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ABBREVIATIONS

AASOR Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
ADAJ Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan
AJA American Journal of Archaeology
AfO Archiv für Orientforschung
BA The Biblical Archaeologist
BASOR Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BT Babylonian Talmud
CAD Chicago Assyrian Dictionary
CIS Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum
DD Discoveries in the Judean Desert
DSD Dead Sea Discoveries
EI Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies
ESI Excavations and Surveys in Israel
IAA Reports Israel Antiquities Authority Reports
IEJ Israel Exploration Journal
JAOS Journal of the American Oriental Society
JBL Journal of Biblical Literature
JCS Journal of Cuneiform Studies
JE A Journal of Egyptian Archaeology
JNES Journal of Near Eastern Studies
PEQ Palestine Exploration Quarterly
PT Palestinian Talmud
QDAP Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine
RA Revue d’Assyriologie et d’Archéologie Orientale
RB Revue Biblique
RE Pauly-Wissowa’s Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft
RQ Revue de Qumran
VT Vetus Testamentum
ZA Zeitschrift für Assyriologie
ZDPV Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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The Assyrian Destruction Layer at Tel ‘Eton*

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ABSTRACT: Tel ‘Eton is a large site (approximately 60 dunams) in the south-eastern Shephelah, just below the Hebron Hills. The site was densely occupied during the Iron Age II, and it appears that a large and probably planned town existed there at the time. This city was destroyed in the late eighth century BCE, like most sites in the Shephelah, and did not recover. The rich ceramic assemblage unearthed in the destruction layer is very similar to the one found at nearby Lachish (Level III), although some elements suggest that it could be a little earlier. The article discusses the assemblage and compares it to the relevant assemblages of other sites in order to assess the date of the destruction at Tel ‘Eton. At the present state of knowledge, we cautiously attribute the destruction to Sennacherib’s campaign.

TEL ´ETON is situated in the south-eastern Shephelah, at the edge of the trough valley, c. 4 km. north-east of Tell Beit Mirsim and c. 11 km. south-east of Tel Lachish. The site lies at an important crossroads, and in the valley below it, several routes running from the Coastal Plain towards Mount Hebron intersected the north–south road running through the trough valley that connected the valley of Beersheba and the Valley of Ayalon.

Most investigators identify the site as that of biblical Eglon (Josh. 10:34–36, 12:12, 15:39; see Noth 1953: 95; Rainey 1980: 197). A brief salvage dig was conducted there during the 1970s (Ayalon 1985; Zimhoni 1985), and additional digs were conducted at several tombs in the hills surrounding the site (e.g., Edelstein et al. 1971; see further below).

In the summer of 2006, Bar-Ilan University initiated a large-scale excavations project at Tel ‘Eton and a survey of its surroundings. Their findings suggest that

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1 The excavations (permit nos. G45/2006, G69/2007, G47/2008, G47/2009 and G53/2010) and the survey (G46/2006, G15/2007, S28/2008, S130/2009 and S197/2010) were directed by Avraham Faust. Hayah Katz was responsible for the ceramics analysis. Restoration was carried out by Dina Castel, the drawings were prepared by Yulia Rodman and the plates by Pirchiya Eyal. The excavation was conducted with the help of students from Bar-Ilan University, the Open University of Israel, Wheaton College and SPNI trailblazers. The excavation received substantial support from the Lachish Regional Council and its head, Danni Moravia, his assistant,
the site was settled throughout most of the Bronze and Iron Ages, continuing into the Persian–Hellenistic period (Faust 2009; 2011). Most of the remains are associated with an Iron Age IIB city, which, like many other sites in the Shephelah, was violently destroyed towards the end of the eighth century BCE.

In addition to the importance of presenting the finds from the eighth-century BCE destruction level at Tel ‘Eton, it should be noted that the dating of the various eighth-century destruction strata in the Shephelah has recently become the subject of lively debate, with several scholars examining and analysing the published finds from Tel ‘Eton in order to support their conclusions (see below). In this article, therefore, we attempt to contribute to that debate as well. Following a description of the remains uncovered at the site, we analyse their stratigraphy and describe and date the wealth of ceramic materials that have been uncovered from that period.

PREVIOUS EXPLORATIONS OF TEL ‘ETON

Small-scale excavations were conducted at Tel ‘Eton by the Lachish expedition (Tel Aviv University), directed by D. Ussishkin. A small team, headed by E. Ayalon and R. Bar-Nathan, excavated four squares near the top of the mound. Despite the relative shallowness of the squares, remains from two Iron Age II strata were uncovered (Ayalon 1985; Zimhoni 1985). O. Zimhoni, who published the pottery, noted the similarities between the findings from the two strata and dated them to the mid-ninth–mid-eighth century BCE. As we shall see, that dating is of great importance and is often cited in the context of the debate over the dating of the destruction strata identified in the Shephelah (Blakely and Hardin 2002; Finkelstein and Na’aman 2004; see further below). In addition, various salvage excavations were carried out in several tombs in the vicinity of the site (Edelstein et al. 1971; Edelstein 1968; Edelstein and Aurrant 1992; Arensburg and Belfer-Cohen 1992; Brewer 1992; Ussishkin 1974; Tzaferis 1982a; 1982b; Tzaferis and Hess 1992), part of a large cemetery (the hill surrounding the site appears to be dotted with thousands of tombs, almost all of which have been robbed).

THE FINDINGS OF THE BAR-ILAN EXPEDITION

So far, excavations have been conducted in four areas (fig. 1). Below we summarise the findings from the two central areas: Area A, lying at the highest point of the mound, near its southern edge, and Area B, lying a few dozen metres north of it.

In Area A (fig. 2), three main levels of occupations have thus far been
Fig. 1. General plan of Tel ‘Eton, with excavated areas
uncovered (in addition to modern activity); at the lowest of them, several phases can be identified.

The uppermost stratum includes the remains of a massive square structure (estimated size: c. 20×20 m.). The external wall (c. 3 m. wide) is composed of two parallel walls, with the space between them filled with small stones. The structure is sub-divided by several inner walls. The massive size of the structure and its location at the top of the mound, at a point allowing it to dominate broad areas, suggest a military use, evidently as a fortress. Unfortunately, the structure is very poorly preserved and only portions of the foundation were uncovered; it is, therefore, difficult to date it. Circumstantial considerations lead us to date it to the late Persian or early Hellenistic period.

During the 2008 and 2009 seasons, limited evidence of resettlement was found on top of the massive eighth-century BCE destruction level (see below). The pottery discovered in that stratum resembles the pottery found in the destruction stratum below, suggesting that resettlement took place relatively soon after the destruction.
Beneath the fortress and the resettlement stratum (where found), large parts of well-preserved structures that had suffered violent destruction were discovered. Walls of the structures were preserved up to a height of 1.5 m., discovered within debris of stones and bricks in which numerous finds were unearthed, including dozens of pottery vessels, arrowheads, loom weights, metal vessels and bullae/sealings. The buildings seem to have been destroyed towards the end of the eighth century BCE, probably in the course of an Assyrian military campaign (see Blakely and Hardin 2002; for a conflicting view, Finkelstein and Na'aman 2004; and see further below). The central building, the doorpost stones of which were nicely worked, was fairly large, with the area of its ground floor apparently exceeding 250 sq.m. Thus far, a substantial part of this building’s central courtyard, with a plastered floor, has been uncovered, as have portions of the surrounding rooms to the north, west and south. During the structure’s final period of existence, the courtyard was divided into two by a flimsy wall. Evidence suggests that the courtyard was open, while the rest of the building was roofed, with a second storey built above it. The northern wing of the building, containing four small rooms, was excavated almost in its entirety; findings there included numerous storage vessels discovered *in situ*, smashed on the floor (fig. 3), as well as many other items, including smaller pottery vessels, loom weights and metal vessels. In some instances, the storage vessels were discovered with their contents — olives, grapes, lentils, vetch, and so on. At several points, remains of a white layer were discovered, apparently the remains of the floor of the second storey. Various items were found above that floor, including a small assemblage of bullae/sealings (Faust and Eshel 2012). In addition to this central structure, portions of several other buildings belonging to the same stratum were discovered.

Area B also yielded impressive remains from the late-eighth-century destruction stratum. The stratigraphic situation in this area is more complex and is discussed below (see also Faust 2011). We note only that in many squares, remains from the eighth century BCE, including a destruction level, were found directly under the surface. In the upper portion of Area B, adjacent to the area excavated by the Tel Aviv University expedition in the 1970s, we found parts of several structures (fig. 4). Their state of preservation was inferior to that of the structures in Area A, and the floors were uncovered only a few dozen centimetres below the surface. Despite this, large assemblages of complete vessels were recovered from this layer (fig. 5), attesting to the violent destruction inflicted upon the city at the time. It is noteworthy that many of the floors were made of plaster and are well preserved despite their proximity to the surface. The lower portion of Area B, on the slope of the mound, also yielded sections of floors on which complete vessels were found (fig. 6). A discussion of several aspects of the stratigraphy of this area follows the presentation of the ceramic assemblage.
Fig. 3. Destruction layer in Area A
THE CERAMIC ASSEMBLAGE

The excavations yielded a rich ceramic assemblage (figs. 7–12). In this article we discuss only complete vessels (for methodology, see Faust and Erlich 2011), as
these can be regarded, with a very high degree of certainty, to have been in actual use when the city was destroyed (table 1).

Table 1. Types of vessels discovered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bowl 6</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Storage jar 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bowl 7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Storage jar 2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pithos</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krater</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Storage jar 3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Jug 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking pot 1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Storage jar 4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jug 2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking pot 2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Storage jar 5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jug 3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking pot 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Storage jar 6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jug 7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage jar 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Juglet 3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lamp 1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage jar 2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Juglet 4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lamp 2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Jug 3</td>
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<td>Jug 7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage jar 5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Storage jar 7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pithos</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage jar 6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Storage jar 7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Juglet 3</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Lamp 2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Jug 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jug 7</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Storage jar 10</td>
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<td>Storage jar 11</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Storage jar 13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By 'complete' vessels we refer to vessels of which the entire profile, the entire perimeter, or most of the pot was unearthed (cf. Faust and Erlich 2011: 106, 208–219). The figures and the table include all the types uncovered during the first five seasons (2006–2010), with the exception of three types identified only during recent restoration and not yet drawn (one type of jug, one type of juglet, and a bottle).
**Fig. 7. Bowls and kraters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Vessel</th>
<th>Reg. No.</th>
<th>Locus</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Parallels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bowl</td>
<td>10147-8</td>
<td>1042</td>
<td>–</td>
<td><strong>Lachish</strong>: Locus 4421 (Zimhoni 2004a: fig. 25.51.4); Level III (Zimhoni 2004b: figs. 26.3.4, 26.40.1); <strong>Tell Beit Mirsim</strong>: Stratum A₂ (Albright 1943: pl. 24:16.20); <strong>Beersheba</strong>: Stratum II (Aharoni 1973: pl. 59:42–43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bowl</td>
<td>20373-1</td>
<td>2114</td>
<td>Red slip and wheel burnish on both sides</td>
<td><strong>Tell Beit Mirsim</strong>: Stratum A₂ (Albright 1943: pls. 24:13, 25:22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bowl</td>
<td>20062.01</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>–</td>
<td><strong>Ashdod</strong>: Stratum VIII (Bachi 1971: fig. 39.2–7.9); <strong>Tell Halif</strong>: Stratum VIIB (Blakely and Hardin 2002: fig. 11.15); <strong>Beersheba</strong>: Stratum II (Aharoni 1973: pl. 59:52–53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bowl</td>
<td>10655-7</td>
<td>1169</td>
<td>–</td>
<td><strong>Timnah</strong>: Strata III–II (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001: fig. 31.6); <strong>Lachish</strong>: Locus 4421 (Zimhoni 2004a: fig. 25.51.6); <strong>Moza</strong>: Stratum V (Greenhut and De Groot 2009: fig. 3.13.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bowl</td>
<td>10374-9</td>
<td>1102</td>
<td>Red slip on both sides, wheel burnish inside and on rim</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bowl</td>
<td>10305-4</td>
<td>1086</td>
<td>wheel burnish inside</td>
<td><strong>Lachish</strong>: Locus 4421 (Zimhoni 2004a: fig. 25.52.18), Level III (Zimhoni 2004b: figs. 26.26.1, 26.37.10); <strong>Tell Beit Mirsim</strong>: Stratum A₂ (Albright 1932: pl. 65:23, 26–27; 1943: pl. 21:8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Bowl</td>
<td>10357-6</td>
<td>1097</td>
<td>Red slip inside and on rim, traces of horizontal hand burnish inside and on rim</td>
<td>See above, no. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bowl</td>
<td>10461</td>
<td>1115</td>
<td>Horizontal hand burnish inside</td>
<td>See above, no. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Bowl</td>
<td>10392-14</td>
<td>1089</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>See above, no. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Krater</td>
<td>10331-7</td>
<td>1088</td>
<td>Horizontal hand burnish inside</td>
<td><strong>Lachish</strong>: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b: figs. 26.3.25, 26.32.10–11); <strong>Tell Beit Mirsim</strong>: Stratum A₂ (Albright 1943: pl. 20:11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bowl 2 (fig. 7:2–3). — Small bowl with straight walls, pronounced carination on the lower part and disc base.

Bowl 3 (fig. 7:4). — Open bowl with everted rim and disc base. The bowl is carinated at the middle of the walls.

Bowl 4 (fig. 7:5). — Large bowl with everted rim, carination at the middle of the walls and ring base. This bowl closely resembles bowl 3, but it is larger and with less pronounced carination.

Bowl 5 (fig. 7:6). — Small bowl with everted rim, rounded walls and low ring base. Surface treatment consists of red slip and horizontal hand burnish.

Bowl 6 (fig. 7:7). — Small bowl with ledged rim. The bowl has carination at the middle of the walls and a disc base.

Bowl 7 (fig. 7:8–11). — Large and medium-sized bowls with thickened or folded rim. Most of the bowls are carinated at the upper third of the wall; some have rounded walls. This is the most dominant bowl type, constituting 72% of the bowls in this assemblage.

Kraters

Krater (fig. 7:12). — Large krater with thickened rim, four handles and ring base. The krater is carinated at the upper third of the wall and has horizontal hand burnish.

Cooking Pots

Cooking Pot 1 (fig. 8:1–2). — Closed cooking pot. It has a globular body, a narrow neck with grooves and a pair of loop handles extending from the neck to the shoulder. The walls are usually thin, and some of the vessels are red-slipped.

Cooking Pot 2 (fig. 8:3). — Open cooking pot with shallow body. The rim is almost flat on top and has a groove in the middle of the flat top or just below it on the exterior. This cooking pot has a pair of handles extending from the neck to the wall, above the carination. The vessel found at Tel ‘Eton is smaller than most of the cooking pots of this type.

Cooking Pot 3 (fig. 8:4–5). — Handmade cooking pot with swollen asymmetric body, thickened walls and erect neck. All the vessels of this type are characterised by their poor quality. It seems that they represent a local variant that imitates cooking pot 1. This type has no parallel, but handmade vessels, similar to these in their poor quality, were found in the Iron Age II site of Kfar Menahem (Kh. Shimon) (Dagan 2009: 46–48).

Funnels

Funnel (fig. 8:6). — Funnel with rounded walls ending with narrow neck. Under the rim two grooves appear, creating a prominent ridge.
Storage Jars

Storage Jar 1 (fig. 9:1). — Royal lmlk storage jar. This jar has an oval body and four handles extending from the broad rounded shoulder to the walls. The neck is engraved with a thickened rim.
### Fig. 9. Storage jars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Vessel</th>
<th>Reg. No.</th>
<th>Locus</th>
<th>Parallels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Storage jar</td>
<td>10264:01</td>
<td>1056</td>
<td><strong>Timnah</strong>: Stratum III (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001: figs. 16:1–9, 19:1–7); <strong>Lachish</strong>: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b: figs. 26.6, 26.7); <strong>Tell Beit Mirsim</strong>: Stratum A₂ (Albright 1932: pl. 52:10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Storage jar</td>
<td>10335:7</td>
<td>1093</td>
<td><strong>Lachish</strong>: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b: fig. 26.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Storage jar</td>
<td>10336</td>
<td>1093</td>
<td>See above, no. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Storage jar</td>
<td>10147:4</td>
<td>1042</td>
<td><strong>Lachish</strong>: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b: fig. 26.10:4–10); <strong>Tell Beit Mirsim</strong>: Stratum A₂ (Albright 1932: pl. 53:4; 1943: pl. 13:5–6); <strong>Beersheba</strong>: Stratum II (Aharoni 1973: pl. 57:8–16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Storage jar</td>
<td>10167:5</td>
<td>1042</td>
<td>See above, no. 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Storage Jar 2 (fig. 9:2–3). — ‘lmlk-like’ storage jar. This vessel type is similar to the royal lmlk storage jar in size and shape, but differ from it in several characteristics: the colour of the clay is light brown, whereas the lmlk storage jar is reddish-brown; the rim is rounded; and there is a ridge on the shoulder, located at the point from where the handles extend.

Storage Jar 3 (fig. 9:4–5). — Oval storage jar with two handles extending from carinated shoulder to walls.

Storage Jar 4 (fig. 9:6). — Storage jar with short neck and two handles extending from carinated shoulder to body. The jar reaches its maximum diameter in the lower third of the body. This type is characteristic of the Iron Age II assemblages in the Coastal Plain.

Storage Jar 5 (fig. 10:1–2). — Holemouth storage jar. These vessels are characterised by a swollen body, four handles and a low ring base. They generally have three ridges on the shoulder.

Storage Jar 6 (fig. 10:3). — Small cylindrical holemouth jar. This type has a rounded base and a ridged rim.

Storage Jar 7 (fig. 10:4–5). — Spouted jar. This type has three loop handles extending from the rim to the shoulder and a spout attached to the rim. The jar represented in fig. 10:5 has a globular body. This shape is characteristic of spouted jars from northern Israel, while the ones found in Judaean sites are oval.

Amphoriskos

Amphoriskos (fig. 10:6). — Amphoriskos with elongated body and pointed base. Two handles extend from the carinated shoulder to the walls.

Pithoi

Pithos (fig. 10:7). — Pithos with thickened walls and elongated body.

Jugs

Jug 1 (fig. 11:1). — Jug with elongated body, broad neck, everted rim and rounded base. A single handle extends from the rim to the shoulder. This jug type is one of the most popular in Iron Age II assemblages in Judah.

Jug 2 (fig. 11:2). — Jug with short broad neck, globular body and rounded base. A single handle extends from the rim to the shoulder.

Jug 3 (fig. 11:3). — Jug with swollen body, everted neck and rounded base. A single handle extends from the rim to the wall.

Jug 4 (fig. 11:4). — Jug with globular body and rounded base. The neck has a concave exterior; a single handle extends from the rim to the walls.

Jug 5 (fig. 11:5). — Jug with globular body, narrow ridged neck and ring base. A handle extends from the neck to the body.

Jug 6 (fig. 11:6). — Large jug with oval body, flat base and thickened, clover-shaped rim. A single handle extends from the rim to the shoulder. This type has no parallels.
Jug 7 (fig. 11:7). — Decanter with square body, ridged neck and ring base. A single handle extends from the ridge to the shoulder carination.

Fig. 10. Storage jars and pithoi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Vessel</th>
<th>Reg. No.</th>
<th>Locus</th>
<th>Parallels</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Holemouth storage jar</td>
<td>10468-8</td>
<td>1115</td>
<td>See above, no. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Spouted jar</td>
<td>10204</td>
<td>1042</td>
<td>Hazor: Stratum VI (Yadin et al. 1960: pls. LXXIV:3, LXXXIX:11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Amphoriskos</td>
<td>20062.02</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Tell Beit Mirsim: Stratum A2 (Albright 1932: pl. 54:7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Pithos</td>
<td>10606-4</td>
<td>1156</td>
<td>The Ophel, Jerusalem: Locus 86/136 (Mazar and Mazar 1989: pl. 12:8–10); Beersheba: Stratum II (Aharoni 1973: pl. 65:12); Tel ‘Ira: Stratum VII (Freud 1999: figs. 6.76–6.79)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1: Jugs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Vessel</th>
<th>Reg. No.</th>
<th>Locus</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Parallels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jug</td>
<td>10135-3</td>
<td>1036</td>
<td>Red slip outside, upper body inside and on handle</td>
<td><strong>Lachish</strong>: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b: figs. 26.1-7, 26.18:13, 26.23:4-5); <strong>Tell Beit Mirsim</strong>: Stratum A2 (Albright 1932: pl. 57:4-5); <strong>Arad</strong>: Strata X–VIII (Singer-Avitz 2002: figs. 30:3, 38:4-5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jug</td>
<td>10153-2</td>
<td>1036</td>
<td>–</td>
<td><strong>Lachish</strong>: Level III, Tombs 120, 224, 1002, 1004 (Tufnell 1953: pl. 84:190)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Jug</td>
<td>10453-4</td>
<td>1115</td>
<td>–</td>
<td><strong>Beth Shemesh</strong>: Strata Ia–b (Grant and Wright 1938: pl. LXV:40,42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Jug</td>
<td>10238-1</td>
<td>1036</td>
<td>Red stains outside</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Fig. 11: Jugs
**Juglets**

*Juglet 1* (fig. 12:1). — Juglet with bag-shaped body and rounded base.

*Juglet 2* (fig. 12:2). — Juglet of Black-on-Red ware, apparently of Cypriot origin (Brodie and Steel 1996: 271). Black-on-Red ware is very rare in Judaean sites, especially during the eighth century BCE (Schreiber 2003: 212–213, 215, 218–219); therefore, the parallels cited are of similar, but not identical, vessels.

*Juglet 3* (fig. 12:3–4). — Juglet with swollen body and rounded base slightly pointed at its center. The juglet has a narrow neck and a single handle extending from the rim to the shoulder.

*Juglet 4* (fig. 12:5–6). — Elongated juglet with cylindrical body and rounded base. The juglet has a wide neck and a single handle extending from the rim to the shoulder.

**Lamps**

*Lamp 1* (fig. 12:7–8). — Lamp with low disc base and pronounced rim.

*Lamp 2* (fig. 12:9). — Similar to lamp 1, but with rounded base.

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Fig. 12. Juglets, lamps and stands
Stands

Stands (fig. 12:10–11). — To date, five stands have been found in the destruction layer at Tel ʿEton. Generally speaking, they have an ‘hour-glass’ form; however, each stand is slightly different, and the assemblage represents a rich repertoire of shapes.

DATING THE DESTRUCTION STRATUM AT TEL ʿETON

Analysis of the ceramic assemblage unearthed within the destruction stratum at Tel ʿEton suggests that the final stage of the settlement’s existence should be dated to the second half of the eighth century BCE (for the assemblage, see also fig. 13). The assemblage may be divided into three groups:

1. Vessels that first appear in the Iron Age IIA and that continue to exist during the eighth century BCE and sometimes even to the beginning of the sixth century BCE. Among these are a bowl with ledged rim (bowl 6); a bowl with a thickened or folded rim (bowl 7); an open cooking pot (cooking pot 2); a

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Vessel</th>
<th>Reg. No.</th>
<th>Locus</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Parallels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Juglet</td>
<td>10239.03</td>
<td>1036</td>
<td>Red slip outside, on rim and on handle</td>
<td>City of David: Caves I–II (Eshel 1995: figs. 24:9, 33:6–7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Juglet</td>
<td>10132.02</td>
<td>1043</td>
<td>Cypro-Phoenician: black stripe decoration</td>
<td>Lachish: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b: fig. 26.18:18); Arad: Strata X–IX, VII (Singer-Avitz 2002: fig. 33:5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Juglet</td>
<td>10485-1</td>
<td>1097</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Lachish: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b: figs. 26.5:3–4, 26.34:4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Juglet</td>
<td>10186.01</td>
<td>1052</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>See above, no. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Juglet</td>
<td>10468-9</td>
<td>1115</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>See above, no. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lamp</td>
<td>10239.04</td>
<td>1036</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Lachish: Level III (Zimhoni 2004b: figs. 26.5:7); Arad: Strata X–VIII (Singer-Avitz 2002: figs. 27:10, 34:11, 39:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lamp</td>
<td>10126-14</td>
<td>1036</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>See above, no. 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Stand</td>
<td>20332</td>
<td>2114</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>See above, no. 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘lmilk-like’ storage jar (storage jar 2); a spouted jar (storage jar 7); and a jug with swollen body and everted neck (jug 3).

2. Vessels that make their first appearance not before the eighth century BCE and that continue to exist until the end of the Iron Age. Examples include a bowl with straight walls (bowl 1); a holemouth jar (storage jar 6); and an elongated juglet with cylindrical body (juglet 4).

3. Vessels characteristic only of the eighth century BCE. Typical of these are a closed cooking pot (cooking pot 1); a lmilk storage jar (storage jar 1) and a holemouth storage jar with three ridges on the shoulder (storage jar 5).

Since all these vessels were uncovered in the same destruction stratum — and most, in fact, were uncovered in the same structure — it is clear that the only time during which they all could have coexisted is the eighth century BCE. Moreover, the assemblage strongly resembles — though it is not identical to — the assemblage uncovered in Lachish Level III, whose destruction has been dated to 701 BCE, during Sennacherib’s campaign. The Lachish excavations serve as the

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3 The term ‘eighth century BCE’ is a general term, encompassing the range of ceramics that existed during that century (primarily during its second half). Of course, many of the vessels continued to exist into the beginning of the seventh century; see also Finkelstein and Na'aman 2004.
benchmark for dating Iron Age II strata in Judah; this certainly holds true for a nearby site such as Tel 'Eton. In this light, it is clear that the destruction of the city should similarly be dated to around the end of the eighth century BCE, probably to Sennacherib’s Judean campaign of 701 BCE (see below). Before attempting a more precise dating, however, we should briefly consider the dating assigned to the city’s destruction on the basis of the limited excavations conducted during the 1970s by the Lachish expedition, as those have been widely referred to (see, e.g., Blakely and Hardin 2002: 35; Finkelstein and Na’aman 2004: 66–67; see also Vaughn 1999: 29, 139).

**THE DESTRUCTION DATE OF TEL ‘ETON ACCORDING TO THE LACHISH EXPEDITION**

In its excavations at Tel ‘Eton, the Lachish expedition identified two strata. The earlier of the two was the more impressive and its destruction more evident; the later was relatively meagre (Ayalon 1985). Zimhoni, who published the ceramic assemblage from those excavations, noted the absence of any difference between the two strata (Zimhoni 1985: 87; 1997c: 207). She divided the assemblage into three groups, relating them to Levels III–IV at Lachish (Zimhoni 1985: 88; 1997c: 208):

1. Types of vessels that appear only in Lachish Level III, such as bowls with folded rim (Zimhoni 1985: figs. 4:8–9, 5:6–8; 1997c: figs. 4.4:8–9, 4.5:6–8); closed cooking pots (Zimhoni 1985: fig. 5:11; 1997c: fig. 4.5:11); and holemouth storage jars (Zimhoni 1985: fig. 7:10–11; 1997c: fig. 4.7:10–11).

2. Vessels that make their first appearance in Lachish Level IV but continue to exist in Level III, including bowls with plain rim (Zimhoni 1985: figs. 4:1, 5:1–3; 1997c: figs. 4.4:1, 4.5:1–3); and bowls with ledged rim (Zimhoni 1985: figs. 4:2, 8:2; 1997c: figs. 4.4:2, 4.8:2).

3. Vessels characteristic of the assemblage discovered exclusively in Lachish Level IV. This group includes kraters characterised by a folded rim. The walls are slightly carinated and rounded inward. The kraters are red-slipped on their interior (Zimhoni 1985: figs. 1:10,13, 4:5, 7:1; 1997c: figs. 4.1:10,13, 4.4:5, 4.7:1). An additional type found at Tel ‘Eton and characteristic of earlier assemblages is a cooking pot with thickened inverted rim bearing multiple grooves (Zimhoni 1985: figs. 4:11, 8:6; 1997c: figs. 4.4:11, 4.8:6). This type first appears in Lachish Level V, but it is characteristic primarily of Level IV.

4 Kraters resembling these were discovered in Strata III–IV at Timnah (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001: KR 14); these kraters are mainly typical of Stratum IV, with the exception of 17 sherds found in Stratum III. It is worth noting, nevertheless, that none of them were discovered in the destruction layer of Stratum III, which is dated to 701 BCE (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001: 63).
with 36% of all the cooking pots in this assemblage belonging to it (Zimhoni 1997b: 122; 2004a: 1682). At Arad, this type appears in Strata XII–XI (Singer-Avitz 2002: 112). Zimhoni also emphasised the resemblance between the vessels discovered at Tel ‘Eton and the Lachish Level IV finds in the widespread use of red slip and hand burnish in surface treatment of bowls and kraters (e.g., Zimhoni 1985: 88; 1997c: 208).

On the basis of these data, Zimhoni dated the two strata uncovered at the site by the Tel Aviv University expedition to 850–750 BCE. The end of Stratum I, which Zimhoni believes reflects the end of settlement at Tel ‘Eton, must, therefore, be no later than the middle of the eighth century BCE — what she takes to be the transition stage between Lachish Levels III and IV (Zimhoni 1985: 88; 1997c: 208).

COMPARISON OF THE FINDS OF THE LACHISH EXPEDITION TO TEL ‘ETON AND OF THE PRESENT EXCAVATIONS

Ceramics

The above discussion suggests, at first glance, a divergence between Zimhoni’s dating and ours. A closer look at the ceramic findings published by Zimhoni, however, shows that it is precisely the complete or nearly complete vessels found in Stratum I at Tel ‘Eton, as defined by the Lachish expedition, that clearly characterise Level III at Lachish. These vessels include a closed cooking pot (Zimhoni 1997c: fig. 4.5:11), a two-handled ovoid storage jar (Zimhoni 1997c: fig. 4.7:12) and a four-handled ovoid storage jar, evidently of the *lmlk*-like variety (Zimhoni 1997c: fig. 4.7:16). The types unearthed by the Lachish expedition at Tel ‘Eton that are characteristic solely of Lachish Level IV (and do not continue into Lachish Level III) are represented only by sherds (Zimhoni 1997c: 183; see also figs. 4.4:11–12, 8.4:6). It is, therefore, reasonable to infer that these sherds originated in an earlier stratum or in floors and are not associated with the destruction stage of Stratum II or with Stratum I (see Blakely and Hardin 2002: 35). When one disregards those sherds, a comparison of the assemblage of vessels found in the Tel Aviv University excavations at Tel ‘Eton to the assemblage of complete or nearly complete vessels that we uncovered shows a marked similarity between the two groups (although Zimhoni’s claims about the differences between the Tel ‘Eton findings and those from Level III at Lachish merit detailed discussion; see below). The resemblance is evident in the following types: bowls with thickened or folded rim (bowl 7), a closed cooking pot (cooking pot 1), an open cooking pot (cooking pot 2), a *lmlk*-like storage jar (storage jar 2), a two-handled ovoid storage jar (storage jar 3), a holemouth storage jar (storage jar 5), and a jug with a broad neck (jug 1). Vessels of these types are characteristic of the assemblages of Lachish Level III, Tell Beit Mirsim Stratum A2, City of David Stratum 12 and Caves I–II, Beersheba Stratum II, Arad Strata X–VIII, and Tel ‘Ira Stratum VII. In
this light, we may infer that the settlement at Tel ‘Eton came to its end during the second half of the eighth century BCE (and see further below).

Stratigraphy
Another matter to be considered in this comparison is the stratigraphy. The Lachish expedition found signs of destruction primarily at the earliest stage (Stratum II in their terminology); the final stage bore less evidence of actual destruction (Ayalon 1985: 61). That stage was also described as having been less well built (Ayalon 1985: 61). As we have seen, our excavation also identified a meagre stage of resettlement above the destruction stratum, but these remnants were identified only in Area A and not in Area B, which adjoined the area excavated by the Lachish expedition. Moreover, the settlement remains we identified are much more meagre than those described by the Lachish expedition as belonging to Stratum I.

Not only is there a lack of correspondence between the description of the late stratum uncovered by the Lachish expedition and our findings, but massive destruction was identified in our excavation just below the surface; this constitutes the final stage of habitation documented in Area B (see, e.g., fig. 5). It is, therefore, noteworthy that despite the abundance of vessels discovered in some parts of Area B, the structures in this area are relatively poorly preserved, and it appears that there may be a difference in the degree of preservation between the section excavated by the Lachish expedition and some of the squares excavated by us. One possibility is that Stratum I of the Lachish expedition was simply not preserved in the areas we excavated. Another possibility is that the floors we uncovered were not well preserved in the area uncovered by the Lachish expedition and that their Stratum I, uncovered only partially, includes fragments of floors and walls intermingled with material from beneath and above the floors. Given the scope of our excavation and the abundance of floors and finds, we are inclined to the second possibility — that is, in the small section uncovered by the Lachish expedition the destruction stratum was less fully preserved, both because of its proximity to the surface and because of later activities at the site (as identified by the Lachish expedition itself; Ayalon 1985: 61). If that is the case, the entire analysis of this stratum (Blakely and Hardin 2002: 35; Finkelstein and Na’aman 2004: 66–67) is fundamentally flawed. The stratum of massive destruction at Tel ‘Eton was simply not unearthed by the Lachish expedition soundings due to the incidental nature of the finds in such a limited area. What they identified as a relatively meagre settlement was, in fact, the partial remains (albeit at some points less

5 Indeed, thus far, we have reached floors only in areas north of those excavated by the Lachish expedition.
6 Not only is it risky to draw general conclusions on the basis of the limited area excavated by the Lachish expedition, but Ayalon himself had reservations about the
massive than those of the previous stage) associated with the massive destruction of the large city that existed at the site during the eighth century BCE. In the 2009–2010 seasons we expanded the excavations to the south of the Lachish expedition trench; interestingly, the finds here clearly indicate that the destruction layer was not preserved in this area (due to later activities; see Faust 2011). This suggests that the fact that the Lachish expedition probe did not detect a ‘real’ destruction layer was a matter of coincidence, stemming from its lack of preservation in this limited area.

A stage of renewed settlement (probably by squatters) on top of the destruction level has been identified in our excavation too (in Area A only), but it appears to be very limited in scope; it is doubtful whether there was any real habitation after the destruction of the stratum discussed here.

DESTRUCTION DURING SENNACHERIB’S CAMPAIGN OR EARLIER?
THE VIEW FROM TEL ‘ETON

Until quite recently, the various destruction strata discovered in the Shephelah were conventionally dated to Sennacherib’s campaign in 701 BCE. That consensus, however, has recently been challenged. Blakely and Hardin (2002) showed that there were two destruction strata at many sites in the Shephelah — generally (though not always) a stratum of massive destruction above which a more meagre stratum of destruction was found. That is the case, for example, at Tell Beit Mirsim, at Beth Shemesh, in the earlier excavations at Tel ‘Eton, and elsewhere.
Blakely and Hardin (2002) proposed dating the first, more massive, destruction to the time of Tiglath-pileser III and the later one to the time of Sennacherib. That view was refuted by Finkelstein and Na'aman (2004), who proposed dating the first destruction to Sennacherib’s campaign and the later stratum to the beginning of the seventh century BCE. It is not our intention here to enter the debate with regard to all the sites in the Shephelah but only to deal briefly with the relevant findings from Tel ‘Eton.

Ceramics
The primary question is whether it is possible to pinpoint when during the second half of the eighth century BCE the settlement at Tel ‘Eton was destroyed and if so, whether that destruction should be associated with Sennacherib’s campaign (in 701) or whether it should be advanced all the way to the time of Tiglath-pileser III (734), or at least to the days of Sargon II (712). As shown above, the assemblage from Tel ‘Eton is generally quite similar to that from Level III at Lachish, suggesting that the destruction should, in fact, be dated to 701. However, the ongoing debate warrants a more detailed consideration of the findings; several possible arguments for dating the destruction to somewhat earlier than 701 can be presented.

1. The possibility of using burnishing as an aid for the dating of pottery was first raised by Albright in the context of the findings from Tell Beit Mirsim (Albright 1943: 152–154). Over the ensuing years, several researchers considered the matter in the context of finds originating in the Shephelah. Zimhoni, studying the finds from Lachish Levels V and IV, showed that 60% of the bowls from Level IV had been burnished, the dominant form being hand burnish. Wheel burnish was identified only in three bowl fragments (Zimhoni 1997c: 118). In Level III, in contrast, Zimhoni reports no hand burnish whatsoever, whereas the use of wheel burnish had become common (Zimhoni 1997c: 169–170). At Timnah, various sorts of hand burnish were distinguished. 58% of the vessels found in Stratum IV were treated with horizontal or irregular hand burnish (or both); only 3% displayed wheel or continuous burnish. In Stratum III, the percentage of vessels burnished by hand — horizontally, irregularly, or both — drops to 30%, while the percentage of wheel burnish or continuous burnish rises to 38% (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001: 149, table 19). Examination of the assemblage found in our excavation at Tel ‘Eton shows that of the 28 complete bowls found, 43% are not burnished at all, 39% have horizontal hand burnish and only 18% are wheel-burnished.8

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8 Interestingly, in the Lachish expedition excavations at Tel ‘Eton, 62.3% of the bowl and krater fragments found in Stratum I are hand-burnished, while 19.4% of these fragments are wheel-burnished. In Stratum II, 61.9% of the vessels are hand-
Comparison of these data to the data from Lachish and Timnah supports the possibility of an earlier dating of the destruction that ended the settlement at Tel ‘Eton, making it slightly harder to date that destruction to Sennacherib’s campaign of 701 BCE, when Stratum III of Lachish was destroyed. One must recognise, of course, that different excavations may have employed different terminology or different chronologies, entailing possible confusion, but the general picture, at least, seems clear.\(^9\)

2. The absence of *lmlk* impressions may also be of significance here. Although not proven, the generally accepted scholarly view is that *lmlk* impressions reflect the final stage of the eighth century BCE, on the eve of Sennacherib’s campaign (e.g., Na’aman 1979; 1986; Ussishkin 1982: 47; see also Vaughn 1999: 165–166, who generally assigns the impressions to the time of Hezekiah; for a summary of the discussion and additional references, see Vaughn 1999: 136–138; for a different view, see, recently, Lipschits, Sergi and Koch 2010).\(^10\) Thus far, no such impressions have been found in our excavations, even though a few complete such storage jars (one intact) have been found, as well as hundreds of handles.\(^11\) If the accepted dating for these impressions is

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\(^9\) The exterior treatment of vessels during the Iron Age II is also evident in the red slip characteristic primarily of bowls; the percentage of slipped bowls can also be an indicator for dating an assemblage. At Lachish Stratum V, slipped bowls constitute 66% of the total; in Stratum IV they amount to 62%, and in Stratum III, the figure is only 25–30% (Zimhoni 1997b: 114–115, 117; 2004a: 1674–1676). Similar variation over time in the percentage of slipped bowls is evident at Timnah, where 64% of the Stratum IV bowls are slipped, 30% are slipped in Stratum III, and only 18% are slipped in Stratum II (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001: 146, table 17). In Strata I–II at Tel ‘Eton, Zimhoni found 70% of the bowls to be slipped (Zimhoni 1985: 65; 1997c: 189). In the assemblage of bowls drawn from the new excavations at Tel ‘Eton, in contrast, the percentage of slipped bowls is 36%. From this perspective, the situation at Tel ‘Eton corresponds to that of the late eighth century BCE at Timnah and Lachish. As for the difference between Zimhoni’s figure and ours, it probably stems from the fact that she examined mainly to fragments; many small sherds may originated from within floors, thus dating the entire life-span of a structure and not its end, as well as from earlier phases.

\(^10\) The interpretation of Lipschits, Sergi and Koch 2010 is fraught with problems, see, e.g., Ussishkin 2011.

\(^11\) We noted earlier that for purposes of dating the destruction, we should consider only
correct, Tel ‘Eton would have been destroyed before these impressions came into widespread use (for a similar analysis with respect to Beersheba, see Na’aman 1979).

3. Several types of pottery vessels (we are discussing only complete or almost complete vessels) found at ‘Eton are characteristic of the earlier phase of Lachish III. At Lachish, vessels parallel in type to jug 4 were found at Tombs 120, 224, 1002 and 1004, which have been dated by Zimhoni (1997b: 164; 2004a: 1701) to Level IV or, at the latest, to the earliest days of Level III. An additional jug of this type was found in room 1010, part of a structure dated by Tufnell to the earliest stage of Level III (Tufnell 1953: 109). This phenomenon, also observed by Zimhoni in connection with some of the kraters and cooking pots found by the Lachish expedition to Tel ‘Eton (Zimhoni 1985: 88; 1997c: 208), allows for the possibility that the assemblage in the Tel ‘Eton destruction stratum may be earlier than 701 BCE.

The three above arguments are not unambiguous. Regarding the first argument, the assemblage thus far uncovered may not be representative; once dozens of additional bowls are found, the statistics may change. Thus, too, with respect to the second argument: as the dig continues, *lmlk* impressions may be discovered; the area excavated thus far may be too small to be representative (although the consideration of the hundreds of handles makes that claim somewhat more problematic).

Regarding the third argument, we may be dealing with a regional phenomenon, although the proximity of Tel ‘Eton to Lachish and the scope of the excavation at Lachish itself diminish the likelihood of that explanation. In light of this, we can say that there are some hints of a slightly pre-701 date for the assemblage (this is discussed further below).

**Stratigraphy**

Stratigraphy also warrants attention here. The various historical reconstructions offered by Blakely and Hardin, on the one hand, and by Finkelstein and Na’aman, on the other, emphasise the existence of two strata — one of massive destruction and another, above it, of meagre habitation — at the range of sites considered here, especially at Tel ‘Eton. As we have seen, however, the debate, insofar as it pertains to Tel ‘Eton, is grounded in error. The final massive settlement at that site was destroyed at the end of the eighth century BCE, and no significant habitation
seems to have followed it (the resettlement stage identified in our excavations seems not to suggest any significant habitation). From that perspective, the findings at Tel ‘Eton correspond more to the accepted reconstructions, according to which the Shephelah was laid waste at the end of the eighth century, for were we to advance that destruction to the time of an earlier Assyrian king, we would be bound to conclude that there was nothing for Sennacherib to destroy at Tel ‘Eton. That sort of reconstruction, though not impossible, strikes us as unreasonable, especially given the mark made by Sennacherib’s campaign on the various historical sources and the descriptions, both in biblical and Assyrian texts, of the widespread ruin it caused. (The campaign is documented in Sennacherib’s prism, of which several copies have been preserved, and its mark is clearly evident in the biblical books of 2 Kings, Isaiah, Micah and elsewhere, such as Jeremiah 26; see, recently, Faust 2008 and literature cited therein.) It thus appears that the new stratigraphic analysis, tentative though it may be, supports the conventional reconstruction (and thereby corresponds more to the thesis advanced by Finkelstein and Na‘aman). \textsuperscript{13}

\textit{The Date of Destruction}

While the ceramic evidence allows the update of the destruction of the city that existed at Tel ‘Eton to a time preceding the destruction of Lachish III, that is not a matter of certainty. On the other hand, the stratigraphic analysis, together with historical considerations, tend to support the later dating. Given these considerations, we remain inclined to date the destruction of the city at Tel ‘Eton to the time of Sennacherib’s campaign. Still, if the ceramic picture remains unchanged after several additional seasons of excavations, it might become more reasonable to conclude that the site was destroyed before Sennacherib’s campaign. Alternatively, we might have to reexamine some conventional notions regarding the use of \textit{lmlk} storage jars and of regional phenomena.

**THE DESTRUCTION OF TEL ‘ETON IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

The utter destruction, toward the end of the eighth century BCE, of the city that existed at Tel ‘Eton and the absence of any clear habitation in the seventh century fit well into the picture we have of settlement in the Judaean Shephelah.

Almost all the excavated sites in the region have yielded clear evidence of destruction during the Assyrian campaigns, and many settlements were not rebuilt following their destruction. Even in cases where a settlement was reestablished at the destroyed site, it was relatively meagre in comparison to its predecessor (see also Finkelstein and Na‘aman 2004).

\textsuperscript{13} Though not to their effort to date the assemblage later, to the beginning of the seventh century BCE.
Thus, for example, no remains at all have been found from the seventh or early sixth centuries BCE at sites such as Kh. el-Qom (Defonzo 2005) or Beth Shemesh (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2003). At other sites, such as Lachish, relatively limited remains have been discovered (Ussishkin 2004b: 90–92), and it is clear that the extent of habitation during the seventh century BCE never regained its earlier levels.

Things are different in the Judaean Hills. Here, many sites were destroyed at the end of the eighth century, but nearly all were restored during the seventh. For example, there was settlement during that period at Kh. Rabud (Kochavi 1974; 1993), Hebron (Eisenberg and Nagorski 2002), Beth-Zur (Sellers et al. 1968; Funk 1993) and Ramat Rahel (Aharoni 1993; Barkay 2006; Lifschits et al. 2009). Moreover, the later resettlement generally exceeded eighth-century levels in its scope (with respect to Kh. Rabud, see, e.g., Kochavi 1974; for a full discussion, see Faust 2008).

It appears, therefore, that the Shephelah suffered a mortal blow during the Assyrian campaigns, especially that of Sennacherib, which seems to have been focused on that area. The transfer of part of that region to Philistine control — a result of Sennacherib’s campaign — along with the ruin and demographic decline generated by the campaign apparently prevented full restoration of the area during the seventh century; any resettlement that took place was only partial.

It is noteworthy that the situation regarding settlement at Tel ‘Eton and the neighbouring sites of Tell Beit Mirsim and Kh. el-Qom parallels the situation in the Shephelah and differs from that in the Judaean Hills. This suggests that the trough valley at the time was part of the Shephelah and shared the same fate as it.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

During the eighth century BCE, a large, and perhaps even planned, city existed at Tel ‘Eton in the trough valley. The city was cataclysmically destroyed towards the end of the century and did not recover (although there are local indications of meagre resettlement above the ruins).

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14 Earlier publications dated the primary stratum to the seventh century, but they seem to have been based on the erroneous dating of Lachish Level III (Defonzo 2005: 139–140).

15 According to the excavators, no seventh-century pottery was found at Beth-Shemesh, with the exception of some vessels that were unearthed within the water-system. They believe that this represents a failed effort to settle the site, and not an actual settlement (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2003). In any case, even if the site had been settled, the meagre nature of its remains is not in question (see also Stern 2001: 147–148).

16 Regardless of the exact dating of the resettlement of Tell Beit Mirsim (which is a matter of dispute), it is clear that even if it was settled during the seventh century this settlement was limited in scope.
The rich ceramic assemblage discovered in the excavations strongly resembles the assemblage found in Level III of nearby Lachish, but there are hints that the Tel 'Eton assemblage might be slightly earlier. Only continued excavations will allow for conclusive resolution of the issue; for now, we believe it remains appropriate to attribute the destruction, albeit cautiously, to Sennacherib's campaign.

The history of Tel 'Eton, situated at the trough between the Shephelah and the Judeaen Hills, shows that the city was part of the Shephelah during the period studied. It appears that the settlement at Tel 'Eton, like most other sites in the Shephelah, suffered a mortal blow during the Assyrian campaigns and was never reconstructed.

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