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BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY REVIEW

Tel Hadid
Through the Ages

Forced Resettlement and Immigration at Tel Hadid

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ONE FINE AUTUMN DAY in 698 B.C.E., a real estate transaction took place. A man called Marduk-bela-usur bought a field from a man named Aya-shebshi and three of his associates. As was customary in seventh-century B.C.E. Mesopotamia, the transfer of title was conducted in front of seven witnesses and recorded on a clay tablet.

Surprisingly, this Akkadian document did not turn up in modern-day Iraq, as you might expect, but at Tel Hadid, a site in central Israel, not far from the Ben Gurion International Airport. Prior to the construction of a modern highway, salvage excavations conducted at this site from 1995 to 1997 under the auspices of Tel Aviv University revealed the remains of a late Iron Age settlement dated to the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. Archaeologists unearthed several structures, including a well-preserved pillared building. Within two other Iron Age structures, this document and another tablet documenting a loan from the spring of 664 B.C.E. were found. The individuals mentioned in both documents have

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HADID'S HILLTOP. With the hills of Samaria in the background, Tel Hadid rises above its surroundings. A wide platform with large walls covers about a quarter of the mound's crest (see left side). The platform likely dates to the late Hellenistic period (second–first centuries B.C.E.). However, Tel Hadid had strategic importance long before the Hellenistic period. From its hilltop, one could see ancient Jaffa (modern Tel Aviv) to the northwest, the Via Maris (the main ancient trade route through the southern Levant) to the west, the Lydda Valley to the southwest, the al-Jib Plateau to the east, and the hills of Samaria to the northeast.

Akkadian (perhaps Babylonian) and Aramean names; no names with Yahwistic components (names formed on the divine name Yahweh) appear in the text. But what are these tablets doing here in Israel and not in some archive in Mesopotamia?

Since the Neo-Assyrian Empire controlled the region at that time, these tablets must reveal deportees from another conquered region who were brought here by the Assyrians in the late eighth and early seventh centuries B.C.E.[1]

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TITLE TRANSFER. This tablet records a real estate transaction from the autumn of 698 B.C.E. Aya-shebshi sold a field to Marduk-bela-usur, and seven people witnessed the transfer of title. Although this sale was recorded in the Akkadian language, the names are possibly Babylonian, and the deal was conducted according to conventional Mesopotamian practices, this tablet was discovered at Tel Hadid in Israel. It reveals that the Assyrian Empire deported a new population to ancient Israel in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E.

The community at Hadid was not the only one in the vicinity with newcomers. Gezer, located just a few miles south, had been a hub of the Kingdom of Israel for some time before the Assyrians conquered, destroyed, and eventually rebuilt it. The remains of the new town at Gezer revealed Assyrian-style architectural elements and cylinder seals, as well as two clay tablets with Assyrian texts that deal with land sales in the mid-seventh century B.C.E. Among the individuals mentioned in those texts, 12 had Mesopotamian names, five had probably Aramaic names, one bore an Egyptian name, and one had a name with the Yahwistic component Yhw—Netanyahu.[2]

The appearance of the foreign names in the documents, coupled with the scarcity of Yahwistic elements in them, points to the policy of forced resettlement for which the Neo-Assyrian state was notorious.[3] The refugees' displacement in times of war—a phenomenon, unfortunately, so familiar to us today—was coupled with forced movements of conquered populations. The kings of the Neo-Assyrian Empire formulated and used this strategy for centuries. They grouped together and deported rivals from the center of the Assyrian heartland and from defeated polities alike. By isolating these groups within larger local populations, the Assyrian kings ensured loyalty to the state and minimized potential resistance among the common people, who were left to fend for themselves without their leaders and traditional social hierarchy.

Assyrian policy in the Levant from the days of King Tiglath-pileser III (r. 745–727 B.C.E.) onward had a great impact on local demography and completely reshaped Levantine societies (see 2 Kings 17:1, 24). Assyrian sources reveal that a considerable part of the population of the southern Levant had been displaced to other lands and that various foreign elements, mostly of Mesopotamian origin, had been resettled in their place.[4]

In recent years, scholars at several excavations have focused on the materials left behind by deportees in the southern Levant, including pottery, objects with cuneiform writing, and seals with Babylonian-style decoration.[5] Our renewed excavations at Tel Hadid, however, additionally

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THE FAMILY'S INTEREST. A tablet from Tel Hadid records a loan, wherein the borrower put up his wife and sister as collateral security. Further, the borrower agreed to pay a massive amount of interest—a third of the original borrowed sum—if he didn't pay on time. Written in Akkadian, the tablet dates to the spring of 664 B.C.E. It provides insight into the daily life of the deportees at Tel Hadid.

focus on another social dimension by tracing the lived practices of these deported communities. Given the organized nature of the Assyrian deportations and the forced settlement of deportees, we expect that archaeological analyses will reveal changes and transformations in the customs and behavioral patterns of the migrants, who sought to maintain their social structure. We see such tendencies today in migrant communities attempting to preserve traditional practices in their new resettled homes.

Our first two excavation seasons at Tel Hadid (2018–2019) have provided new information about the local community during its formative period. We are set to develop a framework for studying the materials left by the deportees to better understand the experience of forced deportation in various historical periods.

Upon beginning the excavation, we had to decide first where to excavate. A visitor standing on the prominent hilltop of Tel Hadid has a panoramic view of the Lydda Valley to the south and the west, the entire Tel Aviv metropolitan area farther westward and northward, the al-Jib Plateau to the east, and the rolling hills of Samaria farther to the northeast. In ancient times, whoever controlled Tel Hadid knew exactly who crossed the central Coastal Plain along the Via Maris (literally, "Way of the Sea"), the main trade route leading from the northern Levant to Egypt.

No wonder the Assyrians invested great efforts in reviving the settlements in the region following their conquest of the Kingdom of Israel. With its central location, the region of Tel Hadid and Tel Gezer played a crucial role connecting the Assyrian army and administration to the city of Gaza, a prime objective of the Assyrian colonial efforts ever since Tiglath-pileser III's first campaign to the region, in 734 B.C.E.

Yet the Assyrian occupation of Tel Hadid is just one chapter of its history. Settled also during the Persian (521–332 B.C.E.; see Ezra 2:33; Nehemiah 7:37) and Hellenistic (332–53 B.C.E.) periods, Hadid maintained its strategic importance for generations. According to 1 Maccabees 12:38 and 13:13, Simon Maccabeus (d. 135 B.C.E.) fortified Hadid (Greek: Ἀδιδα) during the war with the Seleucid king Diodotus Tryphon. The battle between those armies took place in the valley below the mound.

According to the Jewish historian Josephus

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PILLARED BUILDING. With outer walls of large stones and two rows of columns dividing the interior, this building at Tel Hadid dates to the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. It measures 30 feet long.

(*Wars* 4.486; 4.9.1), the Roman general (and later emperor) Vespasian (9–79 C.E.) decided to block the routes leading to Jerusalem and chose to fortify Hadid during the First Jewish Revolt against Rome (66–70 C.E.). These fortifications remained through the Byzantine period (fourth–seventh centuries B.C.E.), a time of growth and prosperity in the southern Levant.

Finally, according to a rabbinic tradition (Mishna *Arakhin* 9:6), Hadid was among the towns fortified in the days of Joshua, which would correlate with the end of the Late Bronze Age or Iron Age I (1600–1000 B.C.E.). Although we have not been able to substantiate this tradition, the strategic importance of Hadid is easy to see.

Before embarking on our excavations, we could not help but notice a wide platform at the site, on the northern and western sides of the high mound, partially covered by a modern cemetery and an olive orchard. This wide platform, an artificial extension of the original hill, covers more than 2 acres and is delineated by massive walls. We decided to begin our explorations of the site in this part of the mound.

Our first excavation season yielded an impressive structure made of large walls, with two rows of large and roughly hewn stones forming a corner. This structure—partially damaged by modern joyriding in 4-wheel-drive vehicles—had been built at the same time as another structure with a stepped wall of large field stones and roughly hewn stones. Additionally, we have uncovered two steps of the outer face of what might be a revetment. The multitude of large potsherds from the late Hellenistic period (second–first centuries B.C.E.) that were found in the dark-brown fills behind the walls—and the absence of a single later potsherd—suggest that the platform was built around that time.

Who could have instigated such a massive construction activity? Could this be the Hasmonean fortified complex of Hadid? We will have to wait until next season to explore this question.

It seems that no matter what period we examine, Tel Hadid was of key interest to ancient peoples controlling the region. From the Israelites to the Assyrians, the Persians to the Greeks, the Hasmoneans to the Byzantine Christians, Tel Hadid controlled the intersection of major east-west and north-south trade routes in the fertile Lydda Valley. It was a place of economic prosperity due to its vibrant agriculture, commerce, and trade.

And with the goods came all of the people that moved them—merchants and traders, travelers and businessmen, soldiers and

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HASMONEAN HADID? At Tel Hadid, archaeologists found a large building, situated on a wide platform covering part of the hilltop. The building has large walls—with two rows of stones forming one of its exterior corners. The structures on the platform and the platform itself form a fortified complex. Part of the platform's revetment wall appears to the northwest of the structure (see top left). Pottery found in this area suggests that the complex was constructed in the late Hellenistic period (second-first centuries B.C.E.), possibly by the Hasmoneans.

prisoners, immigrants and refugees, and exiles and repatriates. Now that we are beginning to discover the "what"—the objects that people left behind at Tel Hadid—we can begin to examine the "who"—the people who created these objects. For the peoples from the Assyrian period who were resettled here more than 2,700 years ago, we can also begin to ask the questions of "why" and "how": Why did they try to recreate their traditional social atmosphere, and how did they accomplish it in this new land, so far from their ancestral home?

Perhaps it is appropriate that this location was chosen for Israel's Ben-Gurion Airport, as it continues to represent the place where people enter and depart this multicultural land. Only future seasons of excavation at Tel Hadid will reveal more about those who first made the journey thousands of years before us.

[1] Nadav Na'aman and Ran Zadok, "Assyrian Deportations to the Province of Samerina in the Light of Two Cuneiform Tablets from Tel Hadid," *Tel Aviv* 27.2 (2000), pp. 159–188.

[2] See Shawn Zelig Aster and Avraham Faust, "Administrative Texts, Royal Inscriptions and Neo-Assyrian Administration in the Southern Levant: The View from the Aphek-Gezer Region," *Orientalia* 84.3 (2015), pp. 293–308.

[3] See Josephus *Antiquities* 9.288, who claims that the Samaritans originated from this resettlement.

[4] Karen Radner, "The 'Lost Tribes of Israel' in the Context of the Resettlement Programme of the Assyrian Empire," in Shuichi Hasagawa, Christoph Levin, and Karen Radner, eds., *The Last Days of the Kingdom of Israel,* Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 511 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2019), pp. 101–123.

[5] Nadav Na'aman, "Locating the Sites of Assyrian Deportees in Light of the Textual and Archaeological Evidence," in John MacGinnis, Dirk Wircke, and Tina Greenfield, eds., *The Provincial Archaeology of the Assyrian Empire*, Proceedings of the British Academy 143 (Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2016), pp. 275–282.

Digging Deeper at Tel Hadid

ARCHAEOLOGY IS INCREASINGLY becoming an organized battery of specialized disciplines. Today, new excavations such as Tel Hadid incorporate specialists with expertise in various areas, including ceramics, glass, religious and cultic objects, plant remains (e.g., seeds and pollen), and zoological remains (e.g., bones and fur). Some experts specialize in historical periods, such as the Late Bronze Age or Roman period. Others focus on technology and can catalog the data and even reconstruct the site in virtual reality. What follows is a series of short, specialized reports that gives **BAR** readers an in-depth look at Tel Hadid to understand this site like the experts do.—B.C.

Hunting for Hadid

IDO KOCH

During the early years of Christianity, scholars, such as Eusebius (260/265–339/340 C.E.), "rediscovered" the land of the Bible and identified numerous biblical places in the settlements of their times. They identified Haditha (Greek: Ἀδιθά or Αδιθα)—Tel Hadid—as the site of Adithaim, a town in the allotment of Judah (Joshua 15:36). The famous Madaba Map (part of a mosaic floor from the sixth-century C.E. church of Saint George at Madaba, Jordan) similarly features a village west of Jerusalem with the caption "Adiathim that is now Aditha." This identification was seemingly accepted not only by scholars but also by the local people—members of the Christian community seeking their biblical roots.

However, biblical Adithaim should be sought in the Judean Shephelah, south of the Lydda Valley. Clearly, this confusion was fueled by the phonetic similarities between the names.

A different identification of Hadid, proposed centuries later, has become the consensus. Isaac HaKohen Ben Moses (1280–1355 C.E.), a Jewish scholar better known by his pseudonym Ishtori Haparchi, traveled seven years across the Holy Land and documented his insights on the local topography and toponomy in his book *Kaftor VaFerach* (literally, "Button and Flower"). There he wrote that the village of Haditha, located on top of a round hill two hours by foot east of Lydda, is biblical Hadid.

Archaeological Surveys

OMER ZE'EVI-BERGER

In 2018–2019, we carried out a detailed survey of Tel Hadid, focusing on two main goals: (1) collecting period-indicative artifacts, mainly pottery, and (2) documenting all features (e.g., walls, fences, cisterns, and presses) found around the site. We divided the site into sub-units based on topography, vegetation, access, and visible landmarks. And we digitally recorded everything, enabling us to track and communicate our progress and mark special points of interest.

The artifact survey involved collecting all surface finds, washing and counting them, and then dating diagnostic sherds, and retaining them for publication. Interestingly, our preliminary results suggest that despite some representation of all periods in all of the survey units, the lower mound has a strong Iron Age II signal, whereas the upper mound is dominated by a Hellenistic signal. Byzantine, Mamluk, and Ottoman periods have a strong representation throughout the site.

A smaller team conducted the feature survey. We gave each installation a feature number and recorded and measured it. Then we built a 3D model of each installation through photogrammetry, using Agisoft Photoscan software, and drew it to scale. Our ultimate goal is to develop a detailed map of the site and its features. To date, we have documented 182 features, including cisterns, caves, tombs, presses, terrace walls, and plot fences.

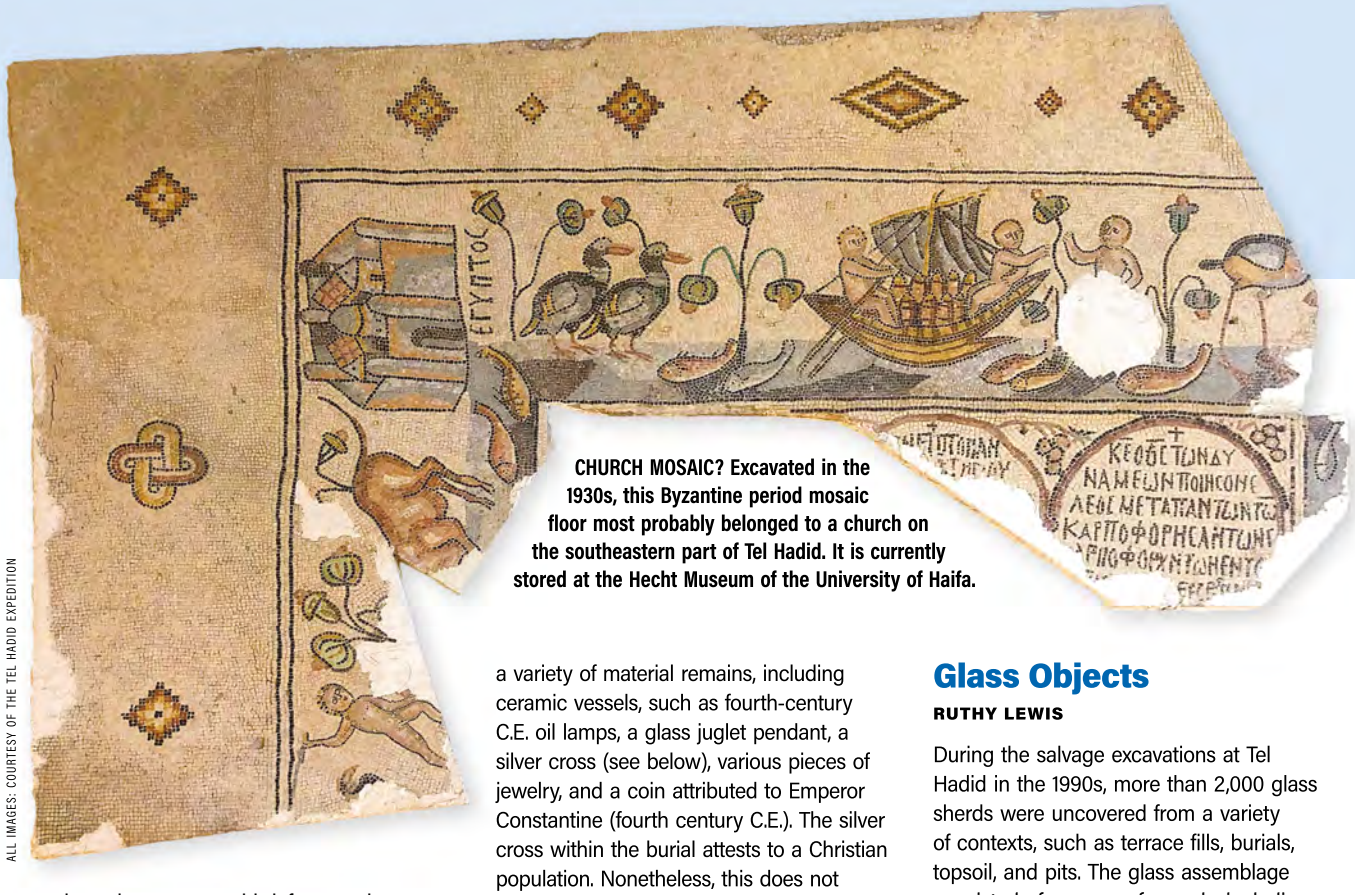
We hope that the two approaches, in combination, will provide us with a holistic view of what is above ground at Tel Hadid. This in turn might help us determine where to excavate and develop elaborate research questions relating to the formation processes of the site, the relationship between the various rock-cut installations, and the relationship between the site and its environs through the ages.

The Byzantine Period

RUTHY LEWIS

The Byzantine period (the fourth–seventh centuries C.E.) was a time of growth and prosperity in the southern Levant. Major transformations, most notably Christianization throughout the land, had a profound impact on the demography and resulted in modifications of various practices, including burials, and the construction of religious buildings, such as churches and monasteries.

The majority of finds from the Byzantine period at Tel Hadid have been identified



CHURCH MOSAIC? Excavated in the 1930s, this Byzantine period mosaic floor most probably belonged to a church on the southeastern part of Tel Hadid. It is currently stored at the Hecht Museum of the University of Haifa.

ALL IMAGES: COURTESY OF THE TEL HADID EXPEDITION

through surveys and brief excavations. Notably, these include a mosaic floor southeast of the upper mound, depicting a Nilotic scene (a scene inspired by the Nile River in Egypt) and featuring dedication inscriptions (see above), and several agricultural installations, including wine and olive presses.

In 2019, we excavated a large wine press, located in the center of the lower terrace, northwest of the mound. We uncovered small portions of a mosaic floor found *in situ*, a section of a floor made of broken pottery sherds and plaster, and, in the center of the wide surface, a square screw base made of stone. To the east, we unearthed an intermediate vat with a partially preserved mosaic floor, as well as channels connecting the wide surface, the intermediate vat, and the large collection vat.

We also unearthed a Byzantine burial complex with 17 arcosolium tombs (from Latin meaning "arched throne," an arched recess used as a tomb). The burials contained numerous human bones and a variety of material remains, including ceramic vessels, such as fourth-century C.E. oil lamps, a glass juglet pendant, a silver cross (see below), various pieces of jewelry, and a coin attributed to Emperor Constantine (fourth century C.E.). The silver cross within the burial attests to a Christian population. Nonetheless, this does not rule out the possibility of several different religious communities coinhabiting the site.

The Byzantine tombs at Tel Hadid are congruent with the ones uncovered at other sites in the region. Together, they attest to the region being inhabited by a Christian population.

Glass Objects

RUTHY LEWIS

During the salvage excavations at Tel Hadid in the 1990s, more than 2,000 glass sherds were uncovered from a variety of contexts, such as terrace fills, burials, topsoil, and pits. The glass assemblage consisted of a range of vessels, including beakers, bottles, wine glasses, beads, and bracelets, all dating from the late Hellenistic period (second–first centuries B.C.E.) to the modern era.

The earlier glass finds consist mostly of body sherds from unsecure contexts. Nonetheless, archaeologists uncovered a significant number of intact and restorable glass items, including Roman period (37 B.C.E.–325 C.E.) candlestick bottles and a unique glass chalice (see p. 36) from burial contexts. Candlestick bottles of various shapes and sizes were popular burial goods throughout the Roman Empire, especially in the southern Levant, from the late first to the mid-third centuries C.E. Other noteworthy finds include an early Islamic (seventh-century C.E.) molar bottle, a juglet-shaped pendant of the Byzantine period (fourth–seventh centuries C.E.), fragments of bowls from the late Hellenistic/Early Roman period (first century B.C.E.–first century C.E.), and an intact fourth-century C.E. trail-wound base of a small bowl.

Most of the indicative glass finds (i.e., handles, rims, bases) date to the Late Roman–Byzantine periods (fourth–seventh centuries C.E.). Of particular importance is a pit near a Byzantine wine press complex that contained a variety of wine glasses, a few sherds of window glass, and some oil-lamp fragments, all dated roughly to the sixth century C.E. These glass objects, along with some restorable ceramic vessels, allow archaeologists to securely date the pit to the Byzantine period. The assemblage might suggest that there was a church in the nearby vicinity of the press.

Like any other man-made material, glass is invaluable for archaeological research. Its permutable nature creates a typology and makes it helpful for the dating of a site. Further, chemical analysis can trace its origins. The glass finds from Tel Hadid show that the inhabitants of the site had access to trade and possessed the means to acquire glass objects and to incorporate them into their daily lives.

Olive Oil Industry

DÉBORA AYMBINDEROW

Archaeologists exposed 25 rock-hewn olive presses, spread over an acre along the southern slope of the lower terrace at Tel Hadid. They revealed three additional olive presses in the structures along the northern slope (where the cuneiform tablets were found)—one cut into bedrock and two movable installations in association with the buildings. The installations on the southern slope largely appear alone or in pairs (see below).

These installations should be dated to the Iron Age IIC (700–586 B.C.E.), most probably the seventh century B.C.E.

Composed of a large beam to which weights would be attached to increase pressure, the presses had a central collecting vat cut into the rock or into a stone boulder. A narrow shallow channel encircled the pressing surface and led into the vat through a hole. A shallow, usually circular, curved surface—used for crushing the olives prior to pressing—was cut in the rock near the vat. Archaeologists exposed a rock wall with a niche for the press-beam near some of the installations. The beams of movable installations were probably set within built walls.

The olive oil industry at Tel Hadid was based on earlier production methods developed in the Kingdom of Israel. Yet the installations' seventh-century B.C.E. date, the presence of deportees at the site, the Assyrian administrative system as reflected in the clay tablets, and the historical context as a whole point to a provincial economic enterprise. By constructing these olive-oil extraction installations, the Assyrians aimed to exploit the olive groves located farther to the east, on the highland of the province, for the benefit of the Assyrian empire.

Cult Objects

ALEXANDRA WRATHALL

During the excavations conducted at Tel Hadid in the 1990s, a pit was uncovered in a natural crevice in the bedrock. The pit revealed a unique and complete ceramic assemblage (see p. 37, top), including dozens of chalices and a donkey-shaped vessel—a prized discovery giving archaeologists a glimpse of life at Tel Hadid in the late Iron Age IIA (c. ninth century B.C.E.). The assemblage raised questions about the nature of the site—and the pit—in the Iron Age II.

Studies have revealed that this was a refuse pit, created for the deposition of cultic vessels. A cultic refuse pit contains a specific "type" of ancient refuse:

(1) artifacts associated with cult and

ritual practice (e.g., serving vessels, figurines);

(2) ceramic vessels usually found intact or completely restorable; and

(3) animal remains (understood in relation to consumption, feasting, or offerings).

The key element that identifies the Tel Hadid pit as a refuse pit is the presence of intact or completely restorable vessels, as well as the apparent cultic nature of its contents. How and why were the ceramic vessels deposited in such a way?

Cultic refuse pits relate to sacred ritual practices and the waste generated by them. The Roman practice of *favissae* (singular: *favissa*) helps us understand these pits. The Roman author Varro first employed the term *favissae* in the first century C.E. to describe rock-cut chambers near a temple close to the Capitoline Hill in Rome. The subterranean chambers stored votive objects, cultic figurines, and votive lumber no longer in use. Indeed, the rooms were allocated for refuse—but for a specific type of refuse that was meaningful to the individuals who deposited it.

In the study of earlier periods, such as the Iron Age II, the more contextually appropriate term "cultic refuse pit" is used instead of the term *favissa*. A cultic refuse pit reflects a similar concept to a *favissa*: the intentional deposition of a specific type of refuse, which is, for the individual depositing it, distinct from routine, daily refuse.

The Intermediate Bronze Age

NOA RANZER

The earliest remains unearthed at Tel Hadid hark back to the Intermediate Bronze Age (the second half of the third millennium B.C.E.). That period was previously considered to be an "interlude"—a short and obscure period that had little in common with the periods preceding and following it. However, excavations conducted at Intermediate Bronze Age sites throughout the southern Levant have revealed major regional differences between the inland areas, the coastal plain, and the Negev.

Regional differences are evident in the pottery, the type of sites (small v. large, etc.), and the trade networks in which every region participated. For example, while sites in the Jezreel Valley of Northern Israel revealed pottery vessels imported from Syria, the people of southern Israel were probably more involved in trade with Egypt. In general, there is little evidence of strong social stratification in the Intermediate Bronze Age.

People occupied the region of Tel Hadid as early as the Early Bronze Age II (2800–2500 B.C.E.). But during the Early Bronze Age III (2500–2200 B.C.E.), such sites as Tel Dalit, Tel Bareket, and Tel Burnat were abandoned or diminished in size. Intermediate Bronze Age remains, including pottery, tombs, and architecture, have been found throughout the region at sites such as Lod, Beth Nehemiah, and Tel Hadid.

The Intermediate Bronze Age finds from Tel Hadid—uncovered by the previous salvage excavation project—include potsherds and installations, mainly silos (see below) and other features carved into rock. The fertile soils in the region around the site are conducive to agricultural activity, which is consistent with the storage installations from Tel Hadid.