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ON THE COVER *Michelangelo's Isaiah ponders creation from the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Entirely conceived and executed by the artist from 1508 to 1512, the Chapel ceiling is Michelangelo's most famous work.*

Excavations at Tell Mevorakh Are Prelude to Tell Dor Dig

What a daughter site can tell us about its mother

By Ephraim Stern

IN 1980, THE FIRST spade will sink into Tell Dor. As previously announced in BAR (November/December 1978, p. 42), I will direct the field work at the new excavation.

In a sense, however, this excavation began several years ago at nearby Tell Mevorakh. The Tell Mevorakh dig, which I directed for Hebrew University in 1973 to 1976, was really a part of what should be considered the Dor Project.

When archaeology began in the Middle East more than a hundred years ago, it was almost a treasure hunt. About the turn of the century, archaeologists began to pay attention, not simply to what would look impressive in a museum, but to stratigraphy and ceramic typologies in order to date the levels of a mound; the result of this shift in emphasis was that pottery and stone walls and destruction layers sometimes became more important than gold jewelry and figurines. In our generation, archaeology, growing ever more scientific, has now added other, new concerns.

Today's archaeologists are no longer satisfied to look only at the artifacts and architecture and political history of a site. Today's archaeologists work to understand how people actually lived at a site—not just the kings and political leaders but common men and women as well. And today's archaeologists want to learn about the social structure, the politics and the economics of ancient communities.

So the excavator makes every effort to extract the last piece of information from every basketful of dirt he lifts from the ground. Sifters separate the smallest bits of evidence from buckets of earth. Animal bones and fruit pits show what the inhabitants ate. Tiny weights or spindle whorls suggest how our ancestors traded and what they manufactured. Flotation machines are used to find ancient pollen, evidence of the agricultural economy and the climatic conditions at the time of the settlement. The texture and tiny, gritty inclusions in clay pots are studied to learn how the potter practiced his art.

Just as new methods are used within the excavation square, so also there has been an expansion of what one might call the horizontal concern. The archaeologist's attention is no longer limited to a single site. Today's archaeologist wants to understand how a site functioned in a larger setting. That is why so many recent excavations are accompanied by surveys of adjacent areas and trial excavations at several sites near the major excavation. That is why, as often as not, an excavation today is part of a "regional" study.

Our excavations at Tell Dor should be understood as part of a study of the region of the Sharon Plain, and, in particular, the Carmel coast. The three seasons of excavation at Tell Mevorakh were part of that study and a preparation for the major work yet to be done at Dor. (See map on p. 35.)

Tell Mevorakh is a "daughter" of Tell Dor. Located 7 miles to the south, it was smaller and far less important. But from the daughter, there was much we could learn about the mother.

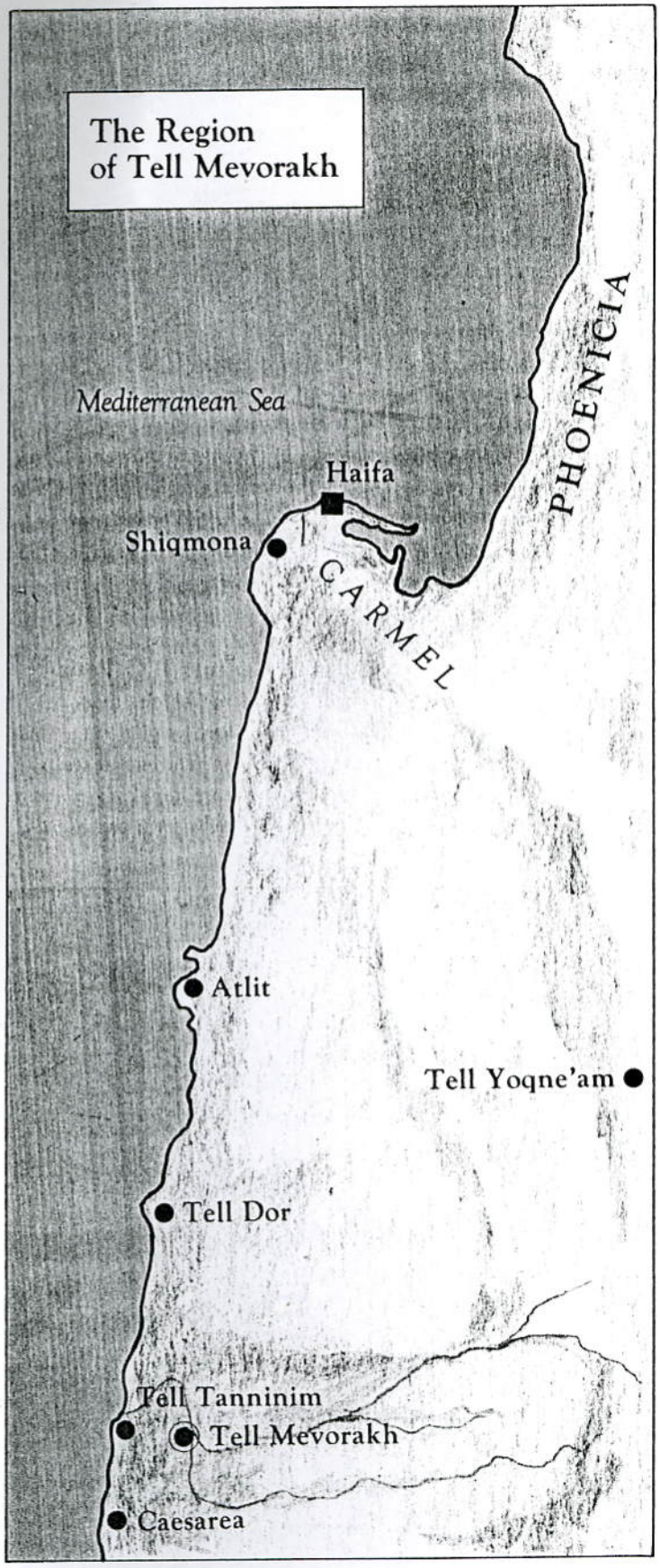
Based on surface finds and somewhat primitive excavations conducted at Dor over 50 years ago, we know that Dor was occupied continuously from the Middle Bronze Age (18th century B.C.) to the Byzantine Period (fourth to mid-seventh centuries). In contrast, our excavations at Tell Mevorakh revealed only intermittent occupation between long periods of abandonment. For example, there was a gap in occupation at Tell Mevorakh in the 12th and 11th centuries B.C. All activity on the mound again terminated at the beginning of the Roman period, in the first century B.C., when the nearby and newly built Caesarea was replacing the city of Dor as the capital of the district.

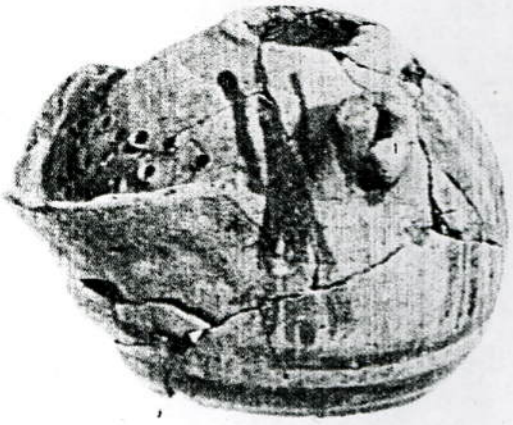
Collar-rim Pithos *This unadorned, ovoid storage vessel is especially useful for dating purposes because it can be dated from the end of the 11th to the beginning of the 10th century B.C. At Mevorakh this pithos was found with the building identified as an administrative center from the reign of King David (early 10th century B.C.)*

By correlating these periods of abandonment and occupation with our knowledge of ancient history, we can conclude that Tell Mevorakh was settled mainly when Dor was an important regional center and powerful enough to protect her "daughter," and when the mother city had a special interest in Mevorach as part of its regional organization.

That Tell Mevorakh was unoccupied during certain periods will help us to understand better how Dor functioned politically, socially and economically during those periods. We will be looking for correlations with changes at Dor which might help explain the changes that were occurring at both sites.

In general, the results at Tell Mevorakh have confirmed—or at least are consistent with—the history of the monarchic period as we understand it from the Bible.



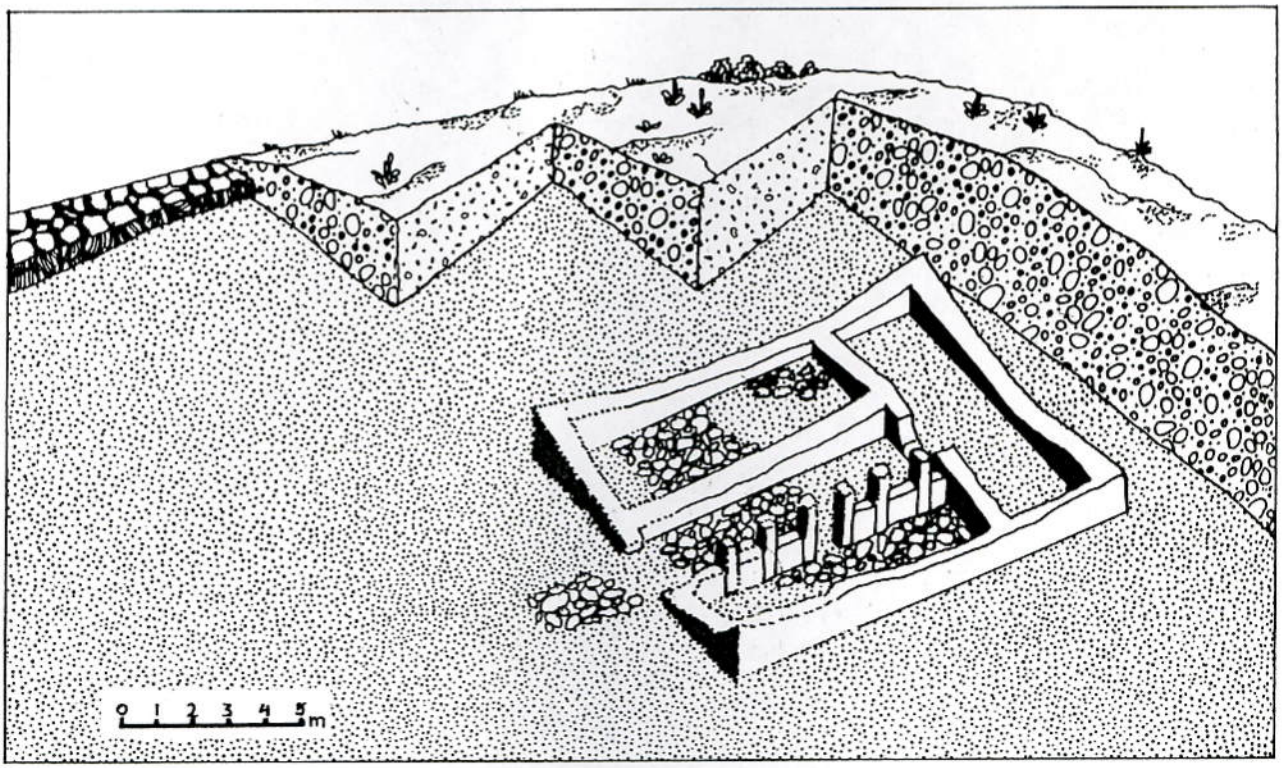


11th Century B.C. Beer Jug *This "beer" jug is one of the earliest examples of Phoenician bichrome (black and red) vessels found in the northern region of Israel. The strainer-spouted mouth may have helped prevent barley roughage from pouring out with the liquid. On its side is a schematic drawing of a lotus flower.*

The coastal district of Canaanite Dor was conquered by King David and brought under Israelite control. The district formed an integral part of David's kingdom, (the northern border at this time being near Tyre and Sidon in today's Lebanon, according to Joab's census in 2 Samuel 24:6-7). David probably reorganized the district of Dor and, as part of that reorganization, Mevorakh became an administrative center. This view is supported by the archaeological evidence at Tell Mevorakh.

We found in stratum VIII a few scattered building remains associated with pottery, including collar-rim pithoi (usually attributed to the Israelites), which can be dated to the late 11th or the early 10th century B.C., the Davidic period. Although the remains are scant, we were able to identify a central building, possibly of the "four-room" type which is characteristic of Israelite architecture. This structure was probably an administrative building similar to the stratum VII building which succeeded it after the destruction of stratum VIII. This later building from stratum VII reused stratum VIII building materials. The Mevorakh administrative center should be understood in the framework of David's reorganization of the district of Dor, whereby new sub-divisions were established and land was granted to the new Israelite settlers.

Reconstruction of 10th Century B.C. Four-Room Building *A typical Israelite four-room structure, this building contained three parallel rooms and a fourth room perpendicular to them. The outside walls of the building were made of one or more stone courses and a mudbrick superstructure surmounted with a crenellation.*



The reason for the destruction of the small Davidic administrative center of stratum VIII is not clear. It may simply have been adandoned, or perhaps its destruction was connected with the same events that obliged King Solomon in the middle of his reign to relinquish twenty towns in the Acco plain to the Tyrians (1 Kings 9:11-12), and to move the northern border of Israel southward to the Carmel range. This loss of territory north of the Carmel probably necessitated a more efficient tax collection system in order to compensate for reduced revenues.

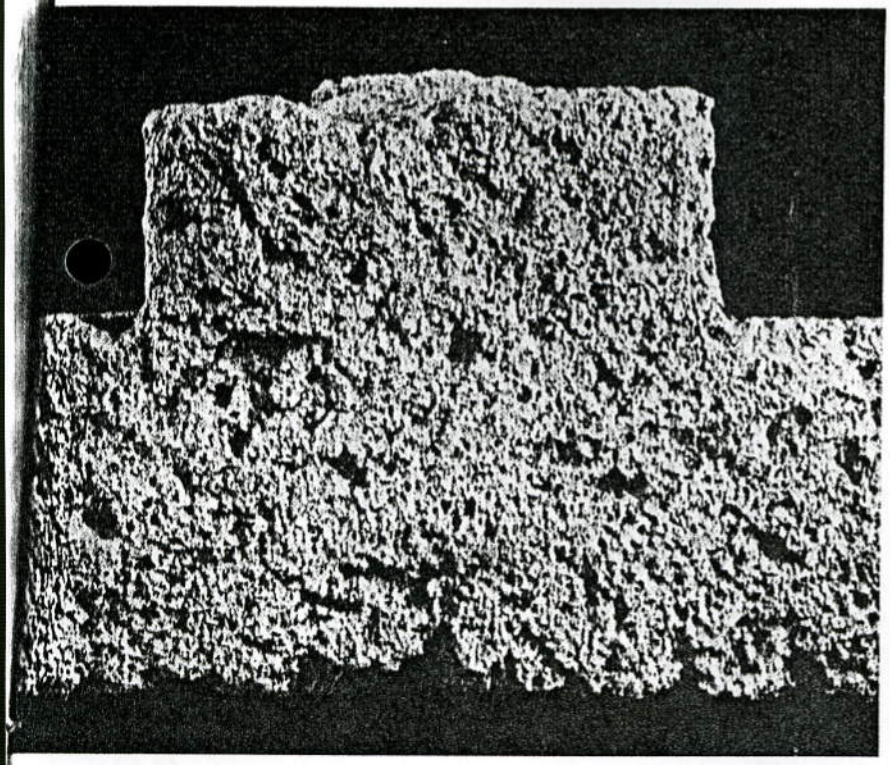
We know from the first book of Kings (4:7) that in the middle of Solomon's reign he established an extensive, reorganized administrative system by dividing the kingdom of Israel into 12 districts, each with a governor who supplied the food for the king and the royal household.

In a comprehensive analysis of the list of Solomon's districts from the book of Kings, Albrecht Alt claimed many years ago that these districts, which were named after important cities (in our case the city of Dor), are the same as the old Canaanite districts situated in the coastal plain and the interior valleys. The Canaanite districts were occupied by the Israelites in the time of David and were divided along the traditional borders of the Israelite tribes. The new division by Solomon put an end to the earlier tribal organization by disregarding the old tribal borders and uniting the various tribes, thus forming new and independent districts. Apparently, during the reign of Solomon, Mevorakh again became a regional center in the fourth district, the district of Dor, and, according to the book of Kings (4:11), Dor was governed by the son of Abinadab, who had married Solomon's daughter, Taphath. That this district was governed by Solomon's own son-in-law is an indication of its importance.

The remains of stratum VII at Mevorakh, attributed to the Solomonic period, consisted, as in the Davidic stratum, of a single "four-room" house. The house was surrounded by a broad courtyard paved with beaten lime and fortified by a wall (see p. 36.)

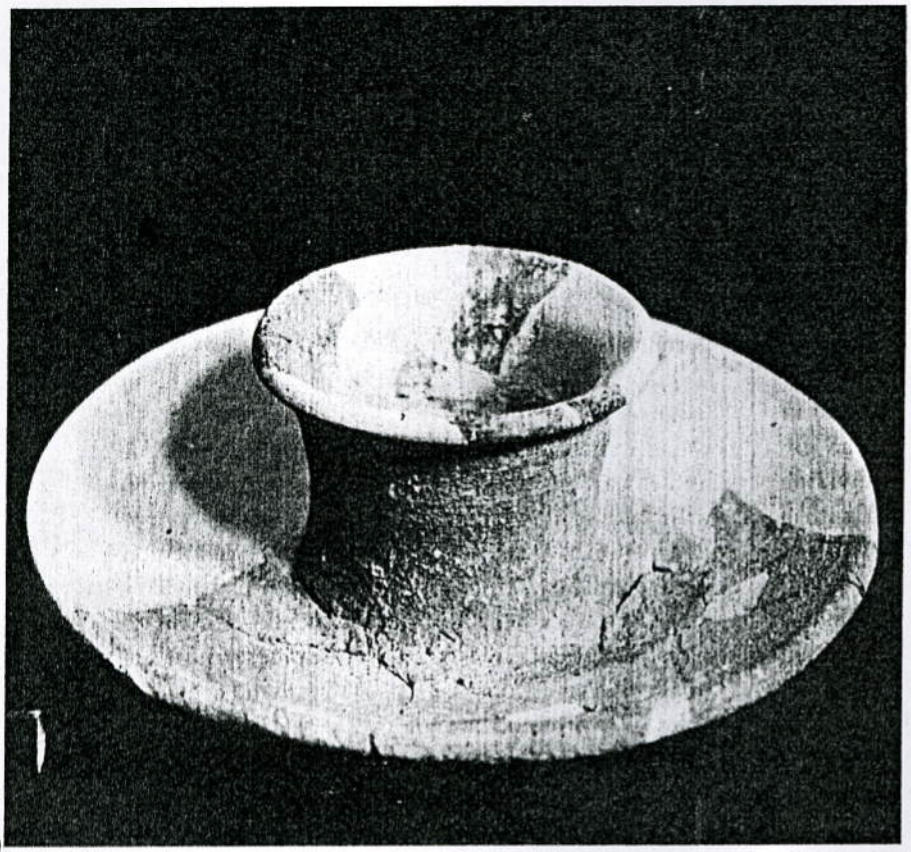
This unusual plan, as well as some of the architectural elements, prompted us to interpret this compound as a regional administrative center. Among the remains of the period was a crenellation stone which originally came from the top of a wall and which enables us to envision the top of the walls of Mevorakh during Solomon's reign.

The pottery groups in stratum VII, including the imported ware, revealed that the center was in existence mainly in the second half of the 10th century B.C., during the middle years of Solomon's rule. To this period we were also able to attribute a tomb dis-



Crenellated Sandstone Block

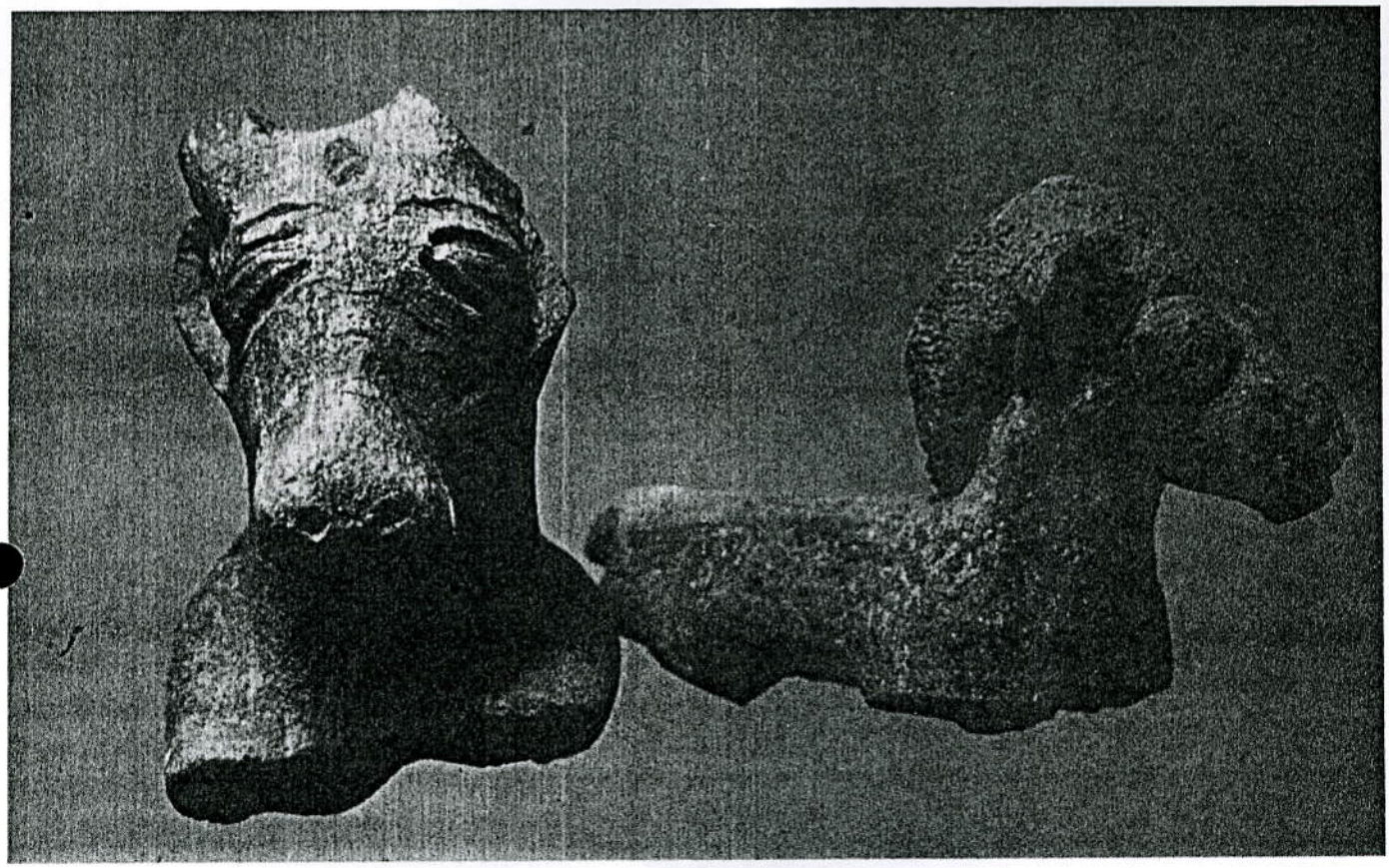
Archaeologists rarely find wall tops so this find is particularly significant since it allows us to visualize the entire wall of the 10th century building. Like the chalk courtyard surrounding the building, this decorative crenellation reflects Phoenician styling. The building's large size (about 36 x 25 feet), the crenellated walls, and the large courtyard extending to the three-foot-wide defensive wall on the edge of the tell support the identification of this four-room building as a regional administrative center in the Solomonic district, whose capital was Dor.

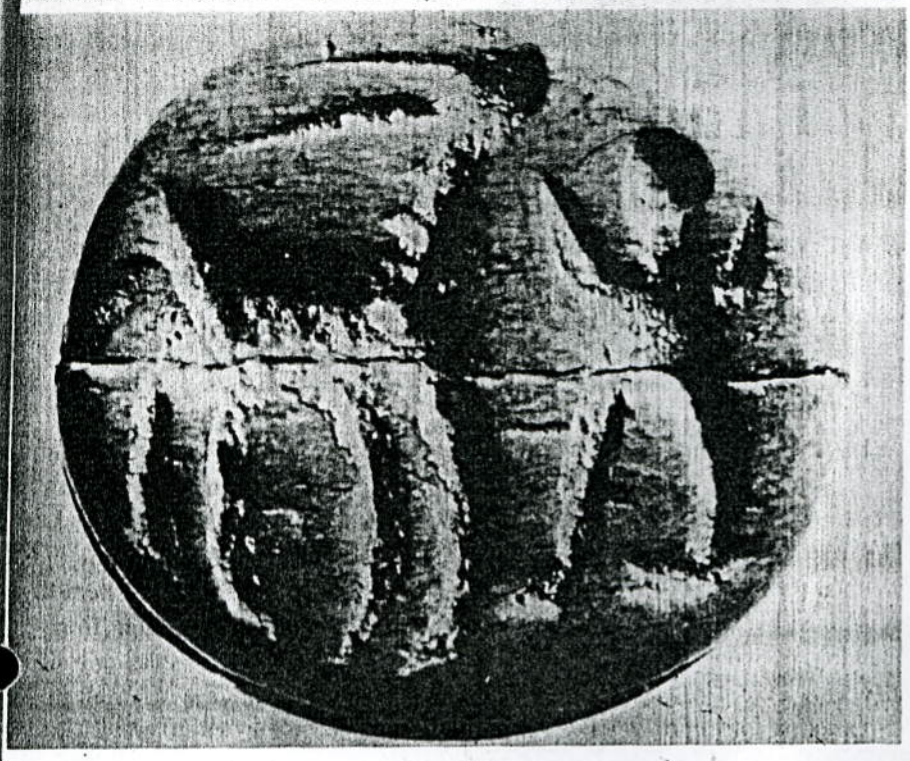


Bone Stamp *(right) A man with uplifted arms and a horned animal are incised on the front of this late 11th century B.C. stamp, or scarab. The man was probably praying to or trying to frighten the animal which may have been a local diety. Such crudely designed seals are common burial objects.*

Cup-and-Saucer *(top) This locally produced tenth century B.C. cup and saucer was probably used for cultic libations. Most of the forms of the pottery found at Tell Mevorakh, have been found in contemporaneous strata of tells in the neighboring northern region of Israel.*

Fifth Century B.C. Goat *(bottom) This clay goat was broken from the base of a large drinking vessel called a rhyton. Phoenician craftsmen probably copied the vessel from Persian metal rhytons found throughout the Persian Empire whose rulers encouraged Phoenician settlement in northern Israel.*





covered near the mound.

Our small administrative center did not last long. The reasons for its destruction are not certain, but we may assume that, like the contemporaneous stratum VA-IVB at Megiddo, Mevorakh was destroyed in the fifth year of the reign of Rehoboam (about 925 B.C.) during Pharaoh Shishak's military expedition to Palestine. Since the stele of this monarch was found at Megiddo, it is plausible that the Egyptian army on its way to Megiddo or during the short period of its encampment there, also occupied the district of Dor, so as to ensure a supply route through the nearby harbor. The final act of the invading army would most likely have been the destruction of the official buildings of the previous regime, like the administrative center at Mevorakh.

The destruction of stratum VII was followed by a long period of abandonment lasting until the period of Persian occupation in the fifth century B.C.

The reason for such a long and unexpected gap is not yet clear. Other settlements excavated in the region, Shiqmona and Tell Zeror for example, were repeatedly rebuilt during the period. Perhaps the explanation is that small "daughter" settlements of the type of Mevorakh would not be capable of existing independently, but only as part of a larger organization. Settlement at Mevorakh was not an inevitable event related to resources or a strategic location, but was the result of governmental decree. That no such decree was issued in later periods was probably because the organization of the later Israelite and Assyrian administrations in the region were of a totally different nature.

Settlement of the mound of Mevorakh resumed in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. after more than 500 years of abandonment. The reoccupation was the result of the great expansion into the region by the Phoenicians (led by the kings of Tyre and Sidon) which began at the end of the sixth century B.C., apparently under Persian encouragement and tutelage. As a result of this expansion, a dense chain of Phoenician settlements was established throughout the region. The building techniques employed at Mevorakh, the distinctive pottery and the small finds, all confirm that Phoenicians inhabited the mound in the Persian period.

The Phoenician occupation at Mevorakh probably ended about 333 B.C. at the time of Alexander the Great's war against Tyre. The Phoenicians were bitter rivals of Alexander, and thus, the coastal Phoenician settlements such as Mevorakh probably suffered the same destruction as Tyre and the whole northwestern region of Palestine.

(For additional details on Tell Mevorakh see: Ephraim Stern, "Excavations at Tel Mevorakh (1973-1976) Part I: From the Iron Age to the Roman Period," *Qedem* 9 (1978).)