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From Village to Town to Village Again: Settlement Dynamics in the Central Coastal Plain and Adjacent Shephelah from the Late Early Bronze Age I to Early Bronze Age III

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The central coastal plain and adjacent Shephelah during the late Early Bronze Age I through Early Bronze III periods has been extensively explored and furnishes us with a 'laboratory' rich with settlement data. This information enables an examination of Canaanite EBA settlement history both microscopically and macroscopically, from the single sherd in a specific site, to the region as a whole. Three settlement areas will be discussed to illustrate changes in this region: the Lod valley, in the south; the Aphek valley to the north, and the coastal Tel Aviv area in the west. The consolidation of sites in these three settlement areas occurred between the late 4th millennium and the 3rd millennium BCE, and while having much in common, each had their own peculiarities. This settlement history between the EBIB-EBIII reflects a fascinating process that shaped the central coastal plain of Israel.

Early Bronze Age Ib/Late EBI

Introduction

The period succeeding Early EBI (EBIA) is known as Late EBI (Braun 1996, 2000) or alternately as EBIB (Stager 1992; Yekutieli 2000; 2001). Typically, several of the sites inhabited during the Early EBI were abandoned during Late EBI¹ while new settlements were founded elsewhere.²

There is a major bifurcation in ceramic assemblages between the northern and southern cultural facies of the EBI in the southern Levant (Amiran 1971), a divergence possibly rooted in the Late Chalcolithic period (Braun 1996:4). Yekutieli has suggested that the post-EBIA of the southern region may be divided into two sub-phases (2000). The earlier of these phases is characterized by pottery decorated in a highly idiosyncratic style of incised decoration on jars and by plastic decoration that appears mainly on jugs. The different distribution of these pottery types was noted between the southern coastal plain in the

vicinity of Ashkelon to the Beth Shemesh region in the Judean Shephelah, with the major sites being Tel Erani (stratum C), H. Ptorah and Hartuv (Yekutieli 2000; Kempinki and Gilead 1990; Milevski and Baumgarten 2008; Mazar and de-Miroschedji 1996).

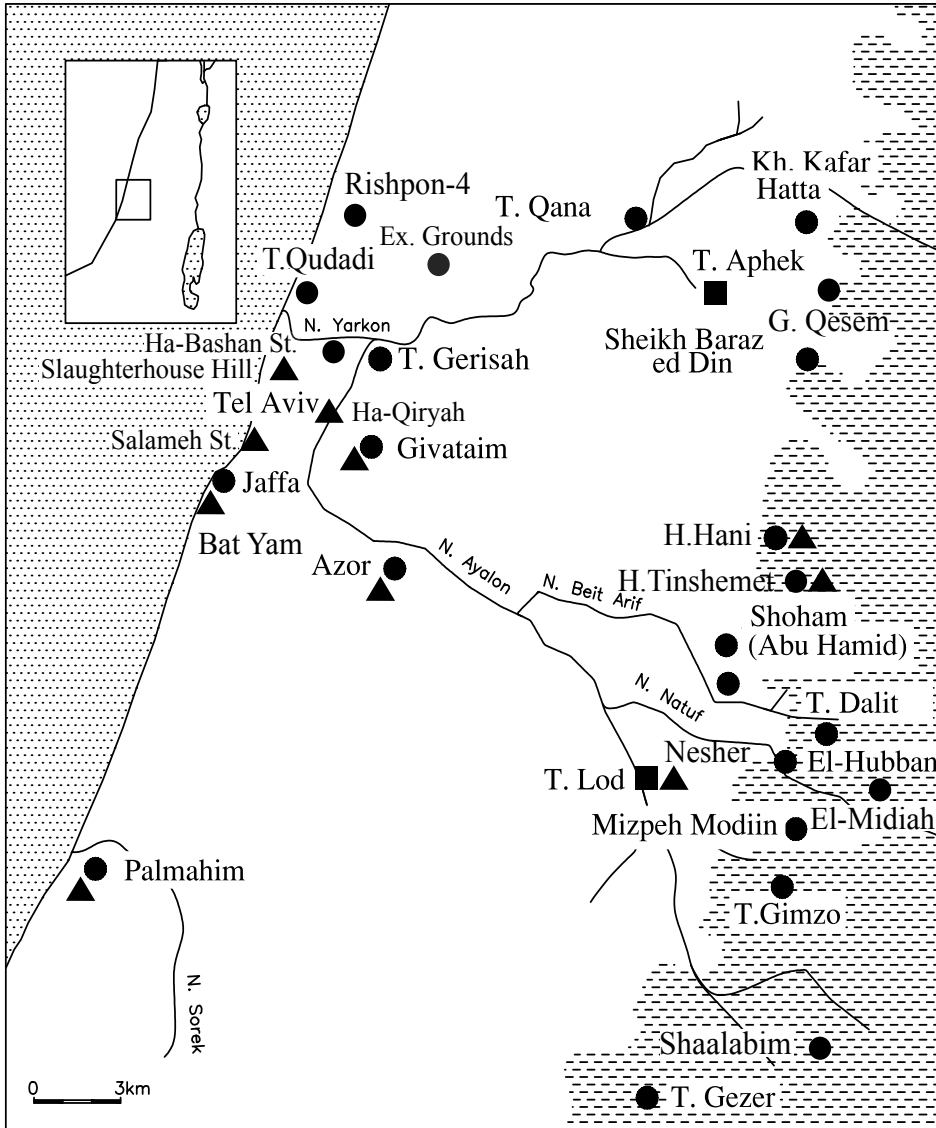
One view suggests the Erani-C pottery is the earliest of the EBI occupations, as indicated by its associations with Proto-Dynastic Egyptian sites (Braun and van den Brink 1998). However, the sporadic presence of sherds of this style in ceramic assemblages of the study region cannot clearly testify to late EBI sub-phasing. Sporadic indications of the earliest recognizable post-early EBI settlement system within our study area are marked by the presence of few ceramic vessel forms of Erani-C pottery in a burial cave at Azor (Ben-Tor 1975: Fig. 6.3, 9.13; Perrot and Ladiray 1980: Fig. 74:19, 22, 30), at Tel Dalit, Stratum 5 (Gophna 1974: Pl. 30, no. 9), at Giv'at Tittora Cave 5 (Lass 2000; in appendix) and at Horbat Hamim, a cave context near Modi'in (van den Brink, in press).³ Evidence for the Erani-C horizon seems to be lacking in the northern reaches of the study area (e.g., Lod and Greater Tel Aviv), where no pottery of this type was found. This lack of evidence does not necessarily imply that in this region there was no settlement coeval with the Erani-C episode; rather that there are insufficient chronologically sensitive indices to determine sequential ceramic phases.

Another view focuses on regionality (Gophna and Paz 2010: 29–34), where the chronological phasing for Erani-C is only relevant for the settlements between Ashkelon and the Beth Shemesh–Jerusalem region. It is more difficult to determine whether this distinction is applicable for the central coastal plain of Israel, mainly because of the paucity of clearly stratified sequences within Late EBI. Similar chronological *fossiles directeurs* of either the southern or northern regions cannot be used to determine the relative dating of its sites because the area was open to influences from both regions, while having its own local stylistic variations.

The Sites (Fig. 1) Settlements

Twenty-seven Late EBI settlements, three artifact scatters as well as nine burial sites are known in this area. These can be divided into three clusters. The northern cluster is located along the extension of the Yarkon river near Tel Aphek and includes the settlements of Tel Aphek (Stratum B VIIIa-c), Tel Qana, Giv'at Qesem and Sheikh Baraz ed-Din (Fig. 2). The largest settlement in this cluster was Tel Aphek, where a fortified urban center occupied no less than 12 hectares. This site dominated the Yarkon fords (see e.g. Kochavi et. al. 2000: 67; Paz 2002: 242).

The southern cluster is located along the eastern tributaries of the Ayalon stream,



EB Ib

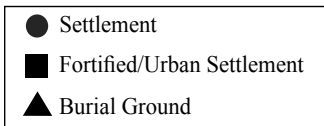


Fig. 1. The three settlement clusters of the central coastal plain during the EBIB.

an area designated as the 'Lod valley.' The sites that belong to this cluster include Horvat Hani, Horvat Tinshevet, Shoham NE, Tel Dalit, Nevallat, el-Hubban, Tel Lod, Mizpeh Modi'in, Gimzo, Sha'alabim and Gezer (cf. Shavit 2000:205–207, Figs. 6.18). Tel Lod was the major settlement here. Though neither its exact size is known, nor if it was fortified, the rich material culture and extensive occupation are evidence for its leading role in the eastern Ayalon Basin. The Dynasty 0 Egyptian baking moulds, majestic *serekhs* and other Egyptian artifacts attest to the presence of a foreign enclave of Egyptians, judging from the material culture remains (see e.g. Yannai and Marder 2000; van den Brink 2002; Paz et. al. 2005). This colony probably had an active role in the exchange of Egyptian pottery sporadically found in other sites of that region, such as at Shoham North. A possible connection of this colony to the western cluster (see below), evident by the large number of Egyptian pottery vessels found in the Tel Aviv region burial sites, such as Giva'at Kozlovsky (Giva'tayim) and Ha-Qiryah (Tel Aviv) cannot be ruled out (see e.g. Sussman and Ben-Arieh 1966; Braun and van den Brink 2002).

The third, western cluster is located along the northern extension of the Ayalon stream, and between its meeting point with the western end of the Yarkon River to the Mediterranean in an area of c. 15 × 7 km. This region seems to have been rather extensively occupied during the EBIB, with eight settlement sites and six burial sites discovered so far.

These settlement sites are north and south of the Yarkon river. Rishpon-4, the Exhibition Grounds and Tel Qudadi are North of the Yarkon. The latter two had few EBIB sherds, the excavation at Rishpon-4 yielded large amounts of pottery in the northern late EBI traditions, as well a rich assemblage of late EBIB 'Proto-Metallic Ware' (see Gophna 1978; Paz 2010; Paz, Shoval and Zlatkin 2009).

South of the Yarkon river, settlement sites included Ha-Bashan street, Tel Gerisah, Ha-Masger street, Jaffa and Azor. The major settlement of this group must have been Azor, whose cemeteries yielded vast amounts of finds, including Egyptian artifacts that attest to the presence of an Egyptian community within the Canaanite site, much like Lod (see Ben-Tor 1975).

Most settlements in all three clusters were open air sites, but a few dwellings and storage facilities existed in caves sites such as Tinshevet, Giv'at Qesem and Shoham South. These sites in the Upper Shephelah, noted for its limestone bedrock outcrops as is typical of open air settlements, remains are not preserved.

Burials

Burial caves were detected and explored in the southern and western clusters. The burials in the southern cluster include Horvat Hani, Phases III-IV, Tinshevet cave,

Nevallat, and the recently discovered Neshet-Ramlah caves (Avrutis and van den Brink 2010; Avrutis 2012).

All four sites seem to be isolated caves that were not part of large cemeteries. Their relation to a specific settlement is problematic. Considering their geographic location, one may assume that Horvat Tinsheet and Horvat Hani were connected to the settlement of Shoham, and that of Neshet-Ramlah was connected with Lod.

On the one hand, the burials of the western cluster represent a more complicated situation. Isolated burial caves were found in the southern part of this region, at Bat Yam and in Salameh Street (Kaplan 1993). On the other hand, burial sites that appear to be part of larger cemeteries were found at Nordau Street perhaps connected with the Slaughterhouse Hill, at Kaplan Junction/ha-Kiriya (Braun and van den Brink 2002; *in press*), Giv'atayim (Sussman and Ben-Arie 1966) and Azor (Ben-Tor 1975; cf. van den Brink et al. 2007). The latter should be connected with the settlement at Tel Azor. The burial caves at Kaplan Junction/ha-Kiriya probably were associated with a settlement probably near the adjacent Ayalon Basin or its immediate environs, although little is known as urban sprawl has removed any possibility of recovering useful information.⁴

Discussion

The settlement pattern in the central coastal plain of Israel during the EBIB was characterized by a consolidation of three settlement clusters connected to the Yarkon-Ayalon river system. It is important to note that in the northern and southern clusters, one settlement site was predominant: Aphek in the north and Lod in the south. The exact nature of Azor is still vague, as the site is still unexcavated. The other Tel Aviv region sites seem to have been small rural settlements.

A settlement pattern of notable intensity is discernible in the region, resulting from at least two hundred years⁵ of development with a concomitant growth in population. At some point this process was apparently ended by a crisis or perhaps a series of crises (cf. Portugali and Gophna 1993). This caused either the total abandonment or shrinking of built-up areas at certain sites and the construction of fortification and defensive walls in others. Notably, the sole fortified site is Tel Aphek. Other sites grew and became fortified in the EBII period. Examples of dynamics can be demonstrated by Abu Hamid/Tel Bareqet, Tel Dalit and Tel Aphek:

1) The flourishing, late EBI settlement at Abu Hamid (Nadelman 1995; Paz, Segal and Nadelman: *in press*), dated by ceramic parallels to Tel Lod (Paz et. al. 2005) was abandoned at the end of the period. Its population probably moved to the newly founded, EBII fortified site at nearby Tel Bareqet.

2) At Tel Aphek in late EBI, three subsequent phases of a fortified town flourished during the EBIB (Kochavi et. al 2000:62–66). This settlement came to

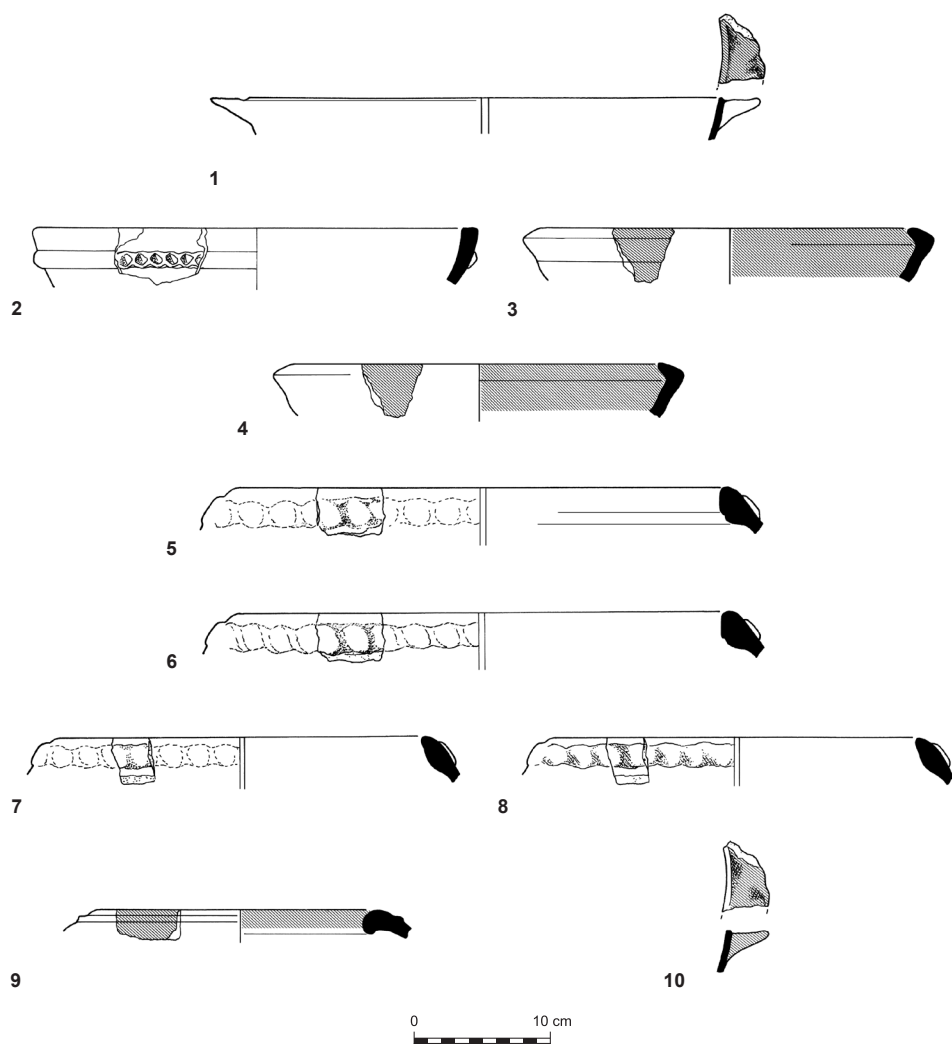


Fig. 2. EBI pottery from Sheikh Baraz ed-Din: bowls (1–4), hole-mouths (5–9), ledge handle (10).

an end by natural causes and another was established in the early EBII, possibly by the descendants of the same population. Notably, the EBII settlement was significantly smaller (Gophna pers. obs.). There is no information regarding the construction of fortifications during the Late EBI at other settlements in the region of the study besides at Tel Aphek.

Another important point should be addressed that may have implications on our ability to synchronize accurately the last horizon of the EBIB. The settlement histories of Horvat Illin Tahtit near Bet Shemesh, Tel Bareqet and Khirbet Abu Hamid (Shoham North) reflect a continuous settlement history in the EBIB (Paz, Segal and Nadelman: in press). At Horvat Illin Tahtit in stratum II, architectural features include both rounded and rectilinear structures (with rounded corners). Both these features occur in late EBIB horizons at Tel esh-Shuneh North, Tel Bet Yerah, Qiryat Ata and Palmahim (see e.g. Paz and Paz 2006; Braun 1996).

The pottery of Shoham North is characteristic to the late EBIB, with the most abundant red slipped ridged hole-mouth as a *fossil directeur*, having close parallels from many sites in northern and southern regions of Israel. A fragment of an Egyptian cylindrical vessel found in stratum II and other Egyptianized wine jar fragments testify to the late EBIB horizon of the site. Stratum I at Shoham North, although poorly preserved, reflects a totally different architecture, with segments of rectangular structures. The date of this stratum falls between the latest EBIB and the earliest EBII. Yet, no EBII pottery could be securely assigned to stratum I.

The earliest occupation at Tel Bareqet preceded the fortified town and was only detected in bedrock pockets. The settlement may be contemporaneous to stratum I at Shoham North. Pottery from these 'pockets' should be dated to the earliest EBII. The fortified town that followed this was securely dated to the EBII on the basis of ceramic hallmarks like 'North Canaanite Metallic Ware' and plastic rope-decorated hole-mouth jars. The architecture of a well-planned town with gates, towers, streets and residential quarters fits well within the model of the familiar urbanization process (see e.g. Getzov, Paz and Gophna 2001: 24–29; Greenberg 2002).

A three-stage settlement process can be reconstructed spread over less than 100 years between Shoham North stratum II (the Egyptian pottery and Proto-Metallic Ware give an estimated Dynasty 0 date of c. 3150 BCE), through stratum I, and the erection of the fortified Tel Bareqet, no later than 3050 BCE (a C14 date for the fortified town was retrieved from olive seeds to 3100 BCE).⁶

The period becomes more complicated with Horvat Illin Tahtit. This site, located c. 25 km south-east of Shoham North, was first defined as a late EBIB village (Braun 2005). It cannot be dated prior to Dynasty 0 in Egypt for two reasons: first, it lacks Erani-C pottery, abundant in other sites at the Bet Shemesh region, such as Hartuv, (Mazar and de-Miroschedji 1996), and second, Egyptian pottery fixes its late EBIB horizon to no earlier than 3200 BCE (Braun 2005). A close examination of the latest stratum III architectural phase at Horvat Illin Tahtit reveals a well planned settlement, of which more than 1100 m² were excavated. The site had rectangular structures, four alleyways, and not one round building. The overall plan is similar to the urban town of EBII Tel Bareqet (Braun 2005). Some pottery

types, particularly two complete jars with two pairs of handles and various jugs seem to be quite similar at both sites judging by photos published by Braun (2005) and Paz (2007). The hallmarks of late EBIB pottery, abundant at Tel Aphek in the northern cluster, Tel Lod and Shoham North (southern cluster) and Rishpon-4 (western cluster) such as red washed ridged hole-mouths are completely lacking at Horvat Illin. Plastic rope-decorated hole-mouth jars with partial decoration over the rim, securely assigned to the late EBIB (Gophna 1996: Fig. 41: 11) are common at Horvat Illin Tahtit.

A complicated chronological jigsaw can be illustrated, even though we cannot date Tel Bareqet to the EBIB and Horvat Illin Tahtit to the EBII. The following sequence between settlement episodes might be suggested, from the earliest to the latest: Shoham North stratum II (late EBIB), Horvat Illin Tahtit (late EBIB), Lod post-Egyptian phase (latest EBIB, see Paz et. al. 2005: 139), Shoham North stratum I and Tel Bareqet pre-town phase (earliest EBII). The chronological span for each episode cannot be more than 50–100 years, between 3100–3050/3000 BCE (compare between Braun 2005, Paz et. al. 2005, Paz and Paz 2007).

Moving northwest along the Ayalon stream towards the Yarkon river, the EBIB pottery tradition becomes clearer. At Aphek and Rishpon-4, the pottery resembles northern regions assemblages devoid of Erani-C types. Moreover, the few Erani-C vessels reported from mortuary contexts at Azor have little context since they were not found in clear stratigraphy. The Erani-C horizon at Hartuv and in Ramat Bet Shemesh seems to blur the chronological picture, mainly due to it being detected in horizontal rather than in vertical stratigraphy. This situation might reflect a spatial settlement shift in the EBIB.

While the settlement at Hartuv with Erani-C pottery had been deserted, its inhabitants may have settled at Horvat Illin Tahtit,⁷ the situation in the Yarkon-Ayalon region is significantly different. Here, some sites represent a vertical stratigraphic sequence that reflect homogenous late EBIB pottery, while lacking any Erani-C pottery. These were short-lived sites representing the very end of the EBIB. Both spatial and stratigraphic evidence strengthen the idea that Erani-C pottery can be distinguished as a clear chronological sub-phase of the EBIB. This occurred in the smaller region spread between the Bet-Shemesh/Jerusalem area to the east, to Ashkelon in the west. This pattern did not reach the Soreq Basin or northwest to the Yarkon-Ayalon Basin (Gophna, Paz and Taxel 2010: 29–34).

An Egyptian Episode

Evidence from the end of the late Proto-Dynastic period in Egypt (Naqada IIIB-C/late EBI), probably during the reign of the last king of Dynasty 0 and the first king of Dynasty 1, includes hundreds of vessels indicating Egyptian contacts with

the southern Levant. Cylinder seal impressions, Egyptian imported and locally imitated pottery, mainly from settlement contexts have been found in the southern region (van den Brink 2002). The assemblage from Tel Lod is impressive, where nine *serekhs* were uncovered. These highly stylized Egyptian symbols for rulers/kings bearing their names, have all been incised prior to firing on imported Egyptian vessels. Five are of Horus Narmer and one of Horus Ka (van den Brink and Braun 2002; Braun and van den Brink 2007).

Egyptian imports have also been found in burial contexts at Neshet-Ramla (Avrutis 2012), at Azor in both settlement and mortuary contexts (van den Brink et al. 2007), and at Giv'atayim in a mortuary context. Drop-shaped vessels of varying sizes indicating Egyptian influence points to the existence of a nearby settlement. Ha-Qiriah burial cave is another site. Other Late EBI burial sites often lack Egyptian imported or related material. An Egyptian bottle (probably a heirloom) was recovered in excavations at Tel Apeh in a settlement phase, dated by the excavators to EBII. A fragment of an Egyptian cylindrical vessel was found during the excavations at Shoham North (Paz, Segal and Nadelman: in press).

At the end of the EBI, finds indicate an Egyptian settlement existed at Tel Azor and Tel Lod (van den Brink 2002; Paz et al. 2005). Tel Azor was probably a northern extension of Egyptian settlement among local populations during the EBIB (see map in de-Miroschedji and Sadek 2000). At Tel Lod kitchen ware was found—bread moulds produced with organic temper. These were common in Egypt, yet rare in Canaan. Petrographic analysis conducted on some bread moulds indicated that these moulds were manufactured at En Besor, a well known Egyptian outpost. Along with Tel Sakan, this site was one of the main bases for the Egyptians moving north (Paz et. al. 2005: 148–149; Gophna 1995). Similarly, a bread mould was found in the EBIB settlements at Al-Maghar, located c. 10 km southwest of Lod. This mould also originated in the En Besor vicinity (Gophna et. al. 2010: 20). Some Egyptian authority, located along the Besor region, was probably in charge of dispatching and equipping Egyptians who went northwards to settle. Recently discovered indications of a contemporary anchorage at Jaffa may imply the existence of commercial maritime relations between the central coastal plain and Egypt (Gophna 2002).

Summary

Some fortified settlements first appear in this area during Late EBI and EBII. These represent a peak in the population of the region during the Early Bronze Age, both in density of settlements and population size (cf. Joffe 1993; Esse 1991; Paz 2002; Getzov, Paz and Gophna 2001: 22–24).

Crises are postulated to explain the abandonment of some settlements and the growth of others. Crises might explain the increased number of Late EBI and EBII fortifications, that apparently began with a defensive wall at Tel Aphek. Yet, the settlement shrank at Tel Aphek with its abundance of Late EBI finds spread over the tell yet relative scarcity of EBII artifacts spread over a restricted area (see below in the discussion of EBII material).

The data available from excavations during the last three decades enable us to compare chronological and cultural processes that took place in different regions. The settlement system of the late 4th millennium BCE (EBIB) south of the Ayalon Basin between Jerusalem-Bet Shemesh and Ashkelon was apparently characterized by local variations atypical of the other regions. The major differences between the two regions were:

1. In the Yarkon-Ayalon region, a homogenous cultural process characterized the time-span between c. 3300–3050 BCE.
2. The introduction of new elements such as ‘Proto-Metallic Ware’ (see e.g. Paz, Shoval and Zlatkin 2009) as well as Egyptian imported pottery assimilated in the local culture without a cultural break.
3. The Egyptian presence at Azor and at Tel Lod did not cause a break in the local material culture. The continuous nature of local late EBIB pottery types was well attested both in long stratigraphic sequences at Tel Lod and at Tel Aphek and in short-lived sites such as Rishpon-4.

The region between Bet-Shemesh westwards divides into two different chronological and cultural horizons, reflected in horizontal rather than vertical stratigraphy. The earlier Erani-C horizon was detected at Jerusalem (Shukrun: pers. comm.), Ramat Bet Shemesh (Eisenberg: forthcoming), Eshtaol west (IAA excavation in 2013), H. Ptora (Milevski and Baumgarten 2008), and Ashkelon Barnea. The later horizon was found at Horvat Illin Tahtit along with Egyptian pottery, (see e.g. Braun 2005) and Eshtaol East (Golani: pers. communication.).

One of the most curious notions that can be made here is that the closer the site is to the Yarkon river, the easier it is to differentiate between EBIB and EBII. When moving southeast along the Ayalon stream, this differentiation becomes more problematic. Foreign imports such as North Canaanite Metallic Ware that entered the region by the beginning of the 3rd millennium BCE, made this distinction easier. While most local pottery types show a typological continuation between EBIB-EBII, the introduction of North Canaanite Metallic Ware clearly outlined the very beginning of EBII in the study area.

This was not the case in the Bet Shemesh region, where no North Canaanite Metallic Ware was detected at sites like Horvat Illin Tahtit. The curious

resemblance in pottery types and in architecture between this late EBIB site to EBII Tel Bareqet may hint at another variety of development that characterized the southern region. We might suggest that by the very beginning of the 3rd millennium BCE, sites at the Yarkon-Ayalon Basin were fortified and passed the threshold of urbanization. These date to EBII, while other sites, at precisely the same time in the Bet Shemesh region, had no North Canaanite Metallic Ware or other EBII traits and therefore continued their EBIB culture. This is highly problematic, especially when the similarities between Horvat Illin Tahtit and Tel Bareqet highlight the former as a large, nucleated, pre-planned, fortified town. The trajectory towards urbanization should not be looked for in foreign factors but rather reconstructed from intra-regional socio-political processes (e.g. Paz 2002; Getzov, Paz and Gophna 2001: 22–24).

The Early Bronze Age II

Introduction (Fig. 3)

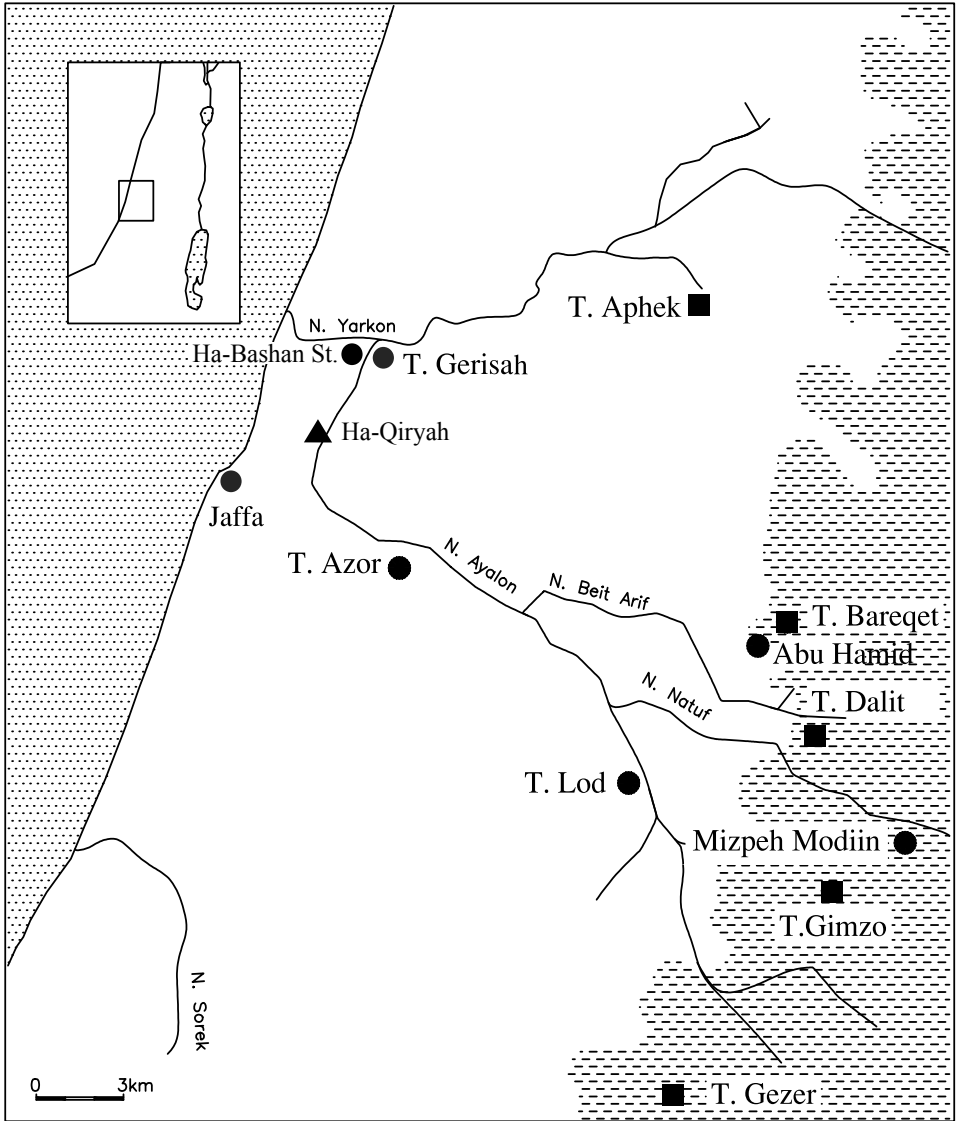
The settlement crisis that took place during the very end of the 4th millennium resulted in the abandonment of many unfortified sites and a concentration of the population in fortified towns (see Joffe 1993; Portugali and Gophna 1993; Getzov, Paz and Gophna 2001: 24–26). A similar pattern did not occur in the central coastal plain. This complicated arena presents a tripartite scenario, where each cluster consolidated during the EBIB, yet reflects a different settlement process.

The Sites

The three settlement clusters that consolidated during the EBIB changed during the EBII. The sole settlement that continued to exist in the northern cluster was Tel Aphek. All of its smaller satellites were abandoned. Tel Aphek shows a continuity in its settlement history and maintained its status as an urban center (see Greenberg 2002). The EBIB wall went out of use, and was not replaced.

The southern cluster was the scene of similar processes. During the EBII, there were five towns in the eastern part of the Ayalon Basin: Tel Dalit, Tel Bareqet, Tel Gimzo (Fig. 4), Tel Gezer and Tel Lod. The settlement at Tel Lod indicates stability during the EBII, but its exact size remains unknown. No town wall was detected during the excavations. The nearby open site of Mizpe Modi'in continued to be settled during the EBII, situated c. 3 km northeast of Tel Gimzo, further inland.

Most conspicuous are the shifts from village to town at the sites of Tel Dalit and at Tel Bareqet. The EBIB buildings at Tel Dalit, about four hectares in size, were leveled and a walled town was erected (Gophna 1996: 62). North of Tel Dalit, the EBIB village of Shoham North was abandoned by the end of the 4th millennium and in the very beginning of the EBII, a new four-hectare fortified



EB II

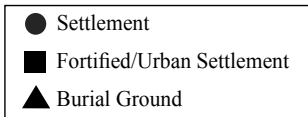


Fig. 3. The central coastal plain with three settlement clusters during the EBII.

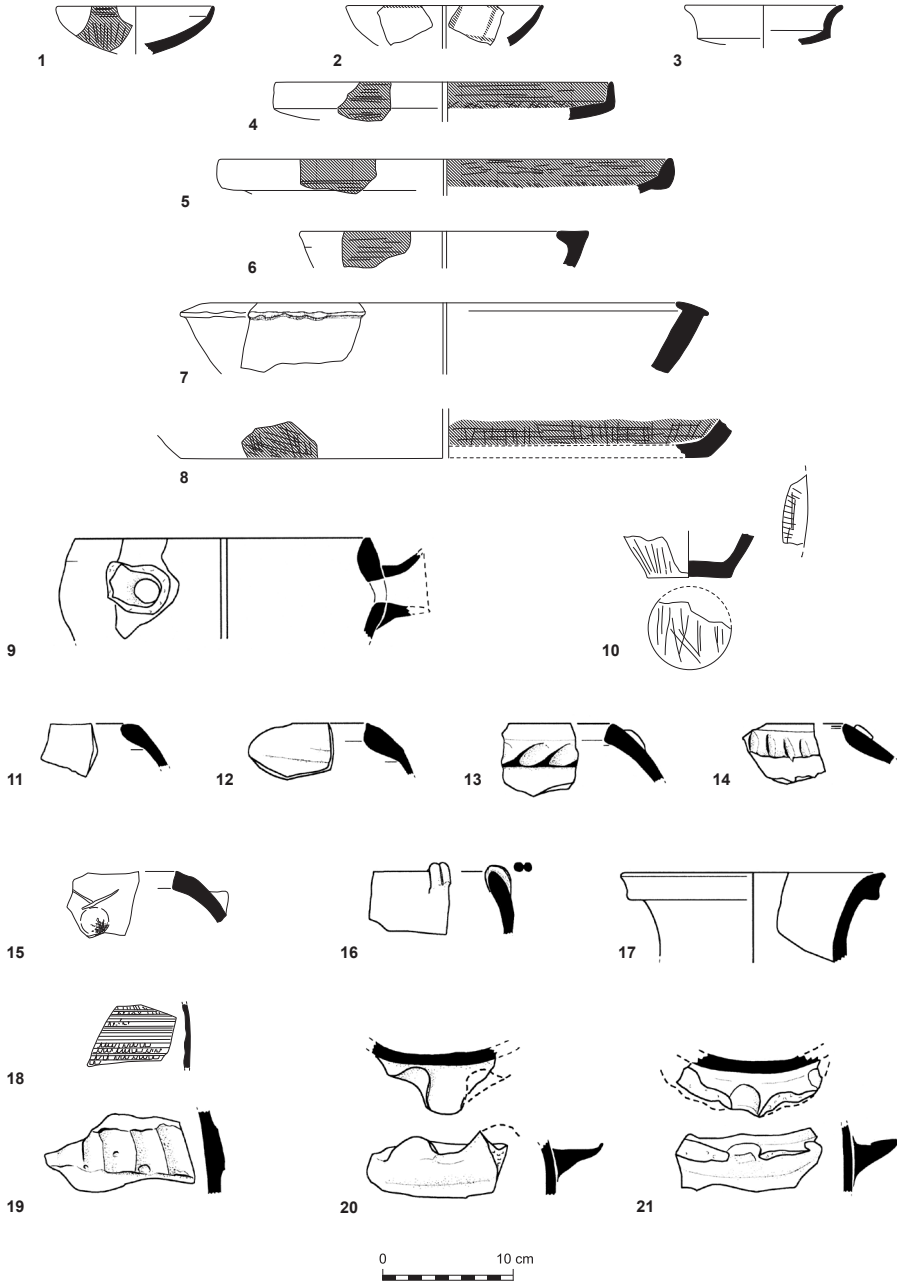


Fig. 4. EBII pottery from Tel Gimzo: bowls (1–3), platters (4–5), vats (6–7), jar base (8), spouted hole-mouth (9), juglet (10), hole-mouths (11–16), pithos (17), decorated sherds (18–19), ledge handles (20–21).

town was established at Tel Bareqet, a prominent hill located 1 km to the east. This walled town developed through two stages during the EBII (e.g. Paz and Paz 2007). An urban settlement may have also existed during the EBII at Tel Gimzo⁸ and also c. 10 km southwest, at Tel Gezer (Dever 1993).

The southern cluster this area is similar to the picture characterized in the northern cluster: most of the open air villages were abandoned, and the population concentrated in few nucleated urban towns (see Gophna 1996: 158–162; Getzov, Paz and Gophna 2001: 24–25).

A different settlement picture emerges from the western cluster. Here, the number of settlements was reduced by half: only Ha-Bashan street, Tel Gerisah, Jaffa and Azor had continuous existence into the EBII. Unlike the situation in the northern and southern clusters, not one new urban settlement was established. Moreover, these four settlements maintained their rural nature. A cluster of open air settlements without links to an urban center is uncommon in the land of Israel may hint at a connection between walled towns and a new socio-political order. This pattern did not exist in the Tel Aviv-Jaffa municipal area and its immediate vicinity. This situation was presumably affected from the distinct natural setting of the coastal sites that reside adjacent to the sea shore. Therefore we might assume these were involved with seafaring activity that may have been the backbone of their existence (Gophna and Paz 2011).

Burials

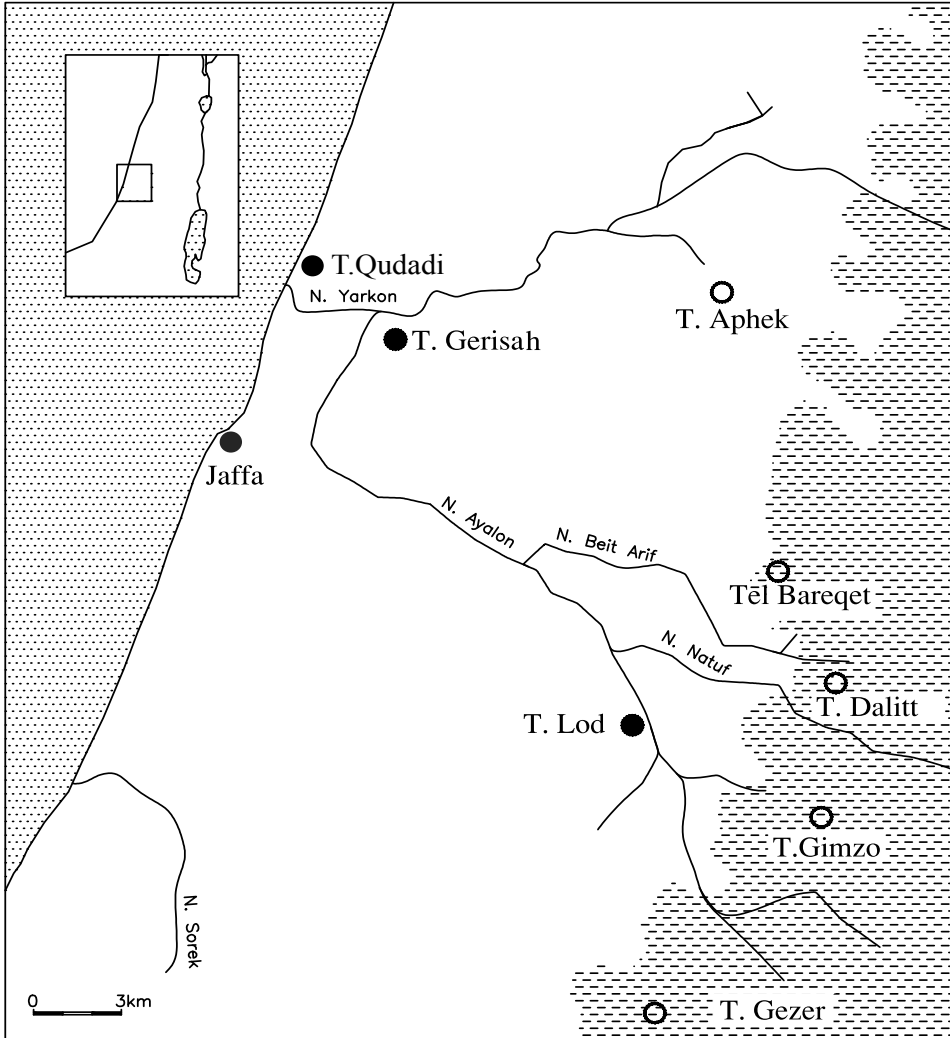
Only the two burial grounds at Ha-Qiriah and Azor were continuously used during the EBII, both in the western settlement cluster. The EBII burial remains represent a possible link with the four rural villages of the western cluster. Yet, not one EBII burial ground was detected in the northern and in the southern clusters. This means that the whole EBII urban system of the central coastal plain has no data for cemeteries, a situation well known from other southern Levant regions (e.g. Ilan 2002).

The accumulated data related to the settlement history of the Lod Valley during the EBII requires an understanding of its territorial and political divisions. The settlement pattern of the Lod valley during the EBII, in which contemporaneous polities existed within urban settlement indicates that this region was divided between similar entities. Each one probably controlled a small territory.

The Early Bronze Age III

Introduction (Fig. 5)

By the beginning of the EBIII, a severe crisis affected most of the land of Israel and resulted with the abandonment of whole regions, including Upper Galilee



EB III

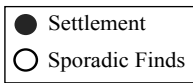


Fig. 5. The three settlement clusters of the central coastal plain during the EBIII

and the Samaria region. Many urban settlements were deserted or destroyed. The next urban system of the EBIII was primarily concentrated in three large units: the northern valleys, the Jordan Valley and the southern coastal plain with its extension into the Judean Shephelah (see Getzov, Paz and Gophna 2001: 30ff).

The settlement crisis severely affected urban towns, yet did not severely change the few rural settlements that were established in the western cluster.

The Sites

All five walled settlements of the northern and southern clusters were completely abandoned. At Tel Aphek, Tel Bareqet, Tel Dalit, and Tel Gezer, small quantities of EBIII pottery sherds (amongst some Khirbet Kerak Ware sherds) may hint at a short duration settlement episode sometime in the course of this long (c. 500 year long) period. This situation stands in sharp contrast to the flourishing urban landscape of southwestern Canaan during the EBIII (Getzov, Paz and Gophna 2001: 33–38). Two sites stand out, Tel Lod, and Tel Gimzo. At Tel Lod, the excavation results indicate the existence of a settlement during the EBIII. The survey data at Tel Gimzo may reflect a similar phenomenon.

The western cluster settlement system probably did not collapse, and a degree of continuity can be reported. At Tel Gerisah, in light of the large amounts of pottery and complete vessels found in excavations and surveys, the EBIB unfortified village continuously existed through the EBII and flourished in the EBIII (Herzog 1993; Gophna and Paz 2011). The settlement certainly benefited from its strategic location on the fords of the Yarkon river. No doubt it was connected with the site of Tel Qudadi, occupying a dominant position on the outlet of the river. Perhaps it acted as an anchorage and an outpost for marine traffic sailing eastwards on the Yarkon river (see Gophna and Paz 2011). Jaffa was another site that commanded a natural anchorage. This site was connected with maritime activity already during the EBIII (Gophna and Lipschitz 1996: 148–149).

The nearest walled towns during the whole of the Early Bronze Age III were 'Ai (Callaway 1980) to the east, Horvat Shovav (Gophna and Paz 2008) and Tel Yarmouth (de-Miroscedji 1993) to the south, both at least 35 km away. The central coastal plain was a kind of backwater until the end of the Early Bronze Age, unlike the southern coastal plain (Gophna and Blockman 2004, Getzov et al. 2001).

The Central Coastal Plain Settlement System during the EBA – A Comparison with Southwestern Israel

The above discussions highlight the complexity of the central coastal plain settlement process during the EBIB to the EBIII. The identification of three settlement clusters and their characteristics was only possible after careful examination of the results of decades of fieldwork by others, comparing the settlement process of this area with the adjacent southwestern Israel comprising the Judean Shephelah and the southwestern coastal plain. This discussion will

focus on settlement processes reflected in the material culture, with no detailed discussions on architecture.

The area that stretches from the Judean Shephelah westwards towards the western coastal plain of Israel represents an enigmatic settlement sequence that should be studied in detail in the future. The EBIB period here may be divided into two main chronological and cultural horizons (see in Yekutieli 2000). The early Erani-C pottery was found at sites such as Hartuv (Mazar and de-Miroschedji 1996), Eshtaol (Storchan: pers. comm.), Horvat Ptorah (Milevski and Baumgarten 2008), Tel Erani (Kempinski and Gilead 1991; Yekutieli 2001) and Ashkelon-Barnea.

The later horizon with an Egyptian presence was detected at sites such as Horvat Illin Tahtit (Braun 2005), Eshtaol (Golani: pers. comm.), Amaziah (Milevski: pers. comm.), Tel Erani, Tel Poran, Tel Maahaz and the Egyptian posts at Ein Besor and Tel Sakan (see e.g. de-Miroschedji and Sadeq 2000). In southwestern Israel, both early and late EBIB horizons were mainly present, yet in horizontal rather than vertical stratigraphy.

The crisis that characterized the transition between EBIB-EBII affected southwestern Israel as well. Numerous open settlements were deserted, and several urban fortified towns were established, e.g. Tel Yarmouth, Tel Zafit and Tel Agra. The EBIII was a period of vast urbanization processes characterizing the southwestern regions of Israel. Settlements such as Tel Lachish, Tel Nagila, Tel Halif and Tel Hesi were established, while others, like Tel Poran, Tel Ashqelon, and Tel Saken were re-settled as fortified urban centers. Tel Yarmouth maintained its urban character, and reached its apogee during the EBIII (de-Miroschedji 1999). Other sites, such as H. Shovav, Tel Zafit and Tel Erani continuously existed as urban towns (e.g. Gophna and Paz 2008).

Concurrently, rural open settlements existed, some with and some without direct contact to the urban centers. Sites such as Givat Ziqit, Tel Turmus and Bir Gamla represent a dynamic 400-year long settlement system in EBIII, in which fortified urban towns declined and became unfortified (e.g. Tel Halif), while villages became fortified towns (e.g. Tel Hesi), other sites retained their power as urban centers (Yarmouth, Lachish), while other remained as small villages or way stations (e.g. Tel Turmus and Bir Gamla).

Conclusion

These distribution maps from the central coastal plain reflect the dynamics of social, territorial and political processes during more than one thousand years of the Early Bronze Age. Each region had its own settlement pattern during the EBA compared with the central coastal plain (Getzov, Paz and Gophna 2001). The peculiarity of the central coastal plain is shown here with the help of data

documenting traits of material culture. By reconstructing three settlement clusters, each with a different settlement pattern, where villages succeeded towns and *vice versa*, the western cluster stands out in that no settlement grew enough to become a town during the EBA.

Table 1. Periodization of known Early Bronze Age IB-III sites in the Central Coastal Plain

Sites	EBIB (post Erani-C)	EBII	EBIII
Tel Aphek	fortified settlement	fortified (?)	+
Tel Qanah	+		
Giv'at Qesem	storage caves		
Sheikh Baraz ed-Din	+	+	
Tel Aviv	+		
Bodenheimer Str./ha-Bashan Street	+		
Exhibition Grounds	+	+	
Hamasager Street		unfortified	
Yannai Street = (Slaughter House hill) Street = General Hill	burial caves	burial caves	
Ha-Qiryah/Kaplan Junction	+		
Rishpon 4	burial caves		
Salameh Street	burial cave		
Jaffa	+		
Tel Gerisa	+	unfortified	+
Giv'atayim	burial caves		
Azor	settlement and burial caves	+	
Tel Bareqet		fortified	
Tel Dalit	open village	fortified	
Horbat Hani (west)	(phases III-IV) burial cave		
Tinshemet	dwelling/burial cave		
Shoham (N) /Khirbet Abu Hamid	settlement		

Shoham (NE)	dwelling cave	
Shoham (S)	settlement	
Nevallat	burial cave	
el-Hubban	+	
Tel Lod	+	+
Palmahim	+	
Gimzo	+	fortified (?)
Tel Gezer	+	
Tel Gezer, Str. XXVI; Field I, ph. 14	mainly burial caves	+
Tel Hamid, the lower terrace, area B	+	
Sha'alabim	+	
Mizpeh Modi'in	(sherds)	+
Nesher	burial caves	
er-Ras/el-Mediah	+	

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Endnotes

- 1 Early EBI sites abandoned and not resettled during Late EBI include Mazor, Quleh, Ben Shemen, Modi'in (Deep Deposits), Horbat Hadat, Mevo Horon and Giv'at Tittora. Most of these abandoned Early EBI sites were settled during the preceding Chalcolithic period, e.g. Mazor, Quleh [west], Ben Shemen, Modi'in (Deep Deposits), Horbat Hadat and Giv'at Tittora. Sites with a similar settlement history north this area include Metzer in the central Sharon plain (Dothan 1959) and Nahal Alexander (Gophna 1974: Fig. 6).
- 2 Early EBI sites resettled during the Late EBI include Ha-Masger Street, the Exhibition Grounds, Azor, Tel Dalit Stratum V, Horbat Hani phases III-IV, Shoham North/Abu Hamid, Shoham South, Palmahim Quarry (burial caves) and Tel Gezer (mainly burial caves; cf. Seger 1988).
- 3 The Erani-C incised loop handles at Giv'at Tittora Cave 5 and at Horvat Hamim come from Early EBI contexts. The origins of this aspect of Erani-C pottery might have its roots in this period.
- 4 The cemetery in the Qiryah Quarter of Tel Aviv on the west bank of the Ayalon river shows the existence of a settlement on a terrace leading to the Ayalon Basin, today at the Montefiori Quarter, or perhaps 0.7 km further north, at Ha-Masger Street. This mirrors a situation to the east of the Ayalon river, with burial caves at Giv'atayim probably associated with a nearby settlement on a terrace slightly west in the direction of the Ayalon Basin.

- 5 For a detailed discussion of the chronology of this period see: Braun 1996: 65–169.
- 6 Two of three olive seeds analyzed in Switzerland by Professor Bonani gave a date of c. 3100 BC.
- 7 Recent excavations at Eshtaol yielded three phases of architecture and pottery exclusively dated to the Erani-C horizon (observation from the 2013 Israel Antiquities Authority excavation). This situation might reflect a large settlement that was succeeded by a smaller one since late EBIB pottery was scanty in all excavation areas. The authors wish to thank the directors of Eshtaol Excavation for allowing them to see and study the pottery of the site.
- 8 All available data concerning Tel Gimzo are the result of surveys during which pottery was collected from various parts of the mound, see Fig. 4.

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