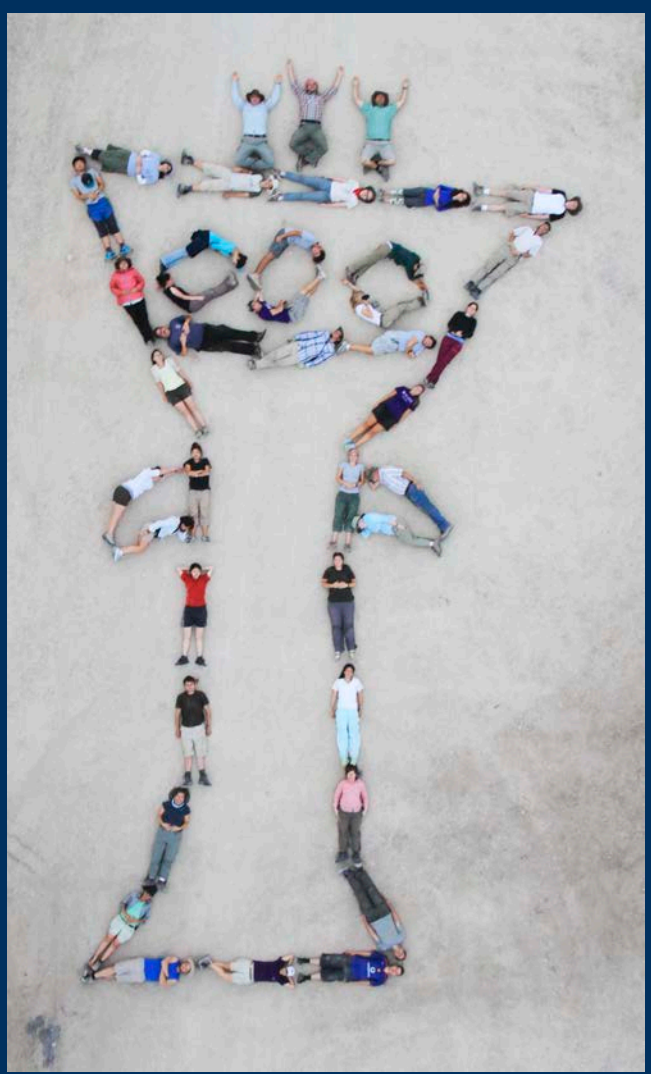
ÄGYPTEN UND ALTES TESTAMENT 90

Tell it in Gath

Studies in the History and Archaeology of Israel

Essays in Honor of Aren M. Maeir on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday



Edited by Itzhaq Shai, Jeffrey R. Chadwick, Louise Hitchcock, Amit Dagan, Chris McKinny, and Joe Uziel

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ÄGYPTEN UND ALTES TESTAMENT

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Band 90

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A LATE MIDDLE BRONZE IIB BURIAL FROM TEL ABEL BETH MAACAH: A NORTHERN PERSPECTIVE ON THE HYKSOS PHENOMENON

Nava Panitz-Cohen, Robert A. Mullins, Arlette David and Ariel Shatil

During the Middle Bronze Age IIB, northeastern Canaan was dominated by the metropolis of Hazor. Its importance is not only evident from its great size and rich remains, but also from allusions to the site in various documents from Mari, as well as from around 20 clay tablets found at Hazor itself (Ben-Tor 2016: 66–75, with references; also Ilan 1995: 307–308; Rainey and Notley 2006: 55–57). In proximity to this mega-city state were a number of large, fortified sites that were most likely subordinate to it. These include Tel Dan, a fortress at Kiryat Shemona and, most recently, Tell Abil el-Qameḥ, identified with biblical Abel Beth Maacah. Among the abundant Middle Bronze Age IIB remains at the latter site was a grave dug into the layers of a rampart dating towards the end of this period. In this article, we will briefly describe the MB IIB remains at Tel Abel Beth Maacah with a particular focus on the grave and its contents as a catalyst for discussing the "Hyksos phenomenon" in the north of Canaan.

We have chosen to write on this Middle Bronze II burial since it relates to one of the many research fields that Prof. Aren Maeir specializes in. This modest tribute to Aren is also a reminder of our shared experience at Tel Beth-Shean, the focus of his Ph.D. dissertation and subsequent book on the Middle Bronze Age II in the Jordan Valley (Maeir 2010). We greatly appreciate his scholarship, friendship and warm personality.

THE SITE

Tel Abil el-Qameḥ is located on the northern border of modern Israel, 6.5 km west of Tel Dan and 30 km north of Hazor. It sits astride Nahal Iyyon, one of the headwaters of the Jordan River (Fig. 1). The site is approximately 100 dunams (10 hectares) in size. It comprises a small upper tell in the north and a larger lower tell in the south (Fig. 2). From its strategic vantage point overlooking the northern end of the fertile Hula Valley, Tell Abil el-Qameḥ commands roads leading north into the Lebanese Beq'a, inland Syria and Mesopotamia, as well as west to the Lebanese/Phoenician coast (ca. 35 km to Tyre), and northeast to Damascus (ca. 70 km).

The tell's identification with Abel Beth Maacah is based mainly on the geographic lists in 1 Kings 15: 20 and 2 Kings 15: 29, which records sites from north to south along the route of military campaigns led by the Aramean king Ben Hadad in the 9th century BCE and the Neo-Assyrian king Tiglath Pilesar III in the 8th century BCE. Abel Beth Maacah appears in both lists after Ijon (identified with Tell ed-Dibbin some 11 km to the north in the Marj Ayyun Valley) and before Dan or Janoah. A third reference to the site, 2 Samuel 20: 14–22, recounts the escape of the Benjaminite Sheba ben Bichri to Abel Beth Maacah after his call for rebellion against David. This passage emphasizes the great distance between the site and Jerusalem, and may allude to its role as a border city when this text was written.

In second millennium BCE sources, the site is simply called "Abel". The suffix "Beth-Maacah" may have been a later addition related to the takeover of the Canaanite town by a tribal/kin-based element

(Israelite? Aramean? Canaanite?) in Iron Age I (Mazar 1961: 27; Dever 1986: 214; Lipinski 2000: 336; Na'aman 2012; Younger 2016: 213–219). The second millennium sources include the early group of Execration Texts from the late 19th to early 18th centuries BCE (but see Ben-Tor 2006 for a caveat to this date), Thutmose III's list of destroyed towns dating to the 15th century BCE, and, possibly, the Amarna letters from the 14th century BCE (Dever 1986: 211–213).

Tel Abil el-Qameh was briefly surveyed (Dever 1986), but not excavated until 2012, when Azusa Pacific University in Los Angeles and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem initiated the current project. A survey and four seasons of excavation to date (2013–2016) yielded rich architectural and artifactual remains from the Middle Bronze Age II to the Hellenistic Period (Panitz-Cohen, Mullins and Bonfil 2013, 2015; Panitz-Cohen and Mullins 2016), as well as ceramic evidence for earlier (Early Bronze II-III) and later (Byzantine to Ottoman) periods.

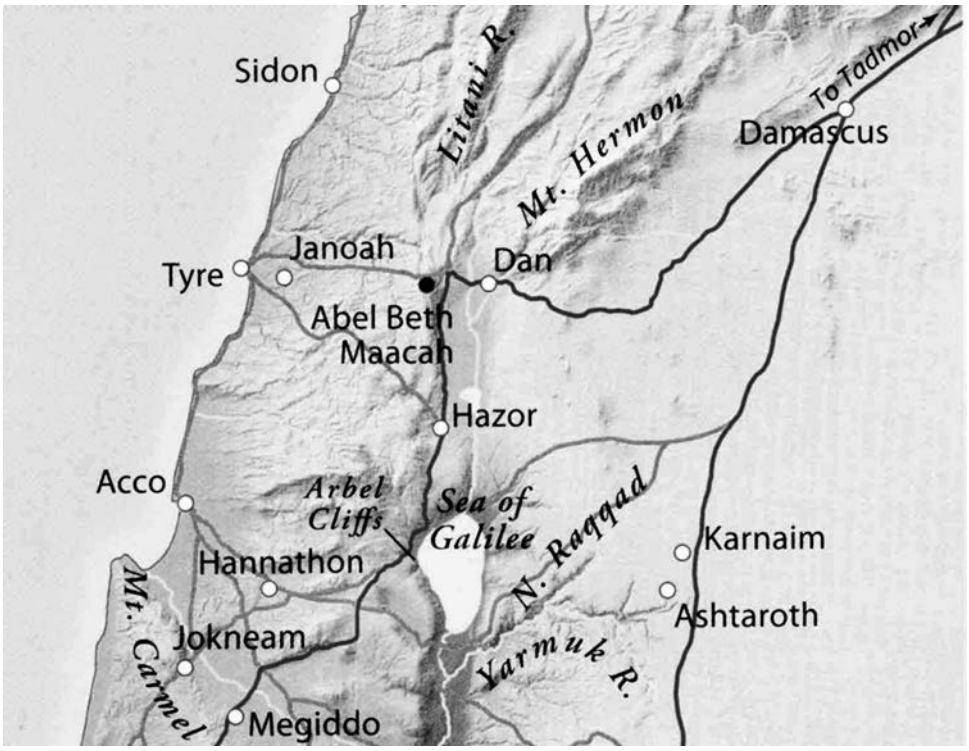

Fig. 1 Location of Tel Abel Beth Maacah.

Fig. 2 View of tell from the west.

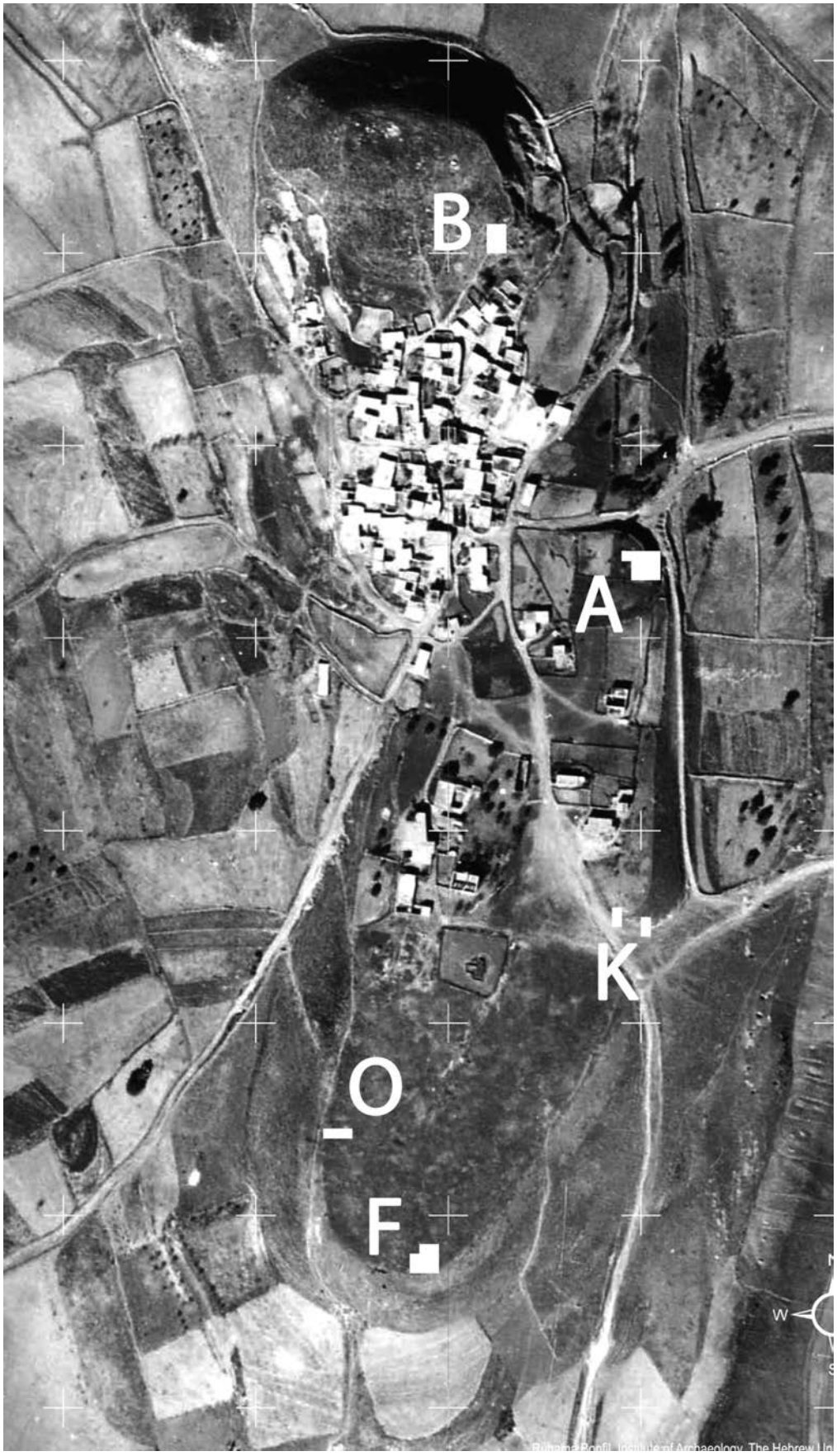

Fig. 3 Aerial view of the tell (1945) and excavation areas with MBII remains marked.

MIDDLE BRONZE IIB REMAINS

Remains from the Middle Bronze IIB (henceforth, MB IIB) have been excavated in three areas to date: F, B and O, with additional evidence for a fortification wall and rampart in Area K that might belong to this period as well (Fig. 3). To date, it seems that there was no major MBIIA settlement at the site, though further excavation is necessary to confirm this, as well as the exact date of the establishment of occupation in the Middle Bronze Age II. The pottery from all excavated areas with Middle Bronze remains points to MB IIB as the main phase of occupation that continued until the very terminal phase of this period, which is termed here "late MB IIB" rather than "MBIIC".[1]

Area F

Area F is located on the southern edge of the lower mound overlooking the expanse of the Hula Valley. The central feature of the MB IIB is a large stone and chalk-earthen structure whose construction is unique (Fig. 4). It consists of a northern wall and northeastern corner built of very large roughly hewn boulders that enclosed layers of medium-sized, roughly rounded stones set into a hard white chalky (nari) matrix on the south and east. On the west, later construction and pits cut the wall and stone-and-nari layers, so this side remains unknown. On the east, alternating layers of dark brown earth and gravelly-chalky nari were found abutting the stone-and-nari layers and sloping down towards the southeast (Fig. 5).

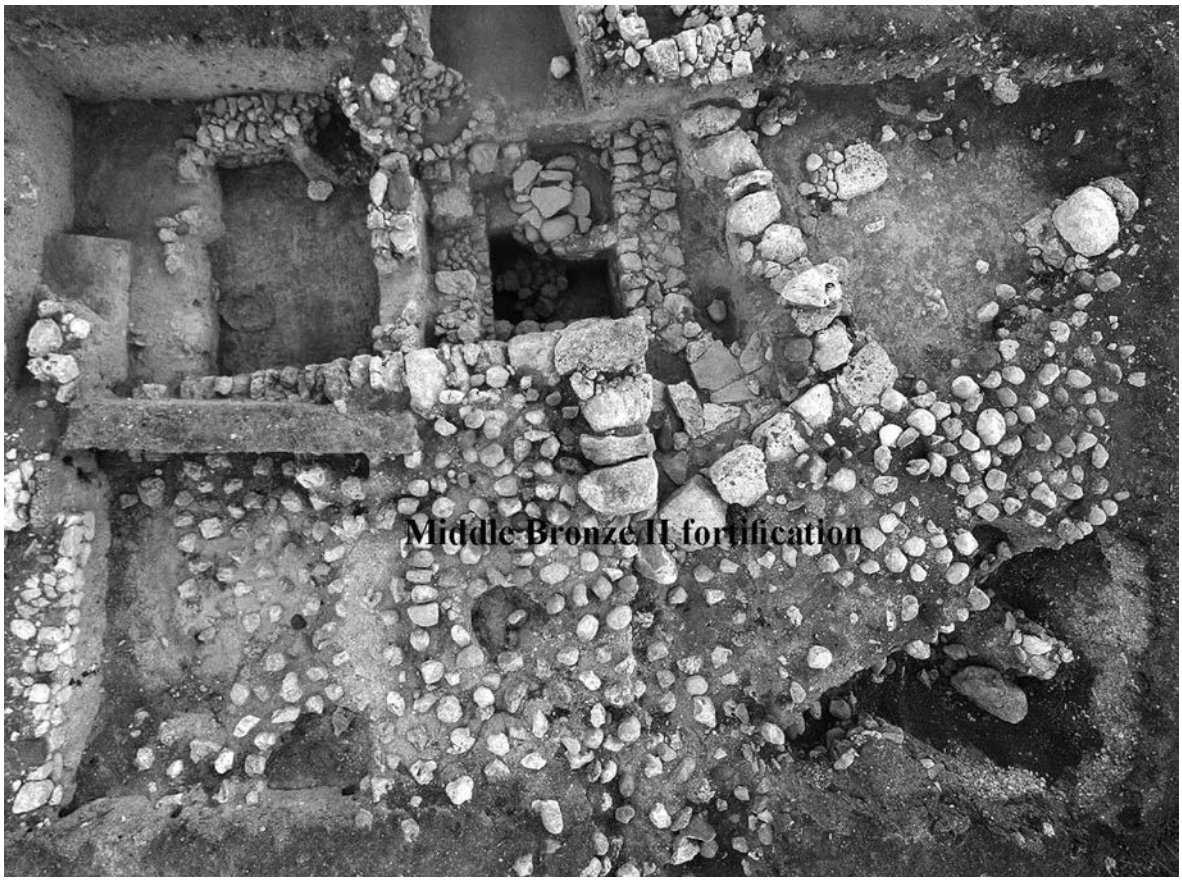

Fig. 4 MB IIB fortification in Area F.

[1] The chronological terminology used in the present article is MBIIA for the early part of the period and MB IIB for the latter part, rather than the alternative terminology, MBI and MBII respectively (Mazar 1990: 175). On the division of the Middle Bronze Age into three sub-periods (MBIIA, MB IIB and MBIIC), see Mazar 1990: 195.

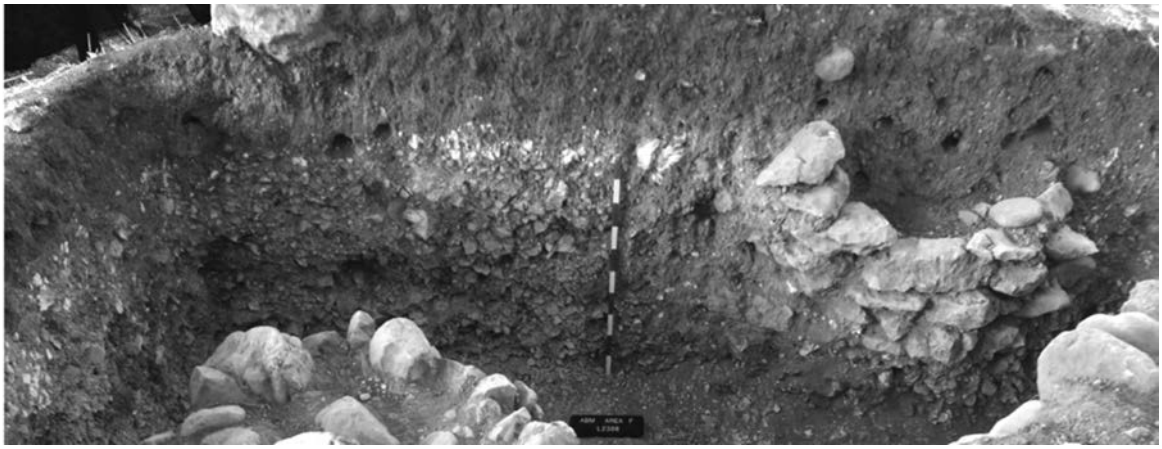

Fig. 5 MB IIB rampart layers in eastern part of Area F (cut by Iron I silo).

Together, these elements comprise an impressive rampart that continues down the southern slope of the tell. A layer of similarly sized stones, ca. three meters wide, covered these layers and extended towards the northeast from the well-built corner mentioned above. On the northern end, these stones were lined by a row of large boulders (some of which were robbed and apparently reused in a nearby Late Bronze Age wall). When viewed from above, these stones had the appearance of a substantial wall. However, they actually seem to have been merely a capping of the rampart layers in this place.

The dating of this fortification to the MB IIB is based on the pottery recovered from the rampart layers and from a living surface that abutted the western part of the northern face of the large stone structure. An oven composed of a large cooking pot was sunken into this floor. The typology of the cooking pot and the sherds found on the surface, including "eggshell ware", point to a date in late MB IIB. To the north of the stone structure were at least two main phases of Late Bronze Age buildings that utilized the structure's northern face, indicating that the fortification probably remained in use at that time. Several Iron Age I pits and stone silos cut into the extant top of the fortification indicate that the fortification went out of use at the end of the Late Bronze Age (see Figs. 4 and 5).

Area O

Area O is a line of three squares extending eastwards from the western edge of the lower mound, ca. 70 meters north of Area F. A few walls found below topsoil were built over a nicely constructed and substantial building. Large amounts of MB IIB pottery were found in association with this structure, including several MB IIB storage jars containing baby burials in proximity to the westernmost and northern walls. A relatively large amount of Iron I, and possibly, Iron IIA pottery in an area mixed with MB IIB pottery makes it difficult at this time to determine the exact periodization, but it is possible that there was some sort of Iron Age re-occupation of an MB IIB structure.

Area K

Area K is a small probe on the eastern slope about midway on the lower mound. The probe exposed a ca. 3 meter wide north–south wall that appears to have offsets and insets. A layer of white chalky material, similar to that described in Area F (see above), abutted the wall on the north and sloped down towards the east (Fig. 6). Topographically, this area affords easy access to the top of the lower mound, indicating that a gate structure might be found here. The suggestion that this fortification might belong to the Middle Bronze Age is based on its similarity to the line and composition of the fortification components in Area F, although no indicative pottery has been found so far.

Fig. 6 Rampart(?) of chalky white sloping layers against a large stone wall, Area K (looking north).

Area B

Area B is located at southeastern part of the upper mound. A large well-constructed building from the late Persian-early Hellenistic period was found below topsoil. It was built above a fill that covered architectural remains, ovens, pits and silos dating to the Iron Age I and II. Throughout the excavated area, these Iron Age elements had been constructed on top of and cut into thin gravelly layers that sloped down towards the south/southeast (Fig. 7). These layers are thought to have been part of a rampart, perhaps providing a foundation for or abutting a large structure higher up the mound to the northwest. MB IIB pottery was recovered in all parts of Area B, although none of it so far can be unequivocally associated *in situ* in the rampart layers. A pit burial dated to late MB IIB based on the grave goods (see details below), was found dug into the rampart (Fig. 8).

Description of the Grave[2]

A large pit (4719) of unknown date barely grazed the eastern part of the burial and continued down to a lower level on the east, cutting into the rampart layers. No damage was done to the burial by this pit; in fact, it was during its excavation when two vessels and one scarab placed to the east of the skeleton's knees, as well as a few bones, were first revealed, indicating that a burial should be sought just to the west. The burial pit (4788) measured ca. 1.0 m long and 65 cm at its widest point; no evidence was found to indicate that the pit had been larger than the size of the skeleton and the goods placed to its east.

The roughly oval-shaped contour of the pit (4723) above the burial itself (4788) was made visible by its dark colored soil and the fact that it cut into the sloping gravel layers that made up the rampart (see Fig. 8). The northern end of this pit was covered by a portion of the late Persian-early Hellenistic building. Approximately 50 cm separated the top of the pit from the foundations of the building. An interesting feature in the pit was the presence of a horizontal layer composed of the same gravel content as the rampart that directly covered the skeleton. Thus, the burial pit not only cut into the sloping layers of the rampart,

[2] Area B in which the burial was located was supervised by Ariel Shatil of the Institute of Archaeology, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

but the skeleton was also covered by the same rampart-like material. There are two options that can possibly explain this situation. First, the burial took place during the construction of the rampart, so that the individual was interred "sandwich-like" inside the layers. Following this, the area above was filled with dark soil. Second, the grave was dug into the rampart and, after the interment, the individual was covered by the layer of gravelly rampart material. The latter option seems more likely.

Fig. 7 Sloping rampart layers, Area B; pit of late MB IIB grave marked with an arrow (looking west).

Fig. 8 The burial, looking west towards Pit 4723.

There is another enigmatic feature. While the burial itself was oriented north-south, the oval-shaped pit with the dark fill above the gravel layer covering the skeleton was oriented east-west. Alternative explanations for this phenomenon is that the dark layer represents a later pit that was dug by chance into the rampart (as were other later pits in the area), just missing the gravel layer over the skeleton, or that in this particular location, the rampart itself was composed of dark earth laid above the gravel. Both explanations are somewhat forced and we prefer to interpret the finds as a rather complex mode of burial and not the result of two different activities at different times or a technical feature of the rampart.

The Skeleton

The placement of the burial inside the gravelly layers of the rampart caused much damage and the bones mostly crumbled upon touch. The skeleton was examined in the field by Dr. Alon Barash, a forensic anthropologist,[3] but its poor condition precluded the effort to remove it, other than part of the skull and a few other bones. The skeleton was lying on its back with its head positioned in the north facing east and its feet in the south (Figs. 9–10). Both legs were flexed and turned to the left side (east). The right arm lay flexed over the thorax, while the left arm was almost straight with the palm over the pelvis. The skeleton was probably an adult male, as suggested by the robusticity of the limbs and the shape of the mandible. His age at death was estimated between 30–50 years. A more accurate estimation is difficult as some key elements of the skeleton were missing. Some pathologies were observed. Osteophytes were visible on the upper lumbar vertebra, which might indicate strenuous labor throughout life. Moreover, the posterior teeth were missing and the mandibular alveolar process was completely resorbed, indicating that tooth loss occurred long before death.

Fig. 9 Position of scarab-ring and toggle pins on the skeleton. See color plate 5.

[3] The Bar Ilan University Medical School in Safed.

The Grave Goods

The grave goods included two bronze toggle pins, a large scarab mounted in a bronze ring, a broken scarab and two pottery vessels consisting of a cylindrical juglet and a carinated bowl. These items date the burial to the late MB IIB, as detailed below. These objects are typical of the MB IIB "funeral kit", as defined by J. Baker at Ashkelon: "a group of pottery, scarab(s), and toggle pin(s) associated with either a primary/primary-disturbed burial or a post-depositional sweep or disintegration" (Baker 2006: 2).

The skeleton's poor state of preservation precluded conclusive observations, but it seems that one of the five hand-palm bones (metacarpals), possibly the "pointing finger" or the "middle finger", and possibly one other finger as well, was/were inserted through the bronze ring (Fig. 9). The two toggle pins were located just above the bronze ring (in the direction of the skull) and it is quite certain that all three elements were related, possibly forming one composite object. The ring-mounted scarab may have been fastened with a string to the toggle pins, which were then used to fasten the shroud. Although the string is understandably gone, the close proximity of the scarab-ring to the pins (they touch each other) cannot be accidental. If this configuration is indeed correct, it is as though the scarab ring served as a kind of sealing for the fastening of the items to the shroud. The two pottery vessels and the broken scarab were placed just to the east of the deceased's knees (Fig. 10).

Fig. 10 Position of the cylindrical juglet and bowl (1) and broken scarab (2).

The Scarabs

Two steatite scarabs were found among the grave goods. A very well-preserved one was found on the skeleton itself and mounted in a bronze ring (Fig. 11), while the other just to the skeleton's east was found broken away on its base (Fig. 12).

The bronze-mounted scarab (Reg. No. 47609) measures 2.3 x 1.6 cm. The inner diameter of the mounting was ca. 27–30 mm, making it too large for a finger-ring and too small for a bracelet (see Keel 1995: § 276 and his examples of large rings from Tell el-'Ajjul, Nos. 242 and 738; see also § 281). As

suggested above, it seemed that the deceased's finger (or two fingers?) had been inserted through the scarab-ring, which in turn was attached to the two toggle-pins. Alternatively, the piece may have been worn on the chest as a pendant attached to a leather thong and placed just above the two toggle pins that fastened the shroud. Scarabs have been found in the proximity of toggle-pins in other Middle Bronze Age tombs, perhaps originally fastened to the pins (Keel 1995: 279; see, e.g., Baker 2006: Fig. 6), as we surmise may have been the case with ours.

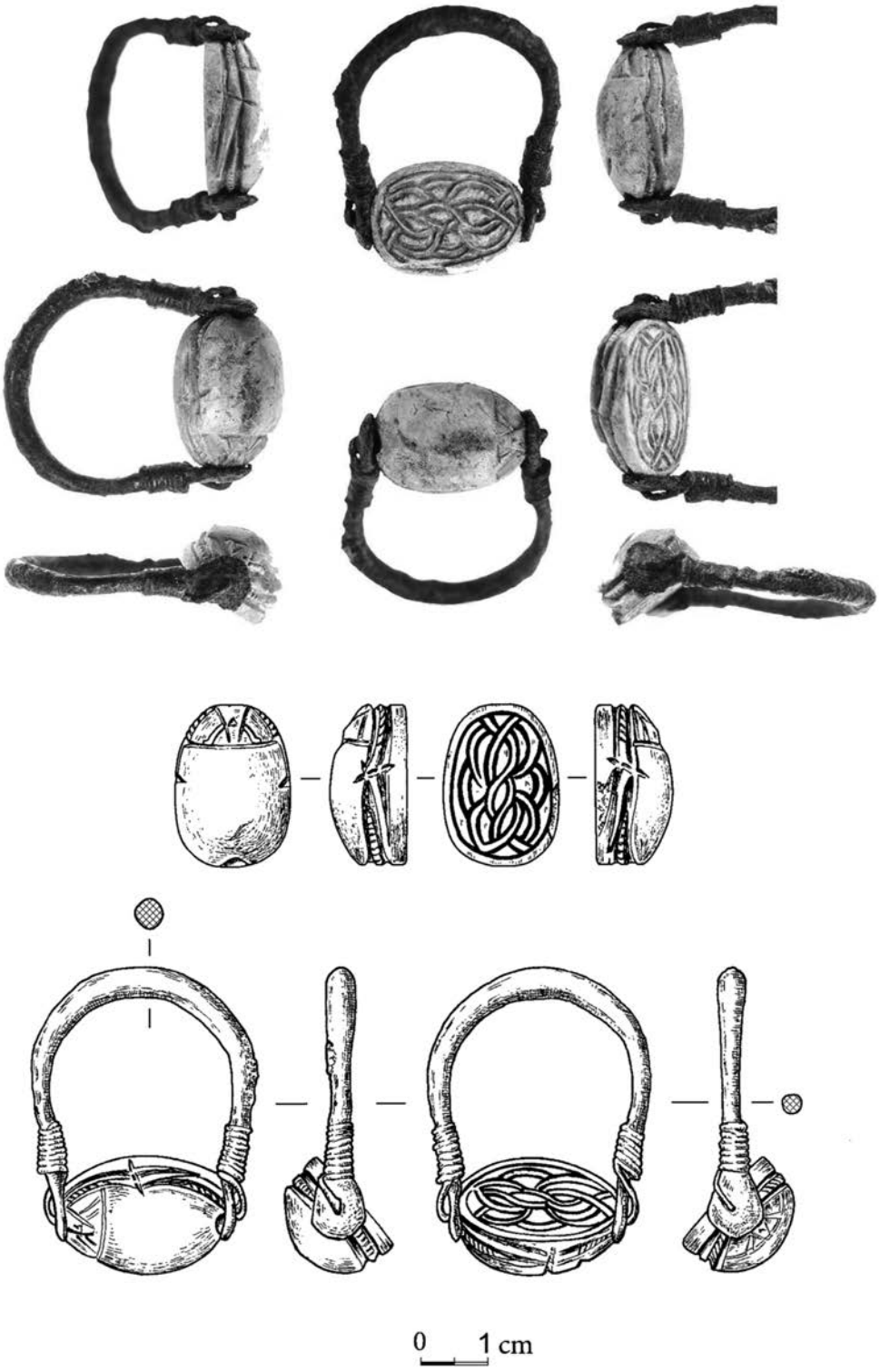

Fig. 11 The scarab-ring,

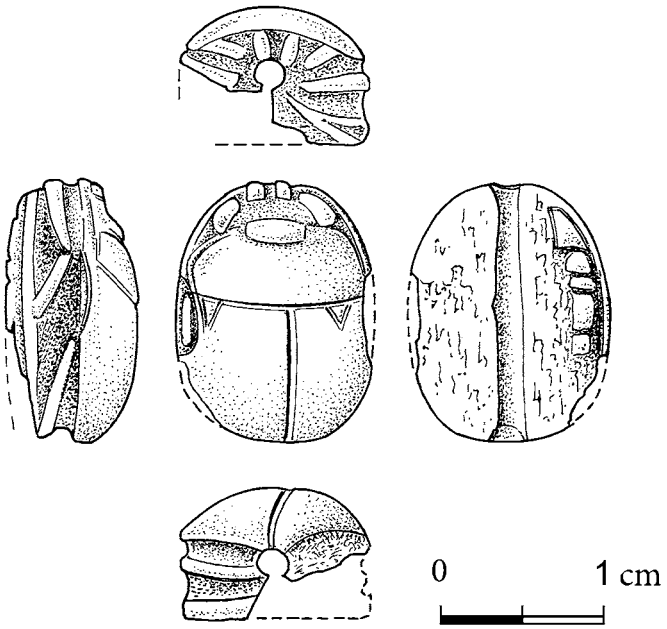

Fig. 12 The broken scarab.

The bronze ring was secured to the scarab by means of a narrow bronze wire that was threaded through the perforation, inserted through small loops that adjoined the perforated ends of the scarab, and then twisted tightly around the ends of the ring. This is a Levantine technique used from early MB IIB onwards, that was adopted in Egypt in the Late 13th Dynasty and used alongside other, Egyptian-style mounting techniques (cf., Kopetzky 2015: 399–400).

The scarab and its bronze mounting were well-preserved except for a chip on the side of the base and slight surface damage to the back. The scarab has a trapezoidal head of the D9 type, a smooth back of the O type with notches marking the suture between the pronotum and elytra, and separate legs with the front and back ones notched (d8 type; Tufnell 1984: 32, 35, 37, Figs. 12–14). The decorated base is carved inside a plain contour band. It exhibits an original vertically-arranged pattern of coils around a central twisted two-thread cable (Tufnell's 6C3 "encompassed [coils with] central cable"; Tufnell 1984: 127; Keel 1995: §502). This particular design is most probably Canaanite and not Egyptian (Ben-Tor 2007: 171). A magic potency is attributed to the 'knots' of this motif (Keel 1995: 186) following an ancient Egyptian belief (Wendrich 2006).

The scarab's formal typology (D9/O/d8), the base's design, and the type of mounting, known in the Levant since the early MB IIB, as noted above (Lilyquist 1993: 43; Kopetzky 2015: 399), permit us to date this piece of Canaanite origin to the late MB IIB.

The second scarab associated with this burial (Reg. No. 47084) was located ca. 20 cm to the east of the skeleton in proximity to the two pottery vessels that formed part of the grave goods. It measures 1.53 x 1.23 cm and is also made of steatite with faint glazing traces at incised points. The base was almost completely missing and it had a damaged head and side chips. The head was originally squarish (type C) or trapezoidal (type D) with notched clypeus. The back belonged to the vIv type (with humeral callosities, a Middle and New Kingdom feature), and the separated, smooth legs belonged to the chronologically non-significant d5 type (Tufnell 1984: 32, 35, 37, Figs. 12–14; Keel 1995: §111 for the legs). Due to its damaged state, the piece cannot be dated with any certainty.

The Toggle Pins

Two well-preserved complete toggle pins were found on the upper chest of the skeleton close to the ring-mounted scarab (as described above). Both pins are made of bronze and have an eyelet near the midpoint, but they differ in size and in certain other details. Most of the comparisons to these pins date from the mid to late MB IIB.

The shaft of Reg. No. 47910 is 11.8 cm long (Fig. 13a). The eyelet is round and has a thickened frame that is slightly wider than the pin's diameter; its interior diameter is 0.29 cm and its outer diameter is ca. 0.65 cm. One end is pointed and the other (the butt) is slightly narrower than the pin's diameter, ending in a flat (though corroded) edge. Both shanks, between the eyelet and the point (6.8 cm) and between the eyelet and the butt (4.8 cm), bear faint traces of ribbing. It seems that this can be possibly correlated to Henschel-Simon's Type 6c with "spiral ribbing" (Henschel-Simon 1938: 191, 194–197), although none of these examples has the narrower butt as the end of our pin.

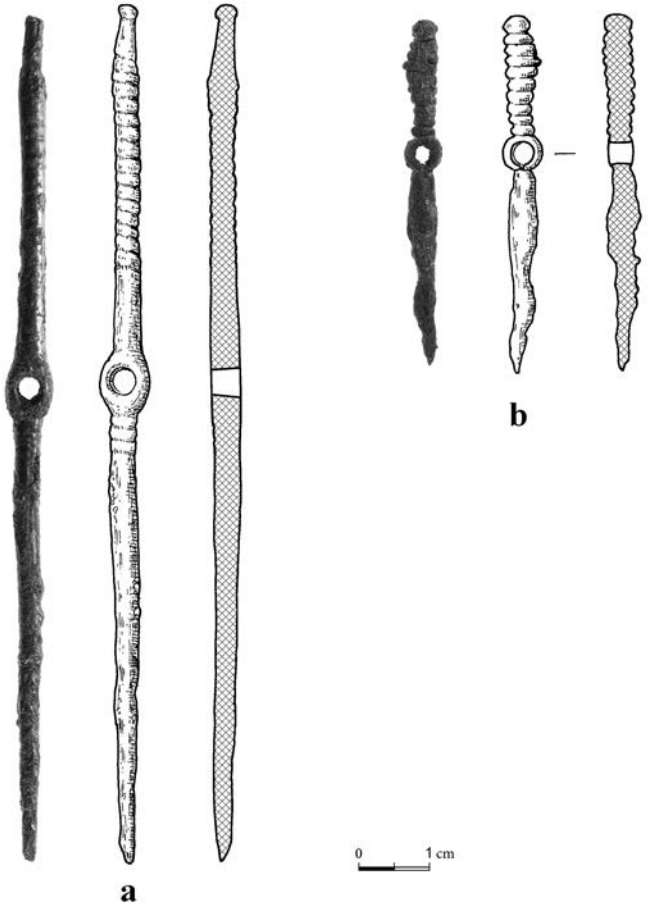

Fig. 13 The toggle pins.

The shaft of Reg. No. 47611 is much shorter, with a length of 4.85 cm (Fig. 13b). The eyelet is round and has a prominent thickened frame that is wider than the diameter of the pin; the interior diameter of the eyelet is ca. 0.17 cm and its exterior diameter is ca. 0.7 cm. One end is pointed and the other is knob- or club-headed. The part of the shank between the eyelet and the point (2.7 cm) is plain, although corrosion prevented us from determining whether or not there were ribbing marks near the eyelet. The part of the shank between the eyelet and the butt (1.6 cm) has prominent spiral ribbing. This pin can

possibly be assigned to Henschel-Simon Type 6a (Henschel-Simon 1938: 193–195; see also Type 8c [pp. 198–201], although these have a flat nail-like butt).

Most toggle pins are bronze, although they are also known in silver, gold, bone or ivory. They are common in MBII burials and were most likely used to fasten the edges of the burial garment (Singer-Avitz 2004: 1005). As opposed to the more selective placement of jewelry or weapons, the ubiquity of toggle pins in burials, regardless of gender or age, led Baker (2006: 2) to conclude that they played a role in the well-being of the deceased, alongside the protective power of the scarabs with which they are usually found. Henschel-Simon (1938: 174) noted that "they were a popular object of daily use during the presence of the Hyksos in Palestine," and in fact, the peak of their presence in the region was during this period (ibid: 186). Toggle pins have been found in MB IIB burials in Egypt, while Bietak (2016: 270–272) noted that this was a Canaanite burial custom that was not adopted by the local Egyptians.

Select comparisons to toggle pins from sites in the vicinity of Abel Beth Maacah include late MB IIB graves at Dan (Ilan 1996: Figs. 4.95: 13; 4.100: 14 [silver]–15 [bronze]), as well as an MBIIA cult deposit at that site (Ilan 1992: Fig. 6). Toggle pins were found in a MB IIB cistern (possibly reused as a burial) at Hazor (e.g., Yadin et al. 1958: Pl. CXVIII: 16–20; see additional examples in Yadin et al. 1961: Pl. CCXCIX: 8, Stratum 3) and in an MB IIB burial at Kiryat Shemona (Yasur-Landau 2012: Fig. 14.4: 6). Toggle pins were also found in Tomb 2/3 at Ginosar (Epstein 1974: Fig. 13: 1–4, 5–8).

The Pottery

Two vessels associated with the burial were found ca. 20 cm east of the skeleton. The cylindrical juglet is a relatively large, well-made example of this shape, standing 16.5 cm high (Fig. 14). It was found intact, though most of the rim was missing. Based on what survived, it was a simple everted (slightly funnel-shaped) rim with a rounded edge. The shoulder is long and sloping and a slight ridge marks the join of the shoulder to the neck. The double-stranded handle has two 'buttons' (one on each strand) just above the join of the handle to the shoulder and two more on top of the handle just before the join to the rim. The base of the juglet is convex, lending it a somewhat wobbly stance. The vessel is lightly burnished all over creating a smooth exterior, with vertical strokes most evident on the body.

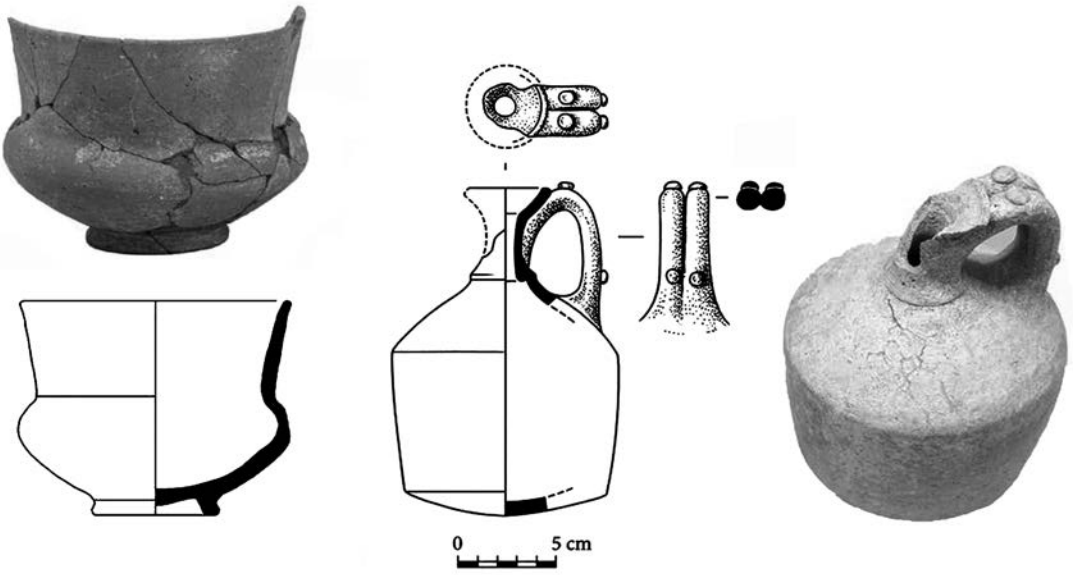

Fig. 14 Juglet and carinated bowl.

Cylindrical juglets begin at the end of the Middle Bronze IIA, but make their main appearance in the Middle Bronze IIB and continue until the very end of the period; it is not clear whether they were still a viable type in Late Bronze I (cf., Amiran 1969: Pl. 46: 2–3 from Megiddo Tombs 1100B and 3025). Such juglets are common in burials of this period and are often the main criterion for assigning the burial assemblage to the latter part of MBII.

Selected comparisons at sites nearby Abel Beth Maacah include late MB IIB burials at Tel Dan, some of which were painted (Ilan 1995: 226–229), though none had the kind of "buttons" found on the handle of our juglet. The lack of cylindrical juglets at the fortress in Kiryat Shemona (Yasur-Landau 2012: 72) might be a chronological factor. One such juglet was found in a grave at Kfar Szold (Epstein 1974: Fig. 1: 10) and a larger number in Tombs 2/3 and 4 at Ginosar (Epstein 1974: Figs. 9: 1–8; 13: 14–15; 16: 1–3), suggesting a later date for these burials. No cylindrical juglets were found in Tomb 1181 at Hazor, dated to the transitional MBIIA-B (Maeir 1997), but a number of MB IIB examples came from other contexts at Hazor, though none are exactly like ours. Examples with "buttons" on the top of a double- or triple-strap handle include Yadin et al. 1958: Pls. XCIV: 15; CXXXII: 3 and Yadin et al. 1960: Pl. CXII: 3 (jug).

The second vessel, a carinated bowl found near the skeleton's knees was not restorable, but it can be assigned to the typical shape of such bowls in MB IIB (e.g., Yadin et al. 1958: Pl. CXIX: 16–129, Stratum 4).

MBII GRAVES DUG INTO RAMPARTS

The phenomenon of MB pit graves dug into MB ramparts is rare. At Tel Dan, numerous burials spanning MBIIA to late MB IIB were found dug into the interior slope of the ramparts in every excavation area except for Area K (the arched gate). In late MB IIB, domestic occupation covered the interior embankment and included burials that were "sub-floor insertions". In fact, these were the only graves that "penetrated the earthen embankment from above," since the MBIIA burials were found below the (inner) rampart and the MB IIB layers at its foot (Ilan 1996: 165). Ilan (ibid) surmised that these burials were due to the over-population of the city at that time and the need for new intramural burial grounds.

In the upper tell at Hazor, several graves with late MB IIB pottery unrelated to structures or floors above them were found on top of the ruins of the Middle Bronze city (Stratum XVI) and below the remains of the Late Bronze I city (Stratum XV). Yadin (1975: 268) attributed them to squatters who returned to the site after the destruction of the MB IIB city, or as the graves of various people living in the vicinity. At Tel Haror, a shallow grave lined with stones at the foot of the inner slope of the MB IIB rampart was found containing pottery vessels and a "Hyksos" scarab as grave goods (Oren 1993: 581–582). At Ebla, MBIIA extramural burials dug into the earthen ramparts on the eastern side of the site were attributed to those who had besieged the site (Burke 2008: 200). In general, it seems that the custom of intramural rampart burials is not common. The fact that these occur at Tel Dan and now at Abel Beth Maacah, might allude to it being a local phenomenon.

Only further excavation will tell if the rampart grave at Tel Abel Beth Maacah is a single occurrence or if there are others nearby. We also do not know yet whether there was dense occupation in this part of the mound when the burial was placed, leading to Ilan's conclusion that burials inserted in the ramparts were the outcome of such density (see above), or whether the location of this grave was related to the status of the interred individual. In any event, this simple pit burial is not indicative of the late MB IIB period nor any particular cultural practice (Steibing 1971). Single interments are more typical of MBIIA, with multiple interments in one tomb becoming common in mid to late MB IIB, reflecting a

social change that is probably related to the more urban and sedentary, not to mention the wealthy nature of the latter part of the period (Maeir 1997: 323, 325). In this sense, the fact that the rampart burial at Abel Beth Maacah is a single pit burial might indicate a high status of this individual, or merely a hasty solution to the need to bury him.

THE "HYKSOS PHENOMENON" FROM A NORTHERN PERSPECTIVE

The presence of a fine scarab in the rampart grave at Tel Abel Beth Maacah belonging to a type dubbed "Hyksos" simply because they are ubiquitous in Egypt and Palestine during the 15th Dynasty (Redford 1992: 119; also Tufnell 1984) prompts a brief look at the "Hyksos phenomenon" from a northern Canaan perspective.

The modern study of the Hyksos, inspired by the writings of the Greek historian Manetho and quoted by Josephus Flavius in the 1st century CE (Redford 1992: 98–99), has prompted much debate over their identity and historical role. Scholars no longer adhere to the earlier definition of the Hyksos as a group of warrior elites migrating into Canaan from further north as part of the Amorite migration, establishing fortified cities replete with ramparts, and continuing south into Egypt, where they established a sweeping empire that included Egypt, Canaan, and Syria (Albright 1960; Kenyon 1960; Aharoni 1979: 148; Oren 1997a: xx–xxi).

Our current understanding of the "Hyksos phenomenon" is more nuanced and informed, due in large part to Manfred Bietak's excavations at Tell el-Dab'a, identified with the Hyksos capital of Avaris, as well as at other sites in the eastern Delta, such as Tell el-Yahudiyeh, Tell el-Maskhuta, Tell el-Hebua and Tell el-Rataba. A study of the material culture of these sites in light of the relative dearth of texts and inscriptions pertaining to the Hyksos has contributed greatly to refining our knowledge of these people and their presence in Egypt, as well as their ties to Canaanite culture and the broader regional sphere (Bietak 1991; 1996; 1997; 2010; Redford 1991; 1992: 101; Weinstein 1981; 1992; Holladay 1997; Oren 1997).

Systematic study of MB IIB scarabs has also contributed to our understanding of the Hyksos and the nature of Egyptian-Levantine relations at that time (Giveon 1978; 1988; Tufnell 1984; Ward and Dever 1994; Ben-Tor 1997; 2007; 2011; Boschloos 2013). While much data is available, the dynamics of the relations between the people who became the Hyksos in the final stages of MB IIB and the Canaanites in the Levant, remains a debated topic to be further explored.

For the most part, the Hyksos phenomenon is analyzed from an Egyptian perspective, focusing on the exogenous aspect of these *hekau hasut*, "rulers of foreign lands", and how their arrival, assimilation, eventual rule, and ultimate expulsion impacted Egypt (Dever 1990: 69). The hybridity of Canaanite and Egyptian culture as it was manifested in the eastern Nile Delta, and to a lesser extent in southern Canaan, is at the crux of the study of the Hyksos and, in fact, is how these people are made archaeologically and historically visible (Bietak 1991; 1996; 1997; 2010; Oren 1997a; Redford 1997).

Given the lack of a clear cultural mixture in the material record at contemporary northern Canaanite sites, it is difficult to achieve an understanding of the impact of the "Hyksos phenomenon" in that region. Most studies have focused on the fortifications, stratigraphy and chronology, as well as on the nature, date and cause of the destruction of these Canaanite cities at the end of the period (e.g., Dever 1985; 1990; Hoffmeir 1989; Weinstein 1991; Redford 1992: 125–129; Oren 1997a; Burke 2014). To a large extent, this discussion is also conducted from an Egyptian perspective and typically debates to what extent these fortifications were built by the Hyksos and were destroyed by Egyptians or by the Hyksos

themselves. However, this perspective does little to shed light on the actual nature of Egypto-Hyksos and Canaanite relations during the final stage of the Middle Bronze Age in northern Canaan.

Three main issues concerning the Hyksos phenomenon maybe examined: 1) their ethnic identity and geographic origin; 2) the chronology and process of their emigration, settlement and seizure of power in the eastern Delta; 3) the nature and extent of their relations with Canaan (southern and northern), Lebanon (coastal and inland) and Syria, both before and during the 15th Dynasty.

Ethnic Identity and Geographic Origin

Consensus has it that the population who gradually entered the Delta and eventually established the 15th Dynasty was ethnically West Semitic, based mainly on the onomasticon of names, but also on the similarity in material culture between MB IIB sites in Canaan and contemporary sites in the Delta, including pottery, architecture, cult, temples, metallurgy (Dever 1985; Redford 1992: 100; Bietak 1991; 1996; 1997: 113; Oren 1997a) and scarabs (for the latter see further below). It is telling that while many MB IIB Canaanite cultural elements are found in the eastern Delta, most of the Egyptian objects found in Canaan at this time came from looted Middle Kingdom (MBIIA) contexts, alongside large amounts of Palestinian-produced scarabs (Redford 1992: 120–121; Ben-Tor 2007: 188 and see further below).

The question of geographic origin is more contentious, oscillating broadly between northern coastal Lebanon or southern Canaan. In favor of the southern origin are the plethora of scarabs, especially those bearing royal Hyksos names, distributed in large numbers at MB IIB sites like Tell el-'Ajjul and Tell el-Far'ah South, prompting Weinstein (1981: 10) and others (e.g., Oren 1997b; McGovern 2000; also Ben-Tor 2007: 188) to claim this region as the "Hyksos homeland." It was suggested that the close ties to southern Canaan, mainly in the economic sphere, were based on kinship relations that cemented Hyksos' political control over this region (Weinstein 1981; Mazar 1990: 222; Ben-Tor 2007: 189). Bietak (2010: 150) opposed this view on the grounds that the people who established the 15th Dynasty had already been in Egypt (specifically at Tell el-Dab'a) for about a century prior to the distribution of these scarabs and other such objects.

In order to resolve this issue, Bietak turned to the provenience and distribution of key pottery types, such as storage jars and Tell el-Yahudiyeh juglets and, on the basis of petrographic studies, concluded that the geographic origin of the Hyksos was the northern Lebanese coast (Cohen-Weinberger and Goren 2004; Owenby and Bourriau 2009: 183–184). However, contradictory results were obtained from Neutron Activation Analysis (NAA) of Canaanite-type storage jars from Tell el-Dab'a, showing mainly a southern coastal origin (McGovern and Harbottle 1997; McGovern 2000). While this kind of information sheds light on trade relations between Egypt and the Levant, it cannot serve as an indicator of the geographic origin of the Hyksos, even though Ben-Tor (2007: 189) argued that the very occurrence of such commercial contacts point to a Canaan origin for the Delta settlers who "would be expected to initiate commercial contacts with their place of origin."[4] Based on texts, Redford (1992: 100–101) concluded that the origin of the Hyksos should be sought "no further north than the Mt. Lebanon ranges, nor further south than the Judean highlands."

Ultimately, in light of the scenario of Asiatic people arriving in the Delta for multifarious reasons, whether by their own volition or under coercion, during a period of some 100 years, the ability to pinpoint their geographic origin remains moot, since they could have come from different parts of the southern

[4] Bietak (1991: 29; 1996: 36) quotes a study by physical anthropologists Winkler and Wilfing who found a closes match between the population type at Tell el-Dab'a and the Iron Age population at Kamid el-Loz in southern Lebanon; however, this match was valid for the males, while the females were apparently of local origin. This led to the suggestion that foreign mercenaries or sailors living at Avaris married local women.

and northern Levant where a broadly shared material culture is evident during the first half of the second millennium BCE (Maeir 1997: 322–323).

It may be suggested that the new rulers of the 15th Dynasty deliberately manipulated a real and a perceived Canaanite origin for political and economic reasons, such as the need to establish a power base in nearby southern Canaan and to boost trade with the northern coastal regions, following the waning of the role of Byblos. The other side of this process is how these same West Semitic rulers adopted certain Egyptian customs, such as the Egyptian king-list tradition and the worship of Egyptian gods as ways to legitimize their rule in Egypt (Redford 1992: 107; also Bietak 1991; Ben-Tor 2007: 192). It may be suggested that the Hyksos' adoption of Egyptian trappings was also aimed at enhancing their status in the eyes of the Canaanite population to the north, assuming that such cultural elements were viewed with admiration and respect (cf., Higgenbotham 2000 for the Late Bronze Age).

Processes of Settlement, and Seizure of Power in the Eastern Delta

The second issue pertains to the process in which West Semitic population elements who emigrated to Egypt (specifically the Delta region) rose to power as the rulers of the 15th Dynasty. The most accepted scenario postulates a gradual infiltration and settlement of Canaanites in the eastern Delta since the Middle Kingdom. This resulted in the presence of a "highly Egyptianized Canaanite Middle Bronze culture in this region and the rule of a dynasty of Canaanite origin in northern Egypt" (Ben-Tor 2011: 34; also Dever 1985; O'Connor 1997: 56; Oren 1997a).

Canaanites reached northern Egypt mainly in search of commercial opportunities, which opened up after the decline of Byblos at the end of the Middle Kingdom (Weinstein 1981: 13–14; Ilan 1995: 308). Avaris, an active port already during the Middle Kingdom, grew into an important industrial center and trade emporium from the 13th Dynasty on (Bietak 1996: 31–36). The Canaanites increasingly played a central role as traders, middlemen, artisans, mercenaries and workers in the port (Mazar 1990: 188; Oren 1997: xxiii; Ben-Tor 2007: 188–189; 2011: 26), culminating in their takeover of government in the mid-17th century BCE. The lack of signs of destruction or conquest in the archaeological record indicates that there had been no opposition to this move (van Seters 1966: 191–195; Steibing 1971; Bietak 2010: 139). We cannot know if this lack of opposition was due to cooperation on the side of the local Egyptian population or to their inability to oppose such a move.

A different scenario is proposed by Redford, who doubts that a gradual increase of Asiatics in the Delta can be easily equated on a one-to-one basis with an inevitable and peaceful takeover by the 15th Dynasty. He raised the possibility that their ascendancy involved violence, though he admitted to the lack of destruction levels in the Delta sites. "The mere presence of Asiatics in Egypt prior to the Hyksos accession to power has no bearing whatsoever on the nature of the political coup that produced the 15th, or Hyksos, Dynasty" (Redford 1992: 102). This view would suggest that a new wave of Canaanites arrived and instituted the takeover. Redford tends to view their "coup" against the background of the internecine hostilities in the Near East, especially Syria, at the end of the 17th century BCE (ibid: 105–106, 111). Thus, the Hyksos takeover of the eastern Delta may be perceived as yet another such altercation, particularly in light of their West Semitic origin and cultural background. Such a viewpoint, in fact, considers how northern Canaanites would have perceived Hyksos rule in the Delta, rather than how the Delta Hyksos would have viewed Canaan.

The Nature and Extent of Relations with the Levant Before and During the 15th Dynasty

The third issue is whether the Hyksos regime constituted an empire that exercised some control in regions beyond the Delta. While the flourishing commercial relations with southern Canaan, and possibly coastal

Lebanon, might have been based partially on kinship relations and shared origins, most scholars conclude, as noted above, that there had been no Hyksos empire or official political control of any region to the north of the Delta. The proximity and cultural affinity of Sharuhen (Tell el-'Ajjul?) suggest a possible dependency or confederation, but nothing more than that (e.g., Mazar 1990: 188; Redford 1992: 120–122; Ilan 1995: 302–303; Bietak 1997: 113; Oren 1997b; Ben-Tor 2007: 193; Burke 2014: 411).

On the other hand, Kempinski surmised that the Hyksos did directly control southern and central Canaan, as far north as the Jezreel Valley, and it was only north of this line that there was no more than a "diffuse sphere of influence and commercial relations with the main city-states" (Kempinski 1997: 328), chief among them Hazor. The evidence he cites for the latter claim is that Hyksos scarabs bearing royal or official names are common in southern Canaan and in the Jezreel Valley, but are rare in northern Canaan and virtually absent in Syria (see further below).

The Role of Scarabs

Scarabs are one of the prime categories of material culture that can shed light on the interface between the Canaanites in the Delta and the population in Canaan during MB IIB. The production and large-scale use of scarabs in Canaan coincides with the takeover of the eastern Delta by the Canaanite population at this time. These items retain the shape of the Egyptian scarabs, but their decoration comprises either geometric designs, false meaningless hieroglyphs, or adaptations of Egyptian apotropaic or cultic motifs without understanding the original iconography behind them. As such, they reflect the character of the Hyksos culture in Lower Egypt, whereby Egyptian motifs were adopted by the foreign rulers (Mazar 1990: 222; Ben-Tor 2007: 2), as well as symbolizing the kind of relationship the Hyksos wished to establish and maintain with the northern Canaanites.

During MBIIA, the export of Egyptian-made scarabs was an expression of commercial and political contacts, as much as it was a manifestation of Egyptian cultural influence, best exemplified at Byblos (Ben-Tor 2011: 24). This changed in MB IIB, when the vast majority of the widely disseminated scarabs were produced by local Canaanite workshops, pointing to a shift in the relations between Egypt and Canaan. The scarabs were probably initiated and sustained by the Canaanite population in the eastern Delta, but at the same time, produced by the Canaanites in Canaan (Ben-Tor 2007; 2011: 24–28; Boschloos 2013).

The local Canaanite production is especially interesting in light of the fact that the raw material (steatite) and the method of manufacture (carving and glazing) were Egyptian, implying an ongoing and well-organized importation of raw material. On the other hand, the technique in which the metal ring was secured to the scarab (as seen in the Abel Beth Maacah scarab) is a Canaanite practice, different from the ones known in Egypt up to the time of the late 13th Dynasty. The misrendered motifs and pseudo-hieroglyphics, as well as the mixture of Canaanite motifs, show that the engravers were Canaanite (Ben-Tor 1997: 168); however, the close technological affinity to the classic Egyptian scarabs, exemplified in the Middle Kingdom examples, indicate that they learned the craft from Egyptian masters. These Canaanite-made scarabs found their way back to the Delta, showing that this was not just a case of import-export, but rather a shared cultural tradition in which the Canaanite component was just as active as the Egyptian in determining the impact of these items. Boschloos (2013: 207–210) has even suggested that since all MB IIB scarabs at Kamid el-Loz are Canaanite, whether made at the site itself or at other southern or central Levantine workshops, so that they actually represent intra-regional contacts within the Levant, rather than inter-regional relations between the Levant and Egypt.

Having established that these Canaanite-produced scarabs represent cultural mutuality between the Delta Canaanites and the northern Canaanites, and not just the dissemination of symbols of Egyptian political dominance (as they became in the Late Bronze Age; Ben-Tor 2011: 31–37), it is telling to look at their contextual and geographic distribution. Most of these scarabs were found in graves, although they were probably first amulets for the living and then deposited as funerary amulets; they certainly were not used as administrative seals at this time (Ben-Tor 2007: 186–187). These scarabs were widely distributed at southern sites (e.g., Tell el- ʻAjjul, Tell el-Farʻah South, Gezer, Lachish and Jericho), and less so at Beth-Shean, Megiddo, Kabri, with only sporadic appearances at more northern sites (Ben-Tor 2007: 155).

Only a relatively small number of scarabs have been uncovered in the upper Galilee, Hula valley, northern Jordan valley and Lebanese Beq'a. At Tel Dan, in the 18 graves ascribed to late MB IIB (MBIII in the Dan terminology), only five were recovered. Ilan (1996: 241) noted that this dearth is "probably connected to Tel Dan's location in the northern interior of Canaan, somewhat isolated from Egypt and the other heartlands of scarab manufacture, wherever they were." Other such scarabs from the region include one in a burial at Kfar Szold (Epstein 1974: Fig. 4: 13) and 12 from a burial at Ginosar (Givon 1974). Among the published material from Hazor, 14 scarabs were found: 10 in Cistern 9024 in Area D (Yadin et al. 1958: Pl. CXVIII: 24–33), two in Area C, one a surface find (Yadin et al. 1960: Pl. CXXVI: 5, 7), one in Area A (Yadin et al. 1961: Pl. CLVI: 29) and one in Burial 4021 (Yadin et al. 1961: Pl. CCXXXVI: 13). Although some 27 burials from this period (mostly infants and children) were excavated at Kamid el-Loz, only five scarabs (and three scarab impressions on pottery handles) dating to MB IIB were recovered (Boschloos 2013: 207–208).

Admittedly, the scarcity of scarabs in the Hula Valley and Lebanese Beqʻa (based on the published material to date) may be the result of not having excavated extensive MB IIB cemeteries at Hazor, Dan, Abel Beth Maacah and these other sites. Nevertheless, it seems that we can conclude that this drastically reduced amount of late MB IIB scarabs in the far north of Canaan, as opposed to their abundance in the south, more-or-less up to the line of the Jezreel Valley, reflect more than just contingencies of excavation and should be understood against the background of the geo-political situation of that time.[5]

The large and influential northern city-states—Kabri in the west, Hazor in the east and Kumidi (Kamid el-Loz) in the north—were autonomous political bodies that were not subordinate to any external force and, in fact, controlled large territories and cities around them, as well as the inland trade routes that fed the coastal trade (Ilan 1995: 303–304; Maeir 1997: 322). Hazor, with its Syrian cultural and political affinity, was equal in status and political-economic power to Yamhad in northern Syria and Qatna in central Syria. Hazor was also equal to the Delta Canaanite entity; it seems that this was not based on common ethnic or kin-related origins, but because of political and economic interests. In Ilan's (1995: 308) words: "Tell el-Dab'a was Hazor's functional and scalar counterpart in the south" (Ilan 1995: 308; also Bietak 1991: 29). According to Burke (2014: 410), this balance or power resulted in a "Pax Amoritica" wherein "the socioeconomic and political environment in the Levant and the Egyptian Delta, which permitted the rise of an Amorite dynasty at Avaris, was clearly one of considerable peace, prosperity and flourishing international trade."

[5] The line of the Jezreel-Beth-Shean Valley was also the boundary of intense Egyptian presence during the time of the 18th–20th Dynasties, the Egyptian empire in Canaan, with the regions of the northern Jordan Valley and the Huleh Valley specifically defined as a buffer zone with the Hittites (David, Mullins and Panitz-Cohen 2016: 9). Anson Rainey (personal communication) also speculated that the Jezreel Valley served as the de facto dividing line in Egypt's mind between Lower and Upper Retjenu (Rainey and Notley 2006: 32).

Redford (1992: 120–121) claimed that the Hyksos were actively engaged in diplomacy with far northern rulers that involved elite gift giving (including statuary plundered from the Middle Kingdom) and arranged marriages, indicating their attempts to be major players (but not rulers) in the Palestinian-Syrian geo-political arena at that time. The presence of the large, finely made, bronze-ring-mounted scarab of Canaanite manufacture in the rampart burial at Abel Beth Maacah could reflect the likes of such an effort. When such a scarab is found in the southern part of Canaan, up to the line of the Jezreel Valley, it probably reflects the shared cultural sphere between the Delta and Canaan that dominated the late MB IIB. When it is found (in much fewer numbers) in the far north, specifically in the territory of the city-state of Hazor in our case, it does not represent such an affinity, since this region tends more towards the Syrian political and cultural sphere and thus, the scarab can be considered a reflection of more formal exchange relations of a commercial basis. Although mere conjecture, the scarab may have been given to the interred individual as a gift during a trade transaction and as such, was a prized possession with which to be buried. Its presence in the burial reflects the involvement of the city of Abel in the geo-political arena between Egypt and Syria at the end of the Middle Bronze Age in Canaan.

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Color plate 5 Position of scarab-ring and toggle pins on the skeleton. See Fig. 9 Panitz-Cohen et al.

Color Plate 6 Lentoid flask L48-N60 from Tomb X. See Fig. 3 Fischer and Bürge.