. The countless Canaanite fertility figurines appearing in excavations have been linked to Asherah, which may shed more light on the goddess in conjunction with conception.<sup>7</sup> It is not clear if there are numerous figurines and cult stands and stories because of Asherah's popularity or if her popularity helped to create them. However, their frequent appearance in the archaeological record and the biblical stories involving barren women and the desire for children indicate a connection with the goddess and fertility (Kletter 1996). Those desiring children would have found the power of a goddess like this appealing and necessary. In addition, success in agriculture each season and the need to increase herds may have drawn farmers and pastoralists to the deity.

While Asherah had connections with fertility, childbirth, and possibly agriculture and pastoralism in ancient Israel, I offer that music was also important to the goddess. Artifacts and textual data suggest that the lyre and frame drum were possibly associated with the goddess. Keep in mind that there are several stories that involve women with frame drums in worship and celebration, including:

Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a frame drum in her hand; and all the women went out after her with frame drums and with dancing (Exod 15:20).

Then Jephthah came to his home at Mizpah; and there was his daughter coming out to meet him with frame drums and with dancing. She was his only child; he had no son or daughter except her (Judg 11:34).

As they were coming home, when David returned from killing the Philistine, the women came out of all the towns of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with frame drum, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments (1 Sam 18:6).

In most of these examples, women play the drum, an instrument with which women often performed, but in the iconographic depiction from Kuntillet 'Ajrud, the figure identified as Asherah has a lyre. This chordophone may have been one favored by Asherah.

<sup>6</sup> Also see Ackerman (1993: 398, fn. 27) who discusses connections between Eve, Asherah and fertility. 'At a minimum, Eve, like Asherah, represents fertility ("the mother of all living": Gen. 3:20).

<sup>7</sup> Not all interpret the objects as fertility figurines. See Darby (2014).

## Conclusions

What made this particular goddess and representations of her so hated by some while simultaneously revered by others in Israelite culture? Consider the following: The diversity of perspectives about Asherah demonstrate levels of complexity within Israelite religion. Most of the biblical writers present a view of the Israelite cult that required everyone to worship YHWH and YHWH only. For example, Deuteronomistic ideology wants YHWH worshipped only in Jerusalem, i.e., no domestic shrines; YHWH was to be worshipped according to the directions of the Temple priests and this was only to be done in Jerusalem. Yet, a reading of the text reveals there were groups within the culture that had different ideas and opinions regarding religion, YHWH, and other deities. These concepts may have adjusted and morphed over time, for example, with changes in leadership or the introduction of new ideas. It is these perspectives, opinions, ideas, thoughts, and voices that are not always clear or present in the text. Nevertheless, careful study indicates that they would have been present along with the others.

In addition to those previously mentioned, there are several other possibilities for why some may have despised the goddess, among them, misogyny. Given the tone in several stories and apparent cultural practices regarding women in the Hebrew Bible and Israelite culture, I offer that it is possible there were those who may have found it difficult to have or serve a deity like Asherah, especially if they did not view women in the same light as men. For example, in the story of Abram and Sarai and their desire to produce an heir, Sarai gives her servant Hagar to Abram as another wife to serve as a surrogate. The writers do not mention any discourse, discussion, or consent from Hagar (Gen. 16). It does not appear that this kind of activity regarding the creation of children happens with men in any of the biblical stories. Concubinage in Israelite culture also produces questions regarding the status of some women during this time, as the text indicates that a concubine typically lived with a man but did not have the same status as his wife or wives. A gruesome story in Judg. 19–22 presents the idea that concubines and possibly women in general were not as important as men. The writers explain that two men were willing to send out a virgin daughter and a concubine to satisfy the demands of a crowd of men gathered outside of the place where they were. Initially the crowd desired to violate one of the men. However, the group eventually seized the man's concubine. After she is gang raped all night by them, to save him from the same fate, the owner of the concubine kills her and dismembers her body (Judg. 19-22). Moreover, note that when a husband and wife have issues conceiving in the biblical stories, the blame is placed on the woman. The writers never mention the possibility that there may be a problem with the man (e.g., Isaac and Rebecca: Gen. 29:31; Manoah's wife, whose name is not mentioned: Judg. 13:2; also see Isaiah 54).

Along the same lines, men may have regarded YHWH as not as strong when paired with a female consort, especially one like Asherah. Although there are many stories in the biblical text that describe YHWH's phenomenal abilities, to have a consort that possibly walks on water and gives and sustains life, among other attributes, could have been troublesome and generate ideas of independence among women. Lastly, there may have been issues because of her copious and intimate connections with so many male deities throughout the ancient Near East.

The archaeological record presents a unique picture regarding the relationships between men and women in Israelite culture. Carol Meyers challenges the identification of ancient Israel as a patriarchal society and does so convincingly. The archaeological record reveals a culture in which women were indispensable and were often the chief executives of essential areas and life-sustaining tasks. She states (2014: 21):

Economic activities were an integral part of household life in ancient Israel as in all traditional agrarian societies. It can be shown that women were largely responsible for food processing, textile production, and the fashioning of various household implements and containers (grinding tools, stone and ceramic vessels, baskets, weaving implements, and sewing tools). Many of these tasks were not only time-consuming and physically demanding but also technologically sophisticated. In the aggregate, they likely required more technological skill than did men's.

Meyers demonstrates that it is imperative that we consider all the enigmatic pieces of the puzzle when attempting to reconstruct ancient cultures.

There isn't much not to like about the goddess Asherah. She gives life, is nurturing, protects, blesses, and rescues. Asherah is much like a mother, but, interestingly, she is also presented as having the quality of a seductress. Moreover, the physical representations of her in figurines and cultic stands (most of the time she is naked or close to it) may have been considered appealing, which may have challenged some groups in the culture. Of course, there is much we don't know about Asherah, but assessing the available data, she was clearly an inspiration to many and a thorn to others.

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# Defending Scripture through Spiritual Archaeology

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## The Battle Begins: Higher Criticism in America

By 1870, most Americans and academics agreed the Bible was the word of God. Even after Julius Wellhausen's *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* was published in English in 1885, higher criticism had a tenuous hold on American scholarship. However, by 1900 the critical analysis of the Bible by Julius Wellhausen and other German scholars had undermined the authority of the Bible. Christians now argued among one another 'how the Bible was the word of God. And the academic world at large had asked if it was' (Noll 2004: 11).

Several events changed the landscape of American biblical studies. In 1875, William Robertson Smith wrote his celebrated articles on 'Angels' and 'Bible' for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. It was Smith's writings that ignited the American debates about the modern critical study of the Bible. Smith, Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at Aberdeen Free Church College, willingly challenged the accuracy of the biblical narrative. Smith was tried for alleged heresies, an action duplicated in America by the Presbyterian Church against scholars who supported a critical analysis of the Bible. The trial lasted three years and, in the end, Smith was acquitted but lost his academic position. The appearance of Wellhausen's theories also deeply affected American traditional Protestant belief, and many reconsidered their concepts of religion. Some American biblical scholars urged the clergy and the public to apply new critical standards of scholarship to the Bible itself.

By the 1880s, higher criticism created a rupture among academic and theological communities. It threatened to consume traditional interpretations of the Bible. As the scientific threats to the Bible's authority gained ground, evangelical Christians often turned to the Princeton Theological Seminary for support in defending the Bible's literal interpretation. The Seminary strenuously asserted 'the belief that the Bible was indeed God's revelation and accurate (or inerrant) in every respect' (Lee 2008: 515). Conservative biblical scholars and theologians regarded the higher criticism imported from Germany as a threat to the foundation of Christianity. They brought legal proceedings against several biblical scholars who were condemned and suspended from the ministry. Charles A. Briggs of Union Theological Seminary, Henry Preserved Smith and Arthur Cushman McGiffert of Lane Seminary, and George Foot Moore of Andover Theological Seminary all faced accusations of heresy for questioning biblical inerrancy and were driven from the Presbyterian Church (Brown 1960: 204–205).

By the end of the nineteenth century, the critical examination of the Bible had existed for nearly a century in Europe, and Wellhausen's analysis of Israelite history and religion should not have been a surprise in America. Anyone who wanted to know what was happening in European biblical criticism could have pieced together the pertinent issues by reading German, Dutch, or even British scholars. Also, during the last decades of the nineteenth century, many American students attended German universities and were exposed to the critical study of the

Bible and other advanced-level studies, research methods, and specialization and brought this knowledge back to the US.

Of equal importance in challenging traditional religion was the issue of evolution. After the Civil War, nearly every field of scientific endeavor was influenced by Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859). His conclusions on natural selection and species evolution stunned the scientific community and American public. Darwin's theories (Darwin was a former Theology student) convinced many people that the Genesis account of creation was erroneous. Darwin's theories had the effect of impugning the biblical narrative of early civilization and the history of man. If Darwin were correct, it was not just the veracity of Genesis that was in play: the entire Bible was called into question. Darwin converted large segments of the scientific community.

Darwin's tome had a poisonous effect on a number of influential conservative Protestant clergy and biblical scholars. They developed an apocalyptic mentality concerning Darwinism and biblical criticism, and, in some notorious cases, launched assaults on modernist biblical scholars. For pious clergy and biblical scholars who attacked the integrity of anyone who questioned the biblical account of creation, Darwinism was not just another specious scientific theory, it was 'a new form of infidelity' (Marsden 2006: 20).

It was clear to many American biblical scholars and theologians that Wellhausen had radically changed the landscape of biblical studies. There could be no turning back to the pious theories of biblical revelation, infallibility, authority, and inspiration at the expense of a critical examination of the biblical text. Evangelical scholars in America were losing ground. They had difficulty adjusting to 'academic life.' By 1900, the field of biblical studies was more professional, engaged in scientific inquiry, specialized study, peer orientation, and influenced by the German model of scholarship (Noll 2004: 33). Yet American biblical analysis was in its embryonic stage. Ira Brown (1960) argued the American contributions to the literary and historical analysis of the Bible were not great. The principal results of the last decades of the nineteenth century regarding the debates over higher criticism 'were the detachment of theological scholarship from Biblical literalism, the popularization of the historical approach to Scripture, and the achievement of religious liberty for later generations of scholars' (Brown 1960: 208).

How important was all this to the public? Discussions and views of higher criticism were not limited to a few elite universities. Whether or not the public was listening, a number of popular clergy publicized the new science of higher criticism. Washington Gladden's *Who Wrote the Bible? A Book for the People* (1891) was the most popular book on biblical criticism. In Gladden's (1891: 5) opinion, 'Many facts about the Bible are now known by intelligent ministers of which their congregations do not hear. An anxious and not unnatural feeling has prevailed that the faith of the people in the Bible would be shaken if the facts were known.' While biblical scholars clashed over the intricacies of higher criticism, the public must have been utterly confused. Walter F. Peterson (1962: 323, 327) argued that critical theories developed by some biblical scholars were immediately questioned by others and believed that, between 1870 and 1910, only one-fourth of all Protestant ministers adopted higher criticism. Ira Brown (1960: 207) contended that the appeal of higher criticism was among a small minority 'chiefly among the better educated elements of the urban Northeast and Middle West....' The popular

revivalist preacher Dwight L. Moody (quoted in Brown 1960: 208) wondered what the use was 'of telling people there were two Isaiahs when most people did not know there was one?' Moreover, higher criticism was forbidden to Catholics (Brown 1960: 208). Perhaps the much-quoted President Grover Cleveland represented the public view at large when he said 'The Bible is good enough for me: just the old book under which I was brought up. I do not want notes, or criticisms, or explanations about authorship or origin, or even cross-references. I do not need or understand them, and they confuse me' (quoted in Parker 1911: 382).

### **An Archaeology of Faith: Nineteenth Century Beginnings**

At the dawn of the twentieth century, to the alarm of conservatives, the critical study of the biblical text was now an acceptable approach for serious study at many major universities and seminaries. The old-style theology that eschewed or scorned science appeared medieval to many educated Christians. Sweeping condemnations of higher criticism and heresy trials to silence its advocates were shunned by many Protestant scholars. Many traditionalists were persuaded that they must attempt something dramatic to reaffirm Christian truth and counter the seduction of biblical criticism and other modernist tendencies. That something would be archaeology.

A number of archaeological discoveries in the last years of the nineteenth and first years of the twentieth century were hailed by some scholars who interpreted this new material as demonstrative proof of the Bible's reliability. The results from these excavations emboldened traditionalists who adhered to the philosophy of biblical inerrancy and infallibility. These cherished doctrines now appeared to be wondrously corroborated by celebrated digs that had unearthed biblical antiquities. More significantly, in England first and then in the US, archaeological evidence was interpreted and integrated into the conservative struggle against German higher criticism. The new data became the bulwark of faith-oriented scholars in the Anglo-American community from whom archaeology received its greatest support and promotion.

Long before Wellhausen's theory, conservatives could point to the remarkable archaeological discoveries during the mid-nineteenth century that had unearthed previously unknown Mesopotamian cities in Assyria and Babylon. These early excavations, often just treasure hunts, were believed to be direct witnesses of the events told in the Old Testament. When Assyrian inscriptions were deciphered and appeared to validate events in the Old Testament, enormous interest was generated over the connections between those monuments and biblical narratives. Cuneiform texts revealed unimaginable information that verified many episodes of the Bible. Assyrian annals, for example, appeared to testify to the biblical narrative mentioning the same Assyrian, Babylonian, and Israelite kings and events described in the Bible.

By the mid-1870s, scholars were informed about Assyrian and Babylonian flood and creation myths that were similar to biblical flood stories, which stirred enormous enthusiasm among the public in England and America. It was obvious to most biblical scholars that the early chapters of Genesis were connected to these spectacular discoveries. But how? Many biblical scholars argued that the biblical flood story was simply an adaptation of Mesopotamian accounts. In other instances, conservative biblical scholars endeavored to illuminate the

biblical narrative with questionable interpretations of Assyrian and Babylonian sources. Fanciful connections ‘concerning creation, paradise, the fall of man, Cain and Abel, and the Tower of Babel were reputedly found’ (Chavalas and Younger 2002: 29). Pious scholars and clergy declared that these Mesopotamian records authenticated a number of biblical stories, especially those in Genesis, but critics claimed this evidence actually raised doubts about the authenticity of many of the traditions located in the first books in the Old Testament.

Archaeology in Palestine lacked the sensational appeal that museums and the public craved compared to the discoveries and monuments in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. The Holy Land had its share of pilgrims, Christian missionaries, adventurers, and early scientific explorers, but Palestinian archaeology could not captivate the public like the exploits of Paul-Émile Botta, Austen Henry Layard, Sir Henry Rawlinson, George Smith, Giovanni Battista Belzoni, Auguste Mariette, Gaston Maspero, and Sir William Matthews Flinders Petrie. These European men uncovered fabulous antiquities that were eventually displayed in the great museums of Europe — a feat that nineteenth century western explorers in Palestine could not match. Instead, American scholars focused on the writings from Mesopotamia to understand the biblical narrative. The American Oriental Society, founded in 1843, was devoted to the research of the languages and literatures of the Near East and Asia. The society’s journal, the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, failed to report Petrie’s 1890 excavation at Tell el-Hesi in Palestine for decades. The popular press regularly printed stories on spectacular temples, palaces, marble columns, aqueducts, amphitheatres, statues, cuneiform libraries, pyramids, and carved reliefs in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Rome, and Greece. As for Palestine, most of its ancient cities were buried in mounds that had been ignored. Despite Petrie’s excavation at Tell el-Hesi in 1890, scholars and the press for years regarded the Holy Land as an archaeological backwater.

The development of archaeology in the Holy Land specifically was a slow process. According to the ‘father of biblical archaeology,’ William Foxwell Albright (1938), late nineteenth century archaeology was mere guesswork. Albright painted a drab picture of the practice of archaeology: there were no real excavations in Palestine except Jerusalem and the understanding of stratigraphy and comparative archaeology did not exist. In addition, while the practice of applying philological method to the newly deciphered languages was new, according to Albright, ‘there were no satisfactory grammars or dictionaries and translation was hardly more than clever guessing...’ (Albright 1938: 178). For Albright (1938: 179), ‘the light shed by archaeological discoveries on the background of the Bible was so fitful that archaeology might just as not have existed.’ Additionally, as Rachel Hallote has noted (2009: 226), ‘the American academy generally regarded the archaeology of Palestine as an unimportant subfield of Near Eastern studies’ throughout the nineteenth century. Endeavors in Palestine were too closely related to Christian theological concerns rather than the secular academy. Therefore, the archaeological data and inscriptions revealed in the last years of the nineteenth century that appealed to biblical scholars came from elsewhere.

### **Early Twentieth Century Developments**

At the turn of the century, new evidence was uncovered that linked to the Bible and energized pious clergy and conservative scholars. They argued theories of higher criticism were now demolished by new archaeological results supportive of biblical events. Those new discoveries

included the contents of the rich archive of Tell el-Amarna (discovered in 1887) that attested to ancient writing in Canaan and other areas in the Levant. The letters mentioned the Habiru, whom many linked to the ancient Hebrews, and a factual exodus. The discovery of Pithom (Egyptian *Per-Atum*, 'House of Atum'), one of the store-cities erected by the Hebrews during their enslavement in Egypt according to Exodus 1:11, also caused a sensation. Conservatives pointed to Petrie's discovery of the stela of Merneptah in 1896 and his discovery in 1905–1906 of Ramses, the other store-city, at Tell el-Retabeh as miraculous evidence of biblical verification. By 1900, scholars were aware that evidence for the invasion of Israel by Pharaoh Shishak cited in 1 Kings 14:25 and 2 Chronicles 12:2–12 had been located on a triumphal relief-scene at the temple of Amun at Karnak. In addition, French archaeologists digging at Susa in 1901–1902 uncovered the law code of Hammurabi (1792–1750 BCE), one of the oldest law codes in existence and remarkably similar to elements in the Hebrew law code. This was interpreted as the possible ancient source of Mosaic law.

Defenders of the Bible praised these archaeological discoveries as confirmation that events depicted in the biblical narrative had indeed occurred. The totality of the archaeological evidence also encouraged devout scholars to believe they could discredit Wellhausen and his supporters. In the next decades, a complete validation of the historicity of the biblical record was magnified throughout conservative scholarship based on the misapplication of archaeological data. However, critical scholars challenged those erroneous claims and warned students that a great deal of archaeological evidence was incomplete and often hypothetical. Mainstream scholars insisted archaeology had not repudiated higher criticism, and they reiterated, time and again, that any archaeological interpretation inspired by a religious spirit or direct appeal to Scripture was inadmissible. The stage had been set for a contentious dispute among Anglo-American scholars over the interpretation of archaeological data and its influence on the biblical text.

In this early period, the most articulate opponent of higher criticism was Archibald H. Sayce. For more than thirty years, he vigorously objected to the negative assertions of higher critics. Sayce was an Anglican clergyman and Professor of Assyriology at Oxford. His scholarly credentials were considerable and included the fact that he was instrumental in deciphering the Hittite language and the first to publish the Siloam inscription. Most importantly, Sayce's writings and arguments in defending many aspects of the biblical record from its skeptics were incorporated into later works by serious scholars and confessional elements.

It was the discovery of the Tell el-Amarna letters dating to the 14th century BCE that 'revolutionized' Sayce's perspective on higher criticism (Sayce 1923: 272–273). He recognized that writing was widespread throughout the Near East and, more importantly, was ancient. For Sayce, the decipherment of the Tell el-Amarna tablets assuredly refuted the documentary hypothesis, which proclaimed that writing was unknown at the time of Moses. In 1923, he asserted: 'It was henceforth plain that the assumption of the late date of the literary use of writing was false.... it was no longer possible, except for the ignorant to maintain that literary works that we find in the Old Testament, could not have existed in the Mosaic era' (Sayce 1923: 272–73). Higher critics were wrong to insist the Bible was written centuries after the events had occurred. Sayce insisted that archaeology had easily demonstrated that German critics could no longer argue that early Israel could neither read nor write until the Exile. These early Egyptian tablets convinced him that 'hence forward the character and credibility of a

Hebrew document must be settled not by the assumptions, subjective fantasies or ignorance of the critic, but by archaeological research' (Sayce 1923: 273-273). According to Barbara Zink MacHaffie, by 1895 Sayce was writing that German criticism had no legitimate role in Old Testament criticism, especially since the advent of the 'crushing replies' of archaeology. Sayce also expressed concern that German critics failed 'to recognize the doubts which their theories cast on the teaching authority and miracles of Jesus' (MacHaffie 1981: 326-327). Of course, this became a recurrent theme for conservatives. If higher criticism was widely endorsed, the consequences were indisputable: Jesus was not divine, and his teachings were false.

Many of Sayce's themes became the foundation of the biblical archaeology movement later developed by Albright. Consider the following: Sayce insisted the archaeologist's spade had illuminated the era of Abraham, and, consequently, scholars knew more about the age of Abraham than they did about the ages of Solon and Pericles. Scholars could speak with confidence concerning the Babylonian civilization in which Abraham lived, its manners, customs, beliefs, practices, and law codes. Sayce suggested that the patriarchal traditions found in Genesis, such as Hagar's position and treatment, Eliezer's role as heir to the 'childless Abraham,' Abraham's purchase of the family tomb at Machpelah, and the mode of witnessing a deed all reflected the Babylonia of Abraham, not that of the age of Moses. The names of Abraham and Jacob were common in 'the age of Abraham' and passed out of use at a later date. Furthermore, Abraham's movements in Genesis reflected a period of Babylonian hegemony throughout Mesopotamia (Sayce 1905: 245-251).

Although Sayce did not cultivate these issues with the same sophistication as did Albright, Sayce contributed to the development and dissemination of several theories that evolved into the biblical archaeology movement that would later flourish under the Albright school. With the sensational discoveries made by archaeologists at the turn of the century, Sayce began to deny that Wellhausen literary criticism contributed any valid knowledge in comprehending the Scriptures. Archaeology and the monuments were validating the biblical record and simultaneously refuting the salient themes of German criticism. He argued that the spade would be useful in sanctifying biblical events and impeaching critical theories. Sayce maintained this basic motif throughout his career: the evidence of archaeology had controverted the critical hypothesis of Wellhausen and his advocates (Sayce 1894: 1904).

The most lucid adversary of Sayce and other scholars who employed archaeology in attacks on higher criticism was Samuel R. Driver. Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, Driver was a committed advocate of the Wellhausen school of critical scholarship. One contemporary called Driver 'the greatest Hebraist of his generation, recognized both in England and in America as a master among Old Testament scholars' (Cooke 1916: 249). John Rogerson (1984: 275) described Driver's *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (1931) as the most influential introduction 'ever to be written by an Englishman ... in advancing the critical cause in English Old Testament study.' This book became the standard work for English and American Bible students until 1941. Driver's analyses of the crude assaults in the battle against literary criticism were the century's most incisive. Years later, his works are still valuable for their sharp criticism of the misuse of archaeological data in defending the biblical record.

By 1899, Driver had delineated his arguments concerning the efficacy of recent archaeological discoveries in refuting higher critics (Hogarth and Driver 1899). Throughout his career, he never deviated from his conclusions: archaeology had not controverted the results of literary criticism. Driver was highly critical of the ‘testimony of archaeology’ in challenging higher critics. Problems arose from the questionable and even illogical inferences deduced from the archaeological data and might, of course, be debated upon their own merits, but archaeology offered nothing to oppose them. Driver insisted that higher criticism was not undermined by the discovery of the Tell el-Amarna tablets because they did not prove that Moses could have easily written the Pentateuch. He asserted there was no proof that Genesis 14 was a translation from a cuneiform document or that the Joseph narrative in Genesis was derived from a hieratic papyrus. He believed that the purchase of the cave of Machpelah could just as easily have come from the period of Sargon II and Sennacherib as from the early Babylonian Age. He also noted that the Genesis writers’ familiarity with Palestinian topography did not reflect historical truth concerning the narratives themselves (Elliott 2002: 19–27).

However, Driver did write that monuments (a play on Sayce’s 1894 volume *The ‘Higher Criticism’ and the Verdict of the Monuments*) and inscriptions had produced evidence ‘which no reasonable critic has ever doubted’ (Hogarth and Driver 1899: 150–151) such as references to Israelite kings and Assyrian rulers in the Assyrian annals. Inscriptions from Babylonia, Assyria, and Egypt had revealed important information concerning the culture and history of these nations, but they supplied no confirmation of any fact recorded in the Old Testament prior to the invasion of Shishak (Hogarth and Driver 1899: 150–151).

Throughout Driver’s major works, he charged that Sayce’s proposal that archaeology had demonstrated the veracity of the Pentateuch was misleading and inaccurate. Driver recognized the importance of cuneiform records from Mesopotamia but felt nothing had been discovered that corroborated Sayce’s assertion that there had been a particular person called Abraham who had lived in Ur and then journeyed to Hauran and on to Canaan as depicted in Genesis. Sayce’s claim that the Joseph stories were historic was false as archaeology could not confirm that these narratives were contemporary with the events recorded. Driver argued against Sayce’s claim that the Babylonian narrative of the flood contains both J and P. So flawed were Sayce’s arguments that Driver’s responses were often dismissive, even contemptuous. Driver referred to Sayce’s evidence that the patriarchs lived under the law of Hammurabi as ‘too slight to merit any attention’ (Driver 1904: XXXVI). The belief that archaeology had discredited the basic foundations of Wellhausen’s doctrines was, in Driver’s opinion, based on the faulty evaluation of the data. Driver argued that it was impossible to doubt the main conclusions of higher critics and to do so would deny ‘the ordinary principles by which history is judged and evidence estimated’ (Driver 1931: vii–viii).

Occasionally, Driver could turn to apologetics in his analysis of the biblical narrative. He assured the faithful that their apprehensions were unfounded. He stressed that any critical conclusions expressed in his writings were not in conflict with the ‘articles of Christian faith.’ Higher criticism did not affect the fact of revelation or the authority and inspiration of Scripture. Furthermore, the consequences of higher criticism did not change the general position ‘that the Old Testament points forward prophetically to Christ’ (Driver 1931: viii–ix). How Christ would have replied to the question of authorship of a particular portion of the Old Testament was unknown. Indeed, as Driver pointed out, we have no record of anyone asking

Christ whether Moses, David, or Isaiah actually authored any book in the Scriptures. Christ's appeal to the Old Testament for prophetic and spiritual lessons was unaffected by critical inquires.

Driver believed that, rather than opposing higher criticism, archaeology assisted literary critics in understanding the Bible's true historical perspective. Perhaps even more importantly, Driver maintained that archaeology allowed biblical scholars to incorporate a holistic approach to the history and civilization of the ancient Near East, the place of Israel in it, and the nature of the influences placed upon Israel. Driver set a remarkable agenda for later scholars to determine what constituted legitimate archaeological evidence in illuminating the Bible. He understood that the textual scholar could not neglect archaeological data (properly interpreted) and Israelite religion, culture, and history could not be reconstructed solely from the biblical text. Unfortunately, Driver's suggestions would not be incorporated into biblical studies. Far too many scholars called on archaeology to discredit followers of Wellhausen rather than to provide data to elucidate ancient Israelite culture and history.

### **The Conservative Response**

From 1900 to 1920, conservatives attacked the supporters of the documentary hypothesis for their lack of faith and failure to acknowledge the truthfulness of the biblical text. The principle issues for the confessional scholars were theological. A number of Anglo-American scholars – among them Emil Reich, George F. Wright, James Orr, Albert T. Clay, Edouard Naville (Swiss born), and Melvin Kyle – appealed to the faithful and extolled archaeology's contributions to destroying higher criticism, vindicating the Bible, and enhancing God's revelation.

Emil Reich, a lecturer at Oxford and Cambridge, called higher critics 'inquisitorial judges' whose methods were 'tainted' and 'mere insinuations' representative of witch trials (Reich 1905: 378-379). Reich claimed that German critics had 'disturbed the minds...of thousands of people who have been too simple to grasp the absolute emptiness of the philologist's methods in history' (Reich 1905: 735). Reich understood that his articles could not overturn the 'scientific rigor' of higher criticism and his solution was a call for action: the action of the spade. For Reich, the spade was 'competent' and 'dispassionate,' and when 'it speaks it does so in no ambiguous terms...let us, then, apply the spade' (Reich 1905: 395). He asserted that the Amarna tablets demonstrated Moses could have recorded the events of the Exodus and much of the Pentateuch. Borrowing from Sayce, he urged archaeologists to excavate Kirjat Sefer, 'the town of the scribes,' for he assumed the likelihood of discovering fragments or tablets that might relate to the events of the Exodus. He was sure that, in the near future, a cuneiform Pentateuch would surface.

Another supporter of the conservative battle against higher criticism was George F. Wright, who held the oddly titled professorship 'The Harmony of Science and Revelation' at Oberlin College. Wright saw attacks on the Old Testament as questioning the truthfulness of the New Testament. Wright cautioned historians to recognize the hand of God as a secondary agency of history (Wright 1907). Wright also wrote for *The Fundamentals*, the paperback volumes published from 1910 through 1915 to safeguard Christian belief in Scripture. Wright's contribution was an essay on the science of archaeology in authenticating God's word and demonstrating that radical critical theories were specious and dishonorable (Wright 1917:



293–314). For Wright, the documentary hypothesis was baseless because the Bible could not have been edited or revised: no editor would have abridged the Bible. Wright's evidence was typical of other conservative attacks, and he mixed archaeological data like the Amarna letters, the Black Obelisk, Shishak's invasion, and the laws of Hammurabi, with Christian doctrines and appeals to faith. Wright argued that God provided positive archaeological data to those whose religious beliefs had been weakened. The Lord had revealed those monuments 'when the faith of many was waning...' (Wright 1917: 314).

James Orr, a formidable opponent of German criticism and Professor at the Union Free Church College in Glasgow, was considered one of the champions of evangelical orthodoxy. Orr wrote a number of books and hundreds of articles, edited the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, and contributed to *The Fundamentals*. Orr's work was significant because he often wrote for newspapers and popular magazines that reached the public. He believed that the struggle against Wellhausen must be restrained, and, it is important to note, he felt that debates concerning higher criticism must appeal to the public. Although a substantial amount of Orr's criticism of Wellhausen was based on textual evidence, he believed that archaeological data unearthed in the nineteenth century comprised a 'mass of material available for the illustration and confirmation of Holy Scripture for which we cannot be sufficiently grateful' (Orr 1917: 396). However, as with many opponents of higher critics, the archaeological issues Orr addressed were only superficially archaeological: the principle issues were theological and literary and focused on reconstructing a historical setting for biblical heroes and narratives.

Conservatives could always find an archaeologist to support their theological opinions and negate critical scholarship. Albert T. Clay was a major proponent of the argument that archaeology had demolished higher criticism. Clay was chair of the Department of Semitics at Yale and in charge of its Babylonian collection. He was also a field archaeologist and an early prominent member of ASOR (then the American Schools of Oriental Research). Clay was not always respected by his colleagues, however. Once, during Albright's residence at the American School in Jerusalem, Albright heard Clay give a lecture in which he claimed that 'Methuselah was a historical name' (Running and Freedman 1991: 69). Albright regarded another of Clay's lectures so absurd that Clay made American scholarship a laughingstock (Running and Freedman 1991: 78–79; Long 1997: 119–121). In an article entitled 'Are the Patriarchs Historical?' Clay was alarmed at the influence of critical scholars because their opinions were 'so popular that they were now penetrating Sunday School' (Clay 1913: 166). He later insisted that, in every instance in which archaeology has illuminated the subject of the 'biblical patriarchs and the early kings of Babylonia...we find that we have historical characters to deal with' (Clay 1922: 54). Although he rarely referred to any specific excavations and never mentioned any archaeologists, Clay assured his readers that the spade had silenced the critic's arguments 'forever' (1913: 122).

For thirty years, Edouard Naville was the chief representative and first excavator of the Egyptian Exploration Fund. He was described as a man 'who could see nothing of importance of a bead or scarab' and was more of a connoisseur than an anthropologist (Hall 1926: 703). He was involved in a number of major excavations in Egypt as well as a mighty critic of higher criticism; his discovery of Pithom was often cited by conservatives as validating the biblical record. It certainly established Naville's reputation as a major biblical scholar and a favorite among conservative Christians.

Naville wrote several curious works on archaeology and higher criticism. In his *Archaeology of the Old Testament* (1913), Naville focused on whether Hebrew was an actual language. He believed that the Pentateuch had originally been written in Babylonian cuneiform, arguing that Abram must have known Babylonian and Moses wrote the laws in cuneiform as God dictated to him. Moreover, Moses must have known 'who Hammurabi was' (Naville 1913: 21). Once scholars recognized that the Pentateuch had been written on cuneiform tablets, 'a fatal blow' would be 'struck at Wellhausen's theory' (Naville 1913: 36). Throughout his career, Naville ridiculed the scholarship and integrity of higher critics, who were, he believed, uninvolved in any serious scholarly endeavor but were engrossed in a 'philological game, practiced largely in certain universities' (Naville 1923: 5). He believed that the practice of 'Higher Criticism...is almost blasphemy' and its advocates self-righteous scholars who believed they 'alone are in possession of the truth' (Naville 1923: 6).

Petrie was highly critical of Naville and his archaeological methods. Naville regarded archaeology as a tool for revealing inscriptions that enhanced the understanding of Egyptian religion and mythology. He often abandoned a site for days, leaving an assistant to supervise the work while he deciphered inscriptions or visited Cairo. In his excavations, he ignored small objects and considered only large monuments worthy of investigation. Throughout his career, Naville never embraced the use of pottery for purposes of dating; pottery differences were not chronological, but simply regional. Petrie thought that Naville was the essence of the incompetent excavator who was more inclined to destroy archaeological data than to preserve it (Drower 1985: 280–281, 285).

Melvin Kyle, more than any other writer or archaeologist during the first decades of the twentieth century, energetically employed archaeology in defending the veracity of Scripture. Kyle was hopelessly compromised by his fundamentalist views, which he merged with his archaeology. Few scholars promoted the conservative theological and archaeological agenda with the biblical narrative as well as Kyle. Kyle was a professor at Xenia Theological Seminary and holder of the Newburg Research Chair of Biblical Theology and Biblical Archaeology. According to Kyle, Xenia was the first theological seminary in America to 'give distinct recognition to the science of Biblical Archaeology as a separate department of Seminary work' (Kyle 1917a: 2). Kyle noted the special characteristics of the Bible clarified by archaeology, such as 'Unity of Message, Its claims to the Exclusiveness in True Religion, and Its Missionary Propaganda' (Kyle 1917a: 3). Theological proclamations were sprinkled throughout his writings: the revelation of God, the manifest intent of God, revelation through prophecy, the revelation of God in person, and the 'promise of the Messiah,' all appeared to have been illuminated by archaeology (Kyle 1917a: 3–7). Kyle was most concerned that, should critics destroy the veracity of the divine revelations to Moses and Abraham, then the revelation of the Gospels would fall as well.

Kyle's coupling of theology and archaeology was extreme even in conservative circles. His 1912 book *The Deciding Voice of the Monuments in Biblical Criticism* is an unparalleled example of the erroneous methods articulated by the author and his conservative compatriots. A substantial portion of his work was dedicated to a discussion of the function of archaeology in higher criticism. Kyle (1912: 13) argued archaeology had the 'rights, power and authority in settling critical controversies.' For Kyle, whenever archaeological evidence was provided, it claimed the right to the last word and no critical theory regarding the Bible 'is to be finally

accepted and admitted into faith and life until tested and attested by archaeological facts' (Kyle 1912: 40). George Barton, in a disparaging review of Kyle's work, wrote 'it is but rarely that an archaeological fact has any vital bearing upon a critical theory' (Barton 1913: 259).

Kyle's 1917 article in *The Fundamentals* entitled 'The Recent Testimony of Archaeology to the Scriptures' was true to the principles of the volume in its articulation of the traditional Christian religious doctrines regarding Jesus and the Bible (Kyle 1917b: 315–333). The intended audience was clearly identified in the Forward as 'ministers of the gospels, missionaries, Sunday School superintendents and others engaged in the aggressive Christian work throughout the English speaking world' (Kyle 1917b: 15). Kyle's essay provided a discussion of pottery chronology, Canaanite religious practices, infant sacrifices, Babylonian influences on Palestinian civilization, Elephantine Papyri, and biblical geography. He informed his readers that the revelation of the spade in Palestine had affirmed the revelation of God and that archaeology had provided the 'necessary material for...the surest foundation of apologetics' (Kyle 1917b: 327–329).

*The Fundamentals* had little impact upon biblical studies, and 'scholarly journals seem to have ignored them' (Sandeen 1969: 65). However, few conservative laypeople or clergy bothered to read Wellhausen or major academic works on higher criticism or archaeology. For hundreds of thousands of conservative Protestants, *The Fundamentals* was their first major introduction to the debates pertaining to the critical investigations of Scripture. The faithful were now informed that archaeology supported their belief in an inspired and inerrant Bible. Thousands of clergy who avoided obscure journals were now able to proclaim from the pulpit the salubrious results of archaeological research. For some Protestant believers, archaeology could serve and protect the faith. *The Fundamentals* became the emblematic philosophy for the emerging movement of fundamentalism that arose in the 1920s. More importantly, the more extreme theological opinions and critiques of critical biblical scholarship found in the pages of *The Fundamentals* appeared time and again in conservative and popular publications in the decades that followed.

During this period, no excavation was as widely published, quoted, and studied as R.A.S. Macalister's excavation of Gezer which began in 1902, was interrupted in 1906 by cholera, and was renewed from 1907 to 1909. When Macalister finished his excavation, no other site in Palestine had been so fully excavated. While most of Macalister's reports on Gezer showed little preoccupation with highlighting biblical heroes or stories, in his *Bible Side-Lights from the Mound of Gezer* (1906) Macalister used the Gezer excavation as a background for biblical characters and events. Macalister believed that the 'plain Bible student' derived little from his scholarly publications and he addressed this problem with *Bible Side-Lights* (Macalister 1906: 1–2). This volume is permeated with allusions to biblical figures and tales and is more representative of the conservative literature proving the Bible than critical scholarly inquiry. For example, Macalister suspected that the stone High Place at Gezer might have once stood at 'Moriah where Solomon afterwards built the Temple' (Macalister 1906: 62). He even surmised that 'at the foot of the stone in its original position the author of Genesis located the attempted sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham' (Macalister 1906: 62). While *Bible Side-Lights* appears unsophisticated today, it was one of the first popular published accounts of an excavation in Palestine; in P.R.S. Moorey's view (1992: 33), 'it did something to meet the needs of the ordinary Bible reader as responsibly as possible.'

## Conclusion

Conservative attacks on higher criticism persuaded few mainstream scholars that the critical analysis of the Bible was a failure and must be jettisoned. Questions of faith motivated conservative scholars and theologians to disparage the documentary hypothesis and defend Scripture and traditional Christian tenets. In their zealous campaign to cripple the supporters of Wellhausen, many conservatives engaged in spiritual archaeology in their dubious interpretations of archaeological data. They were determined to consecrate the biblical text and prove its historical reliability. Their studies were neither scientific nor scholarly, and mainstream scholars criticized faith-oriented scholars and their archaeological allies. Scholars such as Samuel Driver were highly critical of conservatives who created archaeological constructs for the needs of Christian doctrine and faith. The conservative agenda had promoted an archaeology that supported traditional interpretations of the biblical text, which essentially compromised their academic research. Their conclusions were neither credible nor honest. Most conservatives and pious clergy were eager to accept the verdict of the spade when it validated the Bible, but they were disinclined to accept the opposite verdict when archaeological evidence rendered the Bible's narrative impossible.

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# Unveiling Biblical Women with Accurate Translations of the Hebrew Feminine

Elizabeth Ann R. Willett

Hebrew nouns have grammatical gender, either feminine or masculine. Hebrew verbs distinguish masculine and feminine plurals as well as masculine and feminine singulars. Major language translations generally mirror the gender of these verbs in narrative and usually, but not always, when the female metaphor is inescapably gendered—for example, childbirth. However, if the image is out of the ordinary for female roles in the translator’s cultural context, or if the metaphor seems to obscure the word it stands for, feminine verb marking, as well as feminine nouns, are often ignored. Cleansing the Bible of counter-cultural female roles not only masculinizes history, it deprives women of a broader picture of how they might use their gifts in their houses of worship, homes, work, and society.

## An Army of Women Messengers

For example, Ps 68:11 (v. 12 in Hebrew) reports that a large army of women messengers announce God’s word of victory. Literally, *hamebasserot tsaba’ rab* ‘the ones spreading the good news [are] a large army,’ in which ‘the ones spreading the good news’ is a feminine plural participle. The *King James Version* (KJV), followed by many modern English language translations, ignores the participle’s feminine ending:

The Lord gave the word: **great [was] the company** of those that published [it].<sup>1</sup>

Shortly before the KJV, Mary Sidney (1561–1621) published free translations of the Psalms as Renaissance lyric poetry. She highlights women’s roles often glossed over by men and translates Ps 68:11–12, both poetically and more accurately, as follows (Hamlin, Brennan, Hannay, and Kinnamon 2009: 124–125):

There taught by thee in this triumphant song  
**A virgin army** did their voices try:  
‘Fled are these kings, fled are these armies strong:  
We share the spoils that weak in house did lie.’

Later, in v. 25, Sidney refers to them as battle maids:

In vanguard marched who did with voices sing;  
The rearward loud on instruments did play  
The **battle maids** and did with timbrels ring.

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<sup>1</sup> Bold emphasis in all cited biblical verses is the author’s. Earlier versions of this article were published in French in *Le Sycomore* 11.2 (2017) <http://www.ubs-translations.org/sycomore/> and in English in the Autumn 2019 issue of *Priscilla Papers* ([www.cbeinternational.org](http://www.cbeinternational.org)).

And all in sweet consort did jointly say:

Franz Delitzsch, in his *Commentary on the Psalms*, says: ‘The deliverance of Israel from the army of Pharaoh, the deliverance out of the hand of Jabin by the defeat of Sisera, the victory of Jephthah over the Ammonites, and the victorious single combat of David with Goliath were celebrated by singing women. God’s decisive word shall also go forth this time, and of the evangelists, like Miriam (Mirjam) and Deborah, there shall be a great host’ (Delitzsch 1884: 2:253). Verse 12 relates what the women announced:

*malke tseba’ot yiddodun yiddodun*  
*unewat bayit tehalleq shalal*  
Kings of armies they flee they flee,  
**she that abides at home** divides the plunder.<sup>2</sup>

The NET Bible indicates women in both verses:<sup>3</sup>

The Lord speaks;  
**many, many women** spread the good news.  
Kings leading armies run away—they run away!  
**The lovely lady** of the house divides up the loot.

The *New Living Translation* (NLT) has ‘a great army,’ giving the clear impression that it was a male army, although it includes a footnote, ‘Or a host of women’:

The Lord gives the word,  
and **a great army\*** brings the good news.  
Enemy kings and their armies flee,  
while **the women of Israel** divide the plunder.  
\*Or a host of women

However, the NIV removes women from both verses:

The Lord announced the word,  
and **great was the company of those** who proclaimed it:  
‘Kings and armies flee in haste;  
**in the camps men divide** the plunder.

The NIV translates ‘men divide the plunder,’ though the verb ‘she divides’ is marked feminine. The NVI (*Nueva Versión Internacional*—the NIV in Spanish) departs from the English NIV and mentions women in both verses: *millares de mensajeras* (‘thousands of female messengers’) in v.

<sup>2</sup> Another possible translation is, ‘and the beautiful woman of the house.’ The NET Bible, for example, explains in a v. 12 note that the Hebrew form appears to be the construct of ‘pasture’ but the phrase ‘pasture of the house’ makes no sense, so this alternate translation assumes that the form is an alternative or corruption of ‘beautiful woman’ (*nswlh*), adding that a reference to a woman would be appropriate in light of v. 11b.

<sup>3</sup> Scripture and notes quoted by permission. Quotations designated NET are from the NET Bible copyright 1996-2016 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. All rights reserved.



11 and *las mujeres* ('the women') in v. 12.<sup>4</sup> *La Palabra de Dios para Todos* (PDT) says 'many are the women' in v. 11, with *mujer* ('woman') in its translation of v. 12.<sup>5</sup>

Lines of women singing and dancing with tambourines to announce victory in battle is a prominent motif in the Hebrew Bible, as is women proclaiming God's word. It is important to preserve this history and convey those women's activities through accurate translation, thus encouraging the exercise of public religious functions by women today.

### Daughter Zion

Whereas Ps 68's 'great army' of women most likely is figurative, in the sense that the women were a large group proclaiming God's word though not as actual soldiers, Daughter Zion in Mic 4:13 is indeed warrior-like. In various translations, 'Daughter Zion' whose iron horns and bronze hooves crush many peoples translates only as 'Zion' or 'Jerusalem' although she—Daughter Zion—was suffering in childbirth earlier in the chapter.

The NET Bible translates:

'Get up and thresh, **Daughter Zion!**  
For I will give you iron horns;  
I will give you bronze hooves,  
and you will crush many nations.'  
You will devote to the LORD the spoils you take from them,  
and dedicate their wealth to the sovereign Ruler of the whole earth.

Micah 4:6–5:1 describes God's plan to redeem the Judean people from their Babylonian exile and reestablish them as a strong nation God himself will rule. In this context, God personifies his people as a woman who has been shamed but whom he will rescue as she fights her way back to recall her rightful honor and the people's respect. God addresses her several times as Daughter Zion (4:8, 10, 13), as well as Daughter Jerusalem (4:8), then finally Daughter of Troops (5:1 [4:14 in the Hebrew text]). These expressions are examples of Hebrew construct forms, which often are translated into English as 'X of Y' in which X has the characteristic of Y. In the latter, 'troop' (Heb. *gedud*) refers to a marauding or raiding band, an army division, or to the foray or raid itself.<sup>6</sup> Thus, it seems that God is commanding her to marshal her troops like a military leader.

'Daughter Zion' refers to the city of Jerusalem. The Hebrew word '*ir* 'city' is grammatically feminine in gender, which allows the personification that occurs in many of the prophetic books (e.g., Isa 10:32, 16:1, 37:22, 52:2; Zech 2:10). In some cases, the phrase is expanded to 'Virgin Daughter of Jerusalem' (Isa 37:22; Zeph 3:14).

<sup>4</sup> NVI: El Señor ha emitido la palabra, y millares de mensajeras la proclaman: «Van huyendo los reyes y sus tropas; en las casas, las mujeres se reparten el botín.

<sup>5</sup> PDT: El Señor dio la orden y muchas son las mujeres que fueron a contar las buenas noticias: «¡Los ejércitos de los reyes poderosos se han ido lejos de aquí! La mujer que se quedó en casa reparte todo el botín.

<sup>6</sup> Brown-Driver-Briggs (BDB) Hebrew-English Lexicon, s.v. *gedud*.

In Isa 37:22, Zion, that is Jerusalem, is pictured as a ‘young, vulnerable daughter whose purity is being threatened by the would-be Assyrian rapist. The personification hints at the reality which the young girls of the city would face if the Assyrians conquered it’ (NET Bible 2016: Isa 37:22). This had in fact happened already to Judean women in Lachish, an eventuality that would be repeated in Jerusalem. Assyrian pictorial reliefs in the palace of Ninevah show Israelite women and children marched off from Lachish with bundles on their backs (Assyrian Reliefs of Lachish 2006: 9, 10a, and 10b).

The Bible reports examples of this common ancient Near Eastern practice of stealing women and children as war trophies: David pursued the Amalekites who had stolen his and his followers’ wives (1 Sam 30:2); a captive Israelite girl served Naaman’s wife (2 Kgs 5:2); and the Israelites obtained wives for the defeated Benjamites by raiding Jabesh Gilead (Judg 21:10–12).

The young woman of Mic 4:13 has been brutalized. As a result, she is lame (4:6–7), in grief (4:6), driven away (4:6), and hurting as though in childbirth (4:9–10). Her enemies rape her, taunting: ‘Let her be defiled. Let our eyes gloat over Zion’ (4:11).

But Micah says that the nations do not understand God’s plan (4:11). He will gather those who took advantage of his daughter ‘like sheaves to the threshing floor’ and she is told to trample them underfoot. Ancient Egyptian tomb paintings show oxen and donkeys pulling a sled weighted with pieces of flint and metal over the grain; there is also evidence of metal shoes being attached to the feet of these animals to cut the stalks of grain more efficiently, bringing to mind the bronze hooves of Mic 4:13 (Walton, et al. 2000).

Horns in the Hebrew Bible symbolize power, strength, pride and *elan vitale* (Harris 1980: 2072a). The woman of Mic 4:13 is promised iron horns. Iron and bronze were the strongest metals available in the ancient Near East. In Daniel’s vision of four beasts, for example, the last one terrified with its ‘large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left . . . it had ten horns’ (Dan 7:7 NIV). The prophet Micah does not hesitate to quote God telling a metaphorical woman to act like this.

The ancient Near East revered military women: Canaanite and Mesopotamian national goddesses often rode into battle on war horses or lions. The prophet Deborah, who judged Israel and led the Israelites into battle, is the prime biblical example (Judg 4–5). But there are others whom God inspired to destroy Israel’s enemies during military conflicts—Jael kills Sisera with a tent peg (Judg 4:17–23), an unnamed woman saves Thebez by dropping a millstone on Abimelek from the top of a tower (Judg 9:50–54), and another wise woman negotiates the beheading of David’s enemy Sheba (2 Sam 20:14–22). Judith, a Jewish conqueror of the apocryphal/deuterocanonical book named for her, saved Israel from the attacking Assyrians by ingratiating herself to the general Holofernes in order to decapitate him. A woman with iron horns and bronze feet challenges traditional perspectives on women in patriarchal cultures which emphasize force and strength as marks of male leadership and idealize docile, subservient women.

The *English Standard Version* is one of the few translations that retain ‘Daughter of Troops’ in Mic 5:1. It explains in a note, ‘That is, city’:

Now muster your troops, O **daughter\*** of **troops**;  
siege is laid against us;  
with a rod they strike the judge of Israel  
on the cheek.

\*That is, city

Some versions, such as the NIV, retain ‘Daughter Zion,’ but avoid ‘Daughter of Troops’ as too literal:

‘Rise and thresh, **Daughter Zion**,  
for I will give you horns of iron;  
I will give you hooves of bronze  
and you will break to pieces many nations.’  
You will devote their ill-gotten gains to the LORD,  
their wealth to the Lord of all the earth.  
Marshal your troops, **city of troops**,  
for a siege is laid against us.  
They will strike Israel’s ruler  
on the cheek with a rod.

Others, including the NLT, omit the metaphor of an iron-clad young woman threshing, relegating the Hebrew phrase to a footnote:

‘Rise up and crush the nations, **O Jerusalem!**’\*  
says the LORD.  
‘For I will give you iron horns and bronze hooves,  
so you can trample many nations to pieces.  
You will present their stolen riches to the LORD,  
their wealth to the LORD of all the earth.’  
Mobilize! **Marshal your troops!**  
The enemy is laying siege to Jerusalem.  
They will strike Israel’s leader  
in the face with a rod.  
\*Hebrew ‘Rise up and thresh, O Daughter of Zion.’

The *Palabra de Dios para Todos* is a good example for Spanish because it retains the female imagery. It begins 4:13 with *Hija de Sion* (‘Daughter of Zion’) and has:

**hija de guerreros** (‘daughter of warriors’) in 5:1.<sup>7</sup>

The United Bible Societies’ translator’s handbook on Isaiah recommends that it might be more useful to give the meaning explicitly and refer to either Zion or Jerusalem directly as ‘The town of Zion/Jerusalem’ without the ‘daughter of’ idiom (Ogden and Sterk 2011: 37: 22). On the

<sup>7</sup> PDT: Hija de Sion, levántate y aplástalos. Convertiré tus cuernos en hierro y tus cascos en bronce. Tú destruirás a muchos y le entregarás al SEÑOR todas las ganancias de ellos. Le entregarás todas sus riquezas al Señor de toda la tierra. Ahora, hija de guerreros, reúne a tus soldados. Estamos siendo asediados; ellos con su vara golpean en la mejilla al juez de Israel.

other hand, the NET Bible notes: ‘Daughter’ may seem extraneous in English but consciously joins the various epithets and metaphors of Israel and Jerusalem as a woman, a device used to evoke sympathy from the reader. This individualizing of Zion as a daughter draws attention to the corporate nature of the covenant community and also to the tenderness with which the Lord regards his chosen people (NET Bible 2016: Zech 2:10). There may be alternate phrasing in the receptor language to indicate endearment. For example, in Zech 2:10, NET translates ‘Zion my daughter’ and NLT ‘O beautiful Jerusalem.’ Spanish *mi hija* (‘my daughter’) would be appropriate.

‘Daughter Zion’ is both a more direct as well as a more understandable translation, because God is addressing the whole community as his daughter, whereas ‘Daughter of Jerusalem’ may sound as though God is speaking to one particular young woman who lives in the city. Note these two NIV translations of Zeph 3:14:

NIV 1984: Sing, O **daughter of Zion**; shout aloud, O Israel!  
Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O **daughter of Jerusalem!**

NIV 2011: Sing, **Daughter Zion**; shout aloud, Israel!  
Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, **Daughter Jerusalem!**

There are good reasons to maintain the daughter imagery: it reflects the historical context, allowing the listener to picture how women felt, acted, and were acted-upon in war-time and by extension, what the entire populace experienced, as well as God’s fatherly passion for their well-being. The poetry evokes sympathy in general that one would feel toward a young woman in trouble, but even more so, it provides empathy and hope for abused women who identify with the need to trust God’s power for deliverance. The imagery empowers women to act as transformative agents in the service of God, rather than simply waiting to be rescued.

### **Woman Wisdom**

Proverbs presents two contrasting portraits of women. The ‘Woman Wisdom’ is positive, a metaphorical wise teacher but the ‘Strange Woman’ is negative, a foolish, seductive stranger. Both are illustrated elsewhere in the lives of other biblical women. Wise women appear in the stories of Judges, Samuel, and Kings, as do strange foreign women like Delilah and Jezebel. Proverbs 8 personifies wisdom as a woman linked with God as a source of truth, justice, instruction, and knowledge. The grammatically feminine gender of the Hebrew word for ‘wisdom’ may have inspired the metaphor but it does not explain its development. Both the ‘strange woman’ and the ‘wise woman’ are most likely symbolic personifications based in Israelite sociological history.

Proverbs reflects the household struggle for survival in the difficult hill country of the Iron I family-clan period (Meyers 1988: 150), as well as concerns with Jewish identity that climaxed in post-exilic times (Brenner 1985: 117). Israelite households were independent cultural and economic centers which formed the basis for a tribally-organized society. Lemuel’s mother, who gave advice to her royal son in Prov 31:1–9, exemplifies a wise teacher and illustrates the woman’s primary role in socialization and literacy. The acrostic poem that follows in Prov 31:10–31 values the successful matriarch, not in terms of her sexuality but on the basis of her

business acumen and industriousness for the benefit of her household (Bird 1974: 58). This sociological function of women as educators and household managers explains the use of the Woman Wisdom metaphor in Proverbs.

In Proverbs, Woman Wisdom and her alter ego the Strange/Foreign/Foolish Woman together outline the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable social connections for Israelite young men (Brenner 1985: 43; Bird 1974: 59). Although opposite figures, they are both embraced by the men they meet and invite home for food (e.g., Prov 9:5, 17). Even women who were indeed Israelite but ‘belonged to’ another man were ‘other’ and off limits. The death that the Strange Woman brings is not a physical death, but a separation from YHWH and the community (Camp 1988: 23). Both women speak persuasively, demonstrating the crucial importance of rhetorical language in society, especially in the wisdom tradition, and also the dangers of its abuse. The Strange Woman’s words reflect a moral ambiguity that is harmful but often part of human experience (Camp 1988: 24).

Even if these personified feminine images were removed from Proverbs, there would still remain direct warnings to young men about the kinds of women they should not associate with coupled with direction regarding what they should value in women, but much of the impact would be lost. Further, the emphasis on women’s powerful speech implicit in the feminine language of the text would be lost as well. The woman represented as a source of power contrasts with the traditional impression of patriarchal social and theological order in the Bible. In Proverbs, the Wise Woman is the source of life to her community, not as childbearer, but as an important participant in various aspects of Israelite society and religion. Some English versions make this clear by translating feminine pronouns as ‘she’ and ‘her’:

NET: **Wisdom** calls out in the street,  
**she shouts** loudly in the plazas;  
 at the head of the noisy streets **she calls**,  
 in the entrances of the gates in the city **she utters her words**:

NIV: **Wisdom** calls aloud in the street,  
**she raises her voice** in the public squares;  
 at the head of the noisy streets **she cries out**,  
 in the gateways of the city **she makes her speech**:

Today’s English Version (TEV), however, omits feminine references in Prov 1:20-33:

Listen! **Wisdom** is calling out in the streets and marketplaces,  
 calling loudly at the city gates and wherever people come together:

In Spanish, as in Hebrew, ‘wisdom’ (Spanish *sabiduría*) is a feminine noun. The possessive pronoun *su*, however, is the same for both ‘his’ and ‘her,’ and there is no distinguishing masculine or feminine third person verb marking, so it is not certain that Spanish-speaking readers or listeners would picture a woman speaking in Prov 1:20-30 or in chapters 8 or 9. In addition, Spanish versions other than the *Reina-Valera* 1995 do not capitalize *sabiduría* as a person’s name. But, in 9:13 when the figure shifts to the foolish woman, Spanish versions

*emphasize* the female imagery by adding the word *mujer* ('woman'), giving an unbalanced view of woman's nature, even suggesting that men are wise and women foolish.<sup>8</sup>

In Huichol, an indigenous language of Mexico, 'Woman Wisdom' was translated 'A wise person,' perhaps partly due to the lack of clarity of the Spanish base translation, but mostly because a wise woman in their community would not stand and speak in public. However, after consultation,<sup>9</sup> the translators found a natural way to include women. At first, Prov 1:20a, when translated back from Huichol to English, read: 'In the streets they shout so that people would be wise.' After the consultant-check it reads: 'Wisdom shouts in the streets like a woman.' Proverbs 8:1, now says: 'Wisdom is like a woman who speaks to us.' The Prov 9:1 draft read: 'The wise man built the house,' but after the consultant-check it now says: 'Wisdom like a woman built her house.'

It is important for minority-language speakers of indigenous cultures to know that in biblical cultures, women appeared and spoke publicly not only in harmful ways, but in wise, powerful, and helpful ways and that God and the biblical writers approved and encouraged that.

### **An Ammonite Woman and A Moabite Woman**

Not all foreign women in the Hebrew Bible were blameworthy. Women like Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth are remembered in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus as people of faith. Certainly, the women mentioned in 2 Chr 24:26 were also people of faith since their sons conspired against King Joash to avenge the stoning of Zechariah—the High Priest Jehoiada's son. The text names the conspirators' mothers, specifying that one was Ammonite and the other was Moabite. The Hebrew descriptions 'the Ammonite' and 'the Moabite' are feminine forms, clearly indicating that Shimeath and Shimrith were the names of their mothers, not their fathers. A translation like 'Shimeath **the Ammonite**...Shimrith **the Moabite**,' as in NRSV, ESV, and NJB, leads readers to assume that these two women were in fact men (Omanson and Ellington 2014). A more accurate rendering would be 'Shimeath **an Ammonite woman**...Shimrith **a Moabite woman**' (REB, NET, NIV), or '**an Ammonite woman** named Shimeath...**a Moabite woman** named Shomer' (NLT), or 'Shimeath, **a woman from the land of Ammon**...Shimrith, **a woman from the land of Moab**,' as in the Brazilian common language version, *Nova Tradução na Linguagem de Hoje* (NTLH).<sup>10</sup>

While many English translations preserve these references to the non-Israelite mothers, most Spanish versions translate them with the masculine: 'Simat, **un amonita** [Shimeath, an Ammonite]...Simrit, **un moabita** [Shimrith, a Moabite]' (VP) or 'Simat **el amonita** [Shimeath the Ammonite]...Simrit **el moabita** [Shimrith the Moabite]' (*Reina-Valera*, NVI, PDT). Happily, some retain the feminine: 'Simeat **la amonita**...Simrit **la moabita**' (*La Biblia de las Américas*) and '**una mujer amonita** llamada Simeat...**una mujer moabita** llamada Somer' (NTV).

<sup>8</sup> PDT: La sabiduría construyó su casa y puso siete columnas en ella...La mujer insensata es escandalosa, estúpida e ignorante. *Dios Habla Hoy* (VP): La sabiduría construyó su casa, la adornó con siete columnas...La necedad es como una mujer chismosa, tonta e ignorante. NVI: La sabiduría construyó su casa y labró sus siete pilares...La mujer necia es escandalosa, frívola y desvergonzada.

<sup>9</sup> Translations done under the auspices of Bible translation agencies are required to pass an exegetical check, often termed a 'consultant-check,' before publication.

<sup>10</sup> NTLH: Dois homens planejaram a morte dele: Zabade, filho de Simeate, uma mulher da terra de Amom, e Jeozabate, filho de Sinrite, uma mulher da terra de Moabe.

Preserving even minor feminine references like these is important. This particular verse (2 Chr 24:26) shows that these women, though outside Israel, exerted a positive influence on their families and on Israel as a whole. Further, more accurate translation would challenge the impression that the Bible is a male creation that deprecates women.

### Prophetess

On the other hand, preserving grammatical feminine marking on nouns can have the opposite effect, leading readers to believe, for example, that a female prophet had a different, lesser function than a (male) prophet, as has become true for ‘deacon’ and ‘deaconess’ in some religious traditions. Five Israelite women are called *nebiah*, the feminine form of the Hebrew word for ‘prophet’ (*nabi*): Miriam (Exod 15:20), Deborah (Judg 4:4), Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14; 2 Chr 34:22), Noadiah (Neh 6:14), and Isaiah’s wife (Isa 8:3). Prophets, both male and female, held respected spiritual leadership positions. Under the monarchy, they had free access to the kings, whom they frequently reprimanded. Biblical examples support that women prophets had the same back-and-forth communication with military and political leaders and they exercised the same public ministry as their male counterparts. Miriam led the Israelite women in a victory chorus, and many commentators believe she actually composed and led the entirety of Exod 15 (Trible 2001: 128). Micah 6:4 identifies her, along with Moses and Aaron, as a leader God sent to the Israelite people. Deborah led the Israelites publicly as both a religious and a civil authority.

When King Josiah sent his cabinet officials to speak to the Lord and ask about the law that had been discovered in the temple, they consulted with the prophet Huldah. Her negative pronouncement resulted in one of the most sweeping religious reforms in Judah. Noadiah, whose name means ‘YHWH has met’ or ‘YHWH has become manifest’ (Eskenazi 2001: 132) was a post-exilic prophet. Noadiah, along with other high-placed opponents like Tobiah and Sanballat, tried to intimidate Nehemiah to protect her people. Since she was named specifically, she was likely the leader of the unnamed male prophets Nehemiah mentions.

Women also served as prophets in Mesopotamia. The Mari texts from Syria in the early second millennium BC give evidence of both male and female prophets. Women also spoke out as prophets during the seventh-century BC reign of Esarhaddon of Assyria. The females appear to have served in the same function as the male prophets (Walton, *et al.* 2000: 34:22).

Since these women functioned in the same roles as male prophets, it makes sense to use the same key word for both. For languages that do not mark gender on nouns or verbs, the word ‘woman’ should be added to specify that the prophet was female, since the default is usually understood as male. In this way, it becomes clear that both women and men fulfilled the prophetic function. Languages that do distinguish noun gender will make the prophet’s sex obvious but should add a footnote to the effect that women prophets did not have a different or lesser role in Israelite society.

In 2 Kgs 22:14a, NIV 1984 called Huldah a prophetess, but in NIV 2011 she is a prophet. NLT also calls her a prophet, but NET has ‘prophetess’:

NIV 1984: Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Acbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to speak to **the prophetess Huldah...**

NIV 2011: Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Akbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to speak to **the prophet Huldah...**

NLT: So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Acbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to...consult with **the prophet Huldah.**

NET: So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Acbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to **Huldah the prophetess...**

Isaiah's wife is called 'the *nebiah*.' Some commentators say this was a polite way of referring to her since she was not reported as proclaiming the divine word herself, similar to the wife of a king being called the queen (Ackerman 2001: 317). Others insist that there is no reason to assume that the wife of a prophet was called a 'prophetess' (Bushnell 1921: 716). In fact, the 'queen' in the ancient Near East was not usually the king's wife, so the name for her position was not normally the feminine form of *melek* ('king') but rather 'great lady' (*gebirah*) (Harris *et al.* 1980: 1199b) or 'queen mother' (1 Kgs 11:19, 15:13; 2 Chr 15:16; Jer 13:18, 29:2, but see Dan 5:10) who, in the Hebrew Bible, fulfilled a specific position of power as adviser to the king. Since the case of Isaiah's wife is a matter of opinion, the term could be translated 'his wife' with a footnote such as, 'Hebrew: woman prophet,' or, if the translation committee believed the term indicated her ministry, 'his prophet wife' or the 'woman prophet who was his wife' would be appropriate translations.

## Conclusion

If we translate consistently key terms such as 'prophet,' maintain female metaphors such as Daughter Zion and Woman Wisdom, and indicate the gender of feminine actors who exercise various gifts, readers and listeners will gain a grander understanding of how God ministered through women and girls in biblical times.

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# Women in Archaeology and Antiquity

William G. Dever

It is a special privilege to contribute to this volume honoring Beth Alpert Nakhai. Beth was one of my first graduate students. During her time in Tucson, I came to know her father, mother, and sisters. Here she met Farzad, and I knew their daughter Mandana from her birth. When I left the University of Arizona in 2002, Beth stayed on as a faculty member to continue the tradition. She became a mentor to our daughter Hannah as she finished her MA in the Judaic Studies Program.

Through nearly forty years, Beth has been a student, a close friend of both my families, an esteemed colleague, and a singular part of my legacy. And now I have lived long enough to write for a *Festschrift* for one of my own students approaching retirement, edited by two of my other PhD students—a first, I think.

## Introduction

It is now widely acknowledged that women have been under-represented in archaeology, as in many other disciplines. This essay will address the problem in our branch of the discipline, Levantine archaeology, or more specifically archaeology in Israel.

It is a special pleasure to dedicate this essay to one of my students, Beth Alpert Nakhai, who has been a pioneer in championing women's roles in archaeology and shedding light on their lives in ancient Israel.

## Early Pioneers

A brief history of women in Levantine archaeology highlights the dilemma. One thinks, of course, of a few women in archaeology during the Mandate era, heroic figures such as Dorothy Garrod in the 1920s; Judith Marquet-Krause and Olga Tufnell in the 1930s; and Crystal Bennett and particularly Kathleen Kenyon in the 1950s–1960s.<sup>1</sup>

After the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948, there continued to be a small minority of women in Israeli archaeology, notably Ruth Amiran (1914–2005), Miriam Tadmor (1926–2009), Claire Epstein (1911–2001), Trude Dothan (1922–2016); Michal Artzy (b. 1949), Pirhiya Beck (1931–1998), Ora Negbi (b. 1929), and a few others less prominent in the Israel Antiquities Authority.<sup>2</sup> There were no prominent foreign women archaeologists working in Israel until the 1980s, except for Jacqueline Balensi and Claudine Dauphin at the École Biblique.

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<sup>1</sup> For Kenyon, see Dever 2004. Other essays in this volume cover Garrod and other women pioneers.

<sup>2</sup> Of these, only Artzy, Beck, and Negbi had academic appointments. The current Antiquities Authority employs a number of women. But most do not have a doctorate; they may only work part-time, with few benefits; they can do salvage excavations, but have difficulty publishing; none have tenure. Regional museum workers have similar problems.

### The Current Scene

Since 1990, a second and third generation of women in archaeology has emerged, including Rivka Gonen, Ayelet Gilboa, Norma Franklin, Nava Panitz-Cohen, Eilat Mazar (recently deceased), and several others in the Israel Antiquities Authority. Unfortunately, a few promising women died early, like Ora Zimhoni, Ornit Ilan, and Sharon Zuckerman.

It is significant that some of these women do not hold academic positions, and none has a full professorship. There are several younger women archaeologists in the Antiquities Authority, and at the Weizmann Institute in Rehovot, but their future is uncertain.

The only foreign women in archaeology in Israel at present are those to be introduced presently. And they are the first in Israel to deal extensively with the roles of women in archaeology and in antiquity.

### The Emergence of 'Women's Studies'

The development of an academic sub-discipline known as 'women's studies' was an offshoot of both the feminist movement in general and the growing interest in 'area studies' from the 1980s on.<sup>3</sup>

The dearth of women archaeologists in Levantine archaeology until recently, in both America and Israel, is directly related to the number of women enrolled in doctoral programs in this branch of archaeology. At Harvard, my alma mater, the program has had only four women candidates in the past 55 years. The long-running PhD program at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago has produced to my knowledge only five female PhDs. My own undergraduate program at the University of Arizona from 1978 to 2001 produced ten women PhDs, several of them in the vanguard of developments noted here.

In Israel, all six of the universities with graduate programs in archaeology have produced only a handful of women with PhDs in the last 50 years or so. There are a few younger women in the wings, particularly in the Antiquities Authority, but they have dismal prospects (above).

In the case of Levantine archaeology, the emergence of women's studies was a relatively late phenomenon, with several specific antecedents—all departures from traditional male-oriented emphases. But some specific advances were made.

First was a focus not so much on monumental architecture, but on domestic houses and the family. The early landmark studies were, however, still by men: Yigal Shiloh (1970), Larry Stager (1985), and Jack Holladay (1992). Second was the broadening of research to incorporate the 'social archaeology' in vogue in the general discipline from the 1980s onward. And since women made up at least half the population of ancient Israelite society, their lives now received increasing attention. In our discipline, early archaeological studies of society would include those of McNutt (1990) and Dever (1995), materializing in the full-scale works of Faust (2012)

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<sup>3</sup> On these developments, see Freedman 2003.

and Dever (2012). There were also related works on ‘everyday life’ that sometimes emphasized the crucial roles of women in ancient Israelite society.<sup>4</sup> Most of these studies, however much they focused on women’s lives, were written by men.

A third factor in the growth of women’s studies was the rediscovery of the cult of Asherah the Mother Goddess in ancient Israel. It began with my treatment of the el-Qôm and Kuntillet ‘Ajrud inscriptions in 1984, depicting Asherah as Yahweh’s consort and the patroness of women. There followed an explosion of studies depicting women’s distinctive embodiments of Israelite religious beliefs and practices. One pioneering study was by a woman, Judith Hadley (2000).<sup>5</sup>

By the late 1980s, American feminist scholars, some of them archaeologists, were beginning to write more specifically about women’s lives in ancient Israel. Pioneering studies were those by Carol Meyers (1988) and Susan Ackerman (1989), followed soon by works by Elizabeth Bloch-Smith (1992), Tikva Frymer-Kensky (1992), Phyllis Bird (1997), and Susan Niditch (1997). Two of the five were archaeologists and the other two made competent use of the archaeological data. They were all American women scholars, well in the forefront of women’s studies compared with European or other feminists.<sup>6</sup> They may or may not have been comfortable with the label ‘feminist’ and generally avoided feminist rhetoric. They simply excelled in what had been heretofore a ‘man’s field.’

The early studies often focused particularly on the role of religion in women’s lives in ancient Israel. They were facilitated by general studies on ‘folk religion’ now by men, often utilizing the newer archaeological data. Among them are works by Albertz (1994); Berlinerblau (1996); Zevit (2001); Smith (2002); and Dever (2005).<sup>7</sup> A related movement may be seen in American feminist theology, but that is another story (and has nothing to do with archaeology and ancient history).

The first *explicitly* archaeological studies on broader aspects of ancient Israelite women and their lives, by women archaeologists, appeared after 2000. The very first of these publications was that of our honoree, Beth, in 2001, based on her 1993 University of Arizona dissertation, *Archaeology and the Religions of Canaan and Israel*.<sup>8</sup>

Then, in 2000, Beth organized an ASOR Annual Meeting panel on the ‘World of Women: Gender and Archaeology.’ It ran from 2000 to 2007 and produced twenty-nine papers. A number of

<sup>4</sup> Cf. King and Stager 2001; Dever 2012. Other works focused specifically on food production, diet, *ad hoc* technology, and of course pottery.

<sup>5</sup> Many of these works are discussed in Dever 2005; update with references in Yasur-Landau, Ebeling, and Mazow (eds) 2011; Bodel and Olyan (eds) 2012; Albertz and Schmitt 2012; Albertz *et al.* (eds) 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Works are too numerous to cite here. But see Ackerman 2014 and Meyers 2014, where most of their earlier works are cited. References in note 5 above all contain extensive documentation. For Beth, all of her publications are cited in this volume. I am not aware of Israeli or European work this early.

<sup>7</sup> References to all will be found in Dever 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Beth’s 1993 dissertation, the original study, reflects our collaboration, in part due to my interests in publications such as Dever 1991 (above). We were ahead of the curve. But women’s cults *specifically* were yet to come. Cf. note 9 below.

them were published in Beth's edited volume *The World of Women in the Ancient and Classical Near East* (2008).<sup>9</sup>

Soon a number of women—all of them American archaeologists working with data from Israel—were publishing revolutionary works on women's lives, many going well beyond the original focus on religion. Among these scholars were Carol Meyers (2002; 2003; 2005; 2007; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2013; 2014); Gloria London (2002); and Beth herself (especially in 2014).<sup>10</sup>

Two full-scale portraits of women and their roles in ancient Israelite society were of particular importance: Jennie Ebeling's *Women's Lives in Biblical Times* (2010) and Carol Meyers' *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (2013).<sup>11</sup> Susan Ackerman continued her publications on women's lives, more and more utilizing the archaeological data (2003a; 2003b; 2006; 2008; 2014).<sup>12</sup>

A number of edited volumes soon established this new dimension of Levantine archaeology. Among them was a volume edited by Assaf Yasur-Landau, Jennie Ebeling, and Laura Mazow entitled *Household Archaeology in Ancient Israel and Beyond* (2011), with essays by eight women archaeologists, mostly American.<sup>13</sup>

Two other edited volumes of this era are noteworthy, both focusing again more on religion: John Bodell and Saul Olyan's edited volume *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity* (2012); and most recently the volume co-edited by Rainer Albertz (with Beth), *Family and Household Religion: Toward a Synthesis of Old Testament Studies, Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Cultural Studies* (2014).

Another volume of Albertz (with Rüdiger Schmitt) was similar in its focus, *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant* (2012). Although both authors were biblicists, the bulk of their data came from archaeology. In all the above edited volumes, the earlier theme of 'folk religion' was now deliberately revised to become a focus on *households* and religions, and the decisive role of women, not only in religious affairs but also in socio-economic and cultural contexts.<sup>14</sup>

### The Revolution and Its Rewards

The developments in Levantine archaeology that we have surveyed over some thirty years constitute a revolution in archaeological theory and practice. The instigators were almost all

<sup>9</sup> Beth's 2007 ASOR panel was one of the first thrusts of the new movements in women's studies, well ahead of many of the works cited in notes 5 and 6 above. I am pleased that she and three other authors in Nakhai 2008 were my students. But I probably learned more from them than they did from me.

<sup>10</sup> References will be found in works cited in notes 5 and 6 above.

<sup>11</sup> Add a forthcoming volume by Ackerman (2021). Ebeling is one of my students, and both Ackerman and Meyers are longtime colleagues and friends who made many useful comments on the manuscript of my 2005 volume.

<sup>12</sup> See note 11 above.

<sup>13</sup> Two of the three editors are Beth and my students. Lily Singer-Avitz's essay in this volume is the first work on the subject by an Israeli woman. Although this essay deals with Israel, one should note the important early work of Margreet Steiner and Michele P.M. Daviau and two American women, Suzanne Richard and Gloria London.

<sup>14</sup> The rubric of 'family' instead of 'folk' religion does not, however, cover such significant religious installations as those at Dan, Ta'anach, Arad, and Kuntilet 'Ajrud. And 'folk religion' is not, as some charge, condescending.

American women archaeologists, this time well ahead of the men who had long dominated the field. The men gradually came along because the progress was obvious. A few men had foreseen the revolution, but it was women who were the pioneers, Beth Alpert Nakhai notably among them.

The initial consequence of this revolution-in-the-making was to expand other changes already in effect at the time, i.e., beginning in the 1990s. This was an era in which Levantine archaeology was becoming ‘post-processual,’ expanding to include more attention to environmental studies, complex society, socio-economic structures, everyday life, and the varieties of religious experience.<sup>15</sup>

For a long time, the male-dominated discipline of American-style ‘biblical archaeology,’ most of its practitioners clergymen, had been preoccupied with using the archaeological data to write macro-history, mostly biblical, as the account of ‘the public deeds of great men.’<sup>16</sup>

That generation of men had, not surprisingly, concentrated almost all of their efforts on bringing to light evidence of urban defenses and other monumental architecture, public cultic installations, political organization, international relations, and warfare. Without indulging in ‘gender politics’ or chauvinist incriminations, we may observe that these interests are consistent with what many regard as instinctive male concerns about dominance.

This myopia about the larger, more essential dimensions of human existence was complicated by the sparse evidence from the only other source these male archaeologists had: the biblical texts. The fact, now widely recognized, is that the copious narratives of the Hebrew Bible are all the product of a minority of elite, establishment male ideologues. These texts do not represent the reality of the lives of ordinary people in ancient Israel—*especially* of women. Their lives have finally been illuminated by archaeology and by women archaeologists working with new data. That is a hard-won victory and it has made a permanent change in our discipline.

Thanks to recent work by the increasing number of women in Levantine archaeology, the multitudes of women (and children) in ancient Israel are no longer shadowy marginalized figures. They are finally visible again, their lives comprehensible, their roles in society finally appreciated. And the private role of the families that they nurtured can now be seen in relation to the public role of the state and its spokesmen who wrote the Hebrew Bible.

These myriad anonymous women of ancient Israel were those whom Gaertz characterized as ‘the people without a history,’ that is, a written history. But archaeology has now given these women a voice, to write their *own* history. And even though we did not see it at first, they also made major contributions to an understanding of the epic, written history of ancient Israel in the Hebrew Bible. They were major actors in the drama, even if not stage front and center. In the view of history in the *Annales* school, these women represent the *événements*,

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<sup>15</sup> There is little or no specific literature on these trends in our discipline, including ‘cognitive’ archaeology; but see provisionally Dever 2017: 638–640 and references. See also below.

<sup>16</sup> The inadequacies of ‘biblical archaeology’ are too widely recognized to need documentation here. In numerous critiques, I have noted its close connections with a male-dominated, clerical, Protestant worldview.

the immediate, short-term events of daily life that contribute to the *conjunctures* or *mentalités* and finally to the *longue durée* of history.

In particular, we now know that it was largely the women in ancient Israel who held the family together, the fundamental institution of society. It was they who bore and reared the children in incredibly difficult conditions. They were in effect the high priests who presided over family religious rituals, for most folk their only access to religious beliefs and practices. They may have been illiterate, but they were curators of folk wisdom, of the core values of Israelite society, passed on by oral traditions in countless songs and stories told around a fire and at children's bedside. Single-handedly, they provided nearly all the nourishment for the family, body, and soul. The 'hand that rocks the cradle' really did rule the world—the hidden, inner world of ordinary people, as well as contributing to the grandiose history on the larger stage.

Finally, the modern women scholars who have rediscovered the women of ancient Israel have had a significant, lasting effect on the discipline of southern Levantine archaeology. They have broadened our purview to include the whole of ancient society. They have helped to redefine history as more than politics, religion as more than theology. And they have made the practice of archaeology more relevant, without which it has no justification or future.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Since I have concentrated here on women archaeologists who have written specifically on women's studies, I have been selective. Other American women archaeologists working in Israel include Ann Killebrew, Susan Cohen, Sharon Herbert, Jodi Magness, and, in Jordan, Martha Joukowsky and Suzanne Richard. Still, however, they are a minority; and, for whatever reason, none of them have dealt specifically with women's studies. Nor have the few Israeli women archaeologists—perhaps because they have little leverage. Finally, all the women whose work I have discussed would probably prefer to be known not primarily as feminists, but simply as good scholars.

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*In Pursuit of Visibility* honors the distinguished career of a scholar of Canaan and ancient Israel, Beth Alpert Nakhai. In fifteen diverse essays, Professor Nakhai's students and colleagues celebrate her important contributions to the field of Near Eastern Archaeology, including her research into gender, household, and cult in the Bronze and Iron Age southern Levant, and her tireless efforts to acknowledge and support women in the profession. These essays reflect Professor Nakhai's commitment to combining archaeology and text to reconstruct aspects of ancient life and make those who are marginalized visible in both the past and the present.

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