



Jens Kamlah (Editor)
in cooperation with Henrike Michelau

ADPV 4I

Temple Building and Temple Cult

Architecture and Cultic Paraphernalia
of Temples in the Levant (2.-1. Mill. B.C.E.)



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Temple Building and Temple Cult

Architecture and Cultic Paraphernalia
of Temples in the Levant (2.–1. Mill. B.C.E.)

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of the Institute of Biblical Archaeology at the University of Tübingen
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Edited by Jens Kamlah

in cooperation with Henrike Michelau

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Table of Contents / Inhaltsverzeichnis

Preface	IX
The Institute of Biblical Archaeology at Tübingen	XI
Zur Gründung des Biblisch-Archäologischen Instituts in Tübingen	XIII
Grußwort des Prodekans der Evangelisch-Theologischen Fakultät in Tübingen, Prof. Dr. ERHARD BLUM	XV
Grußwort des Vorsitzenden des Deutschen Vereins zur Erforschung Palästinas, Prof. Dr. ULRICH HÜBNER	XVII
Grußwort des Direktors des Instituts für die Kulturen des Alten Orients in Tübingen, Prof. Dr. KONRAD VOLK	XIX
Programm der Tagung / Program of the Conference	XXII

I. Northern Levant / Nördliche Levante

TIMOTHY P. HARRISON

West Syrian <i>megaron</i> or Neo-Assyrian <i>Langraum</i> ? The Shifting Form and Function of the <i>Tell Ta'yīnāt</i> (<i>Kunulua</i>) Temples	3
---	---

STEFANIA MAZZONI

Temples at <i>Tell ʿAḫṣ</i> in Iron Age I–III	23
---	----

MIRKO NOVÁK

The Temple of <i>ʿAin Dāra</i> in the Context of Imperial and Neo-Hittite Architecture and Art	41
---	----

KAY KOHLMAYER

Der Tempel des Wettergottes von Aleppo. Baugeschichte und Bautyp, räumliche Bezüge, Inventar und bildliche Ausstattung	55
---	----

FERHAN SAKAL

Der spätbronzezeitliche Tempelkomplex von Emar im Lichte der neuen Ausgrabun- gen	79
--	----

II. Southern Levant/Südliche Levante

SHARON ZUCKERMAN

- The Temples of Canaanite Hazor 99

ROBERT A. MULLINS

- The Late Bronze and Iron Age Temples at Beth-Shean 127

STEPHEN BOURKE

- The Six Canaanite Temples of *Ṭabaqāt Faḥil*. Excavating Pella's 'Fortress' Temple (1994–2009) 159

CHANG-HO JI

- The Early Iron Age II Temple at *Ḥirbet 'Aṭārūs* and Its Architecture and Selected Cultic Objects 203

SEYMOUR GITIN

- Temple Complex 650 at Ekron. The Impact of Multi-Cultural Influences on Philistine Cult in the Late Iron Age 223

III. Jerusalem and Gerizim/Jerusalem und Garizim

SUSAN ACKERMAN

- Women and the Religious Culture of the State Temples of the Ancient Levant, Or: Priestesses, Purity, and Parturition 259

ERHARD BLUM

- Der Tempelbaubericht in 1 Könige 6,1–22. Exegetische und historische Überlegungen 291

OTHMAR KEEL

- Paraphernalia of Jerusalem Sanctuaries and Their Relation to Deities Worshipped Therein during the Iron Age IIA–C 317

DIANA EDELMAN

- What Can We Know about the Persian-Era Temple in Jerusalem? 343

BERND JANOWSKI

- Der Ort des Lebens. Zur Kultsymbolik des Jerusalemer Tempels 369

JÜRGEN K. ZANGENBERG

- The Sanctuary on Mount Gerizim. Observations on the Results of 20 Years of Excavation 399

IV. Cultic Paraphernalia/Kultische Ausstattung

EDWIN C.M. VAN DEN BRINK, ORIT SEGAL and UZI AD

A Late Bronze Age II Repository of Cultic Paraphernalia from the Environs of <i>Tēl Qašīš</i> in the Jezreel Valley	421
---	-----

P.M. MICHÈLE DAVIAU

Diversity in the Cultic Setting. Temples and Shrines in Central Jordan and the Negev	435
--	-----

DIETER VIEWEGER

Die Kultausstattung „philistäischer“ Heiligtümer in Palästina	459
---	-----

BÄRBEL MORSTADT

Phönizische Heiligtümer im Mittelmeerraum und ihre Kulteinrichtungen	483
--	-----

Comparative Aspects/Vergleichende Aspekte

JENS KAMLAH

Temples of the Levant – Comparative Aspects	507
---	-----

Indices/Register

Authors/Autoren	537
Biblical Texts/Biblische Texte	548
Ancient Texts/Antike Texte	552
Deities/Gottheiten	554
Persons/Personen	555
Places/Orte	557
Subjects/Sachen	565

Plates/Tafeln

The Late Bronze and Iron Age Temples at Beth-Shean

Robert A. Mullins

Beth-Shean is a four hectare site well situated at the juncture of the Jezreel and Jordan Valleys (Map Reference 1977.2124). The fertile nature of the region and its strategic location help explain its historical importance, including the span of some 300 years (15th – 12th cent. B.C.E.) when Beth-Shean (*Tell el-Huşn/Tell el-Hişn*) served as an Egyptian garrison. For the periods under discussion, occupation on the tell was limited to a 1.5–2 hectare area in the southern part of the mound and a population of around 500 inhabitants¹.

Period	Date	UME Level	HUE Local Strata by Area
Iron Age IIA	10 th to mid – 9 th cent.	Parts of V	S-1
Iron Age IB	11 th cent.	Dual temples of V and structures of Late Level VI	S-2, N-2 (revival of Canaanite town)
Iron Age IA	12 th cent. to ca. 1140 B.C.E.	VI	S-3 (Egyptian garrison ends) S-4 S-5?
Late Bronze Age IIB	13 th cent.	Late Level VII VII VIII	Q-2 N-4 Q-3?
Late Bronze Age IIA	14 th cent.	IXA	R-1a
Late Bronze Age IB	Late 15 th cent.	IXB ²	R-1b (Egyptian garrison begins)
Late Bronze Age IA–B	15 th cent.	--	R-2
Late Middle Bronze Age IIB ³	16 th cent.	XA	R-3

Table 1. Comparison of relevant UME and HUE stratigraphy⁴.

¹ MAZAR 2006, 26–28, fig. 2.1; 2011, 157.

² The division of Level IX into phases IXB and IXA is the author's terminology, since ROWE made no such distinction. For the most part, ROWE excavated the later phase equivalent to HUE Stratum R-1a, but in places he dug deeper and exposed the earlier phase equivalent to HUE Stratum R-1b.

³ The term "late Middle Bronze Age IIB" is used here for the period designated Middle Bronze Age IIC or Middle Bronze Age III in various publications. For an explanation of this terminology, see MAZAR/MULLINS 2007, 12.

⁴ This chart does not represent the full stratigraphic sequence at Beth-Shean; only those strata relevant to our discussion. For a more detailed comparison of the UME and HUE strata, see MAZAR 2011, 184, Table 1; MAZAR/MULLINS 2006, 13, Table 1.2.

Archaeological work was first carried out at Beth-Shean by the University of Pennsylvania Museum in 1921–1933 (hereafter, UME). In just three years, A. ROWE (1925–1928) managed to excavate six temples across four strata: Levels V, VI, VII and IX⁵. The fortuitous discovery of a seventh temple during renewed excavations in 1989–1996 by A. MAZAR of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (hereafter, HUE) further illustrates the long history of sanctity at the site⁶.

1. Stratum R-2 (Early 15th Cent. B.C.E.)

The Canaanite temple uncovered in 1989 beneath the central courtyard of Level IX is the earliest sacred structure found so far at Beth-Shean. Since Level IX as excavated by A. ROWE in 1927–1928 fell within Area R of the renewed project, HUE designated its sequence of local strata with the prefix “R”⁷.

Temple 58066 was found in a good archaeological context. It stood over the remains of the last Middle Bronze Age town of Stratum R-3 (16th cent. B.C.E.) and below the earliest Egyptian settlement of Stratum R-1b (late 15th cent. B.C.E.). This would place the temple’s construction in Late Bronze Age IA, or the early 18th Dynasty, prior to Thutmose III’s military campaign to Megiddo (*Tell el-Mutesellim*). Due to its limited extent, the Stratum R-2 sanctuary was missed by UME⁸.

The plan of the temple is unique, but recalls similar structures from the Late Bronze and Iron Age, previously defined by MAZAR as “temples with indirect entrances and irregular plans”⁹. Sanctuary B2 at Ebla (*Tell Mardīh*) appears to be an Middle Bronze Age Syrian prototype for this type in the Levant¹⁰. This would make the Late Bronze Age I temple from Beth-Shean the earliest example of this type known to date in Israel. Additional Late Bronze Age parallels to this type of temple include Alalah Level V¹¹, *Kāmid el-Lōz*¹², *Tell Mubārak/Tēl Məvōrak*¹³, and the Fosse Temples from Lachish (*Tell ed-Duwēr*)¹⁴. During the Iron Age, similar sanctuaries were excavated at *Tell el-Ġasīl*¹⁵ and *Tell el-Qasīle* Strata XI–X¹⁶.

The tripartite layout of Temple 58066 consisted of an entrance hall on the south, a main hall and narrow room in the center, and a trapezoidal-shaped inner hall in the north (Fig. 1). Access to the main hall was by way of a corner passage at the eastern end of the entrance hall. Plastered benches lined three sides of the main hall with a plastered platform on the west. At the southern

⁵ ROWE 1930, 10–17, 19–38; 1940, 6–35.

⁶ See MAZAR 2006, 40–46 for further discussion.

⁷ MAZAR/MULLINS 2006, 14.

⁸ G. E. WRIGHT (1941) was the first one to raise the possibility of an earlier Late Bronze Age I stratum missed by FitzGerald when he removed parts of Level IX (HUE Stratum R-1) to excavate down to Level XA (HUE Stratum R-3). The same observations were made by FRANCES JAMES in unpublished manuscripts maintained in the archives of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Philadelphia.

⁹ See MAZAR 1992, 177 and references there.

¹⁰ MATTHIAE 1990.

¹¹ WOOLLEY 1955.

¹² METZGER 1991.

¹³ STERN 1984.

¹⁴ TUFNELL/INGE/HARDING 1940.

¹⁵ BARAMKI 1964, 48–52.

¹⁶ MAZAR 1980.

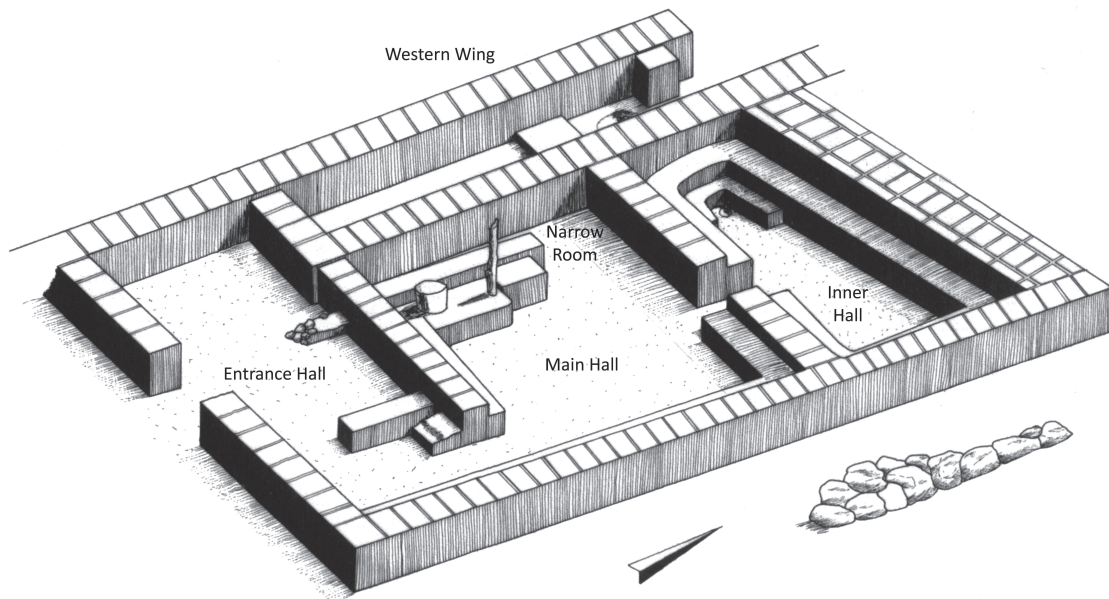


Fig. 1. Isometric reconstruction of Stratum R-2 Temple 58066 (after: MULLINS/MAZAR 2007, 114, Fig. 3.19).

end of this platform stood a cylindrical stone, similar to one found by ROWE in Level IX¹⁷, while at the northern end a post hole was found filled with ash. Its close proximity to a narrow room on the west indicated that the pole had no obvious structural function, so it may have held an *asherah*. The inner hall was surrounded by plastered benches and incorporated a small basin in the northwest corner. It is unclear whether the inner room or the main hall facing the platform was the focus of worship. If it was the main hall, then the narrow room behind the platform might have been used to store ritual objects.

The western wing had two rooms. A square chamber in the north contained a plastered basin with a hole leading into a stone-lined pit below, while a rectangular room to the south contained one of the few sealed loci of Stratum R-2. Numerous ring stands were found here, similar to those found by E. OREN in the late Middle Bronze Age IIB temple at *Tell Abū Hurēre/Tēl Hārōr*¹⁸.

Attached to the southwestern corner of Temple 58066 was a two room annex (not shown in Fig. 1). The southernmost room contained a 2.4 m deep stone-lined pit that narrowed towards the bottom. This unusually large and well-constructed pit had a capacity of 9.3 m³. It may have been a silo for food or other supplies related to the temple activities.

Temple 58066 was built on the soft fills of a late Middle Bronze Age IIB oval-shaped crater from Strata R-5 and R-4 which made the structure vulnerable to sinking¹⁹. The building's broken and distorted walls, and its sloping floors, indicate that it may have suffered from earthquake damage. This might explain why the temple was abandoned and its ruins backfilled for the

¹⁷ ROWE 1930, pl. 22:1.

¹⁸ OREN *et al.* 1991.

¹⁹ See MULLINS/MAZAR 2007, 39–48 for a full discussion of this feature.

construction of Level IX. Thus, the temple was found mostly empty of finds, although a few objects found in the fills apparently belonged to the temple's original use. These include several bowls from the main hall with evidence of burning inside and the bronze leg of a smiting god figurine (presumably Baal or Resheph).

The interpretation of this building as a temple is predicated on five factors:

1. its location below subsequent temples;
2. its irregular plan similar to other non-monumental temples in the Levant;
3. its tripartite division into three halls with each room in a line one behind the other;
4. its plastered walls, benches and floors not typical to public or domestic buildings; and
5. the presence of specialized objects with no obvious domestic function²⁰.

2. Level IX/Stratum R-1 (Late Bronze Age IB–IIA; Late 15th – 14th Cent. B.C.E.; Mid- to Late Eighteenth Dynasty)

ROWE published Level IX (HUE Stratum R-1) as a single stratum; however, we now know that he conflated two discrete phases of occupation. The earlier phase (Level IXB/Stratum R-1b) belonged to Late Bronze Age IB or the second half of the 15th cent. The later phase (Level IXA/Stratum R-1a) belonged to Late Bronze Age IIA or the Amarna period of the 14th cent. B.C.E. Based on the current evidence, our assumption is that the Level IX temples existed in both phases, with most changes taking place in the domestic zones.

Level IXB/Stratum R-1b was originally established as an Egyptian outpost in mid-Late Bronze Age I. Especially indicative of Egyptian presence are Egyptian-style bowls decorated with red-rims and splash. According to D. ASTON, this style has a short lifespan, from Thutmose III to Amenhotep II²¹. A number of flowerpots and other Egyptian-style objects were also found. We therefore assume that Level IXB/Stratum R-1b was first established as an Egyptian outpost sometime after Thutmose III defeated the Canaanite coalition at Megiddo in the mid-15th cent. B.C.E.

Amarna Letter 289 refers to Beth-Shean as a “garrison”, but the nature of the settlement at this time was quite different than the later Ramesside garrisons of Levels VIII–VI (13th – 12th cent. B.C.E.). For one thing, the plan of Level IX/Stratum R-1b hewed closely to that of the last Middle Bronze Age town (Level XA/Stratum R-3), whose peripheral street ran close to the edge of the mound. Moreover, the architectural style and the bulk of the pottery was Canaanite; only 1% of the corpus was locally-produced in Egyptian-style. In contrast to this, the subsequent garrison towns of Levels VIII–VI were built on an Egyptian plan with orthogonal streets, Egyptian-style buildings, and Egyptian-style pottery comprising about 50% of the ceramic assemblage²². Therefore, it is important to take the Canaanite character of Level IX into account when discussing the temples from this phase, since there is little evidence for a strictly Egyptian cult²³.

²⁰ MAZAR 1993a, 613–614.

²¹ ASTON 2006.

²² MAZAR 2011, 174.

²³ In Locus 1227 to the north of Temple 1230, ROWE found a *psš kf* implement used in the Egyptian ceremony of the opening of the mouth. Given the mixed character of this locus, it is impossible to be sure about its original context. See ROTH 1992 for more information on this practice.

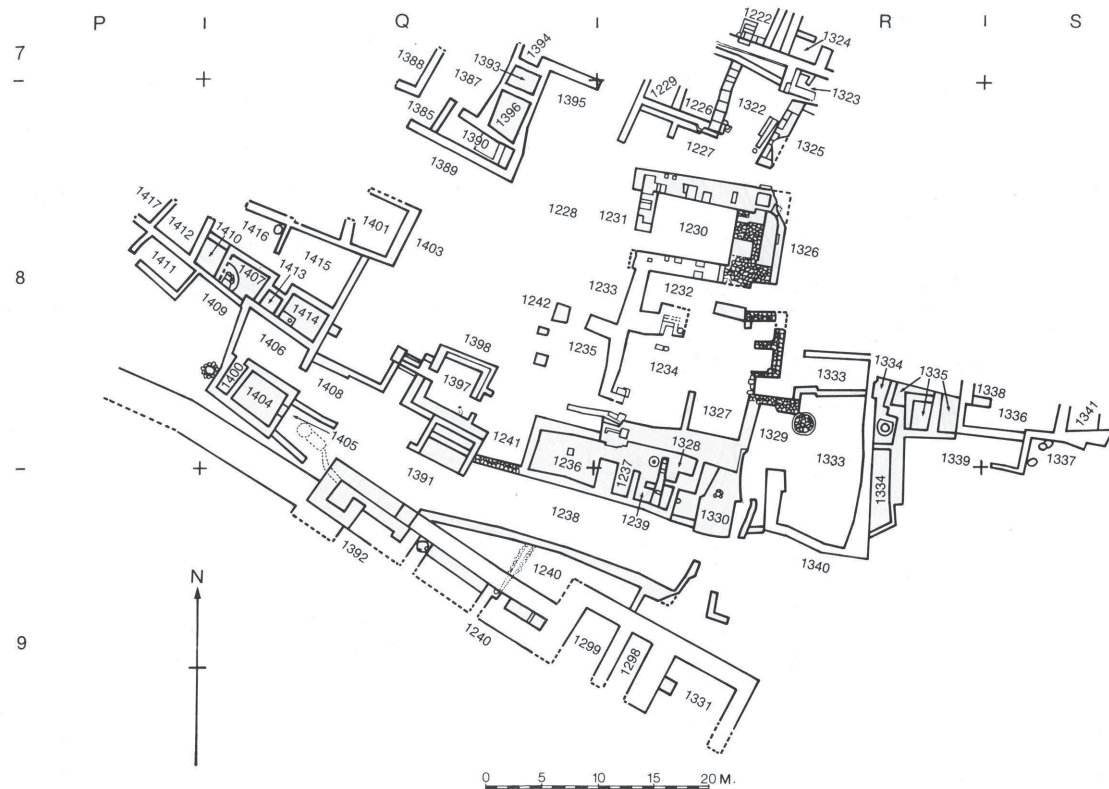


Fig. 2. Plan of Level IX (after: MCGOVERN 1985, 12, Map 4).

In his excavations of Level IX/Stratum R-1 (Fig. 2), ROWE identified two temples: the Northern Temple (Locus 1226) and the Southern Temple (Locus 1234). However, it is now clear that Room 1226 was never a temple²⁴. This moniker should instead be applied to Building 1230, a monumental hall oriented to the east which abuts the northern side of the Southern Temple. Given this corrective, what can we say about the character of structures 1230 and 1234 as temples?

2.1. Temple 1230

In the case of Temple 1230 (Fig. 2), we must rely on its plan, since the unpublished pottery plates prepared by F. JAMES indicate that the locus was mixed with vessels spanning the 16th – 12th cent. B.C.E. The building's symmetrical shape and its thick walls recall monumental Syrian-style ("Migdal") temples in the southern Levant found at neighboring *Tell Mūsā/Tēl Kittān*, *Tell el-Hayyāt*, Pella (*Tabaqāt Faḥil*), and Megiddo; as well as at the more distant sites of Shechem (*Tell Balāṭa*) and Hazor (*Tell Waqqāṣ/Tell el-Qedah*)²⁵. Even so, this structure lacks important features belonging to this type, such as a centrally-aligned entranceway and flanking towers.

²⁴ For a full discussion, see MULLINS 2002, 83.

²⁵ For a discussion of the monumental Syrian-style temple, see BONFIL 1997.

Instead, access into the main hall came by way of a corner entrance on the west. Such entrances are known from later temples in Cyprus, *e. g.* Temple 2 at Kition, but since other structures of Level IX and the Northern Temple from Level V also had corner entrances it is possible that this was a local innovation. Also unique to the building plan was a niche that passed through the eastern wall into a narrow back chamber. ROWE identified a post-hole with ash inside this niche²⁶, not unlike what was found in the main hall of the Stratum R-2 temple, but we were unable to locate it during the renewed excavations. In conclusion, Temple 1230 is probably a local innovation inspired by monumental Syrian-style temples found elsewhere in region and in the greater Levant. It is unknown which deity(ies) would have been worshipped here.

2.2. Enclosure/Temple 1234

The Southern Temple (Fig. 2; Locus 1234) was a rectangular enclosure built with stone foundations topped by a single surviving course of mudbrick. There were openings in the northeast and southwest. Auxiliary rooms 1236, 1237, 1239, and 1328 bordered this structure on the south.

The eastern part of the enclosure (Locus 1327) may have been partitioned into smaller rooms at one time, but these walls are now truncated. Based on comments made by ROWE in his field diary, this may have been the result of later disturbances from Level VIII. The western part of the enclosure (Locus 1234) is clearer. From a corner entrance in the southwest one entered a large hall containing a stepped lime-plastered brick podium in the north. In front of the podium lay a rectangular stone slab abutted by a stone column on the east. Behind the podium was a narrow room (Locus 1232). Two discoveries east of the stepped podium confirm the ritual nature of this area: a carved basalt altar (Taf. 30A) turned on its side²⁷ and a nude female figurine with pinpricks on her body²⁸. A legged chalice, identical to one found by HUE in 1989, came from an auxiliary room (Locus 1236) on the south²⁹.

The most logical interpretation of Enclosure/Temple 1234 is an open cult area subsidiary to the main cult in Temple 1230. This view is supported by the absence of pillar bases and the lack of sufficient interior walls to support a roof. Still, there might be a few reasons to regard this as a roofed structure. First, the Level VIII disturbances mentioned by ROWE may have destroyed supporting walls to the east. Second, pillar bases in Locus 1234 may have been reused elsewhere. Third, a stepped brick podium left exposed to the elements would be susceptible to decay. Though speculative, one might tentatively suggest that this enclosure was a roofed building. In such a case, Locus 1234 would have been a temple oriented to the north, containing a stepped brick podium and a treasury behind, while Locus 1327 to the east would have comprised auxiliary rooms like those bordering the enclosure on the south.

The discovery that compelled ROWE to rename the Southern Temple the “Mekal Temple” was a limestone stele (Fig. 3) found in Locus 1330 at the southeastern corner of the enclosure. This small stele depicts the Canaanite deity “Mekal, the great god, lord of Beth Shean”, seated on a

²⁶ ROWE 1930, 14, pl. 17.

²⁷ ROWE 1940, pl. 69A:1–2.

²⁸ ROWE 1940, pl. 68A:1. These pricks might signify a garment, tattoos or even henna. In the Baal myth, Anat decorates herself with henna (PARDEE 1997, 250).

²⁹ ROWE 1940, pl. 70A:1; see also MULLINS 2007b, 415 and pl. 64:1.

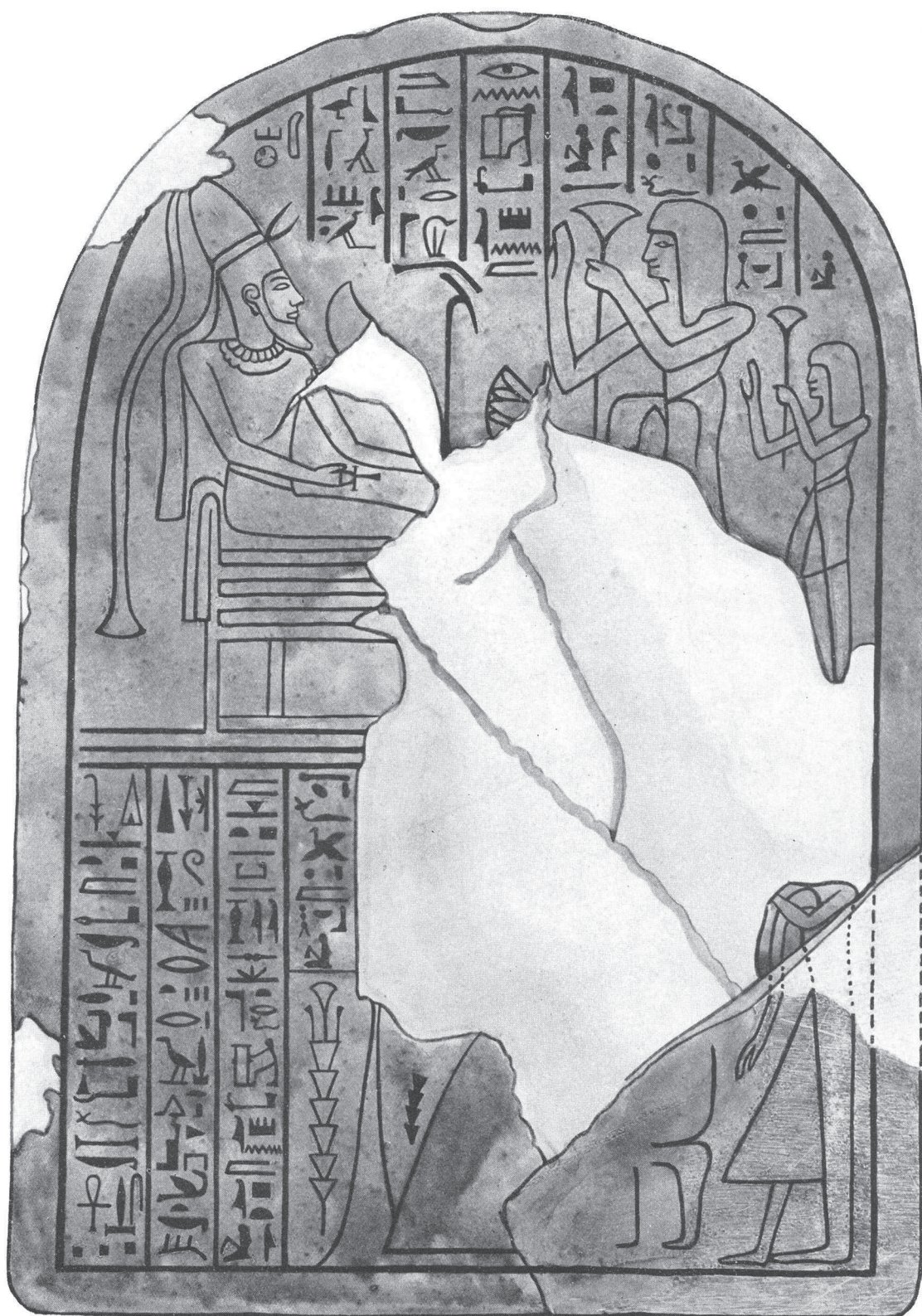


Fig. 3. Stele of Mekal (after: ROWE 1940, frontispiece).

throne with two Egyptians paying homage³⁰. Mekal is shown in a long gown with the characteristic pointed beard and a conical cap with horns and streamers. The god holds an *ankh* in his right hand and a *wꜥs*-scepter in his left. While ROWE claimed the stele came from Level IX³¹, P. MCGOVERN has shown that it originated in Level VIII³². The closest stylistic parallel to the Mekal Stele is the sandstone Stele of Mami from the temple of Baal at Ugarit, which also dates to the 13th cent. B.C.E. Here, a god identified as “Baal of Saphon” wears the same conical cap with streamers and holds a *wꜥs*-scepter. A man on the right is identified as “Mami, royal scribe and governor of the royal domain”³³.

In Courtyard 1333 to the east, UME found a stone-lined installation that served as a roasting pit, presumably for rites taking place in Enclosure/Temple 1234. ROWE’s interpretation seems credible, not only on the basis of the contents of bone and ash, and the remains of a charred female figurine³⁴, but also because an identical installation was found by HUE in Building 1397 to the west³⁵. This square room, lined on the inside with benches, was identified as a guard house

by ROWE³⁶, but in 1989, HUE exposed a stone-lined roasting pit containing a thick accumulation of ash and the burnt bones of sheep and goat. The close proximity of this room to Temple 1230 and Enclosure/Temple 1234 suggests that sacrificial animals were roasted and eaten by worshippers here; a practice that recalls biblical references to the *liškā*, e. g. 1 Sam 9:22. Such roasting installations are unique from this period in the Levant. The closest parallels are the much later roasting pits on Mount Gerizim used by the Samaritans at Passover; the oldest of which dates to medieval times.

In Locus 1403 at the western side of the courtyard, ROWE found a gold pendant depicting a naked woman (Fig. 4) exhibiting Canaanite and Egyptian features and holding a *wꜥs*-scepter in her left hand³⁷. She is usually identified with Astarte or another goddess. In Locus 1407, a residential area west of the central courtyard, the mold-made figurine of a woman nursing an infant³⁸.

A carved basalt orthostat depicting a lion and lioness (or dog) in combat came from Locus 1331 at the southern edge of the site³⁹. Although ROWE identified this structure as a city wall, it was found by HUE to be the back part of a monumental building,



Fig. 4. Gold pendant (after: KEEL/UEHLINGER 2010, Fig. 106).

³⁰ ROWE 1930, 14–17, pl. 33. For a full discussion, see THOMPSON 1970.

³¹ ROWE 1930, 11.

³² JAMES/MCGOVERN 1993, 240, Appendix, No. 8.

³³ YON 2006, 135, no. 17.

³⁴ ROWE 1930, 13, pl. 20:2.

³⁵ MULLINS/MAZAR 2007, 165–168. In addition to ROWE’s discovery, three stone-lined installations were found by HUE in Stratum R-1. If one adds the one found by FitzGerald in Level XA (though it is more likely that it is from Stratum R-1b), then there would have been a total of five such installations from this period of time.

³⁶ ROWE 1930, 13, pl. 19:1.

³⁷ ROWE 1940, pl. 68A:5.

³⁸ ROWE 1940, pl. 68A:4.

³⁹ ROWE 1930, 12, 15–17.

whose front portion is now missing⁴⁰. To this day, the so-called “Lion and Dog Stele” is regarded as a classic piece of Syrian-style art. While not necessarily tied to cult practice, the orthostat does illustrate some elements of Canaanite religious belief.

ROWE does not mention a destruction of Level IX, but HUE found ample evidence for such an event. Most likely, Level IX was destroyed towards the end of the 18th Dynasty. With the subsequent rise of the 19th Dynasty under Seti I, Egypt reasserted its authority in Canaan and imposed a more direct form of provincial rule than had previously existed under the 18th Dynasty pharaohs.

3. Levels VIII–VII (Late Bronze Age IIB; 13th Cent. B.C.E.; Nineteenth Dynasty)

ROWE regarded Levels VIII and VII as distinct strata, but MCGOVERN is probably correct in regarding Level VIII as an earlier phase of Level VII, and dating both to the 13th cent. B.C.E.⁴¹. This makes Level VIII the most likely original context for the two reused stelae of Seti I: one dating to the first year of his reign (Fig. 19:1) but found next to the large stele of Ramesses II (Fig. 19:2) in Level V⁴², and an undated fragment reused as a door sill by the Byzantine builders of Level II⁴³. Similarly, Level VII should be regarded as the original context for the reused stele of Ramesses II⁴⁴, as well as for the unique serpentine cylinder seal found inside the Northern Temple of Level V that depicts Ramesses II in full battle gear shooting an arrow with a composite bow⁴⁵. An ephemeral phase called “Late Level VII” by UME was not an independent stratum, but the result of a few local changes to the architecture of Level VII. Other buildings, including Temple 1072, continued in use as before⁴⁶.

With the construction of Levels VIII–VII, Beth-Shean was organized on a new plan (Fig. 5). The peripheral streets of Levels X–IX were replaced by a grid pattern that remained in use through Level VI (Fig. 10) when Egyptian domination in Canaan finally ended. A number of the Level VII buildings were laid out according to an Egyptian plan. These include Building 1380 (the Migdol), Building 1373 (the Commandant’s House)⁴⁷, and a square building from Stratum Q-2, exposed by HUE in probes below Building 1500. The plan of this earlier structure recalls the Egyptian 19th Dynasty residency at *Dēr el-Balah*⁴⁸.

Scholars have long noted similarities in plan between the Levels VII and VI temples at Beth-Shean and the Level VI Summit Temple from Lachish⁴⁹ with those excavated in Egypt at

⁴⁰ MULLINS/MAZAR 2007, 178–180.

⁴¹ JAMES/MCGOVERN 1993, 5, 70; but see ASTON 1996, 228 who places Level VIII in the late 14th cent. B.C.E.

⁴² ROWE 1930, 24, n. 49, pl. 41.

⁴³ ROWE 1930, 29–30, pl. 42–44.

⁴⁴ ROWE 1930, 33–37, pl. 46.

⁴⁵ ROWE 1930, 31–32; 1940, 27–28, pl. 38:3.

⁴⁶ JAMES/MCGOVERN 1993, 5; MAZAR 2011, 161.

⁴⁷ See HIGGINBOTHAM 2000 for a full discussion of the Egyptian character of these buildings.

⁴⁸ MAZAR 2006, 29, 97; DOTHAN 2008, 66–71. See JAMES/MCGOVERN 1993, 27–28 for a summary of Egyptian parallels to the town plan of Levels VIII–VII.

⁴⁹ For the Summit Temple from Area P at Lachish, see USSISHKIN (*ed.*) 2004, 215–281.

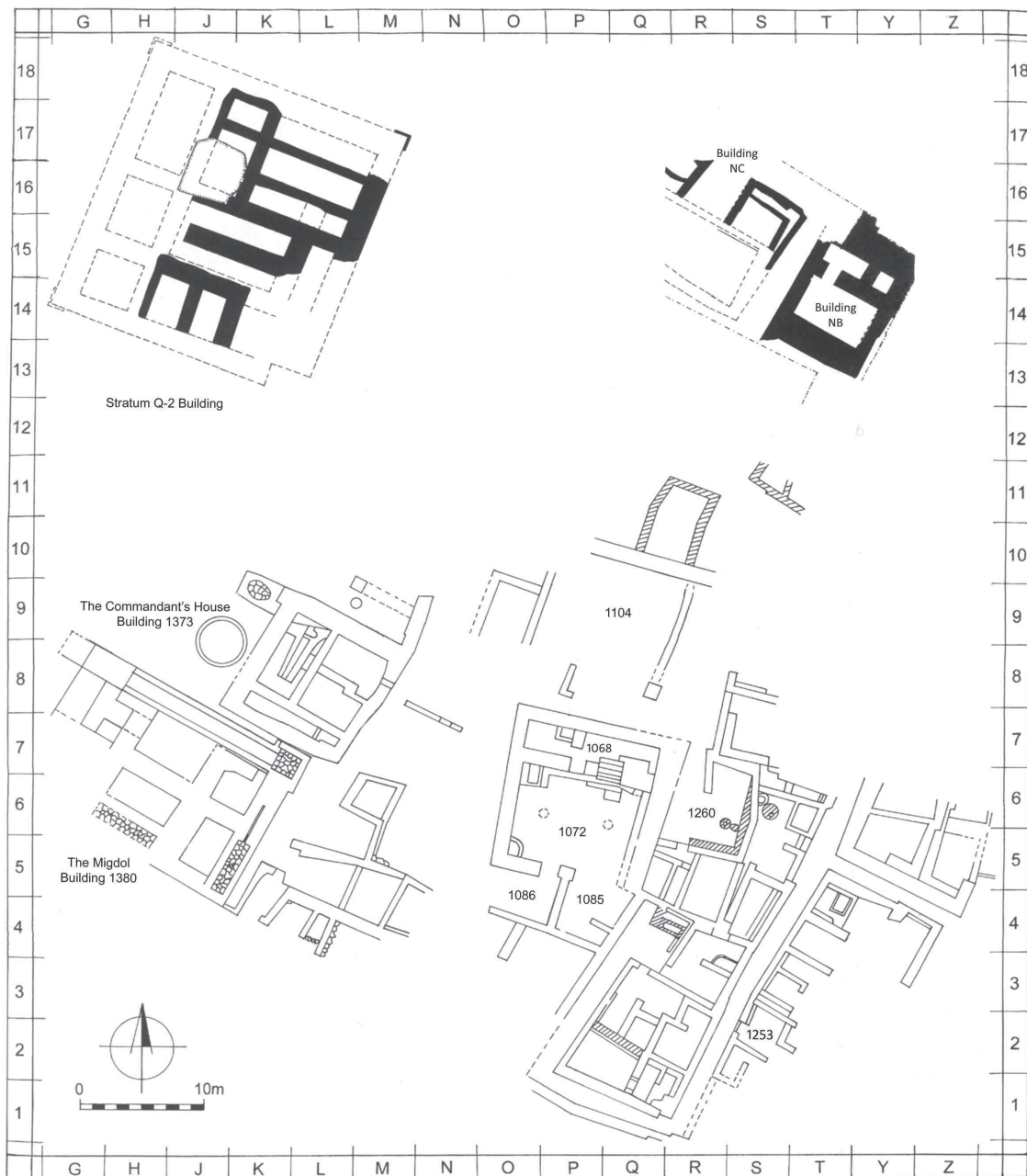


Fig. 5. Combined plan of UME Level VII and Late Level VII and equivalent HUE strata (after: PANITZ-COHEN/MAZAR [ed.] 2009, 6, Fig. 1:2).

Tell el-Amarna and *Dēr el-Medīna*; however, there is disagreement about their origin and inspiration. Some have thought that the Beth-Shean and Lachish temples were inspired by Egyptian types⁵⁰, while others have argued for influence in the other direction⁵¹. Some say that the

⁵⁰ OTTOSSON 1980, 50–51, 79–80.

⁵¹ BOMANN 1991, 81, 89, 93.

temples from Beth-Shean and Lachish were local Canaanite constructions that occasionally displayed Egyptian elements⁵², while others claim that the incorporation of Egyptian elements into a Canaanite temple make them an Egyptian type⁵³. Wherever the gavel may fall on this issue, there is no question that these temples and the accompanying corpus of pendants and other artifacts that evoke Egyptian and Canaanite features highlight the subtle, yet richly complex nature of Egyptian-Canaanite cultural interaction⁵⁴.

Like Enclosure/Temple 1234 of Level IX, one approached Temple 1072 from the southwest and entered the main hall (1072) through an ante-room (1086). Benches lined the eastern and northern sides of the main hall. Bin-like installations in the northwestern and southwestern corners are features known from Egyptian temples⁵⁵. The walls were made of brick without stone foundations; a technique also used in the Level VI temple, except for a single layer of undressed basalt on its northern side⁵⁶. The lack of stone foundations is not only an Egyptian feature, but a method of construction that runs counter to the earlier building tradition at Beth-Shean, which always had stone foundations, possibly indicating greater affinity with Egyptian building traditions at this time.

The roof of the main hall was supported by two pillars. The artistic reconstruction by ROWE/VINCENT, which depicts the Levels VII and VI temples as half open to the sky is doubtful (Fig. 6)⁵⁷. This idea was based on parallels with Egyptian funerary chapels at *Tell el-Amārna* and *Dēr el-Medīna*. While such a feature may have existed in Egypt where there is little or no rain, this would not have been the case in Palestine. ROWE also reconstructs the temple with Egyptian-style lintels and capitals, but this addition is entirely conjectural, since nothing of the sort came from the temples themselves. The Egyptian-style lintels were only found in Building 1500, and according to MAZAR, the two lotus capitals that ROWE found behind the Level VI temple probably came from Building 1500 as well⁵⁸.

A stairway behind the tall brick installation at the northern end of the main hall (1072) led to an elevated room (1068) less than 2 m above the main floor⁵⁹. A ruined altar stood here, as well as a bin or basin at the western end. MAZAR has identified this type as a “Temple with Raised Holy of Holies”⁶⁰. While the series of seven steps was identical in number to the stairway from the Level VI temple, the off-center alignment of the Level VII steps was unusual. This has been explained as a way to allow more space for the storage/treasury side of the room on the west, but it is also possible that the builders wanted to locate the Level VII stairway over the stepped brick altar of Enclosure/Temple 1234 in Level IX (Fig. 7), demonstrating continuity with the earlier sacred structure⁶¹.

A small basalt throne (Fig. 8:1) depicting carved winged creatures (sphinxes or griffins?) on its sides was vaguely described by ROWE as on the floor of the elevated room or beneath it⁶².

⁵² GIVEON 1978, 24–25; MAZAR 1992, 177; USSISHKIN (*ed.*) 2004, 266; MAZAR 2011, 161.

⁵³ HIGGINBOTHAM 2000, 298.

⁵⁴ MCGOVERN 1985.

⁵⁵ JAMES/MCGOVERN 1993, 25–26.

⁵⁶ ROWE 1930, pl. 24:1–2; 1940, 7, 14.

⁵⁷ ROWE/VINCENT 1931; see also ROWE 1940, 7.

⁵⁸ MAZAR 2006, 28 *contra* ROWE 1940, 16.

⁵⁹ ROWE 1930, pl. 24:1; 1940, 7, fig. 3.

⁶⁰ MAZAR 1992, 173–177.

⁶¹ JAMES/MCGOVERN 1993, 5.

⁶² ROWE 1940, 9, pls. 19:13, 48A.

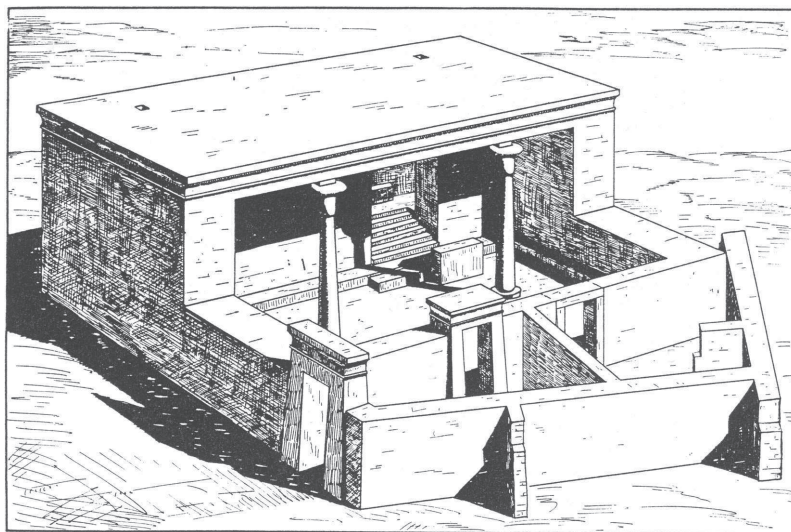


Fig. 6. Isometric reconstruction of Level VII Temple 1072
(after: ROWE 1940, 7, Fig. 3).

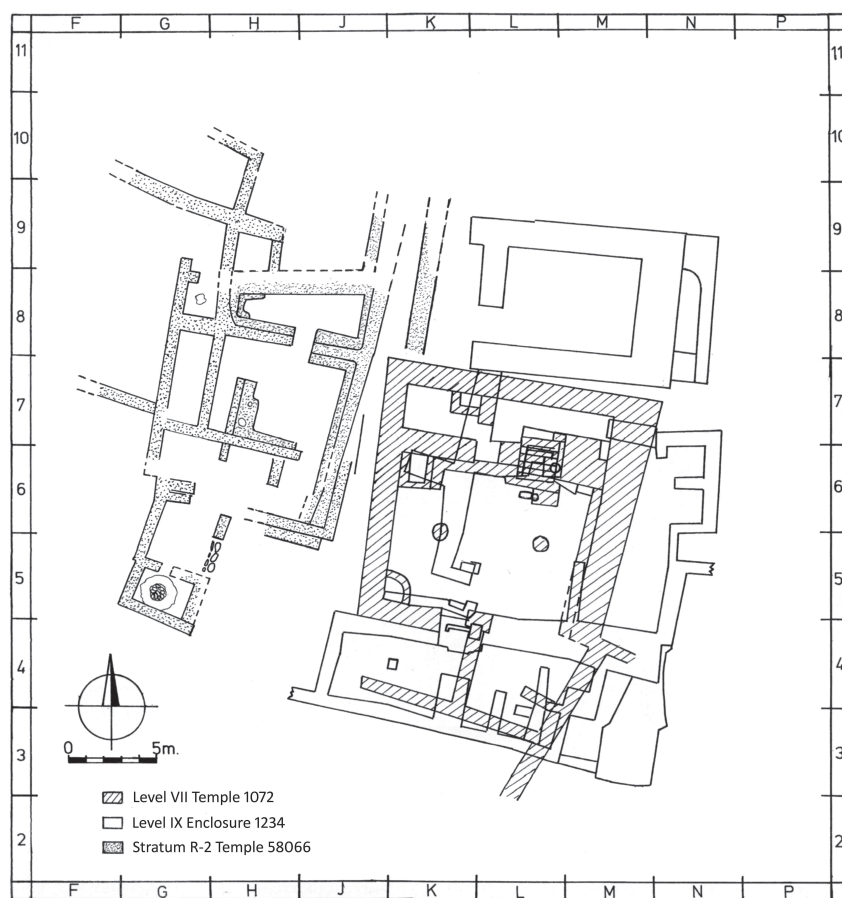


Fig. 7. Superposition of temples from Stratum R-2, Level IX and Level VII
(after: MULLINS 2007a, 33, Fig. 2.6).



Fig. 8. Objects from Level VII Temple 1072: (1) Basalt throne (after: SCHROER 2011, Kat. 792); (2) stele of "Ashtoreth of the Two Horns" (after: KEEL/UEHLINGER 2010, Fig. 107); (3) Hathor "clapper" (after: JAMES/MCGOVERN 1993, Fig. 105).

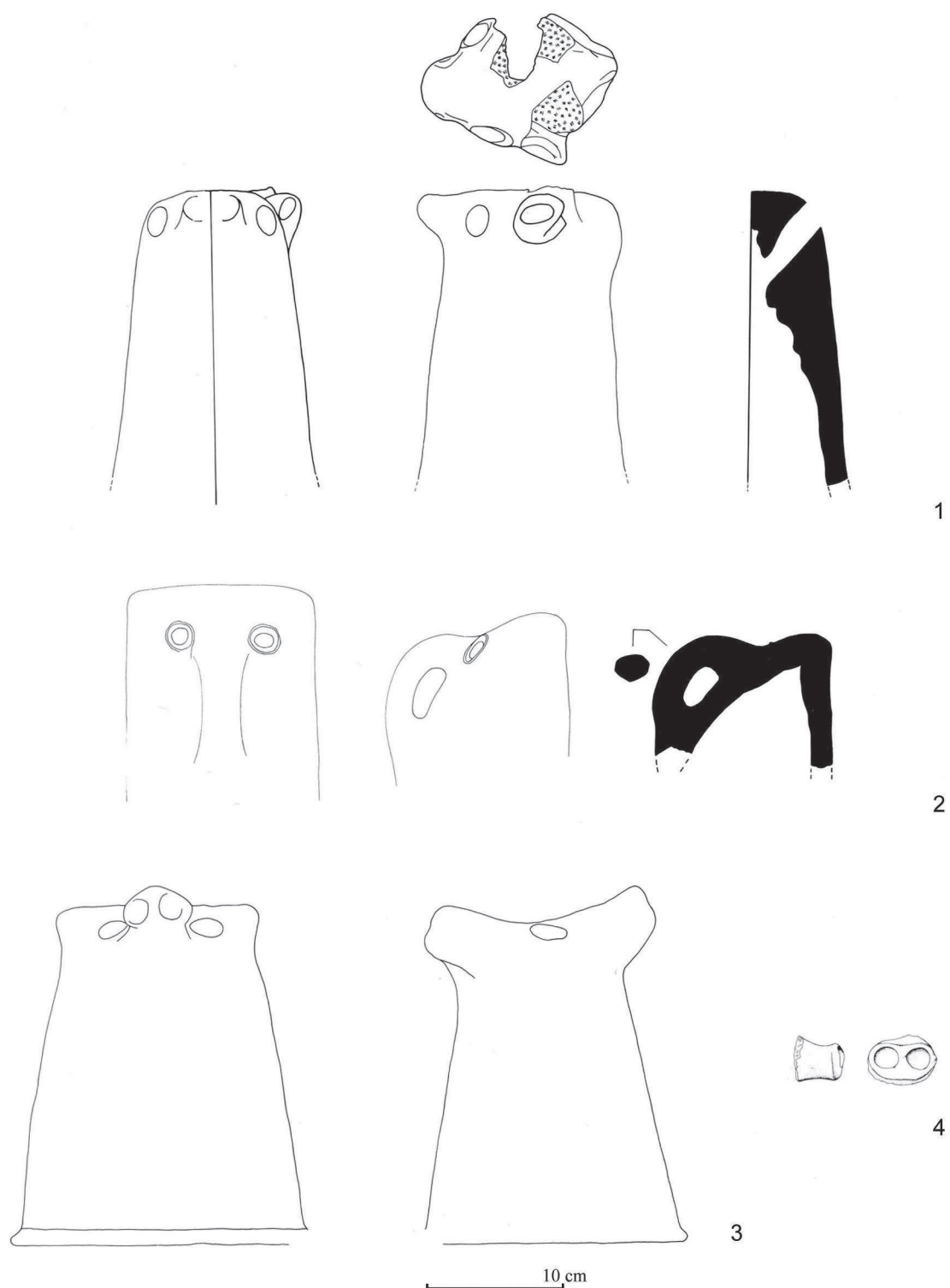


Fig. 9. Zoomorphic cult stands (Level VIII–VII) from the vicinity of the temple buildings (after: JAMES/MCGOVERN 1993, Fig. 94).

However, the diary and register testify that this object came from below the floor and should be attributed to Level VIII⁶³. The back of the throne shows a vulture with extended wings and a *djed* sign below it with upraised arms and *ankh* signs dangling from each elbow. The altar room (1068) also yielded three ceramic duck or goose heads that had once been attached to splayed-rim Egyptian-style bowls. According to MCGOVERN, most of these were concentrated in the Level VII temple precinct and were probably used in the local cult⁶⁴.

Finds inside the main hall of Temple 1072 were limited but significant. An ivory Hathor “clapper” (Fig. 8:3) or wand was found near the bottom of the stairway⁶⁵, and the “Stele of Ashtoreth of the Two Horns” (Fig. 8:2) was found near a bin in the southwestern corner of the main hall⁶⁶. This Egyptianizing limestone stele depicts a woman worshiping a goddess. Since the inscription cannot be read we have no way of knowing the deity’s identity, but she is shown holding an *ankh* in her right hand and *w3s*-scepter in her left. She is generally identified with Astarte, or perhaps Hathor⁶⁷. One might also tentatively regard Mekal as one of the venerated deities in this temple, given the association of the Mekal Stele with Levels VIII–VII.

A clay cobra was found in Locus 1085 in the southeast. Similar cobras with heads modeled in the round and then attached to a flattened torso with affixed breasts and tails were found elsewhere in Levels VIII–VII (Taf. 30B–C), primarily within residential contexts⁶⁸. Although a few of these appeared in Level VI (Taf. 30D), it is clear that by this time their importance had diminished. At the very least, these figurines had some sort of an apotropaic function⁶⁹.

Locus 1104, an open area to the north of Temple 1072, also served a sacred function. Such open cult areas are customarily in front of temples, but the presence of an altar made from roughly-hewn basalt and an accumulation of ash and charred bones surrounding it attest to its ritual use⁷⁰. A nearby enclosure (1260) to the east of Temple 1072 contained a tabun that may have been used to make bread for religious purposes. In the passage leading to locus 1260, an ovoid jar was found whose lid apparently depicted the head of the Egyptian god Bes⁷¹. While ROWE noted several other cult objects from Levels VIII–VII (*e.g.* a group of characteristic zoomorphic cult stands; Fig. 9:1–4)⁷², we won’t discuss them further here in detail. What is important for our purposes is that all of these objects reveal a mixture of Canaanite and Egyptian religious items, testifying to the complex nature of Canaanite and Egyptian interaction at the site.

⁶³ JAMES/MCGOVERN 1993, 6, 179, fig. 104:1.

⁶⁴ JAMES/MCGOVERN 1993, 8, 172–173, pl. 40:d, g, i.

⁶⁵ ROWE 1940, 8, pl. 47A:4; JAMES/MCGOVERN 1993, fig. 105:1; pl. 44.

⁶⁶ ROWE 1930, 19, 21, pl. 48:2; 1940, 8, 31, pl. 35:5, 49A:1; JAMES/MCGOVERN 1993, 250.

⁶⁷ JAMES/MCGOVERN 1993, 250; MAZAR 2011, 163.

⁶⁸ ROWE 1930, 18; 1940, pl. 42A:2.5, 45A:4–5; JAMES/MCGOVERN 1993, 171–172, fig. 83–85.

⁶⁹ For a thorough discussion of the cobra figurines from Beth-Shean, see DAVID 2009, 556 and JAMES/MCGOVERN 1993, 171–172. DAVID notes that while breasts are uncommon on cobras from Egypt, their appearance is consistent with the gender of divine female cobra, and may have represented Renenutet, the protector of granaries and kitchens, goddess of the harvest, wealth, and good fortune. As a fertility and mother goddess with an apotropaic function, Renenutet is also shown in Egypt as suckling a child. MCGOVERN views these objects as combining features of the Egyptian cobra with the Canaanite female plaque figurines with breasts. In this case, the breasted cobra figurines may reflect the hybrid character of the local cult.

⁷⁰ ROWE 1940, 10. The altar in Locus 1104 was inadvertently left out of the plan shown in fig. 3, but can be seen in MCGOVERN 1985, 10 or JAMES/MCGOVERN 1993, 2.

⁷¹ ROWE 1940, pl. 46A:3–4. JAMES/MCGOVERN 1993, fig. 78:2.

⁷² ROWE 1940, pl. 44A:1–3, 46A:1–2; cf. JAMES/MCGOVERN 1993, 175 Fig. 94.

The end of the 19th Dynasty (Level VII) and the transition to the 20th Dynasty (Level VI) was not marked by an overall destruction; nevertheless, there is clear evidence for localized fires and the abandonment of buildings in various parts of the settlement. This may have been the result of turmoil that resulted from the unstable situation in Egypt during this period of time⁷³.

4. Level VI (Iron Age IA; 12th Cent. B.C.E.; Twentieth Dynasty)

Level VI represents the last Egyptian settlement at Beth-Shean, equivalent to HUE Stratum S-3. It retained the same general plan as Level VII, though there were substantial changes west of the temple where important administrative buildings of Level VII were replaced by what appears to be storage facilities (Fig. 10)⁷⁴. In the north, an imposing square structure that UME called

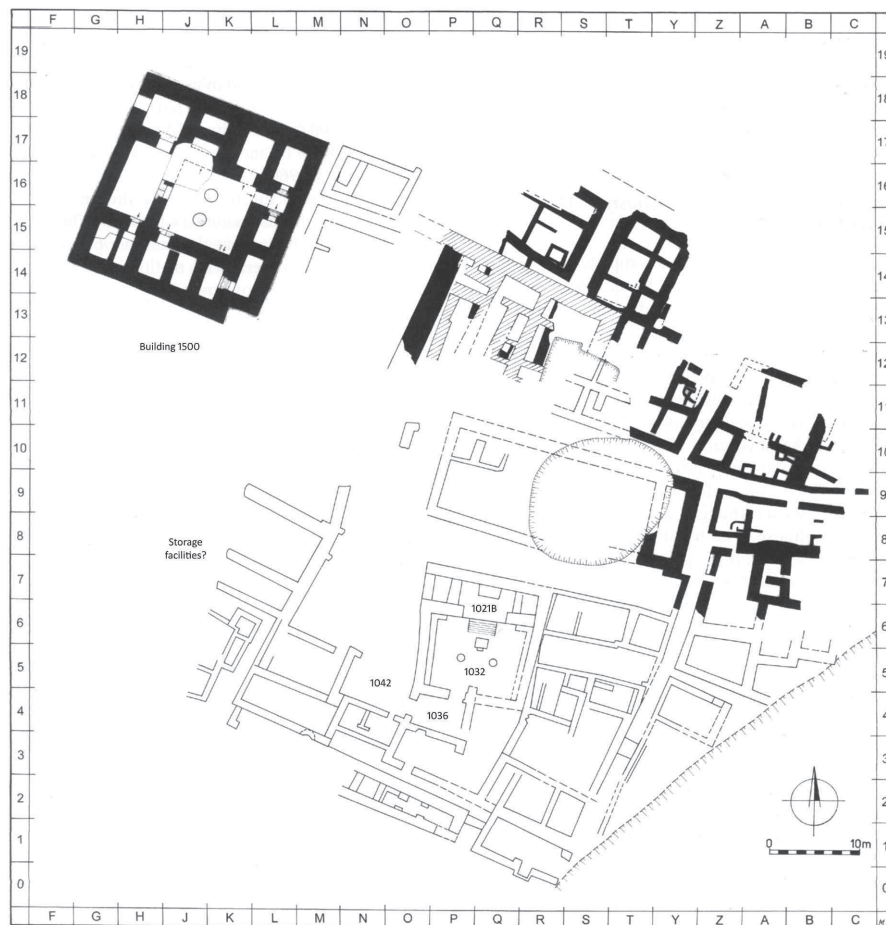


Fig. 10. Combined plan of UME Level VI and equivalent HUE strata (after: PANITZ-COHEN/MAZAR [ed.] 2009, 16, Fig. 1.5).

⁷³ MAZAR 2009, 14–15.

⁷⁴ MAZAR 2011, 167. For a general discussion of Level VI, see MAZAR 2009, 15–26.

“Building 1500” was built over the earlier Stratum Q-2 structure of Level VII. MAZAR interprets Building 1500 as a small palace, designed to impress visitors and reflect Egyptian rule and power⁷⁵. It was probably the seat of the governors of Beth-Shean, including Ramesses Weser-Khepesh and perhaps also his father Thutmosis⁷⁶. Two important objects that probably originated in Level VI, but found reused in Level V, are the statue of Ramesses III (Fig. 19:3) discovered outside the entrance to the Northern Temple⁷⁷, and the Antit Stele (Fig. 18) found inside this same structure⁷⁸.

Temple 1032 from Level VI is similar in plan to the previous temple from Level VII and sits directly above it (Fig. 10)⁷⁹. The most noticeable differences between the two are the centered stairway leading up to the raised podium (1021B) and storage bins on either side. Access into the main hall (1032) was from the southwest as before; but to do so, one had to pass through two ante-rooms (1042 and 1036) instead of one.

Little was found inside the main hall, apart from a kernos near the base of the steps leading to the raised room⁸⁰. In room 1021B, immediately west of the altar, ROWE found a life-sized stone falcon (Fig. 11) representing the Egyptian god Horus standing on a base and wearing the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt⁸¹. Apart from this find, there is nothing else definitive that would identify which deities were worshiped here.

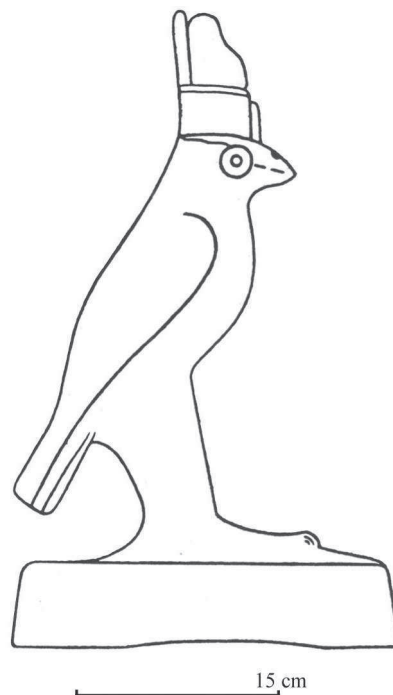


Fig. 11. Horus stone falcon (after: ROWE 1940, pl. 35:8).

⁷⁵ MAZAR 2011, 168.

⁷⁶ ROWE 1940, 25; WARD 1966, 163; HIGGINBOTHAM 2000, 64–67; MAZAR 2011, 171–172.

⁷⁷ ROWE 1930, 36, pl. 51.

⁷⁸ ROWE 1930, 32–33, pl. 50:2; 1940, 31, 33–34.

⁷⁹ ROWE 1940, 13, pl. 50A:1.

⁸⁰ ROWE 1940, 16, pl. 51A:3.

⁸¹ ROWE 1940, 13, pls. 35:8, 51A:4.

5. Late Level VI (Iron Age IB; 11th Cent. B.C.E.; Post-Egyptian Canaanite Settlement)

Occupation following the end of Level VI was denoted “Late Level VI” by F. JAMES (1966, 19–21, Fig. 77). It is equivalent to HUE Strata S-2 and N-2 of the 11th cent. B.C.E., which was the revived Canaanite town following Egypt’s departure from the region. In the biblical narrative, this would be the town associated with the hanging of the bodies of Saul and his sons on the city walls by the Philistines (1 Sam 31:8–13; 1 Chron 10:8–12). None of this, however, can be corroborated by archaeology⁸². A Philistine raid into the region is not improbable, but if so, it left no archaeological record. In addition, there is almost no evidence for a resident Philistine population as has often been assumed from a flat reading of the text, except for a few pottery sherds and a few clay figurines⁸³. To this phase, JAMES attributed a few ephemeral structural remains above Building 1500 and to its east, as well as walls surrounding the Level VI temple. It is noteworthy, however, that no remains assigned to Late Level VI are shown above the Level VI temple itself. As will be seen below, this may help to correctly assign and date the pair of temples attributed to Level V.

6. The Stratigraphy, Dating and Architecture of the Double Temple Complex

Despite JAMES’ meticulous publication of the Iron Age strata (1966), the UME results were difficult to interpret and several problems remain. Following ROWE, she attributed the two temples to Level V (Iron Age IIA, equivalent to HUE Stratum S-1), but remained indecisive about their date. Some of the pottery found in the temples was Iron Age IIA and thus consistent with Level VI. Most of the pottery, including the richly decorated cult stands (Fig. 16–17) and other sacred objects found mainly inside the Southern Temple, was more appropriate to an 11th cent. B.C.E. cultural horizon, after Egypt’s departure from Beth-Shean⁸⁴. She ultimately opted for the earlier date in Iron Age IB⁸⁵.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to enter into the complexity of the Iron Age stratigraphy here, so the reader is directed to the full discussion by A. MAZAR⁸⁶. In brief, he proposed separating the dual temples with their 11th cent. B.C.E. assemblage from the well-planned architectural complex further north, which can be dated to the 10th – 9th cent. B.C.E. (Iron Age IIA), and move the temples to Late Level VI. Thus, the Late Level VI structural void over the earlier Level VI temple (see the previous section above) would be filled by the dual temples. If he is

⁸² According to 1 Sam 31:10, 12, the bodies of Saul and his sons were hung on the city wall of Beth-Shean; however, HUE found no evidence for a city wall from any of the periods discussed in this essay. Either the city was unfortified, or as B. ARUBAS (2006) has argued, the edges of the mound and the fortifications along with them, were cut away by the builders of Nysa-Scythopolis. Also note the alternate tradition in 2 Sam 21:12, which has the Philistines hanging the bodies in the city square rather than on the city wall.

⁸³ The biblical writer probably had Philistia in mind; not the town of Beth-Shean. For a full discussion of the stratigraphy, architecture and finds associated with the city of this time, see PANITZ-COHEN/MAZAR (*ed.*) 2009.

⁸⁴ ROWE 1940, pl. 14–17.

⁸⁵ JAMES 1966, 133–136.

⁸⁶ MAZAR 2006, 34; 2009, 27–28.

correct, this means that the Iron Age IB city would have included the double temple complex, the “Monuments Courtyard” in front of the Northern Temple, as well as other UME Late Level VI and HUE Strata S-2 and N-2 remains. Then later in the 10th cent. B.C.E. (Level V, Stratum S-1), the two temples were reused as part of a more extensive administrative center on the acropolis⁸⁷. A proposal by E. YANNAI to date the two temples to a late phase of Level VI, prior to the end of 20th Dynasty Egyptian presence, is unconvincing for reasons that MAZAR explains in further detail⁸⁸.

6.1. The Southern Temple

This building, which ROWE identified with the “Temple of Dagon” (1 Chron 10:10), represents a complete change of plan and shift in orientation over the earlier temples from Levels VI and VII, so its cultic focus now lay to the east, like Temple 1230 from Level IX (Fig. 12). Its location above the ruins of the temple from Level VI, together with the presence of cult objects, supports its identification as a temple⁸⁹. The temple consists of a large long room divided into three halls by two rows of columns, flanked by smaller rooms on either side. Partition walls filled the spaces between the columns. ROWE believed the columns supported a clerestory, but this is difficult to substantiate⁹⁰. One entered the long room through a slightly off-center wall in the west. Due to a disturbance by later constructions nothing survived of the back side of the building in the east, except for what appears to be a widening at its eastern end into a broad room (Fig. 13)⁹¹. The stairway and raised altar room in the isometric drawing (Fig. 12) was conjectured by ROWE on the basis of the earlier Levels VI and VII temples.

This temple has no known architectural parallels to date⁹². Most of the cult objects and figurines of deities came from rooms north of the main hall. These included cylindrical (Fig. 16:1–5) and square (Fig. 17:6) cult stands; a number of which had snakes depicted on them (Fig. 17:1, 3–5)⁹³. JAMES claimed that the pillars were not part of the original building, but added secondarily, when the building later served as a store house⁹⁴. M. OTTOSSON believes that this building should be defined as a palace, and the cult objects inside attributed to the previous temple of Level VI⁹⁵.

⁸⁷ MAZAR 1993b, 221–223.

⁸⁸ MAZAR 2009, 11.

⁸⁹ ROWE 1930, 31; 1940, 22, pl. 10, 54A. For a fuller discussion see JAMES 1966, 38–40.

⁹⁰ ROWE 1940, 25–26, fig. 7. ROWE based his assumption on the multi-story design of some square cult stands found in the temple. For example, see Fig. 17:6 in the present article.

⁹¹ MAZAR 1992, 180.

⁹² For an attempt to compare its basic layout with the architecture of Iron Age Pillared Buildings see KAMLAH 2003.

⁹³ ROWE 1940, 27–28, 30, pl. 14–17, 56A–62A.

⁹⁴ JAMES 1966, 140–144.

⁹⁵ OTTOSSON 1980, 63–76.

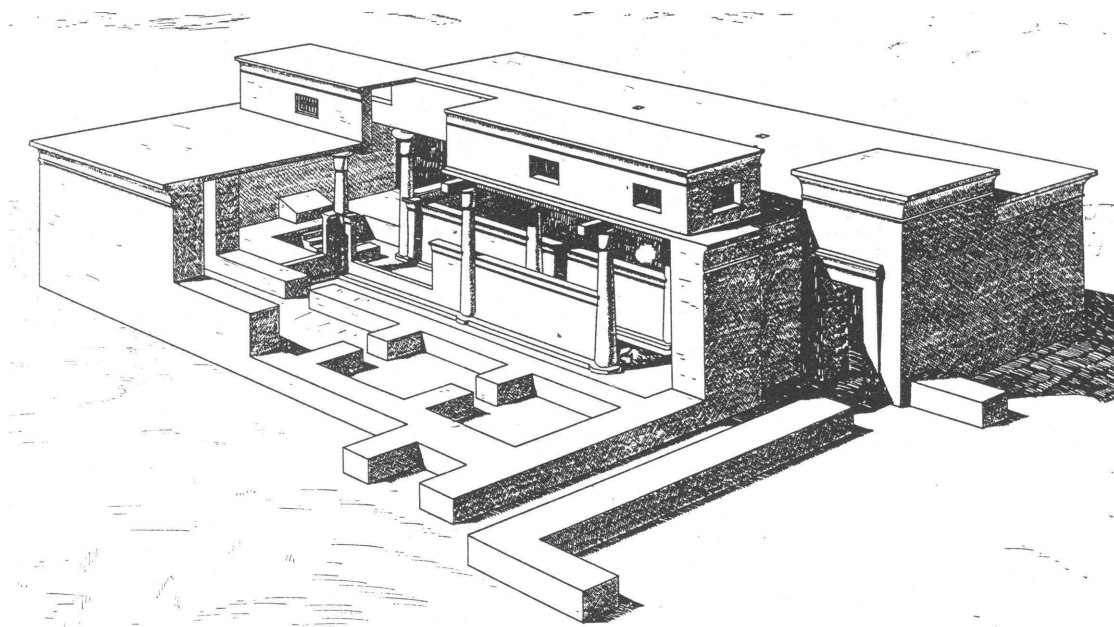


Fig. 12. Isometric reconstruction of the Southern Temple
(after: ROWE 1940, 24, Fig. 5).

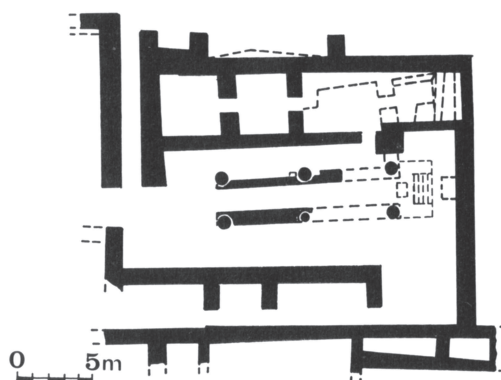


Fig. 13. Plan of the Southern Temple
(after: MAZAR 1992, 180, Fig. 30).

6.2. The Northern Temple

Drawing again on the biblical account of Saul's death, ROWE identified this building as the "House of Ashtoreth" (1 Sam 31:10). Like Temple 1230 from Level IX, this single room structure was accessed by a corner entrance in the west (Fig. 14)⁹⁶. The roof was supported by four columns, whose pillar bases were probably reused from earlier buildings, since they all differed in form. Here too, ROWE assumed the existence of clerestory windows. The orientation of the building is unclear, though ROWE reconstructed it as facing east. As in the case of the Southern Temple, nothing survived of the back side of the buildings or any other interior installations. In his isometric drawing (Fig. 15), ROWE reconstructed the raised altar rooms based on the previous Level VI and VII temples.

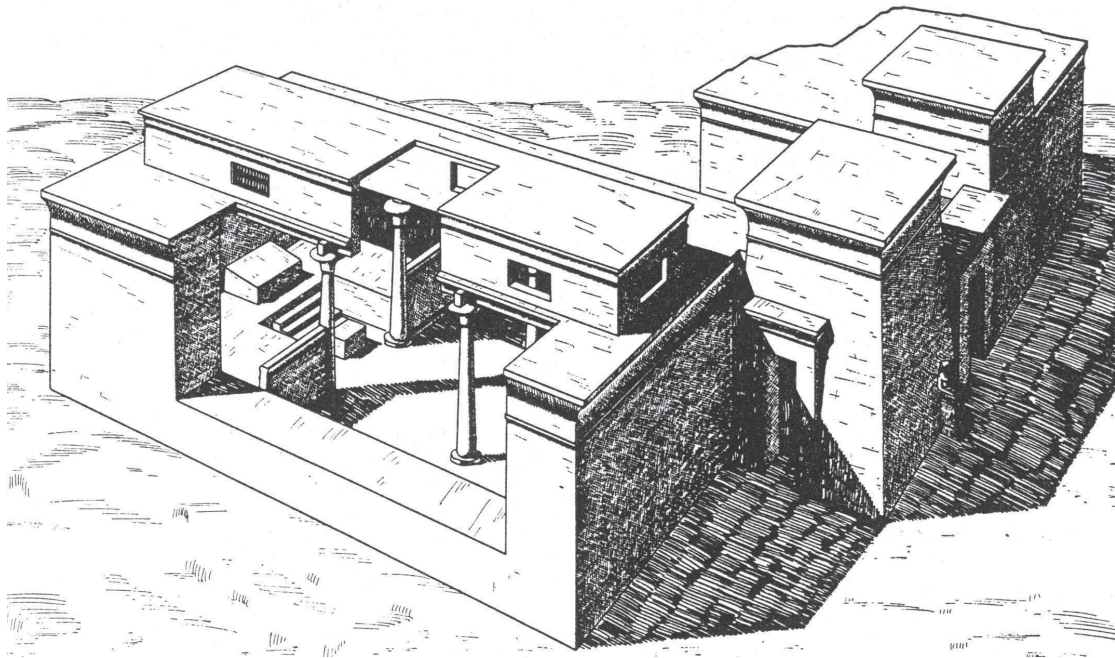


Fig. 14. Isometric reconstruction of the Northern Temple (after: ROWE 1940, 33, Fig. 9).



Fig. 15. Partly reconstructed sketch-plan of the Northern Temple (after: MAZAR 1992, 174, Fig. 24).

⁹⁶ ROWE 1940, 31, pl. 12, 55A.

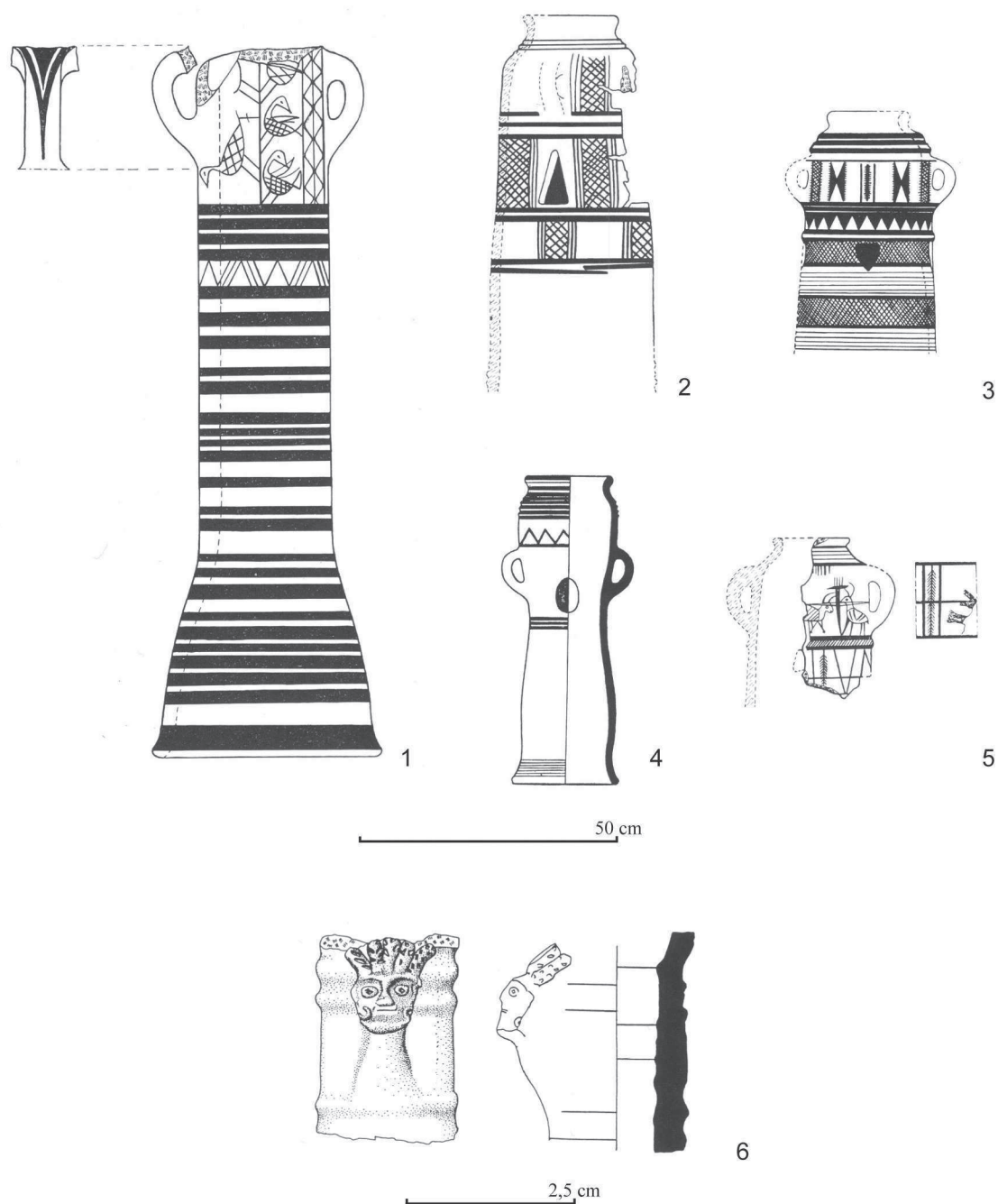


Fig. 16. Painted cylindrical cult stands: (1) from Temple 1032 of Level VI (after: ROWE 1940, pl. 14:2);
 (2–5) from the Southern Temple of Level VI (after: ROWE 1940, pl. 15:1–4);
 (6) Cylindrical object from a street east of Temple 1072 of Level VII
 (after: JAMES/MCGOVERN 1993, Fig. 81:2).

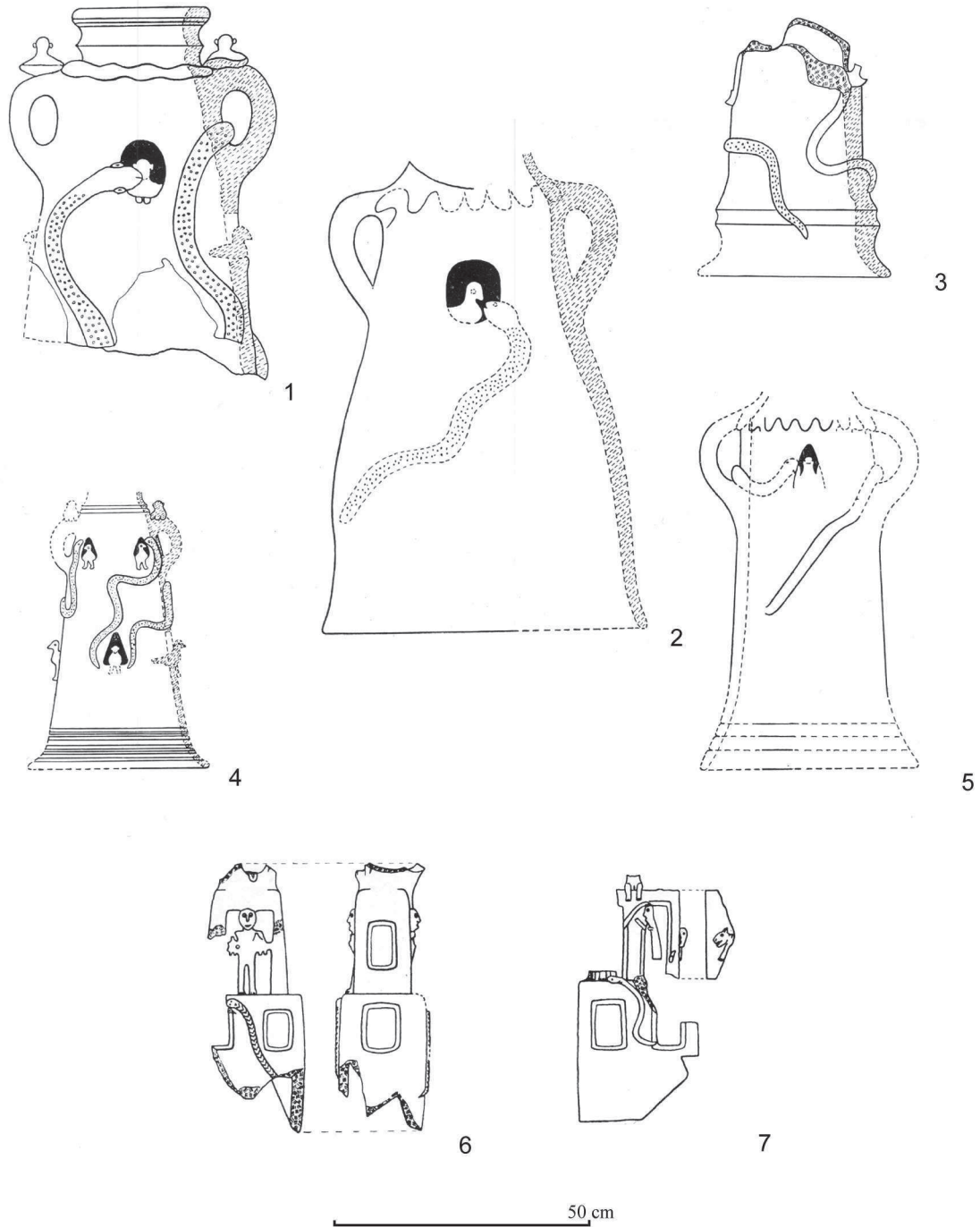


Fig. 17. Cylindrical cult stands with snakes of Late Level VI/Level V: (1, 3–5) from the Southern Temple; (2) from the Northern Temple (after: ROWE 1940, pl. 14:1.3, pl. 16:1–3).
 Square cult stands from Late Level VI/Level V: (6) from the Southern Temple;
 (7) from the Northern Temple (after: ROWE 1940, pl. 17:1–2).



Fig. 18. Private stele dedicated to the goddess Antit by Hesi-Nakht
(after: SCHROER 2011, Kat. 881).

JAMES asserted that this building was not a temple, but rather an administrative building⁹⁷. Yet, ROWE's identification as a sacred structure seems more plausible in light of the various cult objects found inside⁹⁸. While far fewer than those in the neighboring temple to the south, the Iron Age I assemblage did include cylindrical and square stands depicting serpents, and also doves (Fig. 17:2, 7)⁹⁹.

The most important object of significance from the Northern Temple was a private stele (Fig. 18) dedicated to the goddess Antit by Hesi-Nakht¹⁰⁰. The effaced stele depicts a slender female wearing an Egyptian plumed crown. An inscription at the top reads: "Antit, the queen of heaven, the mistress of all the gods". She holds a *w3s*-scepter in her left hand and an *ankh* in her right. She is turned to face a smaller individual identified as Hesi-Nakht, who strides before her with hands raised in adoration. ROWE's identification of Antit with Astarte was probably inspired by his desire to identify this structure with the biblical "House of Ashtoreth". The goddess Anat has also been suggested, but it is always possible that she is a previously unknown goddess by the name of "Antit"¹⁰¹.

⁹⁷ JAMES 1966, 140.

⁹⁸ ROWE 1940, 34.

⁹⁹ ROWE 1940, 32, pl. 16:1, 17:2; JAMES 1966, 33–34.

¹⁰⁰ ROWE 1930, 32–33; 1940, 31, 33–34, pl. 65A:1; JAMES 1966, 34; JAMES/MCGOVERN 1993, 250.

¹⁰¹ BUDIN 2000, 299–300.

The building underwent a major change in Level V when a new floor containing Iron Age IIA pottery was laid down over the four column bases which now went out of use. At this time the structure seems to have served a more secular, administrative purpose.

7. Conclusion

The religious culture of Beth-Shean varied in its history. The structures in Stratum R-2 and Stratum R-1/Level IX recall Canaanite non-monumental irregular-style temples and monumental Syrian-style temples. Although the Egyptians first appear at Beth-Shean with the establishment of Stratum R-1/Level IX in the mid-15th cent. B.C.E., Egypt's cultural impact on the local population is less evident during the 18th Dynasty, unlike the 19th and 20th Dynasties, when in Levels VIII–VI we observe a greater interaction of Canaanite and Egyptian religion and iconography and religious syncretism as expressed in the temple architecture and the variety of artifacts¹⁰².

After Egypt's departure from Beth-Shean in the latter part of the 12th cent. B.C.E., the town returned to its Canaanite roots, as seen in the temple architecture of the double temple complex (reattributed by A. MAZAR to Late Level VI/Stratum S-2) and the predominance of religious objects more directly tied to Canaanite cult. Even so, the reused statue of Ramesses III (Fig. 19:3) found next to the entrance of the Northern Temple, and the two stelae of Seti I (Fig. 19:1) and Ramesses II (Fig. 19:2) standing opposite it in the "Monuments Courtyard" are a good indication that the local inhabitants continued to value their past heritage.

Identifying the deities worshipped in the temples at Beth-Shean is more problematic, since we know little about Canaanite religious practice in the Southern Levant, but it is reasonable to assume on the basis of the metal figurine leg found in the Stratum R-2 sanctuary fills that deities such as Baal or Resheph were worshiped here. And though his stele has been correctly reassigned to the 13th cent. B.C.E., it is not unreasonable to assume that the god Mekal (cf. Fig. 3) was venerated at other times in the town's history as well. Even the city name "Beth-Shean" seems to suggest that this site was the sanctuary town of an unknown deity by the name of "Shean". The goddess Antit is also unattested, unless scholars are correct in identifying her with Anat or some other goddess. Veneration of Anat may be inferred from a hieratic inscription from HUE Stratum S-3a (the last Egyptian phase) that possibly mentions "the bow of 'Anat'"¹⁰³. Finally, the large number of female figurines found in every stratum, and in a variety of cultic and domestic contexts, point to the widespread veneration of Astarte and/or another goddess(es).

Worship of the Egyptian gods may be inferred from the statue of Horus from Temple 1032 in Level VI, and the veneration of Amen-Re or another male deity may be deduced from a hieroglyphic inscription found on a limestone block which ROWE rendered as, "Praises be to thee, O beautiful one [the sun-god], who possesseth everlastingness [. . .] thou didst fashion the Nile"¹⁰⁴. Veneration of Hathor is suggested by the ivory "clapper" (Fig. 8:3) found in the Level VII temple.

¹⁰² See the summary about Canaanite and Egyptian ethnicity in MAZAR 2011, 174–175.

¹⁰³ WIMMER 2009.

¹⁰⁴ ROWE 1940, 19. This context of this limestone block is unclear. It appears to have been found in a Late Level VI context, but ROWE speculates that it originated in the Level VI temple, where he associates local veneration of the sun god with the limestone hawk of Horus found in the raised altar room (1021B).

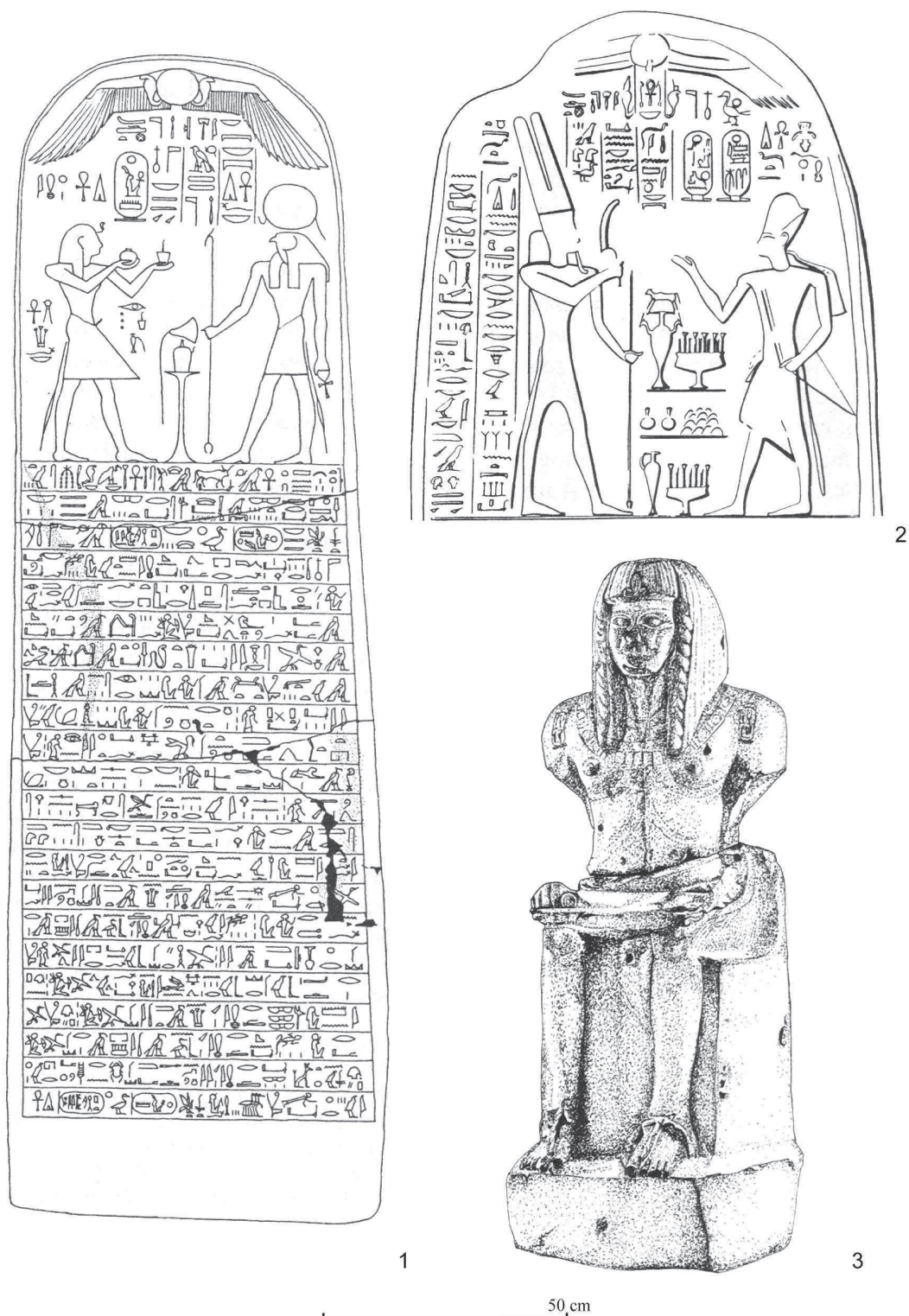


Fig. 19. Egyptian monuments, reused in the temple area of Late Level VI/Level V: (1) Stele of Seti I (after: KEEL/UEHLINGER 2010, 111); (2) Stele of Ramesses II (top portion; after: KEEL/UEHLINGER 2010, 112); (3) seated statue of Ramesses III (after: SCHROER 2011, Kat. 644).

Also, a metal figurine head of this goddess with her face covered in gold foil and attached to a mounting, possibly for furniture, came from a domestic context in locus 1253¹⁰⁵.

In addition to their own deities, the Egyptians respected the local gods. This was certainly the case with Mekal. It may have also included those goddesses represented by the “Ashtoreth of the Two Horns” and “Antit” stelae, although unlike Mekal, these deities are depicted in Egyptian-style dress. We can likewise assume that the local Canaanite population revered Egyptian deities. Hathor was certainly popular outside Egypt, as was Bes. And the numerous cobra figurines and duck/goose heads may indicate some sort of veneration by both population groups. In the end, however, such reconstructions of religious life are highly speculative and should be considered with caution. Despite our growing body of knowledge, it is likely that several aspects of the religious culture and ideology of Beth-Shean will never be known.

Zusammenfassung

Die religiöse Kultur Beth Scheans veränderte sich im Laufe ihrer Geschichte. Um die Entwicklung der Sakralarchitektur und ihrer kultischen Ausstattung während des 2. und 1. Jt.s v. Chr. nachzeichnen zu können, ist der Blick zunächst auf zwei Gebäude von Stratum R-2 und Stratum R-1/Level IX zu richten (15. Jh. v. Chr.). Eines von ihnen (Tempel 58066; Fig. 1) erinnert an andere spätbronzezeitliche Tempel Palästinas, die nicht-monumental und unregelmäßig gestaltet waren. Das andere Sakralgebäude gleicht dagegen monumentalen syrischen Tempeln (Tempel 1230; Fig. 2).

Beth Schean diente den Ägyptern ab der zweiten Hälfte des 15. Jh.s v. Chr. als Garnison (ab Stratum R-1/Level IX). Zwar lässt sich die ägyptische Präsenz für diese Schicht bereits eindeutig nachweisen, aber während der Zeit der 18. Dynastie blieb der ägyptische Einfluss auf die lokale Kultur noch deutlich geringer als in der Zeit der 19. und 20. Dynastie. Während der 19. und 20. Dynastie (Level VIII–VI) ist in Beth Schean eine wesentlich stärkere synkretistische Interaktion zwischen kanaanäischer und ägyptischer Religion charakteristisch. Ausdruck findet diese sowohl in der Tempelarchitektur als auch in der Bandbreite der Funde, insbesondere in deren ikonographischer Gestaltung (MAZAR 2011, 174–175; vgl. z.B. die Aegyptiaca Fig. 8 und 11).

Nach dem Abzug der Ägypter aus Beth Schean am Ende des 12. Jh.s v. Chr. kehrte die Stadt offensichtlich zu ihren kanaanäischen Wurzeln zurück. Dafür spricht die Architektur des Doppeltempel-Komplexes dieser Zeit („Late Level VI/Level V“; Südtempel [Fig. 12–13] und Nordtempel [Fig. 14–15]) und die Dominanz von kanaanäisch geprägten Kultobjekten (vgl. die Kultständer Fig. 16–17). Dennoch lässt die Wiedererrichtung bedeutender ägyptischer Monumente aus der Zeit der ägyptischen Garnison innerhalb des Doppeltempel-Komplexes eine besondere Wertschätzung alter ägyptischer Traditionen am Ort erkennen. Dazu zählen eine Sitzstatue von Ramses III. (Fig. 19:3) im Eingangsbereich des Nordtempels und zwei Stelen von Sethos I. (Fig. 19:1) und Ramses II. (Fig. 19:2) im „Monuments Courtyard“.

Die Identifizierung der in den Tempeln verehrten Gottheiten ist weitaus problematischer, da über die kanaanäische Kultpraxis in der Südlevante nur wenig bekannt ist. Aber der Fund eines von einer Bronzefigur stammenden Beines in der Tempelfüllschicht von Stratum R-2 lässt vermuten, dass Gottheiten wie Baal oder Reschef hier verehrt worden sind. Die berühmte Stele des Gottes Mekal (Fig. 3) ist stratigraphisch ausschließlich dem 13. Jh. v. Chr. zuzuweisen. Es kann jedoch vermutet werden, dass Mekal auch zu anderen Zeiten der Stadtgeschichte als bedeutende Gottheit Beth Scheans verehrt worden ist. Der Name der Stadt könnte darauf hinweisen, dass hier eine unbekannte Gottheit namens „Schean“ angesiedelt war, doch lässt sich diese Vermutung bisher nicht verifizieren. Die Göttin Antit, deren Verehrung in Beth Schean aus einer im Bereich des Nordtempels aufgestellten Stele hervorgeht (Fig. 18), ist andernorts nicht belegt, es sei denn, man folgt der Auffassung, sie sei mit Anat zu identifizieren. Die Göttin Anat ist in Beth Schean eventuell durch eine hieratische Inschrift bezeugt, die aus HUE Stratum S-3a stammt (die letzte ägyptische Phase; vgl. Table 1) und die möglicherweise den „Bogen der Anat“ erwähnt (WIMMER 2009). Außerdem

¹⁰⁵ ROWE 1940, pl. 47A:3; JAMES/MCGOVERN 1993, fig. 81; pl. 38:f.

zeigt die hohe Anzahl an Funden weiblicher Terrakotta-Figuren aus allen Schichten und aus verschiedenen Kontexten (sowohl häuslicher als auch kultischer Art), dass Astarte und/oder andere Göttinnen in Beth Schean sehr populär waren.

Die Anbetung ägyptischer Gottheiten ergibt sich durch eine lebensgroße Horusfalken-Skulptur aus Stein (Fig. 11; ein Kultbild?) in Tempel 1032 (Level VI) und aus hieroglyphisch beschrifteten Kalksteinblöcken, deren Text ROWE folgendermaßen übersetzt: „Praises be to thee, O beautiful one [sun-god], who possesseth everlastingnes [. . .] thou didst fashion the Nile“ (ROWE 1940, 19). Die Göttin Hathor erscheint ikonographisch auf einer „Elfenbeinklapper“ (Fig. 8:3) im Tempelbezirk (Level VII). Dieses Rhythmus-Instrument bezeugt zugleich, dass Musik im Tempelkult aufgeführt wurde. Eine weitere Hathor-Darstellung von Beth Schean stammt aus einem häuslichen Kontext (Locus 1253). Es handelt sich um ein bronzenes, teilweise mit Goldfolie überzogenes Figürchen, das Kopf und Oberkörper der Göttin darstellt und als Aufsatz vermutlich zu einem Möbelstück oder zu einer Standarte gehörte (vgl. SCHROER 2011, 212 Nr. 743).

Die in Beth Schean anwesenden Ägypter pflegten nachweislich nicht nur den Kult für ägyptische Gottheiten, sondern auch für lokale Götter. Dies war sicherlich bei Mekal der Fall. Gleiches gilt vermutlich aber auch für jene Göttinnen, die als „Astareth of the Two Horns“ (Fig. 8:2) und „Antit“ (Fig. 18) dargestellt wurden, obwohl diese im Unterschied zu Mekal typisch ägyptische Gewandung tragen. Im Gegenzug kann für die lokale kanaanäische Bevölkerung im Allgemeinen vorausgesetzt werden, dass sie neben den einheimischen auch ägyptische Gottheiten verehrte. Hathor war außerhalb Ägyptens sehr beliebt, ebenso wie Bes. Und die zahlreichen Terrakotta-Figuren von Schlangen (Taf. 30B–D) sowie die von Gefäßen stammenden Enten- und Gänseköpfe legen eine gemeinsame Verehrung durch beide Bevölkerungsgruppen nahe. Abschließend ist jedoch der hypothetische Charakter solcher Rekonstruktionen von religiösen Verhaltensweisen zu betonen. Trotz der Vermehrung archäologischer Funde und des deshalb ständig anwachsenden Wissensstandes werden vermutlich viele Aspekte der religiösen Kultur Beth Scheans niemals vollständig geklärt werden können.

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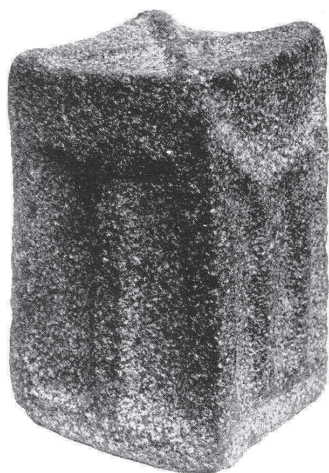
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A. Basalt altar (after: ROWE 1940, pl. LXIXA:1-2; no scale).



B. Clay cobra, Level VII (after: ROWE 1940, pl. XLIVA:4).



C. Upper part of a clay cobra,
Level VIII (after: ROWE 1940,
pl. XLIIA:4).



D. Clay cobra, Level VI (after: ROWE 1940, pl. LIIA:5).

10 cm