

In Centro

Collected Papers
Volume IV

Faith

Editors:

Guy D. Stiebel

Avner Ecker

Amir Gorzalczany

Yotam Tepper

Amit Shadman

Salome Dan-Goor

Ido Koch



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Central Region



The Sonia and Marco Nadler Institute of Archaeology
The Jacob M. Alkow Department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Cultures
The Chaim Rosenberg School of Jewish Studies and Archaeology
The Lester and Sally Entin Faculty of Humanities



Proceedings of the fourth annual “In Centro” conference
held by the Central Region of Israel Antiquities Authority,
the Jacob M. Alkow Department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Cultures
and the Sonia and Marco Nadler Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University
and the Institute of Archaeology of Bar-Ilan University
on June 8, 2023 at Tel Aviv University

Cover art: Stone mask from the PPNA from Tel Bareqet (photo by D. Gazit, IAA)

Publications Director: Tsipi Kuper-Blau

Production Editor: Daniel Kleiman

Graphic Designer: Ayelet Gazit

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and Bar-Ilan University

ISBN 978-965-266-073-2

Printed in Israel 2024

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Emery and Claire Yass Publications in Archaeology
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Contents

<i>Contributors and Editors</i>	v, v*
<i>Preface</i>	ix, ix*
1 Between Sacred and Secular: Interpreting the Preliminary Insights from the Middle Bronze Age IIB–C Public Complex at Naḥal Mazor (Elʿad) Daniel Ein-Mor and Orit Segal	1*
2 “Don’t Look at the Donkey, but Rather at What Is in It”: Zoomorphic Libation Vessels from the Iron Age Yuval Amir	1
3 Upside-down Jars and a <i>Maṣṣebah</i> without a Grave: Has a Site with Ritual Activity from the Intermediate Bronze Age Been Discovered near Yehud? Dor Golan and Michal Mermelstein	19
4 Celebrities in the Late Pottery Neolithic/ Early Chalcolithic Period Hila May, Liron Chavoinik, Marie Anton, Yossi Nagar, Uzi ʿAd, Anna Eirich Rose, Alla Yaroshevich, Ianir Milevski, Nimrod Getzov, Jacob Vardi and Dina Shalem	37
5 Settlement Distribution of Tell Qana/el-Mokhmar in the Late Bronze Age in Light of Recent Surveys and Previous Research Amit Dagan	25*

6	Burial Customs in Iron Age Philistia Aren M. Maeir	59
7	“Face of a Lion”—A Special Find from Khirbat Ibreika Dated to the Roman Period Elisheva Zwiebel and Elie Haddad	69
8	Gallus’ Revolt at “Droma”—First Archaeological Evidence of the Destruction of Jewish Lod Mor Viesel and Shahar Krispin	95
9	A Note on a Newly Identified Type of a Roman Cooking Pot from the Coastal Plain and the Shephelah Regions Shulamit Terem, Peter Gendelman and Anat Cohen-Weinberger	37*
10	A Unique Find from the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A Site at Brekhat Bareqet (Khirbat Burnat) Masha Krakovsky and Ianir Milevski	117
11	Intermediate Bronze Age Tombs Architecture and Burial Customs in the Ayalon Basin in Light of Salvage Excavations at Neue Efrayim (Yehud West) Gilad Itach, Yossi Elisha, Aliza Rier, Daniela Alexandrovsky, Ron Toueg and Yaniv Agmon	137
12	Oil-Lamps, Spearheads and Skulls: Possible Evidence for Necromancy during Late Antiquity in the Te’omim Cave, Jerusalem Hills Boaz Zissu and Eitan Klein	159
	<i>Abstracts</i>	67*,193

Settlement Distribution of Tell Qana/el-Mokhmar in the Late Bronze Age in Light of Recent Surveys and Previous Research

Amit Dagan

Tell Qana is a multi-layered archaeological site located in the southern region of the Sharon Plain on the northwestern bank of the Hadar River within the Yarkon River basin. Its location is in proximity to the junction of two major ancient roads: the eastern section of the north–south international highway and the east–west road between the Yarkon River mouth and Samaria (today, Highway 5/ Trans-Samaritan Highway).

Tell Qana is the northeasternmost of a series of sites situated on both banks of the Yarkon River (Fig. 1). In the last century, several archaeological excavations have been conducted, some on a small scale, at various sites in this river basin (e.g., Ory 1944; Maisler 1950; Kaplan 1958; Kochavi 1981; Geva 1982; Mazar 1980; 1985; Fantalkin and Oren 2015). Although most sites along this river system have undergone excavation or at least been surveyed, Tell Qana has yet to receive any focused or comprehensive research despite its advantageous and strategic location near the meeting point of the two aforementioned ancient roads.

The biblical text refers to the Yarkon River and the Qana River area as the ancient geographical boundary between the Philistine entity and the Kingdom

* **Amit Dagan:** Bar-Ilan University

of Israel and between the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim (Joshua 16:4; 17:7–9). Historical sources indicate that the river was a natural barrier, and there is barely any mention of its being forded. This characteristic is particularly true in the Coastal Plain, where the Yarkon River is the only permanent natural barrier. The river’s water, reed thickets, vegetation, and marshes on both sides make it difficult for regular traffic, which can only cross east of the river’s source or, in less favorable conditions, where the river drains into the sea in the west. Settlement sites were established at different locations along the Yarkon where seasonally-dependant fords were possible, depending on water flow and height. For example, Tell Jerishe and Tell Qasile are located near the confluence of the Ayalon and Yarkon Rivers.

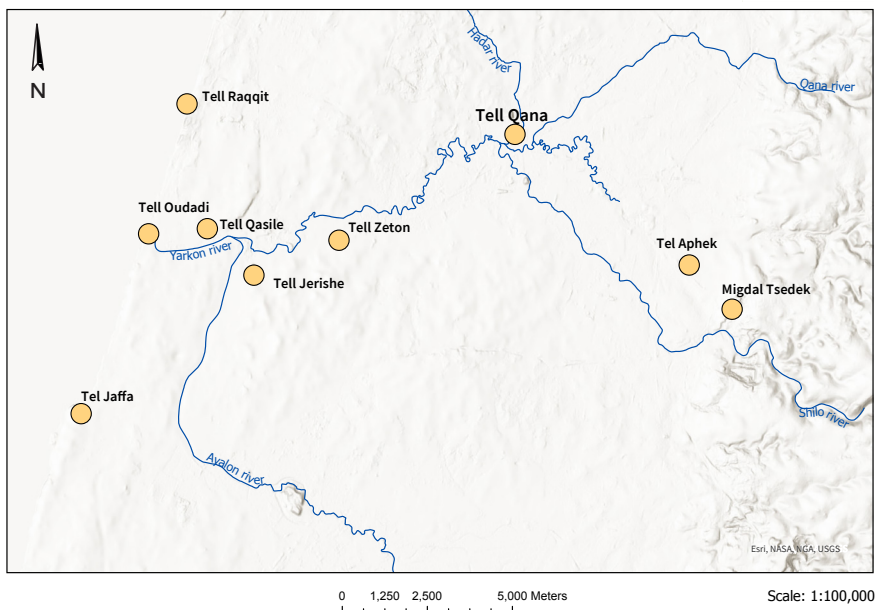


Fig. 1: Regional map showing Yarkon River sites

The Site

The site encompasses an area of approximately 25 dunams and is divided into two parts, separated by a saddle on its southeastern side (Fig. 2). The main northern part of the tell (QL and QU), occupies an area of 21 dunams, while the southeastern part (QSE) covers only four dunams. The southeastern part appears like a branch that slopes southwards towards Naḥal Hadar. The elevation of the mound is approximately 32 m asl, and it rises 14 m over its surroundings. The topography of the northern area (Fig. 2) is characterized by two distinct levels oriented on an east-west axis, separated by an elevation of about five meters. This height difference has been utilized to divide the site into two distinct parts:

1. *Qana Upper* (QU): the eastern part covering an area of around ten dunams
2. *Qana Lower* (QL): the western step, covering an area of about 11 dunams

The fields surrounding the tell have two distinct soil types: the southern part of the mound, situated on the bank of the Hadar River, has alluvium, colluvium, and loam soils. The site's western, northern, and eastern parts are characterized by *ḥamra* soil. The findings of previous research and current survey results indicate a significant degree of agricultural and industrial activity in the site's southern, western, and northern sections (Neri 1994; van den Brink 2007).

Previous Research

Research on Tell el-Mokhmar has been historically limited. The primary focus of previous research efforts has been towards identifying the site's ancient name and conducting surface research and rescue excavations. Palestine Exploration Fund researchers were the first to attempt to decipher the meaning of the site's name. They noted a possible Arabic translation as "The wine bibber's mound" (Palmer 1881: 219). Later, Clermont-Ganneau suggested that "Tell el-Mokhmar" is a corruption of the Crusader name "Fillie De Comer", based on a letter from 1241 from the seigneurie of Arsuf (Havet 1889: 260–261).

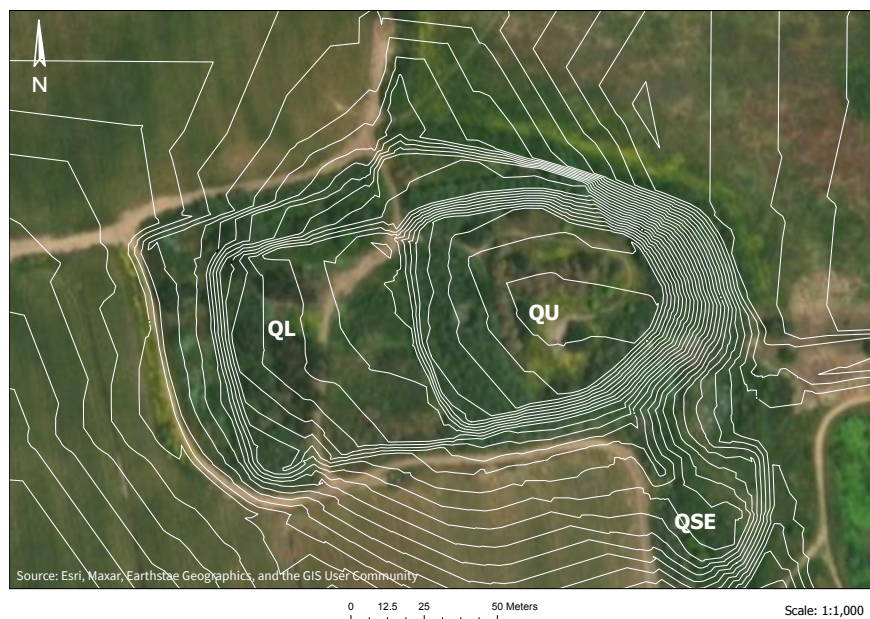


Fig. 2: Tell Qana topographic division

Noth's study of ancient Israel's history implies that Tell el-Mokhmar may correspond to the biblical Aphek (Noth 1958: 166–167). On the other hand, Albright did not propose a specific theory, but observed that Tell Mokhmar illustrates how place names often change over time:

...And so they were. About three miles northwest of Ras el-'Ain is a beautiful tell formerly called Tell Makhmar (Survey), but now known only as Tell Hasan es-Salih, from a former owner, or Tell Bayyaret el-Yehud, from a well recently put in by the present Jewish owner. The old names are disappearing rapidly in the districts occupied by Jewish colonists; there can be no doubt that many names still extant two generations ago have now perished beyond. (Albright 1923: 7–8)

The name of the ancient site remains uncertain. It has been given various names throughout history, including Tell Mokhmar, Tell Hasan es-Salih, Tell Bayyaret el-Yehud, Tell Baum, and Tell Qana. Comprehensive research is necessary to gain a clear understanding of the site's archaeological and historical significance before further toponymic study can be entertained.

Previous Excavations and Field Survey

The earliest field research at Tell Qana was carried out by field inspector Jacob Ory on behalf of the Department of Antiquities of Mandatory Palestine. He conducted multiple surveys of the mound and unearthed pottery from both the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. In addition, he conducted a small-scale excavation that revealed a tomb, as well as reporting pottery and a bronze dagger, none of which could be located.

In January 1966, Tell Qana was visited in the context of the Sharon Survey Project, during a four-day reconnaissance. As this survey covered a vast region from the Taninim River in the north to the Yarkon River in the south, the results were limited owing to the time frame (Gophna and Kochavi 1966).

In the late 1970s, Gophna and Ayalon surveyed the site again as part of the Israel Survey Project (Herzliya Map 69, Site 97). Early Bronze Age to Hellenistic period pottery was collected, as well as artifacts from the Roman and Byzantine periods, primarily at the base of the tell. This team divided the survey area into six sub-areas based on topography. In the northern part of the tell, the researchers identified several stone-lined (cist) graves; however, no further information was provided (Gophna and Ayalon 1998: 45–51).

In 1994, Neri surveyed various sites in the coastal plain as part of his study of groundstone technology in the Coastal Plain. The survey aimed to determine the materials selected and used in this industry. The findings from the survey conducted at Tell Qana indicated the presence of 80 millstones, out of which 32 were made of basalt, 28 were of limestone, and 20 were of beachrock (Neri 1994: 36).

In 2007, van den Brink conducted inspection excavations in Hod Hasharon on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority, in preparation for the creation of an ecological park. As a result, a giant warrior cist grave was discovered. Its dimensions measured approximately 1 × 3 m. The grave's walls and floor were meticulously lined with stone and coated with plaster, indicating that, according to the excavator, the deceased held a high status. The objects found interred included two spearheads and a single arrowhead, all made of bronze, as well as three oil lamps, three bowls, two flasks, and a juglet, likely produced locally. The excavator believes that the burial's orientation, from east to west, may have been influenced by Egyptian mortuary practices (van den Brink 2020: 67–84).

Tell Qana Archaeological Project 2022 Field Survey

Research Methodology

As part of the present archaeological investigation of Tell Qana, we conducted a preliminary survey in 2022, which consisted of a surface reconnaissance and a systematic collection of pottery and other artifacts indicative of human activity. Four remote sensing investigations of the site and its surroundings were conducted, including a multispectral survey, thermal survey, LiDAR survey, and ground-penetrating radar (GPR) survey. The goal is to identify potential excavation areas through advanced remote sensing methods that analyze surface and subsoil findings in correlation with the results of a pedestrian survey. Valuable information about the Yarkon Basin and the southern Sharon region has been gained by carefully assessing the advantages and disadvantages of various remote sensing techniques.

The survey area was divided into 25 units based on their unique geography and topography, each with a specific designation (see Fig. 3). The letter F indicated a field, followed by the relative direction to recognize them easily. For example, the field north of the lower city was called QL-NF. Similarly, the slopes connecting the upper and lower city were designated with the letter S plus the relative direction. For example, the northern slope of the upper city was labeled as QU-NS.

A group of surveyors thoroughly examined predetermined polygons, carefully documenting all visible findings on the surface. Small finds were cleaned and sorted by type and period for each area before being compiled into a spatial data map. Data analysis revealed that the site was inhabited from the fourth millennium BCE until the end of the Hellenistic period.

The finds indicate that the settlement peaked during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, with ceramic evidence from these periods found in all the site and surrounding fields. Notably, the Late Bronze Age finds include imported vessels from Mycenaean (Late Helladic IIIB) and Cypriot cultures (Base Ring I and II, Monochrome and White Slip Wares). Philistine vessels dated from the beginning of the Iron Age were also uncovered, including Mycenaean IIIC type and Bichrome Wares.

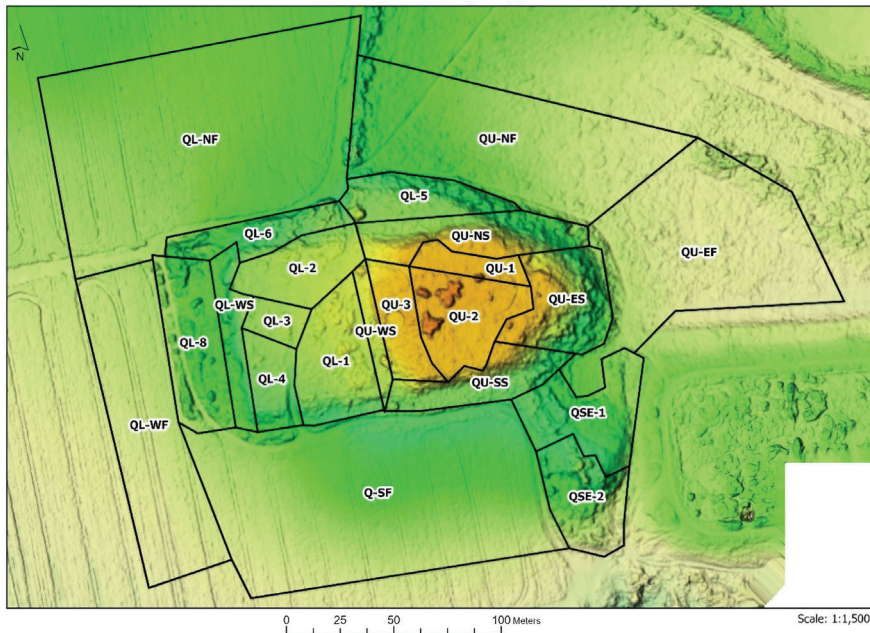


Fig. 3: Survey Polygons

Discussion

This article focuses on the Late Bronze Age settlement at Tell Qana. A detailed publication of the complete survey results will be made separately. The present survey results imply interesting settlement patterns during the Late Bronze Age that will require further research. However, this pattern confirms the results of the Israel Antiquities Authority salvage excavations in the fields at the foot of the mound conducted in 2007 (van den Brink 2007).

Previous archaeological research at Yarkon River sites demonstrated a decline in settlement during the Late Bronze Age (Faust 2007: 69–70; Koch 2015: 22–29; Gadot 2006: 22–23; 2010). In his comprehensive study of settlement patterns in the Yarkon Basin, Gadot noted a significant decrease in the size and importance of the central sites; he also noted that the lack of evidence of public construction indicates that there was no direct administration in the region (Gadot 2003; Gadot and Yadin 2009: 54–70). Koch showed settlement changes and the transition of power centers between the Middle Bronze Age and the Iron Age (Koch 2015: 23–24). The causes of this settlement decline are insufficiently clear. They may be attributed to the destruction of Aphek in the 13th century or of Jaffa in the 12th century. Alternatively, they may be related to the decline in influence of the Egyptian government centers in the Yarkon area; the regional processes and the arrival of immigrants from the Aegean world may also be seen as an influential factor or identified in these processes that led to the settlement decline in the Yarkon Basin.

A different picture emerges from the results of our survey at Tell Qana. Like many sites in the region, Tell Qana witnessed a settlement growth during the MB II. The analysis of the survey findings and the integration of past research results indicate that Tell Qana continues to be a large and significant site throughout the Late Bronze Age and even into the Iron I. Analysis of the findings dated to the Late Bronze Age supports the existence of international trade relations. Alongside the typical Late Bronze Age local pottery vessels (Fig. 4:3–13 [bowls],

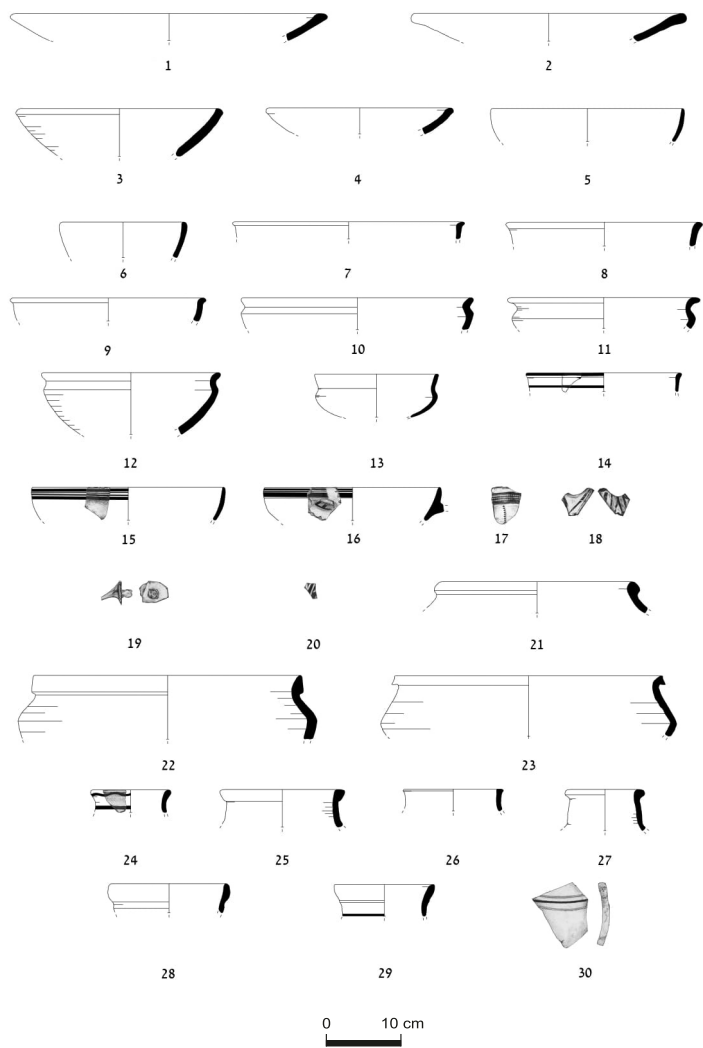


Fig. 4: Late Bronze Age selected pottery

21–23 [cooking pots], 24–30 [jugs and jars]), there is also evidence of imported objects originating from the Aegean world (Fig 4:14 [LH IIIB]), Cyprus (Fig. 4:15–18 [White Slip], 19–20 [Base Ring]). The assemblage also includes objects with an Egyptian influence, such as a faience decoration for a saddle and Egyptian-style bowls (Fig 4:1–2).

In 2007, the discovery of a cist grave at the site yielded weapons and locally-made pottery vessels (van den Brink 2007) dated to the LB II, indicating that the site held significant defensive value. To fully comprehend the fascinating discoveries revealed by the survey and to gain insight into the strategic location of the site and its significance in history, it is necessary to carry out additional research and formal excavation.

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