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Revealed by their Jewellery : Ethic Identity of Israelites during the Iron Age in the Southern Levant

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REVEALED BY THEIR JEWELRY
ETHNIC IDENTITY OF ISRAELITES DURING THE IRON AGE IN THE SOUTHERN LEVANT

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Abstract: In modern times, jewelry is worn not only for adornment, but also to publicize an association or identification with a cultural group or a set of beliefs. Because they are items of a very personal nature, jewelry is thus used to convey information about the cultural, religious or ethnic affiliation of its wearer, highlighting both significance and function within society that go far beyond ornamentation. While this is often readily apparent in our own society, can we identify similar uses of jewelry in past societies? As part of the biblical narrative, the peoples of the southern Levant have aroused tremendous interest over the past decades, and archaeological research has often sought to illuminate them by singling out distinctive material culture remains that would characterize their presence. When a specific jewelry type is found recurring time and again at sites clearly affiliated by their material culture, their geographical location and historical and temporal context with a certain cultural or ethnic group, it may be considered a possible ethnic marker of that culture or group. An interdisciplinary approach seeks to pinpoint certain types of jewelry that may possibly be seen as characteristic of the biblical Israelites, whose choice of what to wear was not necessarily a function of the prevailing fashions, but rather an expression of the austere ideology that identified their own cultural group.

Keywords: ancient jewelry, ethnic identity, cultural markers, pendants, Israelite, Iron Age, southern Levant

Nearly a century ago Gordon V. Childe wrote: "We find certain types of remains — pots, implements, ornaments, burial rites and house forms — constantly recurring together. Such a complex of associated traits we shall term 'cultural group' or just a 'culture'. We assume that such a complex is the material expression of what today would be called a 'people'" (Childe 1929: v–vi). Modern ethnographic research into the subject of particular dress and body ornaments as markers of ethnic and tribal identity to express within-group cohesion has shown that style of adornment is one of the best indicators of cultural identity inside a group or between social groups (Wobst 1977). An ethnic 'group' may be defined as a culturally ascribed association of people sharing a real or assumed expression of common cultural traits or common descent (Marcus 1993: 159; Jones 1997: 84). Certain overt material symbols, such as jewelry, may be worn by an individual as a marker of his

or her ethnic identity and are evidence of the maintenance of ethnic boundaries differenting between groups (McGuire 1982: 163).

Due to its intensely personal and visible nature, jewelry was and is still a method of proclaiming oneself ethnically or culturally. Jewelry is symbolic, and may be used to publicize an association or identification with a cultural group or a set of beliefs. Common examples are a cross or a six-pointed 'Star of David' that are worn to express an affiliation with a religious/cultural group. Other items of jewelry may be used to indicate a social outlook, sexual preference, political creed or ethnic association. Though these forms of symbolic advertising are not always universal, they are usually readily understood messages within a wider cultural group or geographic area at a certain period in time.

Thus, jewelry may be regarded as a form of non-verbal communication that relates information about its wearer to others. Dress and ornament may convey stylistic information that enables members of a group or sub-group to recognize one another and to make social distinctions. In the archaeological record, material culture variations are often associated with ethnic or cultural differences (Hegmon 1992: 527; Jones 1997: 106–127), though they are not often clearly identifiable. With this in mind, the archaeological record challenges us to identify different cultural groups with their styles of adornment. While this is routinely attempted through various other aspects of material culture, such as ceramics, architecture and various types of artwork, it is curious that it is seldom executed through jewelry.

The ethnic or cultural groups that populated the southern Levant during the Bronze and Iron Age periods (2nd and 1st millennium BC) have always aroused interest amongst scholars of various disciplines, primarily because they were connected to the well-known biblical narrative. Ancient Egyptian art, with its meticulous attention to detail, has left us numerous depictions of various peoples of these times, whose ethnic and cultural distinction was often distinguished by the Egyptians by skin color, mode of dress, hair style and facial features and occasionally jewelry as well. As an example, Egyptians often depicted Asiatics wearing specific jewelry they themselves never wore, such as solid metal anklets (Tufnell 1958b; see Verducci 2014: Fig. 3, in this volume). This was due not only to the fact that metal anklets were never fashionable in Egypt itself, but also because this was one of the ways in which the Egyptians defined their own identity as separate from that of their Asiatic neighbors. As another example, Egyptian artists often depicted Syrian/Canaanites wearing rounded star or cross pendants (Sparks 2004: Fig. 3.6:D) [*Fig. 1*]. Circular pendants with 'star' decoration often appear on Canaanite and Syrian figurines from the Late Bronze Age, Iron Age I and Iron Age II (mid 2nd to mid-1st millennium BC) throughout the southern and northern Levant (Conrad 1985). Their depiction by the Egyptians on representations of Syro-Canaanites and their recurring distribution during the Bronze Age throughout Syria/Canaan suggests that this pendant form was regarded as an identifying cultural sign of the Syrian/Canaanites themselves and more importantly by others, such as the Egyptians, in signifying their separate cultural identity. The Neo-Assyrians of the Iron Age II (1st millennium BC) also had

their own distinctive jewelry forms that were commonly depicted on their pictorial reliefs. Many of these are specific forms of jewelry that were worn for protection and as symbols of power and status that were generally not used and are not found outside the Neo-Assyrian realm at the time (see Madhloom 1970: 90–92; Maxwell-Hyslop 1971: 232–269; Bedal 1992; Ornan 2005: 133–134). Thus, ancient pictorial reliefs and iconoplastic representations are a prime source of information concerning ethnic identity; they show not only how specific cultural groups advertised themselves, but also how others identified them.

One of the most sought-after peoples of the biblical narrative are the ancient Israelites, a somewhat generic term that refers to the culture that occupied the geographic regions of Israel and Judah during the Iron Age I and Iron Age II periods (about 1200–586 BC; see Dever 2003; Silberman 1992; Faust 2006 for general inclusive works on this subject and an expanded bibliography). In this article, the terms 'Israelite' and 'Judahite' are used interchangeably and rather loosely to refer to one cultural/ethnic group associated with the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah (see below).

Though various pictoral depictions of Israelites are found, none depict any form of jewelry. The Shalmaneser stele, a 9th century BC Assyrian depiction of Israelites bringing tribute to the Assyrian king (Younger 2007), does not show them wearing any jewelry, neither does the depiction of the Israelite king Jehu bowing down in supplication to the king show any form of distinctive jewelry. Neo-Assyrian reliefs depicting the siege and capture of biblical Lachish in 701 BC bear many depictions of local Judahites being led away into captivity (Ussishkin 1982), yet none are wearing any form of jewelry. Granted, this may be because they were all stripped of their valuables, including jewelry, but even in depictions made by the Israelites/Judahites themselves, such as the ubiquitous Judean pillar figurines (Kletter 1996), jewelry is completely lacking. Does this mean that the ancient Israelites were so poor or so austere that they could not or did not want to wear any form of jewelry?

Not surprisingly the answer is both yes and no, and in the following I will try to show how specific jewelry types may possibly be associated with those elusive Israelites.

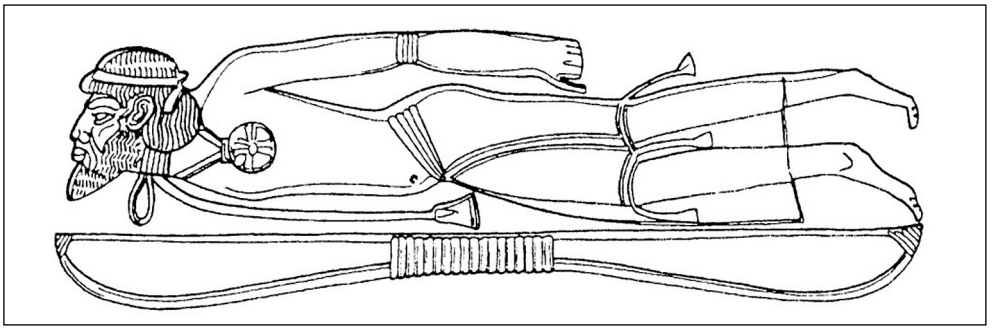

Fig. 1. Egyptian depiction of a Syro-Canaanite with circular star pendant (After Sparks 2004: Fig. 3.6:D)

IDENTIFICATION OF CULTURALLY LINKED JEWELRY IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

When pictorial depictions are lacking, how can we identify an ancient jewelry item with a specific cultural or ethnic group? First, the jewelry has to be of a distinctive form, fabrication and/or decorative technique that clearly sets it off from most other jewelry objects. For example, a simple bead, ring or earring is not culturally or chronologically instructive, because its form and technique of manufacture may be so common as to have been made by many different cultures with no connection between them over a long period of time.

Second, the form must originate and also be largely restricted to a defined geographical area, a core region that is connected with the existence of a certain culture. If limited amounts of the form are also found in neighboring regions, this could also suggest export or diffusion of the product or of people associated with it to that region, but a core region needs to be established, one where most examples were found and were probably manufactured.

Third, the form has to have a well-defined chronological distribution that is also connected with the existence of a specific culture or ethnic group. Historically, the existence of any cultural group is also defined temporally, so that objects in association with it also need to be in a chronological framework. When a specific jewelry type is found recurring time and again at sites clearly affiliated by their material culture, their location and their historical timespan with a certain cultural or ethnic group, it may be considered a possible ethnic marker of that culture or group. This method has been used in past studies to link specific jewelry forms with historical cultures (Golani 2010), showing that some jewelry items may be used as cultural markers in the archaeological record.

THE ISRAELITES: HISTORIC AND GEOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

One of the jewelry types that is often found at sites throughout ancient Israel and Judah are specific types of pendants, usually made of bone, occasionally of ivory and rarely of stone and terracotta, that may appear in three major forms: club pendants [*Fig. 2*], plaque pendants [*Fig. 3*] and pendants in the shape of a mallet or gavel [*Fig. 4*].

In order to understand how these various pendants may be associated with the ancient Israelites, it is first necessary to understand a little of the geography and the history of the southern Levant during the late Iron Age I and the Iron Age II period, or the time from the 11th to the 6th centuries BC. While the field of biblical archaeology has long debated the exact nature and specific chronology of the following, the very general gist that is still accepted by archaeologists, historians and biblical scholars alike is as follows: the formation of the Israelites as a 'people' in the region of the central highlands of the southern Levant (12th–

11th centuries BC) led to the creation of a local monarchy (often referred to as the United Kingdom) that according to the biblical texts, ruled over most of southern Levant during the 10th–9th centuries BC. The monarchy soon split into two and coalesced into what is generally known as the divided monarchy consisting of the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. The northern kingdom of Israel spread from the shores of the Mediterranean in the west, including partial political hegemony over the region of Philistia, to beyond the Jordan river in the east, and from the upper Galilee region of modern Israel in the north to the region of Jerusalem in the south [*Fig. 5*]. This kingdom existed for about 200 years and after repeated Assyrian invasions was finally conquered by Sargon II in the late 8th century BC when its capital of Samaria was finally destroyed. Many of the inhabitants of the northern kingdom were exiled to various parts of the Assyrian empire, while others fled to the southern kingdom of Judah (Finkelstein 2013). The kingdom of Judah spread from the Judean foothills in the west to the Dead Sea and the Arava Valley in the east and from the region of Jerusalem in the north to deep in the Negev desert in the south [see *Fig. 5*]. Sites in Philistia, especially those bordering with the kingdom of Judah, often came under Judean hegemony. Judah withstood several invasions, yet finally succumbed to the Babylonians in 586 BC with the destruction of its capital, Jerusalem.

The appearance, distribution and chronology of the distinctive pendants described in this article are mirrored in this generalized history and will be described below.

CLUB PENDANTS

Club pendants are of distinctive shape, usually between 4–9 cm in length, with a rounded or oval cross-section, perforated at one end. Both the top and the bottom ends of the pendant are usually rounded. The bottom, lower end is often slightly wider [*Fig. 2*]. This type of pendant, usually made of bone or ivory, rarely terracotta and stone, was typical of the Iron Age II in the southern Levant, with a distribution from Byblos in the north to Tell el-Far'ah (S) and Tell Jemmeh in the south (see Platt 1978) [*Fig. 5:A*; *Table 1*], although most examples appeared within the region of Iron Age Israel and Judah described above. Club pendants were often found alongside plaque- and mallet-shaped pendants (see below).

The elongated form of this pendant type is a natural outcome of the intrinsic properties of bone as one of the primary raw materials from which this pendant was made, which can easily lend itself to elongated shapes. Though some club pendants were plain, most were decorated with incised bands or transverse rings below the eyelet and/or near the lower end [*Fig. 2:1–8*] in addition to cross-hatchings or 'lattice work' incisions in the middle part [*Fig. 2:9–15*]). Many decorated examples featured a succession of ring-and-dot incisions [*Fig. 2:6–10*], usually arranged in columns along the sides. This motif was widely used in decoration of bone/ivory and small stone objects already during the Middle Bronze Age and

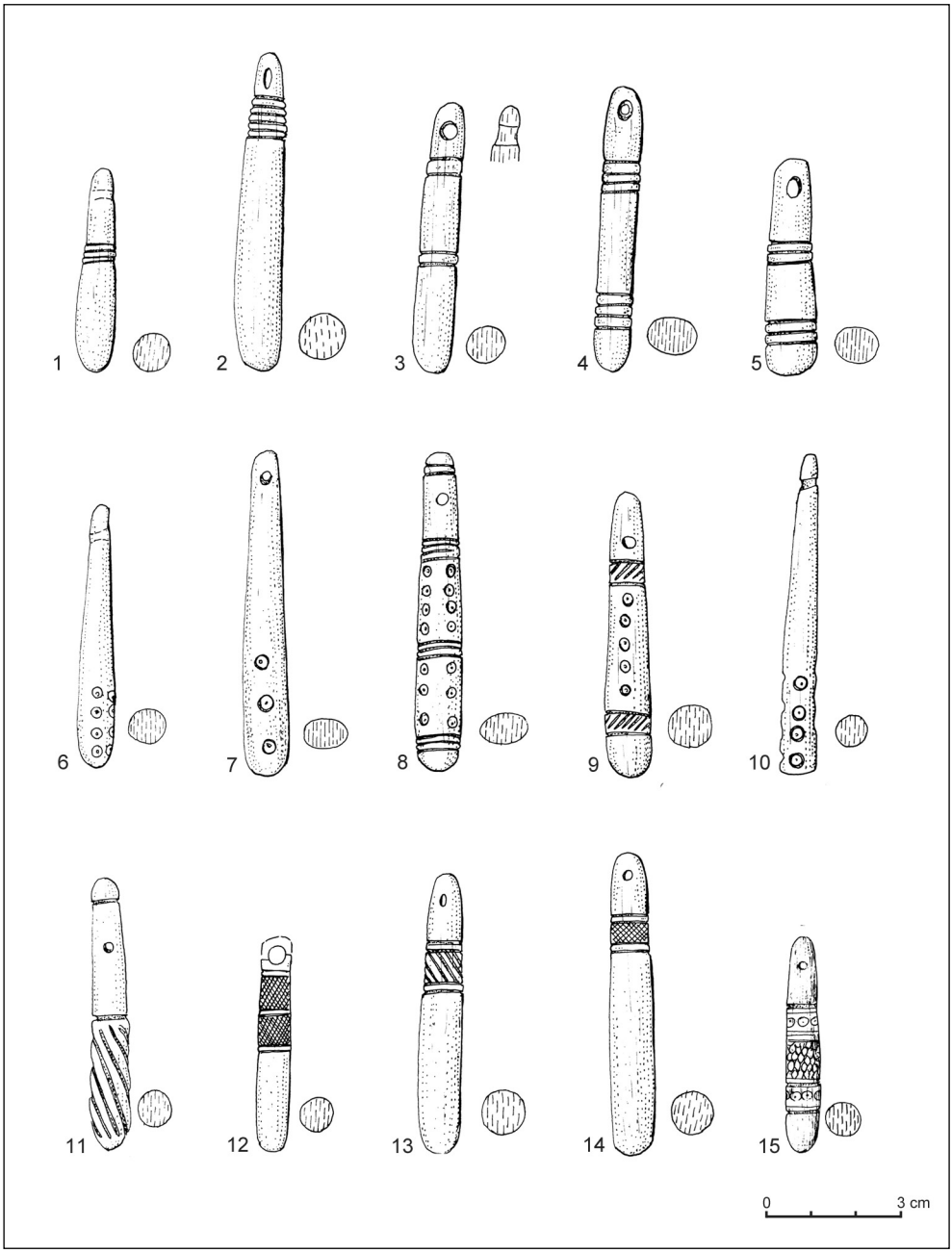

Fig. 2. Club pendants
(After Golani 2013: Fig. 24)

may represent a schematic depiction of an 'eye' (Platt 1978). All three decorative modes, along with undecorated examples of club pendants, appear to have been typical of the southern Levant during the 11th/10th–7th/6th centuries BC.

At Samaria, Kenyon noted this pendant in assemblages from the 10th–9th centuries (Crowfoot *et alii* 1957: 462). At Tell Beit Mirsim, Albright dated them to the 9th–7th centuries BC (1943: 80). Examples from 12th–10th century contexts, such as Tell 'Eitun, Tel Lachish and Tel Masos, may push the range of this pendant type further back into the Iron Age I. However, the examples from Tel 'Eitun are different from the classical form of this pendant, the examples from Levels VI–V at Lachish could have also derived from an 11th–10th century BC context, and the examples from Tel Masos can also be associated with the 11th century BC at the earliest [***Table 1***]. Judging from the fact that the vast majority of these pendants date to the Iron Age II, it may be safe to assume that the earliest appearance of this type is to be found in the 11th century BC and not earlier. A few examples found in contexts that postdate the early 6th century BC [see ***Table 1***] all originate from multi-strata sites that also have an Iron Age II occupation, which these pendants were most likely once associated with. For this reason, the chronological range of this pendant, as also other kinds of distinctive jewelry objects, is better established from burial deposits in tombs of a more limited chronological range or from single-period occupations than from multi-strata sites.

The distinctive design and decorative modes of this pendant, alongside of its restricted geographical and chronological range in the southern Levant, have led some to define this type as 'Israelite jewelry' (Platt 1973: 158–206; 1978). The geographical distribution matches the area of the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah during the Iron Age II period [***Fig. 5:A***]. Though this pendant type has also been found at sites that are not necessarily considered 'Israelite' during the Iron Age II, such as Tel Miqne-Ekron, Tell Abu Hawam, Kabri and Byblos (Dunand 1954: 133, 274, Figs 125, 301), most of these sites fell under the hegemony of the Israelite and/or Judahite monarchies during the initial stages of the Iron Age II (10th–9th centuries BC). Chronologically, this pendant form is found from the late Iron Age I (11th century BC) until the 7th–6th centuries BC, or the end of the Iron Age II. However, at this late stage of the Iron Age II, most examples derive from the region of Judah and not the region of the kingdom of Israel. If this type is indeed to be seen as a form of 'Israelite' jewelry, then this suggestion does find support in its chronological/geographical distribution as well.

Elongated pendants in bone and ivory are also known from Ephesus in Asia Minor (Hogarth 1908: Pl. 35:6–14), apparently dated to the 8th–7th centuries BC. These, however, are different from the present examples as they are fashioned on a lathe and are round in cross-section, are truncated at their top and bear only horizontal decorative bands. Pendants identical to the Ephesus examples, made of ivory and bone and identified as 'bobkins', are also known from the Greek mainland, such as the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta dated to the 6th century BC (Dawkins [ed.] 1929: Pls 174:11, 175:6,8) and Lindos in Rhodes (Blinkenberg 1931: Fig. 10:217) associated with the 'Epoque

Archaique', or late Iron Age II. If the origin and manufacture of club pendants is indeed local, as appears from the many sites within the southern Levant where this pendant has been found in quantities, then the Greek and western Anatolian examples of the late Iron Age II may possibly be seen as imports arriving via the Phoenicians or as the adoption of an idea that appeared in the west at a later date. The bulk of these pendants still appear to have been centered in the region of ancient Israel and Judah during the Iron Age II already at the very beginning of this period, suggesting this region as the source for this type.

The ubiquity of these distinctive pendants during the Iron Age II has long been noted (Macalister 1912: 452–453; Mackenzie 1912–1913: 62–63; McCown 1947: 272; Tufnell 1953: 382–383). The fact that they were found in tombs as well as in habitational contexts shows that they were also worn in everyday life. Platt suggested that the fact they were not found in pairs or groups in habitational contexts suggests that each was the possession of one individual or family (Platt 1973: 198), possibly indicating the amount of individuals or families within one tomb. She also noted that at sites where quantities of fine gold and silver jewelry were found, such as Tell el-Far'ah(S), there were relatively few such pendants, the latter being more common at sites in Judah, where the amount of prestige luxury items was far less. This could reflect a less ostentatious, possibly 'poorer' reality of the local Judahite and Israelite population, leading Platt to suggest that that these pendants be seen as 'poor people's' jewelry (Platt 1973: 89; 1978). At Tell Beit Mirsim, where at least ten such pendants were recovered, Albright (1943: 80–81) noted the general lack of jewelry that he interpreted as evidence of the poverty or simplicity of life in an Iron Age II provincial town in Judah.

PLAQUE PENDANTS

Plaque pendants are made of bone, between 3–8 cm in length, usually with a stringing hole at one end or occasionally with a tab that could be attached to a string. They appear in distinctive shapes: plain rectangular form [*Fig. 3:1*], rectangular or oval form with suspension tab [*Fig. 3:2–9*] or tear-drop or circular form [*Fig. 3:10–11*]. They are usually decorated with incised rings and dots and incised lines and chevrons. These objects have also been found in tombs and habitational levels, usually as singular objects [*Table 2*].

The most common shape of these pendants is rectangular, hung from a suspension hole at one of the short ends [*Fig. 3:1*]. A semicircular, mushroom-shaped or triangular-shaped inverted suspension tab is also common [*Fig. 3:2–8*]. A few examples, such as those from 'Aro'er and Tell el-Far'ah(S), depict stylized proto-aeolic capitals at the top [*Fig. 3:9*]. Elongated oval shapes were less common, usually with a mushroom-shaped suspension tab. Least common are the circular or drop-shaped plaque pendants [*Fig. 3:10–11*], usually with a simple tab for suspension.

Plaque pendants are usually found along with club pendants and mallet–shaped pendants (see below) within the same geographical area during the entire Iron Age II [*Fig. 5:B*]. The distribution of such pendants is limited primarily

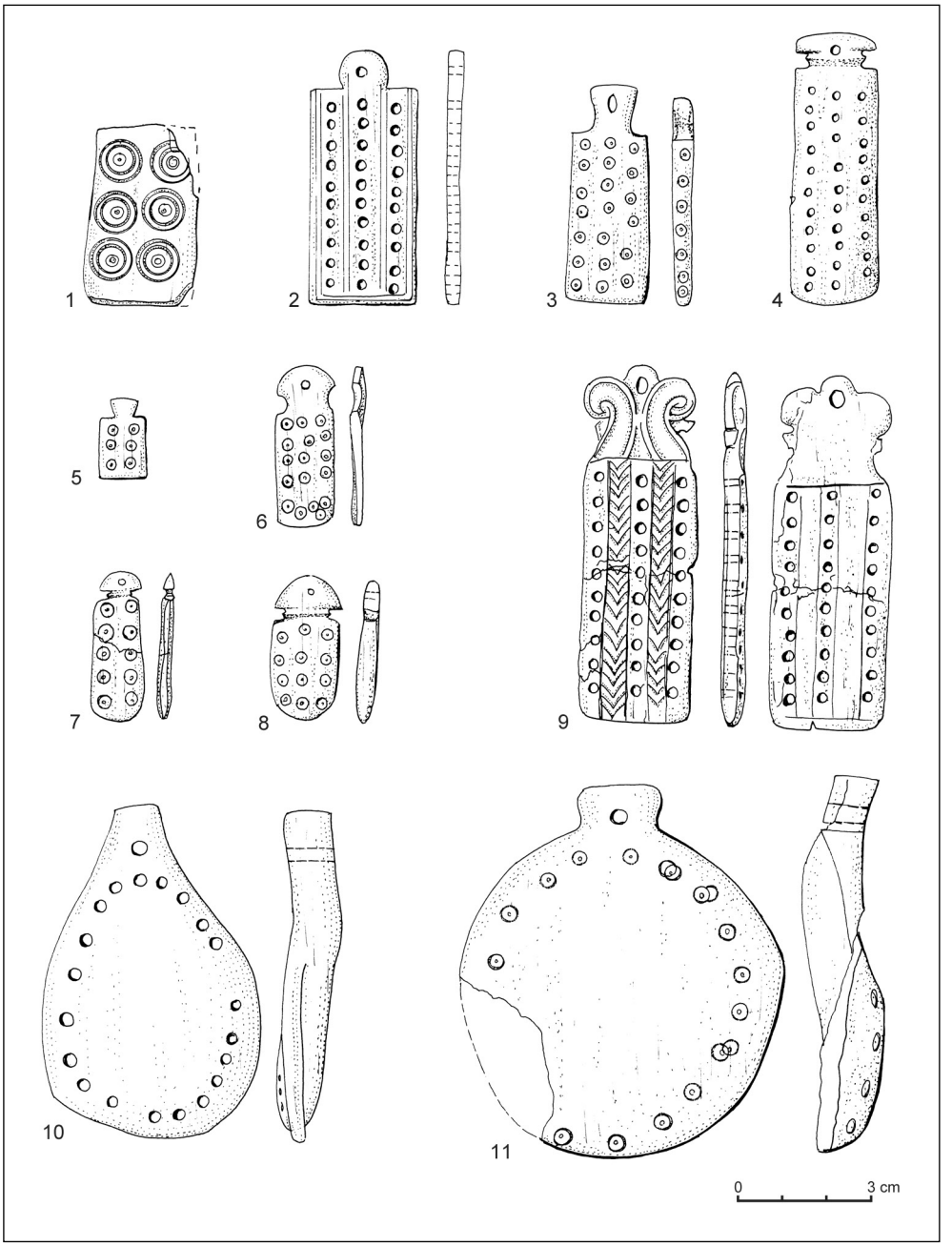

Fig. 3. Plaque pendants
(After Golani 2013: Fig. 25)

to the southern Levant, while a singular example, also dated to the Iron Age II, is found at Hama in Syria (Riis 1948: 178, Fig. 228). Most examples are found in the region of Judah, while only a very few, such as two examples from Megiddo, are known from sites in the region of the kingdom of Israel. Like club pendants, plaque pendants appear to be characteristic of the Iron Age II in the southern Levant with a chronological range that does not predate the 10th century BC and does not continue after the 7th–6th century BC.

These objects have been regarded as calendars designating 30 days (Petrie 1930: 13; Platt 1978: 25) because some examples were found with three rows of ten uniform ring and dot markings or holes on one of their wide flat sides. However, while the few examples with 30 or even 31 markings may lend themselves to such interpretation (see Fox 2011), many other examples bearing 6, 10, 12, 15, 17 or 20 markings on one side are not so easily explained, suggesting that, as in the club pendants, such markings may have had other, as yet unclear meanings or were merely decorative.

MALLET PENDANTS

'Mallet' or 'gavel'-shaped pendants are made of bone/ivory and manufactured in two parts: a cylindrical 'head' and a thin shaft that was inserted at one end into the head and pierced at the other for suspension [***Fig. 4***]. The 'head' of the mallet is often decorated with incised ring-and-dot motifs [***Fig. 4:7***]. Like

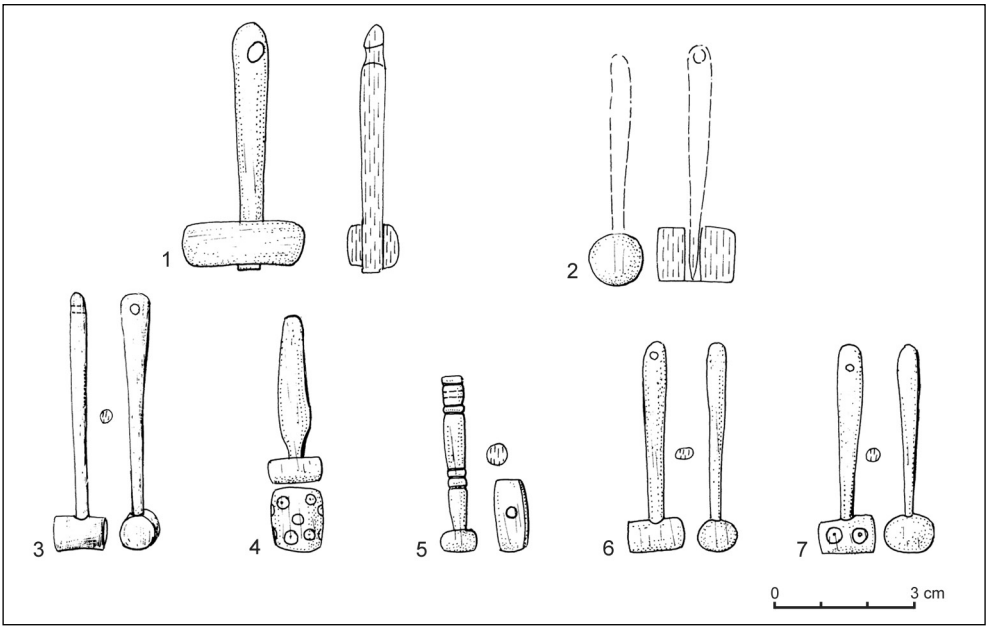

Fig. 4. Mallet pendants (After Golani 2013: Fig. 26:4–10)

the club and plaque pendants, mallet pendants have also been found in tombs and habitational levels, usually as singular objects [*Table 3*].

These pendants may be made of bone or ivory and have a chronological range from the very end of the Iron Age I/ beginning of the Iron Age II and into the early Iron Age II, when they are found usually alongside club pendants and plaque pendants (see above) in the same geographical region [*Fig. 5:C*]. They began to appear as early as the 10th century BC, though unlike the club or plaque pendants discussed above, mallet-shaped pendants apparently did not continue into the latter half of the Iron Age II. As in club and plaque pendants, the distinctive shape, its localized distribution and restricted chronological association posits this form as characteristic of the late Iron Age I and early Iron Age II in the southern Levant. Some scholars have noted that the strong similarity among mallet pendants emphasizes the importance of their specific morphological shape, suggesting that this form was determined by social or cultural considerations rather than technological ones (Ben-Basat 2011: 150).

The specific form was possibly a small representation of a larger full-sized mallet or hammer, which may have been worn to identify the profession or affiliation of the wearer. As this type of pendant is generally not found outside the Iron Age II, its significance was probably restricted to the southern Levant during this period. However, somewhat similar pendants made in one piece of cast copper alloy are known from the Nuraghic culture in Sardinia, where they are dated to the 12th–10th centuries BC (Babbi 2002: 440–442) and the same form is also found in Etruscan Italy and Late Geometric burial and domestic contexts in Greece during the 9th–7th centuries BC (Babbi 2002: Fig. 7) where it is linked to the possible profession of its wearer. While the initial appearance of this distinctive form in the southern Levant and the central Mediterranean occurs at the same time, it is as yet unclear whether this is coincidental or not.

EXCURSUS: TOMB 120 AT LACHISH

One of the Judean towns that endured the Neo-Assyrian conquest of the 8th century BC was Lachish, destroyed by King Sennacherib in 701 BC. The siege of the city, its destruction and the subsequent exile of the survivors to Assyria were vividly portrayed in the amazing reliefs set up by Sennacherib at his palace in Nineveh (Ussishkin 1982).

The mound of Lachish and the cemeteries surrounding it have been extensively excavated (Tufnell 1953; 1958; Ussishkin 2004). Within one of the cave tombs from the late 8th century BC (Tomb 120) that surrounded the city, the remains of over 1500 bodies were found thrown through an opening in the roof of a large cave, forming a huge pile of bones that was further covered by numerous pig bones (Tufnell 1953: 193–196, Pl. 4:3–4). Among the human remains were found numerous bone club and mallet pendants that were apparently on the bodies when they were dumped into the cave (Tufnell 1953: Pl. 55:17–29, 37:6–15, 17). The excavators proposed that these were the remains of the Judahite defenders of Lachish that were disposed of by the Neo-Assyrians after clearance of the

ruined buildings following the destruction of 701 BC. The pig bones may have been thrown in intentionally in order to defile the ancient Judahites, who regarded pigs as unclean and therefore avoided eating pork (Finkelstein 1996: 206; Hesse, Wapnish 1997; see Faust 2006: 35–40 for more references). If this interpretation is correct, the bone pendants, in association with the bodies, appear to have been a common dress item of the Judahite defenders of Lachish. Recent research on a very limited sample of human bones from Tomb 120, though disputing that the bodies were those of war victims, has shown that some of the bones may be associated with genetically related individuals (Ullinger 2012), further indication that some, if not all, of those interred were associated with one ethnic/cultural group.

SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL DISTRIBUTION

The bone/ivory pendants discussed here are probably representative of the ancient populations of Israel and Judah. They are of a distinctive form and decorative scheme that is found primarily in the region associated with the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah and are generally not found in other, adjacent regions. Most of these pendants were found in the region of the kingdom of Judah where they enjoyed a longer period of use, a smaller amount in the kingdom of Israel where they had a shorter period of use. This posits the regions of Judah and Israel as their core area where they were apparently manufactured and used.

The chronological distribution of these pendants also dovetails with the specific history of both kingdoms; while these pendants were found from the 11th to the 6th centuries BC in ancient Judah, they existed only from the 11th to the 8th centuries in ancient Israel. Aside from two examples from Tel Miqne-Ekron, all the club pendants that may be securely dated prior to the 10th century BC originated from what are generally regarded as 'Israelite' settlement sites typical of the Iron Age I, usually found in the central highlands, their foothills, or the region of the Galilee. This is the core region of the Israelite settlement during the Iron Age I, while sites outside this region, such as those in the coastal plain area and in the large northern valleys are not considered as under Israelite control at this time (see Mazar 1985; Finkelstein 1988). In the subsequent 10th–9th centuries BC, when the hegemony of the Israelite monarchy was firmly established throughout most of the southern Levant, club pendants were found in the highlands as well as the coastal plain and lowland valleys, at sites such as Megiddo. Plaque pendants did not appear at any sites prior to the 10th century BC. In the northern kingdom of Israel they were not found after the 8th century BC, yet in the southern kingdom of Judah they continued until the early 6th century BC. In securely dated contexts prior to the 10th century BC, mallet pendants appeared only sporadically, i.e., a confirmed example from Tel Dor dated to the 11th century BC [see ***Table 3***], yet most examples first appeared in the 10th century BC. No examples of this distinctive form have been found at any site after the 9th–8th century BC. This may suggest that this latter form, for some reason, had gone out of fashion nearing the second half of the Iron Age II.

In sum, all three types of pendants are of distinctive shape and decoration, geographically they had a well-defined distribution within the area of the ancient kingdoms of Judah and Israel and chronologically, they appeared within the historical timespan of each kingdom. They all began in the 11th or 10th century BC, yet in the northern kingdom of Israel they did not continue after the 8th century BC, when this kingdom ceased to exist, yet except for the mallet pendants, they did continue in the southern kingdom of Judah until its decline and ultimate fall during the early 6th century BC.

WHY SIMPLE BONE/IVORY PENDANTS?

Other cultures of the ancient world, such as the Egyptians, are well known for their lavish use of gold and other precious materials in their jewelry creations. These are readily distinguished by their iconography, materials, color schemes and workmanship as typical of the ancient Egyptians who, by using these elements in their own particular style, projected their own cultural identity. In this respect, it may seem odd that such relatively simple bone/ivory pendants discussed here would be a cultural/ethnic marker associated with the ancient Israelites. Although they are of distinctive shape, could the Israelites not have used or created jewelry that could project wealth, status or power in order to define their own cultural identity?

At most of the sites and habitational strata where the pendants under discussion are the most common, gold and silver jewelry was generally lacking. Elisabeth Platt, who was the first to propose that these bone pendants be seen as "Israelite" jewelry, also noted that because these are simple objects usually made of inexpensive bone, they are the jewelry of the poor who could not afford the use of more expensive materials (Platt 1978). It may be debated whether the Israelites or Judahites of the Iron Age II were really poor. According to the Bible, the wealth of King Solomon was legendary (I Kings 10: 14). Sennacherib, the same Neo-Assyrian king who sacked Lachish in 701 BC, received as tribute 30 talents of gold and 800 talents of silver from the kingdom of Judah alone (see II Kings 16:8, 20:13, 23:33–35, 24:13; Luckenbill 1927: 121, Taylor Prism, Col. II, l. 37–III, l. 49). According to Holladay (2006), the Judahites amassed such a large amount of precious metal from taxation of South Arabian camel caravans. By one estimate, Neo-Assyrian lists of booty and tribute taken from Judah alone by Sennacherib included approximately 900 kg of gold(!) and 24 tons(!) of silver (Jankowska 1969: 254, note 5).

If the Israelites and Judahites were not necessarily 'poor' and did have access to precious metals such as silver and gold, why is this not apparent in their jewelry and why were they choosing common, inexpensive bone to fashion their distinctive jewelry? Recent research on Israelite cultural identity has pointed out that the simplistic, nearly Spartan character of Israelite material culture, such as the absence of nearly all luxury goods, is not a result of poverty but was due rather to ideological, cognitive and symbolic factors of choice, expressing an egalitarian ideal that promoted austerity (Faust 2006). This was done as a method of defining

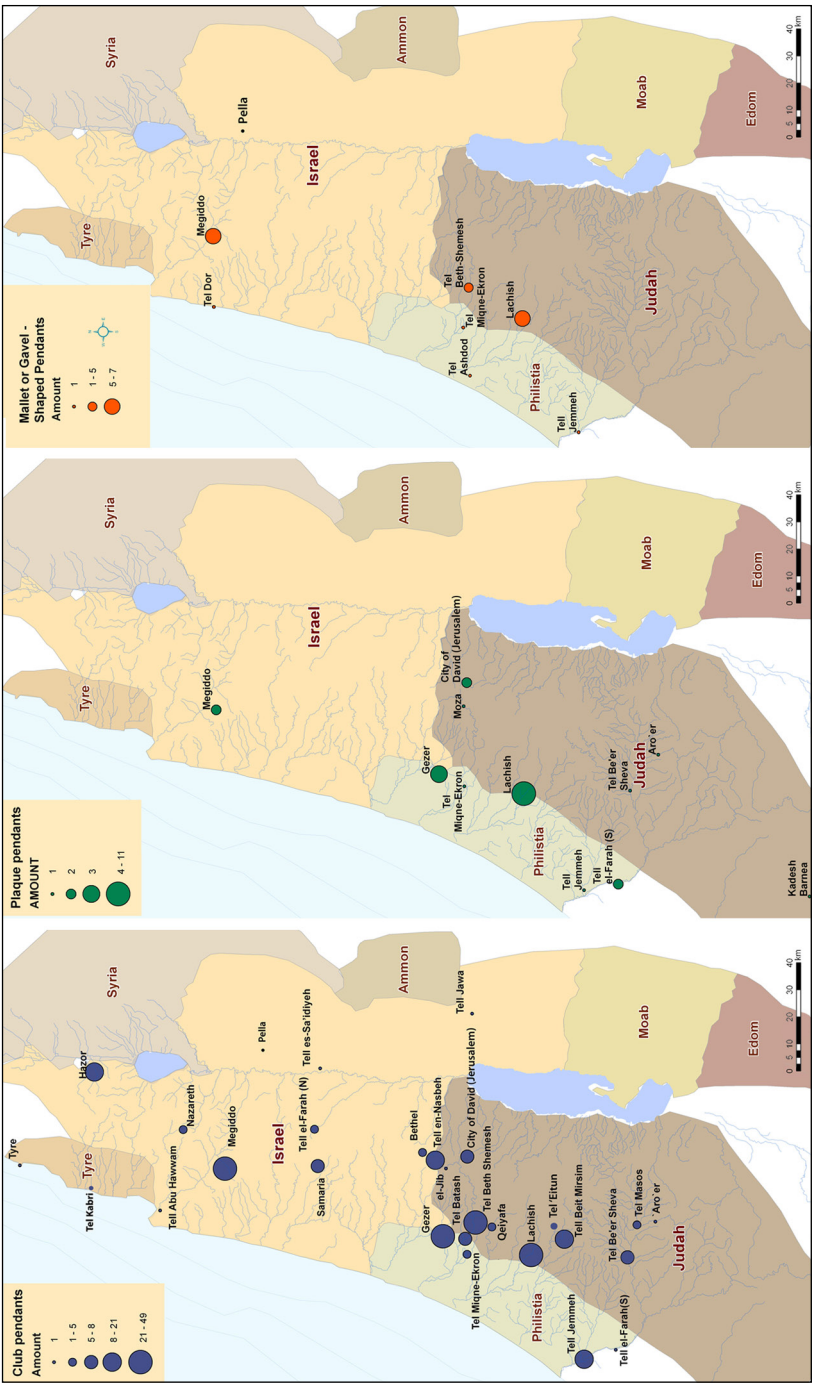

Fig. 5. Geographic distribution of pendants in the southern Levant: A – club pendants; B – plaque pendants; C – mallet pendants (Processing L. Barda, Israel Antiquities Authority)

their own Israelite identity as opposed to other cultural groups around them, such as the Canaanites, the Philistines, and the Egyptians, where for example, luxury goods are often preeminent in the archaeological record of material culture. The biblical narrative itself appears to support this idea, as an ostentatious display of luxury goods, such as expensive jewelry, is usually portrayed in a negative light (e.g., see Isaiah 3:18–23). The use of simple inexpensive materials, such as bone, in order to fashion simplistic yet distinctive items, like the club, plaque and mallet pendants discussed here, ties in well with this egalitarian ideal of austerity.

Table 1. Club pendants in the southern Levant

Century BC	Site	Context	Material	Quantity	Remarks	References
12th–11th	Tel Masos	Stratum II	Bone	2	Dating according to Mazar 2008.	Fritz, Kempinski 1983: Pl. 105:5–6
12th–11th	Tell 'Eitun	Tomb C1	Bone	2	From repository in 'Philistine' tomb. Not the classic shape.	Edelstein, Aurant 1992: Fig. 14:13,17
12th–10th	Lachish	Levels V–VI	Bone	1	Excavator's dating.	Tufnell 1953: Pl. 63:21
11th	Nazareth	Cave tomb	Terracotta coated with bitumen	1	Disturbed tomb.	Vitto 2001: Fig. 4:1
11th–10th	Har Yona, Upper Nazareth	Burial cave	Bone	1	–	Alexandre 2003: Fig. 3:5
11th–10th	el-Jib, (Gibeon)	Tomb 3	Bone	1	UM Reg. No. 62-30-191	Pritchard 1963: Fig. 73 (at bottom)
11th–10th	Tel Batash	Stratum V	Bone or ivory	3	Disturbed locus with Iron Age I and 10th-century ceramics.	Yahalom-Mack 2006: 262–263, Photo 129, Pl. 57:14
11th–10th	Tel Beth-Shemesh (new excavations)	Level 4	Bone	1	–	Golani forthcoming b
11th–10th	Tel Miqne-Ekron	Stratum IVA	Ivory	1	–	Golani forthcoming a
11th–10th	Tel Miqne-Ekron	Stratum IVA–B	Ivory	1	–	Golani forthcoming a
11th–10th	Tell el-Far'ah (N)	Stratum VIIB	Ivory	1	Excavator's dating.	Chambon 1984: Pl. 73:1–3
10th	Gezer	Tomb 142	Bone	1	Excavator's dating.	Macalister 1912/I: 334, Pl. 103:15
10th	Khirbet Qeiyafa	Unclear	Bone	5	Only one published.	Kehati 2009: Fig. 11.1:2
10th	Tel Be'er Sheva	Stratum VII	Bone	1	–	Herzog *et alii* 1984: Fig. 25:5, Pl. 14:12; Golani forthcoming c

Table 1. continued

Century BC	Site	Context	Material	Quantity	Remarks	References
10th	Tel Beth-Shemesh	Stratum II	Bone	1	Excavator's dating. At least 13 more examples, six of ivory, six of bone and one of green stone, found in different, unclear contexts.	Grant, Wright 1938: Pl. 53:29
10th	Tel Beth-Shemesh	Tomb 1	Ivory	23	Single-period burial. Excavator's dating.	Mackenzie 1912–1913: Pl. 30:1–23
10th–9th	Lachish	Tomb 218	Bone	11	Excavator's dating.	Tufnell 1953: Pls55:44–47,37:19–23
10th–9th	Megiddo	Stratum V	Bone	1	Dating according to Mazar 2008.	Loud 1948: Pl. 216:125,127–128
10th–9th	Megiddo	Stratum V	Bone or ivory	14	Dating according to Mazar 2008.	Lamon, Shipton 1939: Pl. 97:13,15,17, 20, 24–33
10th–9th	Megiddo	Stratum VA	Bone	7	Dating according to Mazar 2008.	Loud 1948: Pl. 218:130–133,135
10th–9th	Pella	Trench XXVIIIB (Strata IX–VIII?)	Bone	1	Another undecorated pendant, found in an Iron Age I/IIA context in 1985.	Bourke *et alii* 2003: Fig. 42:3
10th–9th	Tyre	Stratum XII	Ivory	1	–	Bikai 1978: Pl. 30:13
10th–8th	Bethel	Unclear	Bone	4	Excavator's dating.	Kelso 1968: Pl. 45:5,6,8,9
10th–8th	Gezer	Fourth Semitic Period	Bone or ivory	18	Excavator's dating.	Macalister 1912/I: 452–453, Pl. 226:41–56,61,62
10th–8th	Tel Jemmeh	Room D	Ivory	2	–	Golani 2014: 905, Fig. 22.2:g–h
10th–8th	Tell el-Nasbeh	Tomb 32	Bone	6	Four more pendants found in Tombs 33 and 52. Excavator's dating.	McCown 1947: Pl. 112:31–32
10th–6th	Tell Jemmeh	Levels 186, 190–195	Bone	7	Excavator's dating.	Petrie 1928: Pl. 33:2,7–8,11–12, 18,22
9th(?)	Lachish	Tomb 107	Bone	3	Disturbed tomb. Excavator's dating.	Tufnell 1953: Pl. 54:65–67
9th(?)	Lachish	Tomb 120	Bone	20	Disturbed tomb. Excavator's dating.	Tufnell 1953: Pls 55:17–24; 37:7,12,14
9th(?)	Tel Kabri	Stratum D 2	Bone	2	–	Oren 2002: Figs 10.18:14–15, 10.19:10–11

Table 1. continued

Century BC	Site	Context	Material	Quantity	Remarks	References
9th	Hazor	Stratum IXA	Bone	1	–	Yadin *et alii* 1961: Pl. 179:29
9th	Hazor	Stratum VI	Bone	4	–	Bechar 2012: Fig. 8.2:5
9th	Lachish	Tomb 224	Bone	2	Disturbed tomb. Excavator's dating.	Tufnell 1953: Pls 56:14, 37:26–27
9th	Tel Be'er Sheva	Stratum V	Bone	2	–	Golani forthcoming c
9th	Tell el-Far'ah (S)	Tomb 221	Bone	1	Dating according to Laemmel 2004: 47–48.	Petrie 1930: Pl. 41:292
9th–8th	Lachish	Level IVa	Bone or ivory	1	Excavator's dating.	Sass 2004: Fig. 28.17:12, 28.32.10
9th–8th	Megiddo	Stratum IV	Bone or ivory	10	Dating according to Mazar 2008.	Lamon, Shipton 1939: Pl. 97:6,10–11,16, 18–19, 21–23,33
9th–8th	Samaria	'Ahab' courtyard	Bone or ivory	5	Excavator's dating.	Reisner *et alii* 1924: Fig. 243
9th–8th	Tell el-Far'ah (N)	Level 2 (Stratum VIId)	Bone	2	Dating according to Chambon 1984.	de Vaux 1951: Pl. 17,2:1–2
9th–7th	Lachish	Tomb 116	Bone	3	Disturbed tomb. Excavator's dating.	Tufnell 1953: Pl. 54:76–78
9th–7th	Tell el-Sa'idiyeh	Sounding 3 Layer 1	Bone	1	Unclear context.	Pritchard 1985: Fig. 171:7
8th	City of David	Stratum 12	Ivory	1	–	Ariel 1990: 136, Fig. 17:BI147
8th	Hazor	Stratum VB	Bone	1	–	Yadin *et alii* 1958: Pl. 105:33
8th	Lachish	Burial cave 1002	Bone	2	Single-period tomb. Excavator's dating.	Tufnell 1953: Pl. 57:30–31
8th	Tell Beit Mirsim	Stratum A	Bone	10	Dating according to Zimhoni 1997.	Albright 1943: Pls 32:15–16, 64:1–4, 8–11
8th	Hazor	Stratum V	Bone	4	–	Bechar 2012: Fig. 8.2:3–4
8th	Samaria	Period V	Bone	1	Excavator's dating.	Crowfoot *et alii* 1957: Fig. 115:7
8th	Tel 'Aroer	Stratum IV	Bone	1	–	Thareani 2011: 249, Fig. 3.130
8th	Tel Beth-Shemesh (new excavations)	Level 2	Ivory	1	–	Golani forthcoming b
8th	Tel Be'er Sheva	Stratum II	Bone	2	–	Golani forthcoming c

Table 1. continued

Century BC	Site	Context	Material	Quantity	Remarks	References
8th	Tel Be'er Sheva	Stratum III	Bone	3	–	Golani forthcoming c
8th	Tell el-Nasbeh	Cistern 302	Bone	3	Two more from Cisterns 306A, 370. Excavator's dating.	McCown 1947: Pl. 112:30
8th–7th	Megiddo	Stratum III	Bone or ivory	8	Excavator's dating.	Lamon, Shipton 1939: Pl. 97:1, 4–5, 7–9, 12, 14
8th–7th	Tel Batash	Strata III–II	Bone	4	Three more recovered from 10th-century fill.	Yahalom-Mack 2006: 262–264, Pl. 57:14, Photo 193
7th	City of David	Stratum 11?	Bone	2	–	Ariel 1990: 136, Fig. 17:BI149, Bl150
7th	Megiddo	Stratum II	Bone or ivory	1	From earlier strata? Excavator's dating.	Lamon, Shipton 1939: Pl. 97:2
7th	Tel Miqne-Ekron	Stratum IB	Bone	1	–	Golani forthcoming a
7th	Tel Miqne-Ekron	Stratum IB	Ivory	1	–	Golani forthcoming a
7th	Tel Miqne-Ekron	Stratum IB–C	Ivory	1	–	Golani forthcoming a
8th–7th	City of David	Stratum 11–12	Bone	1	Fragment.	Ariel 1990: 136, Fig. 17:BI146
7th–6th	City of David	Stratum 10C?	Bone	1	–	Ariel 1990: 136, Fig. 17:BI148
7th–6th	Tell el-Nasbeh	Room 390	Bone	2	Two more from Rooms 436 and 438. Excavator's dating.	McCown 1947: Pl. 112:33
7th–6th	Tell el-Nasbeh	Room 394	Bone	1	Excavator's dating.	McCown 1947: Pl. 112:29
6th–4th	Megiddo	Stratum I	Bone	1	Probably from earlier strata. Excavator's dating.	Lamon, Shipton 1939: Pl. 97:3
5th–4th	Tell Abu Hawam	Stratum II	Ivory	1	Probably from earlier strata; see dating by Artzy 2008	Hamilton 1935: 17, Pl. 32:32
2nd	Gezer	Stratum III	Bone or ivory	1	Probably from earlier strata.	Dever *et alii* 1974: Pl. 41:11
2nd–1st	City of David	Stratum 7	Bone	1	Probably from earlier strata.	Ariel 1990: 136, Fig. 17:BI151
Iron Age II	el-Jib, (Gibeon)	Unclear	Ivory	1	UM Reg. No. 62-30-845	Unpublished

Table 1. continued

Century BC	Site	Context	Material	Quantity	Remarks	References
Iron Age II?	Megiddo	Unclear	Bone	1	–	Watzinger 1929: Fig. 48:16
Iron Age II?	Tell Jawa	Unclear	Bone	1	–	Daviau 2002: 26, Fig. 2.1:1
Unclear	Gezer	Tomb 85	Terracotta	1	–	Macalister 1912/I: 334, Pl. 89:12
Unclear	Hazor	Trial trench	Bone	1	–	Yadin et alii 1958: Pl. 78:26
Unclear	Megiddo	Surface	Bone or ivory	3	–	Lamon, Shipton 1939: Pl. 34,36
Unclear	Tell el-Nasbeh	Unclear	Bone	1	–	McCown 1947: Pl. 112:34

Table 2. Plaque pendants in the southern Levant

Century BC	Site	Context	Material	Quantity	Remarks	References
10th	Lachish	Tomb 521	Bone	1	Rectangular plaque with semicircular tab; 30 small circles in three vertical registers. From a single-period burial. Excavator's dating	Tufnell 1953: Pls 37:3, 56:23
10th–9th	Lachish	Tomb 218	Bone	1	Oval plaque with mushroom-shaped tab; 12 circle-and-dot motifs on one side, arranged in three vertical rows. Excavator's dating.	Tufnell 1953: Pls 37:18, 55:51
10th–9th	Megiddo	Stratum VA	Bone	1	Rectangular plaque with mush-room-shaped tab; 15 circle-and-dot motifs in three vertical rows. Dating according to Mazar 2008.	Loud 1948: Pl. 218:135
10th–8th	Gezer	(Fourth Semitic Period)	Bone or ivory	3	Rectangular plaque with mushroom-shaped tab; on one pendant 20 circle-and-dot motifs, seven more on thin side. On another, 31 marks on one side. A third example is fragmentary, exhibiting 37 marks. Excavator's dating.	Macalister 1912/III: Pl. 226:58,59
10th–8th	Tell el-Far'ah (S)	Tomb 201	Bone	1	Rectangular plaque with tab depicting proto-aeolic capital; 30 circle-and-dot motifs in three vertical registers, separated by incised chevrons. Dating according to Laemmel 2004: 47–48.	Petrie 1930: Pl. 40:481, Pl. 36

Table 2. continued

Century BC	Site	Context	Material	Quantity	Remarks	References
10th–8th	Tell Jemmeh	Level 192	Bone	1	Rectangular plaque with triangular tab; six circle-and-dot motifs on one side. Excavator's dating.	Petrie 1928: Pl. 33:42
9th	Lachish	Tomb 107	Bone	1	Rectangular plaque with mushroom-shaped tab; 17 circle-and-dot motifs on one side, arranged in three vertical rows. Excavator's dating.	Tufnell 1953: Pl. 54:64
9th	Lachish	Tomb 120	Bone	2	One complete, one fragmentary. Rectangular plaque with semicircular tab; 30 small circles arranged in three vertical registers. Disturbed tomb. Excavator's dating.	Tufnell 1953: Pls 37:15,17, 55:27–28
8th	Lachish	Burial cave 1002	Bone	1	Oval plaque with mushroom-shaped tab; 10 circle-and-dot motifs on one side, arranged in two vertical rows. Excavator's dating.	Tufnell 1953: Pls 37:16; 57:29
8th	Lachish	Burial cave 1002	Bone	1	Fragmentary rectangular plaque with semicircular tab. Excavator's dating.	Tufnell 1953: Pl. 57:28
8th	City of David	Stratum 12	Bone	1	Fragment, possibly 30 holes.	Ariel 1990: 136–137, Fig. 17:BI 152
8th	Kadesh Barnea	Stratum 3a–b	Bone	1	Drop shaped with no decoration.	Gera 2007: Fig. 13.5:26; Pl. 13.5:26
8th	Tel Be'er Sheva	Stratum II	Bone	1	Rectangular plaque with triangular suspension tab; five circle-and-dot motifs on one side.	Aharoni (ed.) 1973: Pl. 23:5; Golani forthcoming c
8th–7th(?)	City of David	Unstratified	Bone	1	Rectangular plaque with no suspension tab; six circle-and-dot motifs on one side, only one on the other side. See also from Nimrud, Barnett 1957: Pl. 123:T27	Ariel 1990: 137, Fig. 17:BI 153
8th–7th	Lachish	Levels III–II?	Bone	1	Drop-shaped plaque with 21 incised circles around circumference. From within room. Excavator's dating.	Tufnell 1953: Pls 41:10, 63:15
8th–7th	Megiddo	Stratum III	Bone	1	Rectangular plaque with triangular suspension tab. Undecorated. Excavator's dating.	Lamon, Shipton 1939: Pl. 77: 6

Table 2. continued

Century BC	Site	Context	Material	Quantity	Remarks	References
7th	Tel 'Aroer	Stratum II(?)	Bone	1	Rectangular plaque with depiction of a proto-aeolic capital on top. Four vertical registers with three times 10 and once 12 circle-and-dot motif.	Biran, Cohen 1981: Fig. 24:D; Biran 1983:37
7th	Tel Miqne-Ekron	Stratum IB	Bone	1	Fragmentary rectangular(?) plaque with semicircular tab.	Golani forthcoming a
7th–6th	Lachish	Tomb 106	Bone	3	Fragmentary rectangular plaque with no suspension tab. Disturbed tomb. Excavator's dating.	Tufnell 1953: Pl. 54:36–37, 39
7th–6th	Moza	Stratum IV	Bone	1	Fragmentary drop-shaped plaque with suspension tab and incised circles-and-dot motifs around perimeter.	Greenhut 2009: Fig. 9.1:2
Unclear	Tell el-Far'ah (S)	Tell	Bone	1	Fragmentary circular plaque with suspension tab and 18–19 circle-and-dot motifs around perimeter.	Starkey, Harding 1932: Pl. 74:116

Table 3. Mallet pendants in the southern Levant

Century BC	Site	Context	Material	Quantity	Remarks	References
12th	Megiddo	Stratum VIIA	Bone	1	Fragment, head only. Probably from later strata. Dating according to Mazar 2008.	Loud 1948: Pl. 197:14
12th–9th	Megiddo	Strata VII–V	Bone	1	Dating according to Mazar 2008.	Loud 1948: Pl. 197:15
11th–10th	Tel Miqne-Ekron	Strata IVB–VC	Ivory	1	–	Golani forthcoming a
11th	Tel Dor	Phase G/8	Ivory	1	–	Ben-Basat 2011: 73, 150
10th	Tel Ashdod	Stratum X	Ivory	1	Fragment, head only.	Golani, Ben-Shlomo 2005: Fig. 4.1:11
10th	Tel Beth-Shemesh	Tomb 1	Ivory	5	Excavator's dating. At least two more unpublished examples found in rooms associated with Stratum II on the tell. UM Reg. Nos 61-14-880, 61-14-882.	Mackenzie 1912–1913: Pl. 30a:13–15

Table 3. continued

Century BC	Site	Context	Material	Quantity	Remarks	References
10th–9th	Megiddo	Stratum V	Ivory	1	Identified as a bovine(?) head with horns broken off. Dating according to Mazar 2008.	Lamon, Shipton 1939: Pl. 77:16
10th–9th	Megiddo	Stratum V	Bone	1	Head of mallet shows schematized depiction of bovine head. Dating according to Mazar 2008.	Lamon, Shipton 1939: Pl. 77:16
10th–9th	Megiddo	Stratum VA	Bone	1	Fragment, head only. Dating according to Mazar 2008.	Loud 1948: Pl. 197:16
10th–9th	Lachish	Tomb 218	Bone?	2	Excavator's dating.	Tufnell 1953: Pls 37:24–25, 55:48–50
10th–9th	Pella	Unclear	Bone or ivory	1	Unpublished.	S. Bourke, personal communication
10th–8th	Tell Jemmeh	Level 193	Bone	1	Excavator's dating.	Petrie 1928: Pl. 32:16
9th	Lachish	Tomb 120	Bone?	5	Disturbed tomb. Excavator's dating.	Tufnell 1953: Pls 37:8,10,11,13, 55:26,25
9th–8th	Megiddo	Stratum IV	Bone	1	Fragment, head only. Dating according to Mazar 2008.	Loud 1948: Pl. 197:17

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