Excavating households and dwellings offers a unique opportunity to inquire into the lives and habits of the voiceless segments of society—individuals and social groups who left behind no written documents. The approach that sees material culture as a nonverbal means of communication, claiming that everyday architecture and tools are all symbolically charged (Tilley 1993: 7; Buchli 1995; Johnson 1999: 103–108; Hodder and Huston 2003: 6–15, 166–170), allows one to search for economic, social, and symbolic choices that have been embedded in the material culture. This notion is especially appealing when analyzing Iron Age I living quarters in settlements along the Yarkon River, in Israel’s central Coastal Plain, which was, during this period (mainly the Yarkon-Ayalon catchment area) [Fig. 1]), an acknowledged ethnic and cultural borderland\(^1\) (Faust 2006: Fig. 19.5) between more ethnically and politically consolidated regions located to the south (Philistines), north (Canaanites), and east (Israelites) (Singer 1985, 1994).

The Iron Age I is often viewed as a formative period for the cultures that dominated the Land of Israel for hundreds of years. Questions relating to the ethnic and political borders dividing the land have received much scholarly attention (e.g., Dever 1995; Finkelstein 1996; Killebrew 2006; Faust 2006: 20–28 and more literature there). Answering these questions based on historical sources—the biblical narrative being the most notable of them—has been limited to investigating the social ranks and geographic zones (i.e., the southern Coastal Plain or the Samarian Highlands) that are described in these sources. However, the written documents do not disclose the ethnic identity of the

\(^1\) For a discussion of the term ethnicity, see below.
Figure 1. Map with settlements discussed.