

# Archaeology and Ethnicity:

The Search for Ethnicity in the Southern Levant during the Iron  
I Period

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Archaeology of the Southern Levant is one with a long history. Many different names have been given to this region of the world whether it is the Levant, Palestine, Israel, the Holy Land, or the Promise Land. The people who lived there in the past have also gone by many names whether it be Canaanite, Israelite, Amorite, Jebusite, Phoenician, and in the later periods, Persian, Greek, Roman, or Muslim to name merely a few. This great history which has spanned thousands of years has led to a rich and complicated archaeological record, and many different interpretations of the record. This field of archaeology has been rife with debate, and new finds and excavations continue to challenge long held theories and opinions. One such area of discussion is ethnicity in the archaeological past of the Levant. The question which has been asked is what was the ethnicity of the people whose artifacts and structures we excavate and research, and how do we know this. Many different scholars have approached this subject, and in the recent decade, it has become an ever increasing important issue due in part to the political situation of the area regarding ancestral claims to the land.

The purpose of this research is to look at ethnicity in the ancient Levant during the Iron I Period particularly the supposed Canaanite and Israelite ethnicity, and to see if the ethnic labels we give material culture are correct. My two research questions are: Does material culture represent ethnicity, and should archaeologists apply ethnic labels to material culture? I will attempt to answer these questions by first examining the history of the archaeology of ethnicity. Second, I will examine the Canaanite and Israelite ethnicity as presented by other scholars in the past and in recent research. Thirdly, I will look at the material culture from the sites of Beth Shean and Hazor which have been called in the Iron I Period Canaanite and Israelite respectively. Lastly, I will take these case studies and the material culture found in them from the Iron I Period and examine it in light of the previous archaeological research while also attempting to answer my research questions. However, to provide the setting for this debate, I will first present here a brief history of the archaeology of the Levant. This historical background is extremely important to this debate as it will frame why we use the ethnic labels of

Canaanite or Israelite and how this debate came to be significant issue in the archaeology of the ancient Levant.

## **1.2 The History of Archaeological Research in the Southern Levant**

In the mid-1800s, when archaeology was still in its infancy, Europeans went to the Levant in search for archaeological remains which could be connected to Biblical times, peoples, and places (Anfinset 2003, 46). The Bible played a central role in this early archaeology as it did for a century afterwards as researchers went to the Southern Levant to try and prove the Bible correct, and to confirm the stories which are held within it. This led to the material culture in the region being described in light of the Bible. Names such as Canaanite and Israelite, among others, were given to material culture in the region, and this material culture was thus ascribed the ethnicity of those people spoken of in the Bible. Research continued in the region with its continued focus on looking for sites and correlating these with those described in the Biblical account. However, an important shift in the archaeology of the region began with the birth of the State of Israel in 1948 as this new nation had a great interest in establishing a national history and solidifying its claims to the land (Anfinset 2003, 46).

A great national focus was placed on finding ancient Israelites in the archaeological record in order to give a physical history to the new nation outside of the Hebrew Scriptures. One of the great figures in this was Yigael Yadin who performed large-scale excavations at the site of Hazor from 1955-1958 and at Masada from 1963-1965 (Silberman 1993, X). Both of these sites were used to demonstrate great historical moments in Israel's past, whether that be the destruction of the Canaanite city at Hazor by Joshua or the last moments of the Jewish people at Masada during the Roman siege of the fortress (Anfinset 2003, 48). In all of this research, ethnic labels and identity were given to the material culture in accordance with an association to the Hebrew Scriptures. This is the reason why Yadin interpreted Hazor to be a Canaanite city, and later to be Israelite as the material culture was given ethnic labels based on these texts (Meyers 2006, 257).

While this research continued on, much as with most archaeological research, views began to shift. Scholars began to question Yadin's assertions about the great conquest of Canaan by Israelites and in addition, scholars greatly challenged the general historicity of the Hebrew Scriptures along with their usefulness to the archaeology of the Levant. Israel Finkelstein has

been one of the largest influences on the archaeology of the Southern Levant for nearly the past three decades. He, along with many others, has shifted the focus away from the Hebrew Scriptures and in many ways has questioned the ethnicity of the Israelites during the Iron I Period (Anfinset 2003, 52; Meyers 2006, 259). As I will show in Chapter Three, many scholars now claim that what we called Israelite in the past and the material culture from the Iron I Period named Israelite actually represents a group of Canaanites who separated themselves from other Canaanites in the area becoming their own ethnic group. These ideas are in strong contrast to the work Yadin published; however, much as with any archaeological research, a shift in archaeological theory in one direction will always lead later to another shift in another direction. As I will demonstrate in Chapter Five, archaeologists working in the Southern Levant have started to soften their views on ethnicity in the region. In addition, scholars such as Dever and Faust believe that the Hebrew Scriptures should be used again in archaeological research but only in conjunction with the archaeological finds and with the archaeological material taking the paramount position of importance in research (Faust 2006, 1-10). Thus, another shift in research has begun; however, the current understanding of ethnicity and the labels we use for ethnicity and material culture in archaeology are all built upon this changing history, which will continue to be built, torn down, and rebuilt.

## **Chapter 2: The Archaeology of Ethnicity**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Archaeology and archaeological theory have sought in recent decades to question the assumptions held implicitly by the archaeologists of the early and mid-twentieth century. New scientific methods and a reconsideration of how archaeology should be performed have changed archaeological theory. Long assumed facts on urbanization, globalization, and many other aspects of archaeological research and reasoning have been called into question. One such area of research which has in the past two decades become a highly debated topic in archaeology is ethnicity and identity. Traditionally, ethnicity has been assumed and past cultures and peoples have for decades been given ethnic labels. Material culture has been assigned to specific groups in the past which have been labeled with present ethnic designators or by names of ethnic groups listed in ancient texts. These archaeological ethnic groups come from and are defined by the material culture which has been left in the archaeological record, the region they have been found, and by the historical texts which speak of ethnic groups. This has all led to pots equaling people, in who they were, what they believed, and how they saw and understood the world.

Of course, this is one of main areas of controversy as these typologies were created by the modern archaeologist not by the people in the past leaving the question if these sets of material culture are useful for creating ethnic groups. It is the present archaeologist who decides what artifacts will be placed within one taxonomic group or another, and from these modern assumptions do we give ethnicity and ethnic labels to the material culture creating the past ethnic groups. This has led many archaeologists to join in the debate as to whether or not ethnicity can be known in the archaeological past, and if it can be, how? Another general question is what is ethnicity or what defines an ethnic group as there is no adequate definition for either of these two basic terms and this has been the subject of debate in recent archaeological theory.

Thus, in this chapter, I will present the history of the archaeology of ethnicity and the present theories on the archaeology of ethnicity. In this section, I will also briefly look at the question can material culture represent ethnicity or do we as archaeologists merely place our own thoughts of ethnicity into the material culture? In addition, I will inspect if these ethnic categories which archaeologists investigate, if they should be considered absolute or fluid? This

question though will be examined again and in full in the context of the two Iron I Period case studies which will be presented in the following chapters.

### **2.2.1 Three Cautionary Examples**

Before examining the history of this debate, I would first like to explore three examples as to why this debate is important and how it affects our understanding of the past. Some very well may argue this is a moot discussion or that there are more important aspects of current archaeology to focus on, but I would like to demonstrate that this issue of ethnic identity in the past is a foreground issue and one which every archaeologist should consider. The first of these three examples comes from an experience of mine in excavating in Israel.

### **2.2.2 “Roman” Pottery**

While excavating in Israel as a student, each afternoon the pottery which we had excavated that day was examined. However, as students watching, we were often shown pottery and told a particular piece was Greek because of the typical orange fabric and black slip. We were also shown pottery which we were informed was Phoenician as evident from the particular bichrome pattern found on the sherd. Israelite pottery was described to us as of poor quality which was given as one of the identifiers which made it Israelite. However, what of any of these qualities mentioned would make the pottery a representative of a particular ethnicity?

There are many underlying assumptions in these statements. Could a “Phoenician” not have made a piece of pottery and used it even though the form is “Israelite”? Or, could a “Greek” have made an amphora for export and in fact this amphora was never used by a “Greek” but was always meant to be used by someone in the Levant and to be part of that ethnic group and could then be called a “Phoenician” amphora? Fundamentally, even these suggestions are flawed as they assume style reflects ethnicity, a concept which will be examined critically later in this chapter.

A further example of this is the wealth of Roman style pottery found throughout the Levant. This pottery is, with its ribbed exterior construction, called Roman giving it an ethnic label. While this designator is used for chronological purposes, it still places an ethnic label on the

material culture. However, why is a piece of pottery which was most likely made by someone who would not ethnically identify him or herself as Roman, used by someone who would not ethnically identify him or herself as Roman, and deposited in Israel hundreds of Kilometers away from Rome, be called “Roman” pottery? While aspects of globalization may point to a mixture of ethnicity and culture during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, it does not take away from the fact that this so-called Roman pottery is a misidentification of the ethnic group which used it even if it is used for chronological purposes. Thus, rather than being insightful, such simplistic assumptions based on this Roman ethnic identity will actively hinder the understanding of the pots and people in the past.

### **2.2.3 The Exchange Student**

The second example comes as a thought from the current living situation of the author at the time of writing this discourse. Suppose a student from the United States were to move to the Netherlands to pursue a master degree. In the move from one continent to the other much of this student’s personal belongings would remain in the United States, and upon arrival in the Netherlands, he would begin to purchase the necessary goods to live and procure other items at random. Now suppose a person were to enter into this student’s apartment. What would they find (In this thought experiment, I will ignore such things as legal documents which would point to the student’s country of origin)? This person would find mostly Dutch products in a Dutch apartment, and while there might be a few items in the apartment which are clearly from the United States, by far, most of the material culture in the apartment would be Dutch. It would then be reasonable for this person to assume that the student living in the apartment is in fact Dutch and that they had gained some goods from United States through some sort of long distance trade network or direct travel to the United States. However, this would be incorrect. The student is in fact a cultural member of the United States and part of one of the ethnic groups within the country.

While perhaps this example is slightly exaggerated, it does point out a flaw in the archaeological understanding of material culture. Archaeologists traditionally assume to know who owned or used the material culture found in the archaeological record through style, placement in space, language, and a variety of other identifiers which will be discussed later.

However, these assumptions are misleading. Even if a site were to be filled with so-called “Canaanite” material culture, this does not prove the people who lived there were “Canaanite.” They could have been a mixture of many different peoples or simply another ethnic group, and if so, this would signify that our ethnic labels should be more flexible or less exclusive.

#### **2.2.4 Iosepa, Utah**

Lastly, the third example comes from the small and relatively unknown historic site in the United States called Iosepa located in Skull Valley, Utah. I had that privilege to have my first archaeological field school at this site and to study the artifacts we collected from Iosepa. This site is a perfect example of how material culture can be misleading in gaining an understanding of past ethnicity if not considered very carefully. Iosepa was a small Mormon Polynesian town established in 1889 and lasted for a mere 28 years as it was disbanded in 1917 (Aikau 2010, 482, 489). Thus, an entire population of extremely different ethnic groups, compared to those of the United States, moved from their home countries and relocated to Iosepa in the Utah desert. One might expect that when ethnic groups such as these moved to another location they would bring their material culture with them at least to some degree. Many archaeologists in the past have assumed this is how migration would be represented in archaeological record by the material culture brought along with the migratory group. However, in the two excavation seasons which took place at Iosepa, only two artifacts were found which would appear to be related to the Hawaiian Islands. The remaining artifacts collected were typical late 19<sup>th</sup> century to early 20<sup>th</sup> century material culture which could be found in any town in the United States from this period.

Without the historical documentation and the testimony of the decedent communities, it would never be known through stylistic analysis or geographical placement of the site that in fact the people living there were originally Polynesian. An examination of the material culture would lead any archaeologists, in the absence of outside sources, to believe this town was a group of people who would ethnically identify themselves as American. This would be utterly incorrect, and no archaeologist or historian would argue that Polynesians did not populate Iosepa as the wealth of historic documentation demonstrates clearly it was in fact Polynesians who lived in Iosepa. However, a strict examination of the material culture would never lead to this conclusion, and the ethnic identity and origins of the inhabitants of Iosepa would be forever lost.

These three examples demonstrate the importance of investigating and carefully considering ethnic labeling in the archaeological record. From this point will I next examine the history of ethnicity in archaeology as much of current archaeology continues to use the assumptions established in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **2.3.1 History of Research: Gustaf Kossinna**

The beginnings of the archaeological study of ethnicity began at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Germany. Gustaf Kossinna, a German archaeologist, developed a theory on culture named “settlement archaeology” during a time of great social revolution in Germany (Jones 1997, 2). It was in this time of social upheaval that German archaeologists such as Kossinna went looking into the archaeological past for their German ancestors. The idea behind settlement archaeology, which Kossinna used in this pursuit, was that material culture could be grouped together by style and location in order trace past cultures, races, and ethnicities. These material culture groups would enable the archaeologist to distinguish one past people from another and to tell when and where they came from along with other information about the culture based on their material culture (Jones 1997, 2). Kossinna’s settlement archaeology was also an attempt at creating a tie between current peoples and those in the past. In part, it was to legitimize land claims, as the political understanding was that if German ancestors lived in the land in the past then they had the right to it in the present. This goal though was later steeped within the Nazi movement as much of Kossinna’s work and thought was used by the Nazi party to create the Aryan or Germanic super-race which they sought in the past in order to establish a historical importance for the German people and to establish land ties.

Much as current thought on archaeological ethnicity is a political struggle, the beginnings of this area of study too was highly politicized and was used to further a political plan rather than finding a true understanding of the archaeological past (Shennan 1989. 8). Kossinna’s settlement archaeology had obvious racial overtones and was used by Himmler and the SS to further the Nazi party as archaeology was used to find the so-called Germanic culture in the past while ignoring other cultural remains, and these assumptions were used to further the bias and socio-political position of the Nazi regime. However, the archaeologists who performed this work

believed they were undertaking perfectly good science. It is only because of the growth of the discipline that we now disagree with their methods much as we do with many former theories of archaeology. Even though Kossinna's idea was motivated largely by a political and racial paradigm, the idea that material culture could be used to create the "archaeological cultures" was widely adopted by other archaeologists of the time such as Vere Gordon Childe (Jones 1997, 3).

### **2.3.2 Vere Gordon Childe and Archaeological Cultures**

Much of the early thought on archaeological ethnicity stems from the archaeological theory of Culture History which was in many ways popularized by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century British archaeologist Vere Gordon Childe. Childe adopted Kossinna's view that material culture if studied by style and spatial context all within a temporal framework could allow the archaeologist to know and label past races, cultures, and ethnicities. To Childe, material culture, if understood properly, could create archaeological "cultures," and these cultures could be assumed to be in some way related by kinship ties, blood, ethnicity, and perhaps most obviously, through their material culture all within a normative framework (Jones 1997, 17). The cultural history movement in Britain saw the creation of many archaeological cultures which could be traced through space and time. Childe's own thoughts on the nature of culture and material culture were that:

Culture is a social heritage; it corresponds to a community sharing common traditions, common institutions and a common way of life. Such a group may reasonably be called a people... It is then a people to which the culture of an archaeologist must correspond. If ethnic be the adjective for people, we may say that the prehistoric archaeology has a good hope of establishing an ethnic history of Europe.

(Childe 1935, 198-9. In Jones 1997, 17)

It was from this point did Childe go on to be one of the main figures in the cultural history movement of prehistoric Europe as he formed archaeological cultures within what would be called cultural areas. These cultural areas were used to map the material culture and thus the

cultures and ethnic groups of the past through space and time. Cultural areas and archaeological cultures were the main tools to delineate peoples in the past and to create links between peoples and cultures from the past to the modern era. Childe's culture history also had an impact on American archaeology in particular the work of A. V. Kidder and his study of prehistoric peoples in the American West (Jones 1997, 19). Kidder, in his approach to culture history saw style as a marker for chronological stages which if mapped correctly could demonstrate cultural and ethnic change in an area (Jones 1997, 20).

It was this framework established by Kossinna, Childe, Kidder, and other archaeologists of the time which created many of the taxonomies still used today. It was also from this theoretical foundation that material culture, if studied by style in the context of space and time, could create archaeological cultures and ethnicities in the past, a concept which remains in current archaeology. However, it can be asked if these "archaeological cultures" actually do represent a truth about the past or if they are merely a modern construction based on the thoughts of the archaeologist as they are the basis for many of the ethnic groups in the archaeological past.

The idea that material culture can be interpreted and molded into archaeological cultures rests on five ideas as outlined by Stephen Shennan (Shennan 1989, 5-6). Firstly, people living in different places at different times should have differing material culture as a residue of these diverse life styles. Secondly, these spatial patterns have allowed archaeologists to create archaeological cultures which can be mapped by these spatial patterns. Thirdly, these cultures are regarded as actors on a historic stage which can be tracked through time before the advent of historic documentation as ethnic or cultural groups. Fourthly, these historic cultures have been deemed to be self-conscious actors in a social group, or acting as ethnic groups. Lastly, these archaeological cultures and ethnic groups can be used as legitimate criteria for land claims and other political actions by current peoples and ethnic groups (Shennan 1989, 5-6). It is obvious from this that there are many political ramifications in creating and identifying archaeological cultures and ethnicities. However, the question remains, are these five assumptions a solid bases from which culture and ethnicity can be known in the past?

Shennan, in his argument, demonstrates these are in fact not strong indicators that archaeological cultures are inherently valid. While spatial variations can be a useful tool in summarizing spatial patterns, it does not necessarily imply regionally bounded cultures. The archaeological cultures which the archaeologist creates are simply that, a creation by the

archaeologist through his or her own paradigm. If these cultures and people exist only in the mind of the archaeologist, then they cannot be considered historical actors on a historic stage (Shennan 1989, 5-6).

Archaeological cultures and ethnic identity are two separate interpretive issues as one culture can house many different ethnic groups. Finally, the political nature of this discussion has been and always will be an integral part of the creation of archaeological cultures and ethnic groups and will create a bias (Shennan 1989, 5-6). It is within this bias laden and political world people groups and ethnicities are created to further the political goals of certain groups or governments. It could very well be argued that many archaeological cultures and ethnic groups in the archaeological past were created and researched for a political motivation as already demonstrated in the work of Kossinna (Shennan 1989, 5-6). The idea then that material culture is able to create ethnicity and culture in the past is called into question.

The concept of the archaeological culture is also held in what has been called the “type site,” and the modern archaeologist too has challenged this idea. A type-site is one particular place which can be used as an exemplar for a particular culture or ethnicity as based on the material culture found at the site. It is the one which will be referred to if someone were to ask for a typical Canaanite site, and this idea is still widely used in archaeology today (Jones 1997, 49). However, as it has been shown with the archaeological cultures, the type-site is also a construction of the archaeologist and does little to aid in our understanding of past peoples as it remains a mystery as to what ethnic group lived at that site. It should also be noted that even at these “type sites” there is always material culture which does not fit into the ethnicity which the site has been ascribed to as will be seen in the case study of Beth Shean. The type-site is in addition important to discuss in this discourse on ethnicity as it creates the idea that there is only one way ethnicity can be expressed in material culture. However, as I will demonstrate in the final chapter, ethnicity in material culture is not fixed and the “Canaanite” material from Hazor may not be the same as the “Canaanite” material from Beth Shean even if the two people groups shared the same ethnicity, as ethnicity can be fluid. Thus, the ideas of the archaeological culture and the type-site have been called into question by modern archaeologists studying ancient ethnicity. It was then after this era of culture history with its archaeological cultures and type-sites did the idea of ethnicity take on new meanings and new interpretations in the Processual and Post Processual age.

### **2.3.3 Ethnicity in Processual and Post Processual Archaeology**

With the advent of Lewis Binford's New Archaeology in the 1970s, the ideas and thoughts on culture shifted away from the cultural history approach. While study into ethnicity was not a main concern of Processual archaeology, Binford and other scholars did view culture very differently from the normative approach of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century archaeology (Jones 1997, 26). Binford's view on culture is deemed an "aquatic view of culture" as he saw it as a vast flowing stream with minor changes and variations in the stream. It is also within this that at certain points in time and space parts will crystallize into culture allowing a chronological continuum to be created in the archaeological record (Jones 1997, 25). Culture, in this view, is ever changing and not nearly as stable as presented by scholars such as Childe.

Binford saw culture as a primarily adaptive mechanism in a functionalist paradigm, and cultural systems were influenced by the ecological surroundings as understood through a neo-evolutionary paradigm. Thus, ethnicity was pushed to the background of study, as function became the main area of focus. If ethnicity was discussed, it was still based on the thought that material culture could give definitive ethnic and cultural labels to past peoples demonstrating little change from the culture history approach (Jones 1997, 26-27). In Binford's view, functional aspects of material culture could not be used to create cultural or ethnic identities; however, non-functional stylistic traits were still believed to hold some residue of ethnicity and culture, an idea which remains in archaeology today (Jones 1997, 27).

The shift in archaeological theory from Processual to Post Processual in the 1980s again brought a new understanding of culture and ethnicity. Binford's focus was on answering questions of "how" and "why" from an empirical standpoint and understanding of material culture. It is this view which the Post Processualists critiqued as it did nothing to answer questions about the "human" in the past. This paradigm shift led to a focus on questions of the meaning behind symbols and where they are found in the archaeological past along with the wish to understand the ideological systems of the past which are reflected in the material culture (Jones 1997, 28). Scholars such as Ian Hodder saw ethnicity as a social function and part of the social process of any given people. Thus, ethnicity was seen as an active part of the social identity of people, and cultural boundaries had to be constantly maintained in order to

continually distinguish one people group from another. In this view, ethnicity and culture are both active parts of the social life and system of a people group as it works in conjunction with economy, politics, religion and other such practices involved in the social network (Jones 1997, 28).

This has led to two main directions in the study of ethnicity. The first being an attempt to understand the relationship between material culture and ethnic symbols and the second being an attempt to understand the role of ethnicity in structuring political and economic relationships (Jones 1997, 28). It was from this background of culture history, Processual, and Post Processual theories of archaeology has the current understanding of ethnicity in archaeology taken form. While the study of ethnicity was of some importance in the 1960s, it began to take on a more important role coming into the 1970s and particularly within the past twenty years. Questions pertaining to what is ethnicity and can it be known in the archaeological past have become very important to many researchers in all fields of archaeology, and particularly so in the archaeology of Palestine as will be discussed in the following chapter. Now, with this understanding of the historical background can the current thoughts on archaeology of ethnicity can we move onto another paramount concept which has been taken into great consideration by current archaeologists which is exactly what is ethnicity and how should it be defined.

#### **2.4.1 The Definition of Ethnicity and the *Habitus***

Throughout the course of this discussion, I have been using the term ethnicity; however, this term is one without a clear definition and many modern archaeologists have differing views on what is ethnicity and what makes an ethnic group. This is perhaps the greatest question in modern archaeological studies of ethnicity as it is a difficult task to give reasons why certain sets of material culture represent a particular ethnicity when the term ethnicity is defined differently by any number of archaeologists. Sian Jones defines ethnicity as “All those social and psychological phenomena associated with a culturally constructed group identity... The concept of ethnicity focuses on the ways in which social and cultural processes intersect with one another in the identification of, and interaction between ethnic groups” (Jones 1997, xiii). Stephen Shennan sees ethnicity as, “An evanescent situational construct, not a solid enduring fact through which we can trace the destinies of peoples” (Shennan 1989, 13-14). However, there are many

ways in which ethnicity can be viewed and these are simply two of the modern definitions for ethnicity. Other archaeologists and anthropologist have seen ethnicity as common descent extending beyond kinship groups or a group of people who conceive themselves as being alike (Finkelstein 1997, 216). The anthropologist Fredrick Barth, one of the great figures in the study of ethnicity, believes that ethnicity is created through a combination of self-ascription and ascription by others (Barth 1969, 13). However, as Finkelstein notes, these definition of ethnicity are difficult to trace in modern ethnic groups (Finkelstein 1997, 218). Thus, what defines or defined the term ethnicity in the past is a much harder goal to achieve.

One idea which has been brought up by most authors discussing ethnicity is the concept of the *habitus* first introduced by Bourdieu but which has been reused by many scholars discussing ethnicity (Faust 2006, 153). Faust describes the *habitus* as that which, “People unconsciously learn to do from birth onwards merely by virtue of having been brought up in one place over another” (Faust 2006, 153). This is an important concept to ethnicity as many believe it is the *habitus* which aids in the construction of an ethnic identity. The *habitus* is not static and it depends on the changing practices of the human agents which form it and it is used as an unseen and unconscious tool-kit by which an ethnicity chooses its traits (Faust 2006, 153). This idea of the *habitus* has influenced the archaeological understanding of ethnicity as it is seen as an active agent in the past by which people groups could have formed ethnic groups. With this in mind that there is no one definition for ethnicity, I will next examine four of the current definitions for what makes an ethnic group and how these groups are created and maintained. These are the objective, subjective, primordial, and instrumentalist views of ethnicity.

#### **2.4.2 The Objective, Subjective, Primordial, and Instrumentalist Views of Ethnicity**

There are several factors on how ethnicity is influenced, understood, and defined no matter which theory of ethnicity an archaeologist chooses to employ in research. The first is the researcher’s own background and paradigm as well as the aspects of ethnicity the researcher chooses to study. It is also important to note that the area of the world in which the research is being conducted will affect the understanding of the group being studied as pressures from political and activist groups will affect research and these groups often influence who obtains research grants (Jones 1997, 56). The difficulties in giving a proper definition to ethnicity and to

what makes up an ethnic group has led many archaeologists to simply ignore this problem and move on with their research in the absence a proper definition. For those who do explore ethnicity in the archaeological past, two of the most basic forms of interpretation are the objective view and subjective view. The objectivist simply sees ethnicity as, “social and cultural entities with distinct boundaries characterized by relative isolation and lack of interaction.” (Jones 1997, 57). Subjectivists understand ethnicity as, “culturally constructed categorizations that inform social interaction and behavior” (Jones 1997, 57). Thus, the objectivist sees ethnicity from an etic perspective as it is understood through the researchers own point of view while the subjectivist takes the emic perspective of ethnicity trying to understand it from the point of view of the past culture (Jones 1997, 57). Either of these two viewpoints will influence how ethnicity is understood in the past and this leads an expansion of these two views known as the primordial and instrumentalist views.

In a short description, the primordialist views ethnicity as rooted and this gives rise to communal sentiments. However, the instrumentalist views ethnicity as a result of common interests that arises in a specific instance for a specific reason (Shennan 1989, 15). The arguments of each theory are much deeper and each has its own problems. The primordial view sees ethnicity as fixed and the rooted nature of it comes from kinship ties, blood, language, religion, territory and culture, all of which when brought together create certain ethnicities and ethnic groups. Thus, from this perspective, one is born into ethnicity, and if one were to ask someone, “Why are you French,” the answer would be, “Because I was born French” (Jones 1997, 65). However, this notion is based on kin selection and that ethnicity is held in this process, but the primordial view does nothing to explain ethnogenesis, and it relies on ethnicity being fixed and stable rarely changing. This though is a problem as ethnicity can be seen to change. In addition, the primordial does not allow someone to change their ethnicity in life after birth, as they would be fixed in what they were born into; however, this too cannot be proven as it cannot be demonstrated that a person’s identity is fixed for his or her entire life (Jones 1997, 68).

Instrumentalists see ethnicity as a variable, something which can change and must be maintained by the group as a whole and is thus a construct of the community. Ethnicity is part of the social construction, and such things as birth, blood, language, and other aspects are a part of the ethnic group, but these do not define the ethnic group (Jones 1997, 73). However, this view

relies on economic and political relationships to form ethnicity and it does not factor culture into the maintenance or birth of a given ethnicity. In addition, because of this basis in the political realm for ethnic identity, this view makes it hard to distinguish ethnic groups from other collective interest groups (Jones 1997, 76, 79). It poses the question of how would one identify these different political, cultural and ethnic groups if they are all constructed in the same manner and do not rely upon such things as kinship ties or language which more easily seen than social construction. Thus, there is at present no single method of understanding ethnicity in archaeology. However, a most basic question can be asked, which is, does material culture represent ethnicity or do we as archaeologists merely place our own thoughts of ethnicity onto the material culture?

I will briefly discuss this question here and will return to it in the final chapter in relation to the material culture which has in the past been used to create Canaanite and Israelite ethnic identity. However, before beginning this discussion, it should be noted there is a difference between believing material culture can represent an ethnicity and that material culture can be given a specific ethnic label. These are fundamentally two different concepts as one relies on an understanding of the material culture and the other relies upon placing the material culture into a historic framework created by a textual analysis.

## **2.5 Material Culture and Ethnicity**

The above question is one of great importance and it has been addressed before by many other scholars. Jones believes that ethnicity can be expressed in the material culture, as style is actively produced and maintained in an ethnic group (Jones 1997, 115). However, the exact nature of how ethnicity is reflected in material culture is not known. Ethnicity it could be represented by a very specific style or in a mundane feature, such as the rim of the collared rim jar which will be discussed in the next chapter, which would have been recognized by the ethnic group and other groups outside of it but not necessarily by the modern archaeologist. Shennan tries to find this connection between material culture and ethnicity in the so-called emblematic style or those variations in material culture and stylistic choices which are used purposefully by the ethnic group to be distinct features in order to distinguish themselves from another ethnicity (Shennan 1989, 18, 20). These would be specific stylistic traits which were purposefully placed

into the material culture in order to distinguish the material culture from that of another ethnic group's material culture.

Jonathan Hall disagrees with this as he believes that material culture is never enough to know ethnicity in the past and the only method which can be used to know ethnicity in the past is through the study of texts in conjunction with a study of how the ancient ethnicity and culture understood itself (Hall 1998, 2). This though would seem to indicate that ethnicity is not an integral part of material culture. Hall though in his discussion does not distinguish ethnicity from the ethnic label as the historical texts give a label to material culture which cannot be proven with any certainty and should only be assumed to be true with caution. Thus, I do agree that textual evidence and an understanding of how ancient people in the past understood their own ethnic identity can be an important part of understanding ethnicity when these documents are available and trustworthy, and if caution is taken when using these texts. However, I am more inclined to agree with Jones and Shennan over Hall as I will argue that ethnicity may be intrinsically linked to material culture. Thus, if it can be understood how ethnicity is seen in material culture, such as in the emblematic style, then textual evidence is not required to see ethnicity in material culture, but it would leave it without a historic ethnic label. The label for these archaeological ethnic groups will be discussed further in the final chapter. I will now attempt briefly to answer why material culture may be intrinsically related to ethnicity and why ethnicity may be intrinsically related to material culture in specific situations.

This concept as to why material culture may be intrinsically related to ethnicity comes from several different sources and ideas. The first of these is the idea that humans and things are entangled as presented by Ian Hodder. Hodder argues that humans and things exist within an entangled relationship where humans depend on things, things depend on humans, and humans depend on things that depend on them (Hodder 2011. 154). It is within this entanglement that humans constantly work to up keep their things. As pots are broken, new ones must be made, and as architecture crumbles, it is repaired or replaced. In Hodder's view, humans and material culture exist in a codependent relationship which cannot be broken and where the human will affect the thing, and the thing will affect the human (Hodder 2011. 6-10). This idea is important to this discussion as it demonstrates that people and material culture may be linked and thus that aspects of a person or group's identity, such as ethnicity, political affiliation, religion and other parts of human social networks, may be part of this human thing entanglement.

The second concept I would like to bring to this discussion is presented by Fowler on the differing methods of knowing identity (Fowler 2004, 23). Our modern understanding of humans is that we are single self-aware agents who are completely separate from all others creating what modern people would call an individual. However, this concept is not necessarily true for all times, people and places. In Fowler's view, the individual human identity can be a composite of the people and social groups which surround him or her, and the individual identity of a person is also affected by the things which they own or are given (Fowler 2004, 23). Fowler presents the concept of the dividual person or that someone's identity is linked to things and other people creating a network of social identify for one person rather than a single individual identity. In this view of identity, humans externalize themselves by placing certain aspects of identity into things or material culture (Fowler 2004, 25). Thus, if I were to create an object, part of myself, beliefs, ethnicity, or other social factors could be externalized in this object. The object then would become part of a group social identity network through trade, gift exchange or other methods by which material culture moves from being in one person's position to another. This then leads to the third concept, that of the partible and permeable nature of individuality (Fowler 2004, 36). In this view, if I were to give the object I created to another person, they will have in fact taken in a small part of my identity. That is to say, I have parted part of myself into a thing and this has now permeated and incorporated itself into the receiver of this object (Fowler 2004, 36). Identify in this view can be fluid and ever changing as a person can give and receive features of other people and groups taking in different aspects of ethnicity, identity, culture, politics and other parts of the social network.

What then do these concepts do for the study of ethnicity and material culture? From these ideas, it becomes more obvious that material culture is an integral part of human life, identity and thus ethnicity. Humans are entangled with their things, and they also externalize part of themselves and their identity within those things. What this means is, ethnicity and material culture can be intrinsically linked as an ethnic community will influence the material culture they produce and they will impart aspects of their identity into the material culture. The material culture too will affect the human as aspects of other ethnicities could permeate another group bringing in those new ideas while also affecting the people who use them in any manner of functions. This too demonstrates that unlike the rooted primordial view, ethnic identity is fluid as it can take in other aspects from different ethnic groups creating a constantly changing ethnic

group. It also means that the material culture which reflects the ethnic group can constantly change. From an outsider's perspective, it may appear that two sets of material culture represent two different ethnic groups because of stylistic differences. However, it may also represent one ethnic group who has imparted aspects of another ethnic group into their own creating a newly defined ethnic group, or it may also represent other aspects of the social network and not ethnicity at all.

From this perspective, material culture can reflect ethnic identity in some capacity as it is possible to imbue material culture with aspects of the social network as demonstrated by the partible and permeable nature of identity presented by Fowler. The key questions are: in what way is this expressed, what elements in material culture may delineate ethnic identity, and how can these be differentiated from other aspects of the social network which have been imparted to the material culture? While some scholars maintain there should be one aspect which can demonstrate ethnicity in the material culture in order for it to have any kind of diagnostic worth, this view is not necessarily true. If it is assumed that people impart different aspects of their identity and ethnicity into their material culture, this does not mean that all aspects are always conveyed at all times. While this paper holds my thoughts and opinions on ethnicity, it does nothing to tell the reader my thoughts on life or how I understand urbanization in the Near East. Thus, it is possible that pottery may in fact represent one aspect of an ethnic group's identity while architecture represents another and writing still another. However, this process of the human thing entanglement and the partible and permeable nature of identity which allows for material culture to be an externalization of an ethnic group's identity could also be a method whereby, culture, politics, and other parts of the social network are also implanted into material culture. Material culture then could be a physical representation of any part of the social network. Thus, while it may be possible for material culture, to represent ethnic groups, and I believe it does, it could also represent other aspects of the social network. How these would be distinguished by the archaeologist is a question for further research.

There still remains a problem though as even if material culture can represent ethnic the question remains whose ethnicity is it representing. This is the problem of the ethnic label, an often-overlooked aspect to this debate and one which will be of great importance to in the following chapters concerning the material culture from Iron I Period in ancient Palestine. While the archaeological discussion asks if ethnic groups can be defined on the basis of material culture

it does little to answer how one knows what the correct label for that group is and how this label should be used. It is here I would stress the importance of a holistic outlook in any attempt at understanding ethnicity in the archaeological past, and this should be kept in mind for the discussions in the following chapters.

## **2.6 Ethnicity: A Working Definition**

As seen in the previous sections, there is as yet no one definition for ethnicity; however, for the purposes of this discussion, I will describe here a working definition of what ethnicity is and what makes an ethnic group taken from the various authors already discussed. Ethnicity is a set of social and psychological phenomena which form under a specific circumstance in order to create a group which is distinct from other surrounding groups. These social and psychological phenomena will manifest themselves in multiple ways, whether it be through foodways, burial practices, material culture, or other social functions which may have a symbolic value. This ethnic group must recognize itself as distinct from other groups, but other ethnic groups must also recognize it as a distinct group. The ethnic group is fluid, not regionally bounded, and there may even be fluctuations within the ethnic group as a whole where one group of ethnically “Canaanites” might be slightly different from other ethnically “Canaanites.”

These fluctuations can be thought of much the same as a language. Ethnicity, when expressed in material culture or through living practices, can be seen as a set of symbols which other groups may or may not understand. The same can be said of language as it is a set of audible or written symbols which can be understood by a group of people who have learned it, but which cannot be fully understood by those outside that language group. However, within one language there are variations in how people understand it. For example, there is a difference between US English and British English, where the word “Chip” in British English is a fried potato stick which Americans call “French Fries.” However, in US English “Chip” means a fried or backed thinly sliced piece of potato which those using British English would call a “Crisp” which has no relevant meaning in US English. However, both groups would be able to understand each other and both would claim to speak English. These differences in the English language do not only come about through the large distance between the United States and the United Kingdom, as there are many regional differences. English spoken in the South of the United States is slightly

different from that of the North even though both speak English and people from either the North or the South would recognize the other as English speakers.

When taking this concept of language into the realm of ethnicity, it demonstrates that if there were in the past different people living in different towns but who all recognized themselves as one ethnic group and were recognized by others as one ethnic group there could still be fluctuation in how this ethnicity was expressed. Thus, the people living at Hazor in the Late Bronze Age may have called themselves and the people living at Beth Shean and Megiddo “Canaanite,” but this does not mean they all expressed their ethnic identity exactly the same. The people in these different towns and regions would have been influenced by differing internal and external stimuli, and small changes would appear in how these ethnicities would be expressed as the people were affected by the permeable and partible nature of identity. Thus, there can be no single rigid material culture set which we call “Canaanite,” rather this set of material culture must be fluid much as the ethnic group who created it was.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

I have given a brief examination of the history of ethnic studies in archaeology from its beginnings in Germany with Kossina to the modern debate with such scholars as Jones, Shennen, Hall, and many others. The ideas of what defines ethnicity, how loose or rigid those definitions are, and even if material culture can be given an ethnic label have all changed through time and are continuing to do so. As I argued, I believe ethnicity can be a part of material culture as humans and their things are entangled and will thus impart part of their identity into those things. However, even if this is true, great caution should be taken when placing an ethnic label on a group of material culture. The ideas of the archaeological culture and type site, which are still used in modern archaeology, are both misleading as it is not known who lived at those sites or who owned the material culture. Thus, when placing an ethnic label onto material culture, I believe archaeologists must acknowledge their biases, and, that much like anything in archaeology, we cannot be sure that when we call a piece of material culture Canaanite that it is truly Canaanite as it could have been made or owned by another ethnic group. Many of the past archaeological theories which I have pointed out in this discussion are being used today and in many cases without causing a problem. However, in certain parts of the world, such as in Israel,

the ethnic labels of material culture are extremely important for the modern political climate and our own understanding of the past. Thus, the issue of if material culture represents ethnicity is incredibly important and cannot simply be ignored as the labels we place onto material culture will affect not only our understanding of the past but also how archaeology will be used for political and national aims.

## **Chapter 3: Ethnicity and Archaeology of the Canaanites and Israelites from the Iron I Period**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In the previous discussion I offered insights to how past and current archaeologists view ethnicity in the archaeological record. The theory of culture history and its use of artifact groups related through time and space is still prevalent in much of modern archaeological thought. This is certainly true of the archaeology of the ancient Levant or modern day Israel. Many of the typologies have such ethnic labels as Canaanite, Israelite, Philistine and many others much of which is based on the early research which drew heavily from the Hebrew Scriptures. It is also true that the archaeological culture and the type-site are certainly used within the context of the archaeology of the ancient Levant. Thus, many sites have been called “Canaanite,” “Israelite,” and, along the coast, “Philistine.” The artifacts found in these type-sites have been given ethnic labels and theories based on these ethnic labels have been created to explain which people were living in the region. In the case of the Israelites, when they arrived in the ancient Levant, and many other such assumptions regarding their history are all based on an ethnic identification of the material culture at a given site. Many of these labels have been placed on the people from the Iron I Period either by foreigners identifying them as an ethnic other such as in the Merneptah or by people who lived after them such as the ascription of Israelite ethnicity of the people in the Iron I by the Israelites later in the Iron Age. Thus, in this section, I will examine the past and current thought on the archaeology of ethnicity in the Ancient Levant specifically discussing Canaanite and Israelite ethnicity and their material culture along with where the labels came from in the ancient past.

### **3.2 The Bible and Archaeology**

The first question which must be asked is on what basis has the scholarly community created the labels of Canaanite and Israelite and why are the labels used? A traditional definition based on the Biblical texts would be: Canaanites were a group of people spoken of in the Old

Testament in the Bible particularly in the books of Joshua and Judges. They lived in the ancient Levant before the Israelites defeated them and forced them out of the land. The Canaanites also worshiped many gods and were, according to the Old Testament, morally debased in comparison to the Israelites when the Israelites first entered the land. In turn, these texts describe an Israelite as follows: An Israelite is a member of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. They came from outside the land of Canaan and invaded either by force or by peace. Israelites also, at some points in time, worshiped one God called Yahweh, they practiced circumcision, they did not eat pork, and they were a different people from the Canaanites living in the land. However, not all Israelites at all times followed these practices according to the Old Testament. While these brief descriptions are in some ways rather contrived, they do point out that many scholars and laypeople alike, will base their thoughts about the ethnic identity of Canaanites and Israelites on the Hebrew Scriptures. I would like to take a brief moment here to discuss the use of the writings of the Hebrew Scriptures and how they will be used in this discussion, as they are a key point of controversy within Biblical studies and in fact within the archaeology of the ancient Levant as a whole.

Many scholars over many years have debated the usefulness of the Hebrew Scriptures. Some believe they are completely useless in aiding our understanding of the archaeological finds or the history of the region as they have been far too changed over time, while others believe they are of some use to the study of the region. Generations of scholars in the past have tried to prove the Hebrew Scriptures correct through archaeology beginning with the formation of Near Eastern archaeology, and this long held quest has led to many debates and conversations over the interpretation of sites and finds therein in relation to the Hebrew Scriptures. This has also led many scholars to attempt to attach Biblical events to archaeological finds such as the Biblical description of the destruction of Hazor with the archaeological finds of Hazor as described by Yigael Yadin (Ben-Tor 1992, 284). This is but one case where the Hebrew Scriptures were used to help to define not only a sites history but also the ethnicity of the site as many of the descriptors given above come from the text. Circumcision cannot be seen in the archaeological record, but it is believed because of the Hebrew Scriptures that the Israelites practiced this custom along with a dietary restriction on eating pork amongst other laws. However, the question can be asked, should the Hebrew Scriptures be used in this discussion or should they be left out. In the remaining course of this look into Canaanite and Israelite ethnicity, the Hebrew Scriptures

will only be used in certain occasions where they may be pertinent or are referenced by other scholars.

It is important to note that the Hebrew Scriptures cannot be proven by archaeology and any attempt at doing so is futile. The reason being is the very nature of archaeological interpretation. What we have are the objects and assemblages which we dig out of the ground, record, and examine in the laboratory. The archaeologist, through his or her own paradigm, then interprets these objects and turns them into evidence to reconstruct history in a wider interpretive context. This results in a story which is supported by assumptions and inferences; however, this story is not history but rather a reconstruction of history based on material culture placed within a textual matrix. Thus, if archaeologists wish, they can attempt to prove the Hebrew Scriptures right, but this is simply not possible due to the very nature of the field. The following discussion will not try to prove or disprove the Hebrew Scriptures nor will it rely heavily on them except for where other scholars have used them in their own discussions of ethnicity and archaeology in the ancient Levant. In addition, I note that for the ease of the reader and writer, sites and material culture will be, for the moment, referred to as “*being*” either Canaanite or Israelite. However, this is only because other scholars have given these labels based on certain theoretical and methodological grounds which they believe demonstrates that these ethnicities existed in the archaeological past, but this does not mean I agree they are correct.

### **3.3.1 Canaanites: The Traditional Definition**

With this in mind that the Hebrew Scriptures are a basis for many of the assumptions for the ethnic identity of the Canaanites and Israelites in the ancient Levant during the Iron I Period, I will now examine how these groups are traditionally defined and described in the material culture. I will discuss the ethnic label of the Canaanite population of ancient Canaan, and how this people group has been described in the past in terms of history, religion, and material culture all of which has been used as part of the Canaanite ethnic label. This topic is one which is often overlooked in the scholarly writings on ethnicity in the ancient Levant. While many will ask why Israelite material culture is Israelite, it is often assumed the Canaanites were simply there and need not be defined. However, the ethnic definition for Canaanites is as important as the one

given for Israelites. It would be impossible to compare and contrast the two without a firm definition for Canaanite ethnicity and Israelite ethnicity (Figure 1).

The definition though for Canaanites is often flimsy. The classic definition for what is a Canaanites is given by Jonathan Tubb in his book *Canaanites* (1998) though this definition is one he presents but does not agree with on the whole as he recognize the circular nature of it. Canaanites according to this definition were, “The people who occupied the land of Canaan from time immemorial, and the land of Canaan can be defined only as the geographical area occupied by the Canaanites (Tubb 1998, 13).” While this classic definition is then further elaborated upon with material culture studies and historical texts, there remains very obvious circular reasoning making it a faulty argument as it rests on a logical fallacy. In addition, if this definition is taken to its logical extreme any discussion about ethnicity in the ancient Levant would be moot as anyone living within the traditional land of Canaan, being modern Israel, Transjordan, Coastal Syria, and Southern inland Syria would be a Canaanite! Tubb states the people living in this geographic area have been Canaanite since the eighth millennium BC, and that at times people who were ethnically Canaanite were called by other names for social-political reasons (Tubb 1998, 14). As Tubb says, “Ammonites, Moabites, Israelites, and Phoenicians undoubtedly achieved their own cultural identities, and yet ethnically they were all Canaanite” (Tubb 1998, 14).

According to this definition, it would mean that what we call Israelite with its separate ethnic identity would be in fact ethnically Canaanite but culturally or politically Israelite. What we call Moabite or Phoenician would also be called ethnically Canaanite by this definition subsuming many different groups into one ethnic label even though these groups have been given their own ethnic identity in the past. Thus, a better definition for Canaanites is needed as this definition will only confuse and cause problems for any research into the ethnic identities of the past people of the ancient Levant. This is particularly true for this discussion as many other scholars have claimed that Israelites had their own ethnogenesis and ethnic identity, and if this definition of Canaanite ethnicity is true than there is no true Israelite ethnicity leaving this discussion without ground.

It is not known if what we call Canaanites were truly one people or if they were multiple people groups who should be defined with different ethnic labels. This is why Ann Killebrew defines first the land of Canaan and then the Canaanites as, “A geopolitical entity that

corresponds approximately to the modern states of Israel, West Bank/Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon, and Southern Syria... *Canaanite* [is used] to describe this culture and the peoples who produced it and spoke a Canaanite language (Killebrew 2005, 94).” Killebrew goes on to say that she does not believe Canaanites were an ethnic group, but that they were a culture which was created of many different ethnic groups which we see as the same because of the similarity in the material culture and social boundaries (Killebrew 2005, 94). This definition then is in opposition to Tubb’s as it does not see many cultures as one ethnicity, but rather many ethnicities as one culture distinguished by social boundaries and language. Killebrew’s definition allows room for other people groups to fall outside of a Canaanite ethnic label even if she does not believe that the Canaanite ethnic label was a true ethnicity.

From archaeological excavations and historical texts, it appears that there were different ethnic groups living within the land of Canaan. Such groups have been called Phoenicians, Moabites, Israelites, Ammonites and Canaanites, and these are only some of the groups which had their own identity in language, material culture, political associations, and the area where they lived. However, according to the definition given by Tubb, they all would be ethnically Canaanite (Tubb 1998, 14). Whether or not these groups should be called ethnically Canaanite is an important question. The aspect of Israelite ethnic identity will be discussed in detail; however, for these other groups the question will still remain. It is important to note though that these groups which can be called Canaanite by the modern archaeologist may not have been considered Canaanite at the time. This is seen in the example of the city of Ugarit which lies within a material cultural continuum which would be classically be given the ethnic label of Canaanite. Thus, by this material culture and geographic area definition, the people living in the city of Ugarit would be labeled as Canaanite. However, this is not what the ancient texts from the city tell us as to what the people thought about themselves. Tablets found at Ugarit, with a script which may have been invented in the city or at least was first found there, seem to indicate that the people living within the city did not define themselves as Canaanite but rather separated themselves from the Canaanite ethnic identity (Tubb 1998, 72-3). This would demonstrate Killebrew’s definition of who was ethnically Canaanite or was not. The people of Ugarit separated themselves from the Canaanites, it would appear, by language and self-identification even though they had similar material culture. Clearly, then, while modern research has used the label of Canaanite to help define material culture, it has also placed a label on a people who may

not have called themselves by that label. This demonstrates that when giving an ethnic label, great caution should be used.

This then demonstrates a conflict in how the modern archaeologist interprets the material culture and how the people in the past thought about themselves. It also leads back to how Hall believes ethnic identity should be found in the past through the use of texts and the attempt at understanding how the people understood themselves (Hall 1998, 2). Thus, with this view, the people of Ugarit should not be called Canaanite, as they did not label themselves Canaanite. However, this is still a label and while it was from a textual source, we still do not know to whom that label belonged as we assume the material culture belonged to a person who belonged to an Ugaritic ethnicity. We do not know who made, owned, or used this material culture, and we assume the historical texts speak to the group which this material culture belongs to. With this same logic, we could call “Israelite” material culture Israelite because a people group living in the area are called Israelite in Hebrew Scriptures. As I will demonstrate, when examining the material culture we still do not know archaeologically who was living in the Central Highlands during the Iron I Period. I believe this example from Ugarit makes it clear that we as archaeologists should not claim that all material culture which appears to be the same in form and function were used by the same ethnicity or that one group of material culture can only represent one ethnicity. This can be seen in the example from the Ugarit texts as the ethnic label archaeologists have placed on this group of people is based on a material culture construct of the archaeologist’s mind.

### **3.3.2 Canaanites: The Textual Evidence**

What then makes a Canaanite a Canaanite if the definitions given by Tubb and other scholars are not without faults or circular reasoning? The definition as given by Killebrew is a better method as previously discussed, and I will here expand upon this by demonstrating the textual sources and material culture assemblages found within a cultural continuum from the Bronze Age through the Iron Age which can be called in Killebrew’s definition Canaanite. It is important to note that while there is a wealth of material culture from this time, there is very little in the way of texts which would tell the modern scholar how the “Canaanites” thought of

themselves (Killebrew 2005, 94). Thus, this label has been based on outside textual evidence and material culture.

The name Canaanite is possibly derived from two different words. If it is of a Semitic origin, the possible root word is (*k-n-*) meaning “be subdued.” The other possibility is that the name is derived from the Hurrian word *kinahhu* meaning “blue cloth” (Tubb 1998, 15). How either of these two definitions would relate to the people is uncertain at this time. However, the first known reference to the Canaanites comes from Mari. A letter written by the king of Mari, Yasmah-Adad, wrote in the 18<sup>th</sup> century BC mentioning, “Thieves and Canaanites” (Killebrew 2005, 95). While the first textual reference to Canaanites may come from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it would only be an assumption to say this was the time the Canaanites entered into the land or when the people group was first recognized as Canaanite. It is highly possible and most likely this group of people lived in the land, later known as Canaan, prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> century BC and where known as Canaanites, but there is simply no text from that times which points this out or it has simply not been found yet. There are other ancient texts which refer to the Canaanites. The Canaanites and Canaan are referred to on a stela found at Memphis from the reign of Amenhotep. From the text, it would appear that the land of Canaan and the Canaanites did live in the Southern Levant during the Late Bronze Age which is also attested to in the Merneptah Stela which will be discussed at length later (Killebrew 2005, 95). There are also several references to the land of Canaan and Canaanites found in the Amarna Letters which were written during the 14<sup>th</sup> century BC. It was during this time the land of Canaan was under Egyptian rule, and it is mentioned as a vassal state in the Levant (Tubb 1998, 15). In addition, there are inscriptions found at Alalakh which speak of “Man of Canaan” or “Son of Canaan” which again speaks to the Canaanites as being a recognized group of people living in the Levant during the Late Bronze Age (Killebrew 2005, 95).

The last ancient source which speaks of the Canaanites is, of course, the Hebrew Scriptures particularly the references to the land of Canaan and the Canaanites found mainly in the Pentateuch, and in the books of Joshua and Judges. It is here that the land of Canaan is geographically defined and is referred to as the “Promised Land” which would later be taken by the Israelites. Canaan and Canaanites are mentioned some 160 times and are described as the idol worshipping inhabitants of the land mentioning their god Baal among others (Killebrew 2005, 96; Tubb 1998, 16-20). Use of the Hebrew Scriptures has already been discussed, and as Tubb

points out, using the Hebrew Scriptures in discussing Canaanite ethnic identity and geographical boundaries is worthwhile as long as the main sources of information is based on the material culture first and textual evidence second (Tubb 1998, 20). This is the stance I will take as well as the texts can help in our definition, but as this is a discussion of archaeology, the first and foremost line of evidence should come from the material culture and cultural remains found within the archaeological record.

From the textual references, it would appear there was a group of people called the Canaanites living in the land of Canaan, which is the modern day Levant, during the Late Bronze Age and the Iron I Period. With this, it is possible to come to some understanding of what their culture was like from the material culture found and the texts which refer to Canaanite practices and their pantheon of gods. In the Canaanite pantheon, their supreme god was called El which is simply the Semitic word for “God” as seen in the Hebrew language as well. He is seen as the father of all the other gods and rules from the “Mountain of the gods” (Tubb 1998, 73). El is one of many gods which the Canaanites worshiped. His consort Asherah was seen as the “Creator of creatures” and was often symbolized with the tree of life and the styled poles of idol worship found in the Hebrew Scriptures are referred to as “Asherah” (Tubb 1998, 74). Other gods include Baal who is mentioned to great extent in the Hebrew Scriptures speaking of King Ahab and his wife’s Jezebel’s worship of Baal and the eventual conflict between the priests of Baal and the prophet of Yahweh, Elijah (1 Kings 18). The references to “Canaanite” religious practices are important as it has been used as an aspect of the people which would have separated them from other ethnic groups such as the Egyptians, Philistines, Israelites, and other supposed ethnic groups living in the region during the Iron I Period. These textual references are also important as they demonstrate that other groups considered Canaanites as a distinct group separate from themselves. This, would further mean that while Killebrew does not see Canaanites as an ethnic group, according to the working definition of ethnicity and ethnic groups, it would be possible for Canaanites to be considered a historical ethnic group.

### **3.3.3 Canaanite: The Material Culture**

Finally, I will give a brief description of the material culture found at “Canaanite” sites beginning with the common temple types associated with the Canaanite ethnic label. The

worship of the gods was one of blood sacrifice on altars within temples and shrines, and the Canaanites worshiped in open-air high places called *bamah* in the Hebrew Scriptures (Tubb 1998, 76). Many of these shrines have been found throughout the ancient Levant such as the symmetrical temples from the Middle Bronze Age found in Schehem, Hazor, and Megiddo all traditional places believed to be inhabited by the Canaanites during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages (Figure 2). The temples have three main elements: a porch, a middle area, and an inner room with a niche in the back wall which has been referred to as the “Holy of Holies” (Killebrew 2005, 105). Other temples have been found at Megiddo, Hazor, and at the “Canaanite” stronghold of Beth Shean. The temple found at Beth Shean has a raised holy of holies as the niche was elevated above the ground level and needed to be reached by a set of stairs (Killebrew 2005, 107). Worship involved not only blood sacrifices, but also male and female temple prostitutes along with the giving of other gifts and offerings to the gods. This is also made evident throughout the Hebrew Scriptures which speaks to the Canaanite worship of their gods (Tubb 1998 76-80). The religious structures and practices are important to ethnicity as “Canaanite” religious practices are often used as an ethnic distinction from the “Israelite” religious practices.

“Canaanite” towns and palaces also share similarities throughout the Levant. Towns which have been called Canaanite in the past range in size from the small towns of 3.5-15 acres to the megalopolis which are over 60 acres (Killebrew 2005, 100). The largest tell from the Late Bronze Age is Hazor which covers an area of 200 acres. Towns and cities from the Late Bronze Age were the focal point of the surrounding hinterlands as they were the base of political, religious, and economic power (Killebrew 2005, 101). These towns would often have a temple or a palace along with other public buildings and a city gate; however, it is interesting to note that during the Late Bronze Age settlements it does not appear as if the majority of towns within Canaan were fortified (Killebrew 2005, 101). The “Canaanite” palace was a large residential complex; however, the exact function of these buildings are not known. They may have been for the local ruler to live or they may have functioned as administrative centers. An important aspects of these buildings is that they demonstrate an uninterrupted architectural tradition of a central courtyard or central room surrounded by a network of other rooms and complexes beginning in the Middle Bronze Age (Killebrew 2005, 103). While architectural features do differ from site to site, and there is at times an architectural influence from buildings in Egypt,

there does appear to be at least a culture link in these structural designs if not as some would claim an ethnic link.

Pottery has also been used as an ethnic marker for Canaanite ethnicity. Typological and technological features typically define Canaanite pottery, and there is a wealth of different forms and vessel types both decorated and not decorated. The supposed Canaanite pottery is broken up into three main categories: kitchen wares, containers, and varia with each of these have a subset of categories for further description. The pottery tradition which is attributed to the Canaanites has its roots as far back as the third millennium BC, but much of the pottery is a continuation of ceramics made in the Middle Bronze Age. These traditions were carried on into the Late Bronze Age and into the Iron Age. Other groups, as will be seen in the following discussion of “Israelite” ceramics, also adopted this ceramic tradition (Killebrew 2005, 110-135). Ann Killebrew has completed an exhaustive overview of the so called Canaanite pottery forms noting the appearance and disappearance of certain vessel types and shapes, but all within a cultural continuity which does appear to last throughout the Bronze Age and into the Iron Age (Killebrew 2005, 110-135). One important aspect to these sets of pottery is that they can be decorated with bichrome patterns, palm trees, animals, triglyph-metope frieze and geometric designs (Killebrew 2005, 132). It would appear that the people who created this pottery had no aversion to decoration, and these decorative patterns have been used to give certain ceramic vessel a Canaanite ethnic label. From this point, I will now go on to describe the controversy and methods of giving Israelite ethnic identity to material culture.

### **3.4 Israelites: The Traditional Definition**

Over the past century, there has been a great debate as to what makes something in the archaeological record Israelite. It has also been asked and debated when the Israelites had their ethnogenesis, if this ethnogenesis can be seen in the archaeological record, and from where did the Israelites originate. These questions have been asked and answered by many archaeologists, and I will present here a brief summary of the views on what has been or is considered Israelite material culture and from where they originated. Again, I will note that the use of the Hebrew Scriptures in this discussion will be limited. This examination will be based mainly on the material culture not on the texts. During the thirteenth century BC, there was an influx of people

into the then sparsely populated Highlands of the ancient Levant (Figure 3). This new population of people who lived in simple dwellings are believed to be the ancestors of the later nation of Israel which was formed under a monarchy in the tenth century BC (Killebrew 2005, 149-52).

After the tenth century, many scholars claim it is clear from the material culture and from textual evidence that the Israelites were a people living in the land of the Southern Levant and were considered a people by other surrounding nations. Several scholars say this is when Israel had its ethnogenesis and during the Iron I they were not yet an ethnic group (Faust 2006, 29). However, the question remains if an ethnic group is defined by being a group of people who identify themselves as a people group while also being identified as a people group by others outside their group, when did “Israelites” first self-define themselves and when did others recognize them as different. This particular problem lies in the time before the Iron II where there is little textual evidence and the material culture is similar to that of the supposed surrounding “Canaanite” population. It is difficult then to know if and how “Israelites” self-defined themselves in the Iron I through their material culture and everyday life practices. Thus, I will present the three main aspects of material culture which have been argued to be representative of Israelite ethnicity and have been claimed to have been practices meant to set them apart from the surrounding populations. These are architecture, foodways, and pottery.

### **3.5.1 Israelites Material Culture: Architecture**

With each category of material culture, certain scholars believe they represent the Israelites while others disagree. Architecture, specifically the four-room house, is of no exception (Figure 4). The four-room house or the three and four-room pillared house is the hallmark architectural form of the Highlands during the Iron I Period. To call it a four-room house is a bit of a misnomer as it often has three or even five rooms, and these rooms should not be considered rooms, but more as spaces. Thus, a more appropriate name may be the four-space house, but the common feature which ties these varying house types together is the central theme of long rooms with one broad room in the back of the house all connected through one central space (Killebrew 2005, 173; Faust 2006, 71). Many scholars such as Shiloh, Killebrew, Faust and others believe that the four-room house was an Israelite invention and that it is in fact a representation of the certain aspects of purity and ritual (Killebrew 2005, 175). The function of the four-room house

and even which room was used for what activities is not known as there is, at this time, no pattern in the material culture found in these houses. Thus, it remains a mystery as to what the true use of four-room house was until further research is done (Killebrew 2005, 175; Faust 2006, 73-75). These four-room houses found in the Highlands are said to represent Israelite ethnicity. However, Israel Finkelstein believes the four-room house is the result of environmental or social factors in the central Highlands as he cites that four-room houses have been found in the lowlands and in Transjordan from the Iron I Period (Finkelstein 1997, 226). Faust though rightly disagrees with this as many of the supposed four-room houses found outside of the Highlands are simply misidentified or there is no reason to say that Israelites did not live in the lowlands or in Transjordan (Faust 2006, 78).

One other architectural feature is the general lack of temples in “Israelite” sites which is believed to be an ethnic marker as it distinguished the people from the surrounding “Canaanites” and has been correlated with the sole worship of Yahweh as outlined in the Hebrew Scriptures (Faust 2006, 93-94). However, this reason too is not well grounded as other sanctuaries have been found as will be seen with the example of a sanctuary in the Iron I “Israelite” occupation of Hazor. This also assumes that the people followed the practice of Yahweh worship as outlined in the Hebrew Scriptures. However, as seen throughout the book of Judges, even the Hebrew Scriptures rarely portray the people worshiping Yahweh particularly in Judges Chapter 18 where the Danites are portrayed as worshiping other gods. Thus, the lack of ceremonial centers in “Israelite” sites is a poor example even when considering the Hebrew Scriptures.

### **3.5.2 Israelites Material Culture: Foodways**

Another ethnic marker which has been used to identify Israelites in the archaeological record is foodways and specifically the faunal remains of pigs found or not found at a given site. Pig bones have been used as an ethnic marker because of the assumption that the Israelites did not eat pork. This assumption of course comes from the Hebrew Scriptures where it is outlined in the law of Moses that the Israelites were to not eat pork. Thus, many archaeologists have believed that a lack of pig bones at a site very well could indicate that the inhabitants were Israelites and that the presence of pig bones would indicate some other ethnicity such as the pork eating Philistines (Finkelstein 1997, 228-30). Finkelstein believes that out of all the possible aspects of

material culture and archaeological remains which could demonstrate Israelite ethnic identity, pig bones are the most reliable even though it is based on the yet unproven assumption that Israelites did not eat pork (Finkelstein 1997, 228-30). However, Hesse and Wapinsh disagree and do not believe pig bones prove ethnicity. They demonstrate that pig bones never dominate in food remains throughout the Bronze Age and in the Iron Age. The only people group during the Iron I Period in the Southern Levant who regularly ate pork as part of their diet were the “Philistines” (Hesse and Wapinsh 1997, 239-40, 248).

Hesse and Wapinsh also demonstrate in the areas believed to be “Canaanite,” that there was very little consumption of pork. Thus, in a discourse of trying to use pig bones to differentiate between Canaanites and Israelites, pig bones may only be useful in certain circumstances. As Faust points out, pig bones are mainly absent from the Highlands during the Iron I Period even though they were present in the Late Bronze II (Faust 2006, 35-37). Thus, pig bones are an unclear ethnic marker and perhaps as Faust states the only use they may have is that pig bones would demonstrate a site is not Israelite. However, this would only be true if the assumption that only non-pork eating Israelites were living at a site and not any other group or pork eating Israelites were living at the site (Faust 2006, 35-37). Nevertheless, this assumption is not one we can know. It is also true what Hesse and Wapinsh said stating, “A lot of people for a lot of reasons were not eating pork” (Hesse and Wapinsh 1997, 261). In addition, much as with the assumption the Iron I “Israelites” worshiped Yahweh which even the book of Judges disagrees with in part, the same can be said of a pork restriction. Even if this law existed at the time as part of Yahweh worship, there is no evidence to say the people actually practiced it. Thus, it is my opinion that pig bones too have only very limited use in denoting Israelite ethnicity as it is not known who was or was not eating pork and for what reasons.

### **3.5.3 Israelites Material Culture: Pottery**

The last aspect of ethnicity which is commonly used for Israelite ethnic identification is pottery. Pottery from the central Highland settlements is mostly a continuation of form and function from the pottery of the Late Bronze Age which has typically been called Canaanite. However, while there is a great similarity in the supposed “Israelite” pottery assemblage to what was used before by other peoples, the repertoire of pottery from the central Highlands during the

Iron I is much more limited than the supposed surrounding “Canaanite” population (Killebrew 2005, 177). Faust points out that the pottery from the Highlands is lacking in decoration. He believes this to be an ethnic marker as the lack of decoration is as much of an ethnic statement as decorating a piece of pottery. Thus, according to Faust, the simple pottery lacking decoration was a purposeful emblematic ethnic trait in the Israelite material culture as it expressed an egalitarian ethos (Faust 2006, 43-46). The emblematic style is again the variations in material culture which are used by the ethnic group to be distinct features in order to distinguish themselves from another ethnicity. It was this aspect of not desiring to flaunt luxury which, according to Faust, caused the Israelites to keep a minimal set of pottery during the Iron I, and it would also help keep them separate from the other local populations. This is why Faust also claims there is a lack of foreign pottery found in the Highlands as the people there were purposely avoiding outside ceramics as according to Levitical law, pottery could not be purified (Faust 2006, 56-68). However, this could also mean this people group was of lesser means and the lack of foreign pottery or luxury wares demonstrates an economic restriction and not an ethnic marker. There is one particular piece of pottery which has been commonly used to identify Israelite ethnicity. This is the collared rim jar.

A collared pithos is a large storage jar with a folded over rim having a ridge in low relief at the base of the neck (Killebrew 2005, 177). Collared pithoi are commonly associated with Israel as they are rare in the thirteenth century BC but they grow greatly in use during the twelfth century in the central Highlands and have been found in moderate amounts in the Transjordan and in Galilee (Figure 5). Finkelstein, however, believes the pithoi cannot be used to identify Israelite ethnicity for the fact they have been found elsewhere, and its prolific use in the highlands was only because of a functional need based on the location (Finkelstein 1997, 224). However, as Small asks, it is not as much how we interpret the pot, but rather how were the people using the pottery to identify themselves (Small 1997, 275). Thus, as Faust states, the use of pithoi was not an emblematic ethnic marker for the Israelites, rather it represented an ethnic behavior. This ethnic behavior was, according to Faust, recognized by other groups at the time who could have seen the pithoi as being used predominantly by early Israelites. Thus, the pithoi, in Faust’s view, can help to create Israelite ethnicity in the archaeological record, as it would have been an ethnic behavioral aspect distinguishing them from other surrounding ethnic groups (Faust 2006, 191-202).

I agree with Faust that pottery can be a great indicator of ethnicity as it may be a bearer of the emblematic style through the human thing entanglement and partible nature of identity. The early “Israelites” would have created ceramics which represented their ethos at least to some degree, but it is still not definite that the collared rim jar is a clear indicator of Israelite ethnicity. Thus, in all these parts of material culture which have been used to claim Israelite ethnicity, there is little certainty if any of them are definite markers of ethnicity at all or if they simply represent other aspects of the social network which existed in the Highlands of the ancient Levant.

### **3.6 Israelites: The Textual Evidence and Origins**

As has been stated previously, the greatest focus in a discussion of ethnicity should be placed on the material culture, and in this case, not on the Hebrew Scriptures even if the material cultural evidence may appear to be utterly inconclusive. However, the question can be asked, where in archaeologically does the name Israel come from particularly from which sources outside of the Hebrew Scriptures give the name Israelite? The main source of evidence for a group of people called Israel living in the Levant during the late thirteenth century BC comes from the Merneptah Stela c1235-1223 (Tubb 1998, 92). This stela, found in Thebes, mentions the conquests of king Merneptah, an Egyptian pharaoh of the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, and lists the peoples and ethnic groups whom he conquered on his military campaign in Canaan. One of the people groups listed as having been conquered is Israel. The mention of Israel does not appear from the text to be a city, but rather a group of people. Scholars have questioned whether the word on the stela should be translated as Israel and, if it is, should this people be associated with the Israel of the Hebrew Scriptures. The majority of Egyptologists and other scholars agree that the Israel mentioned on the stela should be read as “Israel” and that this people group should be associated with the Israel from the Hebrew Scriptures (Killebrew 2005, 154). Thus, there was a group of people living in the Levant shortly before the Iron I which was considered worthy enough to be put on a royal Egyptian stela called Israel. However, the size of this group, who exactly they were, and where exactly where they were located is not known (Faust 2006, 168). This would mean, according to the working definition of ethnicity, it would appear there was an ethnic group of people called Israel in the Levant during the Iron I. It can be assumed this people

group would have had their own set of social and psychological phenomena represented in their material culture, and daily life practices.

The nature of this group Israel talked of in the Merneptah Stela and where they came from is one of great debate among scholars. I will briefly describe the common theories as to where these “Israelites” came from as this has been an important aspect in the understanding of Israelite ethnogenesis or even if they were a true ethnic group. These theories are important to the ethnic identity of the Israelites as some of them have Israelites as being former Canaanites who at some point in time changed their ethnic identity or changed their ethnicity over a longer period of time.

The first is the conquest theory which states a group of Israelites as described in the Hebrew Scriptures’ narrative came into the land and took it by force, and the majority of scholars have rejected this theory. Second, is the peaceful infiltration theory where a group of people peacefully entered into the land and gradually intermixed with the local populations while still maintaining a sense of identity thus creating a new ethnicity through the intermixing of their previous identity and that of the local populace. A possible people for this theory are the nomadic Shasu. The third theory states that a group of local Canaanites were forced or decided to move to the Highlands and from there became the group later called Israel. Fourthly, is the mixed multitude theory which states the people later known as Israel were a conglomerate of peoples who settled in the Highlands and through various pressures became the group called Israel (Killebrew 2005, 182-85). Faust believes that there was one group which was originally called Israel and this is the group spoken of in the Merneptah Stela. This group then later came to be the one which the other groups were subsumed into taking its name and history creating the people Israel of the late Iron I and after (Faust 2006, 184-94). Thus, many scholars believe that at least a part of what was later called Israelite was in the past of Canaanite origin mixing with groups of migratory people to form the new ethnic identity called Israel (Faust 2006, 186; Killebrew 2005, 184-85; Tubb 1998, 108).

### **3.7 Conclusion**

It is clear from this discussion there is much disagreement and uncertainty as to what makes something Israelite or not. The distinctions between Canaanites and Israelites have also been blurred in many respects as Israelites have been called Canaanites or the definition given for a

Canaanite would subsume the Israelites into a Canaanite label. However, all of this is based on interpretation. In addition, much of the thought on ethnicity and identity in the ancient Levant is based on the Hebrew Scriptures, and the archaeological cultures created through the culture history paradigm. Thus, while I have demonstrated what scholars consider Canaanite or Israelite what of any of this has actually given an ethnic identity to the material culture? Nevertheless, according to the working definition of ethnicity, it is still possible for there to have been a historical ethnic group called Canaanite and one called Israelite as they were recognized groups by other historic ethnic groups. If this were true, it would then be assumed they would at least in part represent themselves through their material culture. Even with the similarity between “Canaanite” and “Israelite” pottery, it would still be possible for these pottery assemblages to be a manifestation of two ethnic groups. Referring back to the metaphor of ethnicity being like language, “Canaanite” material culture could be thought of as the dominate language, while “Israelite” material culture could be thought of as a dialect. It would be similar to the main language, but would have many subtle differences making it different and thus representing a different group.

There remains the question, of what would be the best way to attempt to demonstrate “Canaanite” or “Israelite” ethnicity in the material culture. I believe that an investigation into actual case studies and the material culture found at the sites can proved the starting grounds for such a question. Thus, in the next chapter, I will describe the historical background and material culture of the sites of Hazor and Beth Shean as my two case studies. Hazor has been accepted by the majority of scholars as having been an Israelite site during the Iron I Period after being Canaanite in the preceding Bronze Age. Beth Shean is called a Canaanite city by the majority of scholars during the Iron I Period and is known as Israelite afterwards. These two sites will provide the background for a discussion of the material culture found there as to why these sites would be called Israelite or Canaanite and then, how does this transfer to other sites from the Iron I Period.

## **Chapter 4: Case Studies: Beth Shean and Hazor**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The material presented thus far has demonstrated that the labels of “Canaanite” and “Israelite” which have been given to the material culture found in the southern Levant are in many ways unreliable. With this in mind, a needed step then in this discussion of ethnicity is to closely examine specific sites from the Iron I Period which have in the past been given the ethnic labels of Canaanite or Israelite and to see if they truly do represent these ethnic groups. Thus, in this chapter, I will present two Iron I case studies from Northern Israel, Beth Shean and Hazor both of which have been discussed at length in the scholarly literature and have been well published. Beth Shean has been cited by many scholars as being a typical “Canaanite” site and the Iron I settlement at Hazor has for many years been called “Israelite.” I will present the historical background and the material culture from these sites specifically the ceramics and architecture from Beth Shean, and ceramics and the supposed ceremonial sites from Hazor all of which in the past have been used as ethnic identifiers. In the next chapter, I will examine this evidence to see if it truly does represent Canaanite or Israelite ethnicity. Again, for ease of reading, the material culture discussed will be called Canaanite, Israelite and Egyptian. While I may use these labels, I do so as the authors and excavators of Beth Shean and Hazor have used them to describe the material culture and ethnicities at both sites. However, this does not mean I agree with these labels or that the material culture which has been called by the excavators Canaanite or Israelite truly represents these ethnic groups as I will discuss in the following chapter.

### **4.2 Beth Shean: The Mound**

Beth Shean or Beth Sean, meaning the House or Temple of Shean, had a long and enduring history in ancient Israel spanning from the Early Bronze Age through the Islamic Period (DeVries 1997, 157; Mazar 2006, 6). Shean is believed to be one of the gods in the Canaanite pantheon, and thus, the name Beth Shean symbolizes that the city was of religious importance for the surrounding area (DeVries 1997, 157). The location of the site is part of what aided it in

its longevity (Figure 6). Beth Shean is located in a well-watered and fertile valley supplied by the Jalud River, and the Jezreel valley provided the ample location for agricultural practices. Along with being located in a suitable valley, Beth Shean was also at the intersection of two major roadways. The first is an east-west road which follows along the Jezreel and Harod Valleys and the second north-south road passes through the Jordan valley (Mazar 1997, 144). This location placed Beth Shean near the King's Highway, a major junction of international trade, and this most likely aided the economy of the city (Devries 1997, 157-5). The mound of Beth Shean is also located on a natural high hill in the area which placed it in a strategic location in conjunction with the other aforementioned factors (Mazar 1997, 144). However, for the majority of the sites history from the Middle Bronze Age through the Iron Age, it would appear that it was a relatively small and unfortified site. While it was most certainly an important and strategic location, Beth Shean during the Bronze and Iron Ages appears to be more of an administrative center as will be discussed further on in this chapter (Mazar 2006, 26-27).

While the valley of Beth Shean is located in is a superb environment, and in other parts of the Beth Shean Valley there were many other settlements, the pre-Hellenistic settlement of Beth Shean was limited to the mound summit with only sparse occupation elsewhere (Figure 7). The mound itself was the main place of occupation for the residents of Beth Shean throughout its history (Mazar 2006, 6). Tel Beth Shean is a large and impressive mound with a modern height of approximately 100 meters being the tallest tel in modern Israel (Devries 1997, 158). The area of the mound's summit, not including the slopes of the tel, is 2.8 hectares with the step at the southern end of the mound making up another 1.2 hectares. There is a peak at the southeastern tip of the mound and it slopes down to the lowest point at the northwestern corner which creates a natural approach to Beth Shean. The mound has a very steep topography particularly at the northern edge of the site. This feature would have again played an important role in the strategic location of the site. While the summit of the tel does cover a great area, from the excavation conducted, it would appear that during the Bronze and Iron Age settlements, only 1.2 hectares were settled at the maximum and perhaps less (Mazar 2006, 6). The entire tel was only fully occupied during parts of the Early Bronze Age I, the Byzantine, and early Islamic periods. While Beth Shean was a relatively small site, it sat in Beth Shean Valley which was a densely occupied area with other settlements in the valley being larger than Beth Shean (Mazar 2006, 28). During the Bronze and Iron Ages, the major city in the valley appears to be Tel Rehob which lies five

kilometers south of Beth Shean and which Mazar calls the main Canaanite city-state in the Beth Shean Valley (Mazar 2006, 28).

Tel Beth Shean has had a long history of excavation beginning with the University of Pennsylvania's in the 1920's through 1930's to the modern day excavation led by Amihai Mazar. Because of the variety of excavations, there have been a number of different labels ascribed to the stratigraphy of the site. Thus, this examination of the site will focus on strata VI and V as labeled by the earlier excavation or strata S-4 to S-2 which represent the Late Bronze Age and the Iron I Period (Mazar 1997, 144). Strata VI, S-3, and S-4 correspond roughly to the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC with the lower portion of Stratum VI and Strata V and S-2 representing the late 12<sup>th</sup> century and the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC (Mazar 1997, 13). The Mazar excavation also employs slightly different dates for the Iron I period with the Iron Age IA representing ca. 1200-1140 BC and the Iron Age IB representing ca. 1140-980 BC (Mazar 2006, 26) (Figure 8).

#### **4.3 Beth Shean: Historical Background**

The history of Beth Shean as seen in historical documentation and archaeological excavation will play a strong role in attempting to understand the sites ethnic characteristics along with why scholars have called Beth Shean "Canaanite." Beth Shean is perhaps first mentioned in the Egyptian execration texts from the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century BC; however, this is not a clear conclusion and many scholars have rejected this reference. The first undisputed reference about Beth Shean comes from Thutmose III as he placed the name of the city on his temple wall of Amon-Re at Karnak from the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century BC. Another Egyptian reference concerning Beth Shean comes from the Amarna Letters from the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Mazar 2007, 1-3). While the original Early and Middle Bronze Age settlements at Beth Shean have been called "Canaanite" due to their material culture, for a period of some 300 years during the Egyptian New Kingdom ca. 13<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, Beth Shean was an "Egyptian" strong-hold until the city was destroyed in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century BC. From the textual evidence and the archaeological evidence, it appears that Beth Shean was under Egyptian control with a garrison of Egyptians living at the site. However, it is not known how many people from the land of Egypt were living at the site or how many of the "Canaanite" occupants of the city remained and lived at Beth Shean (Mazar 2007, 1-3).

A number of Egyptian monuments were found at the site from the period of the Late Bronze Age through the beginning of the Iron I Period along with the written records from the Amarna period, indicating the site was controlled by Egypt. What exactly this control was is not evident. There were so-called Egyptian administrative structures built at the site, and from the historical documents, it is said the Egyptians utilized Beth Shean as a military garrison. However, how much control they had over the local populace is not known. It is also not known how many “real” Egyptians were living at the site, as it is quite possible the Egyptians employed local people as part of the garrison. Thus, it is possible only a small amount of officials were “Egyptians” while the remaining people living at Beth Shean were “Canaanite” but under the influence of the Egyptian ethnicity. Alternatively, it is quite possible Egyptians intermarried with the local women creating a hybrid culture at the site. Thus, from the historical texts, it appears Beth Shean, during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, acted as an Egyptian military and administrative center in the heart of the Levant (Mazar 2007, 3, 19). However, before, during, and after the Egyptian occupation of the site, there would appear to be a strong “Canaanite” tradition in the material culture. This is seen explicitly in the late 12 century as the city was destroyed, and as the city was rebuilt, the material culture returns to the “Canaanite” tradition with a drastic reduction in “Egyptian” material culture (Mazar 2009, 162). There is a continuation of forms in the pottery and in the architecture, which have been called by the excavators as Canaanite because of their resemblance to the “Canaanite” material culture tradition of the surrounding region (Mazar 2007, 3, 19).

Part of this cultural continuity are the temples found at the site which have been called “Canaanite temples.” These span many occupational phases and have a material cultural and architectural continuity which has been associated in the past with the Canaanite ethnic label. One in particular has four different successive temple structures with one built atop another demonstrating a cultural continuity (Mazar 2007, 6). While there are gaps in the settlement and the intrusion of Egyptians into the city, there is a strong material culture continuity within Beth Shean. This ranges from the temples which were in operation during the sites long history, to the mixing of Egyptian and Canaanite forms. After Egyptian control of the site crumbled and the subsequent destruction of the city, there is the return to the so-called Canaanite pottery forms and drastic reduction in the “Egyptian” forms (Mazar 2009, 170). It is from this brief historical

background will I go on to discuss the material culture found which relates to the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron I Period and the “Egyptian” and “Canaanite” material culture.

#### **4.4.1 Beth Shean: Egyptian Material Culture**

Much of the information concerning this transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron I Period comes from Area S which is located on the southeastern portion of the tel as called by the Mazar excavations. As mentioned before, a number of “Egyptian” monuments, such as two monumental stelae erected by Seti I with inscriptions, and architectural styles were found at Beth Shean. These “Egyptian” monuments are important, as the excavators have used them to attest that at least some of the occupants of the city were ethnically Egyptian (Mazar 2009, 7). In Level VI, six Egyptian inscriptions were found in a structure called *Building 1500* along with five T-shaped doorsills in the Egyptian style. Near this building, seven pieces of an Egyptian style frieze with *Uraei* were found. A statue of Ramesses the III was also discovered to be part of Level VI as an additional monument from the Egyptian period (Mazar 2009, 9-10). In Level V, more statues of Ramesses III and II were found along with a cylinder seal of Ramesses II shooting arrows at two Canaanite captives. There was also found a stele of Hesi-Nakht worshipping the goddess Antit along with parts of a royal stele from the first half of the Iron IA Period (Mazar 2009, 10). Other aspects of Egyptian life found at Beth Shean are the imported Nile Perch. This importation of fish from Egypt caused a higher fish consumption to be seen in the archaeological record than before and after the Egyptian occupation (Mazar 2009, 22).

Another aspect of the Egyptian occupation at Beth Shean are the so called Egyptian pottery forms which were found in the levels dating to the Egyptian period. While some of the Egyptian style pottery was imported, the majority of it was manufactured locally as can be told from petrographic analysis of the fabrics used in the making of the pottery. From study of the pottery manufacture and style, Mazar has concluded the Egyptian pottery was most likely produced by Egyptian potters working in Beth Shean (For a list of Egyptian pottery forms with diagrams see Killebrew 2005. 67-80). The Egyptian forms included serving vessels, plain bowls with painted red rims and to some extent vessels for drinking beer were also found (Mazar 2009, 19). This, along with the importation of the Nile Perch, may indicate that there was also an influx of Egyptian eating habits and goods at least for part of the occupants of the site. Tear shaped jars

with a red slip also appear in the record and some Egyptian style spinning bowls used for textile production also appear in the record; however, not in great quantities. This though is the extent of the Egyptian forms found at Beth Shean. All other pottery forms found are still that of the local so-called Canaanite population. In fact, when looking at the percentages of the pottery, even during the height of Egyptian control, only 25% of the pottery would be called “Egyptian,” with the majority being made locally but also with some imports, while the other 75% would be called local “Canaanite” wares (Mazar 2009, 19, 196-98). Thus, in this context, despite the many local identities including those of the citizens of Beth Shean, it would appear there was a contrast between “Egyptians” and the “General Local Canaanite” identity. This has important implications which will be discussed in the next chapter as how this problem relates to the ethnicity of the population during and after the Egyptian occupation of Beth Shean (Mazar 2009, 19).

#### **4.4.2 Beth Shean: Canaanite Material Culture**

From this point, the pottery forms which have been called Canaanite can be examined from the Late Bronze to the Iron I with the majority of the finds still coming from Area S strata 4 through 2. However, much of the material culture from Stratum S-4 still appears to be “Egyptian” in form and style. It is not until Stratum S-2 which beginnings at the turn of the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC do we see the drastic reduction in “Egyptian” forms with the return of the so called “Canaanite” forms becoming the dominate ware types. This is in part due to the destruction of the city at the end of Stratum S-3; afterwards the city was subsequently rebuilt in Stratum S-2 (Mazar 2009, 162). It is thus Stratum S-2 representing the late 12<sup>th</sup> century and the 11<sup>th</sup> century which is of great importance in attempting to ascertain the ethnic identity of the people of Beth Shean. Pits excavated by Yadin and Geva yielded great amounts of Iron I pottery; however, throughout these pits and the excavation by Mazar the pottery found are local ware types with the complete disappearance of the Egyptian forms. This would suggest to many scholars that after the Egyptian infiltration into the city ended, the local inhabitants, who are assumed to be Canaanites, resumed control of the city. However, the local populace was never absent, and it is not known if all the “Egyptians” left the city or if they intermingled with the local people group (Mazar 2009, 29, 164, 196).

The pottery found in Strata S-3 and S-2 are called by the excavators Canaanite. They have described a wide variety of forms which were used during the time these two strata represent. The excavators have related these ceramics to the typology of Canaanite pottery as laid out by Killebrew (Killebrew 2005, 110-137). “Canaanite” bowls both carinated and non-carinated were found to be used in conjunction with “Egyptian” bowls in stratum S-3 and the use of the “Canaanite” bowls continued on into Strata S-2. A variety of chalices and goblets were found throughout Stratum S-4 through S-2 which fall into Killebrew’s model of Canaanite pottery (Mazar 2009, 201-211). Twenty percent of the so-called Canaanite assemblage are kraters found throughout the three strata being discussed. This group is separated into wheel-coiled kraters with or without handles, and the large deep coil made and barrel shaped kraters with two or more handles called pithos-kraters. These kraters are used as a particular identifier of Canaanite ethnicity both the decorated and non-decorated vessels as they are considered to be a typical Canaanite form which existed over a lengthy cultural continuum (Mazar 2009, 211-225). It is stated by the excavators that these kraters are a, “Continuation of the long lived carinated Canaanite krater with thickened rim known throughout all of the Late Bronze” speaking of the kraters found in Strata S-4 through S-2 (Mazar 2009, 217).

Aside from these and other forms such as cooking pots, jugs and other vessels which are commonly called “Canaanite,” and explicitly so by Mazar, there is another find that is of interest to this discussion. This is the small amount of pithoi and collared-rim pithoi which were found at Beth Shean which has, in the past, been typically used as an identifier for Israelite ethnicity as seen in the previous chapter. Several pithoi and pithoi sherds were found at Beth Shean. One in particular has a similar rim shape to a pithoi found in the Iron I strata from Hazor (Mazar 2009, 241-242). The pottery found in Strata S-4 through S-2 representing the part of the Late Bronze Age and the transition to and the end of the Iron I Period characterize according to the authors a cultural continuum even with the inclusion of the “Egyptian” wares. They state that, “Despite the dominant cultural presence of Egyptians at Beth-Shean during the duration of the 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasty... Canaanite material culture remained robust” (Mazar 2009, 273). The excavators do address the question of why this material culture should be called Canaanite in stating, “Canaanite material culture in general and pottery in particular, whether an expression of specific ethnicity or not, is clearly defined in both space and time” (Mazar 2009, 196). This explanation about why these

forms are called Canaanite and what they represent whether a phenomenon or ethnicity will be discussed in the next chapter.

From this survey of the material culture from the Late Bronze Age and Iron I period it is evident from the historical records that Beth Shean was known in the Middle Bronze Age and part of the Late Bronze Age as “Canaanite,” during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries as “Egyptian,” and in the 11<sup>th</sup> century again as “Canaanite.” However, from this examination of the material culture, there is no clear indicator how many “Egyptians” were living at the site during their occupation and how many “Canaanites” were living at the site as seen in the mixed sets of material culture. It is also unclear if in the time after the “Egyptian” occupation, if all only “Canaanites” were living there or if there was a mixing of the populations and simply an abandonment of the so-called Egyptian pottery and architectural forms. This leaves the ethnic identity of the material culture and the site in question as even during the “Egyptian” occupation it is not clear according to the excavators which houses were “Egyptian” or which were “Canaanite” (Mazar 2009, 19).

#### **4.5 Hazor: The Mound**

Hazor, much like Beth Shean, was an important city located in the northern fringes of modern day Israel just southwest of Tel Dan formally Laish. The meaning of the name Hazor is an “Enclosure” signifying a fortified camp (Yadin 1970, 27). Tel Hazor is located at the foot of the eastern ridge of the Upper Galilee mountain range and is twenty-five kilometers north of the Sea of Galilee (Yadin 1958, 1). Much like at Beth Shean, the sites location is a strategic one as it sits at a meeting point between the road which leads from Damascus to Megiddo and the road which leads from Sidon to Beison (Figure 9). This location placed Hazor in a key position of trade but also in power as it is described in the historical records (Yadin 1970, 15).

The site of Hazor is made of two distinct parts, the upper tel proper and a lower and much larger rectangular plateau. The upper tel has been described by the excavators as being bottle shaped with the neck of the bottle in the west and the base in the east (Yadin 1970, 15). This upper tel is east to west 540 meters long at the base and 470 meters long at the top of the mound while being 260 meters wide at the base and 175 meters wide at the top of the mound north to south (Figure 10). The total area comprised by the upper tel is 106,300 square meters at the base and 61,100 square meters at the top of the mound (Yadin 1958, 1). There are four terraces on the

upper tell which are formed by the west to east slope of the mound, but these terraces were partially formed by the expansion of the city throughout its long history. The lower enclosed plateau lies to the north and east of the upper tel. This vast area has been found by the Yadin excavations to be the lower city of Hazor which existed before its destruction at the end of the Late Bronze Age (Yadin 1970, 15). The lower city is by far larger than the upper tel being 1,000 meters from north to south and 700 meters from east to west (Figure 11). In total, the lower city is 740,000 square meters well over shadowing the area of the upper city. On the western side of the lower city, there was a large earthen rampart which was believed to be formed when a fosse was cut into the earth on the western side of the plateau. This was believed to be done as it is the only part of the lower city not protected by natural slopes (Yadin 1958, 2). The stratigraphy of the site are correlated with the following time periods (Figure 12). Stratum XIII represents the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC with the destruction of the city taking place roughly in the second half of the century while Stratum XII/XI represents the 12<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries BC (Ben-Tor 1993, 606).

#### **4.6 Hazor: Historical Background**

Hazor had a long history, and had its first written mention in the Egyptian execration texts from the 19<sup>th</sup> century BC. However, one of the most important mentions of the city comes from archives at Mari where Hazor is one of only two cities from Palestine mentioned in these texts. These texts which speak of a great city have been dated to the Middle Bronze Age Hazor which had a great occupation of both the upper tel and the lower city (Yadin 1970, 1-2). The Babylonian king Hammurabi had special ambassadors living at Hazor for some time demonstrating its importance in the political world of the Middle Bronze Age. Another important mention of Hazor from the Late Bronze Age comes from the Amarna Letters which again demonstrate the importance of the city as in letter 227 the king of Hazor refers to himself as, “King of the city of Hazor” (Yadin 1970, 7). This statement is unparalleled by any communication from any other city in Palestine found in the Amarna Letters.

Perhaps most importantly for this discussion of ethnicity in the Iron I Period are the references to Hazor from the Hebrew Scriptures. It is important to note these as because of them it has been believed by Yadin and other scholars that the Iron I settlement at Hazor was Israelite, and thus the settlement from the Late Bronze Age and before would be Canaanite as mentioned

in the texts. Hazor is referred to in Joshua 11:10 as, “The head of all those cities” speaking to Hazor’s importance in the region which would seem to be corroborated by the other letters and correspondences mentioned before. However, it is from this mention of Hazor in the book of Joshua that it speaks of the Israelites’ destruction, burning, and conquest of the city (Joshua 11:10-13). Later, Hazor was mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures in 1 and 2 Kings speaking of the city as an Israelite strong hold during the time of Solomon when it was said to be rebuilt as a strategic base. Later, the city is mentioned as part of the general fall all Northern Israel to the Assyrians in 722 BC (1 Kings 9:15; 2 Kings 15:29; Yadin 1970, 11).

From these historical mentions, Hazor seemingly had a long and important history if any of these historical documents can be trusted. The archaeological record does demonstrate that from the Middle Bronze II through the Late Bronze III, both the upper and lower cities were inhabited and contained a wealth of material culture and places of worship particularly in the lower city (Yadin 1970, 28-32). This period has been called, by scholars, Canaanite for a number of reasons. These range from the so-called Canaanite cultic objects and temples, to the Canaanite script found in Area D of the lower city. Hazor, during this time, could be described from the archaeological record as a large and thriving city with well-built defenses (Yadin 1970, 42, 106). However, at the end of the LB III, both the upper and lower city were completely destroyed, and burned including all of the temples and palaces. What followed during the Iron I a time when the site remained dormant, and then later a sparse occupation of the upper city only as the lower city was not re-inhabited. This resettlement of the city after its destruction has been correlated by Ben-Tor, and in the past by Yadin, as Israelite in conjunction with the Hebrew Scriptures thus giving an ethnic identity to the sparse population of the Iron I Period Hazor (Yadin 1970, 108-115; Ben-Tor 1992, 284-85).

#### **4.7 Hazor: Material Culture**

With this brief historical background can the material culture now be examined to see if this does represent an Israelite ethnicity. Again, the focus will mainly be on pottery and certain ceremonial sites from the Iron I Period. During the Late Bronze and before, a number of so-called “Canaanite” temples existed at Hazor both in the upper city, but also in the lower city (Yadin 1970, 67-105). These temples range in shape and size, and a complete discussion of them

is beyond the scope of this research. However, these temples are one of the reasons for the Canaanite identification of the city before the Iron I Period both in to which gods these temples were dedicated to and also their eventual destruction at the end of the Late Bronze Age. Several of the temples have statues which have been interpreted to be gods and goddess along with a wealth of pottery which has been identified by Yadin as Canaanite (Yadin 1970, 69). One such stele has been interpreted to be a Canaanite moon god (Yadin 1970, 71-73). Other finds which were part of the ritual activity was a clay liver model with an Akkadian inscription which was believed to be used in divination and thus another indicator of the Canaanites living in the pre Iron Age city (Yadin 1970, 82). Of interest is also the destruction of these temples and the purposeful destruction and desecration of the so-called cult objects found in them. Much as it is not known who burned and destroyed the Late Bronze Hazor, it is not known who purposefully destroyed the cult objects. However, this action was interpreted by the original excavators as a sign of the Israelite destruction of the city, and was used as further evidence for the removal of the Canaanite identity of the city and the placement of the Israelite identity (Yadin 1970, 87-92).

Pottery from the Late Bronze Age has also been used as an ethnic identifier for the supposed “Canaanite” inhabitants of the city. The types and forms found in Late Bronze Hazor are similar in style and form to those already discussed from Beth Shean. From the LB I, a large amount of bichrome ware was found being the largest collection of this type found at Hazor (Yadin 1970, 44-45). While the forms and styles of pottery found were said to be the typical forms found in Palestine, a carinated bowl with a quatrefoil mouth was a new addition to this repertoire and is believed to have its origins in Anatolia (Yadin 1970, 47). Pithoi, some with and others without decoration, were also found in stratum XIII associated with the Late Bronze Age. This form of pithos is unique to Hazor; however, it should be noted that there are always slight differences in forms from site to site even within a standard typology (Yadin 1970, 34, 50).

The strata which correlate to the Iron I were called by the Yadin excavation as strata XII and XI; however, the recent Ben-Tor excavations have found this to be one single stratum and have redefined it as stratum XII/XI to keep the numerical system established by Yadin (Ben-Tor 2012, 2). Because of the destruction of the city, the short time where both the upper and lower city were uninhabited, and subsequent habitation of only the upper city during the Iron I Period after, the material culture discussed here will come from Areas A and B which make up the upper city. The first feature of importance found in the recent excavation was an open-air feature which has

been interpreted by Ben-Tor as being a cultic place found in Area A (Figure 13). This feature is made of one standing stone made of basalt called a *massebah* with three flat stones at the base of this standing stone which have been called offering tables. One of these flat stones is made of basalt; the other two are made of limestone. Next to this, a small rounded installation of standing stones was found which appear to be smaller *masseboth*. This particular feature resembles another supposed cultic site found in Stratum XIII in Area B which is correlated with the Late Bronze Age and the time of the “Canaanites” according to the original excavators (Ben-Tor 2012, 2, 8-13). While the cultic centers which were destroyed from the Late Bronze Age were not reused during the Iron I settlement, this find will be an important feature in a discussion of Israelite ethnicity in the following chapter (Ben-Tor 2012, 26).

The pottery found in Stratum XII/XI consists of ware types typical for the Iron I Period from northern Palestine. Bowls are very common finds and eighty percent of these bowls are S-profiled bowls. Many are carinated at the top and they lack any sort of decoration. Cooking pots are the most common find from the Iron I stratum. They lack handles and have a prominent carination to the body of the vessel. The cooking pot also has a unique rim shape which sets it apart from the cooking pots of the Late Bronze Age. A limited number of jars, chalices, jugs and pilgrim flasks were also found, but much like most of the Iron I assemblage from Hazor very few if any complete vessels were found, and each of these appear to follow the northern pottery tradition of the Iron I Period (Ben-Tor 2012, 21-24; Yadin 1989, 29).

Among other pottery types, very few kraters were found in this assemblage. It has been suggested by Ben-Tor that the lack of kraters found in Stratum XII/XI would seem to indicate a deviation from the older “Canaanite” ceramic tradition. One of the kraters which was found and reconstructed, revealed an applied plastic decoration of animals placed on the shoulder, one of the rare instances from this assemblage of decoration on the pottery (Ben-Tor 2012, 22). A number of pithoi fragments were also found making it the second most common ceramic from this assemblage. There are a variety of rim shapes in these pithoi and some of them feature a “rope decoration” on the body of the vessel. However, even with these variations in the rim shape, Ben-Tor calls these pithoi, “One of the clearest indicators of Israelite material culture in its early stages” as he still maintains that the pithoi are a possible indicator for the Israelite ethnicity as discussed in the previous chapter (Ben-Tor 2012, 23). Another interesting find from the Iron I Period Hazor assemblage is a zoomorphic vessel of a horned animal which appears to

be part of a pouring vessel (Ben-Tor 2012, 24). This is similar to another zoomorphic bird vessel found in the same strata by Yadin in the earlier excavation (Ben-Tor 1997, 218, 223). These objects have both been interpreted to have a cultic significance Ben-Tor.

Yadin was certain the material from Stratum XII/XI was of Israelite origins, however, this view has begun to shift as noted by Ben-Tor who himself originally called the material Israelite as stated previously. Ben-Tor speaks to the regional change in pottery and ethnic identity being uncertain, as while it does appear to be a new population, the ethnic identity of this group is difficult to discern from the sparse material culture (Ben-Tor 2012, 24-26). The reason for this statement is because “The cultural characteristics of this stratum [XII/XI] differ from those of the previous [late Canaanite] one, and this coupled with the stratigraphic-chronological gap separating the two, points to the appearance of a new population” (Ben-Tor 2012, 24). However, while Ben-Tor stated this about the supposed “Israelite” material culture of the Iron I, he did not make a similar statement about the supposed “Canaanite” material culture from the Bronze Age.

In his discussion of the Iron II settlement on the upper city, Ben-Tor regularly refers to the previous Canaanite city which was built over, but no reason for this identification is given (Ben-Tor 2012, 15). Ben-Tor has also stated there is a difference in the ceramic tradition in the Iron I Period when compared with the Late Bronze Age such as with the absence of kraters (Ben-Tor 2012, 24). However, there are still similarities in the vessel types and in the forms which demonstrate, at least to some degree, a cultural continuity in the material culture. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the “Israelite” material culture exists within and is similar to the broader “Canaanite” material culture though during the Iron I there is a reduction in forms and the lack of kraters. The same can be said of the “Israelite” material culture from Hazor it belongs to this ceramic tradition leaving the question of if it was made by “Canaanites” or “Israelites” even more unclear as will be discussed in the following chapter.

## **4.8 Conclusion**

Both sites of Beth Shean and Hazor offer an interesting view at material culture from the Iron I Period but also at the ethnic labels attached to these assemblages by modern scholarship. From the historical accounts and the archaeological record, both Beth Shean and Hazor had long and important histories in Palestine. Whether it be their location on or near trade routes, being the

location of an Egyptian garrison, or being the “King of all those cities.” Both Beth Shean and Hazor were influential in the region. The material culture from both of these sites demonstrates a general cultural continuity both in the “Canaanite” material culture persisting before during and after the “Egyptian” occupation or the “Israelite” material culture, which while different still corresponds to the wider ceramic tradition of Northern Israel during the Iron I Period. This leads to the question of, who lived in these cities?

From the archaeological reports on Beth Shean, the labels Egyptian and Canaanite have been given to the material culture from the Late Bronze Age and the Iron I Period respectively. However, Mazar and the other excavators of the site cannot be certain who was living at Beth Shean during the Late Bronze Age and the Iron I Period. The pottery demonstrates a strong continuation of the ceramic tradition at the site other than the addition of some “Egyptian” wares. From the material culture, it is not even possible to discern if an “Egyptian” or a “Canaanite” was living in a particular house. The same can be said of the material culture from Hazor as the ceramics from the Iron I levels have been called Israelite particularly by Yadin, but also in the past by Ben-Tor and other scholars. However, Ben-Tor has stated that the ceramics of the Iron I Period Hazor are too ambiguous to give a clear Israelite ethnic identity. When looking at the material culture, it does fit into the broader ceramic tradition of the period though there are differences in the types of vessels used or not used and there is a general lack of decoration. I would argue this “Israelite” ceramic tradition is akin to a dialect in the overarching “Canaanite” ceramic language.

Finally, the ethnic labels given to the material culture are an interpretation, and it is assumed that there were different people groups who lived at these sites or used the material culture. While these labels have been given to the material culture, again, the question can be asked what is it about them which makes them represent these cultures and ethnicities? The following chapter will examine these two case studies by applying the archaeological theories of ethnicity, the working definition for ethnicity, and in this way attempt to answer if ethnicity can be seen in material culture and should ethnic labels be given to material culture and if so how should they be used.

## **Chapter 5: Archaeology and Ethnicity: Conclusions**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In the previous four chapters, I have discussed the archaeology of ethnicity. The first two chapters were meant to demonstrate the general history and theoretical problems of the archaeology of ethnicity. I also demonstrated how the idea of what ethnicity is has changed through time and how it has now become a matter of great debate in the archaeological community. My third chapter explored the specific cases of Canaanite and Israelite ethnicity as it has been described in the past through the material culture and through historical texts. From this, it was clear there are many conflicting views in both what is called Canaanite or what is called Israelite. The material culture in question has been correlated with names believed to belong to ethnic groups from textual evidence from the Bronze Age or shortly thereafter. This is why we use the names “Canaanite” and “Israelite,” as we have taken these names from documents and placed them on sets of material culture which we as archaeologists have constructed. In my fourth chapter, I went on to explore the material culture from Beth Shean and Hazor of the Iron I Period, as the sites have been called Canaanite and Israelite respectively. The reason these ethnic labels were given to these two sites by the excavators was because of an examination of the material cultural continuity and historical texts which speak about a particular group living at the site during the Iron I. These ethnic labels are thus created by a connection between material culture with an ethnic group spoken of in historical texts. This process places the material culture into a historical context and thus giving it an ethnic label. However, the question can be asked, does the material culture from Beth Shean and Hazor truly represent Canaanite and Israelite ethnicity? This question will help to answer the research questions of this study which are: Does material culture represent ethnicity, and should archaeologists apply ethnic labels to material culture? An examination of the two case studies will demonstrate if the Canaanite and Israelite ethnicities can truly be seen in the material culture and they will provide the background on whether or not we should apply these ethnic labels to material culture.

### **5.2 Canaanite, Egyptian or Something Else**

The material culture from Beth Shean has been said by the excavators to represent a constant presence of the Canaanite ethnicity even with the intrusion of Egyptian material culture during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries BC (Mazar 2009, 273). Bowls, kraters, juglets, and a variety of other pottery have been placed under the ethnic label of Canaanite. Other aspects of the ceramic assemblage have been given the ethnicity of Egyptian as they share many qualities with ceramics found in Egypt and are thus believed to have been owned and used by Egyptians. The excavators use this material culture to denote that there was an Egyptian presence at Beth Shean and that before, during and after the Egyptian occupation of the site, Canaanites lived at the site. All of these assumptions are based up an interpretation of the material culture evidence. As I described before, certain architectural elements which were called Egyptian have been used to further denote the Egyptian ethnicity for the site during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries BC while so-called Canaanite temples have been used as architectural indicators of a Canaanite ethnic identity. However, the question remains, what does any of this material culture mean? Can archaeology say with confidence the people who used and created this material culture that they were Canaanite or that they were Egyptian and that the forms of the material culture truly represent the ethnic labels of Canaanite and Egyptian?

Whether or not the material culture from Beth Shean represents Canaanite ethnicity is one that must be examined closely. To begin with, I will once again quote Mazar where he states, “Canaanite material culture in general and pottery in particular, whether an expression of specific ethnicity or not, is clearly defined in both space and time” (Mazar 2009, 196). This is an important statement as it demonstrates a point. The material culture which Mazar and the other excavators call “Canaanite” does not necessarily represent the historical Canaanite ethnicity. What it does represent is a physical phenomenon which existed in time and space, but it cannot be proven that the material culture itself does represent the specific ethnicity called Canaanite. This does not mean that the material culture does not represent an ethnicity, but it cannot be demonstrated that it specifically represents the Canaanite ethnic label.

As seen in the first chapter, the exact nature as to how ethnicity may be represented in material culture is not known though it is likely that material culture can embody ethnicity. I have argued that through the human thing entanglement and the partible and permeable nature of identity that it is possible for material culture to represent certain aspects of a group’s ethnicity, but it may also represent any other aspect of the social network. The method to tell which aspects

of the material culture which does represent ethnicity is currently unknown. Thus, from the words of the excavators, the so-called Canaanite material culture does represent a phenomenon which is known in time and space, but, as I would point out, it does not mean the material culture is a representative of the Canaanite ethnicity. Rather, the material culture has been given this ethnicity because it has been correlated with the historical texts which use the name “Canaanite” in conjunction with the geographic area described in those texts. Again, this does not mean the material culture continuity does not represent an ethnicity as it very well may denote an ethnic group. However, the question remains as to which ethnic group this material culture was created, owned and used by and thus, what is the correct ethnic label for the material culture.

Part of the problem with the excavators of Beth Shean calling the material culture Canaanite is that their brief explanation for why they call the material culture Canaanite is simply too brief and out of the way. Another problem is, that while Mazar states that the “Canaanite” material culture may not represent a specific ethnicity called “Canaanite,” a similar statement is not made about the “Egyptian” material culture which has no more archaeological proof that it represents Egyptian ethnicity than the Canaanite material culture. As stated in their finds, only 25% of the ceramics found from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries BC is “Egyptian” while the rest is “Canaanite” (Mazar 2009, 19, 196-98). In addition, the excavators cannot state, based on the material culture, which of the houses were “Egyptian” or which were “Canaanite” as the material culture evidence is not clear (Mazar 2009, 19). We do not know if “Egyptians” were using “Canaanite” ceramics or if “Canaanites” were using “Egyptian” ceramics, as the material culture evidence is inconclusive. Thus, the ethnic labels which have been given to both the “Egyptian” and “Canaanite” material culture cannot be proven as we simply do not know who made, owned and used these items from the archaeological evidence.

After the destruction and rebuilding of the city, the excavators use the presence of “Canaanite” material culture and the absence of “Egyptian” material culture to state that Canaanites had taken back control of the city and that the Egyptian population was no longer present (Mazar 2009, 29, 164, 196). However, all of this is based on assumptions which cannot be proven. How do we know that a population that was ethnically Egyptian did not mingle with the ethnically Canaanite population forming a new population after the destruction of the city? How do we know that an ethnically Canaanite population did not begin to use “Egyptian” pottery when a small group of “Egyptians” took the city? On the other hand, how do we know solely

from the material culture that any of it represents the specific ethnic labels of Canaanite and Egyptian? The answer to this question is that we do not know as there is currently no theory which can prove a specific ethnic label in the past when applied to material culture.

At Beth Shean, the “Egyptian” material culture is called such due in part to a comparison to material culture found in Egypt proper. The “Canaanite” material culture is likewise called such due to a comparison to material culture found in throughout the Southern Levant and Syria. However, calling the material culture at Beth Shean “Egyptian” or “Canaanite,” even with these comparisons, still relies on the assumption that the people who made, owned, used it were either ethnically Egyptian or Canaanite which I have demonstrated cannot be known. Thus, the assumption that there were two groups of people called Canaanites and Egyptians who lived at Beth Shean and are known by their material culture is simply an assumption. This assumption is based in part on the correlation of historical texts to the material culture, and the cultural historical framework which was established at the very beginning of the archaeology of the ancient Levant which itself was based on a particular reading of the Biblical texts.

With this said, it does not mean there is not an apparent continuity of material culture at Beth Shean from Middle Bronze Age through the Iron I Period even with the intrusion of the “Egyptian” material culture (Mazar 2009, 273). This also does not mean that the “Egyptian” material culture does not indicate an intrusion of different ceramics and architecture such as the serving vessels, plain bowls with painted red rims, along with the Egyptian monuments, inscriptions, and architectural styles which can be correlated to the style found in ancient Egypt (Mazar 2009, 9-10, 19). There are two distinct forms in both ceramics and architecture which may represent two different ethnic traditions. The problem with this though is the labels we give these sets of material culture and the unspoken assumption that go along with these labels of “Canaanite” and “Egyptian.”

“Canaanite” material culture is indicative of the region as it fits into a cultural continuity which has stretched as far back as the Early Bronze Age, and the same can be said of the “Egyptian” material culture as it too represents a part of the cultural continuity in ancient Egypt. These labels though are the problem, as archaeology cannot say who made, owned or used these objects. A strict examination of the material culture can reveal physical phenomena in the material culture which can be tracked across time and space but it does not give a name to the ethnic group which made, owned and used these objects. It may be possible that through the

human thing entanglement and partible and permeable nature of identity that the material culture does have aspects of an ethnicity within it. However, the specific name for this ethnicity cannot be known only by an examination of the material culture. The names and labels we give to this material culture are derived from the textual evidence and the assumption that we can correlate the two. Nevertheless, current archaeological theory cannot say for the material culture from Beth Shean that the ethnic label of “Canaanite” is correct.

### **5.3 Israelite, Canaanite, or Something Else**

The excavators of Hazor have in the past called the material culture from the Iron I Period Israelite. However, much as at Beth Shean, the meaning of this label is not as straightforward as it may appear. I have presented in the previous chapter an overview of the architectural elements and parts of the ceramic assemblage from Hazor during the Late Bronze Age and the Iron I Period. From this evidence, there is a clear shift in the material culture after the destruction of the city as the prolific “Canaanite” ceramics and architectural styles are replaced with a new set of material culture. The new material culture has been called for many decades “Israelite.” This shift in the material culture can be seen in the reduction of forms in the ceramics assemblage and the abandonment of the former ceremonial sites which had existed at Hazor during the Bronze Age (Ben-Tor 2012, 26). The material culture after the destruction of the site has been called, by the excavators, a clear indicator of Israelite material culture and ethnicity as spoken of in the Hebrew Scriptures. Material culture from before the Iron Age, has been called typical Canaanite and thus an indicator of the Canaanite ethnic group spoken of in historic texts and the Hebrew Scriptures (Ben-Tor 2012, 23). However, much as at Beth Shean, the question remains as to what does any of this material culture mean? Does the material culture from the Iron I Period prove an Israelite ethnicity or does it mean something else? Is this Israelite ethnic label correct, and is it proven by the architecture and the ceramic assemblage as the excavators in the past have presented?

While the four-room house is one of the classically used indicators of Israelite ethnicity, the paucity of the architectural remains from the Iron I Period at Hazor leaves this particular feature unusable for this discussion. However, another architectural element which has been used as a typical Israelite ethnic marker is the general lack of temples in “Israelite” sites as this has been

correlated with the sole worship of Yahweh as outlined in the Hebrew Scriptures (Faust 2006, 93-94). This feature has been used to distinguish “Israelites” from “Canaanites” who often had more than one temple in a given city. While it has been seen that after the destruction of the city at the end of the Bronze Age, the “Canaanite” temple areas were abandoned; however, this does not mean that ceremonial sites are lacking from the Iron I Hazor. As described in the previous chapter, a public cultic place was found in the Iron I town of Hazor which appears to have been in use during the Iron I habitation of the upper city. The evidence certainly goes against the idea that the settlement is “Israelite” and even more so as another similar ceremonial site was found in the Late Bronze Age stratum which is believed to be “Canaanite” by the excavators (Ben-Tor 2012, 2, 8-13). This then may lead one to believe that the people living at the site were “Canaanite” which is exactly what Israel Finkelstein believes (Finkelstein 2000, 239). He sees the site and its material culture as simply another Canaanite village with certain differences from those Canaanites who lived there before, but the people were still ethnically Canaanite (Finkelstein 2000, 239).

The other aspect of the material culture from Hazor which has been used to say that it was Israelite is the ceramic assemblage. However, much as before, the ceramics from Hazor do not prove that the material culture represents either an Israelite ethnicity or that the label of Israelite is correct. The pithoi which were found at the site have been said by the excavators to be an example of Israelite material culture, but as seen in chapter three of this discourse, the collared rim jar and pithoi are not a reliable method to tell Israelite ethnicity as they were used throughout the ancient Levant. This is exemplified by the fact that pithoi and pithoi sherds were found at Beth Shean with one in particular having a similar rim shape to a pithoi found in the Iron I strata from Hazor though the people who used it have been called “Canaanite” (Mazar 2009, 241-242). Thus, the pithoi from Hazor cannot be used to indicate Israelite ethnicity, and the same can be said of the rest of the ceramic assemblage. While there are few kraters found in the Iron I Period which Ben-Tor believes to be an indicator of Israelite ethnicity, there are still kraters found in the assemblage (Ben-Tor 2012, 22). The same can be said of decorated pottery as, while yes, there is less decorated wares in the Iron I Period, but they are still present at the site such as bichrome wares and the zoomorphic vessels which were found from the Iron I settlement (Ben-Tor 1997, 218, 223). What this demonstrates is that while there is a change and reduction in certain types of ceramics used during the Iron I Period Hazor, it is not a clear indicator of Israelite ethnicity, but

rather a shift in a ceramic tradition which can be traced back through the Bronze Age. Again, this could lead someone to believe the site was always Canaanite as suggested by Finkelstein. Alternatively, it can be asked if the material culture found at Hazor suffers the same fate as the material culture from Beth Shean that we cannot prove the ethnic label given to the material culture.

Much of what can be said here will echo what I have already stated about the material culture at Beth Shean, as the same principles apply to the material culture from Hazor. As I have shown, there is no strong archaeological case to say that the Iron I material culture from Hazor represents an Israelite ethnicity and this is even noted by Ben-Tor in the most recent publication of Hazor. He believes the ethnic identity of the Iron I material culture is uncertain, though as I have shown before, this has not stopped him from still calling the material culture Israelite or the Bronze Age settlement Canaanite (Ben-Tor 2012, 24-26). However, as I have demonstrated at Beth Shean, there is nothing about the material culture solely which would allow it to be called Canaanite as the label is derived from texts and is placed upon the material culture assemblage which the archaeologist creates and correlates with other sites. The same then can be said of the Israelite ethnic label as the reason the Israelite ethnic label was given to Iron I Period Hazor was due to the Hebrew Scriptures as Finkelstein notes (Finkelstein 2000, 239).

While we cannot call the material culture Israelite, as this again is beyond current archaeological theory, we also cannot prove the Iron I material culture was Canaanite, as Finkelstein suggests for the same exact reasons why we cannot call it Israelite. There is simply no method by using only the material culture to know who made, owned, and used the material culture at Hazor. While the introduction of a different ceramic tradition at Hazor, may represent a new people group and even perhaps a new ethnic group which expressed itself differently in their material culture from those who lived at the site before. However, the name of this group and the ethnic label cannot be derived from the material culture alone even if it does represent an ethnicity. The reason we have the labels Israelite for the Iron Age Hazor or Canaanite for the Bronze Age Hazor is because of the assumption the texts which speak of these cities are correct and that they accurately describe the people who lived at the site. This is also a rigid definition as there is nothing to say that “Canaanites” and “Israelites” could not have lived at Hazor together in the Iron I much as there is nothing to say that “Egyptians” could not have still lived at Beth Shean after the destruction of the city and the abandonment of the “Egyptian” pottery.

An interesting note about both of these case studies is how the ethnicity of the sites and the opinion about the ethnicity of the material culture has changed over time. This has been in conjunction with the changing field of the archaeology of the ancient Levant. With both Beth Shean and Hazor, the early investigations into the sites by the University of Pennsylvania at Beth Shean and Yadin at Hazor, neither group truly questioned the ethnicities of either site as they relied upon historical texts and previously created topologies to give ethnic labels to the material culture. Beth Shean was seen as a classic Canaanite site with the intrusion of Egyptian material culture, and Hazor was a once great Canaanite city which was destroyed and repopulated by early Israelites. These opinions about the ethnicity of the material culture stayed with the sites as other scholars often referred to them as Canaanite or Israelite, and Mazar and Ben-Tor also called their respective sites by the ethnic labels of Canaanite and Israelite.

With the changing field of the archaeology of the ancient Levant, and the renewed focus on ethnicity in archaeology, the excavators of these sites have begun to soften their approach to the ethnicity of Beth Shean and Hazor. Mazar's statement about Canaanite ethnicity demonstrates that he does not specifically believe the label indicates a "Canaanite" ethnicity. Ben-Tor, a traditionally more conservative archaeologist, has also softened his view of the Israelite ethnicity at Hazor as I have noted that he no longer would claim the material culture from the Iron I Period Hazor is Israelite though he still often uses the term. This shift in attitude and that the subject of ethnicity in archaeology is even mentioned in the literature for either site is a clear indicator of the changing views on ethnicity in the ancient Levant. In addition, it demonstrates the interest in the study of the archaeology of ethnicity and its importance in our understanding of the past and the people who lived in it and left their material culture for us to study and interpret.

#### **5.4 Material Culture and Ethnicity**

These two Iron I examples from the ancient Levant reveal that the specific ethnicities of Canaanite and Israelite cannot undoubtedly proven through an analysis of material culture. I demonstrated in the second chapter that some archaeologists believe that material culture does or can represent ethnicity, and I agree with this concept. This imbuing of ethnicity into material culture may be done through the emblematic style or through a combination of the human thing entanglement and the partible and permeable nature of identity. However, which features would

indicate ethnicity or how we would know what those features are is unknown. Archaeologists have given reasons for why material culture can be called Canaanite or Israelite. As I have demonstrated, none of these features truly demonstrates that the material culture is a representative of these specific ethnicities, as we cannot know who made, owned, or used the material culture in the past. While ethnicity may be a part of material culture, as it is certain that in the archaeological record we do see patterns and phenomena which exist within time and space; however, we do not know what is the correct ethnic label for this phenomenon solely from examining the material culture.

According to the working definition of ethnicity, Canaanites and Israelites could have been historic ethnic groups as they were recognized by other ethnic groups who considered them distinct groups. With this, it can also be assumed that part of their ethnic identity would have manifested itself in their material culture. This manifestation would be seen through time and space, but it would be fluid changing by region and through time as the ethnic groups would have been influenced by different internal and external stimuli depending on where and when they lived. This would have been true for Canaanites and Israelites, as these historic ethnic groups would have changed and adopted new material culture from those surrounding them or would have exaggerated certain aspects in order to be recognized as different. Thus, it can be assumed, these ethnic groups would have left material culture which was in part a manifestation of their ethnic identity which could be recognized through time in space. The material culture though would not exist in a rigid framework as the “Canaanites” of Hazor would not necessarily have manifested their Canaanite identity the same as the “Canaanites” at Beth Shean who were influenced by the “Egyptian” ethnicity. This is one of the underlying assumptions of why we can assume ethnicity in the Southern Levant from the Iron I Period as these groups would have created a material culture phenomena which existed in time and space. However, even with the working definition of ethnicity, it is not at this time possible to accurately correlate the historic ethnicity and the assumed material culture they would have left behind with the physical material culture phenomena which we can track through time and space in the archaeological record.

These physical material culture phenomena may be an indicator of ethnicity for an archaeologically unnamed people much as it would appear a different group of people were living in both Beth Shean and Hazor after the respective destruction of the cites. Nevertheless, the question still remains whose ethnicity does the material culture represent? How do we know

to call the Iron I material culture from Beth Shean Canaanite or how do we know to call the material culture from the Iron I Hazor Israelite or the Bronze Age material culture Canaanite? As I have stated before this is through a correlation with historical texts which archaeologists have used to give the ethnic labels to the material culture not only at these two sites, but also throughout the entire field of archaeology. However, this creates the present problem of ethnic labels, and I believe what we are dealing with are two different labels which we have used synonymously.

The debate between archaeologists and historians is long and ongoing. Both archaeologists and historians employ different methods in understanding the past with archaeologists focusing mainly upon the material culture and the historians focusing on the textual evidence. However, both do rely, at times, on the other field's methods and results. It is in this reliance on another field's methods and sources which has caused part of the problem in our understanding of what archaeology can say about ethnicity in the past. The labels we give to material culture are derived from historical texts. Names such as Canaanite and Israelite are terms not indicative of the archaeological material but which have been lifted from monuments and texts and placed on material culture by an archaeologist.

Richard Reece, a classical archaeologist, succinctly stated this problem of the relationship between texts and material culture in his short manifesto from 1984 (Reece 1984, 113-115). In this manifesto, Reece points out the differences in methodology between historians and archaeologists and that for an unclouded understanding of the past, archaeologists should not use historical documents when creating material culture sequences as the documents can never be accurately joined with the material culture record (Reece 1984, 115). Reece thus suggests that archaeological material culture be separated from historical documents to be able to understand the archaeological record to its fullest extent with the methods available to the archaeologist. Reece puts the argument as a whole in three simple words, "Sequence is all" (Reece 1984, 115). While this argument about the separation of archaeology and historical texts focusing on understanding material culture sequences do not directly apply to the case of ethnicity and material culture, it does apply to the labels we use to describe ethnicity in material culture.

As I have pointed out in this discussion, the labels we use to describe the material culture from the Iron I Period at both Beth Shean and Hazor come from historical documents. However, I have also demonstrated that these ethnic labels which we give to the material culture cannot be

proven to be true. Thus, they do not give us an accurate understanding of the ethnicity of the material culture, as the label has been placed on the objects by the archaeologist. While the material culture may indeed represent part of the symbolic language of an ethnic group, we cannot know the name of that group through an examination of the material culture alone. What then do these labels mean? As I stated before, I believe that we as archaeologists are using one label synonymously to describe two different phenomena, and these two phenomena are as follows.

First, is the material culture typology which has been constructed in a cultural historical framework and describes patterns in material culture through time and space. Second, are the historical texts which speak about a particular people group who are given a name in those texts. Thus, when speaking of the Canaanites material culture, we are speaking about a group of material culture which represents a physical phenomenon that exists in time and space and while it may embody certain elements of an ethnicity, it cannot be known if this ethnicity was the historic Canaanite. However, it is often assumed, that when one speaks of Canaanite material culture that both the archaeological artifacts and the historical Canaanites are being discussed. Thus, the ethnic traits which are described in the texts are placed onto the material culture even though the “Canaanite” material culture cannot be proven to correlate with the textual “Canaanite” other than that both share the same label to describe two separate phenomena. This problem was caused because in the early stages of archaeology of the Levant, archaeologists used the texts to describe the material culture in the regions assumed to be Canaanite or Israelite. These ethnic labels attached to the material culture are thus artificial as archaeology cannot prove that material culture was Canaanite or Israelite, although, the material culture itself may represent an ethnicity.

This idea that archaeologists have confused these two different phenomena which share the same label is in a way hinted at in the statement by Mazar where, again, he states that, “Canaanite material culture in general and pottery in particular, whether an expression of specific ethnicity or not, is clearly defined in both space and time” (Mazar 2009, 196). What Mazar is vaguely hinting at is this very issue that the material culture which we call Canaanite does not necessarily represent a specific ethnicity which in the historical texts was called “Canaanite.” However, what it does mean is that there is a set of material culture which is well defined by

space and time which we arbitrarily call Canaanite without actually meaning to say that the material culture is a reflection of the historical ethnicity which goes by the same name.

The same could be said about “Israelite” material culture as it too stands under the same problem. There is a separate physical phenomenon appearing around the beginning of the Iron Age in the Levant which is different to a certain degree from the phenomenon called Canaanite. This separate phenomenon has been labeled, again because of an association with historical texts, as Israelite. However, this label which has been given to the material culture should not indicate an ethnic association with the historical Israelites from the Merneptah Stele or any other historical text. In fact, this statement is true for any archaeological assemblage whether it be Canaanite, Israelite, Phoenician, Philistine, Greek, or Cycladic, as all of these labels have been derived from texts and placed on a group of material culture even though it is not known if that group of material culture truly was made, owned, and used by those ethnic groups. As I demonstrated in my “Three Cautionary Examples” at the beginning of the second chapter, we do not know if a “Greek” pot was made by an ethnically Greek person nor if it was ever meant to be a representative of the Greek ethnicity. It may have been created, bought, and sold by a Phoenician for a market in the Levant to a completely different ethnic group and was thus tailored to fit the desires of that market. Thus, that “Greek” pot may not actually represent “Greek” ethnicity at all, but rather the market for which it was to be sold. As I also discussed, through the partible and permeable nature of identity, we cannot say that even if a pot was ethnically Greek that it was not incorporated into another ethnic group’s identity leaving this once Greek pot now a Phoenician, Canaanite, or some other group’s pot.

### **5.5 Should Ethnic Labels be used in Archaeology?**

With the first question of if, ethnicity can be seen in material culture answered, there remains the question of if archaeologists should use ethnic labels and if they do how should these labels be used? I have in the previous section gone on to describe part of the problem with these labels in that we use the same label, such as Canaanite, to describe two different sets of phenomena. These being the material culture which we call Canaanite, and the historical texts which call a people Canaanite. In answer to the question of if archaeologists should use ethnic labels, I believe that archaeologists should utilize great caution when using ethnic labels as we cannot

know for certain if these labels which assert an ethnicity onto a group of material culture are correct. Thus, it may not always be appropriate to use ethnic labels to describe material culture, as we simply do not know who those artifacts were created, used, and owned by.

For example, calling the ceramics from Beth Shean during the “Egyptian” occupation “Canaanite” or “Egyptian” may not be correct as we do not know who these vessels were made and used by. Thus, if we call the ceramics ethnically Canaanite or Egyptian, we are possibly misreporting the archaeological finds. This is why I recommend great caution when using an ethnic label as the label itself may not be a problem. However, other archaeologists and historians may use this ethnic label associated with material culture in research building grand tales based on information we simply do not know. This is why we say Beth Shean was an Egyptian garrison even though we do not know how many ethnically Egyptians even lived at the site or if ethnically Canaanites were part of that garrison.

What then should be done with these labels? While we cannot prove these ethnic labels to be true, this does not mean that we should abandon the terms Canaanite and Israelite. It would be impossible to rename everything written about Canaanites and Israelites with another arbitrary name as were given in the culture history days of archaeology such as the “Basket Handle People.” The names Canaanite and Israelite will remain with the groups of material culture and this is fine if archaeologists will blatantly demonstrate that these terms represent a physical phenomenon seen in time and space but not necessarily these specific ethnic labels. However, it must also be stated that while the material culture may represent an ethnicity, we as archaeologists do not know with any certainty if this ethnicity seen in the material culture is the same as that spoken of in the historical texts.

While this may lead to confusion, as it has in the past, some of this can be avoided with more statements such as the one made by Mazar. However, the comment on ethnicity made by Mazar is tucked away in a small passage on the 196 page of the third volume of the current excavations from Beth Shean when in fact this statement should have been placed in the foreground of the volume rather than hidden away in the middle. If one were to read only the first 195 pages of the volume, the reader would have to assume that Mazar and the other authors were describing the Canaanite and Egyptian material culture in terms of physical form but also with the ethnicities which share the same labels.

The same can be said of Ben-Tor's statement that the material culture, which in the past had been called Israelite, in fact cannot be given a specific ethnic label. However, statement comes after a section in the report where he calls certain aspects of the material culture from the Iron I Period Israelite. Again, this statement, though on page twenty-six, should have been placed in the beginning to structure the rest of the volume. Without these statements at the beginning, one can only assume the archaeologist is using the label of Canaanite or Israelite synonymously with the ethnic labels which share the same name. I believe that archaeologists can utilize ethnic labels with great caution as in instances as this it is hard to escape them. However, as we continue to use the labels which exist for the material culture groups, we must also make sure to be explicit that these labels refer to a physical phenomenon seen in time and space and that we cannot prove they correspond to the ethnic label which shares the same name.

## **5.6 Conclusions**

This survey of the archaeology of ethnicity, with its focus on the ethnic labels of Canaanites and Israelites as seen in the archaeological records at the Iron I Period sites of Beth Shean and Hazor, has given several conclusions to the two questions of this study. Again, these questions are: Does material culture represent ethnicity, and should archaeologists apply ethnic labels to material culture. The answer to the first question is that while material culture may represent ethnicity, we do not know what that ethnicity is or exactly which features of the material culture are an ethnic indicators. As seen in the second and third chapters, archaeologists have claimed that specific ethnicities can be seen in material culture. I have argued that through combination of the human thing entanglement and the partible and permeable nature of identity, that it may be possible for material culture to have certain features that do demonstrate the ethnic characteristics of the people who produced it; however, we cannot be sure which ethnicity these features represent. In addition, according to the working definition of ethnicity, Canaanites and Israelites were historic ethnic groups during the Iron I and their material culture would have in some way, whether large or small, reflected their ethnicity. Nevertheless, the material culture assemblages which we have called "Canaanite" and "Israelite" cannot be proven have been made, owned, or used by these historic ethnicities.

Material culture found in the Levant very well may represent different ethnicities. However, how do we know which specific historic ethnicity made, owned, and used it, as I demonstrated we cannot rely on historical texts to give us this information and the material culture does not tell us this. We call a set of artifacts ethnically Canaanite because of the region in which it was found, its association to other groups of material culture which have been called Canaanite, a material culture style, and the historical texts which give the name Canaanite for the people of the region and period. Nonetheless, we do not know if that group of material culture actually was made, owned, and used by an ethnically Canaanite person. Clear examples of this are the material culture sets from both Beth Shean and Hazor from the Iron I Period. As I have demonstrated, the material culture from both sites do demonstrate shifts from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron I Period; however, why these shifts occurred and who made them, are questions we cannot answer solely by an examination of the material culture.

This first question was followed by my second research question of, should archaeologists give ethnic labels to material culture. I have answered this by saying if archaeologists choose to use ethnic labels, they must employ great caution when ascribing these ethnic labels to material culture. A part of the difficulty with these labels is that we use the same label for the physical phenomenon we see in time and space which create the material culture groups and for the people groups mentioned in historical texts. However, this problem can be avoided if archaeologists clearly indicate that the use of a term such as Canaanite may not reflect the specific historic ethnicity called “Canaanite.” Rather, it is the term we use to describe a physical phenomenon which may represent an ethnic group; however, which ethnic group that is, we do not know from the material culture. This is one possible way to avoid some of the confusion and debate over ethnicity. If we acknowledge we do not know what the specific ethnicity for the material culture was, and the label we use was ascribed to the material culture based upon early archaeological research in the Southern Levant having its roots in the Hebrew Scriptures. Alternatively, if we choose to associate the material culture group called Canaanite with the “Canaanite” ethnicity we should be explicit in demonstrating we truly do not know if this association is accurate.

Where then does this leave us? Should archaeologist avoid the pursuit of attempting to find ethnicity in the material culture record or in their analysis of sites following along with the post-modern idea that we cannot know anything about the past? I would say the answer to this

question is certainly not; however, there remains a great many difficulties with this problem. I have attempted through this examination of the supposed “Canaanite” and “Israelite” material culture from the Iron I Period to demonstrate the many hurdles which archaeological research has yet to face. There is currently no one standard definition for what is ethnicity, what is an ethnic group, or how would these ethnic groups manifest their ethnic identity in material culture. I have demonstrated the possibility that material culture may be intrinsically linked to ethnicity through the human thing entailment and the partible and permeable nature of identity. However, even with this consideration, we do not know how ethnicity would manifest itself into material culture or how we as archaeologists would be able to recognize the ethnic aspects of material culture.

Another problem specific to the Southern Levant, as I have demonstrated, is that there is no clear way to denote Israelite and Canaanite ethnicity solely through an examination of the material culture. This can be seen in the rather flimsy definitions for Canaanite and Israelite ethnicity, and when examining the material culture from Beth Shean and Hazor, I have presented there to be no way of knowing who made, owned, and used the material culture at the site. One final problem which we must continually face is how we use historical documents in archaeological research of ethnicity. Again, I have attempted to illustrate the problems which can occur when using historical documents to give ethnic identity to material culture even though we do not know if these two sources can be correlated. Thus, with all of these issues remaining unresolved, I believe it demonstrates that archaeological theory and practice must continue to take questions pertaining to ethnicity seriously, and to realize that the debate over ethnic identities in the past is far from over and must be considered with renewed vigor.

Archaeology may not be able to prove, at the moment, that material culture represents a specific ethnicity, and it may not be able to denote what the traits are that specifically make something Canaanite or Israelite. However, as I have stated, this does not mean that archaeologists should not attempt to answer these questions, and quite the opposite, archaeologists should strive to find answers. This is as true for the archaeology of the Southern Levant during the Iron I Period as it is in Nubia, or in Mesopotamia. This research has, I hope, cast doubt on our current understanding of ethnicity in the archaeological record, and to demonstrate there remains much work to be done in this field of study. It is by this continued research can the archaeology of the Levant continue to grow. We must put forth new theories

and new ideas regarding the archaeology of ethnicity not only for the people who lived during the Iron I Period, but also in the times before and after as this problem is one which effects all times, places, and peoples who lived in the so-called Promise Land.

## Abstract

In the recent decades, the study of the archaeology of ethnicity has become increasingly important throughout the field of archaeology. Many books and articles have been written which address the questions of what is ethnicity, what is an ethnic group, and can we see ethnicity in material culture? Questions pertaining to ethnicity have been of great importance in the archaeology of the Southern Levant as scholars have debated over the ethnic identity and labels of such groups as the Canaanites and Israelites. There is a great debate over the difference between “Canaanite” and “Israelite” material culture, and if these ethnicities can even be seen in the archaeological record. The purpose of this research is to investigate material culture from the Southern Levant during the Iron I Period to see if it truly does represent the ethnicities of “Canaanite” and “Israelite” and if these ethnic labels are correctly attributed to the material culture. I will address two main questions in this research which are: Does material culture represent ethnicity, and should archaeologists apply ethnic labels to material culture?

My attempt at answer these questions will be divided into five chapters. In the first chapter, I will present a brief of the history of archaeological investigation in the Southern Levant with its bases in Biblical studies. The second chapter will focus on examining the past and current theories of ethnicity and how these affect our understanding of ethnicity in the archaeological record as well as shaping our current paradigms. Chapter three will be an examination of the specific theories regarding the Canaanite and Israelite identities and how scholars have identified them in the past in the archaeological record and in historical texts. In chapter four, I will present material culture from Iron I strata of two case studies, Beth Shean and Hazor, which have been given by scholars the ethnic labels of Canaanite and Israelite respectively. The focus will be upon certain architectural elements and the ceramic assemblage. Finally, in the fifth chapter, I will critically examine the material culture from Beth Shean and Hazor in light of the theoretical framework established in the prior chapters to determine if the material culture truly can be called ethnically “Canaanite” or Israelite. In this process, I will attempt to answer my two research questions. Thus, the purpose of this research is to critically examine the ethnic labels which have been given to the material culture from the Southern Levant during the Iron I Period.

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## Figures

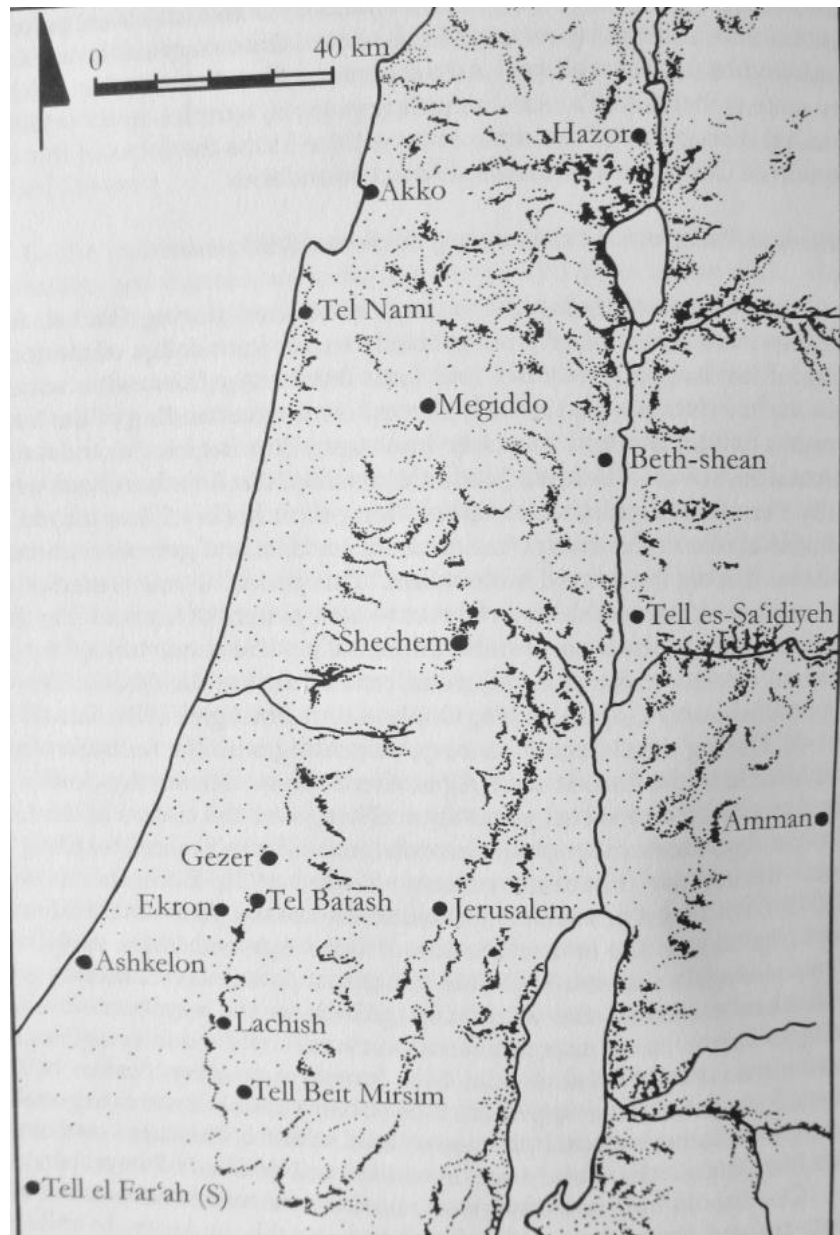


Figure 1: Map of Selected Canaanite sites (Killebrew 2005, 98)

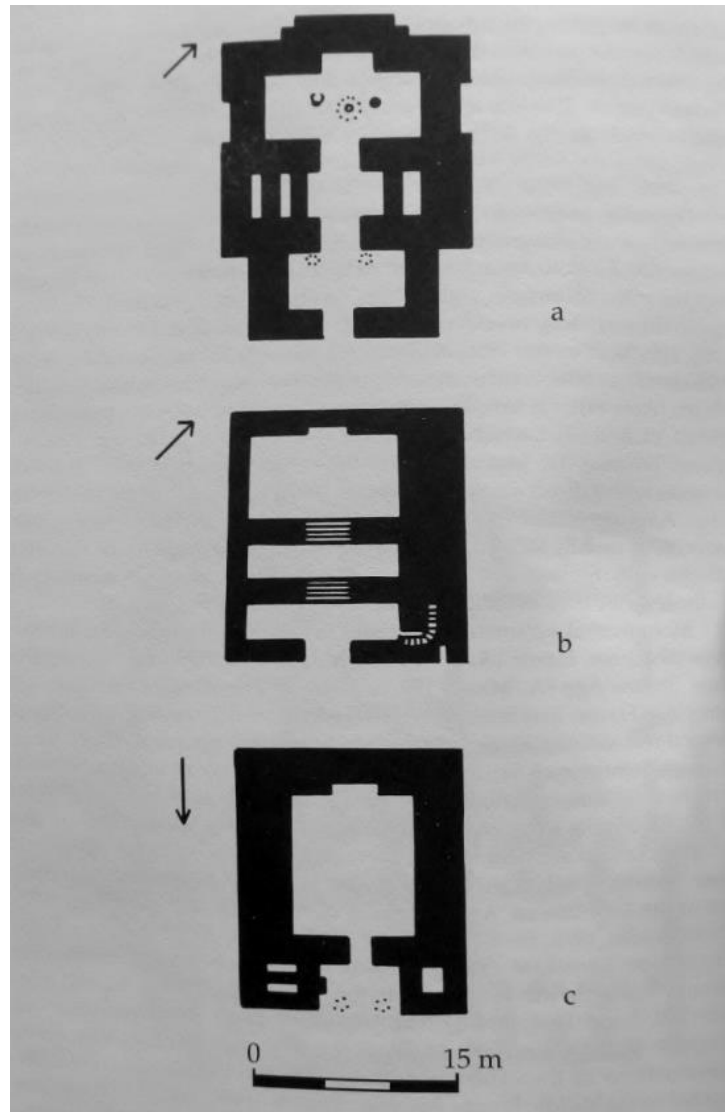


Figure 2 Late Bronze Age Temples from Hazor, Alalakh, and Megiddo (Killebrew 2005, 106)

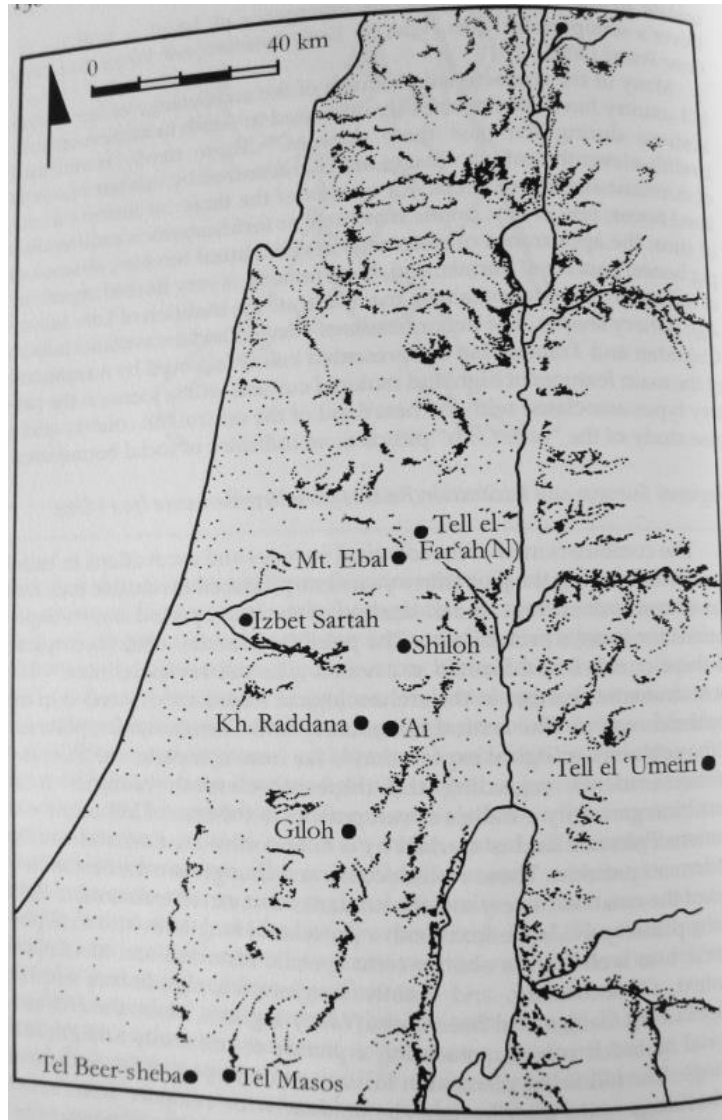


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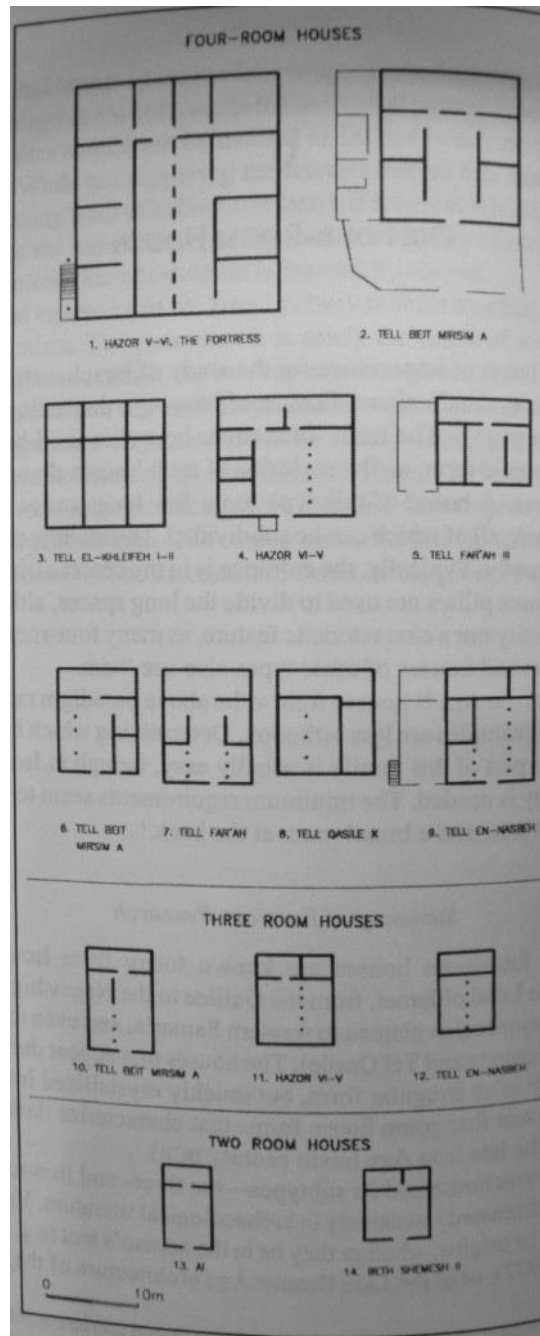


Figure 4: Four-room Houses (Faust 2006, 72)

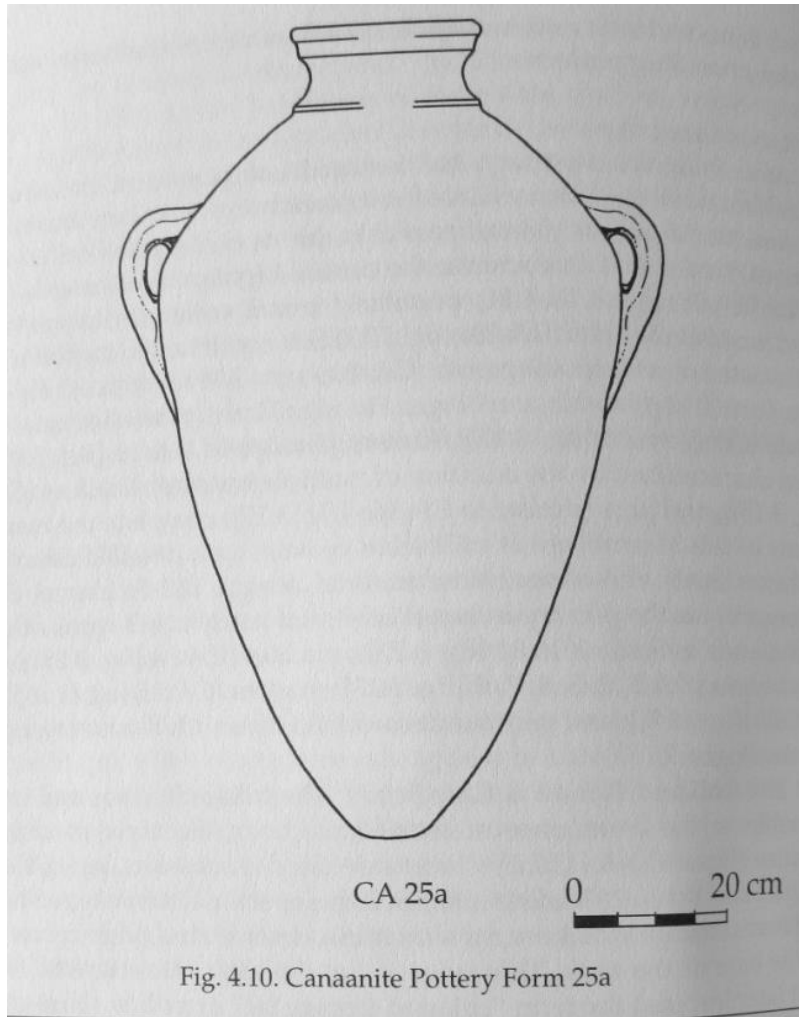


Figure 5: Collared Rim Jar (Killebrew 2005, 178)

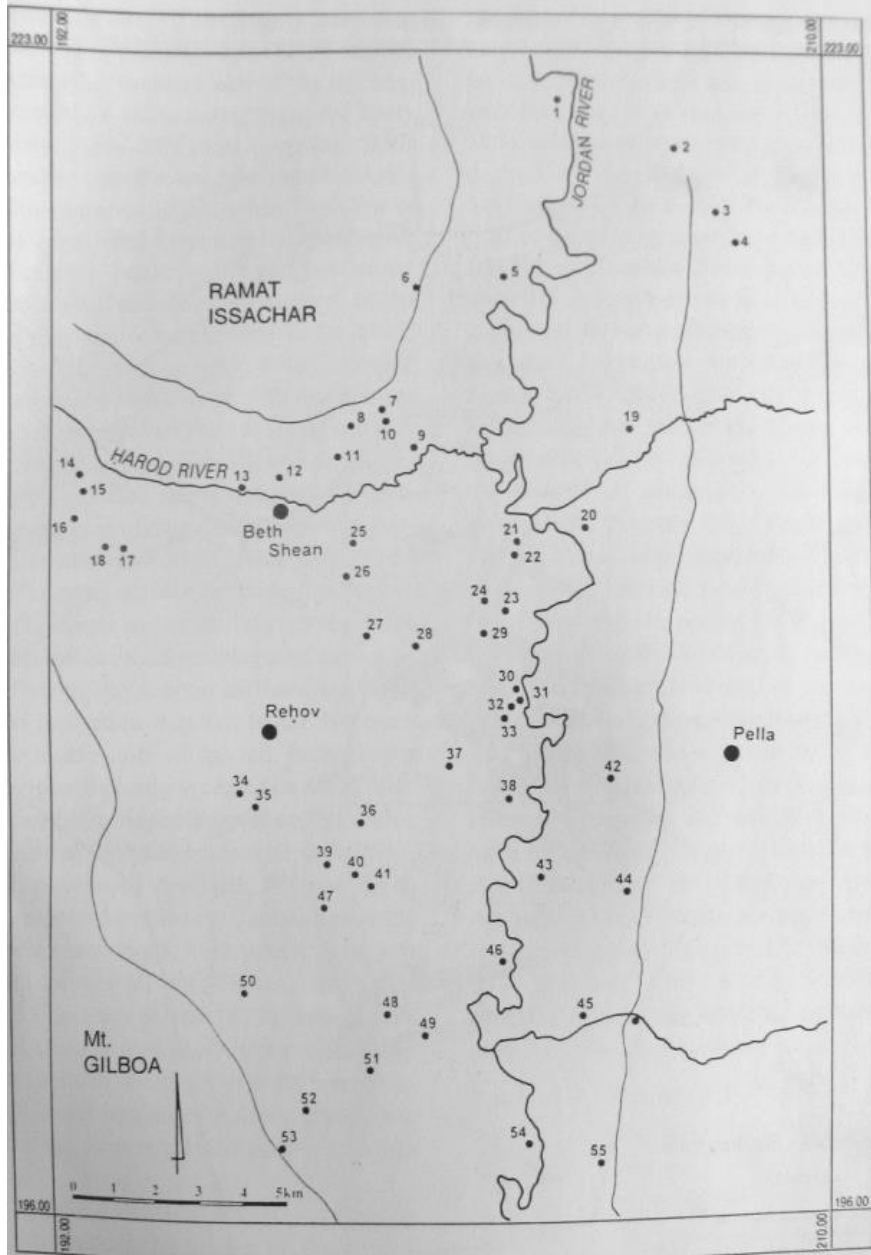


Figure 6: Beth Shean Valley (Mazar 2006, 7)

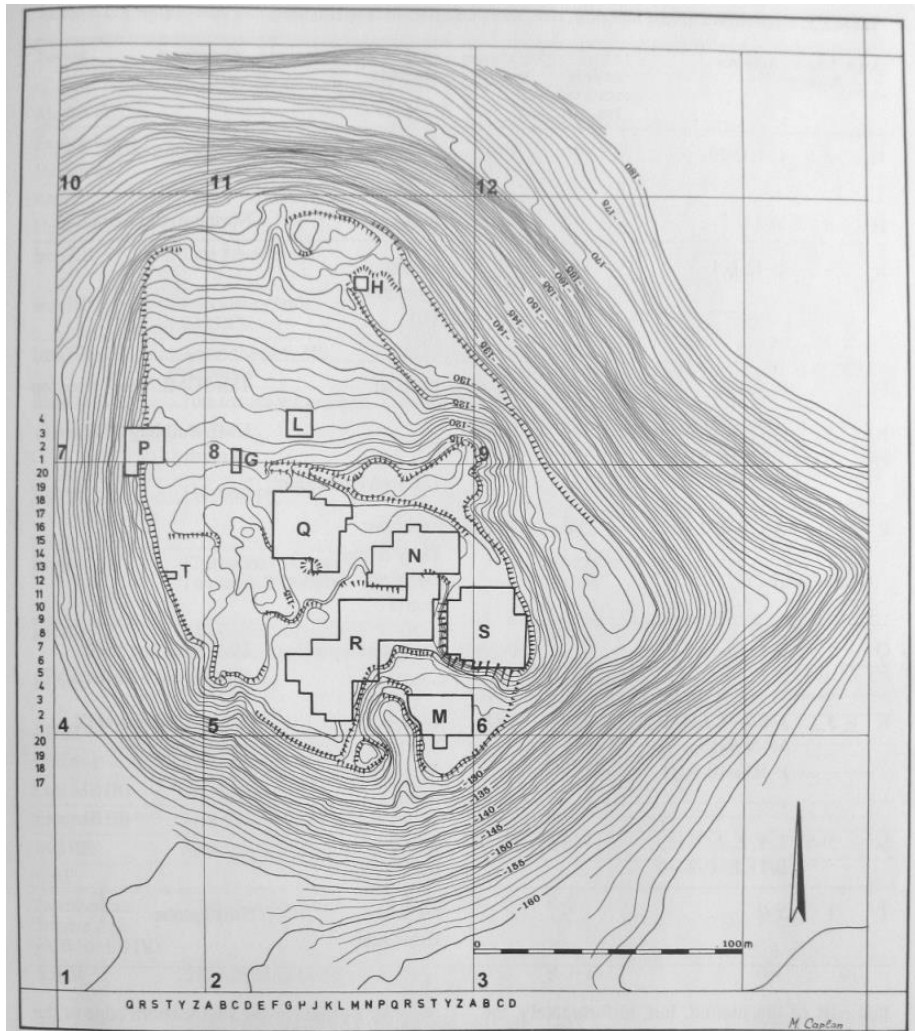


Figure 7: Topographic map of Beth Shean (Mazar 2006, 11)

Period*	Date BCE	UME	Yadin and Geva	HU Area N North	HU Area N South	HU Area S	HU Area Q
Iron IIA	10th-9th centuries	Parts of Lower Level V		N-1?	N-1? (pits; not dated)	#### S-1a S-1b	-
Iron IB	Late 12th and 11th centuries	Late Level VI and the double temple of Lower V	1-3	N-2?		Building 1700 added at end of N-3a or later	S-2
Iron IA	12th century (Egyptian 20th Dynasty)	Level VI	4	N-3a continues?	N-3a N-3b?	#### S-3a	Q-1 (Building 1500)
				N-3a		S-3b	
				N-3b		S-4 S-5**	
LBIIB	13th century (Egyptian 19th Dynasty)	Level VII and Late Level VII		#### N-4	N-3b? N-4		Q-2
		Level VIII					Q-3

#### violent destruction by fire  
 \* Following the terminology in the *NEAEHL*: 1529  
 \*\* For different views concerning the date of this stratum, see below

Figure 8: Stratigraphy of Beth Shean (Mazar 2009, 13)

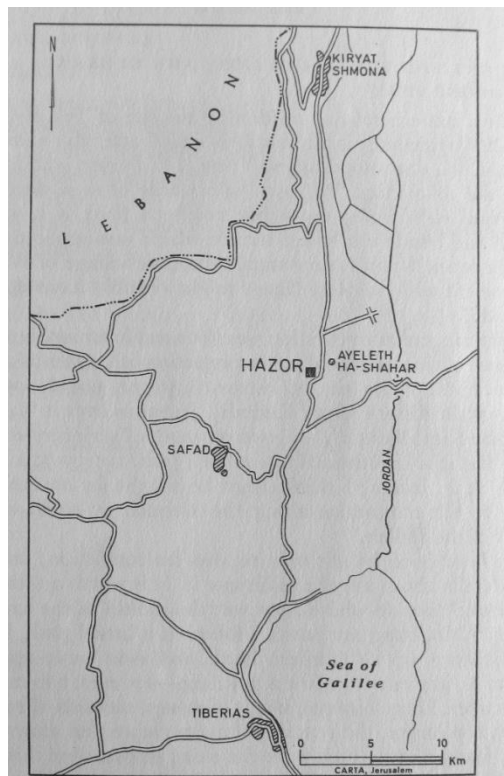


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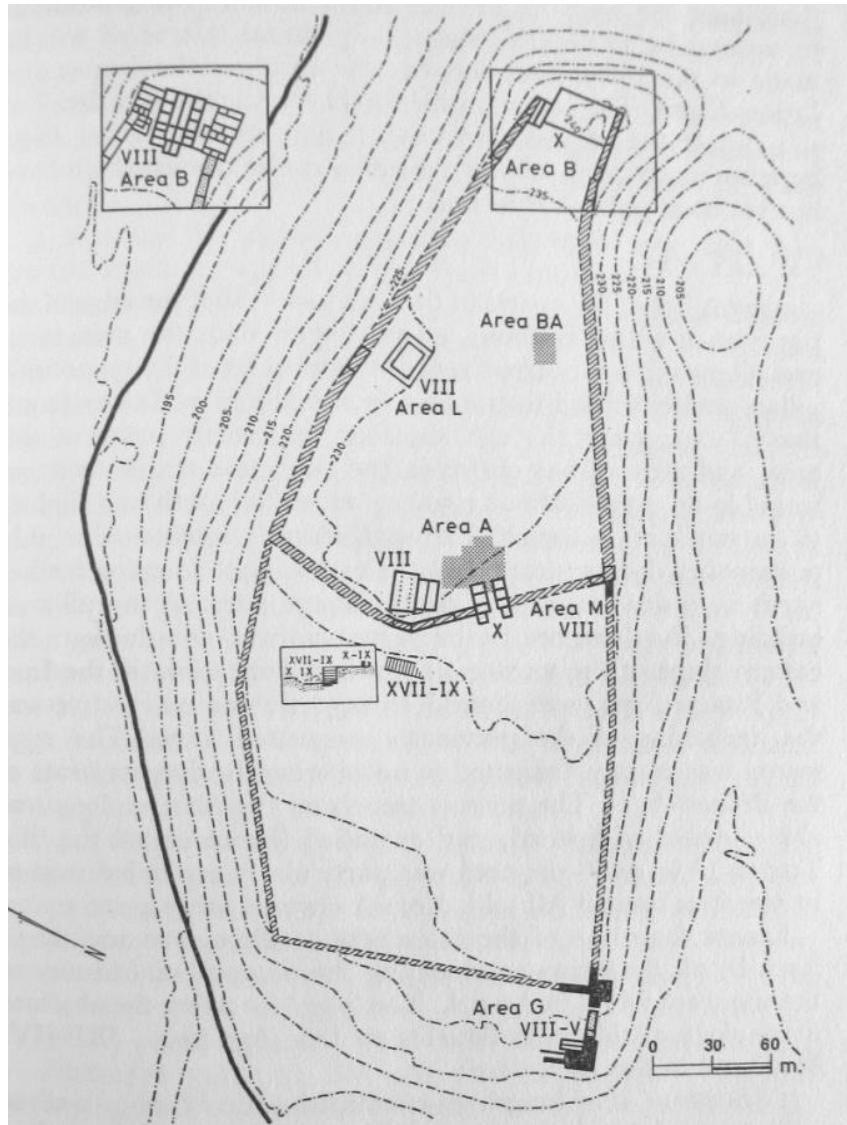


Figure 10: Topographic Map of Hazor's Upper City (Yadin 1970, 111)

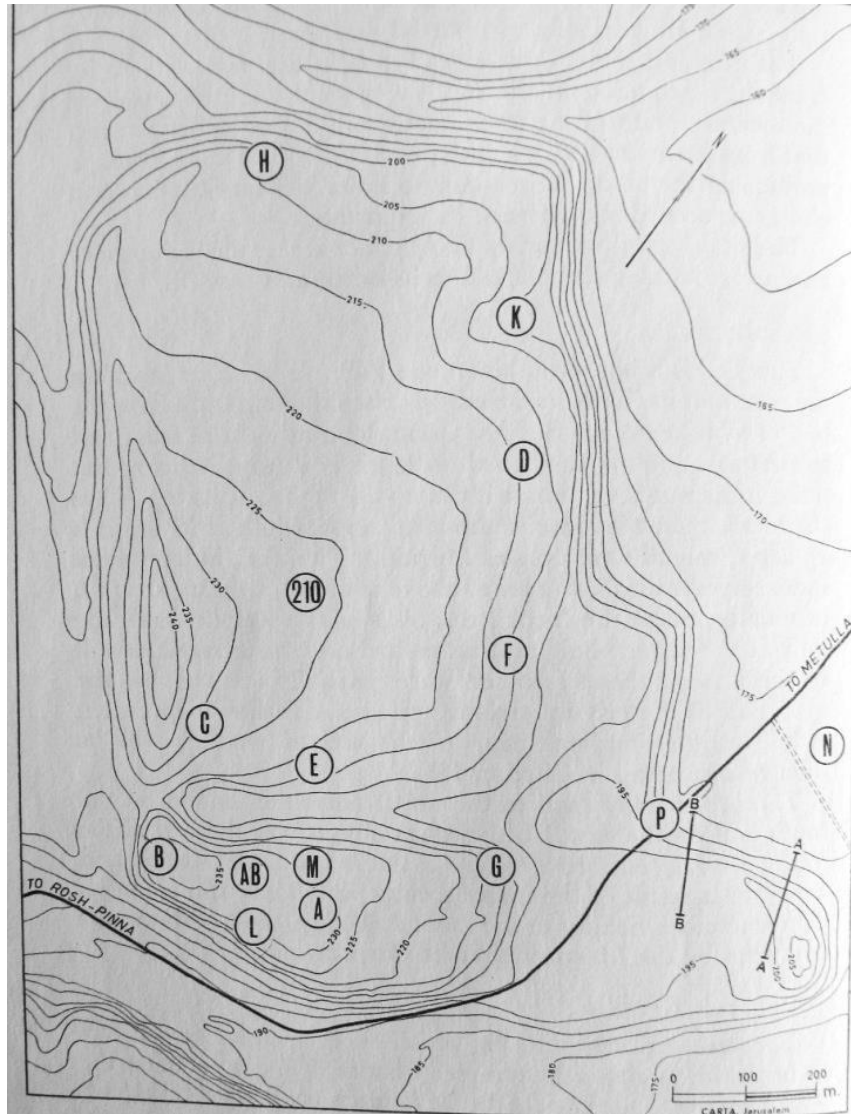


Figure 11: Topographic map of Hazor (Yadin 1970, 16)

STRATIFICATION AT HAZOR				
<i>Upper City</i>	<i>Lower City</i>	<i>Period (BCE)</i>	<i>Remarks</i>	
I		Hellenistic (3rd–2nd cent.)	Citadel	
II	No longer settled	Persian (4th cent.)	Citadel, graves	
III		Assyrian (7th cent.)	Citadel	
IV		8th cent.	Unfortified settlement	
V		8th cent.	Destruction by Tiglath-pileser III, 732 BCE	
VI		8th cent.	City of Jeroboam II, destruction by earthquake	
VII		9th cent.	Reconstruction of parts of stratum VIII	
VIII		9th cent.	Omrid dynasty	
IX			End 10th– beginning 9th cent.	Conflagration (Ben-hadad I)
X			Mid-10th cent.	City of Solomon
XI			11th cent.	Limited Israelite settlement
XII		12th cent.	Temporary Israelite settlement, seminomadic	
XIII	1-a	13th cent.	Destruction in second half of 13th cent. by Israelite tribes	
XIV	1-b	14th cent.	El-Amarna period	
XV	2	15th cent.	Thutmose III–Amenhotep II	
Post–XVI		16th cent.	Graves in the ruined city	
XVI	3	17th–16th cent.	Destruction by conflagration (Ahmose)	
XVII	4	18th–17th cent.	Lower city founded in mid-18th cent. BCE (Mari documents)	
Pre–XVII	Not yet founded	Beginning 18th cent.	Unfortified; many burials and some structures	
XVIII		22nd–21st cent.	Small quantity of pottery	
XIX		25th–24th cent.	Remains of structures (post–Khirbet Kerak culture)	
XX		27th–26th cent.	Remains of structures	
XXI		29th–28th cent.	Khirbet Kerak culture; poorly preserved remains of structures	

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