

# Ancient Egyptian Beer Vessels Unearthed in Tel Aviv, Israel

Archaeology news

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Fragments of ancient Egyptian beer vessels were uncovered during a salvage excavation in downtown Tel Aviv. *Photo: Yoli Shwartz, courtesy Israel Antiquities Authority.*

Archaeologists conducting a salvage excavation in downtown Tel Aviv, Israel, have discovered ancient Egyptian beer vessels, [the Israel Antiquities Authority \(IAA\) recently announced](#).

The excavation, led by Diego Barkan of the IAA, revealed 17 Early Bronze Age I (c. 3500–3100 B.C.E.) pits, in which were found hundreds of sherds from locally produced pots as well as fragments of large ceramic basins used to prepare beer. These beer vessels were made with straw temper and organic material—a method of manufacture not common in the local production of pottery, but consistent with Egyptian custom. The IAA reports that the beer vessels are similar to those found in an Egyptian administrative building in ‘En Besor in the Negev desert.

In the Early Bronze Age I, the Egyptians interacted with cities in the northern Negev and the southern coastal plain—through trade and the establishment of Egyptian settlements. This is evidenced by Egyptian architecture, pottery and flint and stone tools discovered at sites such as ‘Erani, Arad, Halif Terrace and the aforementioned ‘En Besor.<sup>1</sup> The beer vessels recently discovered in Tel Aviv offer evidence for Egypt-Canaan interactions further north during the EB I. If the vessels do indicate that Egyptians lived in the Tel Aviv region, this would be the northernmost Egyptian settlement in Canaan known during this period.

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There is evidence that during this time, the Egyptians were in contact with cities even further north in Canaan.

“We have Egyptian pottery sherds from the EB I at [Tel Megiddo and Tel Megiddo East](#),”<sup>2</sup> said Matthew J. Adams, Dorot Director of the [W. F. Albright Institute for Archaeological Research in Jerusalem](#) and director of the [Jezreel Valley Regional Project](#), in an email to *Bible History Daily*.

“Some have suggested that the famous [Megiddo ‘Picture Pavement’](#) dating to the EB I is graffiti left by Egyptians,” Adams continued. “There’s also the Kefar Monash copper hoard—which is on the Sharon coastal plain—which has Egyptian metal tools.”

Beer was an important part of the diet [throughout the Near East](#). Michael M. Homan explains why [in \*Biblical Archaeology Review\*](#):

In ancient Near Eastern cultures, beer was in many ways a super-food. By producing and drinking beer, one could dramatically multiply the calories in harvested grains while consuming needed vitamins; the alcohol was also effective at killing bacteria found in tainted water supplies. Given the difficulty of producing food in the ancient world, beer gave you a lot of nutritional bang for your buck.

Commenting on the ancient Egyptian beer vessels recently excavated in Tel Aviv, excavation director Diego Barkan said, “Now we know that [the Egyptians] also appreciated what the Tel Aviv region had to offer and that they, too, knew how to enjoy a glass of beer, just as Tel Avivians do today.”

#### **Notes:**

<sup>1</sup>. Suzanne Richard, ed., *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), p. 289.

<sup>2</sup>. Matthew J. Adams, “[The Early Bronze Age Pottery from Area J](#),” in Israel Finkelstein, David Ussishkin and Eric H. Cline, eds., *Megiddo V: The 2004–2008 Seasons*, Vol. II (Tel Aviv: Institute of Archaeology, 2013), pp. 295–334. For more on Egypt-Levant relations, see Johanna Regev, Israel Finkelstein, Matthew J. Adams and Elisabetta Boaretto, “[Wiggle-Matched <sup>14</sup>C Chronology of Early Bronze Megiddo and the Synchronization of Egyptian and Levantine Chronologies](#),” *Egypt and the Levant* 24 (2014), pp. 241–264.