

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE THREE PHOENICIAN OSTRACA

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Three ostraca were found in a surface layer in poor condition. The use of advanced photographing techniques enabled us to read the ostraca, but even still, the photos weren't very clear.

DESCRIPTION

Locus 04-101B, B. 04-1042 (figs. 69:3, 132:1)

]? מחל[lhmw
תאתמל[?	lmt't
י' לכב	Bkl y
תנע	'nt

From the word «lhmw» (bread), in the first line, we can assume that this is speaking about provisions or supplies of consumer goods, and if the word in the fourth line is referring to the goddess, «Anat» then it could be assumed that it is speaking of the supply of goods for the temple of the goddess. It seems that in the second line, a specific individual is mentioned by name. In this name there is the word «mt» along with a theophoric particle, but it is very difficult to read. «Mt» means «person» and is similar to שיא in Hebrew. The pronunciation is unknown. In Hebrew, the word only appears in the plural form (see Deut. 33:6 for reference).

L04-101B, B. 04-1055 (figs. 69:2, 132:2)

ב??	b
פלמ[mlp
מ?חלשב	M]bšlh

The significance of this ostraca is not clear. «Shelach», (šlh) mentioned in the third line, can have something to do with leather, possibly a tool or a bag made of leather.

L04-101B, B. 04-1555 (figs. 113:40, 132:3)

???]ברל?	lrb hbkrl
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The word «rab» (בר) usually indicates someone who has been appointed to be in charge of a group or over a

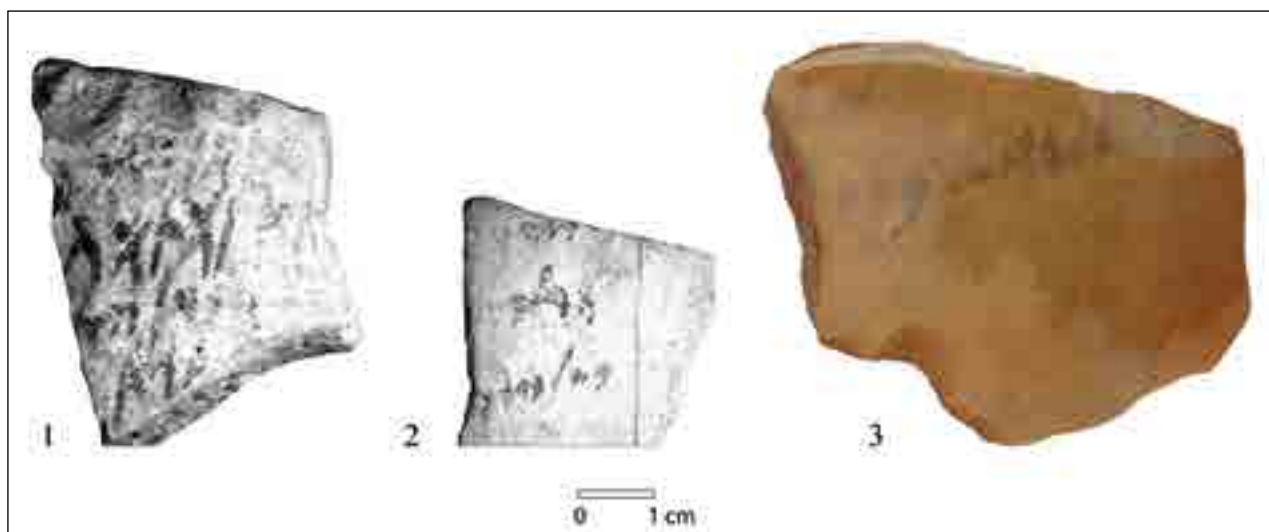


FIGURE 132.

task. The word «bechor» means «firstborn» in its singular form as well as in its plural form, «bechorim.» If the word is «bechor» or «bechorim» (רַבֵּב, מִירַבֵּב) then it may have a ritual significance.

DISCUSSION

The script is written in cursive Phoenician, and was usually written in ink. Similar ostraca were found in Acre (Dothan, M. 1985, p.81-94), Tell Kheleifeh, next to Elath (Naveh, J. 1966, p. 39-44), and in Sidon (Vanel, A. 1967, p. 45-95). Phoenician script was also found on a fragment of pottery that was purchased in Gaza, which seems to be from Khirbat Makom (Naveh, J. 1987, p. 25-30). The fragment from Gaza, which was dated by Naveh to the 4th century BC, shows clear signs that it is from a period later than the fragment from Achziv. However, the shard for Acre seems to date closer to the shard from Achziv. This shard was dated by Dothan to the middle of the Persian period in the 5th century BC. There is a possibility that script from the pottery for the ostraca from Achziv could be dated even later, maybe to the second half of the 5th century BC.

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