Tel Dor, 1991: Preliminary Report

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The eleventh season of excavations at Tel Dor[1] was conducted during July–August 1991. It was directed by E. Stern on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Israel Exploration Society.[2] Also participating were groups from the University of California, Berkeley, directed by A. Stewart; the California State University, Sacramento, directed by H.P. Goldfried; and the University of Saskatchewan, directed by C. Folley.

This season's excavations focused on three areas: Areas B1 and B2 on the eastern side of the mound and Area G in its centre (Fig. 1). N. Karmon of Haifa University carried out some additional probes in the dye manufacturing installation in Area D1, on the south-western tip of the site.[3]

Area B1

The purpose of the excavation in this area was to clear up several problems concerning the Iron Age fortification systems, and primarily to test the hypothesis that outer gate structures existed north-east of the two gatehouses (the two- and four-chambered ones) excavated in previous seasons between Areas B1 and B2.[4] For

1 Reports on earlier excavation seasons at Tel Dor appear in *IEJ* 30 (1980), pp. 209–213; 32 (1982), pp. 107–117, Pls. 12:B, 13:A–B, 14:A–D, 15:A–D; 33 (1983), pp. 259–261; 35 (1985), pp. 60–64; 36 (1986), pp. 101–104; 37 (1987), pp. 202–211, Pls. 25:A–C, 26:A–B, 27:A–C; 39 (1989), pp. 32–42, Pls. 4:B–C, 5:A–C; and 41 (1991), pp. 46–61.

For general syrveys, see E. Stern: The Excavations at Tel Dor, in E. Lipiński (ed): *The Land of Israel: Crossroads of Civilizations*, Leuven, 1985, pp. 169–192; E. Stern: The Walls of Dor, *IEJ* 38 (1988), pp. 7–14, Pls. 1:B–C, 2:A–C, 3:A–C; and *ibid.*, Hazor, Dor and Megiddo in the Time of Ahab and under Assyrian Rule, *IEJ* 40 (1990), pp. 12–30, Pls. 2:A–C, 3:A–C, 4:A.

2 He was assisted by Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom and I. Sharon. The staff also included Bracha Zilberstein (registrar); Ayelet Gilboa, J. Zorn, P. Cason and the late Eyal Ben-Ari (field and area supervisors); G. Ben-Adiva and I. Schraauwers (architectural drafting); V. Rosen (artifact restoration and drawing); Y. Hirshberg (photographer); and I. Aviram (administration). Some 15 unit supervisors and other junior staff also participated. This was a study excavation for the students of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the other participating institutions. The expedition was lodged at the Pardess Ḥanna Agricultural School and had the use of the facilities and the support of the Centre of Nautical and Regional Archaeology of Kibbutz Naḥsholim at Dor.

3 E. Stern and I. Sharon: Tel Dor, 1986, Preliminary Report, *IEJ* 37 (1987), p. 208.

4 E. Stern, J. Berg and I. Sharon: Tel Dor 1988–1989: Preliminary Report, *IEJ* 41 (1991), p. 54.

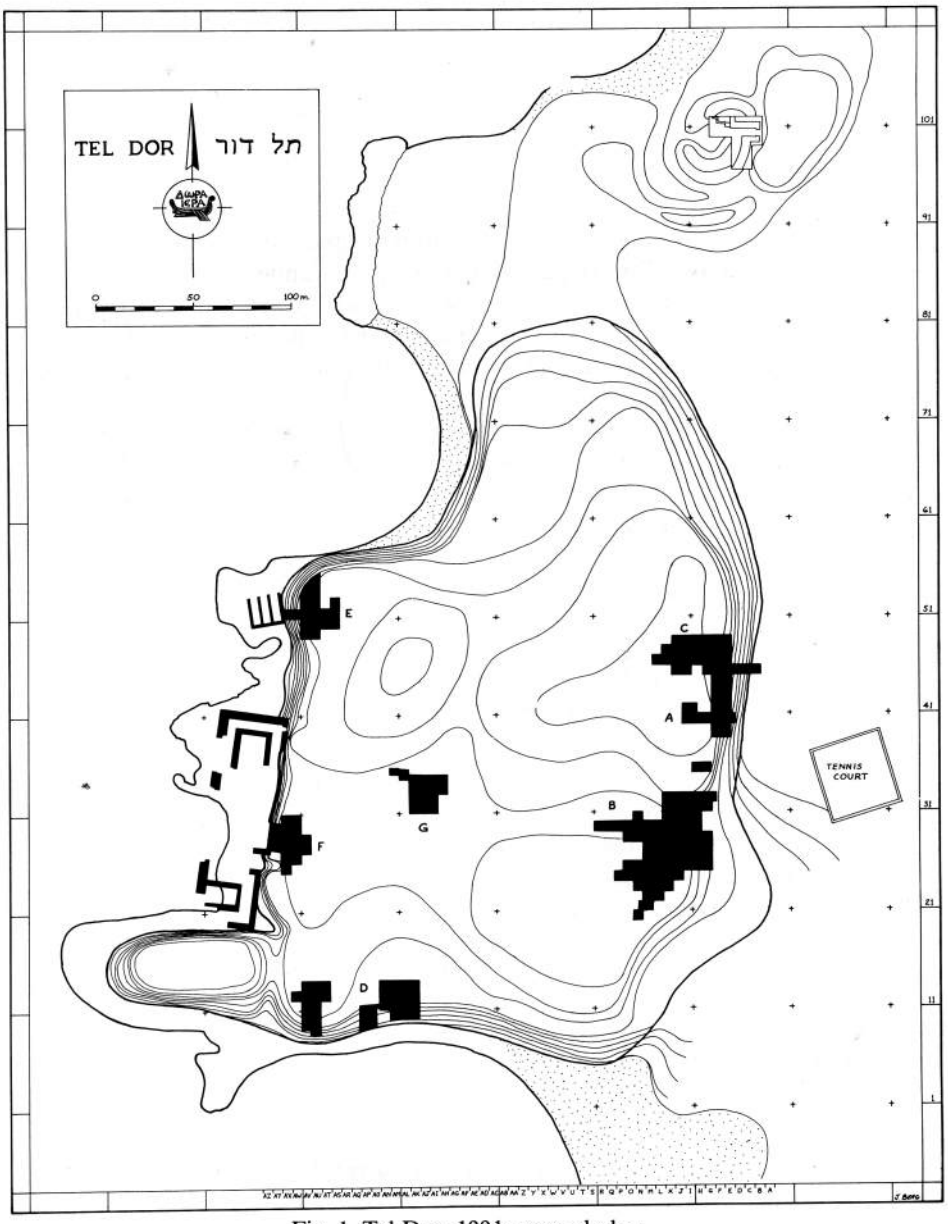

Fig. 1. Tel Dor, 1991: general plan.

this purpose, we opened a series of new grid squares on the eastern side of the field, as well as four new units on its northern side — on the surmised line of the Hellenistic and Iron Age city walls. While digging these units we also encountered some later remains.

The Roman period. The Roman remains seem to be of two distinct architectural strata. A deep round ashlar-lined pit, possibly a well, on the northern part of the area belongs to the later stratum. Excavations have not yet reached the pit's bottom, but the pit seems to cut earlier Roman remains. Attached to the well is another round installation, one ashlar course deep; its nature is unknown. Both were filled to the brim with pottery fragments dating from the end of the second and the beginning of the third centuries C.E. The dumping of pottery in the installations at that period is consistent with our hypothesis that the end of the urban occupation at Dor should be dated to the first third of the third century.

The earlier Roman stratum consists of a large building east of Area B1, on the tell's outskirts. Parts of the same building were uncovered in previous seasons,[5] together with additional evidence for the existence in the Roman period of an extensive lower city east of the old mound. The house was built of ashlars on concrete foundations. Three rooms, each about 4 × 5 m., have been excavated so far, north of a hypothesized courtyard. The various repairs to the walls suggest that the building must have had at least two separate construction phases; so far, however, only its deep foundations have been found intact. The floors and superstructure are totally eroded, making it difficult to date either phase reliably. It will be possible to suggest a construction date based on the fairly large number of potsherds in its foundation trenches. Another factor which may contribute to its correct stratigraphical placement and subsequent dating is the fact that the sewer which drains the wide *piazza* at the entrance to the Roman city[6] is associated with the building's foundations.

The Hellenistic period. One of the reasons for opening four new units in the northern part of Area B1 was the discovery in previous seasons that a segment of the Hellenistic wall, north of the city gate, was missing. It may have been dismantled when the Roman house described above was built. The continuation of the Hellenistic city wall was located, as expected, in these new units. Its width here is 2.5 m. (as opposed to 3.5 m. near the gate), and the gap between the two segments is approximately 12 m. wide. There is no doubt, however, that they are both part of the same city wall; this is indicated, among other factors, by their unique method of construction, with ashlar header 'compartments' filled with rubble.[7]

The intermediate Persian–Hellenistic phase. Walls of this period were found in both northern and eastern extensions of Area B1; like most walls of this phase elsewhere they are constructed in the Phoenician 'ashlar pier' technique.[8] As we observed in

5 *Ibid.*, p. 49; E. Stern, Ayelet Gilboa and I. Sharon: Tel Dor, 1987, Preliminary Report, *IEJ* 39 (1989), Fig. 2.

6 See above, n. 5.

7 I. Sharon: Phoenician and Greek Ashlar Construction Techniques at Tel Dor, Israel, *BASOR* 267 (1987), pp. 28–29, Fig. 2(e).

8 *Ibid.*, pp. 27–28, Fig 2(d1–d3).

Fig. 2. Figurine fragments of the Persian period.

previous seasons, these walls seem to belong to residential structures stretching east of the line of the city's fortifications in both the preceding (late Iron–early Persian) and succeeding (Hellenistic) strata. The edge of the 'intermediate' city in Area B1 appears to have been further east than our excavation extended. In some units it is possible to infer two distinct architectural strata within this intermediate phase. Associated with this phase (unfortunately, in constructional fills and not on the floors) is a remarkable assemblage of fourth century B.C.E. Attic pottery, notable both in its quantity and in the range of types, even in comparison to the diverse Attic repertoire already uncovered at Dor. Most of the pots are black-glazed and undecorated. We do not yet have a satisfactory explanation for the unusual concentration of these vessels at this particular spot.

The Persian period. In the eastern units we found a concentration of figurine fragments of this period (Fig. 2) mainly of the horse-and-rider type typical of this period. This may indicate the existence of a favissa — the third located on the eastern fringes of the mound so far — although no pit was clearly delineated.[9] We also found part of a glass stamp depicting in eastern style a king/hero fighting two winged and horned creatures (Fig. 3), and a rhyton, shaped like a calf's head (Fig. 4).

Fig. 3. Depiction of a king/hero fighting two winged and horned creatures, found on a glass stamp in the eastern units of Area B1.

Fig. 4. A rhyton, shaped like a calf's head, found in Area B1.

The Iron Age. In the squares north of Area B1, under the 'intermediate phase' houses, we seem to have uncovered the eastern face of the solid offset-inset wall of the Iron Age;[10] this supposition, however, requires further corroboration. Our main objective in the coming season will be to obtain assemblages to date this

9 E. Stern: Two Favissae from Tel Dor, in H. Bonnet *et al.* (eds.): *Israel Studia Phoenicia* IV, Namur, 1986, pp. 277–287.

10 Stern (above, n. 1, Walls of Dor), pp. 6–8.

Fig. 5. The massive walls of the Iron Age outer gate (W 12840) appearing underneath Roman and Persian remains.

wall. Slightly to the south, on the northern edge of the eastern row of new units, under the fills of the 'intermediate phase', we found a massive wall running parallel to the offset-inset city wall, approximately 8 m. outside it and almost 2 m. lower (Fig. 5). The wall is built of boulders, about 1 × 1 × 0.5m. each, and recalls the four-chambered gatehouse (located about 15 m. to the south-east) in the size of its stones and its construction technique.[11] This wall probably belongs to an outer gatehouse of the city; next season we will attempt to verify this and determine to which of the two gate systems (or both) it belongs. No such architectural features were found in the south-eastern part of the field (the southern units of the eastern row of squares). Under the level of the ramp leading to the two-chambered gate,[12] however, we encountered the same sequence of constructional fills (sand over chocolate-brown mudbrick debris) found inside the four-chambered gatehouse. The continuation of the gate-complex — the ramp connecting it to the outer gatehouse — should, therefore, be sought here. One exceptional small object found here, although obviously not in context, should be mentioned: it is a black stone cylinder seal, depicting a man, scorpion, bull and dagger (Fig. 6); its style is common in Cyprus in the Late Bronze Age, continuing into the beginning of the Iron Age.

Fig. 6. Stone cylinder seal, depicting a man, scorpion, bull and dagger, found out of context in the Iron Age stratum. Its style was common in the Late Bronze Age/ beginning of the Iron Age in Cyprus.

Area B2

The excavation in this area had three objectives:

1) to continue to expose the large Roman courtyard building east of the street leading southwards from the entrance *piazza*;[13]

11 Stern (above, n. 1, Hazor , Dor and Megiddo), pp. 17–20.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

13 Stern, Berg and Sharon (above, n. 4), p. 49.

Fig. 7. Hellenistic catapult balls found at the eastern edge of the southern baulk of Area B2.

2) to complete the excavation of the unique concentration of catapult balls which appeared in the southern baulk in previous seasons,[14] and to determine its stratigraphical provenance;
3) to excavate Iron Age architectural elements outside the two- and four-chambered gatehouses, in order to determine the nature of the structure of the southern side of the gate complex and to locate possible connections to the outer gates (see Area B1 above).

The Roman courtyard building. This season we concentrated on the courtyard itself; as expected, it was surrounded by a colonnade on at least three sides (the eastern side, which has not yet been excavated, is probably eroded). The centre of the courtyard was paved with flagstones, and was surrounded by an unpaved

14 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

however, to delineate the exact horizon from which the pit had been dug. Besides the catapult balls and the skeleton of a dog buried in the bottom of the pit, almost no material was found. The few sherds found (mostly storage-jar body fragments) may be very tentatively dated to the Hellenistic period. Although the stratigraphic and typological evidence is far from conclusive, the most plausible explanation remains that the pit is associated with the Hellenistic fortification system.

The Iron Age. As part of the effort to extrapolate the general plan of the gate complexes (Fig. 9), we cleared the region east of the southern chamber of the

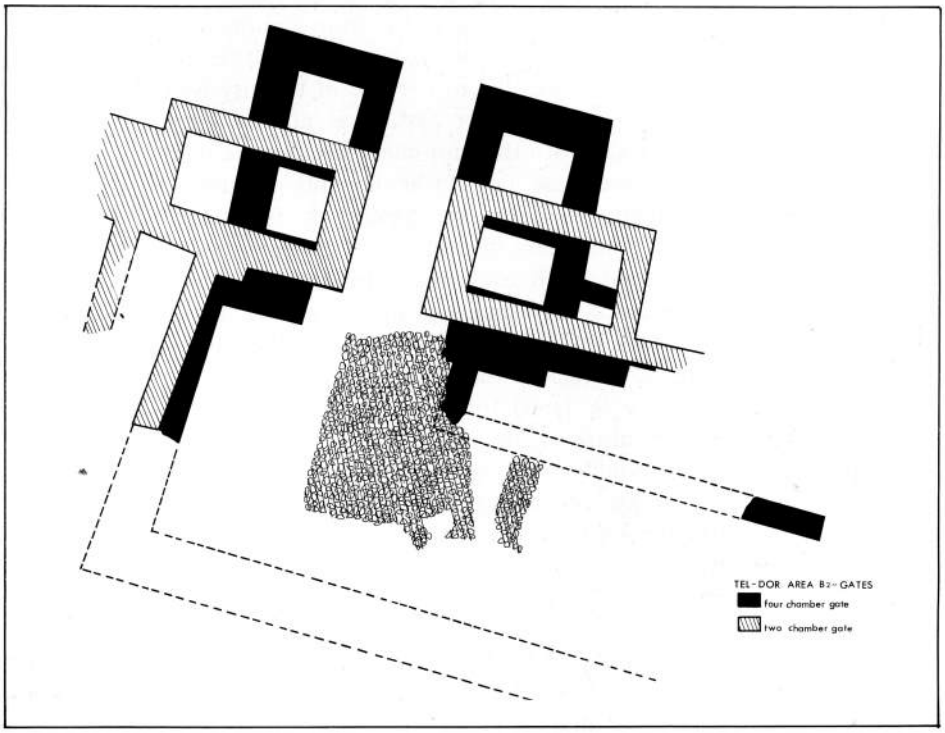

Fig. 9. Tel Dor, Area B2: the gate complex.

two-chambered gate. Two parallel walls were uncovered in this region in previous seasons, leading eastwards from the gatehouse.[17] These are probably part of the fortification encircling the ramp which leads from the outer to the inner gate. These walls form a long casemate perpendicular to the gate, similiar to the casemate arrangement in the connecting walls between the outer and inner gates at Megiddo III — the closest parallel to our two-chambered gate.[18]

17 Stern and Sharon (above, n. 3), p. 207, Fig. 2.

18 R.S. Lamon and G.M. Shipton: *Megiddo I, Seasons of 1925–34, Strata I–V*, 1939, p. 78, Fig. 89.

Under these walls we excavated two superimposed whitewashed floors, which we assumed at first to belong to the above-mentioned casemate. While following the upper floor surface, however, it became apparent that it continues under one of the 'casemate' walls and even under the corner of the gate tower itself, where it reaches a mudbrick wall. This latter wall may be part of the city wall associated with the lower, four-chambered gate. In the higher of the two 'white floors' there was a row of five storage jars, inserted upside-down at regular intervals, and with their bottoms removed. This arrangement seems to have been intentional, although its purpose remains enigmatic. At any rate, these two floors and adjacent installations are evidence of some activities beyond the four-chambered gate as well. Under the uppermost 'white floor' related to the four-chambered gate, there is a mudbrick wall, preserved to a height of approximately 2 m. Its entire width has not yet been cleared. The wall runs parallel to the line of the city wall at this point; it is located approximately 5 m. further east. It is not yet clear whether this wall is associated in some way with the four-chambered gate complex or whether it is entirely earlier — in which case it might be the tenth century B.C.E. city wall. Under the two above-mentioned floors and against this wall, there was a deep, sandy, homogeneous fill, reminiscent of other constructional fills we encountered under the four-chambered gate both inside and outside the gate chambers (see Area B1 above). This fill contained only small, weathered potsherds, none necessarily later than the tenth century B.C.E. The date of the constructional fill under the gate and the date of the jars stuck in the latest floor relating to that gate (second half of the eighth century or later) form a welcome addition to the body of archaeological evidence re-affirming the chronology of the gates at Dor.[19]

The face of a battered boulder wall appeared at the bottom of the probe; it lies diagonally to all the wall systems above it. This wall may be associated with the tenth century fortification system (in which case the high mudbrick wall above it evidently does not belong), or may form part of an even earlier system.

Area G

The major field where Iron Age habitation levels may be uncovered lies here, in the city centre. This season we made a major effort to maximize the exposure of the Iron Age IIA residential quarter partially excavated in previous seasons.[20] In the course of dismantling later constructions we learned more about later strata (Persian–Roman); these, however, will not be discussed in this report.

Some of the walls of the residential houses are built of mudbrick, while others are made of stone. In previous seasons we determined that these houses span, with minor constructional changes, the tenth and ninth centuries B.C.E. They may have been used even later, but, unfortunately, the late Iron Age phases in Area G were riddled with Persian pits, making it impossible to ascertain their plan. We did find

19 Stern, Berg and Sharon (above, n. 4), pp. 54–57; Stern (above, n. 1, Hazor, Dor and Megiddo), pp. 16–20.

20 Stern, Berg and Sharon (above, n. 4), pp. 57–58.

this season a late Iron Age wall and some floor fragments in the south-eastern corner of the area; nevertheless, there is a general paucity of late Iron Age remains in this field. The earliest floors hitherto found in association with this residential quarter were datable to the tenth century B.C.E. This year we excavated an additional portion of this quarter, east of the previously excavated sections. In the main room there were two superimposed floors: the upper chronologically equivalent to previously excavated levels in the same structures, while the lower is somewhat earlier. On this lower floor a tabun and a rich assemblage of complete pots crushed *in situ* were found. These can preliminarily be dated to the end of the eleventh or the beginning of the tenth century B.C.E. Simple undecorated vessels predominate the assemblage, although some bichrome ware is present. Red-slipped or burnished ware is almost entirely absent.

In a nearby unit we excavated below the residential quarter and found several tightly packed occupation horizons, so far unconnected to any architectural element. A great amount of organic material (including the complete skeleton of a fish) with pottery dating from the Iron Age I was found on these surfaces and between them. A small probe underneath these surfaces revealed unmistakable evidence of a major conflagration.

The importance of this season's discoveries in Area G, apart from the rich pottery assemblage recovered, is in the correlation to previously excavated remains in Area B1, at a distance of about 100 m. on the eastern edge of the mound. The earliest Iron Age occupation in Area B1 (local phases 12–13) was destroyed by a massive fire. The subsequent phases (Area B1, phases 10–11) produce pottery correlating to that found under the residential quarter in Area G, while the assemblage of the uppermost Iron I phase (Area B1, phase 9) is similiar to the one found in the lower floor of the Area G room (although it might be slightly earlier). This correlation is the first solid evidence that the phenomena observed in the rather limited exposure in Area B1 (and especially the destruction level there) have a wider significance. In this connection it should be recalled that we found in 1987, in a test trench dug against the Roman foundations of the temple in Area F, a deep destruction level, which we could not date at the time more precisely than 'Iron I/IIA'.[21] The correlation of Areas B1 and G is not exact, however, as in phases 9–11 in Area B1 the buildings were only of mudbrick, whereas stone and mudbrick were used indiscriminately in Area G. The assemblage of phase 9 contained a large number of imported Cypriote vessels, which were not found in the assemblage on the floor of the Area G room. A unique vessel, probably of Cypriote manufacture, was found in one of the other rooms of the residential quarter, but its stratigraphical correlation to the main assemblage is so far tenuous.

Area D1: the purple dye installation.

N. Karmon conducted additional tests in the purple dye manufacturing installation

21 Stern, Gilboa and Sharon (above, n. 5), p. 41.

discovered in 1986 in Area D1.[22] The object of these tests was to clean out the two pits in the installation in order to obtain more lab samples, and to carry out some quantitative sampling, which may make possible an estimate of the installation's dye extraction capabilities. The southern pit was dug to a depth of approximately 1.40 m. and large amounts of murex shells and calcerous deposits were taken out. The only finds in the pit were several coarse pottery sherds, whose purpose is not yet clear, and a faience bead. The northern pit also contained some die residue, but no other finds. We are not sure whether we have reached the bottom of the deposits in the installation.

22 Stern and Sharon (above, n. 3).