

Philistines in Text and Archaeology

Session III



Rev. Dr. Jonathon Wylie
23 September 2022

What Is a Philistine?

- Uncultured
- Barbaric
- Dumb
- A holder of commonplace ideas, which are not well-examined
- Matthew Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy*: someone who is materialistic, narrow-minded, anti-intellectual, places no value in culture, beauty, or the arts
- Dictionary: "a person who is hostile or indifferent to culture and the arts, or who has no understanding of them."

Foreign Origins

- Jeremiah 47:4: ...because of the day that is coming to destroy all the Philistines, to cut off from Tyre and Sidon every helper that remains. For the LORD is destroying the Philistines, the remnant of the coastland of **Caphtor**."
- Ezekiel 25:16: ...therefore thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I will stretch out my hand against the Philistines, and I will cut off the **Cherethites** and destroy the rest of the seacoast.
- Amos 9:7: "Are you not like the Cushites to me, O people of Israel?" declares the LORD. "Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from **Caphtor** and the Syrians from Kir?"



Thessalonica

Philippi

Corinth

Athens

Smyrna • Izmir

Ephesus

Laodicea

Knossos

Antioch

Aleppo

Edessa

Ugarit

Hamath

Tadmor

Damascus

Jerusalem

Alexandria



Aleppo Temple Inscription

- 11th–10th century BC
- "King Taita (am) I, the hero, Palistin-ean king"



Photo by K. Kohlmeyer, printed in Hawkins, 2011, p. 42, Fig. 4



Rameses III

Medinet Habu Texts and Reliefs (ca. 1175 BC)

The foreign lands made a conspiracy in their islands. Dislodged and scattered by war were the lands all together. No land could stand before their arms. Beginning with Hatti, Qode, Carchemish, Arzawa, and Alasiya, they were cut off at ... [one time?]. A camp was pitched in one place within Amurru – they destroyed its people and its land like that which had never come into being. They came, while the flame was made ready before them, forward to Egypt, their confederation consisting of the Peleset, Tjeker, Shekelesh, Denyen, and Weshesh, lands united. They set their hands upon the lands that they might surround the earth. Their hearts were confident and trusting, (saying) ‘Our plans are being realised!’

(Trans. by Roberts, 2008, 222)

Papyrus Harris

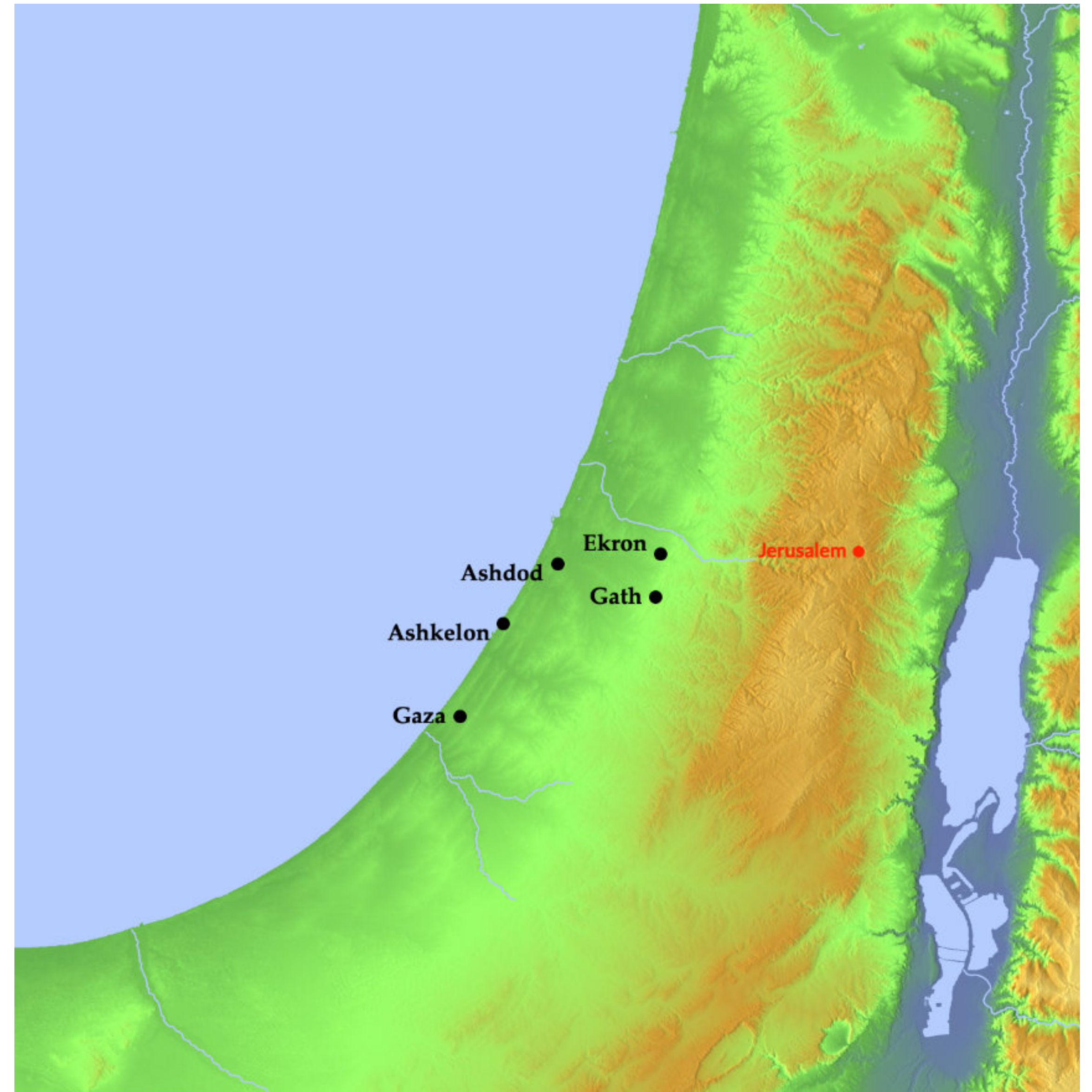
Praise of Rameses III upon his death (ca. 1155 BC)

I caused Egypt to burgeon with many classes, consisting of butlers of the palace, great nobles, the army and chariotry – numerous like hundreds of thousands, Sherden and Qeheq – no end of them, and retainers in tens of thousands, the subjects of Egypt. I caused all the frontiers of Egypt to be extended, and I overthrew those who intruded upon them from their lands. I slew the Denyen from their islands, the Tjekker and Peleset being made into ashes, and the Sherden and Weshesh of the sea were made into what had never been, captured at one time and brought as plunder to Egypt like the sand of the shore. I settled them in strongholds, bound in my name.

Territory

~1175–830 BC

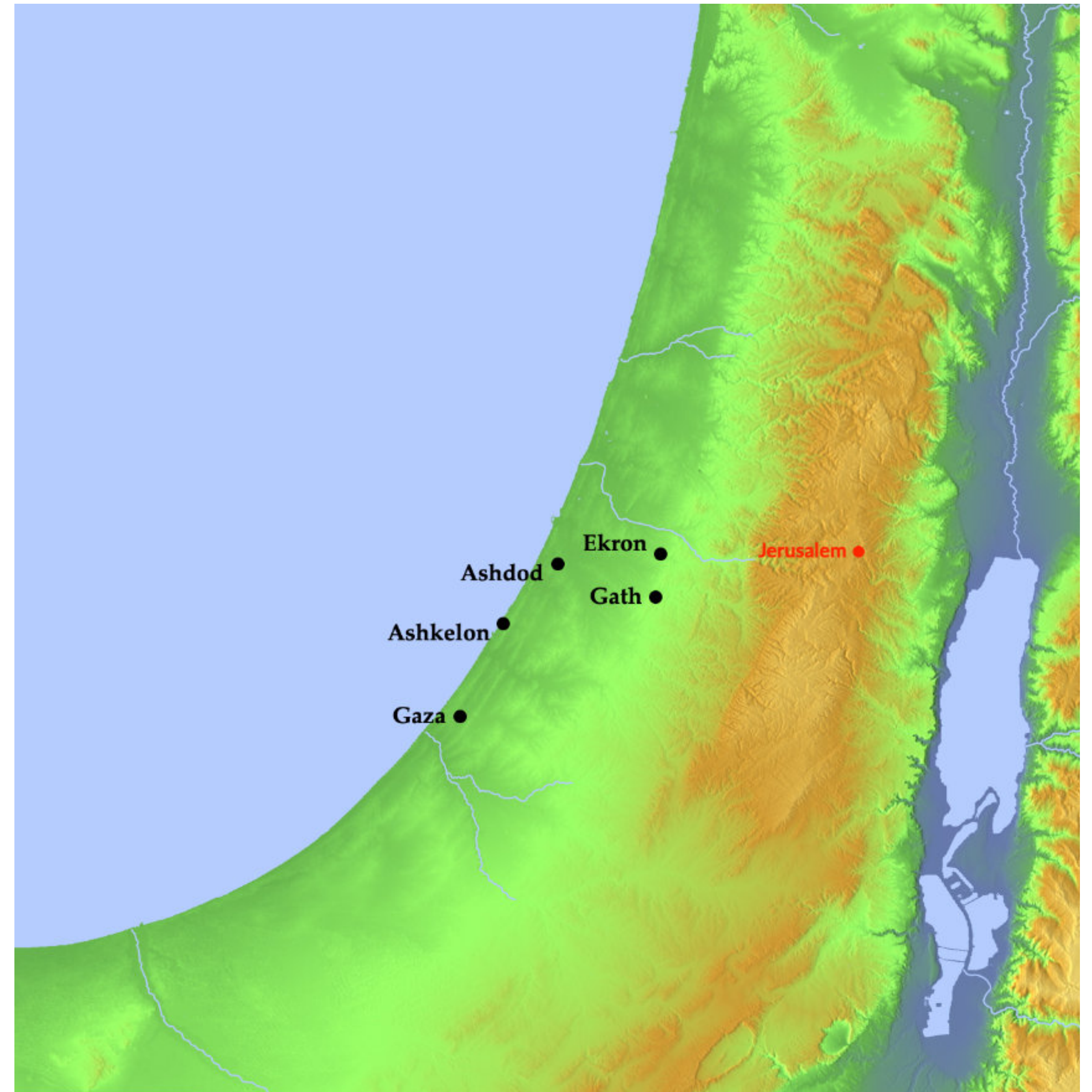
- 5 main cities ("Pentapolis"):
- 1 Sam 6:17: "These are the golden tumors that the Philistines returned as a guilt offering to the LORD: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron..."



Territory

After ~830 BC

- Zeph 2:4; "For Gaza shall be deserted, and Ashkelon shall become a desolation; Ashdod's people shall be driven out at noon, and Ekron shall be uprooted."
- Amos 1:6–8
- Zech 9:5





Evidence of a Migrant Community?

- New Pottery: styles and technique
- New cookwares
- New diet
- New architectural customs
- New weaving technology
- New religious elements
- Names

Philistine Monochrome

(ca. 1140–1000 BC)

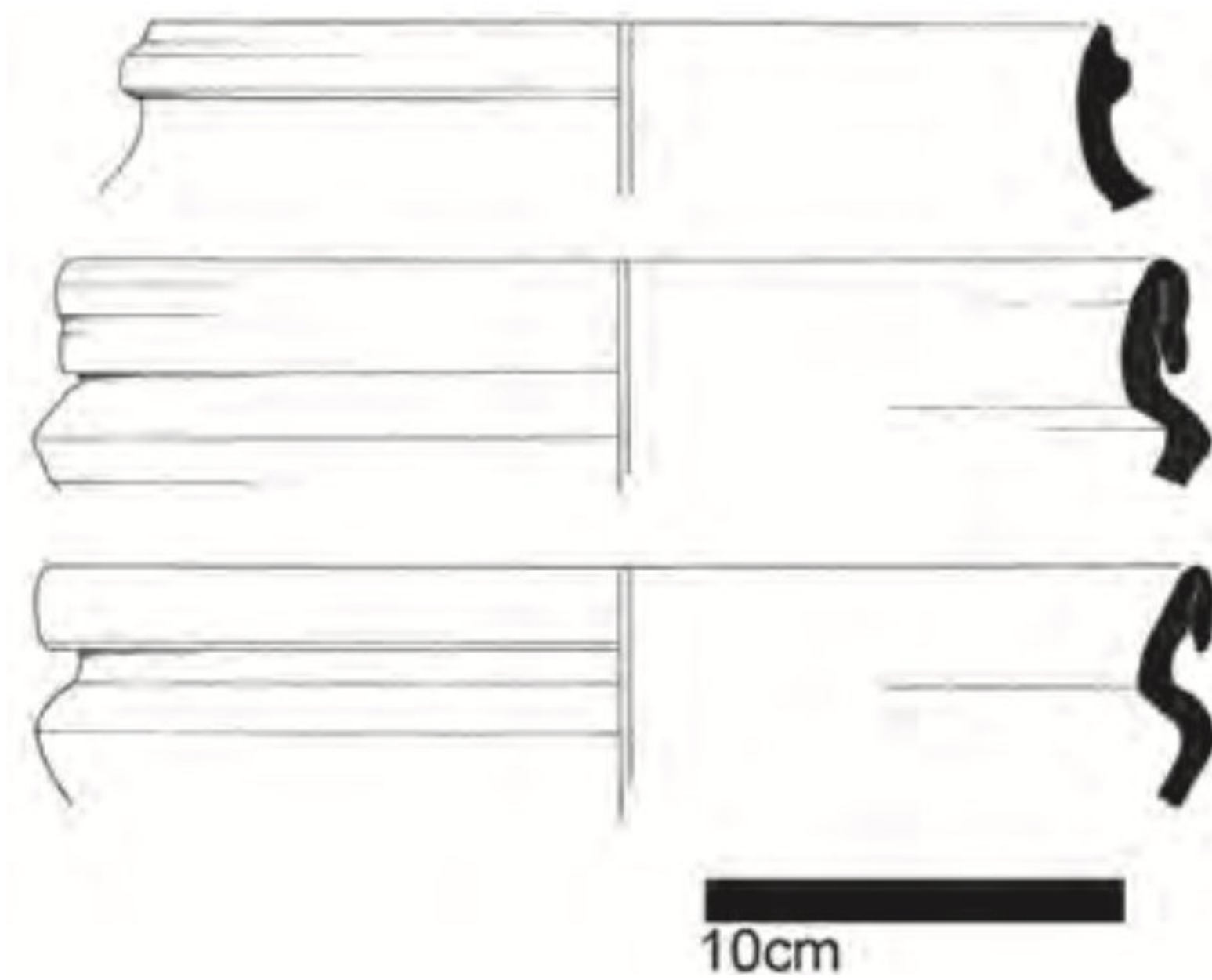


Philistine Bichrome

(ca. 1140–1000 BC)

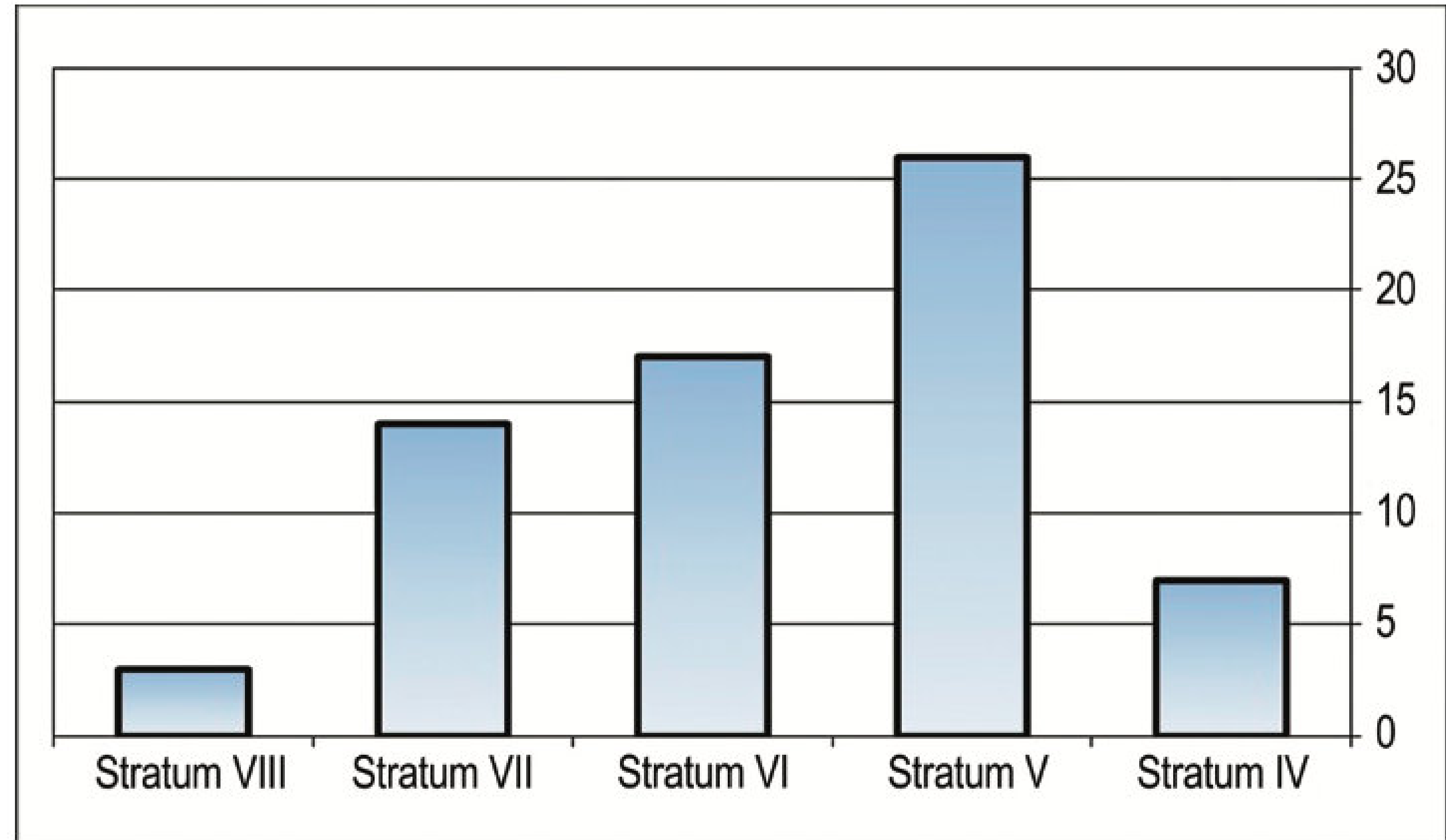


Cooking Vessels



Diet

- Pork consumption at Ekron from ca. 1300-975 BC
- Pig remains outside Philistia is almost entirely absent throughout the Iron Age.



Architecture

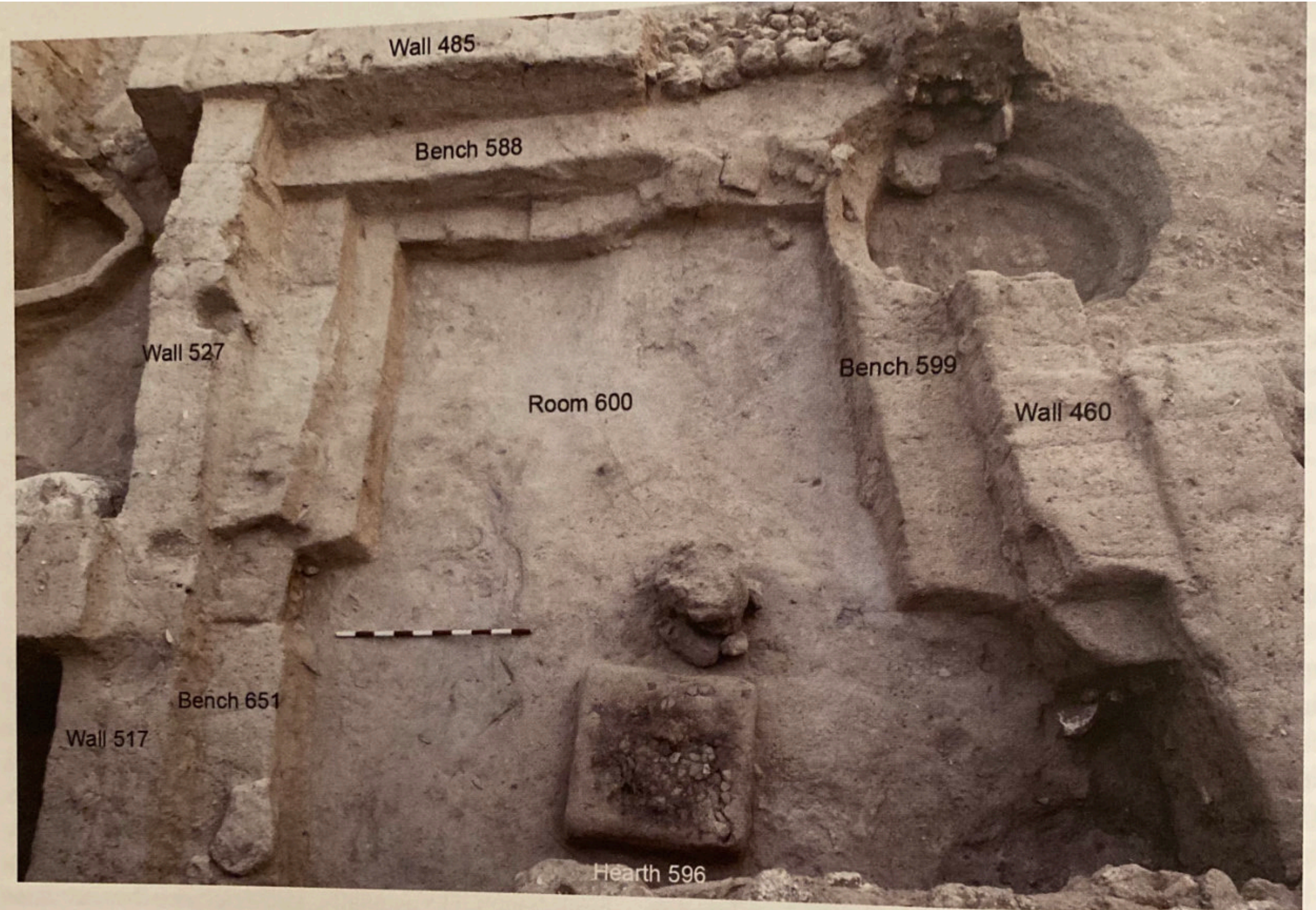


Figure 5.12: Benches in Grid 38, Room 600 (view to east)

Architecture

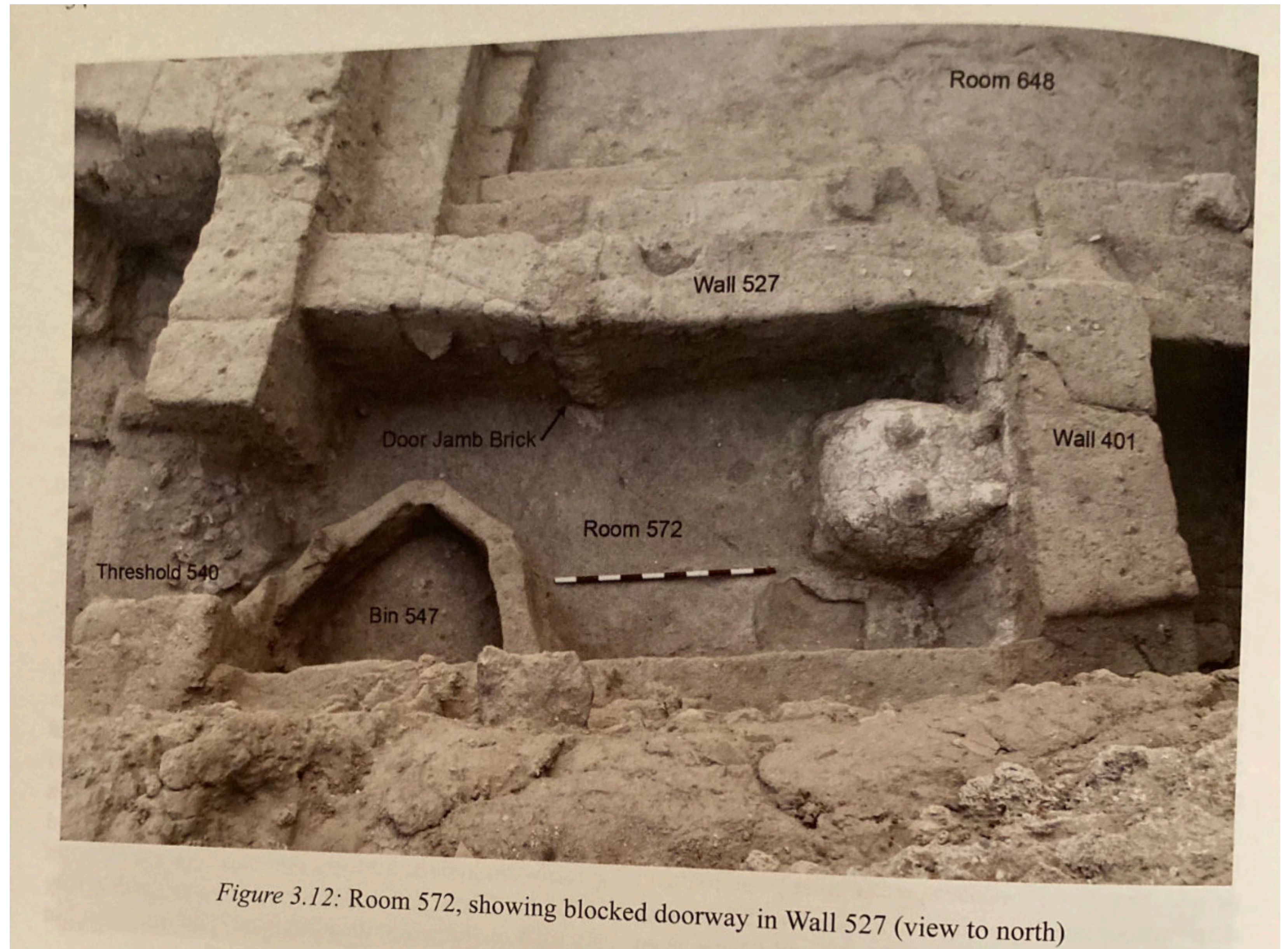


Figure 3.12: Room 572, showing blocked doorway in Wall 527 (view to north)

Weaving



Figure 19.21: Weight cluster found in 38.85.Floor 322 (view to north)

Greek Names

- Goliath is non-Semitic
- “And David rose and fled that day from Saul and went to Achish the king of Gath” (1 Samuel 21:10). Achish (Ikausu) is likely an archaic Greek name.





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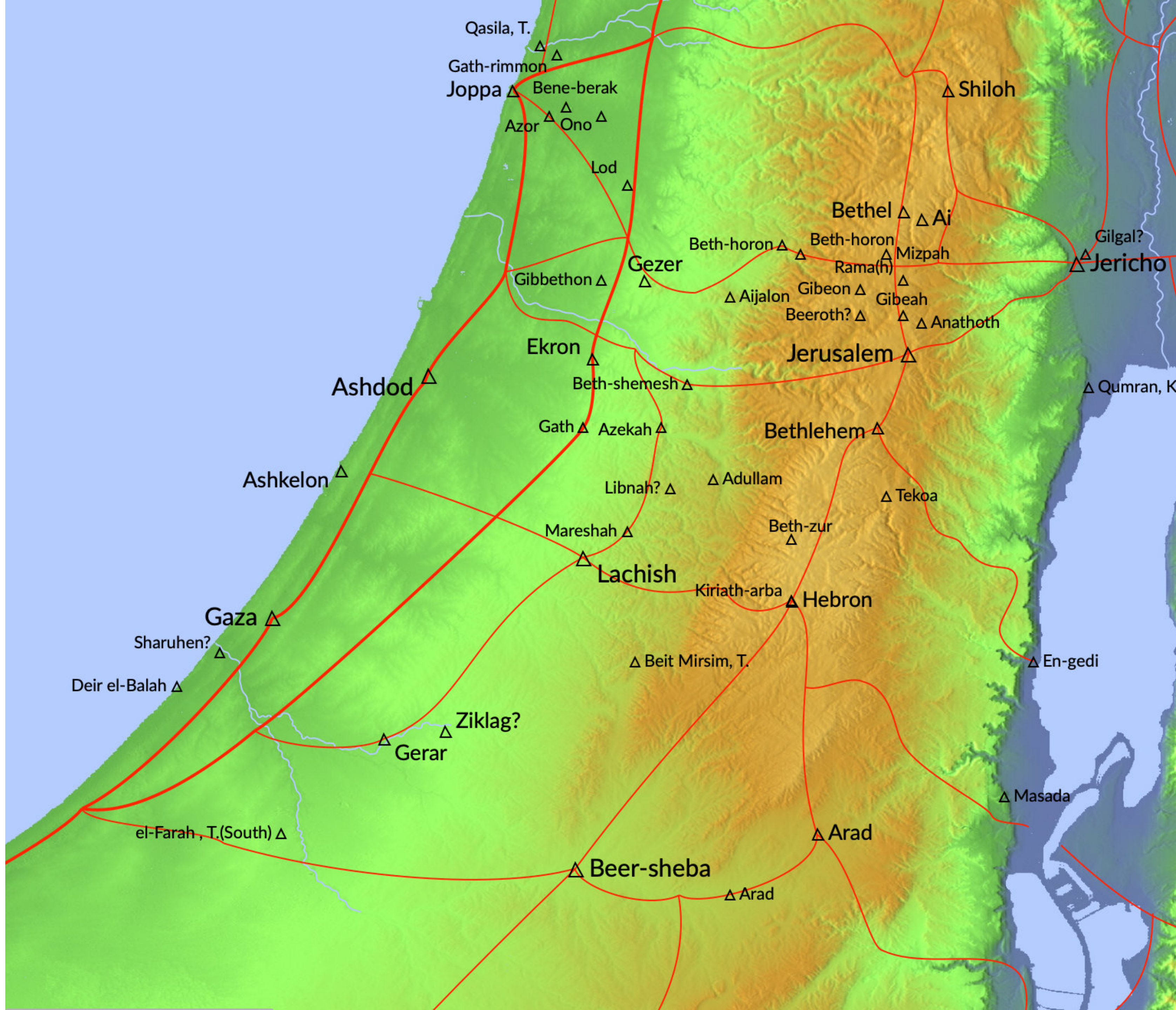
Hamath

Tadmor

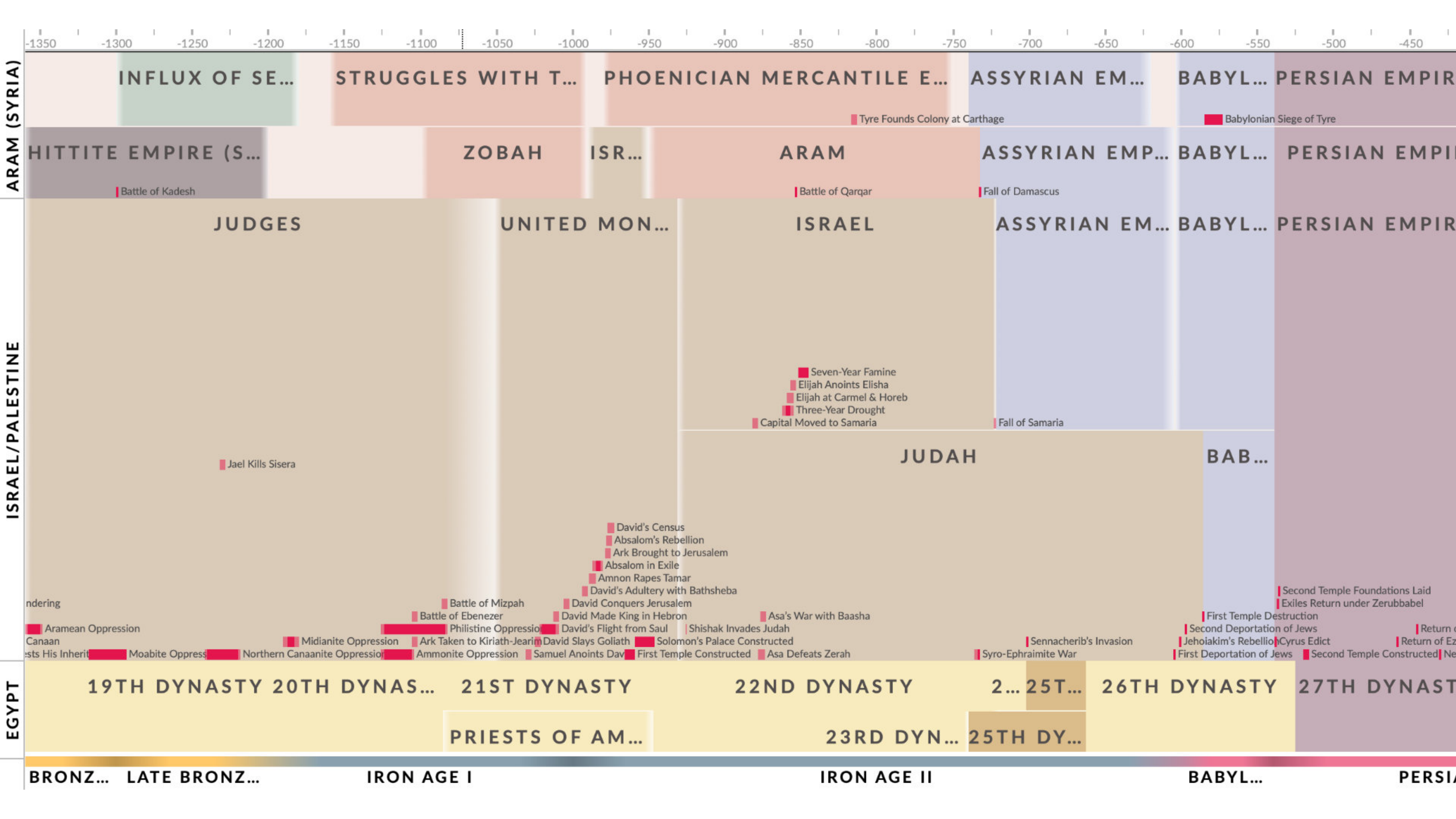
Damascus

Jerusalem

Alexandria







Philistia in the 7th Century

The View from Ashkelon



Scale 2:5



Scale 2:5



profile on next page



The Royal Winery of Ashkelon

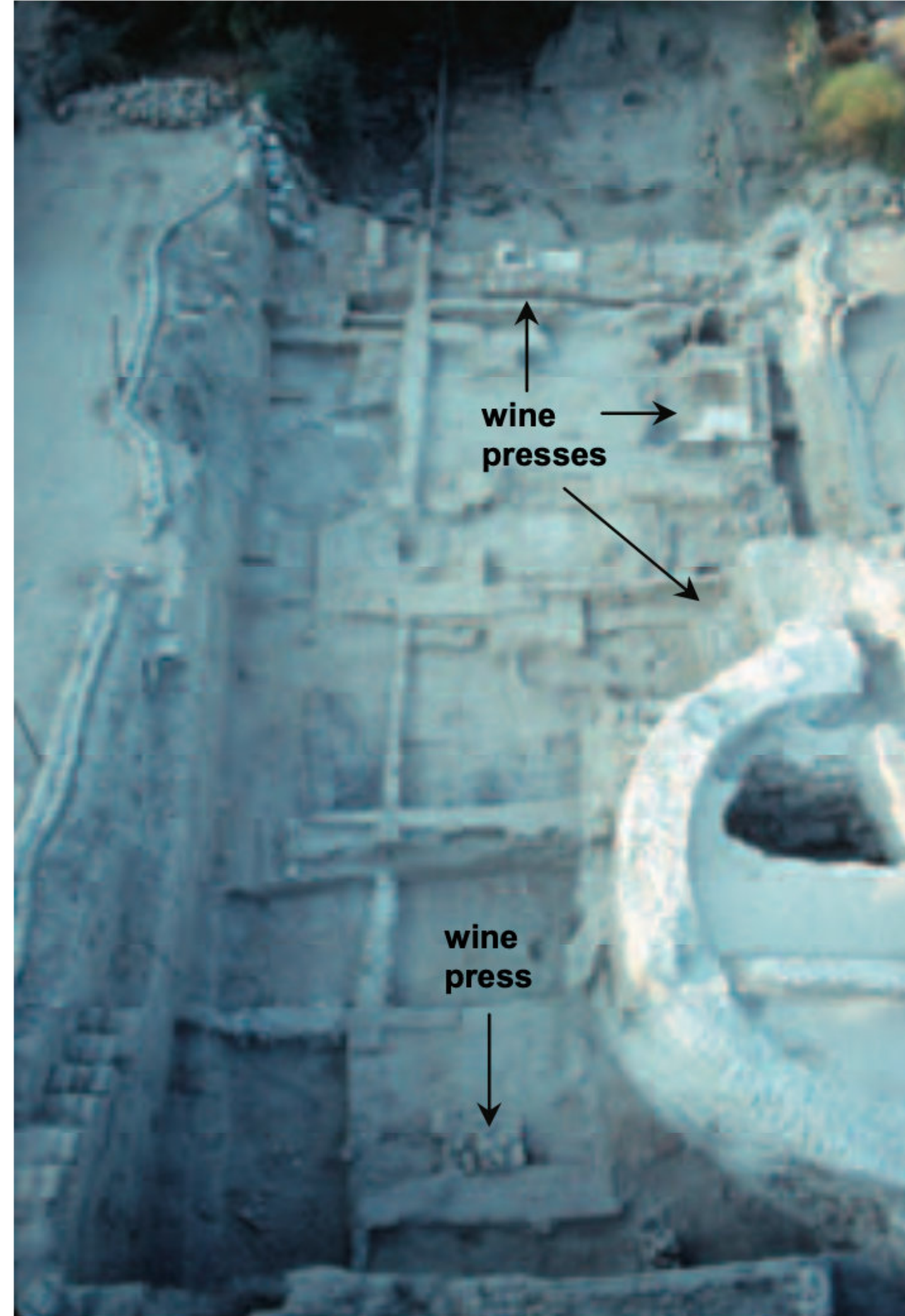


Figure 2.1: The winery at the end of the 1993 excavation season (view to the north)

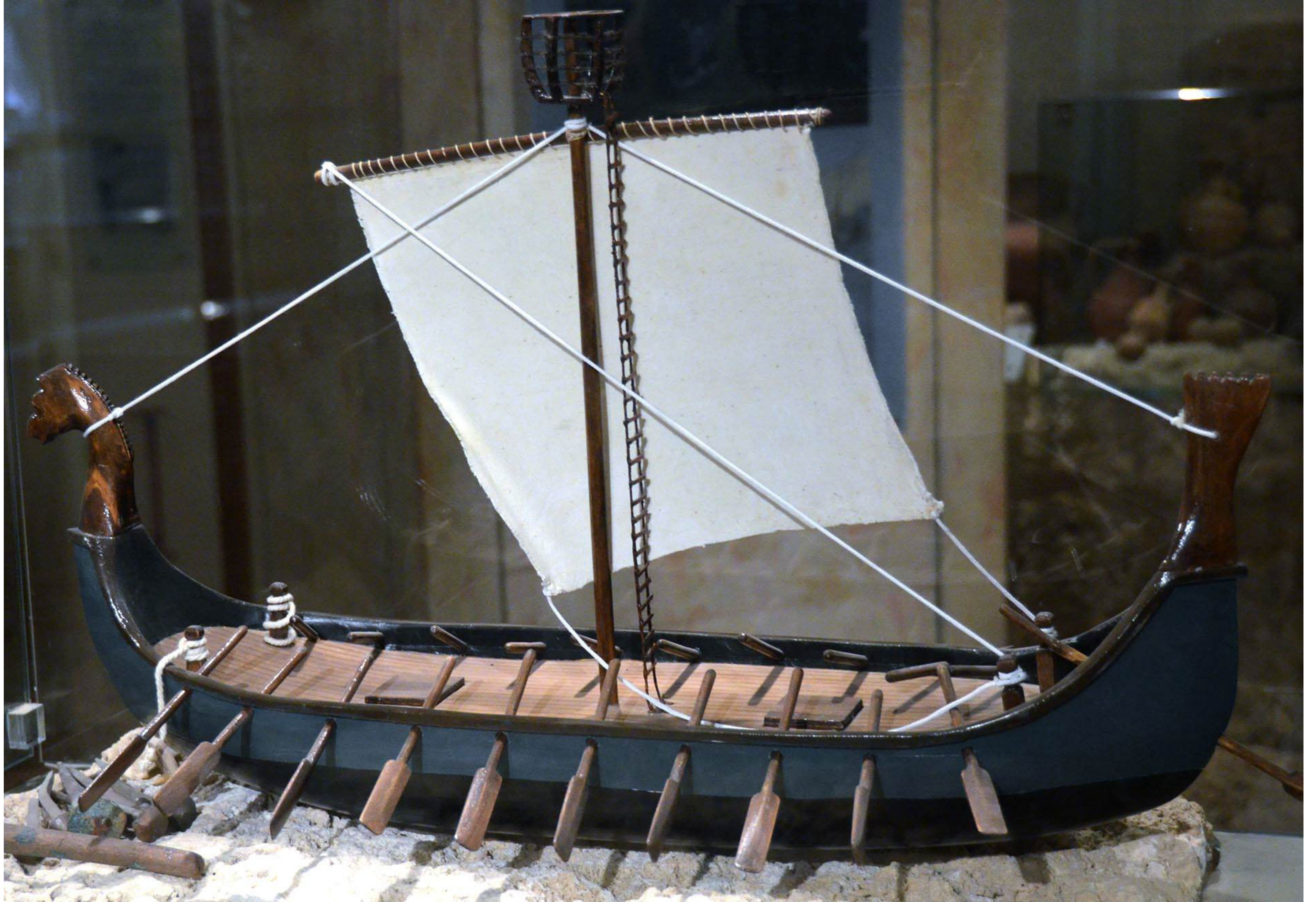


Figure 2.8: Wall 773 and Press 777 (view to north)











From Prosperity to Destruction

Zepheniah 2:1–7 foretells destruction of Philistine cities

Jeremiah 47:3–5 speaks of the destruction of Philistia and Phoenicia together

Ezekiel 25:15–17 foretells destruction of Philistia.

Ezekiel 26–27: destruction of Tyre (i.e., Phoenicia)

The Babylonian Chronicle

"[Nebuchadnezzar marched against the city of Ashkelon and captured it in the month of Kislev. He captured its king and plundered it and carried off [spoil from it]...He turned the city into a mound (Akk. *til*=tell) and heaps of ruins and in the month of Sebat he marched back to Babylon."

BM 21946 lines 18–20





Figure 28.1: Human skeleton in the destruction debris of the Babylonian conquest of Ashkelon in 604 B.C.

Conclusions

- The Philistines were not the uncultured people we sometimes make them out to be.
- The Bible's testimony on Philistine history generally accords with what we see in the archaeological and epigraphic records.
- Biblical stories of conflict between Israel/Judah and the Philistines seem plausible in light of the archaeological record.
- Prophetic texts best understood in the light of historical and political setting, which in turn helps us to understand the nature of biblical prophecy.
- A methodology for study of ancient history must account for both texts and artifacts.