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**“See, I will bring a scroll recounting
what befell me” (Ps 40:8)**

Epigraphy and Daily Life
from the Bible to the Talmud

Dedicated to the Memory of Professor Hanan Eshel

With 60 figures

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The Inscriptions from Tel Rehov and their Contribution to the Study of Script and Writing during Iron Age IIA

The number of alphabetical inscriptions from Israel that date to the Iron Age IIA (tenth–ninth centuries BCE) is minuscule and their dating is open to debate. The discovery of eleven inscriptions, mostly incised on storage jars, at Tel Rehov in the Beth-Shean Valley (see map) thus constitutes an important contribution to the study of various aspects of the development of script and writing during this formative period of the early Israelite kingdom.¹ Three of the inscriptions from Tel Rehov (Nos. 4, 6, 8 below) have been previously published.² Seven additional inscriptions, among them three which include only a single letter, are being published for the first time in this article.³

1 The excavations at Tel Rehov are directed by Amihai Mazar of the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, with the generous support of Mr. John Camp of Minnesota, U.S.A. Ten seasons of excavation have been conducted from 1997 to 2010. Nava Panitz-Cohen was the field supervisor of Area C, where six of the inscriptions presented in this study were found. The complete vessels that bear inscriptions were restored by Ora Mazar; drawings by Rachel Solar (Figs. 2, 3, 5, 7, 9), Ada Yardeni (Figs. 4, 10) and Yulia Rudman (Figs. 1, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15). Photographs were taken by Gabi Laron. Benjamin Sass, Larry Herr, Diana Edelman and André Lemaire made helpful comments during the early stages of the publication of Inscriptions Nos. 4, 7 and 9. Fig. 6 is published by courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority. The table and accompanying graph in Fig. 13 were prepared by Katharina Streit, using OxCal 4.1 program.

2 Amihai Mazar, “Three 10th–9th Century B.C.E. Inscriptions from Tel Rehov,” in *Saxa loquuntur: Studien zur Archäologie Palästinas/Israels. Festschrift für Volkmar Fritz zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. Cornelius G. Den Hertog, Ulrich Hübner and Stefan Münzer; AOAT 302; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2003), 171 – 184.

3 For a general survey of the excavations and their implications for the study of the Iron Age, see Amihai Mazar, “The 1997 – 1998 Excavations at Tel Rehov: Preliminary Report.” *IEJ* 49 (1999): 1 – 42; idem, “Rehov, Tel,” in *The New Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (ed. Ephraim Stern; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, Volume 5, 2008) 2013 – 2018.

Corpus of Inscriptions

The following corpus is arranged chronologically, based on the stratigraphy of the inscriptions' find spots, from Stratum VI (the tenth century BCE) through Stratum IV (the ninth century BCE).

1. Reg. No. 104028, Locus 7512, Area C, Building CY, local Stratum C-2, general Stratum VI (Fig. 1)

This sherd bears two letters written in ink. It was found when the floor material was removed and thus may date earlier. The sherd comes from the lower part of a storage jar, near its base. The thick walls and general workmanship of the vessel is consistent with the storage jars of the Iron Age I, but these are not unequivocal criteria and the sherd may belong to Stratum VI. Two signs are written in black ink that may be read as ץ and ך. The ץ is a circle without a dot, as it has lost this pictographic feature. The ך is somewhat unclear and it seems that the writer had difficulty when forming it. In our view, the zigzag and its cross-line are visible.

2. Reg. No. 74891/10, Locus 7491, Building CT, local Stratum C-2b, general Stratum VIB (Fig. 2)

This is a narrow ovoid storage jar, with two handles on its body, a tall ridged neck and an elongated rim. The jar is made of metallic-fired brownish gray clay that should apparently be identified as belonging to a Lower Cretaceous source. This clay was used to make many of the ubiquitous Hippo jars that are common in Strata V and IV at Tel Rehov, a type which bore the majority of inscriptions in those strata (see below). However, it should be noted that Hippo jars were virtually absent from Stratum VI and no other storage jars were made of this fabric at that time. The restorable fragments of this storage jar were found sealed under a wall (Wall 7435) that is attributed to the main phase of Stratum VI in Building CT.

This is a double inscription, incised after firing with a sharp instrument on both faces of the jar, on the upper part near the shoulder. One side can be read |מחא (the most reasonable interpretation of the short vertical line that follows the name מחא is the numeral one), while the opposite face bears the same inscription, although only the upper left part of the ח, the מ and the short vertical line are preserved. The inscription can be interpreted as a personal name followed by the numeric one. The name מחא appears on an Ammonite seal dating to the end of the Iron Age: למחא בן שעל, "(belonging) to Mt' son of Shu'al (fox)".⁴ It seems that this is an abbreviated theophoric name (a hypocoristic) composed of the noun מח (מרו, see below), meaning "a man", which appears in the Bible only as the plural מרחים (*maṭîm*), "men" (Deut 2:34; 3:6; Psalms 17:14; Job 11:3; 24:12) and in the

4 Nahman Avigad and Benjamin Sass, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Israel Exploration Society, and The Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem 1997), No. 951.

construct state as מְרִי (*məṭēy*) (Gen 34:30; Deut 4:27; Is 5:13, etc.), or in the genitive, with the suffix for 1st person singular: מְרִי (*məṭāw*), “his men” (Is 3:25). The noun מֶה is known in Akkadian, *mutu*.⁵ The component מְרִי in its archaic form preserves the ancient nominative case /u/, appears in the Bible in personal names such as מְרוּשָׁאֵל, “Methusael” (Gen 4:18) and מְרוּשָׁלָּה, “Methuselah” (Gen 5:21 – 22; 1 Chr 1:3). The noun *mutu* appears as a component in Akkadian and West-Semitic names, such as the Amorite name *Mutu-IM=Mutu-Ba’l* in the Mari archives⁶ or the Ugaritic name *Mtba’l*, in syllabic form *Mutba’l*.⁷ One of the sons of the famous Labaya was *Mutba’l*, the governor of Pehal/Pella.⁸ It seems that the name מְרִי is a remnant of an ancient name composed of the noun מְרִי.⁹ The shortened theophoric name מְרִי, spelled with an א that represents the long vowel /ā/, is a known element in other abbreviated names such as אֲסָא (Asa) in I Kings 15:8 and on an Ammonite ostrakon, No. 7, from Tell el-Mazar in the eastern Jordan Valley,¹⁰ אֲשָׁא (*’Āśā*) in the Samaria ostraca¹¹, עֻזָּא (Uzza; II Sam 6:3) on Hebrew and Ammonite seals,¹² and זִמְמָא (**Zimmā*?, cf. biblical name זִמְמָה *Zimmā*^h; 1 Chr 6: 5, 27; 2 Chr 29: 12) on an ostrakon from Beth-Shean,¹³ etc.

From a paleographic point of view, all the letters have parallels in the Gezer Calendar. Especially noteworthy is the elongated מ, which differs from the one that appears in Inscription No. 5 from the subsequent Stratum V (see below).

3. Reg. No. 75109/99, Locus 7505, Area C, Building CY, local Stratum C-2, general Stratum VI (Fig. 3). A ל incised by a sharp instrument after firing was found on the inner side of a thick body sherd from a storage jar. The letter is

5 CAD M/II: 313 ff.

6 Herbert B. Huffman, *Amorite Personal Names in the Mari Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), 119 – 120, 234.

7 Frauke Gröndahl, *Die Personennamen der Texte aus Ugarit* (Studia Pohl 8; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1967), 162.

8 Jorgen A. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln 1 – 2* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1915; reprinted Aalen: O. Zeller, 1964), Nos. 255: 3; 256: 2, 5.

9 The inscription מֶה לְעִבְדָּה “(belonging to Abda^h (son of) Mt”, appears on a seal impression found in an illicit excavation in the Shephelah (Robert Deutsch, *Biblical Period Hebrew Bullae. The Josef Chaim Kaufman Collection* [Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publication, 2003], No. 284). The component מֶה is unusual and it would be peculiar to relate it to Mot, the god of death. A preferable interpretation would be as a derivative of *mutu*, “man”, although this interpretation is not a simple one. It seems untenable to call a person by the name מֶה, “dead”, or “Death”. Moreover normally “death” should be written in Hebrew with a י representing the form *mawet*.

10 Shmuel Ahituv, *Echoes from the Past. Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from the Biblical Period* (Translator and academic editor Anson F. Rainey; Jerusalem: Carta, 2008), 382.

11 Ibid, 281, No. 22 and more names.

12 Avigad and Sass, *Corpus*, Nos. 69, 297, 298, 925, 960.

13 Amihai Mazar, *Excavations at Tel Beth-Shean 1989 – 1996 I: From the Late Bronze Age IIB to the Medieval Period* (Jerusalem: The Institute of Archaeology, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2006), 505 – 506.

presumed to have been incised after the vessel was broken, since it would have been impossible to do so if the jar had been complete. This sherd was found in occupation debris on a floor.

4. Reg. No. 23138, Locus 2308, Area B, local Stratum B-6, general Stratum VI (Fig. 4). This is the body sherd of a storage jar made of a fabric similar to that of No. 2 above that was found on a floor. The inscription was incised after firing and includes letters c. 2 cm high; three letters were preserved, while the fourth one is impossible to decipher. The first two letters – נח – are clear. The third appears to be a letter incised on top of another letter. Ada Yardeni, who drew this inscription, read this as a ך above a נ, although this reading is problematic since the ך would then have three horizontal lines and the נ is not clear. Another possibility is to read the letter ן on top of a נ, as suggested by Frank Cross and Kyle McCarter (personal communication), and one of the authors (Ahituv). In this case, the ן would be a kind of closed rectangle without the lines extending beyond the top and bottom of the horizontal lines, as is the case in most of the inscriptions known from the tenth and early ninth centuries BCE, such as the Gezer Calendar and an inscription from Ḥorvat Rosh Zayit.¹⁴ If this is correct, the inscription reads נחנ (‘(belonging) to Nahum’).¹⁵ There is also a slim possibility of reading נ or ן on top of the נ or ך. If we read it as a נ, we can complete the word as נחנ[א], that is, ‘(belonging) to the prophet’. However, this appears to be dubious since no other instances of a letter incised on top of another are known to us.¹⁶ We may ask whether the lower letter was indeed canceled by the one incised on top of it, or perhaps whether both letters should be considered when reading the inscription, which seems quite unlikely.

From a paleographic point of view, the letters appear consonant with a date in

14 Johannes Renz, *Die althebräische Inschriften* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), Vol. III: Pl. I.

15 Diana Edelman suggested that the letter נ was replaced by ן in the same place due to a scribal error, and then the scribe wrote a new נ, of which only the end is visible at the left edge of the sherd.

16 The only somewhat analogous case of superimposed letters is the inscription: נחנח בלשה ליעלי ‘(belonging) to/for Blṯh Blṯh Yā‘ēli’, found in the City of David excavations (Joseph Naveh, ‘Hebrew and Aramaic Inscriptions,’ in *Excavations at the City of David 1978 – 1985 Directed by Yigal Shiloh VI: Inscriptions* (ed. Donald T. Ariel; Qedem 41; Jerusalem: The Institute of Archaeology, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem), 8. Initially, the word בלשה is correctly inscribed, but an inexperienced hand incised the next word, נחנח, and mistakenly skipped the ל. Yet another, third hand wrote the next word, ליעלי, and began to write it between בלשה and נחנח, but stopped after the first two letters – לי. This is not similar to the double writing of a letter formula and an abecedarium on the second pithos from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Ahituv, *Echoes*: 321; Shmuel Ahituv, Esther Eshel and Ze’ev Meshel, Chapter 5: ‘The Inscriptions.’ in Ze’ev Meshel, *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Ḥorvat Teman). An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah-Sinai Border* [Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2012], 102 – 103) nor to the writing on top of the drawings on the first pithos at that site (Ahituv, *Echoes*, 234). It also has no affinity to the scribbling scratched into the soft stone in the cave at Khirbet Beit Lei (ibid., 234).

the tenth century BCE,¹⁷ although most of them are not indicative. In most of the inscriptions dating to the tenth and early ninth centuries BCE, the ם is not as vertical and slants to the left at a 45° angle (i. e., Tel Amal, Tel Batash/Timnah and Horvat Rosh Zayit; see below).

5. Reg. No. 84730/4, Locus 8465, the apiary, local Stratum C-1b, general Stratum V (Fig. 5). The inscription was incised before firing on a completely restored storage jar of the Hippo type that was made of the same material as No. 2 above, found on the floor of the apiary at the southern end of the eastern row of beehives.¹⁸ The inscription נמש, incised on the upper part of the jar just under the shoulder carination, marks ownership: “(belonging) to *Nemesh”, or “for *Nemesh” (for the meaning of this name, see below).

The formation of the letters is unique: the ם has a very long stem that extends diagonally to the left until the end of the entire inscription. The נ is composed of two vertical zigzags terminating in a very long stem that extends to the right and to the left, parallel to the stem of the ם. A similar inscription incised on a similar type of jar was found in Strata IV – III at Tel ‘Amal, part of a ceramic assemblage that is identical to that of Strata V – IV at Tel Rehov (Fig. 6).¹⁹ The letters in the Tel ‘Amal inscription are extremely similar to those in the inscription from Tel Rehov. However, a small discrepancy can be seen in the formation of the letter ש on the jar from Tel ‘Amal; the two parts of this letter are not joined, an observation which led Levy and Edelstein to mistakenly read it as two numerals. The alternative reading ש was proposed by Lemaire.²⁰

The name נמש appears on Ostrakon No. 56 from Samaria²¹ and on two Hebrew seals,²² as well as in Ugaritic.²³ In the Bible, the name נמש appears as נִמְשִׁי, “Nimshi”, once as the name of Jehu’s father (1 Kgs 19:17; 2 Chr 22:7) and once as Jehu’s

17 See Renz, *Inscripfen*, III: Pl. I.

18 Amihei Mazar and Nava Panitz-Cohen, “It Is the Land of Honey: Beekeeping in Iron Age IIA Tel Rehov – Culture, Cult and Economy. *Near Eastern Archaeology* 70:4 (2007): 202 – 219.

19 Shalom Levy and Gershon Edelstein, “Cinq années de fouilles a Tel ‘Amal (Nir David),” *RB* 79 (1972): 336, Fig. 6, Pl. 25:3 – 4; Renz, *Inscripfen*, Vol. I: 29 – 30.

20 André Lemaire, “À propos d’une inscription de Tel ‘Amal,” *RB* 80 (1973): 559.

21 David Diringer, *Le iscrizioni anticho-ebraiche palestinensi* (Firenze: Felice le Monnier, 1934), 35, Pl. VI.

22 Avigad and Sass, *Corpus*, Nos. 266, 574.

23 Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (Analecta Orientalia 38; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute), 444, No. 1653 = Manfred Dietrich, Osawld Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín, *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995), 4.63.iv; Lemaire, “À propos;” Lemaire (Appendix A: “Inscriptions found in the Har Menasseh Survey,” in Adam Zertal, *The Har Menasseh Survey I: The Shechem Syncline* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence Publishing House, 1992, 507 – 511 [Hebrew]) reconstructed נמש or נמש, on a sherd found in a survey at Horvat Tanin in Samaria, but we doubt whether it is possible to define this incision as an inscription (see Benjamin Sass, *The Genesis of the Alphabet and Its Development in the Second Millennium B.C.* (Ägypten und Altes Testament 13; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1988), 100 – 101.

grandfather (2 Kgs 2:14). In all these instances, the name appears in the *nisbe* form נִמְשִׁי, and it seems that the text is referring to Jehu's family (the Nimshi family) and not to his father or grandfather themselves, as already suggested, albeit with hesitation, by Gray.²⁴ The name נִמְשִׁי means mongoose (Noth 1928: 230), based on the Arabic *nims*.²⁵

6. Reg. No. 54322/5, Locus 5425, Area C, Building CF, local Stratum C-1a, general Stratum IV (Fig. 7). The inscription was incised by a sharp instrument after firing on the upper part of a completely restored storage jar of the Hippo type, made of a fabric similar to that of No. 2 above. The jar was found in the destruction debris of Building CF, a unit with a unique plan that contained particularly rich finds. The jar was found in the first of a series of small consecutive rooms that were lined with benches. It seems that these were not regular dwelling rooms but rather fulfilled some special function. The innermost of these three rooms contained a large heavy pottery crate with a lid. The central space of this building contained a pottery "model shrine" with a unique applied motif.²⁶

The inscription contains seven letters, most of which are 2.5 cm high; the length of the letters with long stems is 4.5 – 5.5 cm. Close scrutiny shows that the first three letters were incised in a somewhat different manner from the other four, being more carefully executed and running in a slightly different direction.²⁷

One reading for this inscription is לִשְׁקִי נִמְשִׁי. All of the letters are clearly legible except for the fourth which is unknown in other inscriptions from Israel dating to the Iron Age. One possibility, advanced by Ada Yardeni, is to read this letter as a variation of the letter ך. In this case, the slanted line crossed by a horizontal line that is typical of this letter appears here as a zigzag. An alternative explanation is to see this as the numeral six in Egyptian Hieratic, which has a similar shape.²⁸ If indeed this represents the Hieratic numeral, it would be the earliest appearance of this numeral in the inscriptions found in Israel. However, its position in the middle of the inscription does not make much sense. If the fourth letter is indeed a ך, then the word should be read לִשְׁקִי, which recalls the (Aramaic) inscription

24 John Gray, *I and II Kings. A Commentary* (Old Testament Library; London: SCM Press, 1964), 486; see also Nadav Na'aman, "Naboth's Vineyard and the Foundation of Jezreel," *JSOT* 33 (2008): 213.

25 See Edward W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London and Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1893; reprinted Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1968), Vol. VIII, 2854.

26 Amihai Mazar and Nava Panitz-Cohen, "To What God? Altars and a House Shrine from Tel Rehov Puzzle Archaeologists," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 34:4 (2008) 40 – 47.

27 These observations were made by Ora Mazar and Miriam Lavi, who restored and conserved the jar.

28 Georg Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie* II. Second edition (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1927; reprinted Osanbrück: Otto Zellar, 1965), 60, No. 661.

לשקא incised on the shoulder of a storage jar from Ein Gev Stratum III (Fig. 14; see below). This stratum and its ceramic assemblage are contemporary with Stratum IV at Tel Rehov, both dating to the ninth century BCE.²⁹ This word in Aramaic is understood as: “(belonging) to/for the cupbearer”, a title for a high-ranking official mentioned in the Bible (cf. Gen 40:2 etc.) and throughout the ancient Near East. If the fourth letter is not a ך, then the personal name would be שק, which can be understood as an abbreviation of a theophoric name. However, among the assortment of Hebrew names, we are unaware of any with the component שק, from the root שקק, “to desire”. However, in early Southern-Arabic, as well as in Thamudic and Safaitic, there are names derived from the root ŠQQ II, which parallels the Hebrew root שקק;³⁰ see also the names שוקן and שן in Palmyrenean.³¹ The last three letters in our inscription are the same name, גמש, that appears in Inscription No. 5 above (see discussion there).

From a paleographic point of view, all the letters are paralleled in the Mesha Stele, as well as in other inscriptions dating to the ninth century BCE. It seems that the writer had particular difficulty when incising the letters. In the left part of the inscription, it can be seen how each vertical line was individually incised and then joined by thinner horizontal lines. The difference between the writing of the name גמש as opposed to Inscription No. 5 above and that from Tel ‘Amal is notable: here the ך and the ן are straighter and are typical of how these letters are written in contemporary inscriptions, while in the latter two inscriptions, the form of these two letters is exceptional, having a long diagonal stem. It is possible that the reason for this discrepancy is chronological, as Inscription No. 5 was found in an earlier stratum. Alternatively, the difference might be due to the style of writing.

7. Reg. No. 104274, Locus 9417, Area C, Building CQ3, local Stratum C-1a, general Stratum IV (Fig. 8). This inscription was incised before firing on a restored storage jar made of medium-fired light brown-gray clay. It is ovoid, with

29 Benjamin Mazar, Avraham Biran, Moshe Dothan and Imanuel Dunayevski, “Ein Gev: Excavations in 1961,” *IEJ* 14 (1964): 27 – 29, 32, 43, Fig. 1:8, Pl. 13; John C. L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions II: Aramaic Inscriptions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975): 5 – 6.

30 Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Study Edition*. Translated and edited under the supervision of Mervyn E. J. Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 2001), Vol. 2: 1448, entry II שק; Gonzague Ryckmans 1934: 207. *Les noms propres sud-Sémitiques I: Répertoire analytique* (Louvain: Bureaux du Muséon, 1934), 207.

31 Jürgen K. Stark, *Personal Names in Palmyrene Inscriptions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 51, 53 interprets this from the word שק, “thigh”, but we are unaware of any private names that were derived from parts of the body and it seems that the derivation from שקק, “to desire, long for”, is more likely; thus, such names would mean a child who was longed for. This marks a retraction by Ahituv from his proposed interpretation (following Stark) in Mazar, “Three 10th–9th Century B.C.E. Inscriptions from Tel Rehov,” 180, n. 14.

a carinated shoulder, tall neck and molded rim; this type is not common in Strata V – IV at Tel Rehov. The jar was restored from numerous small pieces that were strewn in the destruction debris throughout the room. The inscription is composed of seven sherds, although one is missing. The room in which the jar was found is an inner room in what seems to be a small dwelling with three rooms that was violently destroyed at the end of Stratum IV.

The nine letters in this inscription are large (the ט and ש are 1.5 cm high) and were incised with a blunt tool before firing. The letters are all clear aside from the fifth one, of which only a long vertical stem remains. We suggest reading this partially missing letter as ק, although it may possibly have been a נ or a ר. However, these two letters do not yield a comprehensible reading. The most plausible reading is שחלי-אל-עד [ק] "Elišedek (son of) Shaḥli". The bar of the י in the name שחלי is slightly damaged, but its reading is irrefutable, and the inscription can be understood as containing two personal names: Elišedek and Shaḥli. These two names are unknown in the corpus of Biblical names, but they can be compared to similar names.

The root עדק appears in numerous West-Semitic names. In Amorite names: *Ammišaduqa*, *Aḥulišaduqa*, etc.;³² in Ugaritic: *'dnšdq*, *B'īšdq*, etc.;³³ in the Bible: Melchi-zedek (*Malkīšedeq*; Gen 14:18; Ps 110:4), Adonizedek (*'ādōnīšedeq*; Josh 10:1, 3), as well as Jehozadak (*Yəhōšādāq*), Zedekiah (*Šidqīyāhū*), and Zadok (*Šādōq*); in Southern Semitic inscriptions: *Yšdq'l* in Qatabanean, *Šdq'l* and *Šdqyp'* in Sabaean,³⁴ *Šdqyd'* and *Šdqḏkr* in Hadramutean,³⁵ among other examples. In Arad Ostrakon No. 93, the word לעדק, "(belonging) to Zadok (*Šādōq*), was incised after firing on the shoulder of a decanter from Stratum XI (ninth century).³⁶ As well, עדק appears as a component in seals from Israel.³⁷ עדקא (*Šidqā*) appears as the king of Ashkelon in Assyrian documents³⁸ and also on a seal from Ashkelon.³⁹ עדק (עדק) appears as the name of a Canaanite deity in the writings of Philo of Byblos,⁴⁰ which Philo translates as δικαιο, "justice"⁴¹ and is,

32 See Huffman, *Amorite Personal Names*, 257.

33 Gröndahl, *Personennamen der Texte aus Ugarit*, 188 – 187, 412.

34 Ryckmans, *Noms propres sud-Semitiqes I*, 246, 269.

35 Ibid., 269.

36 Yohanan Aharoni, *Arad Inscriptions* (Translated by Judith Ben-Or, edited and revised by Anson F. Rainey, Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1981), 107.

37 Avigad and Sass, *Corpus*, see the index for עדק, עדקסמך, עדקמן.

38 Mordechai Cogan. *The Raging Torrent. Historical Inscriptions from Assyria and Babylonia Relating to Ancient Israel* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2008), 114.

39 Avigad and Sass, *Corpus*, no. 1066.

40 Harold W. Attridge and Robert A. Oden, *Philo of Byblos. The Phoenician History*. Introduction, Critical Text, Translation, Notes, by Harold W. Attridge and Robert A. Oden (The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 9; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1981), 44:27; 46:4; 52:13; 58:13.

41 Ibid., 44:27; 52: 13 – 14.

in fact, considered the hypostasis of the quality 'justice'.⁴² The name מלכזדק can be compared to the biblical names Melchi-zedek and Adonizedek. These names do not mean "my king/lord (epithets for the divinity) is justice", but rather, "the king/lord is just" (the /i/ is an auxiliary vowel), i. e., a virtuous god. Thus, זדק is a title or epithet for the divinity and it can replace it in names such as מלכזדק* or מלכזדק*.

The name שחל does not appear in the cadre of biblical or West-Semitic names, but the name כפיר, which should be read as כפיר (*kāfir*), does appear on seal stamps.⁴³ Both כפיר and שחל (*šahāl*) are synonyms for אריה, "lion", as לביא and ליש. כפיר and שחל are traditionally taken as epithets for a young lion/lion cub. In Ps 91:13 and in Job 4:10, the parallelism is שחל/כפיר. The form of the name שחל (with a י) can be compared to Biblical names such as גמלי (*Gəmalī*), "my camel" (Numbers 13:12), סוסי (*Sūsi*), "my horse" (Numbers 13:11), to the name יעל (*Yā'ēlī*), "my ibex" (from יעל, *yā'ēl*, "ibex, mountain goat") that is incised on a stone from the City of David (see n. 4) and to שעלי (*Šū'ālī*), "my fox" (from שעל *šū'āl* "fox"), on an Ammonite seal.⁴⁴ It seems that the terminal י should be interpreted as the 1st person possessive suffix, an expression of endearment.

8. Reg. No. 46129/1, Locus 4616, Area E, local Stratum E-1a, general Stratum IV (Fig. 9). The inscription was found in Building EB, which is part of a complex that was apparently of a cultic nature.⁴⁵ The inscription was incised after firing on the shoulder of a restored Hippo jar, made of clay similar to that of No. 2 above. The inscription is 13 cm long and the letters are especially large: the two מ are 5.5 cm high and the נ is 2.2 cm high. Only four letters have been preserved, two at the beginning and two at the end: מנ[...]. Judging by the size of the gap between the two pairs of letters, it seems that there would have been room for two or three additional letters.

From a paleographic point of view, the two מ are similar to the מ in the Mesha Stele and in the Tel Dan inscription, although they have a somewhat longer stem than usual. They differ from the מ in the Gezer Calendar and that in the inscription from Ḥorvat Rosh Zayit,⁴⁶ as well as from the מ's in the earlier inscriptions from Tel Rehov, Nos. 2 and 6 above. The elongated נ with the short tail at its lower right edge that appears twice in this inscription can be compared to the נ in inscription 9, which has a similar short tail at its right edge. This letter is

42 Shmuel E. Loewenstamm, "Philo of Byblos," in idem., *Comparative Studies in Biblical and Ancient Oriental Literatures* (AOAT 204; Kevelaer and Neukirchen-Vluyn: Verlag Butzen and Neukirchener Verlag, 1980), 394.

43 Avigad and Sass, *Corpus*: Nos. 1079, 1086, 1087.

44 Eidem, No. 980.

45 Amihai Mazar, "The Excavations at Tel Rehov and their Meaning for the Study of Iron Age Israel," *Eretz Israel* 27 (2003): 148 – 150 [Hebrew].

46 Renz, *Inschriften*, Vol. III, Pls. 1 – 2.

also similar to the ץ which is not entirely closed in Arad Ostracon No. 69 that has a short tail on the right edge, the result of two contiguous swipes of the pen. The short incision above the letter ץ on the right has no explanation, except for a conjecture of difficulty encountered when incising the letter on the hard fired clay surface. In the gap between the two pairs of letters, the bottom edges of stemmed letters can be discerned: the right one is diagonal and the left one is vertical. This third letter could have been א, ב, ק, מ, נ, or פ, and the left letter could have been ו, י (less likely), ס, ק, or ר. The size of the gap indicates that there could have been an additional (third) letter in the center of the inscription.

It seems that the first letter (מ) is the preposition מ, known from Hebrew inscriptions, such as the Samaria ostraca, for example: מִבְּאֵרִים, “from Bə’ērayīm” (Ostracon No. 1, line 2),⁴⁷ מֵאֲזָה, “from ’Azzā^h” (Ostracon No. 2, line 3),⁴⁸ etc., although these refer to a place, while our inscription refers to a person. According to this interpretation, the inscription refers to a delivery or dedication from a certain person whose name follows. Such a מ has been seen on ostraca, but not on vessels. As to the name itself, several possibilities may be suggested: עֵמְ[מִס]עֵם, עֵמְ[מִר]עֵם or עֵמְ[נִר]עֵם. The name עֵמְ[מִס]עֵם can be compared to the Biblical names עֲמוֹס (Amos) and עֲמָסְיָה (Amasya), as well as to the Ammonite name עֲמֹסָאֵל (^Amās’ēl),⁴⁹ all of which are expressions of affection for the newborn as an entity to be supported, such as in the verse that describes the children of Israel: “...you whom I have upheld since your birth and have carried since you were born” (Isa 46:3). The name עֵמְ[מִר]עֵם can be compared to the biblical name עֲמִיר (Omri), from the root עֲמַר, which according to the Arabic root ‘MR, can be interpreted as to live, or to worship the divinity.⁵⁰ The name עֵמְ[נִר]עֵם can be compared to the biblical name אֲנֵר (Aner), which is composed of אֲנִי and the theophoric component עֵם, meaning “a family member”. The theophoric component עֵם appears in numerous West-Semitic names, such as the biblical names יִרְבֵּעָם (Jeroboam), רְחֹבָם (Rehoboam), אֵלִיָּם (Eliam), the Ammonite names כְּמוֹשׁ’אֵם (^Kəmoš’ām)⁵¹ and אֲדֹנִי’אֵם (^Adoni’ām) in Samaria Ostraca Nos. 9, 10, 19.⁵²

9. Reg. No. 94443, Locus 9418, Room 9449, Area C, Building CP, local Stratum C-1a, general Stratum IV (Fig. 10). These are two sherds from the same jar that bear an inscription written in red ink and were found in the destruction debris in

47 Ahituv, *Echoes*, 261 – 263.

48 Ibid., 264.

49 Avigad and Sass, *Corpus*, no. 356.

50 Martin Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen in Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namenbildung* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1928; reprinted Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1966), 63, 333, n. 7.

51 Avigad and Sass, *Corpus*, Nos. 1105, 1035.

52 Ahituv, *Echoes*, 269, 271, 279.

one of the small rooms of Building CP. The clay is gray with a reddish core. The larger sherd is rounded on the bottom and it seems that this inscription was not written on a vessel that subsequently broke, but rather as an ostrakon. The larger sherd bears the remains of five letters, while the smaller sherd has only one letter. The letters are large (average height 1.5 – 1.7 cm) and written in a cursive script. The smaller sherd bears traces of the letter **ל**. The beginning of the inscription on the large sherd has the edges of an unidentified letter which Ada Yardeni reconstructed as **א**, with only the left edge of its head and the lower edge of its stem preserved. Alternatively, this can be read as the left edge of the head of a **ב** or the edges of a **י**, although such a reconstruction would be meaningless. The upper part of the next letter is broken off and its reconstruction is problematic. Initially we considered this to be **ז**, in the style of the final letter in this inscription, but now regard its open top as too different from the later **ז**. It seems more credible to reconstruct this as a **ב**, although this poses its own problems, since the left arm is too short (the arms become thinner and end just beyond the broken end of the sherd) and the lower right corner has a small tail that is not usually found on this letter (a similar tail can be seen on the **ז** at the end of the inscription). Despite these caveats, it seems there is no alternative reconstruction other than a **ב**.⁵³ The third and fourth letters can be clearly read as **ש** while the last letter is read by us as **ו** with a small tail at its right lower end, as in inscription No. 8 above. If we accept the reconstruction of the second and third letters in this sherd as **א** and **ל**, then this should be read as the name **אלישע** (Elisha). If the two sherds were originally close together, a possible reading would be **לְאֵלִישֶׁעַ**, “for/ (belonging) to Elisha”; however, the original location of the small sherd is not known and it could possibly have belonged to another line or to the beginning part of the inscription, which has not been preserved.

The name **אלישע** (Elisha) appears in Samaria Ostrakon No. 1,⁵⁴ in Lachish Letter No. 22,⁵⁵ in Arad inscription No. 24,⁵⁶ in five Ammonite seals,⁵⁷ and on a Hebrew seal that was purchased in Baghdad, all from the 8th – 7th centuries BCE.⁵⁸

The inscription was found in a small inner room in a large spacious building (Building CP) that includes an entrance vestibule, two large rooms with benches

53 Ada Yardeni claims that neither **ז** nor **ב** can be reconstructed here, since the left arm ends just before the broken edge of the sherd and does not rise above the line of the right arm as it should if this was a **ב**. However, she does not suggest an alternative reading. This may possibly be a variation of a **ב**, lacking the long left arm, or perhaps we are wrong in assuming that the left arm ends before the broken edge of the sherd and that, in fact, it had originally continued beyond this point.

54 Ahituv, *Echoes*, 26.

55 Ibid., 86.

56 Ibid., 127.

57 Avigad and Sass, *Corpus*, Nos. 885, 894, 895, 960, 975.

58 Diringer, *Iscrizioni*, 200.

lining some of the walls, and three small inner rooms. This inner room could be accessed from both the large room on its east and from the small room on its south. A wide bench ran along the inner (northern) wall of this small room, with a smaller bench on its western edge. Two clay four-horned altars found just outside the entrances to this room are an indication of cultic activity close to the entrances. This building, which was destroyed by the fierce conflagration that consumed Stratum IV at Tel Rehov, is especially rich in finds, among them a globular three-legged perforated incense jar with a matching lid, a type that is particularly common in Transjordan. In the southernmost of the three small rooms was a mold for casting female figurines of the type that had adorned some of the clay altars at Tel Rehov. Two rectangular clay silos for large amounts of grain of a previously unknown type were found as well as numerous storage vessels, cooking and serving vessels, an oven and grindstones. The overall impression is of a unique building with a special function.

We conjecture, with due caution and fully aware of the dangers inherent in such identifications, the possibility that the Elisha mentioned in our inscription is the prophet Elisha son of Shaphat, who was “a holy man of God” (II Kgs 4:9), that appears to have been a “miracle worker” and a holy man in the eyes of his contemporaries.

Elisha was born at Abel Meholah in the Jordan Valley, just south of Tel Rehov, and operated during the second half of the 9th century BCE. He was a witness to the wars with the Aramean kings Ben Hadad and Hazael, and was an active participant in the rebellion of Jehu, dated to 843/2 BCE (2 Kgs 9:1 – 13), just prior to the destruction of Stratum IV at Tel Rehov. The narrative of Elisha’s prophecy describes his presence at a number of different venues throughout the Israelite kingdom: Samaria (2 Kgs 5; 6:31 – 33), Jericho and Bethel (2 Kgs 2), Mount Carmel (2 Kgs 4:25) and Shunem (2 Kgs 4:8 – 11). His presence at Rehov would not be surprising since it was one of the largest cities in the Israelite kingdom, although it is not mentioned in the Bible. We may surmise that Elisha, as a native of this region, had contact with the Nimshi clan who was also indigenous to this region, as evidenced by the appearance of this name in inscriptions twice at Tel Rehov (see above, Nos. 6, 8) and once at Tel ‘Amal.

10. Reg. No. 70578, Locus 7113, Area J, local Stratum J-5, general Stratum IV (Fig. 11). The letter ׀ was incised before firing on the upper exterior of a thick and coarse sherd that might have belonged to an oven or to some handmade storage receptacle. The letter is 2.4 cm high.

11. Reg. No. 64001/1, Locus 6401, Area C, Building CF, local Stratum C-1a, general Stratum IV (Fig. 12). This is a sherd from the shoulder of a Hippo storage jar, made of the same clay as No. 2 above. It was found in the destruction debris in the northwestern corner of Building CF, in a small alcove that contained a grindstone installation. This alcove was just north of the room in which In-

scription No. 6 was found. The letter was incised before firing and is bordered on top and bottom by parallel incised lines, a feature that is typical of the shoulder of many Hippo storage jars. There are fragments of what appear to be a particularly large letter ϖ (height 1.5 cm).

Chronology of the Tel Rehov Inscriptions

All of the Tel Rehov inscriptions were found in secure stratigraphic contexts and most were incised on restorable storage jars found in strata that contained burnt destruction debris. These destruction layers can be dated by the accepted methods of relative stratigraphy and ceramic typology, backed up by ^{14}C dating. As far as relative chronology, the three main strata, VI – IV, belong to the Iron Age IIA, with the somewhat different ceramic assemblage of Stratum VI associated with the early part of this period, and Strata V and IV linked to the second part. The ceramic assemblage of the latter two strata is identical to that of Megiddo Strata VA–IVB and Ḥorvat Rosh Zayit, as well as other similar assemblages.⁵⁹

Table 1 and Fig. 13 present the ^{14}C dates from Strata VI – IV in Area C, where the clearest stratigraphic differentiation between these strata was found. Four of the inscriptions discussed in this article were found in buildings that yielded ^{14}C dates (see n. 1 in Table 1). As the table shows, the combined date for Stratum VI covers most of this period, between 968 – 902 BCE at 1σ and the combined date for Stratum V is 926 – 897 BCE at 1σ . In the 2σ range, both strata are dated to the broad range of 975 – 850 BCE. In light of the architectural and ceramic differences between these two strata, we choose to date Stratum VI to the mid-tenth century BCE and Stratum V to the last decades of the tenth century or to the beginning of the ninth century BCE. Stratum IV is dated to the ninth century BCE, ending no later than 834 BCE.

59 See Mazar, “Excavations at Tel Rehov.”; Amihai Mazar, Hendrik Bruins, Nava Panitz-Cohen, and Johannes van der Plicht, “Ladder of Time at Tel Rehov: Stratigraphy, Archaeological Context, Pottery and Radiocarbon Dates,” in *The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating: Archaeology, Text and Science* (eds. Thomas E. Levy and Thomas Higham; London: Equinox, 2005), 193 – 255; for a discussion of the chronology of this period, see Amihai Mazar, “From 1200 to 850 B.C.E.: Remarks on Some Selected Archaeological Issues,” in *Israel in Transition: From Late Bronze II to Iron IIA (c. 1250 – 850 B.C.E.)* (ed. Lester Grabbe; New York and London: T&T Clark, 2008), 86 – 121; Amihai Mazar and Christopher Bronk Ramsey, “ ^{14}C Dates and the Iron Age Chronology of Israel: A Response,” *Radiocarbon* 50 (2008): 159 – 180; idem, “A Response to Finkelstein and Piasezky. Criticism and ‘New Perspective’,” *Radiocarbon* 52 (2010): 1681 – 1688.

Table 1: ¹⁴C dates from Area C, Tel Rehov

Sample no.	No. of repeated measurements	Local stratum (general stratum in parentheses)	Locus	14C BP Date	Calibrated date at 68.2 % probability (1σ)	Calibrated date at 95.4 % probability (2σ)
R18	5	C-2 (general VI)	4426	2772 ±11	969 – 899	975 – 848
R19	3		7432	2807 ±23	995 – 924	10106 – 901
R20	10		7428	2767 ±13	969 – 859	973 – 845
Combined C-2				2774 ±8	968 – 902	975 – 852
R24	3	C-1b (general V)	6449	2757 ±26	924 – 844	976 – 830
R25	3		2422	2771 ± 8	927 – 901	974 – 850
R26	5		2441	2767 ±7	927 – 898	972 – 848
R28	3		8465	2735 ±25	901 – 841	926 – 819
R28a	1			2690 ±30	893 – 808	803 – 901
R29a	1			2720 ±30	896 – 833	918 – 811
R29b	1			2850 ±40	1109 – 932	1187 – 906
Combined C-1b (excluding outlier R29b)				2767 ±5	926 – 896	970 – 847
R35	7	C-1a (general IV)	5498	2758 ±16	922 – 849	970 – 840
R37	3		9434	2690 ±25	892 – 808	897 – 806
R36	1		10431	2770 ±30	973 – 847	998 – 838
Combined C-1a				2744 ±13	906 – 845	918 – 837

Notes to Table 1:

1. Inscription No. 5 appears on the storage jar that contained the concentration of grain in Locus 8465 (near the beehives; samples R28 – R29). Inscription

No. 6 was found in the building from which Sample R35 was taken and in the same destruction level. Inscriptions Nos. 7 and 9 were found in buildings adjoining that from which sample R37 was taken, in the same destruction level.

2. All the samples in this table came from Area C and from loci which can be attributed with certainty to one of the three Iron IIA local strata C-2 (general VI), C-1b (General V) and C-1a (general IV). Excluded from this table are dates from loci in Area C where attribution to either Stratum C-1a or C-1b or to both was indefinite due to the continuity in use between these two strata in certain buildings.
3. The sample numbers in the left hand column are taken from an up-to-date corpus of ^{14}C samples from Tel Rehov (unpublished). Samples R18, R24, R25, R26 and R35, measured in Groningen University, were published in Mazar, Bruins et al. "Ladder of Time" (the sample numbers there can be deduced by comparing the Loci numbers). Other samples in this table have not been published previously. Samples R28a and R37 were measured in 2008 in Groningen University. Samples R19 and R20 were measured as part of the Iron Age Dating project directed by E. Boaretto, A. Gilboa, T. Jull and I. Sharon, and are published here with their courtesy: R19 is their Sample No. 5236 that has been measured in two different laboratories and Sample R20 is their Sample No. 5233 that has been measured in four different laboratories. Samples R29a, R29b and R36 were measured by AMS in the Beta Analytic laboratory in 2010, where their sample numbers were Beta 287772 and Beta 284753 respectively. Sample R28a was measured at Oxford University in 2011, sample No. OxA-2478. Calculations of the combined dates were conducted by Katharina Streit, using OxCal 4 software.
4. All samples are from large grain deposits or a sufficient number of olive pits. Each locus number refers to concentration of grain or olive pits in one place. All the samples except Locus 10431 were measured multiple times, with the number of measurements recorded in column 2. A total of 46 measurements is included in this table.
5. It should be noted that the Stratum C-1a dates do not pass the Chi-square test.

Additional Inscriptions from the Tenth and Ninth Centuries BCE

The eleven inscriptions from Tel Rehov mark an important addition to the limited number of inscriptions from the tenth–ninth centuries BCE because they are so rare. Their significance can be regarded within the context of the following

list of inscriptions found elsewhere in the country that have been attributed to the tenth and ninth centuries BCE.⁶⁰

Tenth-Century BCE Inscriptions

1. An ostrakon from Izbet Sartah was found in a silo of Stratum II, dating to the end of the eleventh century BCE.⁶¹ The 22-letter alphabet was incised in five rows in proto-Canaanite script. Although it is apparently earlier than the tenth century BCE, it is included here since, from a paleographic point of view, it is similar to the inscription from Khirbet Qeiyafa and apparently belongs to the transition between Iron I and Iron II.
2. An inscription from Khirbet Qeiyafa⁶² marks a milestone among the inscriptions from this period, as the stratum it was found in is dated by ¹⁴C to the first half of the tenth century BCE. This is the latest inscription to appear in what is known as proto-Canaanite or Canaanite script, although it seems that this is a Hebrew inscription.⁶³
3. An inscription on a bronze bowl from a grave at Kefar Veradim, in a context that may be defined as Phoenician: כס פסח בן שמע ("the cup of Paseah son of Shema") is relevant.⁶⁴ This inscription poses a chronological problem, since

60 For previous lists of inscriptions from this period, see Renz, *Inschriften*, Vol. I: 29 – 66; Mazar, "Three 10th–9th Century B.C.E. Inscriptions from Tel Rehov," 181 – 183; Benjamin Sass, *The Alphabet at the Turn of the Millennium: The West Semitic Alphabet ca. 1150 – 850 BCE and the Antiquity of the Arabian, Greek and Phrygian Alphabets* (Tel Aviv Occasional Publications 4; Tel Aviv: Emery and Claire Yass Publications in Archaeology, 2005), 83 – 88. Our list does not include inscriptions dating to Iron Age I, such as the inscriptions on the handles of vessels from Khirbet Raddana and from Malha, the inscription from Kubur el-Walaydah, and those on bronze arrowheads (for the latter, see Sass 1988).

61 Ahituv, *Echoes*, 249 – 252, with references.

62 Haggay Mispav, Yosef Garfinkel and Saar Ganor, "The Ostrakon from Horvat Qeiyafa," Pp. 111 – 123 in *Innovations in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and its Environs* 3 (Comments A: Ada Yardeni, pp. 124 – 125; Comments B: Aaron Demski, pp. 126 – 129; Comments C: Shmuel Ahituv, pp. 130 – 132). (Jerusalem: The Israel Antiquities Authority and the Institute of Archaeology, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2009); eadem, Chapter 14: "The Ostrakon." Pp. 243 – 257. in Yosef Garfinkel and Saar Ganor. *Khirbet Qeiyafa I: Excavation Report 2007 – 2008* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and the Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2009).

63 Mispav, Garfinkel and Ganor, "The Ostrakon from Horvat Qeiyafa," 121; Ahituv, Comments C, *ibid.*: 130 – 131; Gershon Galil, "The Hebrew Inscription from Khirbet Qeiyafa/Neta'im: Script, Language, Literature and History," *UF* 41 (2010): 193 – 242. For Rollston's objection to identification of the inscription from Qeiyafa as Hebrew, see Christopher Rollston, "The Khirbet Qeiyafa Ostrakon: Methodological Musings and Caveats," *Tel Aviv* 38 (2011): 67 – 82.

64 Yardenia Alexandre, "A Fluted Bronze Bowl with a Canaanite-Early Phoenician Inscription from Kefar Vradim," in Zvi Gal, ed. *Eretz Zafon. Studies in Galilean Archaeology* (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2002), *65–*74.

it appears to be even earlier than the Gezer Calendar, although the ceramic assemblage found nearby is more consistent with an Iron IIA date, including a Cypro-Phoenician Black on Red juglet that is traditionally dated to the tenth century BCE. Based on this data, Yardenna Alexandre dated the grave and the inscription to the tenth century BCE. Benjamin Sass, however, suggested a later dating to the ninth century BCE, due to his adoption of the “low chronology” for the Iron Age and of Assyrian parallels to this bowl, which do not appear prior to the ninth century BCE.⁶⁵ Alexandre demonstrated that bowls of this type originated in Egypt and that they began to appear in Assyria and other regions only later, from the ninth century BCE on.⁶⁶ Two gold bowls that are similar to the bronze bowl from Kefar Veradim were found in the royal cemetery at Tanis in the tomb of Pharaoh Psusennes I (1051 – 1006 BCE) and in the tomb of an Egyptian prince.⁶⁷ It thus seems that bowls of this type appeared in the Levant before they did in Assyria, where their appearance in the ninth century was the result of western influence.⁶⁸ According to the chronological view held by Amihai Mazar, the Cypro-Phoenician juglets of the Black on Red family began to appear in Israel in the second half of the tenth century BCE and continued to be imported during the ninth century BCE.⁶⁹ This ceramic family appears at Tel Rehov for the first time in Stratum V (see above, Table 1). Thus, the date suggested by Alexandre for this bowl in the second half of the tenth century BCE appears to be correct.

4. The Gezer Calendar is usually dated to the second half of the tenth century BCE.⁷⁰

65 Sass, *The Alphabet at the Turn of the Millennium*: 36 – 38; for an opposing view, see Christopher A. Rollston, “The Dating of the Early Byblian (Phoenician): A Response to Benjamin Sass,” *Maarav* 15 (2008): 83 – 85; idem. *Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 27 – 29.

66 Yardenna Alexandre, “A Canaanite-Early Phoenician Inscribed Bronze Bowl in an Iron Age IIA–B Burial Cave at Kefar Veradim, Northern Israel,” *Maarav* 13 (2006): 7 – 41.

67 Pierre Montet, *La nécropole royale de Tanis II: Les constructions de la tombe de Psousennès à Tanis* (Fouilles de Tanis II). (Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1951), 82, Fig. 30; 101, Fig. 42; Pls. 69, 74.

68 An opinion similar to that of Alexandre concerning this bowl was expressed by Hartmut Matthäus in an email message (January, 12. 2010): “The earliest metal bowls of this type appear in the tomb complex of Psusennes at Tanis, and there must have been a continuous tradition into the 8th century although until this time, well-dated evidence from the 10th c. is lacking. I would have no problem with a 10th century date for Kefar Veradim.”

69 Mazar, “From 1200 to 850 B.C.E.,” 86 – 121, with references.

70 Ahituv, *Echoes*, 252; Renz, *Inschriften*, Vol. I, 30 – 37. Sass (*The Alphabet at the Turn of the Millennium*: 83 – 84) mentions it among ninth century BCE inscriptions.

5. An inscription חנן [ב] ("[the so]n of Hanan"), from Tel Batash/Timnah, has been dated by the excavators to the tenth century BCE.⁷¹
6. An inscription חן (Hanan) on a stone object from Beth Shemesh, has been dated by the excavators to the tenth century BCE.⁷²
7. An inscription ולין אלה incised on a stone bowl from Tell es-Safi/Gath.⁷³ The inscription was interpreted as two personal Philistine names of Anatolian or Aegean origin, although the writing is "proto-Canaanite". The inscription is dated by the excavators to the tenth century BCE.
8. An abecedarly from Tel Zayit, incised on a large stone mortar in secondary use in a wall of a building was dated to the tenth century BCE.⁷⁴
9. Inscription No. 81 from Arad Stratum XII, with traces of letters and numbers.⁷⁵
10. The inscription on an ostrakon from Ḥorvat Rosh Zayit written in red-brown ink חמר [י], can be interpreted as ("fermented?") wine".⁷⁶ The ceramic assemblage from Ḥorbat Rosh Zayit, dated to the latter part of the Iron Age IIA, is identical to that of Strata V and IV at Tel Rehov. The ¹⁴C dates point to the ninth century BCE in a 68% probability range and to the tenth and ninth centuries BCE by a 95% "cautious estimate".⁷⁷
11. A seal from Revadim (near Tel Miqne/Ekron) has the inscription לאבא, "(belonging) to 'b'".⁷⁸ The name is a hypocoristicon with the component אב, "father". Cross dated it to the tenth century BCE,⁷⁹ while Avigad and Sass⁸⁰

71 Amihai Mazar and Nava Panitz-Cohen, *Timnah (Tel Batash) II: The Finds from the First Millennium BCE* (Qedem 42; Jerusalem: The Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2001), 190 – 191; see also Renz, *Inscriften*, Vol. I, 30.

72 Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman, "Beth-Shemesh, Culture Conflict on Judah's Frontier," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 23 (1997): 48.

73 Aren Maeir, Stefan. J. Wimmer, Alexander Zukerman and Aaron Demsky, "Late Iron Age I/ Early Iron Age II Old Canaanite Inscription from Tell es-Safi/Gath, Israel: Paleography, Dating, and Historical-Cultural Significance," *BASOR* 351 (2008): 3 – 71. For more 10th–9th centuries B.C.E. inscriptions from Tell es-Safi/ Gath see Aren M. Maeir and Esther Eshel, "Four Short Alphabetic Inscriptions from Late Iron Age IIA Tell es-Safi/Gath and Their Implications for the Development of Literacy in Iron Age Philistia and Environs" in this volume.

74 Ron E. Tappy, P. Kyle McCarter, Marilyn J. Lundberg, and Bruce Zuckerman, "An Abecedarly of the Mid-Tenth Century B.C.E. from the Judean Shephelah," *BASOR* 344 (2006): 5 – 46.

75 Aharoni, *Arad Inscriptions*, 101; Renz, *Inscriften*, Vol. I, 46 – 47.

76 Zvi Gal and Yardenna Alexandre, *Horbat Rosh Zayit* (IAA Reports 8; Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2000), 133 – 134; reconstruction following Renz, *Inscriften*, Vol. I: 78.

77 Ilan Sharon, Ayelet Gilboa, Timothy Jull and Elizabeta Boaretto, "Report on the First Stage of the Iron Age Dating Project in Israel: Supporting the Low Chronology," *Radiocarbon* 49 (2007): 43.

78 Avigad and Sass, *Corpus*, No. 1067, with references to earlier literature.

79 Frank M. Cross, "An Archaic Inscribed Seal from the Valley of Ajalon," *BASOR* 168 (1962): 12 – 18.

80 Ibid., n. 78.

suggested a tenth–ninth century BCE date, favoring the ninth century.⁸¹ The letters ך and ם have close parallels in the inscription from Khirbet Qeiyafa, while the ה appears to be later; thus, a tenth century BCE date for this seal seems likely. From an iconographic and stylistic viewpoint, the figures on the seal recall a cylinder seal from Ashdod Stratum XI (eleventh century BCE) that bears seated figures,⁸² as well as other Iron Age I Philistine seals. These comparisons show that the Revadim seal should be dated to the eleventh century BCE, or to the tenth century BCE, at the latest.

12. A hoard found at Eshtemoa included five jugs full of silver scrap; the word חמשה, “five”, is written in red or black ink on three of them.⁸³ Based on ceramic and paleographic typology, the jugs date to the tenth or ninth centuries BCE.⁸⁴
13. A storage jar with the inscription נמש from Tel ‘Amal, was found in a stratum dated to the late tenth or ninth centuries BCE (see above, Inscription No. 5 from Tel Rehov and Fig. 6).

Ninth-Century BCE Inscriptions

14. An Aramaic inscription from En Gev לשיקא (Fig. 14).⁸⁵ The writing style and paleography of this inscription substantially recall that of inscription No. 6 from Tel Rehov Stratum IV; the ceramic assemblage of the building in which the inscription was found is very similar to that of Strata V – IV at Tel Rehov.
15. An inscription incised on a storage jar handle from Tell el-Hammah: אהאב (Ahab), found during a surface survey.⁸⁶ We had this inscription redrawn (Fig. 15).⁸⁷ The style of incision and shape of the letters are very similar to the inscriptions from Tel Rehov Stratum IV. Close examination of the handle

81 See also Sass, *The Alphabet at the Turn of the Millennium*, 83, n. 130, based on the low chronology for the Iron Age.

82 David Ben-Shlomo Moshe Dothan and David Ben-Shlomo, *Ashdod VI: The Excavations of Areas H and K, 1968 – 1969* (IAA Reports 24; Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2005), 165 – 166.

83 Although the publication states that the inscriptions are written in red ink, perusal of these jugs in the Israel Museum shows that the ink appears to be black.

84 Zeev Yeivin, “The Mysterious Silver Hoard from Eshtemoa,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 13/6 (1987): 38 – 44; Renz, *Inschriften*, Vol. I: 65 – 66.

85 For reference see above, Inscription No. 6 from Tel Rehov.

86 Ram Gophna and Yoseph Porath, “Survey of Ephraim and Manassah Region,” in *Judea, Samaria and the Golan: The 1968 Archaeological Survey* (ed. Moshe Kochavi; Jerusalem: Carta, 1972), 214 [Hebrew]; Renz, *Inschriften*, I:47.

87 We thank Debi Ben-Ami of the Israel Antiquities Authority for her help in locating the handle and for permission to have it redrawn.

shows that it could have belonged to a Hippo storage jar, similar to the ones found at Tel Rehov.

- 16–19. Arad Ostraca Nos. 76 – 79 from Arad Stratum XI.⁸⁸ Nos. 76 and 79 are the most significant of these, although they are very fragmentary; Nos. 77 – 78 are only single letters.
20. A fragmentary inscription from Hazor Stratum IX: שִׁי לִי.⁸⁹ According to Naveh, the script could be Aramaic, Phoenician or Hebrew, but י (zi) seems to be the common Aramaic relative particle. Naveh objected to Delavault and Lemaire's suggestion to read this as [מִי] שִׁי לִי [מִי] and to their claim that the inscription is Phoenician.⁹⁰
- 21–24. Four short inscriptions of a few preserved letters each, written on sherds from Hazor Stratum VIII.⁹¹ No. 1: אִי־א; No. 2: לִי־א; No. 3: ה־ב־ג; No. 4: אִי־א. Yadin et al. compared the letters on No. 3 to the inscription of Shiptibaal from Byblos. Finkelstein (following Sass)⁹² claimed that the Hazor inscriptions are Aramaic, however in our view it is impossible to determine whether they are Phoenician, Aramaic or Hebrew in light of their very fragmentary preservation, lacking any grammatical data.⁹³
25. An additional inscription that should be attributed to Stratum VIII at Hazor is incised on a bowl, read by Naveh as אִי־אִי־א.⁹⁴ Naveh mistakenly attributed it to Stratum V, but the locus was in a Stratum VIII room, as is stated in the photo caption. It should be stressed that the א is problematic.

The date of two additional inscriptions that have been attributed to the ninth century BCE is uncertain: one is incised on a sherd found at Tel Kinneret: אִי־אִי־א.⁹⁵ The excavator states that the inscription was found in Pit 855, dug into ninth-century BCE Building 829; however, the pit is not dated and thus he does not attribute the sherd to any particular stratum.⁹⁶ It is doubtful whether this

88 Aharoni, *Arad Inscriptions*: 98 – 100.

89 Joseph Naveh, "The Epigraphic Finds from Areas A and B," in Yigael Yadin et al. *Hazor III – IV: Text*. Edited by Amnon Ben Tor (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1989), 346 – 347.

90 B. Delavault and André Lemaire, "Les inscriptions phéniciennes de Palestine," *Rivista di Studi Fenici* 7 (1979): 5 – 12.

91 Yigael Yadin et al., *Hazor II* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society; 1960), 66 – 68.

92 Israel Finkelstein, "Hazor and the North in the Iron Age: A Low Chronology Perspective," *BASOR* 314 (1999): 55 – 70.

93 See also Naveh, "The Epigraphic Finds from Areas A and B," 346; Sass. *The Alphabet at the Turn of the Millennium*, 85 – 88.

94 Naveh, "The Epigraphic Finds from Areas A and B," 347.

95 Renz, *Inschriften*, I: 65.

96 Volkmar Fritz, *Kinneret, Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen auf dem Tell el-'Oreme am See Gennesaret 1982 – 1985* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1990), 118, Pls. 41C, 101:1.

inscription can be attributed to the ninth century BCE, as claimed by both Renz⁹⁷ and Sass.⁹⁸ The second is an Aramaic inscription on a bowl found at Tel Dan: לטבח[ח]יא, “(belonging to/for the cooks)”, found in an unclear context and dated to the ninth or eighth centuries BCE;⁹⁹ it seems that a ninth-century BCE date is not justified.

The monumental inscriptions dated to the ninth century BCE round out this corpus: the Mesha Stele, the Kemoshyat inscription from Moab, the Aramaic stele from Tel Dan,¹⁰⁰ and the inscriptions from Kuntillat ‘Ajrud from a slightly later date, c. 800 BCE.¹⁰¹ The eleven inscriptions from Tel Rehov are, thus, an important addition to the small corpus of inscriptions from Iron Age IIA Israel, most of which are short and very fragmentary, and only a few of which were found in a secure archaeological context.

Discussion

Writing in the tenth and ninth centuries BCE was much more common than it initially appeared. As more excavations of sites dating to this period take place, the quantity of inscriptions increases. More and more inscriptions are found in secure archaeological contexts that have good radiometric dates, allowing us to build a dependable sequence of the development of writing during this period. The data shows that there was a great degree of inconsistency in writing because it had not yet fully evolved at that time, as evidenced by unidentifiable signs and by the variability in the writing of letters and in the direction of writing, particularly in the tenth century BCE.

Most of the inscriptions of this period are incised on pottery or stone vessels. Writing in ink was limited to only a small number of very fragmentary inscriptions from Arad, Horvat Rosh Zayit, Eshtemoa and Nos. 1 and 9 (above) from Tel Rehov. The use of red or red-brown ink is prominent, found in the inscriptions from Tel Rehov and Horvat Rosh Zayit, and perhaps Eshtemoa as well. It should be emphasized that no epigraphic seal (aside from the seal לטבח mentioned above) has been found in an archaeological context that predates the eighth century BCE; bullae found at various sites, such as the City of David, never bear inscriptions in that period.

97 See reference above, n. 95.

98 Sass, *The Alphabet at the Turn of the Millennium*, 83.

99 Nahman Avigad, “An Inscribed Bowl from Tel Dan,” *PEQ* 100 (1968): 42 – 44; Gibson, *Textbook*, 5 – 6.

100 Ahituv, *Echoes*, 387 – 418; Avraham Biran and Joseph Naveh, “The Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment,” *IEJ* 45 (1995): 1 – 18.

101 Ahituv, *Echoes*, 313 – 329.

The inscriptions come from various regions, primarily from Philistia, the Shephelah, Phoenicia and its borders, the Negev and the northern kingdom of Israel. It is worth noting that we lack inscriptions from the heart of Israelite settlement in the central hill country. However, it should be kept in mind that the present corpus is limited, based on random finds and the scope of excavations at sites dating to this period.

Language

Aside from the inscription from Tell eṣ-Ṣafi/Gath, that seems to include non-Semitic names, all the other inscriptions from this period contain West-Semitic names. The fragmentary short inscriptions are usually insufficient to confirm whether the language is Hebrew, Phoenician, Aramaic, or some other dialect. The identification of the inscriptions from En Gev and from Hazor as Aramaic is based on linguistic considerations. The inscription on the bronze bowl from Kefar Veradim had been defined as Phoenician based on its writing, the geographic area in which it was found, and comparison to the Teke inscription from Crete.¹⁰² The Gezer calendar is usually categorized as Hebrew, although this determination has recently been challenged. Lemaire¹⁰³ interprets it as a Philistine inscription and Pardee suggested that it was written in “Canaanite”.¹⁰⁴ Contrary to these interpretations, we argue that there is no element in the Gezer calendar that cannot be considered Hebrew. Moreover, the traces of the name written on the margins of the calendar, אֶבֶן, which should be completed as אֶבֶן [י], is a quintessential Israelite name.¹⁰⁵ As noted previously, several scholars claim that the Khirbet Qeiyafa inscription is in Hebrew, although there has not been complete consensus.

Are the Tel Reḥov inscriptions written in Hebrew, Phoenician or Aramaic, or do they possibly contain components of all these languages? In the ninth century BCE, Tel Reḥov was part of the Israelite kingdom, but it is possible that its population was a mix of Israelites and descendants of the indigenous Canaanites

102 J. Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet: an introduction to West Semitic Epigraphy and Palaeography* (Jerusalem: Magness, 1982): 41; Sass, *The Alphabet at the Turn of the Millennium*: 34 – 36 with previous bibliography.

103 André Lemaire, “Phénicien et Philistien: Paléographie et dialectologie,” in *Actas del congreso internacional de estudios fenicios y púnicos* (ed. Maria E. Aubet and Manuela Barthelemy; Cádiz: Universidad de Cadiz, 2000), 247.

104 Cited by Rollston. *Writing and Literacy*: 29 – 30; A. Bean, “Recent Developments and Ongoing Debates Concerning the Calendar Tablet from Gezer: A Summary of the Scholarly Discussion,” Abstract of a lecture, SBL Annual Meeting 2010 [http://www.sbl-site.org/meetings/Congresses_Abstracts.aspx?MeetingId=17].

105 Ahituv, *Echoes*, 357.

who had lived in the Beth-Shean valley for hundreds of years, since the Late Bronze Age. The names appearing in the Tel Rehov inscriptions lack peculiarities that would help to ascribe them to any particular language, other than the name לשק in No. 4 if it is interpreted according to the En Gev inscription לשקא as Aramaic. We can only state that the inscriptions from Tel Rehov belong to the West-Semitic language group, with a local population that was probably comprised of Israelites, Canaanites and possibly also Arameans.

Chronology and Paleographic Development

Questions concerning chronology are mostly related to the ongoing debate over the chronology of the Iron Age. Based on Finkelstein's low chronology, Sass proposed that all inscriptions previously ascribed to the tenth century BCE, including the inscriptions of the kings of Byblos and the Gezer Calendar, among others, should be down-dated to the ninth century BCE. He claimed that West-Semitic writing underwent rapid development in the ninth century, shifting from the archaic writing of the Gezer Calendar and the Kefar Veradim bowl inscription to the stable and developed writing of the Mesha and Tel Dan stelae.¹⁰⁶ However, this claim is untenable.¹⁰⁷ Finkelstein's low chronology scheme has lately undergone a major revision, as a result of ^{14}C analyses showing that the severe destructions of Megiddo Stratum VIA, Tell Qasile Stratum X and Yoqne'am Stratum XVII, among others, must be dated to around 1000 BCE (which suits the high chronology) and thus the destruction cannot be attributed to Shisak's campaign. Finkelstein and Piasezky calculated the dates of these destruction to 1050 – 996 BCE,¹⁰⁸ while Mazar¹⁰⁹ and Mazar and Bronk Ramsey¹¹⁰ calculated similar and even slightly lower dates. Finkelstein and Piasezky attempted to fill the gap that resulted from these changes in the date they had set for the transition from Iron Age I to II in the low chronology (c. 920 or 900 BCE) by postulating an additional series of destructive events in the Beth-Shean and Kinnerot Valleys (Tell el-Hammah, Tel Rehov and Tel Hadar) during the mid to late tenth century BCE.¹¹¹ Nevertheless Mazar showed that this is an untenable

106 Sass, *The Alphabet at the Turn of the Millennium*.

107 See Rolleston, *Writing and Literacy*, 27 – 29.

108 Israel Finkelstein and Eli Piasezky, "Radiocarbon Dating and the Late Iron I in Northern Israel: A New Proposal," *UF* 39 (2008): 256, Table 3.

109 Mazar, "From 1200 to 850 B.C.E.," 86 – 121.

110 Mazar and Bronk Ramsey, " ^{14}C Dates and the Iron Age Chronology of Israel," 176.

111 Finkelstein and Piasezky, "Radiocarbon Dating in Northern Israel," 247 – 276; eadem, "Radiocarbon Dating the Iron Age in the Levant: a Bayesian Model for Six Ceramic Phases and Six Transitions," *Antiquity* 84 (2010): 374 – 385.

argument, since the material from Tell el-Hammah came from a very limited probe. Recent high-quality and reliable ^{14}C dates have determined the destruction of Tel Hadar at the beginning of the tenth century BCE, and the pertinent level at Tel Rehov (Stratum D-3) can be dated to a short interlude at the beginning of the tenth century BCE.¹¹² This correction has enabled to determine the date of the transition from Iron Age I to II to the first part of the tenth century BCE and assign the greater part of the tenth century BCE to Iron Age IIA. This negates the central argument of the supporters of low chronology that seeks to lower the transition between Iron I to II to the late tenth century BCE.¹¹³ In our view, these results undermine Sass' claim to date all the tenth century inscriptions to the ninth century BCE, as it was based solely on his support of the low chronology approach.

The Tel Rehov inscriptions from the different strata enable us to trace developments in certain letters. Most important is the development of the 𐤊 from Strata VI to IV. The 𐤊 in Inscription No. 2 from Stratum VI is identical to that in the Gezer Calendar. The 𐤊 in Inscription No. 5 from Stratum V, as well as that in the inscription from Tel 'Amal, is different: part of the letter is vertical, but a long horizontal foot was added. The 𐤊 in Inscriptions Nos. 6 and 8 from Stratum IV is similar to that of the Mesha stele and other ninth century BCE inscriptions. The dates of Tel Rehov Strata VI to IV are well grounded in secure ^{14}C dates and thus it is clear that the Gezer calendar cannot be dated to the ninth century BCE and belongs to the second half of the tenth century BCE. Development of the letter 𐤌 can be traced as well, from the oddly shaped 𐤌 with its elongated foot that appears in the name 𐤌𐤍𐤏 in Inscription No. 5, as well as in the Tel 'Amal inscription, to the 𐤌 in Inscription No. 6, that is similar to that in the Mesha stele and others dated to the ninth century BCE.

112 Amihai Mazar and Christopher Bronk Ramsey, "A Response to Finkelstein and Piasetzky Criticism and 'New Perspective'," *Radiocarbon* 52 (2010): 1685 – 1687.

113 Israel Finkelstein, "A Low Chronology Update: Archaeology, History and the Bible", in *The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating: Archaeology, Text and Science* (eds. Thomas E. Levy and Thomas Higham; London: Equinox, 2005), 31 – 42; Finkelstein and Piasetzky, "Radiocarbon Dating in the Levant"; Sharon et al. "Report." ^{14}C dates from Khirbet Qeiyafa show that this site was occupied for a short period during the first half of the tenth century BCE. The excavators attribute its ceramic assemblage to the early Iron Age IIA, which lends further support to a date in the first half of the tenth century for this period. See: Yosef Garfinkel and Hoo-Goo Kang, "The Relative and Absolute Chronology of Khirbet Qeiyafa: Very Late Iron Age I or Very early Iron Age IIA?," *IEJ* 61 (2011): 171 – 183.

Literacy

One of the arguments made against the notion of the United Monarchy was the lack of literacy in the tenth century BCE.¹¹⁴ The data presented above can serve to refute this contention, as the number of inscriptions dating to the ninth century BCE – a time when all agree that states run by royal dynasties existed in both Judah and Israel – is also small and in fact, is no larger than the number of inscriptions dating to the tenth century BCE. Thus, the quantitative aspect of literacy cannot serve as a reliable criterion for determining whether or not there was a state in Israel during the tenth century BCE.

Na'aman suggested that during the reign of David and Solomon, literacy was limited to the palace and royal administration. This concentration of skills changed only in the eighth century BCE, when literacy expanded throughout the country.¹¹⁵ The inscriptions on the storage jars at Tel Rehov were found in different excavation areas and in various types of contexts and buildings: a cultic area (No. 8), a dwelling that might have been a patrician house (No. 6), an average house (No. 7), a building with a unique plan (No. 9) and in the apiary (No. 5). The rest of the inscriptions were found in various everyday settings. The same can be said about the Gezer Calendar, which many scholars have understood as a writing exercise, as well as most of the other inscriptions of this period, many of which are inscribed on storage jars to designate merchandise, ownership and other routine functions. The corpus presented above, as small as it may be, indicates that most writing tasks were completed for routine purposes on imperishable materials in order to mark goods. It can be surmised that there was a larger body of writing on perishable materials such as papyri that have not been preserved. It is thus untenable to claim that writing was limited only to the state's elite, although we cannot claim that literacy was widespread. Learning to read and write, even with an alphabet of only 22 letters, requires investment of much effort and resources, as well as the ability to efficiently use and apply this knowledge. However, it does seem that literacy was more common than what is reflected by the relatively small number of inscriptions that have been preserved.

114 David W. Jamieson-Drake, *Scribes and Schools in Monarchic Judah* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1991): 136 – 159; Israel Finkelstein. "State Formation in Israel and Judah.," *NEA* 62 (1999): 40.

115 Nadav Na'aman, "Naboth's Vineyard and the Foundation of Jezreel," *JSOT* 33 (2008): 60 – 61.

History and Epigraphy

Finally, the question remains whether these inscriptions contain constructive historical information. We can point to the appearance of names known from the Bible: Nimshi, in the inscriptions with נִמְשִׁי (twice at Tel Rehov in two different strata and once at Tel 'Amal), אֲחִימָחַב (at Tell el-Hammah) and אֲלִישֶׁע (at Tel Rehov); all of these appear in inscriptions that can be dated to the ninth century BCE. Do these names pertain to the same persons or clans known from the Book of Kings? Certainly this cannot be proved, but in our view, the recurrence of the name נִמְשִׁי points to the central role of the Nimshi clan as an elite one at Tel Rehov and the Beth Shean Valley just before and during the reign of Jehu. This appears to be the region where Jehu came from and it is possible that the large city at Tel Rehov was the family's hometown.

Postscript: After submitting this article we found that Andre Lemaire suggested a reconstruction of inscription No. 8 that is similar to ours, and read *m'nr'm*. However we differ in our explanation of the name (Lemaire, A. 2007. West Semitic Inscriptions and Ninth-Century BCE Ancient Israel. in: H. G. M. Williamson (ed.). *Understanding the History of Ancient Israel* (Proceedings of the British Academy 143). London: The British Academy, p. 280.)

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- 213 in *Judea, Samaria and the Golan: The 1968 Archaeological Survey* editor Moshe Kochavi; Jerusalem: Carta, 1972 (in Hebrew).
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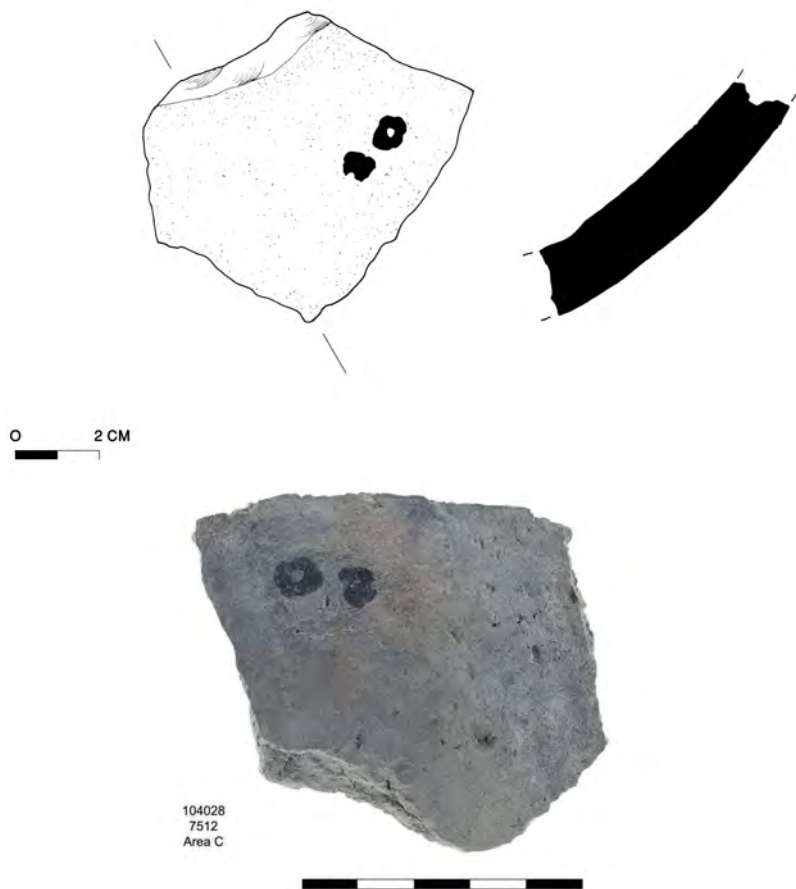


Fig. 1: Reg. No. 104028, Locus 7512, Area C, Building CY, local Stratum C-2, general Stratum VI.

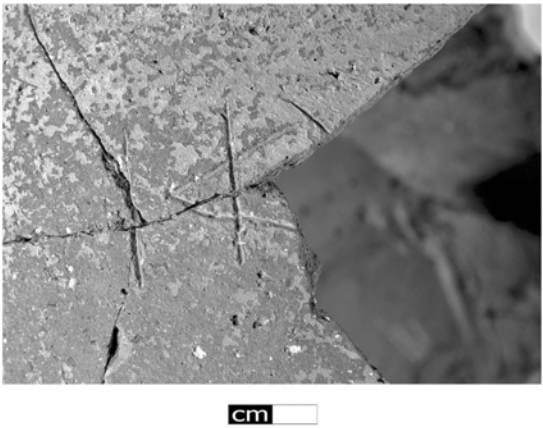
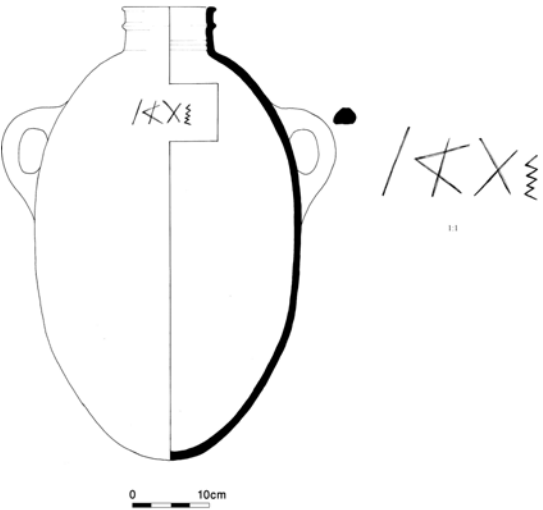


Fig. 2: Reg. No. 7489/10, Locus 7491, Building CT, local Stratum C-2b, general Stratum VIB.

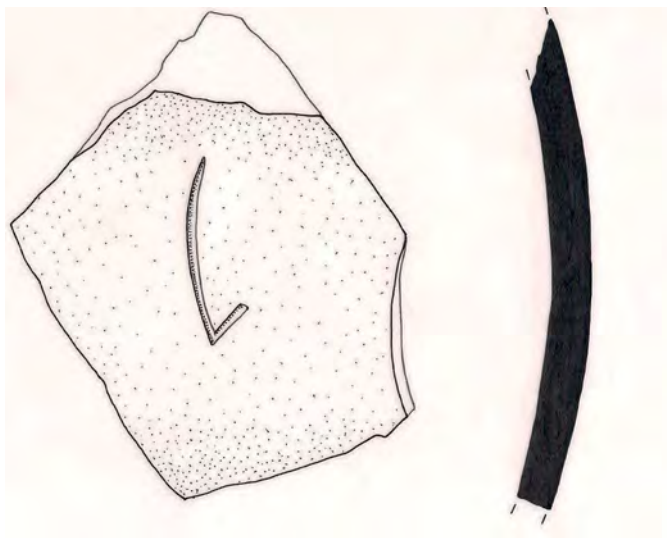


Fig. 3: Reg. No. 75109/99, Locus 7505, Area C, Building CY, local Stratum C-2, general Stratum VI.

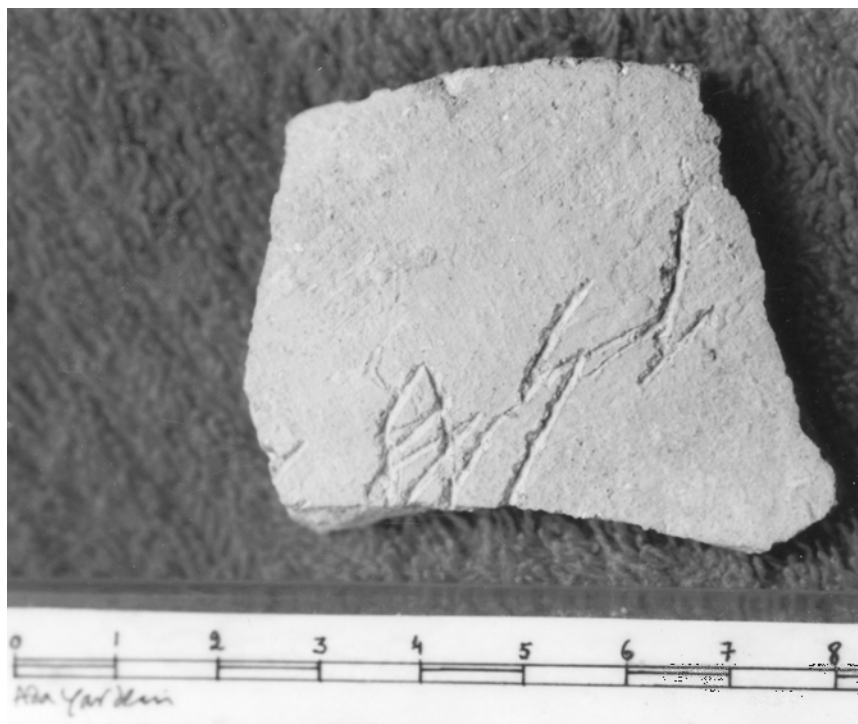


Fig. 4: Reg. No. 23138, Locus 2308, Area B, local Stratum B-6, general Stratum VI.

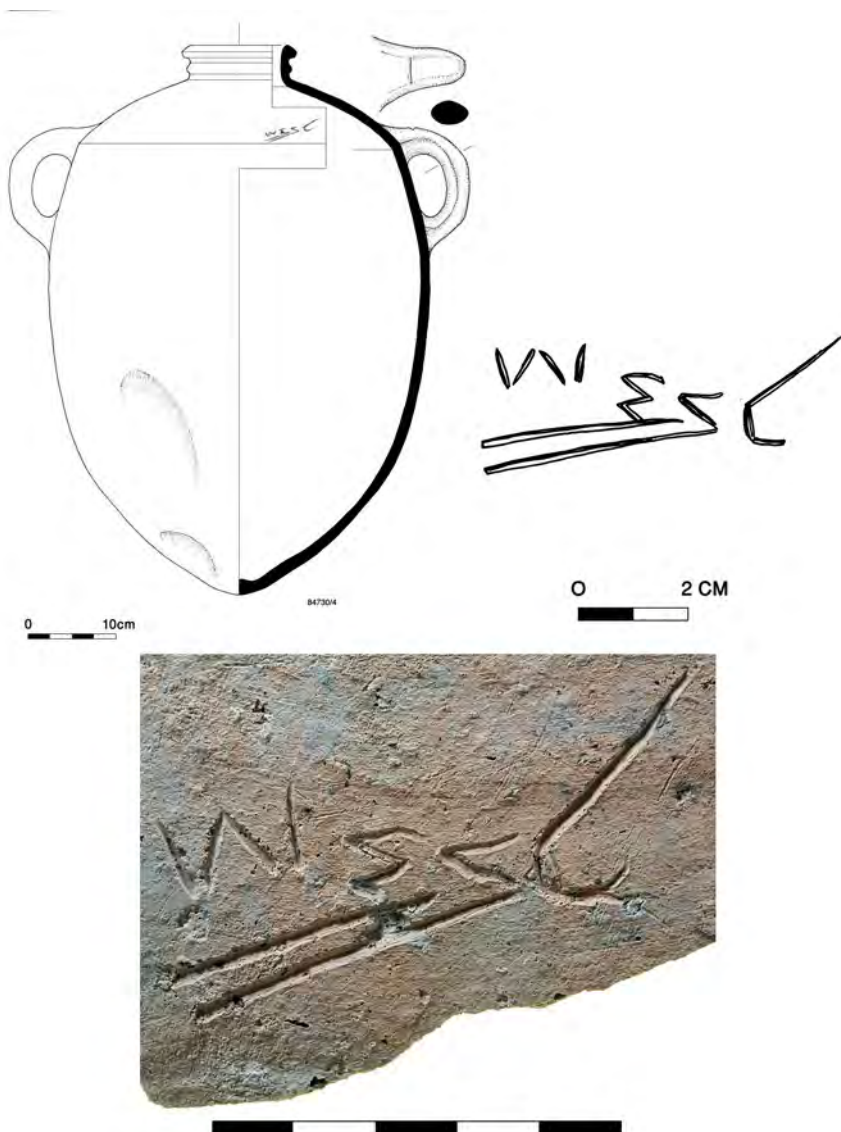


Fig. 5: Reg. No. 84730/4, Locus 8465, the apiary, local Stratum C-1b, general Stratum V.



Fig. 6: Strata IV – III at Tel ‘Amal, part of a ceramic assemblage that is identical to that of Strata V – IV at Tel Rehov.

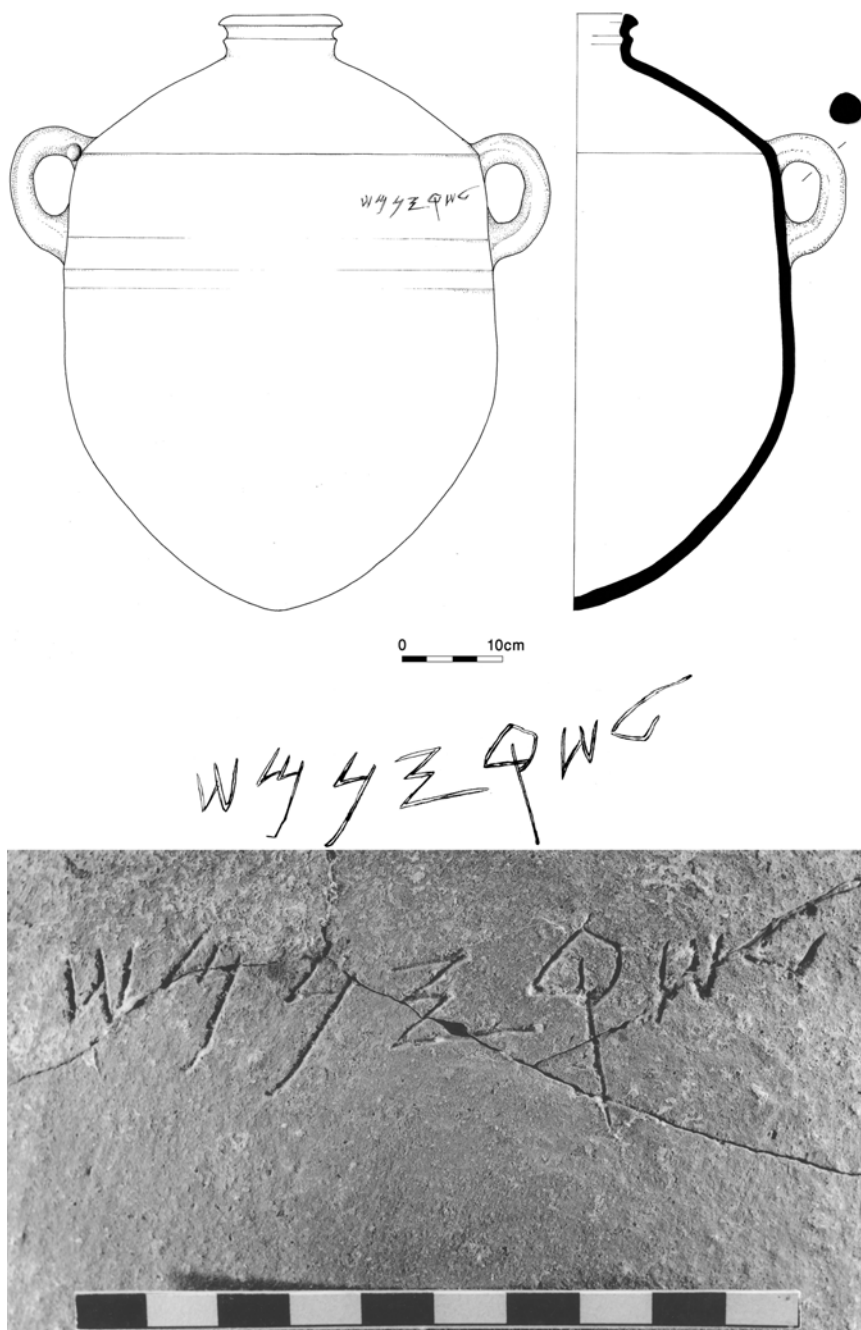


Fig. 7: Reg. No. 54322/5, Locus 5425, Area C, Building CF, local Stratum C-1a, general Stratum IV.

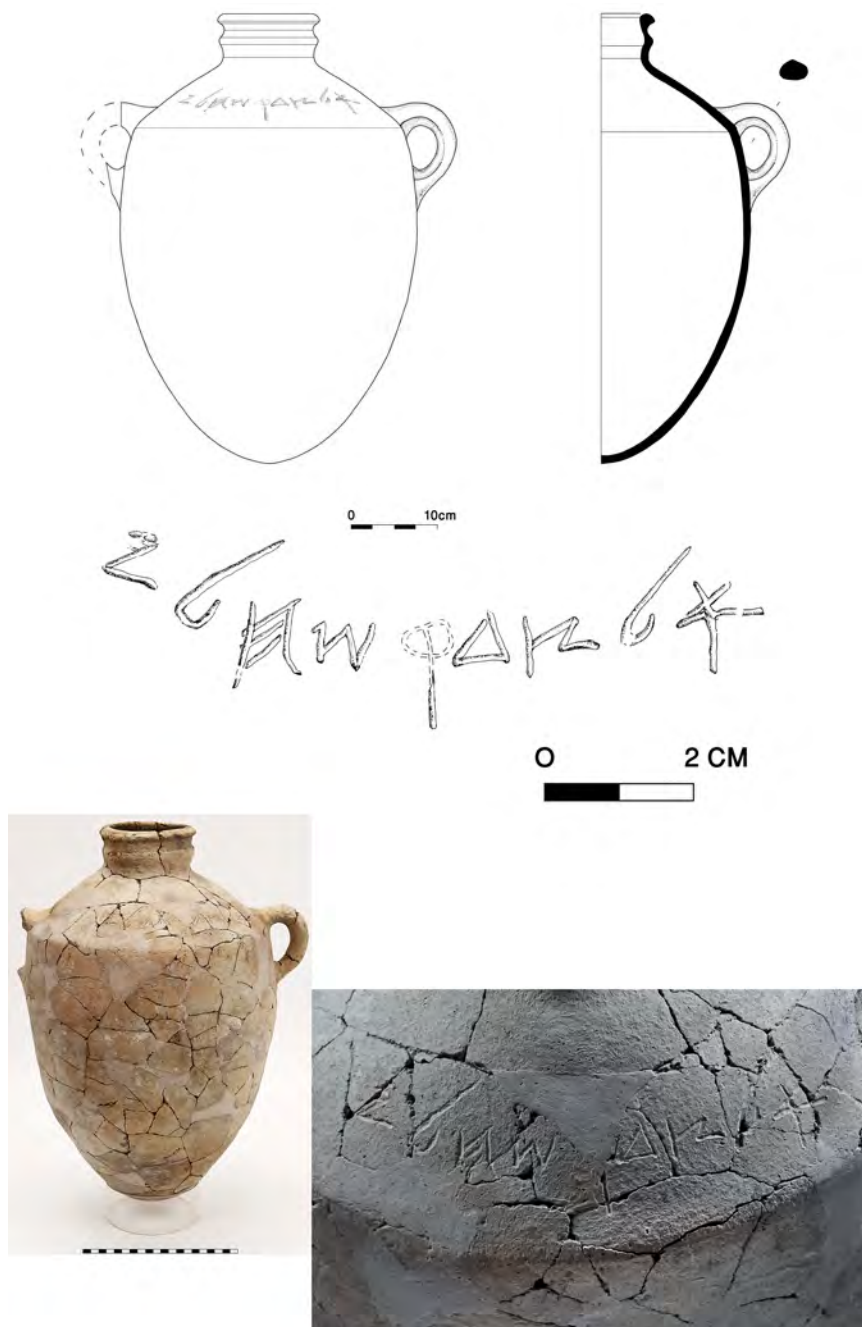


Fig. 8: Reg. No. 104274, Locus 9417, Area C, Building CQ3, local Stratum C-1a, general Stratum IV.

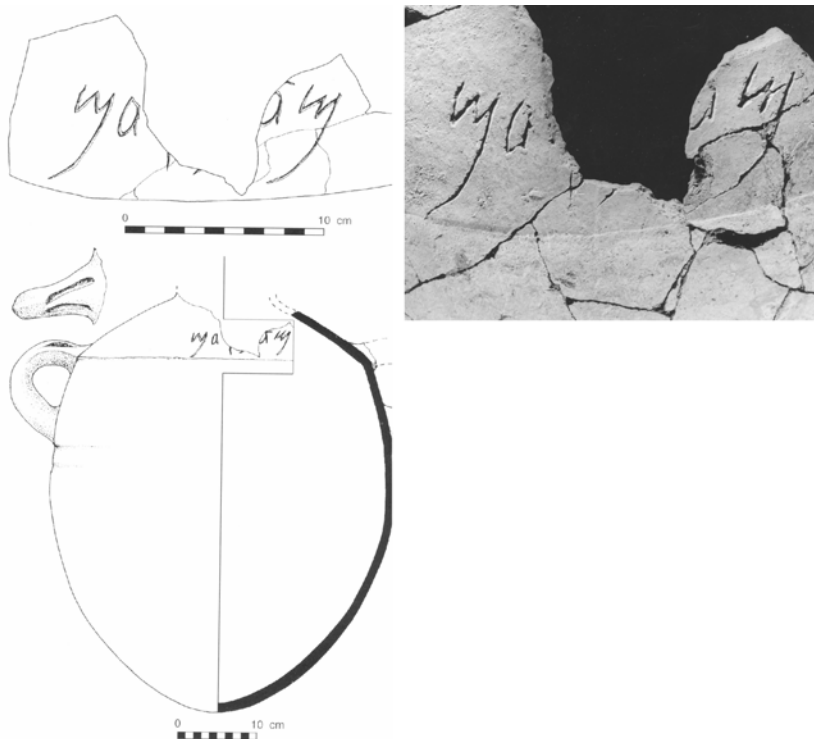


Fig. 9: Reg. No. 46129/1, Locus 4616, Area E, local Stratum E-1a, general Stratum IV.



cm



cm

Fig. 10: Reg. No. 94443, Locus 9418, Room 9449, Area C, Building CP, local Stratum C-1a, general Stratum IV.

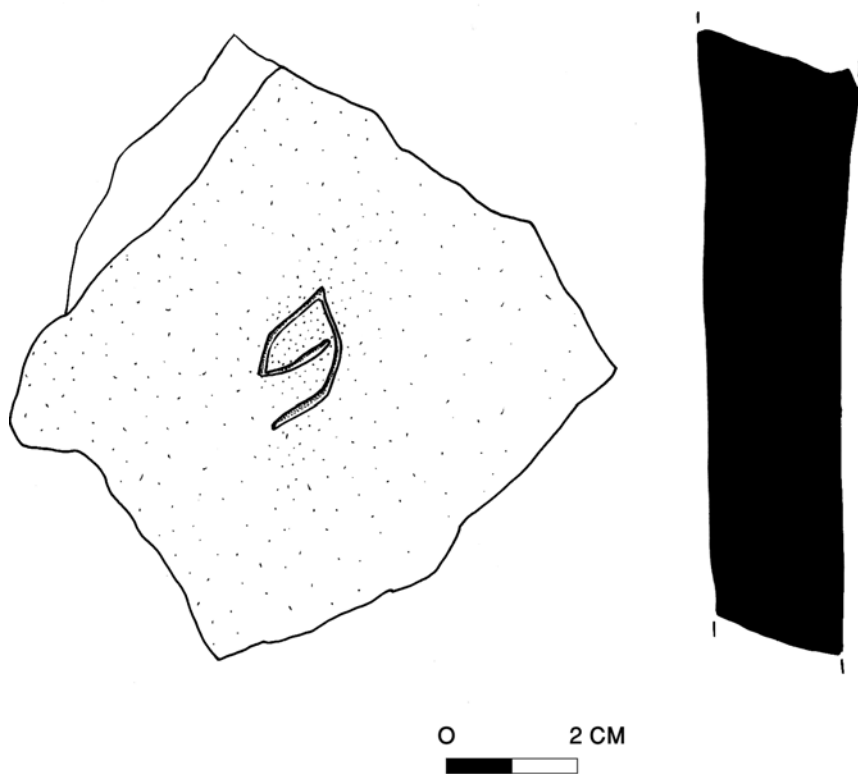


Fig. 11: Reg. No. 70578, Locus 7113, Area J, local Stratum J-5, general Stratum IV.

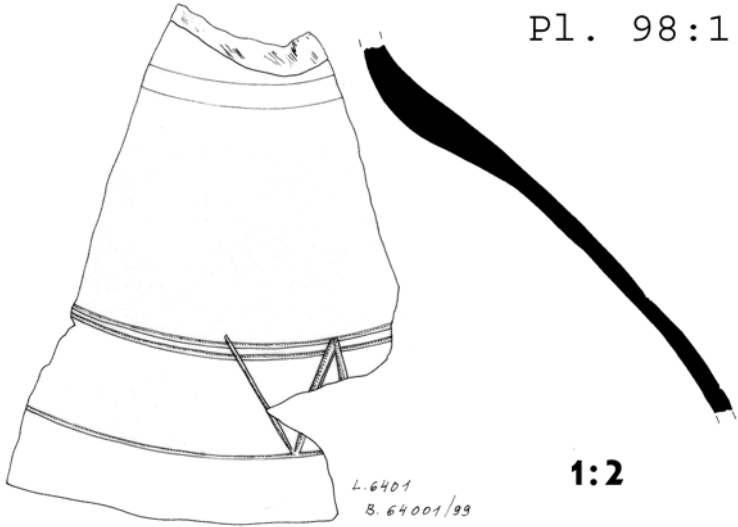


Fig. 12: Reg. No. 64001/1, Locus 6401, Area C, Building CF, local Stratum C-1a, general Stratum IV.

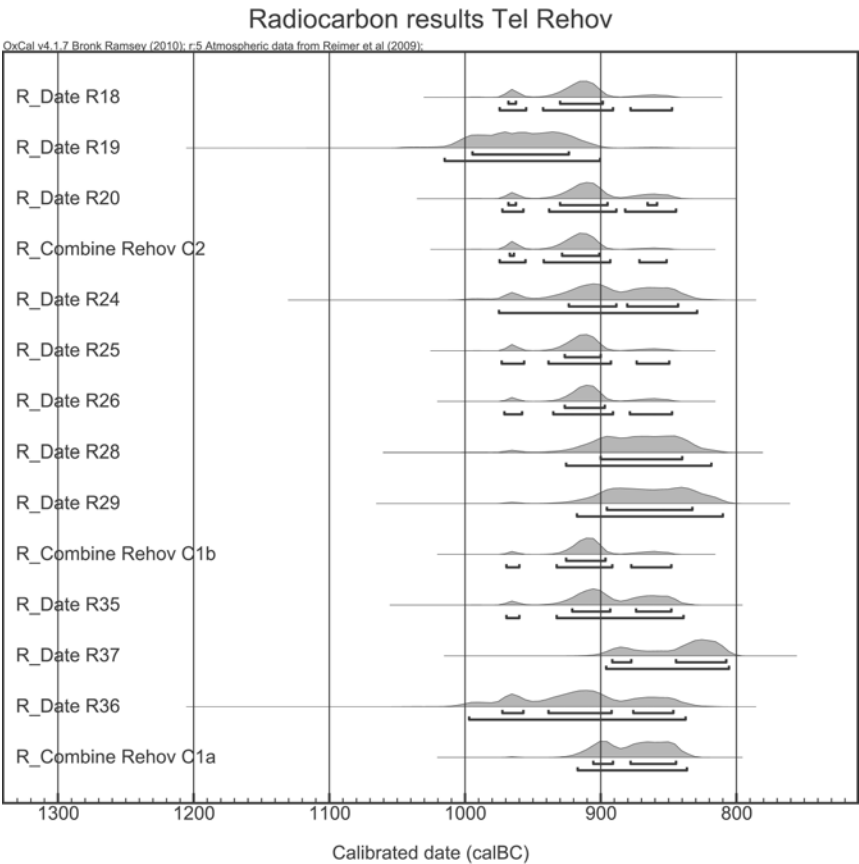
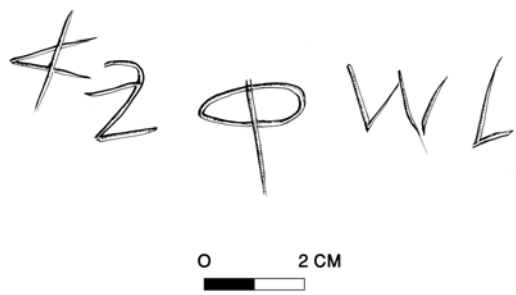
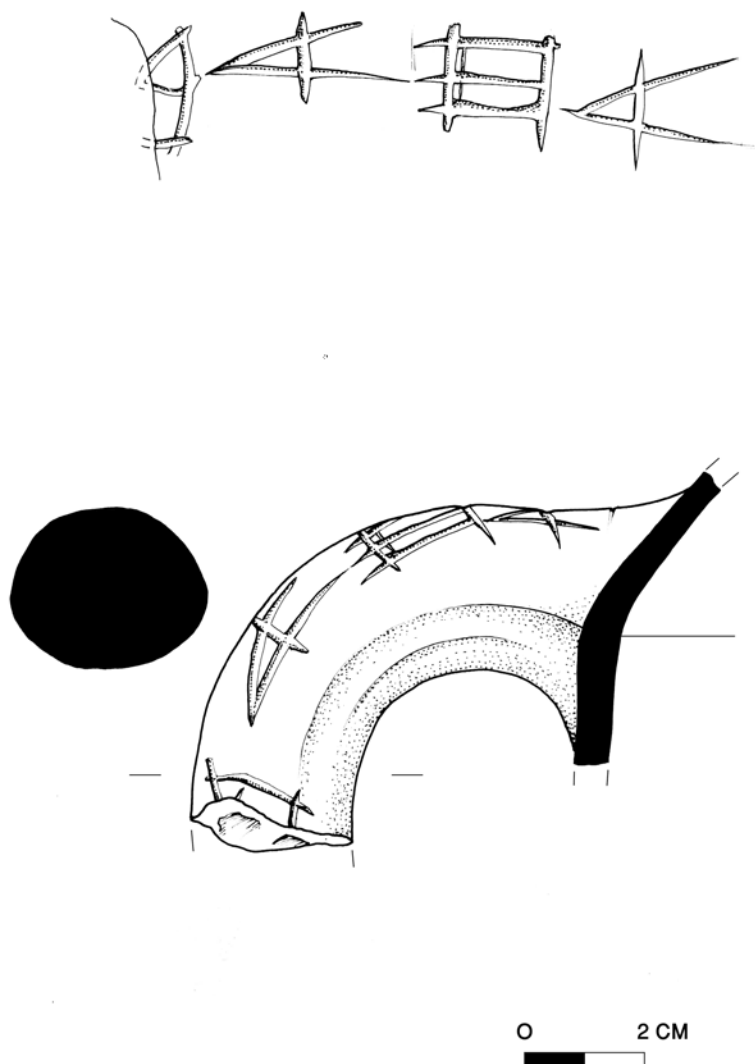


Table 1 and Fig. 13 present the ^{14}C dates from Strata VI–IV in Area C, where the clearest stratigraphic differentiation between these strata was found.

Ein Gev



An Aramaic inscription from En Gev ארמית (Fig. 14).



An inscription incised on a storage jar handle from Tell el-Hammah: אהב (Ahab), found during a surface survey.¹ We had this inscription redrawn (Fig. 15).

¹ Ram Gophna and Yoseph Porath, "Survey of Ephraim and Manassah Region," in *Judea, Samaria and the Golan: The 1968 Archaeological Survey* (ed. Moshe Kochavi; Jerusalem: Carta, 1972), 214 [Hebrew]; Renz, *Inschriften*, I:47.