

G 35/09
Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon
Annual Report Submission
Excavation Season, May 31-July 17, 2009



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1. RESEARCH DESIGN

The 2009 excavation season at Ashkelon continued the long-term goals outlined in 2007 (as year three of the current five-year plan), with continuing work in Grid 38 and three other excavation areas from last season. The goals for each area will be briefly outlined below:

1) Excavation in Grid 38

Grid Supervisor: Adam Aja, Ph.D. Candidate, Harvard University

Grid 38, on the northern scarp of the southern tell (*el-khadra*), has been a key excavation area of the Leon Levy Expedition since 1985. This area contains the only complete stratigraphic sequence through all of the periods of Ashkelon's occupation. In the 2000, 2004, 2007, and 2008 season, most of the earliest Iron I strata were excavated, revealing key evidence of the arrival of the Sea Peoples in Canaan at the beginning of the Iron I period. In 2009, we should complete excavation of the Iron I material, which is scheduled for publication in Ashkelon 5. All of the other pottery and architecture from earlier seasons has been compiled, and the material from 2009 will be incorporated into that publication. In 2004 and 2007, the immediately preceding stratum was discovered to be an unfinished Egyptian garrison, probably founded after the conquest of Ashkelon by Merenptah in the late 13th century BCE. And in 2008, we uncovered the 13th century remains of the Canaanite city that was destroyed by Merenptah and below excavated MB IIC/LBI remains in selected areas. In 2008, in probes, we uncovered MBIIC material is thus far the earliest phase in this area. Grid 38, when the sequence is completed, will provide a nearly complete stratigraphic profile of Tel Ashkelon.

2) Excavation in Grid 51

Grid Supervisor: Dr. Kathleen Birney

From 1985-2000, excavation along the western coast of the southern tell (Grid 50) sought to replicate the stratigraphic conclusions of W. Phythian-Adams through modern stratigraphic excavation. However, excavation in this area, while producing some extremely important results (Dog Cemetery, Iron Age Marketplace, Bronze Age Necropolis), did not provide a complete stratigraphic profile of the known phases at Ashkelon. The area was in some ways peripheral to the occupation of the city: a necropolis in the Bronze Age, a dog cemetery in the Persian Period, an open park in the Byzantine and Islamic city. In order to understand the results of the wide-scale excavation in Grid 50, a small excavation area was opened in Grid 51 (just to the east) with the goal of determining the boundaries of the city. The hope is that Grid 51 might have a nearly complete sequence of the Iron and Bronze Age strata thus supporting the hypothesis that the Iron and Bronze Age sea wall lay between Grid 50 and 51, and refining our understanding of the city's size and organization. In 2008, we realized that we were still within the Persian period. In 2009, we anticipate continuing and completing our work in the Persian period and reaching the 604 BCE destruction.

3) Limited rescue excavation in Grid 23

Grid Supervisor: Dr. Tracy Hoffman

From 1998-2000, Grid 23 explored the south side of Ashkelon's northern tell. While its finds demonstrated its importance for the Roman and Islamic periods, there are still unanswered stratigraphic question which will be critical to answer for the forthcoming publication. In the case of this building, it is unclear if it is residential building with some craft industry or a full scale industrial complex. At the same time, we noticed in 2008, as part of our ongoing management of open excavation areas, that there were features in the section which were beginning to erode. We plan to excavate a small plots on the eastern and northern margins of this area with the goal of protecting the architecture that exists and rounding out our knowledge of this important building

4) Excavation in Grid 47

Grid Supervisor: Rachel Bar-Nathan, Israel Antiquities Authority

In 1923, John Garstang undertook excavation in the center of Ashkelon, uncovering a major public building that he described as “Herod’s Cloisters.” This monumental building produced some of the most important Roman statuary east of Ephesus and represents the only excavation every undertaken in the city center of Ashkelon which we now all call the “Severan Forum.” Garstang’s excavation is only visible to the public through a series of columns haphazardly erected in the center of the park. The impressive Basilica is hidden. In 2008, we opened 100 square meters at the south end of the Basilica with the goal of understanding Garstang’s rather poorly published stratigraphy. We were able to find 5 phases of occupation in this area, including the continuation of two very large apsidal structures. We were only able to expose 50 square meters of these structures, and plan to open approximately 250 square meters of this building in 2009 in concert with development plans from the IAA. In the fall of 2008, inspectors from the IAA noticed that the original open air museum constructed by Garstang was crumbling, and that the statues he uncovered were not well placed. In response, the IAA prepared a comprehensive management plan for this area. We are in full agreement with this plan as it relates to the apsidal structure at the south end of the basilica area, and we have designed our strategy for 2009 to accomplish “Phase 1” and “Phase 2” excavations according to the IAA proposal.

5) Paleo-Environmental Reconstruction of the mounds of Ashkelon

Supervising Geologist: Stephen Moshier

Ground Penetrating Radar Specialist: Lawrence Conyers

In the recently published *Ashkelon I*, Avner Raban argued that the current coastline of Ashkelon was quite different from the coastline of the Bronze and Iron Ages, and that the changes hid natural harbors that once dotted the coast. We aim to test this hypothesis through coring in the south and GPR work along the beach. In 2008, we began this coring project, discovering important results both for the geological and anthropogenic formation of the hollow south of the south tell. As we continue in 2009, this basic geological work should provide insight into the site formation processes that have changed the landscape around the tell.

2. RESULTS

Grid 38—see A. Aja, Grid 38 final report

While the original plan had been to follow full removal of the Iron Age strata in squares 65 and 75 with excavation of the LB II remains over a broader area, the remarkable preservation and nature of the Iron Age architecture necessitated a change in plan. Parts of three structures, the best preserved early Iron Age I buildings at Ashkelon, were excavated, with the most remarkable finds in the South Structure of the East Building Complex: it consisted of five rooms, including a main room with sherd hearth and pillar base.

Grid 51—see K. Birney, Grid 51 final report

The late 5th-early 4th century building extant from previous seasons was fully exposed. Expansion of the excavation area to the south helped to clarify the Byzantine and Islamic stratigraphy in the area excavated in 1997-2000. With this work, the phasing of the grid was revised.

Grid 23—see T. Hoffman, Grid 23 final report

The limited excavation in this area worked to clarify the Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic remains in this area. The focus was on a single building, in use in all of these periods, which was domestic in nature but also included some craft or commercial use. It was determined that further work in this area will provide additional information not only about the residential building, but also about the urban plan of the city in these periods.

Grid 47—see R. Bar-Nathan and P. Johnston, Grid 47 final report

Excavations almost fully exposed the extent of Garstang's excavations south of the basilica. Most significantly, it was revealed that the a Severan-period odeion was built over the remains of the early Roman basilica apse. These developments were significant steps in the long-term plan of developing this area for visitors to Ashkelon National Park.

Paleo-Environmental Reconstruction of the mounds of Ashkelon—see report on data collection

3. RECORDING TECHNIQUES

The new recording techniques introduced in 2007 – namely the use of the online database OCHRE

<http://ochre.lib.uchicago.edu/>

– continued to be employed. As a result, once again we have included a series of digital reports covering each stratigraphic unit extant during the 2009 season (along with printouts of these reports to comply with current regulations concerning report submissions).

We are committed to the regular submission of *complete* data sets to the Antiquities Authority, and this new system makes that possible. If, however, these large digital reports are impractical for your use, please let us know. We are capable of formatting the data in any manner or in setting up an IAA login to the root database itself. It is important to us that our data be submitted in a manner that will best aid the IAA in its long term cultural resource management of the Ashkelon region.

4. CONTENTS

The printed report includes:

- 2009 Grid 38 final report (abridged)

- final report for each square

- 2009 Grid 51 final report

- final report for each square

- 2009 Grid 23 final report

- 2009 Grid 47 final report

- final report for each square

- 2009 Geology summary (Paleo-Environmental Reconstruction of the mounds of Ashkelon)

Grid 38 Final Report 2009

Ashkelon Excavations, the Leon Levy Expedition

by Adam Aja

During the 2009 Season of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon, the directors Lawrence E. Stager and Daniel Master opted to significantly reduce the excavation area of Grid 38. The tighter focus upon the areas of remaining Iron Age exposure, namely squares 38.65 and 75 (encompassing an area measuring only approximately 10.00 x 15.00 m) was designed to bring the entire grid into phase with the Late Bronze Age occupation levels. Once the Iron Age strata had been fully excavated, the intention had been to proceed with the Late Bronze Age II occupation across a broader area. The remarkable preservation of the Iron Age architecture and dramatic discoveries of the season necessitated a reevaluation of these earlier objectives.

The close of the 2008 season in square 38.65 and 75 had left us with a tantalizing view of the earliest Iron Age architecture found at the site. Although some later Iron Age I walls and features remained to be excavated, many of the underlying wall lines were exposed, such that we were able to begin excavating the interior of rooms almost immediately starting from the beginning of the 2009 season. As the season progressed, it quickly became apparent that we were revealing the best preserved early Iron Age I structures yet excavated at Ashkelon. Parts of three individual structures were revealed. One large structure located in the northeast of the excavation area (Eastern Building Complex—North Structure) proceeds into the balk. In the northwest, we revealed additional portions of the Northern Building Complex—Main Structure that had been largely excavated and removed during previous seasons. The remaining southern half of the excavation area was dominated by the South Structure of the Eastern Building Complex. This impressive structure included five individual rooms, three of which were fully encompassed within the bounds of the excavation area. The work was skillfully supervised by Janling Fu and Jonathan Wylie. They were ably assisted in this task by a team of volunteers and experienced excavators Dana DePietro, Eric Prins, and Sarah Hoffman. Their excellent work and attention to detail ensured the high quality of the expedition results this season.

The following is a preliminary report intended to provide working summaries only for the major architectural features, significant finds, and tentative dating of the discoveries from the 2009 excavation season. Several elements discovered and introduced during the 2008 and earlier seasons appear again here to provide context for room descriptions. This report is not intended as a comprehensive discussion of all excavated layers and features. Room and building designations are given for the purpose of facilitating discussion and should not be considered finalized labels for the architectural spaces. Readers are encouraged to examine the 2009 field reports and OCHRE database records from individual areas of excavation to find additional details. The discoveries of previous seasons in Grid 38 have been variously discussed and summarized in earlier grid reports, as well as in Stager (1993; 2008), Master (2005), Stager, Schloen, and Master (2008), and Aja (2009).

Phase 22-21 (LBII)

The Egyptian Pharaoh Merneptah claims to have conquered the Canaanite settlement of Ashkelon at the end of the 13th c. B.C.E. The siege of the city was depicted on the walls of the temple of Karnak. Merneptah's capture of Canaanite Ashkelon appears to have been followed by the systematic demolition of buildings and a re-use of the area encompassing Grid 38 for grain storage and other industrial activities. The end of the Egyptian occupation is marked by the

construction of a major military structure (**84.1080=83.618**), exposed in past seasons. There is no evidence for the catastrophic destruction of the Phase 22 buildings by the Egyptians of Phase 21, as might be expected in a city subjected to siege. There were no charred roof beams, ash, or layers of fired mudbrick walls. The 2008 season revealed the remains of a large, multi-roomed courtyard-style structure, Building 1101 (measuring at least 14.0 by 11.0 m.). The building was stripped of all material culture, suggestive of a planned abandonment and demolition. A bricky fill, which was cut through by numerous pits and silos, covered the remains. The Iron Age structures had cut into and were built upon the LBII strata of Phases 22 and 21. The evidence from this 2009 season supports the observations of the previous season.

The Late Bronze Age II occupation levels were noted immediately below the Iron Age I floors and exterior debris layers. Only a few coherent architectural features were identified this season. Most material appears to be debris originating from the destruction and decay of the Late Bronze Age buildings. Fills included fragments of mudbricks and shell-lime plaster along with substantial quantities of material culture. The top levels of these fill and debris layers often served as the initial floors and courtyard surfaces of the subsequent Iron Age occupation. The limited exposure of the architecture could not provide a single coherent plan to be linked with the discoveries of the previous seasons, but did illustrate the presence of substantial buildings across a broad area of the grid.

Numerous cobbles (**75.661**) found in the southwest corner of the grid appear to represent a short segment of a N-S oriented fieldstone foundation. The stones were not well-aligned and the mudbrick superstructure was poorly preserved. A beaten earth surface with an ashy lens at its top (**75.662**) appeared to run up to the west edge of the stones. The fill (**75.641**) that covered the stones included an apparently complete storage jar smashed in-situ. The southern extent of the wall proceeds into the balk and the northern extent appears cut by the later Iron I construction (Wall 75.517).

Two additional walls (**75.613 and 632**) found to the north of Wall 75.661 clearly form the corner of a different room. Each includes a stone foundation of at least two courses and one course of preserved mudbrick superstructure. The N-S Wall 75.632 is not aligned with Wall 75.661 suggesting that it belongs to a separate room or structure. The layers found north of Wall 75.613 include several sand lenses characteristic of exterior debris. No floors were identified for the interior of the room enclosed by the intersecting walls. Walls 75.613 and 632 appear to have been covered by striated layers of debris following the destruction of the building. These fills included numerous fragments of Egyptian pottery characteristic of the brief interlude of Egyptian occupation (Phase 21) that preceded the arrival of the Iron Age I (Phase 20) occupation.

Early Iron Age I Settlement: The Arrival of the Philistines

Phase 20 (early Iron I)

The recent excavation results from Tel Migne-Ekron, Tel es-Safi/Gath, and Ashkelon (coupled with the results from the older excavations at Ashdod) are adding significant data regarding the Philistine Pentapolis settlements and Philistine culture studies. The broad exposure of Grid 38, however, presents the largest continuous expanse of the *earliest* Iron Age occupation yet excavated in Philistia. Although there is clear evidence for change, there is no evidence for a catastrophic destruction of the settlement in the transition from the Late Bronze to the Iron Age. It is marked by the appearance of a new pottery style and new buildings set upon or dug into the decayed remains of the Late Bronze Age occupation. The bulk of the Iron Age strata were excavated in previous seasons. Philistine Monochrome sherds did not appear in large quantities

this season. Interior floors were largely clear of material culture debris and many contemporary exterior surfaces were excavated in previous seasons. The presence of even a small amount of Monochrome, as well as of Aegean style cooking pots both set upon and set *into* floors (see below) assured us, however, that we were solidly located in post-LB occupation levels.

The general layout of the Iron I settlement in Grid 38 was established by the work of previous seasons: several free-standing structures organized around an open exterior courtyard, which later developed into a N-S oriented street/alley. Buildings from the West and South sides of the courtyard were successfully excavated in previous seasons. Most of the Northern Building Complex (NBC) was also excavated previously, however, one East-West oriented wall (64.1072/1100=65.295) extended into the section, revealing that at least one additional room remained to be uncovered. The Eastern Building Complex (EBC) may be understood as two distinct units, the North (EBCn) and South (EBCs) Structures. Each of these units will be discussed separately.

The structures excavated this season had more in common than a shared pottery tradition. The brick color was relatively uniform between all three buildings, though ranged from very light grey to tan/buff. This light color was often difficult to distinguish from the surrounding, frequently bricky soils. The later Phase 19 walls were often situated directly above or abutting the earlier, Phase 20 walls. This continuity of occupation was thus useful in anticipating the location of many Phase 20 walls. In addition, the brick sizes were relatively standardized (circa 0.54 x 0.38 x 0.12 m). Once a single brick line was identified, simple measurement could often predict the next mortar line to emerge from the ground.

The structures were cut deeply into the debris of the Late Bronze Age II occupation. Last season's efforts definitively proved that the interior floors were established at elevations matching the *lowest exposed level* of the foundation stones. This discovery was matched repeatedly this season as room after room was revealed with floors well below that of the exterior ground level from which the foundations were cut. The dramatic elevation differences were most noticeable in the rooms of the NBC and EBC. Unexpectedly, most stone foundations did not project above the elevation of the contemporary exterior surfaces. The lower courses of the mudbrick walls built upon these foundations thus were submerged below ground. Such a poor construction would inevitably have resulted in a constant problem of moisture seeping into the bricks during the wet winter seasons. Such activity ultimately undermines the integrity of the mudbrick superstructure and likely shortened the potential lifespan of the buildings. There is some indication that the occupants attempted to deal with the dangers by placing small stones and cobbles against the exterior of the walls. This would have minimized problems from erosion, but would have done little to stop the wicking action of bricks in contact with the moist ground.

There are two possible reasons for the apparent subterranean construction. Large amounts of new mudbrick would have been necessary for the construction of the new Iron Age settlement. The subterranean rooms may have been the result of the builders constructing their structures within the large pits created when they mined for the necessary construction material. An alternative explanation rests upon the lack of good entrances for the buildings and the mounded condition of the LB II debris field. The Phase 20 buildings appear arrayed around the heap of bricky debris that represents the remains of the Phase 22 Building 1101. The preserved portions of the Iron Age structures may be only the rear or side rooms. The entrances would thus appear on the sides facing away from the LB mound. The entrances and floors may have been set at the lower elevation found for the ground level located farther away from the LB mound. While the stone foundations at the entrance may have projected above the ground, maintaining the

horizontal levels would leave them below ground as they dug into the sides of the LB mound to extend their structure. The slightly later Phase 20a rebuilding of the exterior walls may have been an attempt to mitigate some of this situation, though bricks still were founded below ground elevations. Neither explanation is entirely satisfactory, but no better solution has yet been offered.

Northern and Eastern (North Structure) Building Complexes—Phase 20b and 20a

Only the easternmost Room 1115 of the NBC remained to be fully exposed this season (See photo below). Walls 64.1071/1080, **65.295**, **65.296**, and **65.314**(=64.164) framed a space measuring approximately 3.00 x 3.00m m. The brick walls were set upon stone foundations. The foundation was substantially built with two courses, an upper course of smaller leveling cobbles set upon a large lower course, but remained completely below ground. The beaten earth floor (**65.333**=64.1110/1115) sloped up to the lower courses of foundation in both the east and south walls. It was found covered by a thin layer of ash, which likely emanated from the small fire installation **65.331** built in the northeast corner of the room. The installation was of unusual construction. It consisted of a pottery vessel surrounded by bread oven fragments set in a mud mortar. The vessel appears to have been turned on its side with the opening pointing towards the south. It would have been too small to function as a bread oven, but could have been an adequate installation for cooking or heating. A brick bin (**65.319**) constructed of brick fragments set against the east wall was found filled with grey ash. There was no evidence of burning within the bin. It likely served only as a repository for the ash debris.

No additional installations were noted on the west or south ends of the room. The entrance to room was not recovered. The northwest corner of the space was removed by a late period well and it is possible that the doorway was located at this location. No objects of note were recovered within the room. A small sliver (ca. 2.00 by 0.15 m.) of another room was exposed north of Wall 65.314, but most of the space remained unexcavated below the north balk. The remaining rooms of the NBC were excavated in previous seasons. It is uncertain if the sliver of room at the north would have corresponded to Room 216 excavated to its west during the 1990 season, although it certainly would have been contemporary.

A large, unroofed exterior space divided the NBC from the EBCn to its east. The area was marked by sandy debris and ash patches typical of exterior, unroofed spaces. Many sand layers appear to have been either water laid or wind-blown. Large quantities of pottery and bone were recovered from the accumulated fills. Layers **75.589** and **65.306** represent the earliest exterior surfaces contemporary with the Iron Age structures. While these technically represent the top levels of the LB debris fills, the Iron Age foundation trenches were noted to have been cut from these surfaces. Additional debris built up upon these early surfaces and against the mudbrick walls of the Northern and Eastern Building complexes.

The EBCn structure may have been of comparable size to the NBC. Unfortunately, most of the structure remains unexcavated below the eastern and northern balks. Only an area measuring approximately 2.00 by 8.00 m. was exposed within the bounds of the excavation area. The structure is defined by its southern (**75.492**) and western (**65.263**=**75.454**) walls. As in the case of the NBC Room 1115, the deeply set walls were constructed of brick set upon stone foundations. The exterior wall (65.263=75.454) was found with small stones and cobbles piled against its outer, western face, perhaps an attempt to protect the brick from erosion. There was no discernible entrance found through which one might have entered the building. The interior divisions remain unclear, given the limited exposure, but it appears that the structure included at

least two rooms, 75.602 and 65.332.

The smaller room in the south, Room **75.602**, was divided from the larger, northern Room 65.332 by an E-W Wall **65.301=75.585**. This wall included a mudbrick superstructure and a single course of stone foundation. Stone foundations were generally rare in interior spaces, unless they were vulnerable to damage from water. This was often the case in bathrooms and multi-purpose workrooms placed adjacent to the main entrance. This suggests that Room 75.602 served as the entrance vestibule of the structure. However, given the apparent disregard for the dangers of allowing the mudbrick superstructure to remain below ground, such observations may be meaningless here. The relatively level beaten earth floor, **75.602**, ran directly over the LB walls 75.613 and 623 to reach the foundations of the surrounding Iron Age walls. A small amount of occupation buildup was found above the floor. A small pit, **75.616** (see photo below) was cut into the floor to the south of a possible brick bin (**75.578**). Two juglets and a stone tripod leg were placed in the pit as a possible foundation deposit. One of the vessels (**RP11228**) parallels an example from Deir el Balah sarcophagus burial 116, (Qedem 10, figs. 86 & 93), dated late 13th -12th c. A spindle whorl (**MC61158**) and stone weight (**MC61159**) were also recovered from the floor.

Room EBCn 65.332 was preserved to approximately 5.00 by 2.00 m. The beaten earth floor, **65.332**, appeared to run to the walls, but was cut by a large pit (**65.264**) and disrupted by several later period pits. In the northern preserved portion of the room, the floor appears to have been set directly upon the debris of the LB. Some small stone installations of uncertain function were found on the floor adjacent to the west wall. A collection of over 20 loomweights and beads were recovered from the floors near the southwest corner. The weights were of unbaked clay and appeared in a variety of shapes and sizes, including small rectangular, cylindrical, and pierced pyramidal. There is some limited evidence for a mudbrick bin built in the southwest corner of the room. The exposed portion of the room was dominated by the presence of the large Pit 65.264 that cut the floor. It was roughly oval in shape, measuring nearly 2.00 m at its broadest point. The bottom of the feature was not reached, although it was excavated to a depth of over 1.50 m. The fill of the straight-sided feature was nearly devoid of material culture, although several small pieces of crushed gold foil and yellow ochre were recovered. The function of the pit could not be determined.

Some major changes affected the NBC at the end of Phase 20b. Room 1115 was dismantled and leveled with clean fill (**65.315/316/294**). The east end of the NBC was partially rebuilt and its large interior spaces sub-divided into several rooms. This construction changed the flow of traffic to provide a more direct line of access between the northern and southern areas of the grid. Numerous ashy debris and fill layers continued to build up in the open courtyard. An Egyptian vessel fragment stamped with the cartouche of Ramses III (**MC 60937** [see photo below]) and a faience scarab (**MC 60768**) were recovered from the courtyard debris.

These were sealed by later Phase 19b occupation and architecture, providing a solid *terminus post quem* for the architecture. Three large silos (**65.284**, **65.321**, and **75.542**) were cut into the exterior courtyard located between the NBC and EBCn structures. Silo 65.284 was lined with a white material, perhaps plaster or decayed organic residue. There was no clearly built wall to divide the silos from the N-S path of travel between the buildings. There is some indication of several post holes running roughly along a N-S line that may have served to support fencing, but these appear high in the debris fills and perhaps belong only to Phase 19b. Silo 75.542 was notable particularly for the presence of at least 15 small cylindrical loomweights of unbaked clay that were recovered from near the bottom, and storage jar inscribed with a Cypro-Minoan sign

(MC 61513)

No discernible changes could be determined for the EBCn structure in Phase 20a. Presumably the later Phase 20a period is represented only by additional occupational build-up upon the floors. Unlike the case of the EBC South Structure (see below), there is no indication for a lower set of foundation stones, or later Phase 20a rebuild of the exterior walls. Given the relatively small amount of occupational build-up and a foundation depth similar to that of the Phase 20a EBCs structure, it is possible that the EBCn structure is entirely a Phase 20a construction, although if so, was likely constructed early in this phase.

Eastern Building Complex (South Structure)— Phase 20b

The EBCn structure was abutted on its southwest corner by the EBCs. Two distinct architectural phases were visible, Phase 20b and the later Phase 20a.

The point of intersection between the buildings was unusual. The EBCs may have relied upon the EBCn to provide part of its northern closing wall. Two features suggest that the North Structure was constructed prior to the South Structure. First, the southwest corner of the EBCn Wall 75.492 was slightly rounded. This rounding may have occurred from wear prior to the construction of the South Structure. Second, the northern wall (75.460) of the South Structure does not run the length of the building. It runs parallel to the southern wall (75.492) of the EBCn but stops approximately 1.00 m. after meeting the corner intersection. It thus appears that the builders found it unnecessary to complete Wall 75.460 since Wall 75.492 could have served as the remainder of the northern wall. It is possible that the two structures were related, but in the absence of doorways to connect them we can only speculate on a more intimate relationship.

The exposure of the EBC South Structure (approximately 7.00 x 9.00 m.) revealed five individual rooms, each with a unique character: the northwest “bead room” (Room 587), the southwest “basket room” (Room 624), the main “hearth room” (Room 648), the southeast Room 611, and the central “altar room” (Room 572—[see title page photo and photo below). Wall 75.461 created the western wall of the structure and Wall 75.460 the north. The internal organization of rooms and preserved doorways suggest that the structure certainly included additional rooms to the south, although additional eastern rooms are equally likely. The eastern and southern sides of the structure remain obscured below the unexcavated balks. As with all other Phase 20b structures, no main entrance was identified. There are good reasons, however, to place the entrance at either the northeast or southwest corners of the structure.

The floor of Room 624 (75.624=654), which was heavily disturbed by contemporary pits and postholes, was partially exposed last season. A patch of mud plaster near the center of the room may have functioned as a platform hearth (75.642). Doorways provided access to the room from the South or East. It was difficult to distinguish two separate floors that might be associated with distinct sub-phases of occupation. A second hearth (75.504) was located near the center of the room in the higher elevation of occupational build-up (75.507=647). This later feature, along with the occupational build-up and additional built installations found along the walls (Bin 75.481, Benches 75.503, and 495, and Bin 75.544) may possibly be associated with the later Phase 20a occupation. The phytolith impression of a basket was found in the northwest corner of the room alongside an Aegean-style cooking jug during the 2008 excavation season. Heavy pitting, numerous built installations, and cooking facilities were frequently located in multi-purpose entrance vestibules in other Iron Age structures (Aja 2009). The presence of these features in Room 624 may indicate that the southern doorway was located near the main street-side entrance.

Residents could proceed from Room 624 to the Room 572 to its east by stepping over a

cobblestone threshold (**75.540**). The narrow room (ca. 2.00 x 3.00 m) had a beaten earth floor (**75.572**) with little occupation build-up. There was some evidence that the floor was plastered. Another doorway led to the north, but was not reinforced with a stone threshold. Its eastern doorjamb, however, was reinforced by a stack of unusual mudbricks. The color and composition of the bricks was distinctly different from that of the other bricks in the building. It appears that the brick was either baked, or made with a higher clay content. A small, hemispherical hematite weight **MC61459** was recovered sitting on the floor in the center of the northern threshold. A semi-circular bin (**75.547**) constructed of vertically stacked mudbrick was found in the southwest corner of the room, partially obscuring the opening of the western doorway with the cobblestone threshold. The bin, however, clearly was in use at the same time with both doorways. The mud-plaster that sealed it to the floor (both inside and out) was found covering the cobblestone threshold, and the floor traced cleanly through the northern doorway. The curved form of the bin likely was designed to minimize the doorway obstruction; however, the placement is unusual. The bin was found empty of finds.

The narrow Room 572 was dominated by the presence of the white, lime-plastered installation (**75.539**) that sat against the center of the wall (**75.401**) opposite the doorway to Room 624 (see the following two photos below). The prominent placement highlights the significance of the installation. This feature appears to be a roughly squared mound of earth with a flattened top. Four projections rise vertically from each of the top corners. Each projection was likely rounded slightly at the top, though this was only preserved in three of the four examples. The main body of the installation, as well as the south-side, rear projection was engaged with the wall. A lime-plaster sealed the wall and installation together at the points of intersection. There is some indication that the installation and wall were replastered several times during its period of use. The plaster was cracked or broken in several areas of the installation, particularly at the base, revealing the earth core. A faint trace of ash was noted on the top and front of the installation, though preliminary study indicates that the plaster in this area was not fired *in-situ*.

The largest exposed room of the EBCs was Room 648, located to the north of Room 572. Another unusual brick door jamb of possibly baked-brick was found in the southeast of room, likely marking the entrance to Room 611. The beaten earth floor was cut by several small postholes, but was relatively smooth and clean. It sloped up from a low point in front of the entrance to Room 572 in the southwest, to a high point on the northeast corner. The east wall was not recovered. Bench **75.599** was positioned along the northern wall (**75.460**). A platform hearth (**75.652**), constructed of mud-plaster spread upon the floor, was located near the center of the space. A stone and rubble-filled pit (**75.644**) was discovered immediately next to the hearth and may once have held a pillar base. Such a large room (ca. 4.00 x 4.50 m) would have been best served with a central pillar support, which commonly appeared in the largest room of Philistine structures (see Aja 2009). Indeed, a stone pillar base was recovered immediately above the location of the stone-filled pit in the subsequent Phase 19 occupation phase.

Room 587 was located to the west. The entrance was not excavated this season, but is suggested by the evidence to exist at its southeast corner to provide access from the hearth room (Room 648). The beaten earth floor was cut by two pits (**75.625** and **628**), each filled by an upright two-handled, Aegean-style cooking jug (**RP 11224** and **RP 11241**—[see photo below]). The burned sides of the vessels indicate that they had been used prior to their placement below the floor. Some unidentifiable bone fragments were recovered from within the vessel of Pit 75.628 (Hesse, Personal Communication 2009). Two previously excavated Phase 18 examples of sub-floor cooking jug deposits have included the articulated remains of juvenile canids (See

Stager, Schloen, Master, Press, and Aja 2008, 241). A possible bench (75.666) was constructed against the west wall, although this was not well defined. The debris fill that covered floor included nearly 6000 small frit beads of various colors. Spacer beads with 6 holes indicate that multiple strands would have been held together.

Eastern Building Complex (South Structure)— Phase 20a

Although the floor plan did not change, it appears that the EBCs was partially rebuilt at the end of the Phase 20 occupation. The northern (75.460) and central (75.549) walls were seemingly replaced and the main hearth room was significantly altered. Accumulation above the earlier floors was thickest in the northwest and southeast rooms.

The northwest room, Room 587, was covered by a relatively clean fill and a new floor (75.528) established at a higher elevation. Two small pits were identified in the northeast corner, cut into the floor. One of these (Pit 75.571) included an elephant-ivory tusk blank (MC 60360). One edge had been cut away indicating that it had been used in the creation of some narrow implement. A larger pit, which was seemingly used for refuse disposal including bovine horn, jaw, and ribs, was noted near the center of the room. There was no obvious entrance or exit from the room. The earlier threshold in the southeast corner was blocked and the rebuilt eastern wall (75.549/556) was reset at a slightly different orientation.

The main room with the hearth did not experience a significant build-up upon its floors, although several new features were added to the space. The doorway to the altar room was blocked and benches appended to both the western and southern walls. The Phase 20b bench located on the northern wall appears to have remained in use. Both the southern (75.651/586) and western benches (75.620/598/588) were constructed as two-tiered installations, with an upper and lower shelf. No other bench at Ashkelon was constructed in such a manner. These benches were bonded at the southwest corner, indicating that they had been constructed together. The earlier platform hearth was replaced by a square platform hearth (75.596; 0.72 x 0.72 m) of exceptional preservation. The hearth was covered by a layer of mud plaster set with pottery sherds. There was clear evidence of *in-situ* burning atop the installation (see photo below). The previously-discussed stone-filled pit (75.644) was not covered by the new installation and presumably would have continued to support a central pillar in this phase of occupation as it had in the earlier period. The most significant occupational build-up (75.600) occurred in the northeast corner of the room.

The construction of benches in the west and south blocked access to the surrounding rooms. No obvious exit from the space could be determined, although it is possible that the southeast threshold to the partially exposed Room 611 was maintained. Room 611 was found covered by a fill and a thick accumulation (810 cm) of white material. It is unknown at present if the white substance was plaster or phytolithic remains of organic debris. The basket room experienced some occupational build-up upon the floors, sealing most of the small pits and postholes of the previous occupational phase. Other than the blockage of its northern doorway, no observable change could be discerned in Altar Room 572 in Phase 20a.

Phase 19

The Eastern Building Complex's Northern Structure was significantly augmented in Phase 19, while the footprint of the Southern Structure remained largely the same. The open courtyard area, which was previously occupied by silos in Phase 20a, was incorporated into the EBCn structure. The rooms of the EBCs were filled with relatively clean soil, which provided a higher

elevation for new construction and served to protect and preserve the Phase 20 walls and built installations. Debris continued to build up against the exterior of the buildings.

Eastern Building Complex (North) Structure

The large open area located to the west of the Phase 20 EBCn was enclosed by a series of mudbrick walls (**75.437**, **65.240/268**, and **65.243**) built without stone foundations. The N-S orientation aligned with preexisting Phase 20 walls in the south and created a narrow street between the Eastern and Northern Building Complexes that ran the excavated length of Grid 38. Once established, this N-S alley was maintained for the rest of the Iron Age at Ashkelon. A linear series of post-holes found in the alley running parallel to the new walls may have been an animal pen or enclosed storage area. A second series of post-holes appear to encircle the opening to Room 474.

The entirety of Room 474 had previously been exterior space. New walls without stone foundations were appended to the pre-existing Phase 20 walls to enclose a large area (measuring ca. 6.00 by 5.50 m) at the corner of the EBCn and EBCs. The presence of a stone pillar base (**75.478/479**) near the center of the space indicates that the room was roofed. An irregularly shaped platform hearth (**75.422**) was placed adjacent to the pillar. It was constructed primarily of mud plaster laminations, with some evidence for a sherd layer covering at the northeast corner of the installation. Some undefined brick and stone installations were discovered in the western portion of the room. The room certainly must have been the locus of numerous activities given the high percentage of debris relative to other interior spaces. The proximity to the street and the presence of the hearth fire-installation may have contributed to the accumulation of debris layers that were found within the room. The surfaces bore traces of several small pits and postholes. A Bes Amulet (**MC 60217**) was recovered in the debris of the room. Other than the street-side entrance, no additional doorway could be identified to provide access to the surrounding rooms.

Room 237 was located to the north of Room 474. As in the case of its southern neighbor, no doorways could be found to provide access to the rooms found bordering it. The western wall was poorly preserved, with no stone foundation (**65.243**). A brick bench (**65.233**) was constructed against its inner face. The beaten earth floor (**65.237**) traced to the western and southern wall features.

As noted above, no clearly identifiable doorway connected either Room 237 or 474 to the eastern room. It is thus unclear if they may be considered part of the same residence. At present, the eastern space appears divided into at least three separate rooms. The area of the large Phase 20 Room 332 was subdivided, while the southern space was reused (walls 75.454/65.263; 65.301=75.585). The floors were covered by numerous fills. The southern Room 577 included numerous small finds in the sub-floor fills, including a scarab with lion or baboon (**MC 61016**). The white floor surface sloped up to a possible cobblestone threshold (**75.597**) at the west. A large ivory inlay (**MC 60477**) was found on the floor near the threshold. The uninscribed piece was pierced by several *in-situ* ivory dowels, indicating that it had been affixed to some other surface, possibly a wooden box or piece of furniture. Additional finds from the room included a cartouche amulet and a cylinder seal (**MC 61323**) with a tree of life depicted before several anthropomorphic worshippers (see photo below). Wall 65.301=75.585 divided the room from Room 323 to its north.

Room 323 was reworked several times during its use in Phase 19. Only a small area (measuring only 2.00 by 3.00 m) exposed between the east balk and the reused walls on its west (65.263) and south side (65.301). Its northern wall, Wall **65.302**, divided it from an additional

room to its north, Room 325. The rubble-filled bench **65.279** built against the south face of its north wall put an earlier, limited use fire installation (**65.329/330**) out of use. A later fire pit (**65.310**) cut into the occupation build-up near the center of the room, but was itself covered by later occupational build-up. This considerable activity does not appear matched by anything in the northwest Room 325.

Only about 1.00 by 2.00 m of floor (**65.325** with occ. deb. **65.318**) were exposed in the northwest Room 325. No object of particular importance was noted in the space. Evidence suggests that the northern and eastern walls of the room should be expected at the approximate locations of the current east and west balks. The remains of rubble-filled benches were exposed along both balks. These built features would typically be expected to rest against a wall.

Eastern Building Complex (South Structure)

Much of the Phase 20 architecture of the EBCs was reused in Phase 19, although a few walls were rebuilt and the floors were covered by a thick, relatively clean fill that sealed the installations and lower mudbrick courses. This fill was a hallmark of the Phase 19 constructional activity and was likely one of the reasons for the exceptional archaeological preservation of the Phase 20 features. Many architectural features from Phase 19, with the exception of the constructional fill, were excavated during previous seasons. Readers are directed to examine earlier summary reports and discussion for details.

The street-side rooms were largely excavated during the 2008 season. The main entrance to the structure may have been changed in Phase 19. The N-S oriented street/alley appears to have provided access to both the EBCn and EBCs structures. Entrance vestibule Room 392 was discussed in the Grid Final Report 2008. One additional feature was revealed this season near the proposed doorway. A highly disturbed Sunken-Vessel Installation (**75.520.B3730**) was set into the sub-floor fill and likely functioned with the earliest floors of the room before being put out of use. There was no trace of a surrounding basin of shells, sherds, or stones as commonly appeared in other excavated examples (see Aja 2009). Additional thresholds connected the vestibule to Room 347 to its south and Room 550 to the east. The eastern Wall 75.296 was constructed using an unusual technique employing integrated vertically brick (IVB), a technique possibly unique to Philistine building traditions.

The floors of Room 550 (**75.550/534**), previously known as the “Hearth Room,” covered the thick fills (**75.535**) that characterized Phase 19 construction. A Bes amulet (**MC 60861**) was recovered from the fill near the original Phase 20a surface. Some minor pits and postholes cut the floor and occupational debris layers. Brick benches (**75.374**, **75.446**) were found against west and north walls. A large stone pillar base (**75.524**) was placed near the center of the room atop a stone-filled pit of similar diameter (75.644/645 discussed above). The Phase 19 constructional fill was found surrounding the pillar base, suggesting that it was in place at the time of the filling and was not cut into it from above. Lamp and Bowl style foundation deposits (**75.488** and **75.518**; see Bunimovitz and Zimhoni 2004) were recovered from north side of the room at corner of Bench **75.446** and from the south at the corner of Wall **75.401**, possibly marking a doorway to south. The vessels of both deposits were close parallels of one another in form and decoration.

Further discussion of the pillar base is warranted. Although there was contact between the stones of pit 75.644/645 and the pillar Base 75.524, the stone-filled pit should not be considered purely as a support base for the large stone pillar base. There were few points of contact between the stones of the pit and the pillar base. It is possible that the pillar base stone used in Room 550 was robbed from the earlier Phase 20 building. The hole left by the robbing of the pillar base

would have been filled and the stone drum set upon the fill in anticipation of the new, Phase 19 needs for roof support and higher floor elevation.

Both entrances to the Phase 20 “Altar Room” were blocked in Phase 19 and the room filled (75.523). The altar was completely covered, preserving it fully. A bichrome sherd with a bird (RP 11161) was recovered from the fill. A rubble-filled bench (75.434) was constructed against the north wall and a bin (75.522) placed against the west. The bin had organic residue and miniature bell-shaped bowl with horizontal handles (RP11163). The room must have been extended to the south, since the southern wall was not recovered. No doorways were found to provide access to and from the space.

Phase 18-17

Only a few limited remains from the later Phases 18 and 17 remained to be excavated this season. These were predominately located in the northernmost square.

The Phase 19 EBCn Wall 65.240 had been over the filled Phase 20 silos and pits of the open courtyard. This unstable base apparently caused some settling that necessitated a rebuild in Phase 18. The new wall (65.180) included large stone set into the settled depression to create a solid foundation. This new construction would have functioned with Phase 18 Wall 65.178. A narrow cobble threshold (65.260) was exposed at the intersection of these two walls. This phasing represents a change from the previous season’s interpretation of the wall remains.

The eastern walls and floors that would have been contemporary with Walls 65.180, 65.178, and Threshold 65.260 were severely damaged by later phase 17 foundations, removing most traces of their remains. A possible Phase 18 fragment of the contemporary eastern floor (65.292) was preserved in the northeast corner of the grid, along with a pillar base of a squared stone with flat top (65.297). A bone pit-deposit (65.280) was found cutting the surface. Other Iron Age I examples of bone pit-deposits from Ashkelon included either an *ovicaprid* skull or articulated right forelimb packed in clay. Although the bone fragments appear to have been packed in clay, they did not match the pattern of other examples.

See earlier reports and summaries for additional details regarding the Phase 18 and 17 occupation.

Conclusions

The earliest Iron Age occupation of Ashkelon has thus, with the close of the 2009 excavation season, been almost thoroughly exposed to the limits of the designated excavation area of Grid 38. Additional limited excavation might answer some questions regarding the transition between the Late Bronze and Iron Age; however, it would be inadvisable to substantially excavate the extant architecture. The remains of the Eastern Building Complex represent some of the best preserved, substantial, and important structures of the earliest Philistine occupation found to date. As such, they should be preserved.

Future possibilities for exposing additional Iron Age architecture in Grid 38 are extremely limited. The Iron Age exposure was the result of over 20 years of excavation. Previous experience has revealed that the Iron Age architecture north of the EBCn was almost completely removed by later constructional activity. The height of the balks precludes the possibility of exposing Iron Age structures in less than 10 additional years of stratigraphic field excavation. The southern extent of the Eastern Building Complex’s Southern Structure (in the area of Square 38.85) might be revealed with concerted effort, although would likely require an additional two or three seasons of excavation; and given the limits imposed by substantial Roman period

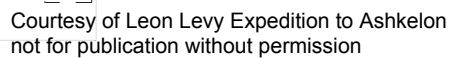
remains would be restricted to an area of less than 5 by 10 m.

Regardless, the results of the 2009 excavation season must be considered highly successful for its role in completing the map of Iron Age Philistine occupation begun in 1985 during the inaugural season of the Leon Levy Expedition. We are now privy to a full layout for substantial portions of four major Iron Age I building complexes (see Aja 2009)—one of the broadest archaeological exposures of Philistine strata ever revealed. Coupled with the studies of specialists conducted over the past several years, we are now well situated to begin fitting together the multiple pieces of the complex archaeological puzzle for the Philistine occupation of Ashkelon.

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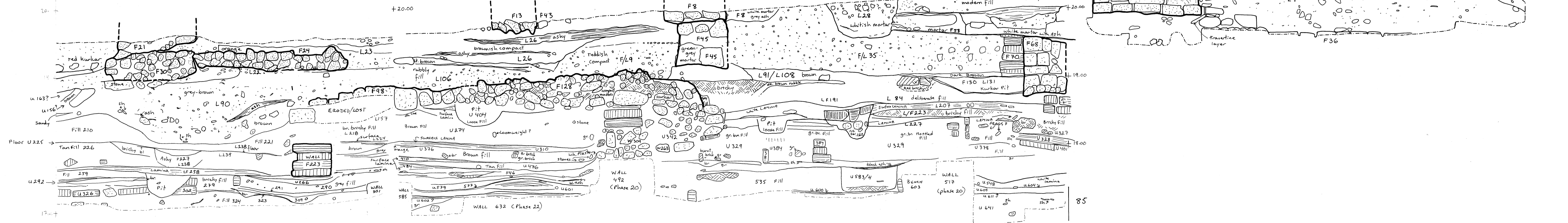
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75



Tel Ashkelon
Grid 38
Squares 65, 75, 85
East Section
1:25

Complete section compiled by
C.S. Alexander & A. Aja, 2003; 2007 ADDITIONS; Sh = Sherd
2008 ADDITIONS gr = grey
2009 ADDITIONS br = brown



DwgID 13,2 38

TEL ASHKELON

Grid 38 Square 65

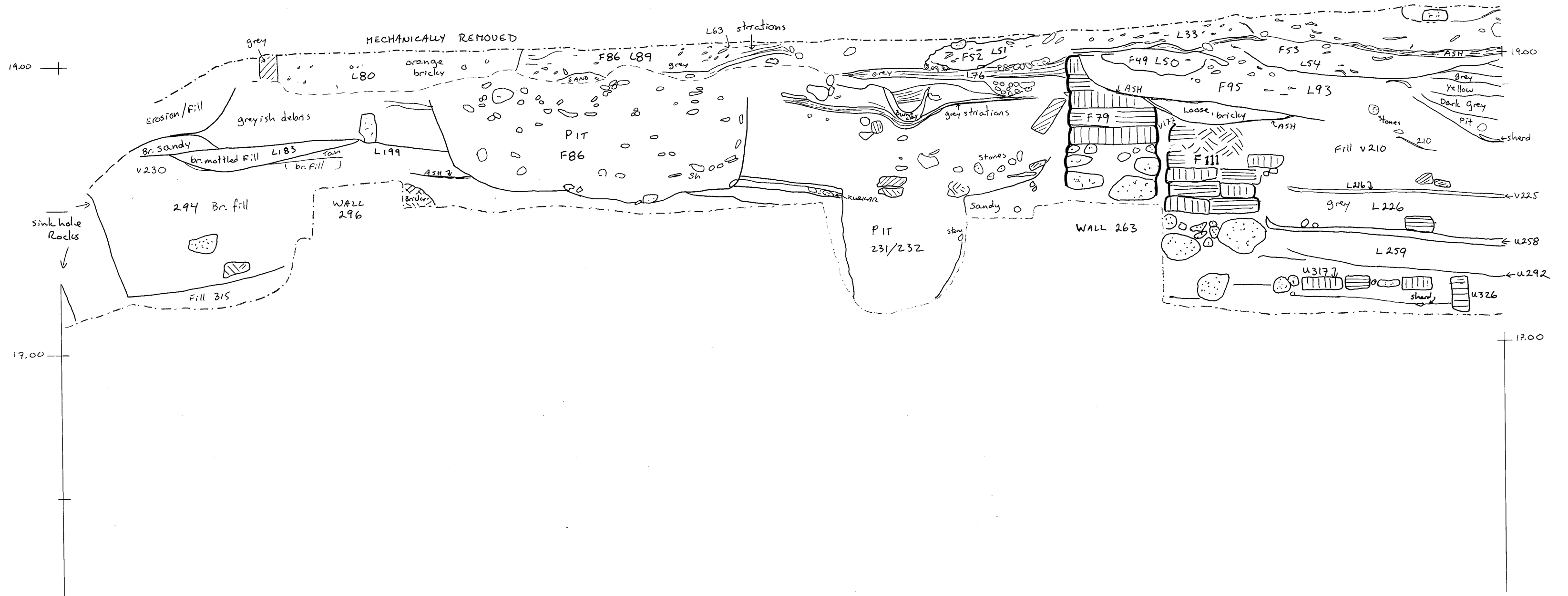
NORTH SUBSIDIARY SECTION

1:25

2609 Additions

64 65

65 66



Jonathon Wylie

17 July 2009

Grid 38, Square 65: 2009 Final Report

The primary goal for grid 38 this season was to excavate the remainder of the Iron Age in squares 65 and 75. The goal was a lofty one, but with the hard work and enthusiasm of our team of six staff and some 12 volunteers we were successful in meeting our goal. In six weeks of excavation in 38.65 we have excavated remnants of four phases of Philistine Ashkelon (phases 17 through 20). In the process, we have answered some old questions and raised some new ones. What follows is a report of the excavations in 38.65 during the 2009 season.

Phase 20

Phase 20 marks the arrival of the Philistines in Ashkelon. It is divided into 20B and 20A, though it is not possible to separate A and B everywhere. In 38.65 the only place in which we can be certain of an A and B separation is in room 333, which is part of the Northern Building Complex. Excavation of part of this room in 38.64 several seasons ago provided us with some notion of what to expect and also gave us a decent plan of the room along with the depth of the floor. It appears that the occupants of phase 20 dug deeply into the LB2 fill. As a result, their bricks had a life span much shorter than that of bricks sitting above the surface. 20B, then, appears to be relatively short. Room 333 was bound to the south by wall U295, to the east by wall U296, and to the north by wall U314. We never found any trace of mudbrick above U314 and, therefore, did not have any sign of it until we came down upon the stone foundation. The fill above room 333 (U316) was especially soft in the northern part of that unit, so it seems unlikely that there were any bricks there. I believe it is possible that U314 is a threshold. This would explain the absence of brick. On the other hand, a strong patch of phytolith which was found immediately on top of the stones may be a remnant of a grain composite applied to the tops of stones before bricks were laid in order to help prevent deterioration of bricks by water (Adam Aja's theory). Sitting on floor U333 were an ash bin U329/330 and a fire installation constructed of tabun and potsherds, U331. U329/U330 sat along the W face of U396, and U331 sat in the corner between U296 and U314. U333 was a very compact beaten earth surface that traced very nicely throughout the entire room and sloped up gradually to each of the walls.

To the north of wall U314, we excavated through the fill layer U315, hoping to come down on a surface. We had only a very small bit of this unit between U296, U314, and the N baulk, so excavation in it was difficult. We found no trace of a surface there.

Room 333 was put out of use in phase 20A. At the beginning of that phase a street that ran N-S directly above room 333 was constructed. This required that 333 be filled. The fill immediately above floor 333 was U316. This fill went as high as the top elevation of U314. To the north of U314 was fill U315. Above U315 and U316 was U294. U315, U316, and U294 are all the same fill. I closed U294 and opened U315 and U316 when we came down on U314 because we thought that U314 might be a grain bin built against an E-W wall beneath the N baulk. I thought it would be a bin because we found phytolith above it and because initially we

found just one row of stones for it. When we found that 314 was a wall with at least five courses and four rows of stone we realized that the fill above U333 all the way up to the first layer of the street is probably the same. Above U294 is U278, which is the first “surface” of the N-S street that persists through the rest of the Philistine occupation of grid 38.

During phase 20 the area to the west of the Northern Building Complex was a large courtyard area. U306 extends from the N baulk to the S baulk, and from U296 to U263. It is cut by posthole U308 and by pit U321/U322. There may be additional pits cut into this courtyard that have not yet been identified. After final sweeping I saw possible lines for two more pits—a small one less than a half meter to the south of 284/285 and a larger one about a meter south of it. There is also a regular depression and rectangular area of ashy material between U296 and U284/U285. I am not certain these are pits because there appears to be a layer of bricky detritus above a layer of ash and loose kurkar pebble. It is quite possible that these areas that look like pits may simply be slightly lower, and a light picking through the more compact detritus areas may reveal the junkier fill beneath them. Above U306 were fill layers U286 in the northern half of the square and U289 in the southern half. The line between these units was arbitrary. After we tore down the phase 19/18 E-W wall that ran through this area we continued to excavate the areas to the north and south separately for control. Once we could see that the material in both halves was identical we opened U306. Importantly, we found an Egyptian vessel stamped with the cartush of Ramses III (MC 60937) and a faience scarab (MC 60768) in U289. The cartush of Ramses III provides a terminus post quem of the mid-late 12th century for U289. Cut into U289 is U287/288, which I thought was a pit but turned out not to be, or if it was it was very shallow. Above 289 was U271, which was cut by pit 276/277. Above 306 in the north was U286, which was cut by the silo U284/285.

The third area of phase 20 we uncovered this season was in the building to the east of the courtyard. This room was bound in the west by U263 (in foundation trench U239) and in the south by U301. Floor 332 appears to be the earliest surface associated with these walls. We now believe that U332 was the surface from which the large pit 264/265 was cut. Initially we thought that pit was cut from U266 because we first saw lines from that level. We now think there was some 20-25 cms of settling in the pit, which caused a depression in the surfaces above, so that the lines we saw in U266 were not really from the cut of the pit but from its settling. Nevertheless, we excavated the pit as though it were cut from U266.^[1] U332 is the only phase 20 surface we can associate with U263 and U301 because it is put out of use by the phase 19 wall U302 and the rubble bin built to its south, U279. U332 runs beneath these features. U332 traced nicely through the southern part of the room, but we were unable to trace it all the way to the northern baulk. To the north of U264/265 we lost the surface and came into an large area of fill characterized by many chunks of shell plaster. We gave this fill a new unit number, U336. It is unclear whether we went through U332 and came down upon U336, or whether U336 is another large pit. We do know that fill deposits including shell plaster were common in 38.74 in the LB, so it is likely that we are dealing with a similar phenomenon here. At the end of the season we thought we might be seeing some faint pit lines in this area but we were unable trace them consistently. If 38.65 is returned to next season this should be an early matter of exploration. In the southern part of the room U332 traced up fairly consistently to U301 and U263. We saw on the last day of excavation two mudbricks protruding from U301 in the SE corner of the square in a SE-NW orientation. These mudbricks may be part of a bin built against U301 and U263 in the corner. We were unable to find any other bricks that would continue this

feature. We did find it more difficult to trace U332 as it approached U301 in this area. That could be because there was a bin here and we had come into the fill contained by the bin. Nevertheless, we could tell that U332 was sloping up on its way to U301. U332 was covered, probably at the beginning of phase 19, with fill U324. It is important to note that as we removed U324 when we were exposing U332 we found some 22 clay spool weights. Many of them were pierced, and they were in various shapes and sizes. They were spread out around the SW corner of the room, but did not seem to be deposited in any organized fashion. We also found several beads in the SW corner of this room. All these beads and spool weights were found during our excavation of U324, so they were recorded under buckets collected from that fill. It is important to note, though, that many of these objects were found either on surface U332 or just above it. One final thing to note about U332 is that as we removed U324 we came down on three stone installations. In the south we found U334—a row of stones parallel to U263; in the middle we found U337—4 stones perpendicular to U263; and in the north we found U338—a group of stones built against U263. It is possible that these items are part of the fill U324, but their organization is suspicious.

Phase 19/18

During phase 19 the western part of the square remained a street. Above U278, we had U269, a street surface from phase 19/18. U269 was cut by a series of five postholes, all alligned in a N-S orientation—U272, U273, U274, U275, U293.

The large open courtyard was divided in phase 19 by an unimpressive E-W mudbrick wall U268=U240. The courtyard to the north had surface U283=U237. U237 was bound to the south by U268=U240, to the west by U233 and U243. We were unable to trace U237 to a wall in the east, but the most likely scenario is that it was contemporary with the re-used U263. The western walls of courtyard U237 were a bit tricky. We found two distinct mudbrick features, U233 and U243. When we traced U237 it seemed to slope up to U233. Our conclusion was that U233 was a mudbrick bench built against the mudbrick wall U243. When we removed U233 we found that U237 also seemed to slope up to U243. Perhaps U243 stood for a brief period without U233, and at a slightly later date U233 was constructed alongside it as a bench. Since neither U243 nor U233 had a stone foundation, and since their bricks seemed quite deteriorated, it is possible that they were not proper walls. Maybe U243 served as a street curbing with U233 built against it as a bench. This would help to explain why these features were so anemic, and why we had such a difficult time finding good bricklines in them.

To the south of U268=U240 we had courtyard surfaces U261 and U251, the latter being cut by posthole U255. Following U251, U247 was laid. U247 was cut by pit U245/U246. There was also an intriguing stone installation, U203, sitting on U247. In addition to the stones of U203, there was a row of three mudbricks, U244, just to the south of U203, which may have functioned in relation to U203. We have no good clues as to what this feature was. Perhaps it was a type of platform.

In the eastern building the phase 20 wall U263 was re-used in phase 19, as was U301. In phase 19 the large room U332 was divided into two smaller rooms by wall U302. Along the southern face of U302 we found a rubble bench U279.^[2] We found a very similar rubble bench against the north baulk, U317. We did not have the wall against which U317 was constructed. Presumably it is barely beneath the north baulk.

There appears to be a long history of phase 19 occupation in these rooms, especially in the room bound by U263, U301, and U302. We did not find as much occupational material to the room north of U302. In that room, above the sub-floor fill U324, we found floor U325 with occupational debris U318 above it.^[3] This surface was contemporary with U317, U263 and U302. Above U318 was fill U299, which was laid in phase 18 to cover the phase 19 room in preparation of floor U292 (see phase section on phase 18 for more on U292).

The southeastern phase 19 room contained more occupational material, and was cut excessively by pits. The earliest phase 19 surface was U323. It was contemporary with U301, U302, and U263. The small ash pit U329/U330 was cut into it. Shortly thereafter, directly above U329/U330 the rubble bench U279 was constructed on top of U323 and against the S face of U302. Two postholes were also cut into U323—U327 and U328. Above U323 was a layer of occupational debris, U307. U307 was cut by a fire pit—U310, another pit—U311/U312, and by a posthole—U313. U310 was slightly later than U311/U312, as it was clear that U310 had cut U312. It is unclear why this area was cut by so many pits. In order to level the area before the next surface was laid, a thin leveling fill was deposited, U309. U309 did not cover the entire area, but just a small area above the pits. Floor U303 was laid after U309, and pit U304/U305 was cut into it. Above U303 was the occupational layer U300=U291. All these occupational layers following U323 were contemporary with U301, U302, U279, and U263.

Phase 18

In general, it remains difficult to make a distinction between phases 19 and 18 in the eastern squares of grid 38. The western squares displayed a more significant architectural difference between these two phases, but we have not seen that as much in 65 and 75. Nevertheless in at least two instances in 38.65 we can posit a phase 19 construction with a phase 18 reconstruction. That is in the E-W wall that separates the northern courtyard from the southern courtyard. In phase 19 the mudbrick wall U268=U240 was laid extending from the street to the N-S wall U263 (re-used from phase 20). U268=U240 was laid above pit (U331/U332) and another large divot (U287/U288). As they settled, the mudbrick of U268 deteriorated and sank. This led the occupants of the phase 18 city to cut into U268 in its eastern end in order to lay down stones where the mudbrick had sunk. These stones are U180. This is a reversal of our understanding of this wall from last season when we posited that U180 was phase 19 and U240 was phase 18.

Related to our understanding of that wall, we have also altered our understanding of U178. Last year we thought that U178 was a mudbrick bench built against U111 in phase 17A, but the presence of a stone foundation beneath U178 was odd for a bench. This year we removed U178 and found beneath it a very consistent stone foundation. We also found a threshold between U178 and U180. We numbered the threshold U260. In the corner between U178 and U260 we found a small stirrup jar as a foundation deposit. Important for the stratigraphy, we found a very large cornerstone joining U180 and U260. This led us to believe that U180, U260, and U178 were all constructed at the same time in phase 18, when U240=U268 was repaired.

In the eastern rooms we may have one surface in the northeast and one surface in the southeast that can be attributed to phase 18. Presumably, U180 would have continued onward to the east into the eastern baulk before it was cut away in phase 17. This would have created two rooms in the east, a northern and a southern one. Moreover, this would make more sense of the placement of the threshold U260.

In the northern room, after the phase 19 occupation, a sub-floor fill U299 was laid in preparation for the laying of floor U292. We can see in the northern and eastern baulks that U292 appears to go over U302 and beneath F111, which makes it post-19 and pre-17. U292 was cut by pit 297/298, which contained a pillar base, and probably by U280/281, a bone pit. Unfortunately we missed most U292 in excavation, so we did not have the opportunity to trace much of it. Extrapolation from the baulks, however, suggests that it would have been contemporary with U178 to the west and an eastern extension of U180 (i.e. extending to the east of U178) in the south before U180 was cut away by phase 17A builders.

U291-U300 is the last of the phase 19 occupation in the southeast room. Above that we have fill U290, with the occupational layer U266 above it. U266 ran beneath the phase 17A E-W wall U223, which makes it pre-17. Beyond that we unfortunately were unable to trace its relation to any architecture. U266 did not trace well because of a large divot caused by pit U264/265. We were not able to trace it to the S baulk, as it appeared to reach its terminus directly beneath the S face of U223. Given what we know, it is most likely that surface U292 in the north and surface U266 in the south were contemporary. They do not trace through the E baulk consistently enough to equate them. They probably would have been separated by U180 anyway. In the north we came down upon a small bone pit, U280/281, which we estimated was probably cut from U266. We now think it was probably cut from U292. The settling of U264/U265 made it very difficult to trace U266 through the entire room.

Phase 17

All our excavation of phase 17 this season was in the rooms to the east of F111. We began the season with two major pieces of architecture from phase 17A—the N-S wall F111 and the E-W wall F223. There may have been a foundation trench, U267, cut into U259 for F111. We did not find consistent evidence for it, but given how deeply phase 17A cut into the earlier material it makes sense that they would have used a foundation trench. Fill U259 was laid over the phase 18 surfaces U292 and U266, and over the divot created by the large phase 20 pit U264/U265. Above fill U259 floor U258 was laid, and occupational debris U254 accumulated on that floor. U258 appears to have been covered with plaster, especially where it sloped up to F111. The plaster was not well preserved, but we were able to trace it out fairly well where U258 met F111 near the north baulk. We can see in the eastern baulk that there was a pit cut into U258, but we missed it in excavation. Above U254 were two layers of fill. U252 was a thin layer which was slightly junkier than the fill above it, U226. We began the season in this room with U226 in the north and U239 to the south. The division was a remnant of last season's excavations which required us to excavate this room in units north and south of the large pit F121/L90. We equated U226 and U239 on the first day of excavation this year because we could see that we were below that pit and that the material was all homogenous.

There was another phase 17A room in the SE corner of 38.65, bound by F111, U223, and the E and S baulks. It was a small area, which made working in this area tedious. Above the occupational layers U291=U300 was a fill U290, which is probably equal to U259. U223 was built atop U259. We found U262 above that in the small SE room. When we excavated it we thought we were going through fill, but we now see that we were in occupation, more or less contemporary with U258. Above U262 was U253. We opened U262 because we noticed a change in composition to a darker soil, but we found no phytolith striations or anything that

would normally indicate a surface. At the time we could not see the surface in the baulk either. Fill U253 was laid prior to the floor U250, upon which a mudbrick bench U249 sat against F111. U250 was undoubtedly contemporary with F111 and U223. Slightly later, another floor was laid above U250. In this task, fill U248 was poured on top of floor U250 and bench U249, and a new floor and bench, U224 and U220 respectively, were installed.

Connecting this season and next season

Since we were successful in getting through the Iron Age, for the most part we have come to a good stopping point. Floor 333 was removed, though there may still be a thin layer of occupational material beneath it. Given how deeply 20B cut into the LB, I suspect the LB city is not far below.

Most of the remaining questions and tasks are germane to the eastern building. The first task should be to remove the late material from the eastern face of U263. When we came down on a long row of stones pushed up against the western face of U263, we knew we had a phase 20 wall because 38.75 had had the same phenomenon with their U454. We did not spend much time articulating the wall or scraping it down to find good bricklines. For a good portion of the latter half of the season the sandbag staircase into the grid sat atop this wall, which prevented us from doing much work with it. As a result, there is a strip of 10-15cms of later material against the eastern face of U263. This should be removed early next season. I have labelled as U267 on the top plan, which is the foundation trench for F111. One could excavate it as such in an intentional overcut of that foundation trench. Alternatively it could be excavated in a cleanup bucket. Removal of this fill may help to explain the function of the stone installations built against U263's eastern face. The second task would be to remove some of the foundation trench material on the western side of U263, which is part of the foundation trench for that wall (i.e. foundation trench U339). A third important task would be to excavate the remnant of pit U264/U265, the cut of which can be seen in the western side of U332. Initially we thought this pit was cut from U266, so we dug it from there. One can see on the top plans, however, that it had a very peculiar shape, being straight on its western side. We thought that the pit had cut U302 and U279, but we no longer think that is the most likely situation. Now that we see this cut in U332 which runs flush with the curvature of U264/U265 we believe the pit is cut from this layer. Our theory is that U302 and U279 helped prevent settling of this pit in its western half. This explains why the pit seemed to want to bell out so much beneath U302 and U279 when we excavated it. A fourth important task would be to clarify with the nature of the shell plaster fill U336. Is this a pit, multiple pits, or a deep fill? It may be helpful to excavate through U332 to see whether the shell plaster material continues to the south. In the process, a flotation sample should be collected from U332. Since we found such a large cache of spool weights in the SW corner of U332, it would be interesting to see whether there were fibers from cloth present in the soil there. A fifth task would be to explore the two mudbricks we see in the SE corner of the square to determine whether they are a part of a bin.

[1] For a more detailed discussion on this pit, our excavation of it, and its stratigraphy, see the

notes on it.

[2] U279 and U302 have a long history of interpretation. See the daily notes for details.

[3] The numbering seems out of order because we first came down on 324 in the southern part of the square beneath U323, and then traced it to the north where it ran beneath U325.

Grid 38 Square 75 2009 Final Report

Janling Fu and Sara Hoffman

PURPOSES AND GOALS:

Entering the 2009 excavation season, the goal in Square 38.75 was to expose and remove Phase 20 architecture and floors to the Late Bronze Age. In the previous season, the main Phase 20 walls had been exposed and these had borne a uniform character of grey mudbrick of 54 by roughly 38.5 by 11 cm, although except in the basket room to the southwest no floors had yet been exposed. The intention of this season was to continue the process of excavation in order to investigate the features of domestic architecture of the initial period of Philistine settlement that we expected to follow the layout of the later Phase 19 buildings. Two buildings were expected to continue in Square 75 in its Eastern Building Complex situated to the west of the street, one to the north and one to the south. Excavation of the Phase 20 buildings was to investigate questions concerning the early pottery reading of layers in the street in comparison to the adjacent walls as well, the reason for the deep level of fill exposed in the previous season in the basket room, and relative heights between floor and foundation stones. The results produced by this season's excavations far exceeded expectations and raised a host of additional issues concerning the function of this building complex with the discovery of plaster installation U539 and the preserved height of hearth U596. These features bring into prominence the question of Philistine origins and places of cultural contact and influence.

The exceptional work and results produced for this season are a credit to the industry, attention to detail and stratigraphic eye of Tim Barker, Thomas DeVries, Benjamin Felker, Ethan Franz, Patricia Kim, Mark Lester, Yekaterina Levina, Daniel Pioske, Kerry Sonia, and Alethia Williams. Staff member Dana DePietro deserves special commendation for his invaluable contributions as another set of eyes closely supervising and teaching the volunteers. Architect Mike Resig provided daily updating of top plans and provenience points. At various points in the season staff and volunteers both from Grid 38 and from other grids helped tremendously by working second shifts on top of their other responsibilities and deserve appropriate commendation for their efforts.

The following report gives a phase by phase summary of stratigraphic relationships by area of the square as revealed through the course of excavation along with tentative room function and constructional changes. The presence of important finds is additionally highlighted.

PHASE 22:

The earliest stratum reached in this season's excavation was Phase 22. In the northeast N-S wall **U632** of tan mudbrick on cobble foundation was found with foundation trench **U659** and corners with E-W wall **U613** to form part of a room with associated floor **U655** (16.95) on the south. The number of semi-ordered mudbricks in N-S orientation found to the west of U632 in fill **U621** argue for a period of later disrepair as during this time large stones and an abundance of pottery and faunal remains characterized this fill layer in preparation for the later Phase 20 building. This room is of

unspecified dimensions, although on the other side of wall U613 lies N-S wall **U660** which at present appears to run underneath U613. No associated floor was found with this wall, although fill layer **U614** was similarly found to be consistently to have pottery readings from the Late Bronze Age with a heavy concentration of Egyptian pottery.

To the west a 2 x 1.5 meter probe of courtyard fill **U589=65.306** from the western face of U454 against the northern balk west to half of silo **U542/3** served to answer the important question of the phase of U613 as an extension was found running underneath the foundations of Phase 20 N-S wall **U454=65.263**. Although at one time it seemed that U613 may have the consistent grey mudbrick of Phase 20 and so was expected to corner beneath U454, the presence of the distinct line of U613, of brown/tan against grey under such a depth of fill in the courtyard with consistent pottery readings from the LB (including Egyptian beer jar and other typical pottery from the LB) strongly argued that U613 be placed within Phase 22, that is before the Egyptian garrison wall of Phase 21, and thus of its associated walls as well.

Similarly in the southeast of the square bordered by the eastern and southern balks, the presence of Phase 22 was found towards the end of the season with the discovery of N-S wall **U661**, its associated thin grey floor **U662** (17.01-16.97) that reached these foundation stones, and the brown, relatively “clean” subfloor fill **U663**. The small kurkar cobbles of U660 along with the width of this wall appear to match the foundation stones of Phase 22 found in the western half of the grid. U660 appears robbed out towards the north as the stones end without cornering, but their depth, the presence of U662 in the section underneath Phase 20 wall **U517**, and the pottery reading of LB, argue for their correct placement within Phase 22.

PHASE 21:

The presence of Phase 21 was seen in the so-called “LB Great Cut” from the eastern section of Square 74 underneath the northern courtyard fill U589. A portion of the balk between Square 64 and 74 was removed in order to answer a question concerning the foundation trench of Phase 20 wall **64.U**. A faint line of a foundation trench could be traced by changes in color as well as a disruption in the surface layers showing the Phase 20 foundation trench, wall, and first surface of Phase 20 roughly at the level of U589.

PHASE 20B:

The main emphasis of the season lay in exposure of the Phase 20 architectural elements and thus to view the first phase of the Philistine occupational sequence and domestic planning. Whereas several rooms showed a distinct demarcation between 20a and b through significant layers of deposition and rebuilds (as seen in the southeast room and the central room), in the remainder of the rooms differentiation between subphase appears negligible (northeast corner, hearth room, altar room, and the basket room). Initial argumentation for the relative absence of subphasing may follow on the light usage of these rooms as might be typical for rooms devoted toward cultic significance or as being interior space less traveled by traffic and so less exposed to courtyard or street material. Nevertheless this question will only be fully answered with another season of excavation by pulling the remaining floors to check for earlier phases.

Philistine settlement in the eastern half of Grid 38 began with three buildings, of which two lie within Square 75 (Eastern Building Complex-South and East). At this period, the street on the western half of the square extended its length beyond which lay the southern wall for the northern building and turned eastward north of **U460** to occupy most of the northern area of the square to the border of wall **U454 (=65.263)** to the east. **U451**, the probe conducted at the end of the previous season, was not further excavated, while **U417** retained its designation throughout the season as well. In the north, as mentioned, **U589** constituted the first layer contemporary with the use of the northern building's southern wall. This fill was characterized by a high degree of pottery, bones and ash mixed with layers of yellow sandy accumulation typified as exposure to outdoor surfacing (S. Moshier) as also indicated in the section of silo **U542/3**. As a courtyard surface multiple lenses were present throughout the fill that were unable to be fully traced. A notable feature of grey ash appeared to mark the western half and evidence of fragments of mudbrick extended throughout the northern courtyard, although more dense concentrated on a diagonal SE to NW line extending from one-third along the west to east line of **U460**, as if this might have operated as an indistinct barrier to keep out street buildup.

To its east lay the eastern building. The extant area of this building in Square 75 is bounded by walls **U492** in the south, **U454** to the west, **U585=65.301** to the north in which was found inset a large piece of slag, and the eastern balk. Although of one phase, the rounded edge of the mudbrick on the southwestern edge of **U492** suggests that it was built prior to the construction of **U460** to its south as the wear indicates exposure that is unlikely to have been caused once **U460** had been placed to its south. **U492** is founded on three courses of cobbles on top of which were set additional courses of mudbrick. Abutting this wall is N-S wall **U454** that is similarly founded and built with cobbles and grey mudbrick, and abutting wall **U454** is the single course of **U585** that slopes downward from west to east but appears in the northeast corner against the northern and eastern balk to have a mudbrick superstructure. As this wall is only of one course, this was likely an interior wall placed later to divide this space. Reaching these walls and clearly seen running over wall **U613** in section is the white phytolith or plaster level of floor **U602** (17.22-17.13) the only associated Phase 20 floor. On this very thin floor were found spindle whorl **MC 61158** and a diorite weight **MC 61159**. Cut into this floor were two small pits **U616/617** and **U618/619** that were adjacent to one another, along with bin **U578** and posthole **U615**. Within the former were a possible tripod stone leg (**MC 61115**) and two complete juglets (**RP 11229** related to Cypriot shaved ware and **RP 11228**, Iron I Cypriot painted juglet). These vessels are important for being imported pottery from Cyprus, rare during Iron I, and also corroborate the dating of this floor to this period.

The building to its south has exterior walls and interior walls with stone foundations. As previously mentioned, **U460** with foundation trench **U608** was built at a time slightly later than **U492**, with only Roman pit **F30/L109** disturbing its presence in the square. Its cobble foundations within Phase 20b were seen at the end of the season. With walls **U461 (=U436=U440=U442)**, **U549b** and **U403**, this formed the boundaries for the northwest room of the southern building with associated floor **U587** (17.29-17.18) and subfloor fill **U627**. This hard beaten earth and clay floor was placed at the bottom of the foundation stones of the walls. Cut from this floor were two pits (**U625/U626** and **U628/629**) each of which held an intact Aegean-style cooking jug (**RP 11224** and **RP**

11241) that was intentionally buried and whose burn marks showed prior use. A number of larger beads (**MC 61519**, **MC 61485**) were found, along with several grinding stones in situ (**MC 61492**) and a hematite weight (**MC 61483**). Also found on this floor and within the fill above were 5968 of beads of various colors (**MC 60430**) using spacers in groups of 6, justifying a designation as the “bead room.” Built on the floor in the NW corner was installation **U666** of a rectangle of cobbles set against **U461** that likely formed a bench. The entrance to this room seems to open to the east. Above the line of the foundation stones of **U549b** is a course of small cobbles that may be threshold that otherwise is anomalous although further investigation is needed in the upcoming season.

Threshold **U549a** opens to a large room with two or three other entrances. This eastern room is bounded by walls **U517** and **U527** in the south, **U549b** in the west, **U460** in the north with only its eastern end slightly beyond the eastern balk. A door jamb in the southeast of stacked pinkish, hardened mudbrick in the southeast, **U658**, appears to mark one side of an entrance south, with a second doorway to a different room to the southwest at **U610** that is similarly marked by these pinker mudbricks stacked vertically. AJA suggests these semi-fired bricks were used due to heavier traffic back and forth through the doorways. The surface of **U610** that unlike other thresholds is only of beaten earth also had embedded within it a purple-hued hematite weight (**MC 61459**).

There does not appear to be a strict differentiation in horizon between Phase 20a and 20b in the accumulation of floor surfaces within this room. **U648** (17.27-17.12) is the hard, compact beaten earth floor and the earliest floor we have reached for this room. Associated with this floor are postholes **U646**, **U649**, **U656** and **U657** along with benches **U599** in the north and **U603** in the south. **U599** can be seen in the west section of pit **F30** and is preserved by only a small ridge on its western half but clearly is built against wall **460** as seen in the east. **U603** of solid brown/tan mudbricks and extend to the eastern edge north of wall **U401** and of **U517**. Built on floor **U648** is large mudbrick hearth **U652** that seems to be a platform built in one (as seen on the eastern edge) or two different phases (as viewed from the southeast). It is cut by the later Phase 19 pit **U644/645** as **U652** can be seen in the section of the pit.

The relationship between **U652** and the square hearth **U596** is uncertain. This square hearth (.72 x .72 m) unlike **U652** is covered with the residue of burning and ash along with a layer of sherds on top. It is likely that a thin layer of mudbrick plaster had at one point covered this as well. This hearth may have been part of the original construction of **U652**, or a later development once **U652** went out of use. At the very least it precedes the later surface of **U600** as indicated by the northeast corner where **U596** dives underneath **U600**. No pillar base was found extant with this large room, which must have required either one or a row of columns in order to support the roof of this enclosed space. Nevertheless, **U644/645** although phased in 19 would most likely be the place of construction as on top of this was Phase 19 pillar base **U524**, which may have been reused from its original position. Not only would this be adjacent to a hearth, but the stone bedding of cobbles placed as the fill of **U645** is unique as the only pit filled in this way seen in the entire season, and of the prior three seasons in Square 75. Although possible to phase within 20b or 20ab due to its elevation with respect to **U648**, floor 600 (17.33-17.17) will be phased in 20a due to the new features built upon it during that time. A remaining issue is whether this floor is contemporary with **U587**, a question unresolved because it is still obscured by the presence of potential installation **U598** and

bench **U620**, both probably features of Phase 20a. At a medial phase, surface **U653** composed of small shells and still visible against the eastern balk next to hearth **U596/U652** was laid in proximity to the hearth and this proximity may lead to an explanation of a similar function to the use of sherds on top of hearth **U596**. Some evidence of continued shell surfacing can be seen further to the north and in the section of pit **U644/645**, although none was found to the south.

Threshold 610 shows contemporaneous use with **U648** and **U572** (17.22) the dark, compact, beaten earth floor to its south clearly differentiated from the brown, bricky fill above it (**U523**). This small room is bounded by walls **U527** to the north, **U401** to the east, **U525** to the south and **U485** to the west, all of grey mudbrick. A small area of **U572** had been cut through in the southeast which sloped upward and this showed another floor **U640** underneath which appears to be the same surface beneath **U551**, the fill of bin **U547**. **U572** slopes upwards toward both **U547** and a second threshold to the west **U540** and its cobbles as they shared a mudbrick plaster, thus demonstrating contemporaneous use. The floor showed flecks of plaster and likely connotes the presence of plastering throughout this room at an earlier point. A small posthole **U636** was cut from this floor in addition to two installations built on this floor: bin **U547** and **U539** (17.73: points; 17.64: top surface; 17.15: bottom) The presence of bin **U547** in front of threshold **U540** requires some explanation. It's irregular rounded and off-centered plan precludes its functioning as a step. On the one hand the construction of **U547** runs into the threshold and is built at the same time, but its placement effectively restricts full access through threshold **U540**. This problem is resolved however if two doorways are used simultaneously with **U610** operating as the main doorway. The care with which this room was excavated demonstrates the use within phase of both doorways and surfacing.

To the east set roughly in the center against wall **U401** stands a pyramidal plastered installation with four rounded points at its corners. This installation's sides slope outwards before rounding towards floor **U572**. Brilliant white plastering was found in what seems to be multiple layers with one "horn" engaged in the southeast and the northeastern horn not engaged. A thick layering of white plaster covers the face of wall **U401** behind **U539** with the engaged horn demonstrating the installation was plastered in at one point with this wall. The plastering also covers the crease between **U401** and **U527**. This plastering was first found against wall **U401** and led to the care with which the room was excavated. The rounded tips of the installation were first visible and their presence and regularity, in addition to the plaster that was apparent on them, led to increased attention in excavation. The installation is most easily interpreted as a four-horned altar, although this defies current understanding of the presence of four-horned altars in Philistia that are seen as related to later Israelite influence (see Gitin 2001), and at present have no other readily available parallels from the Aegean (one possible parallel is of a plastered mudbrick installation at Ekron called a bamah). Found on the floor surface sloping upwards to the south of the altar were a number of small finds: mortar and pestle (**MC 60182** and **MC 60181**), an incomplete or broken faience object perhaps resembling a cluster of grapes or a pine cone that seems to have been attached to some longer rod, and a pyramidal loomweight underneath the mortar (**MC 60240**). It may be significant that all these objects were in a state of disuse or broken (so AJA). If indeed this is an altar, it might explain the relative lack of occupational debris found in this room. The partial blocking of **U540** with bin **U547** may be explained if Room **507**, the

basket room, had functioned as a store room or preparation room of secondary importance in the use of U572.

Phase 20 in the southwestern room or basket room had already been exposed as of last season and the presence of an Aegean cooking jug along with bin U481 could be justified as facilities for food preparation and storage for the altar room. The walls of this room maintain their designations from the previous season (U403 in the north, U461 in the west, **U343** in the south and U485 in the east) with the removal of all installations built on layer 507. Excavations this year revealed no significant distinction between Phase 20a and 20b although features can be associated with different surfaces. Floor **U624** (17.22=**U654**) was the floor in Phase 20b, with U507=**U647** then functioning as a layer of occ. deb. This beaten earth floor covered the entire surface of the room and reached the extant walls, although in excavation its southern half was broken through to the fill below. This floor in contrast to the occ. deb. above it, showed heavy usage as the presence of pits (**U622/623**, **U630/631**, **U633/634**, and **U664/665**) and postholes (**U635**, **U637**, **U638**) cut from it demonstrates. A possible earlier small mudbrick hearth **U642** was found beneath **U504**. U443 was established as the location of the threshold as we suspected from the previous season, and thus establishing an entrance from the south. As this room demonstrates such frequent use it is likely that the overall entrance to this building comes from this direction.

Justification for last year's phasing of features in this room was confirmed in the dismantling of occ. deb. layer U507 that showed features U481, **U503**, U504, **U506**, **U495** were built upon this layer. One additional feature of only 1 cm thickness was found to the west of threshold U540, bin **U544** with its layer **U643**=**U482**. This may possibly be interpreted as step to the threshold although its lack of depth precludes definitive conclusions.

Returning to the hearth room, as mentioned an additional exit to the southeast followed to a room in the southeast of the square. Over the floor U662 and covering wall the Phase 22 wall U661 were placed the leveling fill of Phase 20 **U641**=**U650**. U641 was a dark brown, relatively compact fill with few inclusions. Within this fill was found most of a complete restorable LB store jar (**B. 5019**). No lines of a pit were found for this vessel although if one were found it would be associated with the thin phytolith floor layer **U611** (17.15-17.11) of Phase 20b with which no features related.

PHASE 20B CONCLUSIONS:

The excavation done this season served to significantly increase our understanding of this subphase. Present within the square are most of one existing building in the southern structure, and part of another. The use of cobble stone foundations (U461, U460, U454 and perhaps U492) cut into LB fill as evidenced on the western edge of the square and of three courses of stone in foundations (U556) in exterior walls seems to be a general practice. In addition, the use of grey mudbrick is standardized, although some adjustment needs to be made in what were thought to be the dimensions of last year. It now seems like the standard brick size is 54 cm x 38.5 cm x 12 cm, with the difference perhaps due to measurements where we had not cut sufficiently back to the face of the wall. Floors are founded at the bottom of the level of foundation stones and are typically of dark, compact soil with high clay content that is easily

differentiated from the mudbricky brown fill above. Thresholds in this period normally are of a single course of small cobbles as indicated in U540 with the use of pinkish semi-fired mudbrick as doorjambs (U610, U658). Hearths may be of simple mudbrick plaster smears (U504, U642) or of platform installations (U596, U652) and may lie next to pillar bases (assuming the presence of a pillar base located in the region of pit U644/645). The presence of benches (U599, U603), bins (U547, U481, possibly U544 and U666) is present throughout this period. Several outstanding questions remain as to why several rooms appear to lack accumulation in floor surfaces between a Phase 20a and Phase 20b, including the altar room, the hearth room, the basket room and within the eastern building, although degree of use has been offered as a plausible explanation. The continued removal of U600 and of U648, and a probe of U572 may give more data on this anomaly. At present an entrance to the southern building is still lacking although this may be found in what is Square 85 and entered through threshold U443. The bead room as well lacks a definite doorway, although we have proffered U549 at an earlier period to have been a threshold.

The conclusion arrives that the Phase 20b building complex of the first Philistine settlement was an impressive structure of imposing depth in its use of multiple courses of mudbrick upon courses of stone. The additional information of the presence of what seems to be a four-horned altar U539 and the platform, sherd and ash-covered hearth, whether of one, two or three stages of construction, significantly increases the scope of debate in terms of cultural connections and continued contact. In the case of the latter, this highlights Aegean connections as indicated also in the presence of Cypriot imports in the Iron Age (U616/617) and the use of Aegean cooking jugs (U625/U626 and U628/629), while the former raises entirely new questions over the origins of the form and idea of the four-horned altar. The presence of these features has led to a possible interpretation as a temple as the presence of U539 in conjunction with the plethora of benches in Phase 20a set against each extant wall is an unusual feature. Nevertheless, the lack of significant and clear cultic finds renders this early judgment less likely and a more careful explanation may continue to regard Room 572 as a shrine room within an elite domestic structure.

PHASE 20A:

In Phase 20a outside surfaces continued their buildup with no appreciable difference in matrix. **U536** designates the combination of the units U515 and U474 below the kurkar, while silo **U542/3** was cut from U589. Within the silo were found about 15 Aegean loomweights notable for their small size (**MC 60953**, **MC 61080**, **MC 61177**) and a Cypro-Minoan inscribed handle (**MC 61513**). In the northern outer street **U516** a Mycenaean IIIB psi figurine (MC 59241) was found.

While little or no differentiation is possible between Phase 20a and b in a number of rooms (the southwest, basket room, the altar room, and the northeast room of the eastern building) some change is evidenced in the remaining rooms and in the street. The most significant changes occur in the northwest room of the southern building, or the bead room. Here 10 cm of grey fill appear to mark a distinct division between a first course of foundation and two courses of stone. Similarly, the wall of U549b is slightly changed in orientation with the founding of wall U556 with U461 and U403 remain in

use during this period. Upon floor U587 is placed the fill of **U558** that was, for the most part a consistent, clean brown-bricky fill except for a large grey, ash-filled, area in the center of this room with large rocks and many pottery sherds. This was most likely a large pit and fill otherwise missed, and the remains of a possible feast as the horn, jaw and ribs of a bovine were found. As previously indicated almost six thousand beads were found in this fill and upon the floor of this room, most of which were exceptionally small, with some cylindrical ones of dentilium. Their presence within the fill of the southwest and southern part of the room suggests they had been embedded in the layer of fill that hit the floor and scattered. Above this leveling fill was laid floor **U528** (17.63-17.54), which was a dark brown, beaten earth floor with phytolith or plaster. Associated with floor U528 are adjoining pits **U571/580** and **U581/582**. Within layer U571 was found a large roughly 3 cm thick raw production material of an ivory elephant tusk with hollow center (**MC 60360**). A portion from the end that had been cut off or squared may be explained as having been used for the production of ivory goods. The presence of a sizeable piece has bearings for local household or workshop production and is further indication of elite status for the occupants of this building. While initially we had considered U556 to have been the site of the threshold for this room, dismantling of the western face showed that in fact this was a substantial wall of several courses of large fieldstones. The threshold instead was to be located at U549a to its south.

Some confusion had persisted over the presence of U528 as late in the season a ledge was found west of U556 and a separate ledge south of U460 that indicated the presence of a floor. This lined up at the bottom of the stones of what seemed to be the later course of foundation stones and so was assumed to be U528 or the Phase 20a floor. In point of fact it is markedly lower in elevation than U528 (estimated at 17.39-17.3). Thus, the possibility exists of a lower floor that was missed. Nevertheless, it was fairly apparent that the beads, while mostly present in the lower part of U558, were scattered throughout this layer thus arguing that this may more likely be fill. If a floor or occupational surface, the association of this layer with the bottom of Phase 20a would not preclude U528 also belonging to this subphase as few features were built on either surface.

Occupational surfaces continued a slow buildup in the hearth room. While the differentiation in elevation between the dark brown, extremely compact beaten earth floor U600 (17.33-17.17) is only 2-3 cm in places, significant architectural construction marks the new subphase within this room. U460 in the north receives a second foundation of stones and mudbrick superstructure. U556 is founded in the west, while in the south U517 and U527 meet at the point of U401. Significantly, besides the continued use of benches U599 and U603, additional benches are constructed in this period. Access to the altar room is closed off from the north as threshold U610 is filled in by **U612**, in which was found a purplish hematite weight (**MC 61459**), and a series of benches are built against wall faces. Against wall U527 is constructed bench **U651** (in which was found an ivory toggle pin **MC 61447**), **U620** and installation **U598**, currently of unknown function, are built against wall U556 and U549, although this latter interpretation still requires significant evaluation that will only come in an additional season of excavation. Benches **U588** and **U586** are also associated with floor U600. Excavation revealed that they were bonded in their southwest corner although the exact nature of their relationship to U652 and U620, of whether they were entirely distinct features or built together as wider

benches, needs further attention. Within the room, hearth U596 remained in use although the buildup of the room now covered U652 and feature U653 and appears to have accumulated particularly in the northeast corner.

No significant changes occur in the altar room and basket room, although we changed designation of U507 to occ. deb. In the basket room, In the southeastern corner, above floor U611 was placed fill **U605**, a thin, hard beaten grey earth floor **U604** (17.4-17.36). Above this was the thick layer of grey occ. deb. U548 of roughly 8-10 cm accumulation.

PHASE 20A CONCLUSIONS:

The Phase 20a buildings remained on the same plan as those of Phase 20b with no differentiation between the two in some cases, and in others only a small buildup of surfaces. The main changes occurred in the bead room and the hearth room with the re-founding of wall U460 with a 10 cm grey fill before placing in new foundation stones, a slight reorientation of the Phase 20b wall U549b with the Phase 20a wall U556 and the use of U549a as a threshold, and the stopping up of threshold U610 with the fill U612 in preparation of the placing of additional benches into the hearth room. Architectural features include the use of grey mudbrick, the construction of hearths including the use or reuse of platform sherd hearth U596, the presence of mudbrick benches (U588, U586, U651, U620, and possibly U598) and the reuse of others (U599, U603), and the cutting of silo U542/543. The four-horned installation is most likely still in use during this period.

The material culture continues to reflect Aegean traditions with the use of platform sherd hearth U596, the use of Aegean, unpierced and unbaked cylindrical loomweights, and a Cypro-Minoan incised handle. Notable also was the high level of ivory use, of the ivory tusk raw material to the ivory toggle pin, speaking to aspects of ivory production in this building, as well as the presence of thousands of beads.

PHASE 19:

Significant architectural changes and layout of the Eastern Building Complex occurs during Phase 19. The buildup of surfaces in U417 west of wall U461 and in the northern courtyard at the end of Phase 20 occasioned the construction of what appear to be secondary foundation trenches of deposits of large sherds and stones pressed against the western faces of walls U461 and U454 (**U545**). These are used to keep out the surfaces and presumably moisture from damaging the mudbrick superstructure. That the western faces of these walls are protected may be due to the natural slope from west to east of Square 75. Subsequently, the northern courtyard was enclosed. Wall **U437**, visible in section though never satisfactorily found, shut off this space leaving the area to its west as the street while inside the courtyard surfaces began to be more intensively used, as discussed in the prior season. In this phase the courtyard was divided roughly in two with **U474=65.261** and **U515** in the west and **U514=65.261** in the east. U474 was characterized by a kurkar surfacing, still visible in section, which was lacking in U515. Posthole **U526** was cut from U515, in addition to the features found from the previous year. From **U514**, in which was found a bes-type amulet (**MC 60217**), were cut postholes **U564**, **U541** and pits **U537/538** and **U575/576**. Hearth **U422** evidenced multiple

laminations although the northeast corner was covered with sherds, but in contrast to U596 did not have a coherent center. The pillar base **U478/479** to its west was associated, as seen in the pit lines of U479.

In the eastern building walls U492, U454 and U585 continued in use during this phase. Above Phase 20 floor U602 was placed leveling fill **U601**, in which were found a rich assortment of small finds: a ceramic duck head (**MC 60918**), a spindle whorl (**MC 60929**), part of the torso of a Myc IIIB figurine (**MC 61377**), and a scarab with the design of either a lion or baboon (**MC 61016**). Above this fill was laid brilliant white floor **U577** (17.32-17.29) that clearly reached all three walls and sloped upwards sharply to the west to what seems to be the well-laid cobbles of threshold **U597**. Built on this floor was mudbrick bin **U578**, visible in section, of which only little was preserved. Found on this floor were a large piece of ivory inlay with dowel pegs still partially attached (**MC 60477**), pyramidal loomweight **MC 60491**, cartouche amulet **MC 60703** (?), and a beautiful and rare cylinder seal **MC 61323** with tree of life motif and the possible points of a headdress on one of several anthropomorphic figures.

The fill of **U546b=U579 (=65.262)** marked the end of the occupational use of floor U577 before the laying of floor **U484** of Phase 17b or 18 and includes an Aegean loomweight (**MC 60079**) and grindstone (**MC 60107**), a monochrome bowl (**RP 11187**), a Philistine bichrome sherd (**RP 11197**), and two ballistae (**MC 60320**). Problems came in the excavation of U546, which was fine-gridded as a floor (**=546a=65.266** 17.54-17.48 until 6/22 inclusive of buckets **B. 4128** and **B. 4270**), and then continued to be excavated as a deep layer of fill (**546b** post 6/22). On this floor as seen in section is a mudbrick hearth, that was missed in excavation.

Excavation of U577, U546 and U601 bears quick rehearsal as fresh joins of a different bichrome sherd were found in layers U546 and U601 (**RP 11185** and **RP 11193**). The presence of bin U578 caused a hump leading from north to south. As we had been picking in horizontal passes, a separate designation did not occur until this feature was visible, at which point material that was likely from U601 would have been included in U546 on the south end. Note that the presence of this bichrome sherd stands as a major rationale for the division of U577 into Phase 19, along with an earlier interpretation of U613 as Phase 20b. Given the discussion above including the presence of floor U546a and our current understanding of U613 as belonging to Phase 22, it may well be that U577 is actually a Phase 20a surface.

In the room that earlier had beads, walls U403, U461 and U460 continued in use during this phase, while changes were made in the eastern wall. The integrated vertical brick of wall **U296**, while containing vertical facing, seemed to be more haphazard in construction than the preceding phase and was made of yellow mudbrick. Built with this were the small cobbles used in the construction of threshold **U475** to its north, thus switching the point of entry in the east from south to north. A large, clean layer of fill **U462b** was used to cover up the previous phase's occupation. Upon this was placed a new beaten earth floor, which should have had its own designation but was taken together with the earlier fill. Cut from surface **U462a** (17.98-17.53) were posthole **U557** and installation **U520** in which was found a store jar (**B. 3730**) possibly related to a large, flat white stone.

In the eastern room, fills **U593**, **U594** and **U595** (in which was found ivory palette **MC 60621**) were placed over benches U651 and U620 and new courses of mudbrick

were laid above. Mudbrick wall **U483** of reddish/orange mudbrick and squarish brick (48 cm x 40 cm) cornered in the south with U401. Brown bricky fill **U535** of considerable depth covered the Phase 20 floor. Notable finds within U535 included a beautiful two-sided blue frit scarab (MC 60659) and a bes-type amulet (**MC 60861**). Over U535 was placed floor **U550** (17.77-17.51) and its associated features (fire pit **U559/560**), pits (**U565/566**) and postholes (**U567**, **U568**, **U569**, **U570**, **U574**), although it seemed to be only a previous lamination of floor **U534**. This floor followed the natural slope of the square, both downwards north to south and from west to east. U667 deserves special note. This area immediately north of U401 was found to be different during the excavation of Phase 20 material of benches U603 and U651 and a possible foundation deposit of a partial bell-shaped bowl had been found in U593 (**RP 11207**). Underneath this was a fired brick and a ring of cobbles that was completely different in matrix from the surrounding areas as in the excavation of bench U651 the majority of the pottery came from this area. The presence of a Philistine bichrome sherd (**RP 11240**) found in U651 is to be interpreted as part of the fill of a pit placed here whose outline had been missed.

Floor **U534** lay immediately above U550 and was likely simply a later lamination. Cut from the floor were pits **U552/553** and **U583/584** against the eastern balk and postholes **U531** and **U532**. As discussed previously, **U664/665** was cut and filled in, in order to provide a base for pillar base **U524** (37 x 38 x 42 cm). Bench **U374** was laid abutting wall U483 and set against U296.

Above this floor was plastered or phytolith floor **U444** (17.77-17.51) with which the season began and bench **U446** was built in the north against U460 along with bins **U445**, **U502** and installation **U501**. Pit **U510/511** and posthole **U512** from the previous season were cut from this surface along with bowl-lamp-bowl foundation deposit **U518/519** (**RP 11136**, **RP 11138**, **RP 11141**) found south of U446. The bowl-lamp-bowl or lamp and bowl deposit has been interpreted as an originally Canaanite feature derived from the Egyptian practice of foundation deposits (Bunimovitz and Zimhoni 1993; see also Weinstein 1974), although the bowls clearly have Philistine characteristics. Their presence here matches the similar deposit found last season further south U488/U489.

The room to the south on its western side is now blocked up on its western side with fill **U561** covering threshold U540, bin U547 is filled with **U551**, and the entirety of installation U539 is put out of use with deep dark brown fill **U523** which has relatively few inclusions within it. Within fill U523 was found a possible bichrome sherd with Philistine bird (**RP 11161**) that would place this fill in the transitional period between Phase 19 and Phase 20, along with residual beer jar base **RP 11186**. The bounds of this room continue to remain walls UU485, U525, and U401 with the addition of wall U483. Bin **U522** divides the room in half with its fill **U521** on the western half, in which were a complete monochrome hemispherical bowl (**RP 11147**) and a votive vessel (**RP 11163**). Over bin U522, rubble-filled bench **U434** was placed against wall U483.

PHASE 19 CONCLUSIONS:

Significant architectural changes marked the onset of Phase 19. Buildup in the street occasioned the placing of pseudo-foundation trenches of stone and pottery used to protect walls. In the north, the courtyard surfaces became at least semi-enclosed with the

building of wall U437 and the construction of hearth U422 and pillar U478/479. The walls of the eastern building remained in use initially during this period, ultimately with the covering of U585.

The southern building is characterized by a thick layer of brown and brickly fill that is placed over many of the rooms including the basket room, the bead room, the altar room and the hearth room. Walls are no longer standardized of grey mudbrick as different dimensions and building styles are employed (U483, U296). These rooms remained on the same plan as well, using many of the characteristic features and installations of the previous phase with bins (U502, U445) benches (U446, U374, U434) and the use of hearths (U422) and pillar bases (U524 and U578/579) that, along with the use of postholes and pits, showed cultural continuity although the four-horned installation has now gone out of use.

Material culture of this phase retains connections with Aegean features (cylindrical loomweights, the presence of Myc IIIC pottery, partial sherd hearth U422, the presence of bird motifs in MC 60918 and RP 11161) although showing development with the appearance of Philistine bichrome pottery. Nevertheless, signs of cultural contact and Egyptian or Canaanite influence are present. Foundation deposits in the form of bowl-lamp-bowls are found (U518/519 and possibly present in U593) along with a number of Egyptian or Egyptianizing Bes-type amulets (MC 60217, MC 60861). The presence of the ivory production seems to continue with the finding of ivory inlay (MC 60477 and MC 60621) and the production of textiles is attested to in the presence of spindle whorls and loomweights. Cylinder seal MC 61323 requires further research as it may also show intercultural contact with the use of date palm in conjunction with what may be the depiction of Philistine anthropomorphic figures. Overall, the picture painted in Phase 19 shows a robust development of the past along with acculturation (Stone 1995).

PHASE 17B or 18:

Few features remained from this phase, whether to be called Phase 17b or Phase 18. In the southeast corner **U407** and **U408** were two non-descript fills that were removed early in the season. U407 lay on the west side of U401, while U408 covered thick occ. deb. layer U548.

PHASE 17A:

In the north we realized that pit **U427=65.100** had not bottomed out and was removed. This pit cut earlier silo U542/3.

PHASE 4-5:

Roman well **F30/L109** continued to be excavated during this season to a depth that would preclude its contaminating of surrounding units. It was overcut although in doing so provided sections to be used in excavation.

FUTURE GOALS OF EXCAVATION:

In the upcoming season, the northern half of Floor U600 has yet to be fine-gridded and the relationship between U600/648 to U587/U627 needs to be explored. In order to do this bench U620 and installation U598 should be further probed to see if they are floating. If so, they should be removed to see whether or not floor U600 reaches wall U556 and tentative threshold U549a. Finally, the floor of the installation room should be probed or removed, although the appearance of U640 indicates that the occupational layers of the Phase 20 floor are of only limited depth. The walls of 20a and b will otherwise be preserved to their height along with hearth U596 and altar U539.

Introduction to the 2009 Season

The 2009 season was extremely productive for Grid 51 on multiple fronts. Excavations continued in the original 10 x 10 m area of squares 51.73 and 51.74, completing the exposure of the late 5th/ early 4th century mudbrick-floored building and the building immediately adjacent to its west, thus exposing all of Phase 6. A new 5 x 10 m expansion (Squares 51.83 and 51.84) was opened to the south of the original 10 x 10, exploration of which helped to shed light on the larger Byzantine building which spanned much of the Grid, as well as to clarify remnants of later Byzantine and Islamic phases recovered during the excavations of 1997-2000 in 51.73 and 74. Finally, a long-overdue preliminary reading was conducted of all the pottery collected from the excavations in Grid 51 from its opening in 1997 to the present, and served as the basis for a new phasing framework. This highly productive season was made possible through the efforts of an energetic volunteer crew and two dedicated staff members, Elise Jakoby and Laura Wright, who deserve tremendous thanks for their hard work and continued good humor.

The Southern Expansion: Squares 51.83 and 51.84

Two adjacent 5x5m quarter-squares, technically the northeast quarter of 51.83 and the northwest of 51.84, were opened at the outset of the season. This southern expansion served a larger and long-term goal of preparing the Grid for excavation to a greater depth. The 2008 probe showed clearly that Iron Age occupation was nearly 2m down below the floor level of the mudbrick building. In order to excavate safely to that depth it will be necessary to expand the grid in several directions. This was the first in a set of planned expansions, and discussion is underway to determine the direction and scope of the next such effort. However, the southern expansion was opened also with an eye towards the more immediate goal of exposing the full southern extent of the Phase 6 Persian mudbrick-floored building which had been uncovered during the 2008 excavation season. In squares 51.73 and 74, Islamic robber trenches and fills were encountered immediately underneath topsoil, and very little in the way of occupational debris was present from either the Islamic or Byzantine phases. Instead Hellenistic architecture was encountered almost immediately. The hope was that similar circumstances would obtain in 51.83 and 84, and it would be possible to move swiftly through the Islamic and Byzantine period fills and robber trenches to uncover the Hellenistic and Persian architecture below.

In preparing the area for manual excavation, a bulldozer was first employed to clear topsoil, carefully monitored. Topsoil in this area was quite deep, and nearly a meter of empty soil was removed before any signs of occupation were encountered. The south section, which served as a guide for the process, was clean, showing that no remains were damaged or disturbed, and only the tops of a few trenches were clipped, and these by less than 10cm. The pattern of Islamic pits under topsoil mirrored that seen in 51.73 and 74. Overall, the 2009 season saw the successful removal of all of the Islamic and most of the Late Roman/Byzantine trenches and fills in these new squares. Only a few walls have been unearthed, but not enough context is available yet to be able to tie them into to the larger architectural plan of the grid.

The Revised Phasing

Grid 51 poses a particular methodological quandary in that for the most part, the building(s) in the area were rebuilt along the same wall lines – frequently piling wall upon wall – for centuries. It was clear too that in some cases existing walls had been knocked down not to their foundation stones, but to varying heights along their length at which the structural integrity of the original had been preserved. The highly complex patterns of builds and rebuilds, the degree of continuity, and the lack of external ceramic dating, made it difficult to establish clear dividing lines between subphases and phases within the lengthy Hellenistic phase. (Indeed much hinges

here on how a phase or subphase should be architecturally defined, in the absence of any external dating criteria.)

As discussed in the 2008 Grid Report, the phasing framework established in the early years of excavation in Grid 51 had been influenced by certain faulty preconceptions regarding the proximity of the Iron Age. It was assumed that following the Islamic (Phase 1) and Byzantine (Phase 2) levels in the grid, all subsequent occupational levels reached belonged to the “Persian/Hellenistic” horizon, (Phase 3). With the Iron Age surely impending, each pre-Byzantine phase encountered was assigned as a subphase of the Persian/Hellenistic Phase 3 (3A, 3B, 3C, etc). As subphases continued to emerge, however, it became clear that this phasing scheme was untenable, resulting in an awkward Hellenistic “lumping” which was both methodologically awkward and lacked chronological refinement. The difficulty was highlighted when the 2008 probe **74.L200** showed that at least one coherent occupation level remained – at 1m below the surface of the mudbrick-floored building – before the Iron Age would be reached. Had the original phasing scheme been maintained, Phase 3 would have spanned nearly four centuries.

This season, therefore, we undertook to revise the original phasing to reflect changes throughout the Hellenistic and Persian occupation in the grid. A reassessment of the stratigraphy and building plans in light of the evidence from the new southern expansion, a close analysis of architectural styles and occupational levels in Grids 38 and 50, coupled with the new information gleaned from the long-overdue pottery reading from prior seasons, has formed the basis for the tentative phasing scheme proposed here. In certain cases differences are architecturally mild, although ceramically supported:

Phase I: Islamic (Fatimid-Crusader, 10th-12th c. A.D.)

Phase II: Byzantine (4th-7th c. A.D.)

Phase III: Early Roman/Roman (later 2nd c. B.C. – 3rd A.D.)*

Phase IV: Late Hellenistic (ca. 3rd-early 2nd c. B.C)

Phase V: Early Hellenistic (ca. 350-290 B.C.)

Phase VI: Late Persian (ca. 400-350 B.C.)

Phase VII: Persian (~5th c. B.C)

*ceramically most such assemblages fall into the 2nd B.C.-1st. A.D. range

In general the new phasing scheme builds upon the old, such that the major features of Phase IV will be equivalent to those previously assigned to 3A, Phase V to 3B, etc. There have been some significant changes and additions, however.

Note that the existence of the Roman phase is probable but as yet unproven; it may be that this phase will ultimately be collapsed together with Phase IV, the Late Hellenistic phase. As discussed above, we have been able to identify assemblages which can be classified as either Late Hellenistic or Early Roman, in addition to many whose forms span both the Roman and early Byzantine periods. It is as yet unclear whether we can isolate layers which belong only to the 1st c. B.C. -3rd centuries A.D., although this seems a possibility. Classification is further clouded by the larger (theoretical question) of how to define the “Roman” period in an environment where political control and material culture are not absolute mirrors. This would be particularly problematic in non-elite areas of the city such as Grid 51, where readily datable imports occur with less frequency. For the present, we leave open the possibility of a Roman occupation within

the grid, although the remnants are quite sparse indeed. The larger phasing framework will no doubt undergo some revision in the coming 2010 season.

Overview of Occupation in Grid 51 by Phase

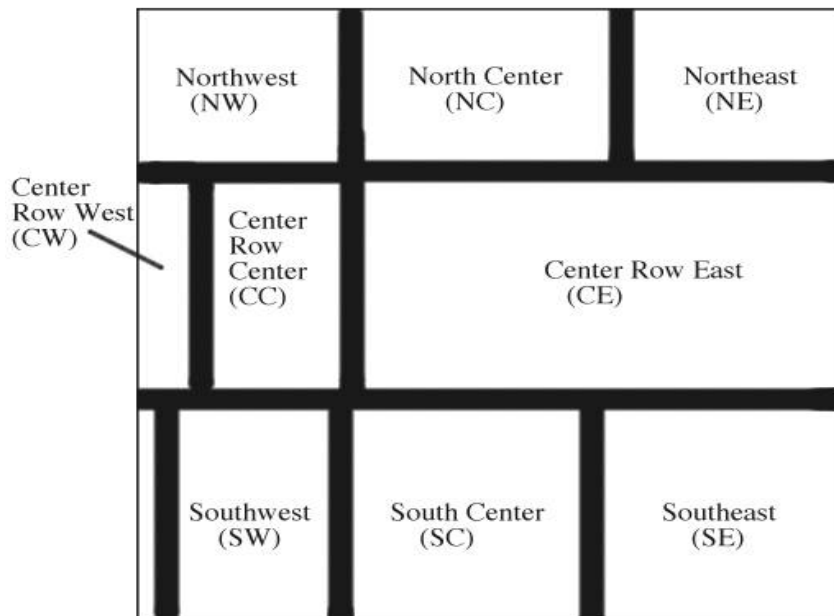
The following report lays out the phases represented in the grid in rough chronological order, moving from latest to earliest. Detailed descriptions of the buildings described herein can be found in the square reports from the 1997-2000 and 2008 seasons.

Topography and Grid Layout

In order to fully understand the sequence of (particularly the later) phases represented in the Grid one must first understand the basic topography of the area, the result of both natural and human forces. First, there appears to have been a general slope to the area from the northeast to the southwest, the north to south angle being the more pronounced. The bulldozer cuts which opened the grid in 1997 encountered signs of occupation – or at least began excavation – at roughly 19.5 above sea level. This elevation was mix of topsoil and Islamic fills, just covering a thick Byzantine shell surface **74.L3**, the latest occupational surface in the northeast of the grid. No equivalent occupational levels were identified in the western and southern portions of Squares 73 and 74 at these elevations; rather evidence for occupation in these areas begin at roughly 19.0m or slightly below. Moreover, occupation in the southern portion of the grid in the newly opened squares 83 and 84 appears to begin even lower, roughly at 18.7 above sea level. Here, as in the north, the first surface reached was a thick shell surface **83.U2**, identical in character to **74.L3**, at 18.7 above sea level. The southern section of Squares 83 and 84 confirms the total absence of either occupational surfaces or architecture above this elevation. Thus, while some allowance can be made for natural erosion or human leveling activities (including, perhaps, our own in 1997 and 2009), it seems likely that some sort of slope or terracing was present in nearly every phase. Although the possibility of terracing was recognized in 1999, it was presumed to be a Byzantine phenomenon and its implications were not fully considered when assigning all phases.

We have tried to take the topography into account, in conjunction with the pottery data, in making minor adjustments to the pre-existing phasing schemes.

Although variation does occur, the arrangement of rooms within the grid seems to have remained constant for nearly 800 years. The basic plan, shown below, involved a series of three rows of three rooms each:



In some phases the Center East room was divided into two separate rooms; these will be termed CE e (east) and CE w (west). For ease of reference the acronyms NW, NC, CE, and so forth will be used to describe the spaces within each square.

Phase I: The Islamic Period

Our understanding of the Islamic period has undergone some small shifts as a result of the pottery information and a better understanding of the topography outlined above. As noted earlier, the beginning of the Islamic horizon in the northeastern quadrant of the grid is at ca. 19.5 above sea level, constituting all activity after the Byzantine shell surface **74.L3** goes out of use. Following the slope of the terrace, to the west and south, the Islamic horizon starts at a lower elevation, 19.0, except in the southernmost squares of 83 and 84 where it begins at ca. 18.70.

As elsewhere on the site, the Islamic period in Grid 51 was essentially a phase of thorough leveling and profound robbing, which all but obliterated the remains of the larger Byzantine structures which had stood in the area. Thus the shell floors **74.L3** and **84.U2** (and possibly the walls stubs **73.F9=74.F20**, **74.F17**) are all that remain of what was clearly a substantial Byzantine structure. The robbing and removal of the Byzantine building was not a single action, but is reflected instead in a series of pits and trenches, at times even showing the sequential removal of existing – probably partially standing - walls section by section.

In Squares 73 and 74 three subphases of Islamic activity were identified. The earlier Phase IC was marked by E-W robber trenches **73.LF13** and N-W trenches **73.LF17** and **73.LF12**, which in 1997 were said to contain a mixture of Late Byzantine to Early Islamic transitional wares and early Islamic glazed wares. These robbed Roman or Byzantine walls. Phase IB was represented by two larger robbing actions: the huge N-S trench **74.LF6** and the E-W trench **74.LF14** containing predominantly Fatimid and Crusader wares, also **74.LF8**, an oblong trench cut through the shelly layer **74.L3** in the northeastern quadrant. Finally, in IA a series of Fatimid-Crusader period fills **73.L2**, **73.L3**, **83.L1**, **84.L1** covered over most of the area. The

superimposition of pits and robber trenches in Squares 83 and 84 suggest strongly that similar subphasing might be applicable here. While the backfill of the majority of the trenches in Squares 83 and 84 contained predominantly Fatimid and Crusader period pottery (with the majority belonging to the twelfth century A.D.) there were some indications in ceramic repertoire that there may have been an early (8-10th century) horizon as well. However the prolific numbers of pits in this phase, their consistent superimposition and their rubbly character made it difficult to separate their contents cleanly. This was most clearly illustrated in the south where a series of superimposed cuts (**83.F35/L8, 83.F13=84.L10; 84.F35, 84.L30/84.F31, 84.F38/L37, 84.F17/L14**) were visible in section along an E-W line which likely reflect the sequential robbing of an earlier Byzantine wall. (Rubble and cement remnants of which were found at the base of several of these pits). This particular sequence of pits appear to have been cut from the same elevation, suggesting a surface at roughly 18.70 (as in 73. and 74, where both the Phase IA and IB pits were identified at 19.0). Continued work in this area next season should be conducted with an eye towards separating these subphases if possible.

The only indication of actual construction during this period comes in the form of a drain/sewer, constructed of fieldstones (**73.F5/74.F14**), in the north of Square 73, which contained an organic green fill **73.L48**. It was preserved until a height of 19.0 m and was then covered over by additional Islamic fills, so it is unclear with what building it might have been originally associated. No surfaces were preserved at that elevation in the northwest of the grid.

The Question of the Kiln

The only major change in our understanding of the Islamic period in Grid 51 centers around a kiln in Square 74. In 1999-2000, a limestone kiln, constructed within the walls of an earlier Byzantine room, was assigned to the early Islamic phase IB.¹ According to the original interpretation, in Phase IB a thin fieldstone lining was built inside each of the fieldstone and ashlar walls of an originally Hellenistic (Phase 3B) structure. The original room was defined by **74.F46/70** (north), **74.F10** (west), **74.F69** (south), and **74.F72** (west); the "Islamic" lining walls were **74.F63** (north), **74.F79** (west), **74.F61** (south), and **74.F64** (east). The basis of the dating was twofold: first, one of the upper kiln floors was lined with slabs of marble (**74.F98**, elev. 18.45-50), presumed to have been reused from an earlier Byzantine building. Second, Islamic pottery was recovered from between the upper stones of the northern lining wall, **74.F63**.

¹ For detailed description see Square Supervisor's report 2000:8.



Fig. 2 Kiln in 51.74, view to the west. Lining walls are 74.F 79 (W), 74.F63 (N), 74.F61 (S) and 74.F64 (E). The marble paving is 74.F.98

The interpretation is problematic, however. The Islamic pottery recovered from **74.F63** comes from only a single bucket, from an area adjacent to where an early Islamic pit was later discovered, such that contamination must be considered as a possibility. Every other layer and feature within the kiln – from the multiple floors within it to the other lining walls and original walls of the room yielded either Byzantine or Hellenistic pottery. The kiln was put out of use, backfilled by two layers: **74.L12** and **74.L68**, both of which contained exclusively Roman and Byzantine pottery. The only layers above them were topsoil. It seems unusual that an Islamic kiln would yield so little evidence of use in the period during which it functioned, and furthermore that it would be backfilled in the Islamic period without a trace of Islamic pottery. It seems more likely that the “kiln” is a later Byzantine (rather than Islamic) reuse of an earlier Byzantine (not Hellenistic) room.

The room into which the kiln was inserted was originally phased as “3B” (roughly our Phase 5), an early to middle Hellenistic room. The earliest cobblestone surface in the space **74.F105**, upon which the marble slabs of the kiln floor were set belongs to Phase 3 or 4. However the walls against which the lining was placed were built in a style identical to the walls of the Phase 2 Byzantine structure in the northeast of the Grid (**74.F.4, F5, F46** – see below). In addition, both the western and northern walls are set over earlier Hellenistic foundations. As such we propose that the Byzantine walls were constructed immediately on top of the foundations of the Phase 3 walls in the room, that there may have been an original use of the space earlier in the Roman or Byzantine period, and that the secondary use as a kiln occurred later also in the Byzantine period. There is virtually no data to suggest an Islamic date for the kiln.

Phase II: Byzantine

The understanding of the Byzantine period within Grid 51 has undergone some significant shifts over the last four seasons. It was originally suggested that there were two phases of Byzantine occupation, the earlier characterized by what was termed a “Byzantine villa”, the latter a secondary occupation of the disturbed villa. More recently in 2000 it was determined that there was no true “Byzantine phase”, only a period of reuse of existing Hellenistic architecture.

(With the exception of the poured concrete wall **73.F20=74.F17/74.F9**). Thus only a few surfaces, **74.LF15=60**, being the most notable, were assigned to this phase.

The pottery readings conducted in 2009 support the earlier, broader view of Byzantine occupation with architectural subphases. The latest such – Phase 2A – is that represented by the shell layers **74.L3** and **84.L5**, which appear to put both the poured concrete walls in the south **73.F17=74.F20 /F9** and the ashlar walls in the north (**74.F4,F5**, etc.) out of use. The shell layers themselves present something of an enigma. Their shell and concrete matrix is essentially identical to that seen binding the large stones in walls **73.F20=74.F17**, **74.F9** and **84.F5**, however they clearly pass over the top of these walls, putting them out of use. In sections they do not appear to function with any visible walls – perhaps their remains were too high and eroded – except for the suggested (and heavily eroded) connection with the E-W wall **74.F46** implied by the angle of the shell layer in the east section. Yet **74.F46** is itself only preserved to almost exactly the level of the shelly layer at 19.5m, and it is more likely that it runs over the top of **F46** as it does the tops of **74.F4**, **74.F5**, **73.20=74.F17** etc.

One possibility, particularly applicable to the southern portion of the building, may be that the remaining wall stubs were not themselves walls but instead subterranean piers, and the shell layer itself a subfloor bedding to provide support for columns, heavy stone slab or mosaic floors. Numerous tesserae –ranging in size from 1 square cm to ~5cm – and some larger flat stone slabs were recovered from the mixed Byzantine and early Islamic debris layers across the grid, and were particularly heavily concentrated in robber trenches where concrete debris was similarly found. One might look to the example too of the Phase 3 room which served as the base for the kiln discussed above, where the marble flooring **74.F98** was supported by two layers of cobbles (**74.F105** and **74.F.143**) Certainly classical tradition tells us that mosaics needed to be bedded atop several supportive layers of mixed sand, stones, and mortar. (This may in fact be what we are witnessing in the series of layers underneath the shell layers in **84.L32** and **L33**. These layers run up to either side of the poured concrete Byzantine wall **84.U5**, and are a series of crushed kurkar, mudbrick and shell.)

If, however, the large poured concrete walls are not subterranean piers but belong to an earlier Byzantine phase, predating the shell layers **74.L3** and **84.L2** then they should be classified as belonging to Byzantine phase 2B. In either case, the 2A shell floors likely functioned as part of a substantial building of which there is virtually no remaining trace.

The kiln was put out of use at the end of Phase 2A with fills **74.L12** and **74.L68**.

Phase 2B: The Byzantine “Villa”

This building was originally described as a “Byzantine villa”. When excavated in the 1999-2000 seasons, all that was known of this building was a single set of stone walls with poured concrete mortar: a very wide east-west wall **73.F17=74.F20** cornering on the east with N-S wall stub **74.F9**. Both were heavily robbed in the early Islamic period, with stones apparently chipped away from both sides, but the original width probably approached one meter. This L-shaped wall structure, being unique in both its mass and its style of construction, was interpreted as a retaining wall for a terrace upon which the original structure stood. The 2009 discovery of another N-S wall stub extending south from **74.F20**, **83.U5**, which was clearly constructed at the same time as the former using stone and poured concrete, renders it unlikely that this set of walls served as terrace retaining walls (particularly as the slope indicates that erosional activity would likely be directed towards the south and west, rather than to the south and east, the erosional vector which would have been contained by the existing set of walls).

There seems instead to have been a complex of constructed rooms partially preserved in the southern part of the grid. If the building continued to the north, where the elevations would likely have been higher, we cannot pinpoint the location of what had to have been the “true” terrace wall, or load bearing wall separating the upper and lower structures. It is unclear why so little of the building was preserved further to the north of wall stub **74.F9**.

Apart from the poured concrete walls, a series of Byzantine rooms were constructed using square cut ashlar in the northeastern quadrant of the grid.² The northeast room was framed by the north-south wall **74.F4** on the west, **74.F5** on the north, and **74.F46** on the south. The NC room shared **74.F4** on its east side but the closing walls to the west and south had been robbed out by Islamic trenches **73.LF17** and **74.F65**. Slightly lower on the slope on the east side in Square 74 was the room which served as the eventual home for the kiln: room CEw, sharing **74.F46** as its northern wall, it was limited by **74.F10** on the west, **74.F69** in the south, and **74.F72** in the east. Two occupational horizons were visible on the northern step: an early floor **74.LF43** in the NC room and **74.LF45** in the NE at ca. 19.25, which was put out of use by the leveling fills **74.L37** and **74.L38**, respectively. These fills served as the basis for more substantial shell and plaster floors **74.LF15 = 60** in the NE and **74.LF13** in the NC. In the southern rooms the marble flooring **74.98** with concrete overlay **74.F 97** reflects probably kiln use, over which ash layer **74.L85** accumulated.

Phase III: Early Roman/Roman

This phase represents an effort to distinguish between the Hellenistic and Roman occupation periods within the Grid. Elsewhere on the site, as in Grid 50, Early Roman phases were apparently overlooked during excavation, and new ceramic data, the result of analysis undertaken during the 2009 season by Rahel Bar-Nathan in Grid 47 is suggesting a greater depth of Early Roman occupation than had previously been anticipated.³ As such we are making every effort to avoid simply lumping the Roman material into either the Late-Hellenistic/Early Roman transitional range, or the Late Roman/Byzantine range without careful study. Thus for the present, until such time as a more nuanced reading can be carried out on the 51 assemblages, we are positing a separate horizon with the full knowledge that it may end up merged with either Phases 2 or 4. Conversely with an increasing ability to distinguish between Roman and Byzantine forms, this horizon may grow.

The walls and surfaces of Phase III had originally been classified as belonging to the later portions of Phase The phase is not represented in all areas within the grid. In the north, a mixed fieldstone and ashlar wall **73.F43 = 109=74.124** was constructed as the southern closing wall for the NW and NC rooms. The wall was present only in stone scraps left remaining in the bottom of the Islamic robber trench **73.LF13**, but is visible also in the west section above **73.F66**. The NW and NC rooms were divided by a fieldstone and ashlar wall **73.F26**. Another N-S wall stub **73.F16**, also heavily robbed, ran south of **73.F26**. In the NE, a third E-W stone wall, **74.F111**, was constructed over the top of the Phase 4 wall **74.F144**. A southern wall stub, **74.F113**, turned south off of this wall (although the join was disrupted by a later Byzantine trench **74.F82**). This formed two sides of the room which later became the Byzantine kiln (the southern and eastern edges of this room were formed by **74.F69** and **74.F72**.) It is unclear whether fieldstone walls contemporary with **74.F113** and **74.F111** had existed during this phase but were disturbed by the later constructions, or whether the area of this CEe space was larger than the Byzantine room and reached instead as far as the E-W wall **73.F126=74.F145** (rebuilt as **74.F21** in the Byzantine period.) In the south, the N-S walls **74.F28** and **74.20** were constructed, likely cornering with **74.F21** which continued in use during this phase, and possibly also with the long E-W fieldstone wall **83.U2=84.U3**. (This latter is also likely rebuilt in the Byzantine period.)

Only a few occupational surfaces were preserved. Beaten earth surfaces **73.LF55** and **73.LF65** were set down in the NE and NC rooms and ran up to the wall **73.F26**. In the CEe, a cobble floor **74.F143** spanned the room. In the south, a single surface ran up to the west edge of **74.F28**, **73.LF33=74.F31**.

²

³ Rahel Bar-Nathan, personal comm., July 2009.

Ceramically, this phase is characterized by assemblages which are predominantly Roman or Late Hellenistic/Early Roman, with little to no Byzantine pottery. Most are dated between the 2nd century B.C. and the 1st. A.D. There are, however, exceptions: **73.F26** which has one bucket, pb12, with Byz pottery, the rest being Roman. This is described as cleaning off the top of the wall in an area near the N baulk, which raises the possibility of contamination from the robber trench **73.F17** above. The other buckets were entirely Hellenistic and Roman). Likewise **73.F16**, which lay beneath an Islamic robber trench and was cut by a Byzantine pit.

However, it is of course possible, in the absence of clean ceramic margins, that the architecture from this phase might constitute its own early Byzantine, rather than definitively Roman, horizon. It may in fact be that these structures might simply be buildings set further down the slope to the west and south from the Phase 2 “villa” on the northeastern acropolis, and should be lumped into Phase 2B. Fine tuning our reading of the ceramics from the intervening fill layers should help to address this question.

Phase IV: Late Hellenistic to Early Roman (3rd-2nd c.)

This phase corresponds best to the period originally called “3B”. This is a complex phase spanning the third to second centuries B.C., and even when classified as a subphase it was still described as having two to three sub-sub-phases of its own. This reflects not only the overall frequency of rebuilds and reuse of space during this time, but also the difficulties in finding coherent surfaces with which such rebuilds could be clearly associated. As a result, Phase 3B (now Phase 4) has ended up being something of a catchall between the better defined surfaces of the early Hellenistic phase and the ashlar architecture of the Roman/Byzantine.

In 2008, the phase was divided into an early and late sequence, although essentially the phase included what seem to be three, rather than two, subperiods. The ceramic data gathered this season has allowed us to separate out those phases. In particular, as noted above in the discussion of Phase 3, it has allowed us to ceramically distinguish between those features dating to the Late Hellenistic and those which are more predominantly Roman. As it happens, those Roman features tended to be the third in a series of wall rebuilds or the third in a series of floor sequences which had been compressed into Phase 4, and have now been moved into Phase 3. Therefore, absent the early Roman material, we are for the present preserving the 2008 description of Phase 3B – early and late. For a full discussion of the building plan see the Grid 51 Reports from 2000 and 2008.

Phase V: Hellenistic

Née Phase “3c”, this phase was largely excavated in 1999-2000 and was fully described as Phase 3C in the 2008 Grid 51 Final Report. That phasing has remained unchanged, the only modifications being the creation of three new unit numbers to identify previously unrecognized rebuilding activities that occurred between the Phase 6 and Phase 4 walls. In general, the Phase 5 walls made use of the relatively intact mudbricks of the previous Phase 6 walls, widening them by building alongside them, and up and over them (best illustrated in the West Section drawing of 51.73). In the western building, the rebuilds integrated corners of previously separate walls, such as **73.F66** and **73.F118**. Where these walls had been previously believed to be Phase 6 walls, our excavations this season demonstrated that these were in fact Phase 5 rebuilds of pre-existing Phase 6 walls, **73.F225** and **73.F216**. In these two walls in particular the rebuilds were undertaken using alternating rows of grey and brown mudbricks.

The only other addition to the 2008 phasing is to note the combination of two wall sections which were excavated separately: **74.174=199** and **74.195=208**. These were the east and western halves, respectively of the larger E-W wall separating the NC and NE rooms from the CE.

Preliminary examination of the ceramic assemblages from this horizon suggests a date in the early part of the fourth century.

Phase VI: Persian (5th c.)

The mudbrick-floor building, already largely exposed in the 2008 season, was fully exposed in 2009, along with an adjacent contemporary building on the west side of the Grid. Having reached Phase 7 levels in the western half of the grid, it can be conclusively demonstrated that the mudbrick floor building does not span both 73 and 74 but is restricted instead to the NC, NE, CE, and SE rooms. (Possibly also to the SC although the contents of this space were outdoor fills.



Fig. 2. Phase 6 Mudbrick-floor building (left) and an adjacent building (right), view to the south.

During this season a few additional rebuilds of walls were identified, such that while the arrangement of walls and rooms for Phase 6 is the same as in 2008, a few of the numbers have changed. This applies particularly to the CW and CC rooms. The deconstruction of the upper courses of the north-south walls **73.F118**, **73.F99** and the east-west walls **73.F66** and **73.F157** revealed that these were in fact upper repairs or complicated rebuilds for earlier mudbrick walls. (This is most clearly illustrated in the West Section drawing.) The north-south walls which demarcate the CC room, **73.F216** and **73.F225**, were grayish brown mudbrick walls which clearly cut into – bisected, in fact – the Phase 7 grey mudbrick N-S walls **73.F167** and **73.F168**.⁴ The grayish brown mudbrick walls **73.F222=223** in the north and **73.F196** in the south functioned as the Phase 6 closing walls for this room, and were built over in Phase 6 respectively by the brown mudbrick **73.F66** and the E-W mudbrick wall **73.F157**. The floors in each of the rooms were

⁴ Illustrated in Fig. 2, above. The thin grey walls which appear to be interior curbing in the room on the right are in fact Phase 7 mudbrick walls which have been bisected by the Phase 6 walls, later rebuilt in colorful bricks in Phase 5.

carefully laid mudbrick tiles. In the CEe room, the flooring **73.U169=74.198** consisted of irregularly shaped or squarish grey mudbricks arranged in rows, on the west side. Elsewhere, in the NC (**73.F212**), the NE (**74.F205=206**), the CEw (**74.L173**) and in the SE (**74.F190**) the mudbricks are rectangular, averaging 30cm in length, and are arranged in alternating grey and brown patterns. The differences in brick pattern and coloration between the east and western halves of the CE room suggest that some sort of subdivision may have existed. Indeed, the transition between these two floors was disrupted in the area just NW of the probe, abutting the northern closing wall **73.F134=74.F201=211**. However there were no visible post holes nor architecture.

As noted in the 2008 report, there was little evidence for occupational use of this building. Lenses of plaster (or possibly white ash) were noted immediately above the mudbricks in the CEw and the NE rooms, but there was nothing in the way of laminated occupational debris. A series of loomweights were recovered in 2008 from the area against the wall **73.F134=74.F201=211**. (MC#s **58805, 58955-7**). To these can be added an additional 5 unbaked clay cylindrical loomweights which were excavated in the same area along the all, in the occupational debris I (**L97=128**) just above the mudbrick flooring. (MC #s 60229, 60332, 60449, 60482-3). They were not, arranged in a row suggestive of the presence of an actual loom against the wall, however their plentiful numbers is certainly indicative of domestic activity in the space. The only finds of note were an unusual Hellenistic amphoriskos (4th c.) which appeared sitting in the fill above the floor **74.F205=206** leaning against the west face of the wall **74.F169** (RP# 11166).

In all, the preliminary ceramic reading suggests a date for Phase VI in the late fifth and early fourth centuries B.C.

Phase VII: Persian

Elements of this building were only partially exposed this seasons, predominantly in the western half of the grid. The grey mudbrick-walled building of Phase 7 shows the earliest use of the architectural layout which would continue for four centuries, with the single exception of the north-south wall dividing CC from CE (which comes and goes). The walls of this structure were not merely built over by the subsequent residents but in effect bisected lengthwise by later constructions, which demonstrates that unlike some later phases where reconstruction and rebuilding occurs on standing walls, the remains of these walls were likely totally covered over at the time of the later constructions. The damage to these wall stubs has left only patchy information at best regarding the nature of the joins and cornering, and we can only guess at original wall widths. The basic layout, however, was consistent with the nine-room plan familiar from later phases.

A northwest room, defined by walls **73.F186=121** to the south and **73.F120** to the east (closing walls in the north and west baulks). [Note that on the current Phase plan this room is shown containing "Floor 194"; this is inaccurate – 73.194 is a fill layer only.] The north center room is defined by **73.F120** to the west, **73.F134=74.F201=211**⁵ to the south and **74.F169** to the east. The northeast room shared wall **74.F169** and the southern boundary, and its northern and eastern extents are unknown.

The CC room was defined again by grey mudbrick walls **73.F167** and **73.F168** to the west and east, respectively, **73.F186=121** to the north and **73.F164** to the south. A sloping ashy surface, **73.L179** remains the only occupational surface in the room, although the degree of slope suggests that a more level original surface remains below. The Center East room, was during this phase divided into two rooms, which we shall call CEe (Center east-east) and CEw (Center East – west side). Although nothing of Phase 7 was technically excavated in either of these spaces

⁵ The central section of this wall had been cut through by 5 successive foundation trenches and rebuilds. All that remained of this original was a thin, perhaps 20-25cm wide strip of intact mudbricks.

during the 2009 season, the 2008 well probe shows the existence of a north-south wall in its west side, extending across the width of the probe and nearly in line with the north-south wall **74.F169** immediately to its north. To the south, the original closing wall for Phase 7 has yet to be determined. The southern row of rooms was defined by

Apart from that in the CC room, the original Phase 7 surfaces have not yet been exposed, but merely a series of fills which separate them from the Phase 6 mudbrick floors (in the E building) and beaten earth surfaces (in the W building) above them. Unsurprisingly, many of these are brown fills with occasional chunks of grey mudbrick in them. (e.g. **73.L207=74.L221; 73.L194**). As such we are unable to determine anything about the use of space and rooms within the building. Exposure and interpretation of this phase will be one of the primary goals of the 2010 season.

Future Goals

The 2009 was an illuminating season and it was very gratifying to see so much progress made in establishing the proper sequence and chronology in the Grid. The goals for the next season are as follows:

- To expose Phase 7 across Squares 73 and 74, and to expose the latest Hellenistic material in Squares 83 and 84.
- To refine knowledge of the Roman pottery in the grid and fine-tune the relevant phasing
- To work towards establishing a typology for the local Hellenistic pottery from Grid 51, establishing context lists and working through local forms.
- To expand an additional 5x10m (arguments for which cardinal direction will be forthcoming).

Thanks are due to directors Larry Stager and Daniel Master for the opportunity to participate in this exciting new phase of the Ashkelon Expedition, to Elise Jakoby and Laura Wright for their hard work and partnership.

Ashkelon 35/09

Grid 51

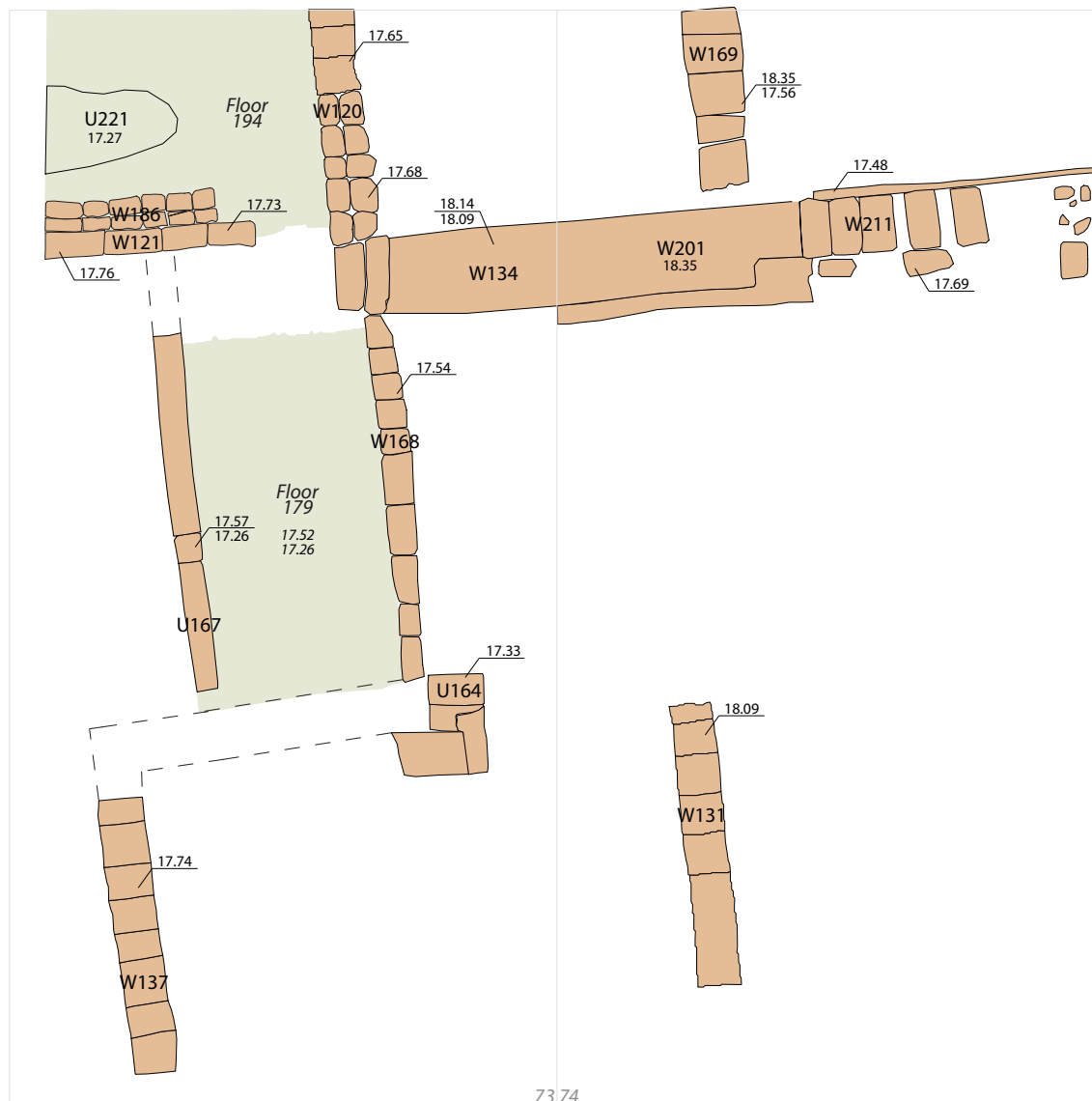
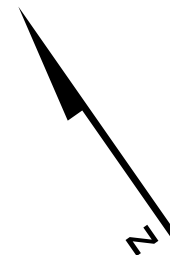
Phase 7

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July 21, 2009

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73.74

Ashkelon 35/09

Grid 51

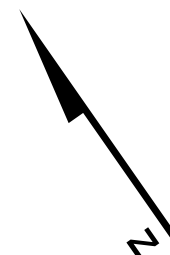
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Phase 6a

July 21, 2009

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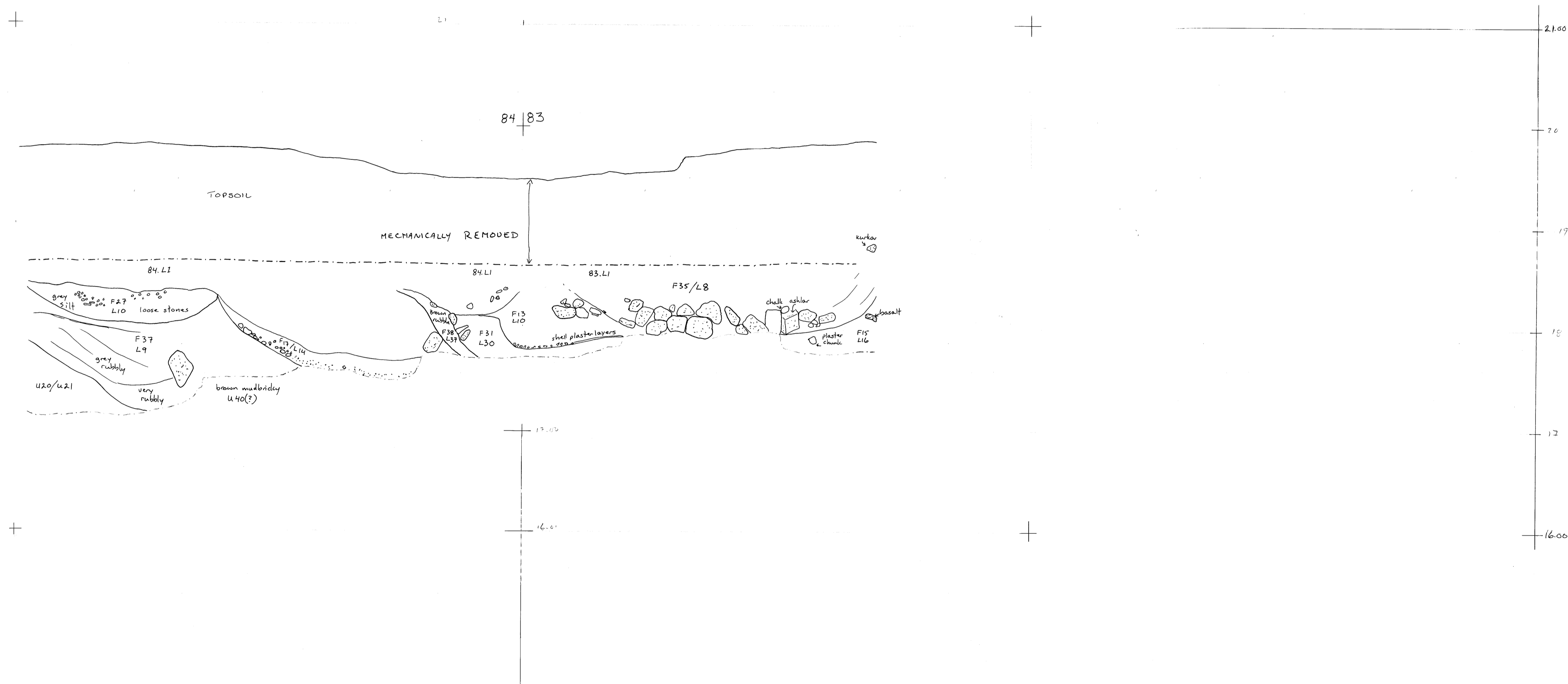
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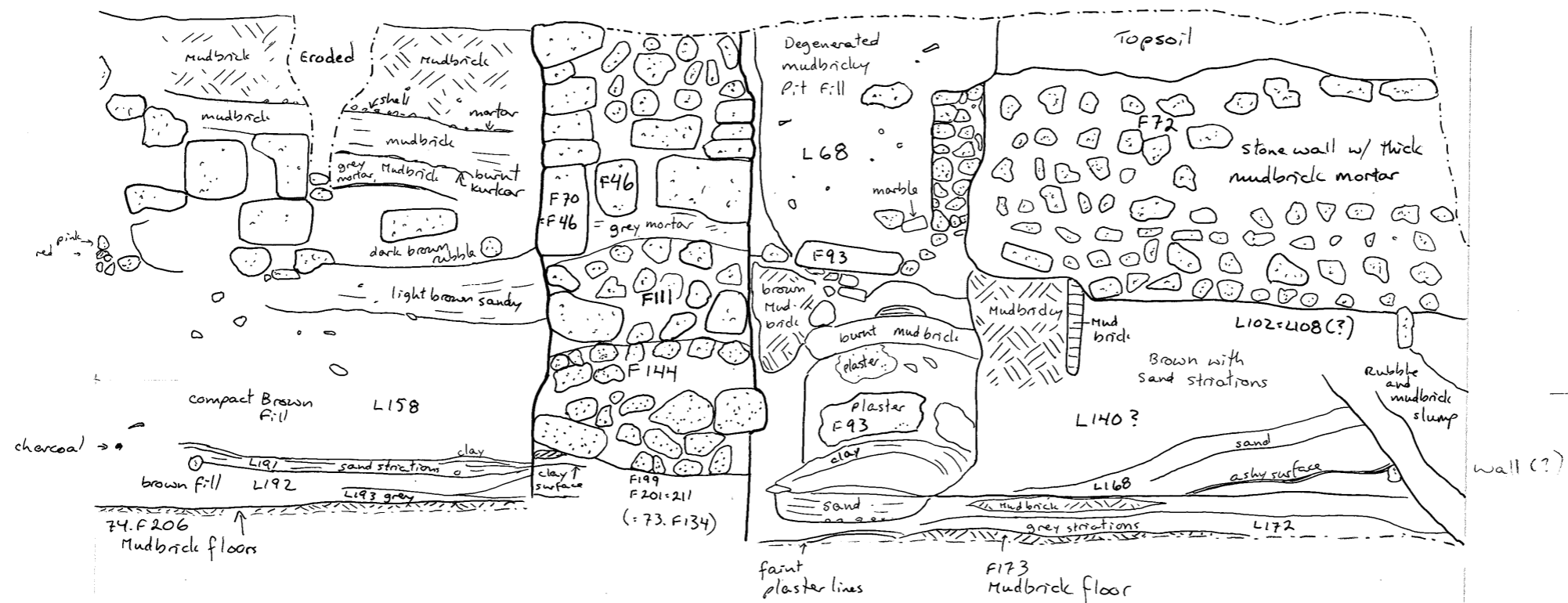
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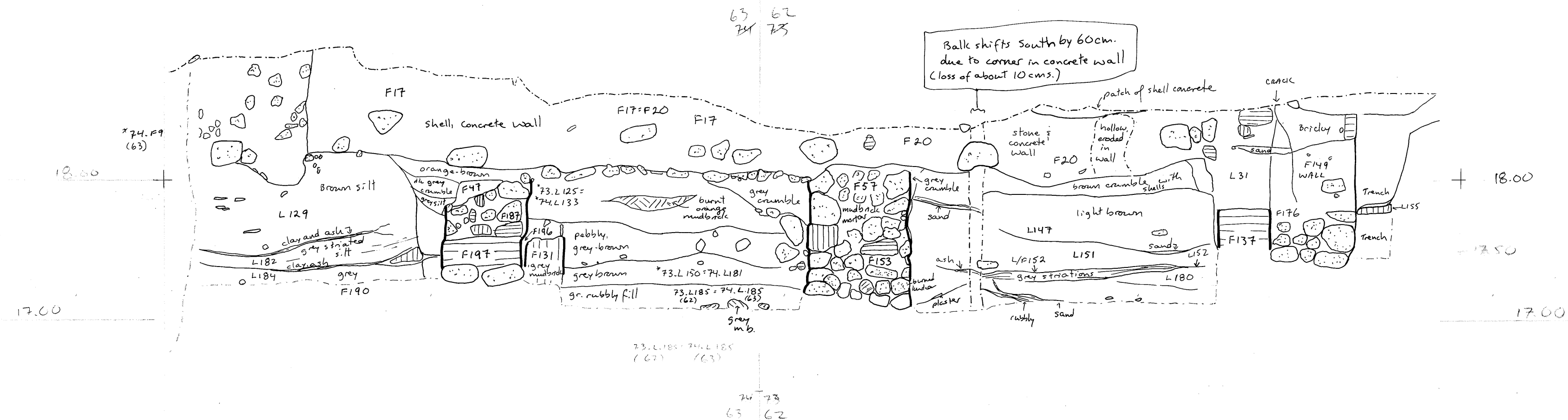
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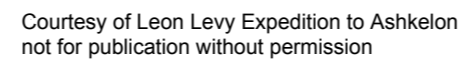
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2009 Additions

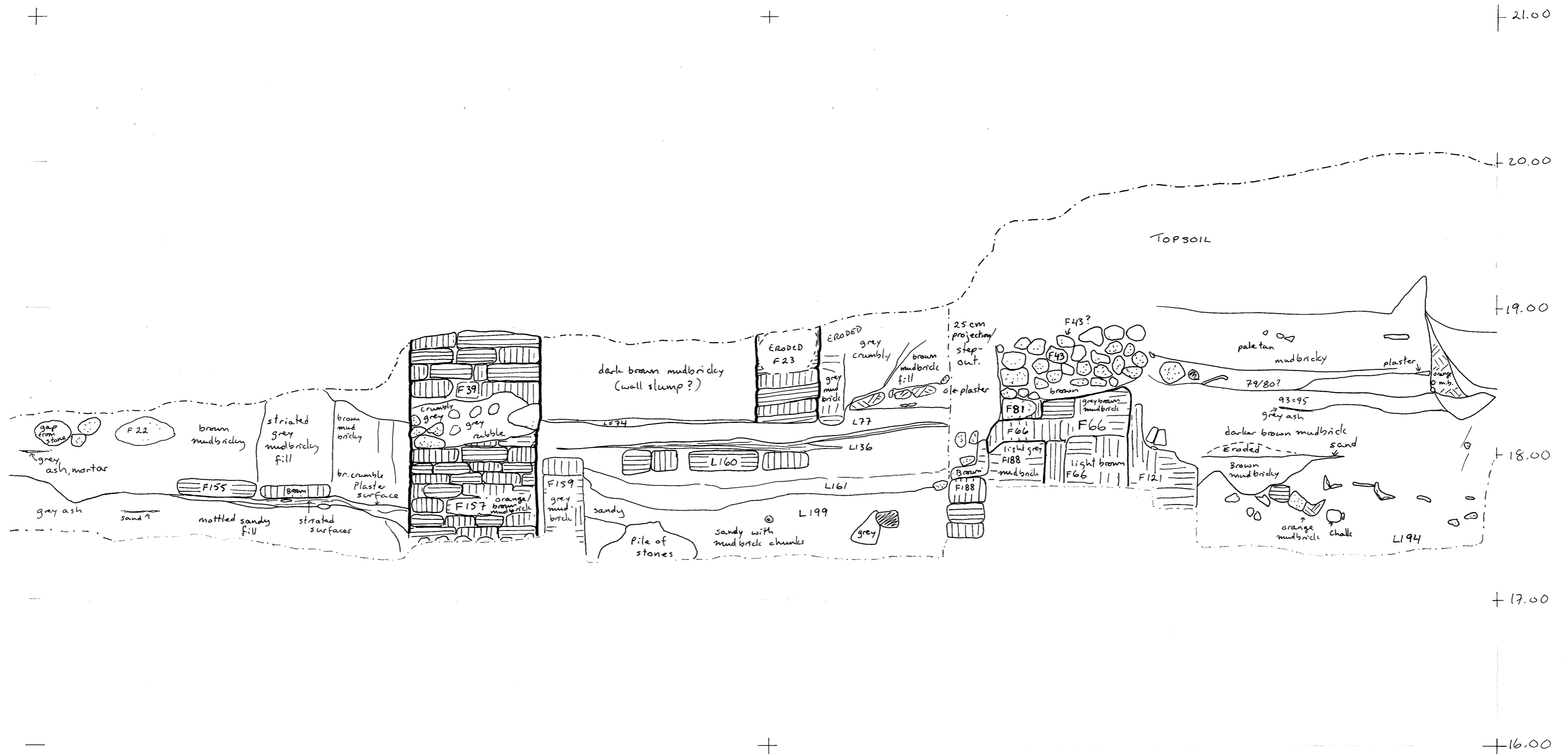


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2009 Additions

62



Grid 51.73-74 Final Report - 2009

Introduction -

The broad excavation goals for the 2009 season were to uncover the rest of the mudbrick building of phase 6 and bring the rest of square 73-74 into roughly the same phase. In the western two thirds of the grid this goal was met and we uncovered mudbrick flooring and the walls associated with them in the NC, NE, CC, and SE rooms. In the western third of 73-74, no mudbrick flooring was found and, in fact, it appears that this part of the grid is a different building complex than that in the eastern two-thirds with the mudbrick flooring. In this western part of the grid we did uncover walls and fill associated with phase 6 and were able to move beyond them into phase 7.

The staff members responsible for accomplishing these goals were, Kate Birney, Grid supervisor, Laura Wright, square supervisor of 51.83-84, and myself. Nothing, however, would have been possible without the lively crew of volunteers who participated from one week to the entire dig season. Thank you, Andrea, Brandon, Dan, Danny, Eric, Hilary, Jake, Kathleen, Nikki, and Trevor.

I. Phase 7 – Pre-mudbrick Building

At the end of 2009 the earliest exposed phase, which consists solely of mudbrick construction, is mostly isolated to the western half of the grid. We are in mid-phase in uncovering these walls and have not yet reached the foundations of any feature. The most coherent stratigraphical connections thus far in this phase are the units associated with the sloping ashy gray surface, **73.U179**. **73.U179** is bounded by the N-S gray mudbrick walls **73.U167** to the west and **73.U168** to the east. Last season these two walls were described as benches abutting the actual closing walls of this same space. This season we determined that these two walls were originally free-standing walls before they were cut into in subsequent phases. The cutting of **73.U167** by **73.U206**, the foundation trench for **73.U216**, and the cutting of **73.U168** for the construction of **73.U225**, gave **U167** and **U168** their bench-like appearance. The tip-line for the sloping, ashy-gray surface, **73.U179**, however, sloped from the northeast down to the southwest and ran up to the side, but not over the top of **73.U168**. As mentioned the 2008 grid report, **73.U179**, is thus associated with this phase of construction. As also mentioned in the 2008 report, the tip-line of this surface suggests that **73.U179** is the product of continued accumulation for the activities in this room. The layer immediately below **73.U179**, **73.U181**, is then not considered leveling fill for the surface immediately above, since it too followed the northeast to southwest tip-line, but accumulation associated with the activities already occurring in the room and the layer on which **73.U179** is founded as a continuation of that activity.

Also associated with **73.U181** is **73.U212**. During excavation of **73.U181**, the southern third of the layer was constantly noted as having several disturbances. It was clear that **73.U210/211** was a pit cut into **73.U179**, but the disturbed nature of this layer seemed to be caused by a very rubbly and pebbly fill. We were never able to see a clear line between this pebbly layer the cleaner and more compact layer **73.U181**. Given the tip line in the room, it would be fair to assume that **73.U212** is the southern, lower extension of **73.U181** where the pebbly, rubble of **73.U181** accumulated or was placed during use. Both **73.U181** and **73.U212** were founded on a more level brickly brown fill, **73.U219**. All these layers accumulated against **73.U167** and **73.U168** and currently both the **73.U219** and the walls associated with it continue down.

All that remains of the southern E-W closing wall between **73.U167** and **73.U168** is

73.U164, an E-W gray mudbrick wall stump, just south of **73.U168**. At one time **73.U164**, spanned the southern extent of the room containing **73.U179**, but it was cut by a later closing wall, **73.U157**. This corner of **73.U164** continued to be used in later phases as the pre-existing foundation for several rebuilds including **73.U200=74.U215**, **73.158=74.U189**, **73.U157**, and **73.U153**. **73.U159** may have been the western extension of **73.U164**, but this relationship cannot be definitively demonstrated as it was not only cut by **73.U157** (FT **U182**) but also **73.U196** and **73.U216** (FT **U206**) of a later phase. It should also be noted that **73.U159**, as the western extension of **73.U164**, is oriented slightly more clockwise and does not form a 90 degree angle with **73.U167** and **73.U168**. The later wall, **73.U157**, also severed the relationship between the southern closing wall for this room and the N-S gray mudbrick wall **73.U137**. **73.U137** does not have any surfaces associated with it at this time, but we have yet to continue to drop in the SW room and in the area to the west of **73.U137**. While the mudbrick of **73.U137** looks to be composed of very poor quality mudbrick, as we were never able to distinguish any brick lines, it is clear from the south baulk into which it disappears and continues to the top of that this wall was reused throughout the subsequent phases.

To the east of **73.U137** in the SC room is the next layer associated with phase 7. The loose, gray, rubbly fill of **73.U207=74.U221** has accumulated against the N-S gray mudbrick wall **74.F131** and is cut into by the pit **73.208/209** in the NW corner of the layer. **74.F131** is associated with this phase because the wall is continuing down and there do not appear to be any signs of its trench line or foundations yet. Like **73.F137**, **74.F131** also continued to be used in subsequent phases as evidenced by its preservation height in the baulk, though in later phases its use appears to be diminished to a bench rather than load-bearing wall. In its earliest phase it was much wider before being cut by the trenches for the subsequent rebuilds abutting it to the west.

Returning to square 73, the northern E-W closing wall for the room associated with **73.U179** is the E-W mudbrick wall **73.F121=U186**. Originally the mudbricks of **73.F121** were thought to be mudbrick orthostats placed against the face of **F66**, but this season we determined that **F121** is actually the earliest phase into which **F223** was later cut and onto which **F66** was placed. We separated these rebuilds by foundation trenches, brick orientation, and brick color. After **F66** was removed it was clear that **F121** continued under the mudbrick of **F66**, the northern half of these bricks were cut into by previous excavators and the E-W mudbrick bench **U186** abutting **F121** were all part of the same wall. The northern closing wall also appears to have had a functioning doorway in the earliest part of the phase and then this doorway was partially blocked up with large ashlar (**U175L**) during the latter part of the phase. We have come to this conclusion based on the fact that there does not appear to be any cut from above in order to place these ashlar. The layers south of the ashlar were not cut by the stones either, but have accumulated against them. In fact, based on the tip line of **U179** which angles down away for it, it makes sense that these ashlar were part of a constructed doorway that was in use in both the early and late periods of this phase. It is possible that these ashlar still continue down, but that is for the next excavation season to discover.

Just north of **F121=U186** and bounded on the east by the N-S mudbrick wall **F120**, is the space containing the layer **U194** (NW room). Whereas the layer immediately later, **L100**, accumulated up and over **F121=U186** to touch **F66**, **U194** is abutting and associated with **F121=U186**. The bricky, gray-brown fill of **U194** is also abutting **F120**. It is possible that **F120** is the northern extension of **U168**, though this relationship will have to be clarified next season. There are no other closing walls for this layer to the north and west within the bounds of the square. The pit **73.U201/202** was cut into the surface of **U194** and below the level of this pit and

possibly associated with it is **U221**. The nature of **U221** is unclear at this time, but there does appear to be a diving shelly surface as well as a layer of loose fill contained within it. Whereas the pit **73.U201/202** was contained within the excavation area, **U221** extends into the western baulk and that section will hopefully shed light on it next season.

Cornering with **F120** and **U168** is the E-W gray mudbrick wall **73.134=74.201/211**. This mudbrick wall extends all the way from **F120** into the eastern baulk of square 74. We know that this gray mudbrick wall should be associated with this phase because it is cut into by the phase 6 brown mudbrick wall, **U225**. In the western part of this wall, in square 73, the composition is mostly of gray mudbricks whereas in the eastern section, namely what we originally named **U211** and later equated with **U201**, the bricks are gray and gray-brown. No surfaces, trenches or foundations north or south of this wall have yet been associated with it in this phase. Just north of **73.134=74.201/211**, though not abutting it and extending into the north baulk, is the N-S brown mudbrick wall, **74.F169**. Much like the other mudbrick walls already mentioned, **74.F169** is assigned to phase 7 based on the fact that the layers around it are abutting it and there are no signs of trench lines or foundations yet. Early on this season, we thought we had identified the trench and named it, but this turned out not to be the case. When the trench for **F169** does appear, it should be labeled **U207**.

II. Phase 6 – The Mudbrick Building

At the end of the 2009 season, the majority of what we are calling the mudbrick building of phase 6 in square 73 and 74 is in phase. The mudbrick flooring characteristic of this phase spans across the eastern two-thirds of square 73 and 74. Though in the same phase it appears that the eastern, mudbrick flooring portion of the 73-74 is not part of the same building complex as the features in the western side of square 73. It is our theory that throughout this phase and the subsequent phase that the N-S walls just west of the 73-74 square line are walls shared by abutting but not shared building complexes.

In the SW room **73.U137** is used once again and is associated with the brickly detritus fill layer, **73.U180**. Large, square gray bricks and brick chunks in the gray-brown fill of **U180** were mostly but not exclusively pushed against the side of **U137** in the westernmost part of the layer. The brick chunks in this layer may be associated with wall fall. **U180** is immediately earlier than the surface **U152** from which the pit **U183/U184** was cut. Though identified in 2008, remnants of this pit needed to be removed in 2009. **73.U180** is cut by the foundation trench **U182** for the E-W wall **U157** to the north, but appears to abut the wall **U153L**, not being cut by the trench **U165** for **153U** as revealed by the probe dug in the NE of the layer.

In phase 6, the small CW room is bounded to the north by **73.U222**, to the east by **73.U216**, and to the south by **73.U159**. The E-W gray mudbrick wall, **U159**, already mentioned in the previous phase, is reused in phase 7, but it is cut by the trench **U206** for the N-S gray mudbrick wall **U216**. **U206** also cuts into the wall N-S **73.U167**. **U206** was cut from ~17.6m and is currently visible on top of **U167**. ***U222** is the northern E-W closing wall which corners with **U216** and heads west into the baulk. This wall also that appears to be integrated with **U216**.* **U199**, immediately earlier than layer **U161**, is the layer associated with these walls in the CW room. It is composed of a silty, compact, brown fill. At the level we left **U199** at the end of this season, there are several large rough ashlar protruding from the layer. The way these stones are angled suggests that they may be wall fall of some sort. Some of the special finds from this layer include a coin (MC 60448) and a mostly whole Hellenistic juglet (RP 11178).

To the north of **U222** and **U216** is the E-W gray-brown mudbrick wall, **U223**, and its

foundation trench, **U224**. **U223** is immediately later than **U121=U186** and earlier than **F66**. The foundation trench for this wall was visible on the south side of the wall at ~17.55m as we removed fill from the inside of the CC room. This wall serves as the northern closing wall for the CC room. It is also the wall containing a constructed threshold between the NW and CC rooms. It appears that there is also an earlier and later rebuild of the doorway within this phase. In the earlier part of the phase, the later threshold of the previous phase continued to be used. Then at some point the doorway is reinforced with mudbrick and stone. A few rough ashlar were placed in the northern part of the doorway, a mudbrick was set on top of the southernmost of the well-shaped ashlar of the earlier threshold as well as on either side of the stones. The cut made for the placement of the stones of this threshold, **U175**, was visible on the northern side of the doorway and labeled **73.U213/214**.

The southern closing wall for the CC room was, like the previous phase, cut by the FT **U182** for the E-W wall **U157**. In this phase, the remnant of the E-W wall is the gray-brown, mudbrick stump of a wall, **U196**. **U196** is directly in line with **U216** and is only separated from it by a thin layer of packing, **U220** (**U220** not having the character of a FT). The foundation trench for **U196**, **U218**, however, does appear to cut **U159**. The eastern and final closing wall for the CC room in this phase is **U225**. **U225** is a N-S brown mudbrick wall that cut into but also utilized **U168** in its construction. The CC room in phase 6, then, is bounded by **U216**, **U223**, **U225**, and **U196** and the surface associated with these walls is the plaster surface **LF119**. **LF119** continues only a few (2-3) centimeters under the mudbrick in the threshold of this phase as well as around the corner to the east and against the wall **U225**. The leveling fill for **LF119** was the rubbly brown, pottery filled layer, **73.U170**, which covered the walls **73.U167** and **73.U168** and put them out of use. The pit **73.U192/193** in the SW corner and the pit **73.U204/U205** in the NW corner of the CC room are both cut into **LF119** and cut into the earlier wall **U167**.

The E-W gray mudbrick wall **U223**, the northern closing wall for the CC room is also the southern boundary wall for the NW room. This room is also bounded on the east by the N-S light brown mudbrick wall **F120**; a reuse of a phase 7 wall. The northern closing wall which corners with **F120** and fades into the north baulk before it reaches the west baulk is the E-W gray-brown mudbrick wall, **U138**. The layer associated with all these walls is **L100**, which is immediately earlier than **L95** and immediately later than **U194**. The W baulk clearly shows that **L100** lips up and over **F120=U186** and runs up to the face of **U223/F66**.

To the east of **F120** are the NC and NE rooms. Both of these rooms have mudbrick flooring and are partially divided by the N-S brown mudbrick wall, **F169**. **F169** is a reuse of a phase 7 wall. In the NC room there are several alternating brown and gray rectangular mudbricks which make up the surface, **U212**. This surface is disturbed to the west by the cut for the foundation trench **U163** for the later wall **U178**, but to the east the flooring abuts **U169**. The layer immediately later and surrounding **U212** is **73.U198=74.U210**. This brickly, brown gray fill contained a whole amphoriskos which was just above the level of the floor and pushed up against the side of **F169**. The transition between the NC and the NE room is marked by a change between alternating rectangular mudbrick flooring to gray square mudbrick flooring. Just south of **F169** is **74.U210** and then the gray mudbrick flooring of **74.U205=206** begins just past the south side of **F169** abutting its east side. **74.U205=206** is abutting its southern closing wall **73.U134=74.U201=211**. This mudbrick flooring is immediately earlier than **U204** and cut by the pit **U213/U214** in the SE corner and the central plastered pit or depression **U217/U218**. The relationship between **U212** and its southern closing wall **73.U134=74.U201=211** was disturbed by the later phase 5 stone wall **73.195=74.U208**. Under the bedding layer (**73.U203=74.U216**)

for this wall there are a few faint brick lines of **73.U134=74.U201=211**, but it will be up to next years excavators to definitively demonstrate the relationship between **U212** and its southern E-W closing wall.

73.U134=74.U201=211 also serves as the northern closing wall and abuts the mudbrick flooring **74.U173** and **73.U169=74.198**. The ephemeral plaster patches on the surface of **74.U173** which are immediately earlier than the sandy brown fill layer **U172**, lip up to the bricks of **U211**. The mudbricks themselves are rectangular and alternate gray and brown. This surface disappears under the E and S baulks. The western extension of the bricks and their relationship to the square gray mudbricks of **73.U169=74.198** is mostly disturbed by the cut for the probe **74.U200**. North of the probe there is a gap between **73.U169=74.198** and **74.U173** but it is unclear at this point what the nature of this disconnect is. To the west and south **73.U169=74.198** abuts and is therefore associated with the N-S brown mudbrick wall, **U225** and the fieldstone foundations of the E-W wall **73.U200=74.U215**. **73.U169=74.198** is immediately earlier than the soft, silty, gray-brown, pottery rich layer **73.L97=74.L128** and is cut by the pit **74.U219/U220**. This season we continued to pull of several more unbaked clay loom weights on the surface of **74.U198** north of **U200** and a whole juglet in the pit **74.U219/U220**.

All that remains of E-W wall **73.U200=74.U215** is its fieldstone foundations since its mudbrick superstructure was cut into by the trench **73.U166=74.U195** for later rebuild of **73.U158=74.U189** along the same line. The alternating gray and brown rectangular mudbrick, **U190**, in the SE room, more of which was uncovered this season abutts **73.U200=74.U215** to the north and the N-S gray mudbrick wall **F131** to the west. The southern and eastern extents of this surface are outside of the excavated area. **U190** is immediately earlier than layer **U184** and also shallowly but not completely cut into by the foundation trench **U196** for the wall **U197**. In the SC room, **F131**, **U153**, and once again **73.U200=74.U215** serve as closing and abutting walls to the east, west, and north respectively for the brown-gray, rubbly and pebbly fill **73.U185=74.U185**. **73.U185=74.U185** is immediately earlier than **73.U150=74.U181**.

III. Phase 5 – Post-mudbrick Building

Phase 5, as described here, is mostly what was excavated this season and of few units from last season of our post-mudbrick building phase. Beginning then in the SW room, the N-S mudbrick wall, **U137**, has continued in use for a third consecutive phase. In phase 5 **U137** is associated with the surface **U152** into which the pit **73.U183/U184** was cut.

The E-W mudbrick wall **U157** of a later phase one again has removed all traces of the southern closing wall for the CW and CC rooms as well as the northern closing wall for the SW room. In the CW room, the surface **U136** is associated with the E-W gray and brown mudbrick wall **U188** to the north, a rebuild of the earlier wall **U222**. **U136** is immediately later than the fills of **U160** and **U161**. **U136** is also the surface abutting **F118**, a N-S alternating gray and brown mudbrick wall whose trench **U215** cut into the immediately earlier wall **U216**. The trench line **U215** was visible on the west side of **U118** with a top and bottom elevation of ~17.8 and ~17.67. The southern end of **U118** was cut into by the pit **73.U190/U191**. **LF 105** is the surface associated with the CC room bounded by **F118** to the west, **F66** to the north and **F99** to the east. The E-W alternating gray and brown mudbrick rebuild, **F99** was cut by the pit **73.U187/U197**. The fill of this pit included several large stones and may have been a repair of the wall.

Bounding the NW room on the south is the alternating gray and brown E-W mudbrick wall **F66**, a rebuild which cut into the earlier wall **U223** and **F121=U186**. For the first time **U178**, a N-S wall composed of large deeply founded stones, is the dividing wall between the NW

and the NC rooms. The foundation trench for **U178** is **U163**.

The layers associated with **U178** in the NC room are **73.U172=74.U203** and the fill layer immediately later, **73.U171**. Once again **74.F169** is the partially dividing wall between the NC and NE rooms. The E-W stone wall **73.U195=74.U203**, bedded on the brickly brown layer, **73.U203=74.U216**, is the southern closing wall for the NC room. This wall looks to have cut into the pre-existing wall, **73.U134=74.U201=211** while still making use of it as the stones are only cut in on the western half of the pre-existing wall. The stones on the easternmost side of **74.U211** may be related to this phase of the wall. This wall is not only assigned to this phase because it cuts into the wall immediately earlier than it, which is assigned to the previous phase, but because it also associated with the surface in the NE room which is immediately later and only a few centimeters above the mudbrick flooring of the previous phase. In fact the plater surface associated with this phase in the NE room, **74.U193**, lips up to the lower stones of **73.U195=74.U203** on its N-E stone at ~XXXX and to the stones on the easter side of **U211** which we think are associated with this wall at ~XXXX. The plaster surface, **U193**, was laid on top of the thin fill layer, **U204**, which was immediately later than the mudbrick flooring **73.U205=74.U206**. **U194** was the burnt installation associated with the plater surface and **U192** the occupational debris that accumulated on **U193**.

In the SC room layer **73.U150=74.U181** is with the N-S gray mudbrick wall **F131**, which has continued in use but has been designated a bench in this phase. In the SE room the foundation trench **U196** shallowly cut into the mudbrick floor, **U190**, for the wall stone foundation with mudbrick superstructure wall, **U197**. **U197** and **F131** are abutting one another. The layers that accumulated above **U190** putting it out of use are **U184** and **U182** divided by the mudbrick feature, **F134**. Both the SC and SE rooms have the E-W stone wall **73.U158=74.U189** as their northern closing wall.

IV. Post-Phase 5 -

This season we came very close to bringing most of the grid into phase 6. Besides the features mentioned as phase 7 and 5 there are a few features that belong to an earlier phase and should be removed at the beginning of next year. **73.U173** is a N-S stone wall in the SW corner of square 73 whose foundation trench **U176** cut the N-S mudbrick wall **F137**. This stone wall and the compact brown-gray layer abutting it to the west, **U155**, are the latest features still in the grid besides the E-W fieldstone wall with mudbrick superstructure **73.U157** whose foundation trench, **U182**, cuts through the stone wall **U173**. The fieldstone foundation stones of **U157** are clearly later than everything around it since they cut every feature and layer they touches. From the probe dug in to the NE corner of the SW room (**U180**) we were able to tell that foundations stones are 5 courses deep.

One other feature we removed this season which was clearly out of phase with the rest of the grid was **73.F81**. The feature consisted on only three stones resting on top of **F66**, remnants of a stone wall left by the 2000 excavators.

Conclusion -

In the 2009 season we would have liked to begin removing the mudbrick flooring in the eastern two-thirds of 73-74, since all the stratigraphical relationship with them have been established and start moving on the the next phase of the grid. Circumstances did not allow this, however and we well leave this as a goal for future seasons. Besides generally moving past the mudbrick building into the next phase, it would be ideal in the next season if we were able to

excavate down to the next horizon of occupation visible in the section of the probe. Hopefully, we will be unlike Grid 50 where in their post-mudbrick building phase, they came upon the dog burials. From the section of the probe, however, it looks like there is a wall directly below the mudbrick flooring of **73.U169=74.U198**, signifying occupation instead of open cemetery space.

The broad goal for the next excavation season in 73 where we have already come down on the next phase will to be come down on any new surfaces associated with this phase and then to uncover the foundations of the walls in the CC room, which at the end of the 2009 season are continuing to go down.

2009 Final Report: 51.83 and 51.84

During the 2009 season, two quarter squares—51.83 and 51.84—were opened to the south of the previously excavated area in Grid 51. By expanding the horizontal exposure of Grid 51, we hope to refine the stratigraphic decisions reached during the excavations from 1997 to 2000. The pottery readings from 1997-2000 will be integrated with the current excavations to achieve greater stratigraphic clarity. I worked toward achieving these goals with the generous assistance of grid supervisor Kate Birney and the delightful camaraderie of volunteers Cathleen Chopra-McGowan, Brandon Hoff, Daniel Hudson, Jake Hunzeker, Trevor Lair, Dan Partain, Danny Shereff, Hilary Smith-Wikle, and Nikki Wheeler.

Though current survey data indicate through GIS mapping that these two quarter squares are appropriately named 51.72 (Northeast) and 51.73 (Northwest), the original numbering from 1997-2000 was retained to avoid the confusion that would result from excavating two separate squares under the same name in different seasons. GIS mapping also shows that the baulks of these two quarter squares are not placed squarely within Ashkelon's larger grid. The southern baulk was excavated at a slight angle to avoid destabilization of the grid's fence. 51.83 also does not span the full 5 meter width because the western baulk was limited by the grid's staircase.

The following report will move from chronologically latest to earliest contexts.

1. The Islamic Period

As occurred in previous Ashkelon excavations of the Islamic period, the later Islamic periods are characterized by pitting in 51.83 and 51.84 while the earlier Islamic periods are absent. After a shuffel cut removed the topsoil, a Fatamid fill covered the expanse (**83.1** and **84.1**). As this fill was systematically removed, the southern and eastern baulks reveal the chronological order of the pitting activity throughout the Fatamid period.

The Islamic robber trenches along the southern baulk rob an earlier east-west wall(s) (**83.L8/83.F13=84.L10/84.F35**, **84.L30/84.F31**, **84.L37/84.F38**, **84.L184.F17**), and these trenches were filled during the Fatamid period. The latest of these robber trenches (**83.L8/83.F13=84.L10/84.F35**)¹ has a plaster lining and was filled with a darker brown matrix upon which was thrown a layer of medium-sized stone. This robber trench cuts into two earlier robbing activities to its west (**83.L15/F16**) and east (**84.L30/F31**). The eastern robber trench was filled with a mudbricky matrix identical in color to the mudbricky fill of **84.L8**. This robber trench was initially misidentified as part of **84.L8**. However, the southern baulk reveals that this matrix was instead mudbricky fill of a robber trench that cut an earlier robber trench (**84.L37/84.F38**). This robber trench **84.L37/84.F38** then cut an earlier east-west robber trench (**84.L14/84.F17**) that was filled with a finer, gray matrix. This series of five robber trenches stretch along the southern baulk of both quarter squares.

Additional late Islamic pitting occurred extensively in the eastern half of 51.84. Again, the southern and eastern baulks relay the chronological order of this pitting activity. The latest cut (**84.F27**) is filled with a rubbly fill (**84.L1**), which cuts into an earlier Fatamid pit filled with a brown, finer matrix (**84.L9/84.F39**). **84.L9/84.F39** was also cut on its eastern side during the likely robbing of the east-west wall(s) mentioned above (**84.L14/84.F17**). This pit also cut another earlier Islamic pit (**84.L20/84.F21**). Therefore, the southeastern pitting activity—**84.L9/84.F39** and **84.L20/84.F21**—

¹ Though the latest pottery from this pit was Byzantine, the section clearly shows that 83.L8/83.F13=84.L10/F35 is cut into 84.L30/84.F31, which clearly contains Fatamid fill. The sample size of pottery within these Byzantine buckets is too small to maintain that this fill is Byzantine.

occurred prior to the robbing of the east-west wall(s) mentioned above. These eastern pits cut deeply into the southern portion of earlier mudbrick exterior surfaces (**84.U12**) and obscure the exact orientation of possible Byzantine walls in the eastern half of 51.84.

In the northeastern portion of 51.84, the late Islamic pitting cuts through Byzantine features. In particular, **84.F4** and **84.L6/84.F7** cut **84.F5** and **84.F3** respectively. Two additional late Islamic pits (**84.L11/84.F28**; **84.L22/84.F23**) cut respectively into an earlier Islamic pit with highly rubbly fill (**84.L26/84.F29**) and a dark brown layer (**84.L19**). Both the highly rubbly fill (**84.L26**) and the dark brown matrix (**84.L19**) are later than another earlier Islamic pit (**84.L34/84.F37**) with fill that includes small chunks of kurkar.

2. Byzantine Period

Due to the extensive pitting activity in the Islamic period, the horizontal extent of the initial Byzantine phase is small. A shell, cement layer of possible subfloor material (**84.L2**) oddly covers half of the top of a wall with cement mortar (**84.F5**),² and subfloor layers run up to the eastern face of the wall (**84.L33**).³ These subfloor layers consist of a kurkar layer, burned mudbrick, an additional kurkar layer and mudbrick fill above a shell layer. Similar subfloor layers (**84.L32**) run up to the western face of this wall (**84.F5**), but these layers are in a slightly different order. Both of these subfloor layers (**84.L32** and **84.L33**) put the mudbrick exterior space (**84.L8** and **84.L7**) out of use.

Though these subfloor layers do not run up to the face of the east-west wall that extends through both quarter squares (**84.F3=83.F2**), they are assumed to be in use with this wall because the earlier Islamic clover-shaped pit severed this connection (**84.L6/84.F7**). The foundation trench (**84.L13/84.F36=83.L14/83.F23**) for this east-west wall was filled with a brown-gray matrix with burned mudbrick chunks. This wall was cut by a well, ringed with kurkar blocks, which goes out of use in the Byzantine period when it is filled with a gray matrix containing some large ashy inclusions (**83.F10/83.L11**).

The next phase of the byzantine period reflects a wider horizontal preservation. An exterior mudbrick space with occasional lenses of surface material stretches across both quarter squares (**83.L7=84.L8**). The upper level of this exterior space is cut by a pit containing a darker brown matrix (**83.L17/83.F18**). This possible courtyard space was in use with surrounding walls to the north, west, south and possibly the east. The northern extent of the mudbrick exterior space lips up to the fieldstone wall that continues in use in the later Byzantine phase (**83.U2=83.U3**). The eastern end of the foundation trench for this wall (**84.L13/84.F36**) cuts an earlier pit (**84.F15/L16**). A poorly constructed mudbrick wall (**83.U5**) stands to the west. The southern wall(s) has been largely robbed out (**84.F17**, **84.F35=83.F13**, **83.F16**) with some mudbrick detritus from a previous wall (**83.F9**) remaining in one robber trench (**83.F13=84.F35**).

3. Late Roman/Byzantine Period

While the horizontal extent of this phase remains to be exposed, its general character can be determined. The exterior space constructed from mudbrick fill continues into this phase. A sand layer was traced below **83.U7** exposing more mudbrick exterior space below (**83.L24**). This sand layer ran

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- 2 Two possible interpretations of the enigmatic **84.L2** have been offered. The layer oddly covers only half of the wall (**84.F5**). **84.L2** may have been subfloor construction leading up to a column base that rested on top of **84.F5** for additional support. In this reconstruction, **84.F5** is not a wall, but subfloor support for the monumental construction of columns. This grand reconstruction on meager evidence may require further horizontal exposure to confirm. Secondly, **84.L2** may be subfloor material that covers a terracing wall.
- 3 It was suggested that these subfloor layers—**84.L32** and **84.L33**—may have been laid in preparation for a mosaic floor. Further examination of Byzantine building techniques is required to determine if this is a plausible interpretation.

up to the western face of **83.U5**, but it was cut by the foundation trench for the east-west wall **83.F2=84.F3**. This sand layer continues eastward into **83.L8**, and can be seen in the small section created at the boundary between the two quarter squares. This sand layer remains to be excavated in Square 84 (**84.L40**). This exterior mudbrickly expanse was likely in use with the mudbrickly exterior area of **84.L12**. However, the walls have been robbed out and deep Islamic pitting has severed the connection between **84.L12** and **83.L24=84.L40**. One wall stub remains (**84.U18**) pointing toward a possible wall associated with these exterior areas.

Future Goals

Though we removed much of the Islamic fills, the first priority of next season is removal of all Islamic pits. Additionally, the pitting activity to the north of Unit 18 must be removed in order to clarify the confusing relationship of 84.F18. Following this removal, the sand layer throughout the exterior space of 84.L40 must be traced eastward in order to achieve greater horizontal exposure of the Late Roman/Byzantine phase. This excavation will clarify the nature of this area in the Roman period—a phase previously unidentified during the excavations of 1997-2000.

Ashkelon Excavations 2009

Grid 23 Grid Report

Tracy Hoffman

Overview

This season we returned to Grid 23 after a 9 year absence. Grid 23 Squares 14, 24 and 34 were first excavated in 1999 and 2000 at which time a large building was uncovered. Rich in material culture this building appeared to be founded in the Hellenistic period with continued use in the Roman, Byzantine, Islamic and Crusader periods. Through repeated renovations, which involved part of the building going out of use, the structure had a domestic function which may have also included some space for craft or commercial use. While many questions about the area were answered in the initial two seasons of excavation new research questions about Roman, Byzantine and Islamic period Ascalon emerged over the intervening years and it was decided a return to Grid 23 might address some of these new interests.

Goals

Our primary goals this season were,

1. To better understand the function and chronology of the building previously exposed in Grid 23. An important aspect of this goal was to identify the eastern closing wall of the building which had not been found during earlier excavation.
2. To understand the context of the building in Grid 23 within its immediate and wider surroundings. In other words, what could we learn about the neighborhood within which the building in Grid 23 was situated.
3. To ascertain whether or not there was an opportunity, with wide horizontal exposure, to investigate Ascalon's urban plan and to test some of the building laws enumerated in Julian of Ascalon's 6th century text known as *On the Laws or Customs of Palestine*.

Excavation Results

During the 2009 season work in a 3.5 x 10 m area of Square 25, which lies to the east of Square 24, uncovered 3 phases of occupation in addition to modern activity in the area. Phase 1 is dated to the Fatimid-Crusader period, roughly the mid 11th – late 12th century, and is represented by the poorly preserved remains of a building with a courtyard. Phase 2 is dated to the Byzantine period, approximately the 4th through mid-7th century, and is represented by two rooms each with a surface. Phase 3 is dated to the Roman period, approximately 3rd - 4th century, and it consists of a room with a beaten earth floor, occupational debris, a wall and some fills.

Phase 3: Roman

The Roman period was the earliest phase reached this summer. In the southern area of the square was the remains of a room bounded on the south by an east-west oriented cobble wall, **Unit 69**. **Unit 66** was a beaten earth floor that ran up to the south face of **Unit 69**. We recovered a great deal of material

culture from this floor including a number of coins, a bone needle, a spindle whorl and a bone die. Just above **Unit 66** was a layer of occupational debris, **Unit 65**, which was an area of thick, burned material covering the central section of the floor. The only other material that dates specifically to this phase was a small layer of fill, **Unit 72**. **Unit 55** was a layer of fill (?) exposed but unexcavated when the modern trench **Unit 6** was excavated. Work in 2010 should clarify which period this unit belongs to although as currently exposed its height suggests it fits into Phase 3 or earlier.

Phase 2: Byzantine

The remains of the Byzantine period were quite extensive in Square 25. In the southern portion of the square the Roman period structure was rebuilt and continued in use. Above the east-west wall **Unit 69** a new wall, **Unit 24**, was constructed. This wall, built of medium-sized cut ashlar, was larger than the earlier wall and followed a slightly different angle although it was clearly a rebuild on the earlier wall. **Unit 24** abutted and formed a corner with **Unit 47**, a poorly preserved fragment of a north-south oriented wall. **Unit 24** was at some later date partially robbed by **Unit 21** which may have also robbed the earlier Roman period walls. Together these two walls form the boundary of at least one room and possibly a second. Inside the two walls to the northeast was **Unit 31**, a tile floor, on top of which was **Unit 26**, described as collapse. **Unit 30** was a layer of wall fall on top of the collapse and the tile floor and may have come from **Unit 47** thereby marking the end of the room's use. The floor, which was bedded on a deliberate fill **Unit 48** (a deliberate fill put down over **Unit 66** in order to build a level surface on which to build the tile floor), was constructed out of a variety of tiles some of which were clearly in secondary reuse. At least one tile was a fragment of decorative marble molding that was placed upside down so that its flat surface was face up. Just to the west of **Unit 47** was the remains of a second floor, **Unit 41** which was bedded on **Unit 52**, a deliberate fill put down for the construction of that floor. Only a small fragment of this floor, made of marble tiles, was preserved along the west baulk and it appears as if the majority of the room must lie in Square 24. The collapse, **Unit 26**, on the flagstone floor **Unit 31** and the later wall collapse, **Unit 30**, seemed to mark the end of occupation in this area. The remainder of material from this area consists of a series of fills and there is no evidence for occupation in the Islamic period.

Units **33**, **34** and **40** were small areas of fill along the west baulk with Square 24. Units **56**, **58** and **64** were also a series of fills. **Unit 58** was a fill put down with **Unit 48**, bedding for **Unit 31**, between the floor and the later wall **Unit 24**. **Unit 56** was a fill actually above parts of the flagstone floor, **Unit 31**, and another fill layer **Unit 64**.

In the northern part of the square Phase 2 is represented by a several large walls, two fragmentary walls and a number of fills. **Unit 25** was a large north-south oriented wall made of ashlar set in a shell cement. That wall was bonded with an east-west oriented wall, **Unit 46** which was also made of ashlar. The other walls in this area were rather more fragmentary and had no direct connection with either **Unit 25** or **46**. **Unit 57** was an east-west oriented wall built of cobbles that lies close to the south end of **Unit 25** although the two walls do not meet. The only other wall was **Unit 76** which was located adjacent to the east baulk. Preserved two courses high and only one row wide it was difficult to discern the nature and extent of this construction although it was treated as an east-west oriented wall.

The remaining material from this period is a series of fills which seemingly postdate the Byzantine period use of this building. **Unit 75**, **Unit 77** and **Unit 70** were all generally loose fills which contained

a wealth of material culture including bone, glass and metals. Notably, **Unit 70** contained a Gaza jar recovered at the end of the season during clean up which is at least partially restorable. **Unit 61** was another fill but it was a distinctively harder silty deposit which contained comparatively little material culture. Further to the north just inside the east-west wall **Unit 46** was another layer of fill, **Unit 51**, which also had a slightly harder matrix which produced less material culture than some of the other fills associated with this phase. Finally, **Unit 73** was the fragment of a small cobble surface (?) found along the west baulk.

In the Byzantine period material of Grid 23 we saw a pattern similar to what was found in other excavation areas. The exterior walls were large and set in cement while the interior room walls were often on a smaller scale and not set in a cement. The tile floors in the rooms of these periods were certainly found in other parts of the grid and seemingly represented a common type of construction in Byzantine period Ascalon.

Phase 1: Fatimid-Crusader

This phase was characterized by a series of leveling fills laid down in preparation for the construction of an Islamic period building of which only a small portion was preserved. The construction of that building also involved the later insertion of a sump and a related construction which drained into the sump. With one exception there was no Islamic period material in the southern third of the square and it seems that it was out of use before the Islamic period. The main occupational sequence was located in the northern part of the square.

The construction of the Islamic period building began with a series of fills. **Unit 23** was a large fill that covered parts of walls **Units 25, 57** and the earlier **Unit 73**. **Unit 27** is another fill that partially covered both **Units 25** and a section of **Unit 36**. It was part of the leveling process in preparation for the construction of walls. Perhaps around the same time that **Unit 23** was being laid down a series of small pits were dug alongside the southern face of the earlier Byzantine wall **Unit 46**. The first pit, **Units 49/50**, extended alongside Unit 46 and just beyond the preservation of its eastern extent. The second pit, **Units 53/54**, was a small ash pit that contained almost no material culture except a small fragment of bone and one piece of glass. Finally, pit **Units 67/68** was a small round pit excavated in the corner formed by **Units 25** and **46**. It too contained little in the way of material culture.

With the leveling process well under way **Unit 36** was constructed. **Unit 36** was the outer wall of a drain first excavated in 23.24 **F50**, that was cut through the earlier Byzantine period fills and built up against the west face of **Unit 25**, the large Byzantine period wall. In addition to the construction of the drain, **Unit 59**, a cemented cobble bedding for a plastered basin, **Unit 14**, was put down in order to provide a good level on which to build the basin. Many of the Byzantine period walls, especially **Unit 25** which was constructed of well cut ashlar, were clearly robbed at some point although no evidence of the robber trenches was found. It appears as if the leveling and construction process was so systematic that much of the evidence for the initial decay and/or robbing of the earlier Byzantine period material is absent from the archaeological record.

Unit 14, a rectangular plastered basin, was partially founded on **Unit 25**, the Byzantine wall, and **Unit 36**, the Islamic period drain. The uneven heights of these two constructions necessitated the construction of a cobble bedding, **Unit 59**, in order to provide a level surface on which to build **Unit**

14. It seems likely that the drain, for which **Unit 36** was the east wall, was built in conjunction with the basin **Unit 14** but no direct connection, such as a drainage hole or channel, between the two was found when the basin was excavated. Plastered on its inside face originally in a deep red color the basin continued to be used and there was evidence for a least two additional coats of white plaster, discolored to a gray by a later fill, on both the sides and the bottom of the basin. This basin was a subterranean feature whose walls, constructed of small plastered cobbles, were clearly not meant to be seen. Only the tops of the walls were finished and they lay even with a small fragment of flagstone floor, **Unit 4**. This floor was the only preserved surface for this building. **Unit 14** is also associated with a short fieldstone wall, **Unit 18**, which seems to have provided additional support for the southern wall of the basin.

There were a series of walls associated with the basin and floor although they were not adjacent nor immediately touching. **Unit 10** was a large north-south oriented wall constructed of ashlar. It abutted **Unit 11** a large cobble built east-west oriented wall which ran the width of the square. **Unit 3** was an east-west oriented cobble wall founded on top of **Unit 11**. It was separated from a second east-west wall, **Unit 39**, founded on top of **Unit 11** by a thick layer of plaster. Just to the west of **Unit 3** was a pillar base, **Unit 2**, that was founded along the south face of **Unit 11**. **Unit 2** and **Unit 3** were founded on leveling fill **Unit 44** = **Unit 28/29**. Of these walls only **Units 2** and **3** were actually excavated and the excavation of the other walls next season should further clarify the exact relationships between these constructions.

Again, as was seen in the case of Byzantine period rebuilds on earlier Roman walls we saw a similar pattern in the Islamic period. **Units 2** and **3** both followed more or less the line of the earlier Byzantine wall, **Unit 46**. The walls were separated by a layer of deliberate fill, **Unit 44**. While **Units 2** and **3** were above the earlier wall, **Units 11** and **39** were actually running above and just beyond the north face of the earlier wall thereby expanding the dimensions of the space. What was surprising about this continuity was that it persisted even with a gap in the occupation of the area. The Islamic period occupation of Grid 23 dates to the 11th and 12th centuries. There was no occupation in the Early Islamic period which was, perhaps, the most significant change in the settlement of this area.

Some time after the initial construction of the Islamic period building two new constructions were added. First, a large pit or foundation trench, **Unit 42/43**, was dug for the construction of a large cobble built sump or catch basin, **Unit 32**. The gray-green soil around the sump clearly indicates that it was either a trash pit or more likely part of a waste/sewage system. The latest ceramics in this square came from the construction of the sump with at least one piece of a late 12th century Crusader import coming from **Unit 42/43**. At the same time two walls were built in conjunction with the sump. **Unit 62** was a short east-west oriented wall built up against the east face of **Unit 25**. It cornered with **Unit 38** which was a short, abutting north-south oriented wall. Together these two walls formed a little rectangular space between **Unit 25** and the sump **Unit 32**. The excavation of the area revealed some additional features. Inside the confines of the two walls was a very loose silty fill, **Unit 35**, which came down on **Unit 63**, perhaps the beaten earth side walls of a drain, and **Unit 71**, the fill inside the channel under **Unit 35**. When **Unit 71** was removed it was possible to see a deeply sloped channel running from the area bounded by **Units 62** and **38** into the sump **Unit 32**.

The construction of these features cut through much earlier material including the fill **Unit 23** as well as a second fill, **Unit 45**, which was similar in consistency to **Unit 23** but which was visually distinct after being discolored by the materials draining into the sump as they leached out through the unlined

cobble walls.

The sump and associated walls were found under **Unit 19** which was the fall/collapse of the upper levels of the structures as well as, perhaps, the decay of the entire building.. **Unit 37**, originally identified as an east-west cross wall built up against **Unit 25** at the same time as **Unit 38**, was subsequently determined to be more wall fall/collapse. **Unit 37** was wall fall above fill, **Unit 60** which in turn revealed the full extent of **Unit 62** (part of which had been previously and mistakenly identified as **Unit 37**). Contemporary with the collapse are two fill layers, **Units 20** and **22**, which fell on either side of the sump and **Unit 19**. Our most exciting find of the summer actually came from **Unit 22** from which we recovered a gold dinar. The sump/catch basin and its subsequent collapse was the latest material in the square. After their use there were no signs of additional occupation and the area was covered by a series of fills.

Unit 8 and **Unit 9** were deliberate fills along the north face of **Unit 11**. They are quite deep and in the case of **Unit 8** a bottom was not reached. **Unit 8** was full of material culture including a number of iron nails and a worked bone bead. **Unit 12** was a thin layer of fill between **Units 10** and **11** which contained little MC and which may have been part of the construction process of one or both of the walls. Above those fills were a series of fills just under topsoil. **Unit 5=Unit 13** was a layer of fill that covered **Units 11, 10** and the lower courses of **Unit 39**. **Unit 16** was a layer of fill to the south of **Unit 11**. It was under another fill **Unit 7** which was very similar in makeup. Finally, after the basin **Unit 14** went out of use it was filled in by **Unit 15**, a deliberate fill, which produced a Fatimid/Tulunid period oil lamp. These latest fills were full of building debris including plaster, floor tiles, tesserae and rubble.

One final unit was placed in this phase although it might more appropriately belong in Phase 2. In the southern quarter of the square directly below topsoil was a layer of deliberate fill, **Unit 17**, which appeared to have been contaminated by modern activity near its top levels but which seemed to come down on clean Byzantine period material. This fill did contain a few Islamic period ceramics although certainly seems to have been outside the buildings in the area in the Islamic period.

Modern

The latest activity in Square 25 is represented by **Unit 6**, a large east-west oriented trench that went from topsoil down to bedrock which was reached at 17.61 meters. This trench cut a number of earlier deposits including, but not limited to, **Units 7, 16, 23**, and **17**. MC collected from the trench, a credit card, beer bottle, plastic razor blade, a large coil of barbed wire and a large metal bar confirmed its modern date. The cut of this trench was so destructive that it completely severed the connections between the the southern quarter of the square and the northern half of the square in both Phase 1 and Phase 2.

The latest activity in Square 25 was **Unit 1**, topsoil, which was excavated across the entirety of the square. In the northern half of the square the layer was quite shallow and its removal immediately revealed ancient (Islamic-Crusader period) archaeological deposits. **Unit 1** had a greater depth in the southern part of the square where it was directly over the Byzantine material of Phase 2.

Conclusions

This season was very successful and we were able to achieve a number of our goals the most important of which was learning more about the nature of settlement in this area of the tell. Phase 3, the Roman period, was reached only in the last week of excavation but we uncovered at least one room, bounded by a cobble wall, which had a beaten earth floor. This same space continued to be used in the subsequent Byzantine period, Phase 2, when a new wall was founded on the earlier Roman period wall and a new tile floor was laid down on top of the earlier surface.

In the northern part of the square no surfaces of the Roman or Byzantine period were preserved although several large walls were uncovered. These walls, ashlar constructed and set in a thick cement served as the boundary for a second room the function of which is at present impossible to determine. Together, these two Byzantine period rooms reveal that the main building uncovered inside Grid 23 during the 1999-2000 seasons of excavation was not isolated. It stood with other structures in the midst of a neighborhood.

In the Islamic period the evidence pointed to a pattern found in other areas of the site. There was no early Islamic period occupation during the 7th - 10th centuries. Phase 1 in this grid was dated to the Fatimid-Crusader period, mid-11th through late-12th century and the occupational gap found in other areas of the site was also found in Grid 23.

All indications are that functionally the area continued to be residential in the Islamic period from which a courtyard with a flagstone floor and a red plastered basin (similar to what was found in Grid 37 in the 1985 and 1986 seasons) was uncovered. Occupation continued into the Crusader period, post-1153, when new structures were added to the courtyard area although it cannot be conclusively said that the basin, drain and attendant features were still in use at that time.

It is likely that the best preserved material in this area will be the Roman and Byzantine period occupation levels. The Islamic and Crusader period, which lies close to the surface, seems to be poorly preserved although it was better preserved in Squares 14 and 24. It is clear that further work in Grid 23 will allow use to investigate questions about not only the nature of the large building exposed during the original excavation of the area but also about the urban plan of the surrounding area which obviously consisted of more than one building. The one remaining issue is how the new work ties in with the previously excavated material.

Grid 23

When the grid was first excavated in 1999-2000 excavators identified six phases. The first three were Islamic, followed by Byzantine, Roman and Hellenistic. Our new excavations have demonstrated that the phasing is probably incorrect and that there is only one Islamic phase in addition to the Byzantine, Roman and Hellenistic. Furthermore, the Islamic phase should date to the 11th – 12th century and not the earliest centuries of the Islamic period. While the Hellenistic phase has not yet been reached in the current excavations it seems likely that we will have a fourth phase.

As a result of our most recent excavation we have started trying to rephase the previously excavated squares, 14, 24 and 34. This remains very much a work in progress and the conclusions presented here should be regarded as preliminary.

Phase 3: Roman

The material identified as Roman period in Grid 23 consists of a number of cemented walls and at least one floor from Square 24 and a few units in Square 25. (There are some floors in Square 34 which may belong in this phase but the exact sequence has not yet been deciphered.) First, in Square 24 there were a series of large ashlar walls built out of cut ashlars set in a thick shell cement which is a building technique seen throughout the grid and in other parts of the site. These walls include **F46** (or perhaps the wall underneath it) a north-south oriented wall which is bonded with **F45** an east-west oriented wall. That wall in turn abuts **F21**, another north-south oriented wall. **F45** is bonded with **F37**, a north-south oriented wall, which itself appears to be bonded with **F67**, an east-west oriented wall meeting the north extent of **F37**. Together these walls form three, possibly four rooms and are at the core of the Roman period building. Along with these walls there is one floor, **F60**, which can be associated with the Roman period. The construction of this floor inside a small room with plastered walls along the west baulk of Square 24 is very interesting. It is made of broken pottery sherds set on end in plaster in a herringbone pattern. At some point, either during the construction of this room or after it had been in use for some time, a drain was inserted. **F61** and **F79**, the channel and then the roof for the drain cut through two rooms of the building in this period before emptying into a third space inside Square 34.

These rooms are in use with the wall and floor, **Unit 66** and **69**, found in Square 25 this season. What is not yet clear is whether or not they are part of the same building or rather found in two separate buildings.

Phase 2: Byzantine

This phase is equally well represented in Squares 25, 24 and 14. First, in the previously excavated areas there were a number of walls which again formed several rooms and which largely followed the same lines of the earlier Roman period walls. The Byzantine period walls were for the most part described as rebuilds by the previous excavators. In the northernmost square, Sq. 14 there were two bonded walls in the northwest corner, **F25** and **F28** which formed the corner of a room which does not extend further into the grid. **F70**, a north-south oriented wall, follows a line which in the subsequent Fatimid-Crusader period provides the eastern limits of a large courtyard. In the central square, Sq. 24, there are two parallel north-south oriented walls, **F39** and **F38**, as well as a robber trench of an east-west wall, **F28.L29**, which seem to bound at least two rooms. At present these are the only layers and features that can be placed in the Byzantine period with confidence although further excavation may help to further clarify some relationships.

In Square 25 the Byzantine period material was described previously and will only be recapped briefly here. It consists of walls **U24** and **47** as well as floors **Unit 31** and **41** in the southern most area of the square in what is probably several rooms. Further to the north there is a second room bounded by **Unit 25** and **46**. There are also several other walls including **Unit 57** and **76**. Originally it was thought that **Unit 25** was the closing wall for the building inside Grid 23 and that may still be the case. Even if that is the case, and the evidence is no longer absolute, **Unit 25** is not the limit of occupation in this area as there are walls forming additional rooms to the east of **Unit 25**.

Phase 1: Islamic (Fatimid-Crusader)

The remains of this period are quite extensive and rather confused although some units and features clearly belong in this phase. First, in Square 14 there were two walls, **F10** and **F11** through which

there was an opening giving access to a room that extends off to the north-west. These two walls are founded on the earlier Byzantine period walls, **F25** and **F28**. Across the “hall” from those two walls was a service room accessed by crossing over a threshold in **F8**. Inside the room was a plaster floor, **LF18** which runs up to the threshold. The room also had several notable features including **F21** and **F22** which were two plastered basins one draining into the other. In addition, the room held **F19.L20**, a large tabun.

Other features dated to this period include **F26.L27** a large sump dug in the space between walls **F11** and **F9** one of the walls that bounded the room with the plastered floor. Finally, **F50** a long north-south oriented drain that ran from this Square south into Square 24. The eastern wall of this drain was excavated in Square 25 as **Unit 36**, and clearly shows that it dates to the Islamic period. Furthermore, this drain was associated with **Unit 14** the large, rectangular basin we excavated just above **Unit 36** and **Unit 25**.

LF13 was a large flagstone surface in a courtyard that also extended further south into Square 24, where the flagstone floor was also numbered **LF13**, where there were a number of additional pieces of a building dated to the Islamic period. **LF12** was a large plaster floor near the west baulk of Square 24. There were also two walls dated to this phase. **F6** and **F5**, two parallel north-south oriented walls, were rebuilds on earlier Byzantine period walls. In addition, a well, **F34** was dug in this period and a large threshold stone, **F33**, placed over it to provide easy access. **F50** continues into the square from the north where it runs past **F8**, a small stone lined sump, and the well **F34**. The only other material currently dated to this phase consists of a small fragment of flagstone floor near the east baulk of Square 24, **LF9**.

The Islamic period material in Square 25 included a series of super imposed walls, **Unit 10**, **Unit 11**, **Unit 39** and **Unit 11** as well as one column base, **Unit 2**. In addition there was a flagstone floor, **Unit 4** adjacent to a plastered basin **Unit 14**. **Unit 36** is the eastern wall of the drain, **F50**, running through Square 24 and **Unit 32**, a large sump into which a drain channel led from the area bounded by **Unit 38** and **Unit 62**.

It is clear in this last phase that we have a number of spaces including at least two courtyard areas, a service room and at least one other room. It seems likely, furthermore, that these spaces are in two separate buildings. The function seems to be residential and such activity is a continuation from previous periods of use.

It is to be hoped that further excavation in Grid 23 will continue to illuminate the occupational sequences in this area as well as providing us with a better understanding of Ascalon's urban plan in the Roman, Byzantine and Islamic periods.

Ashkelon 35/09

Grid 23

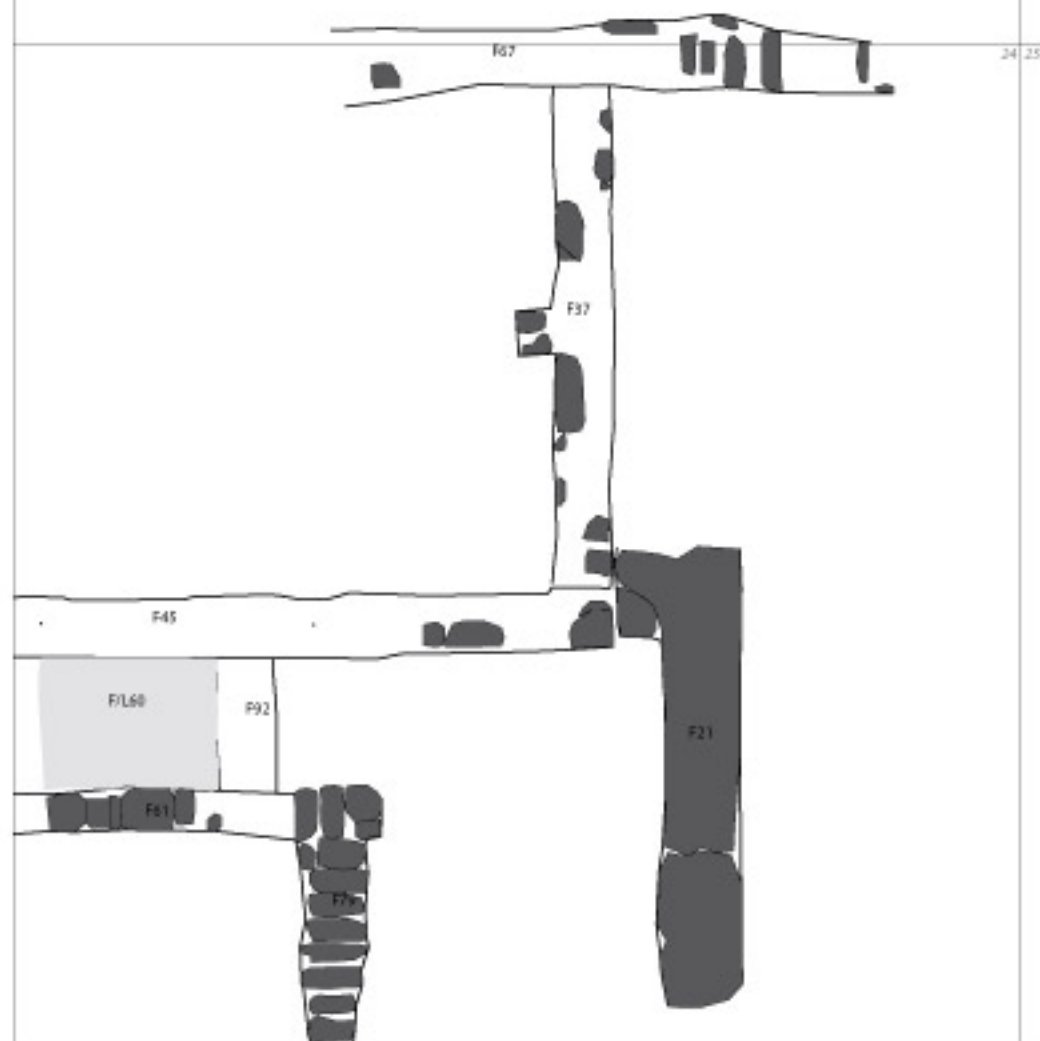
Phase 3

Supervisor: TLH

July 22, 2009

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Drawn and Illustrated by: DLW

Ashkelon 35/09

Grid 23

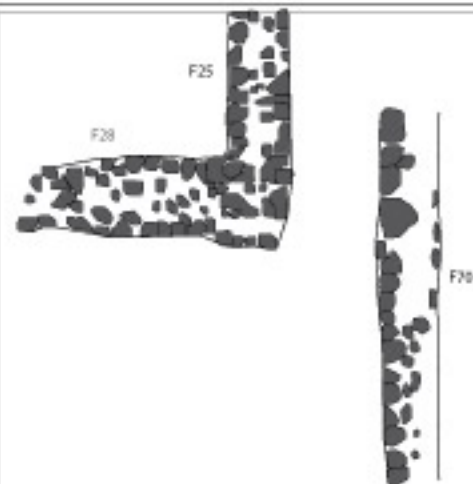
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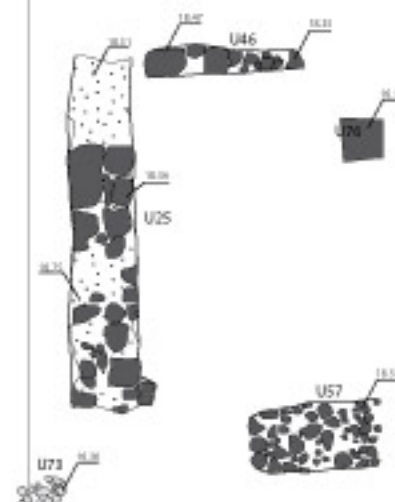
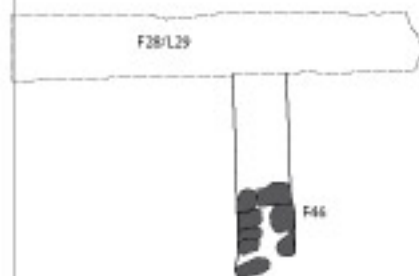
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GRID 47 FINAL REPORT 2009
THE LEON LEVY EXPEDITION TO ASHKELON

Dr. Rachel Bar-Nathan and Philip Johnston



From June 7th to July 17th 2009, the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon carried out its second season of excavations in Grid 47, to the East of Ashkelon's South tell, and southeast of the probable intersection of the Roman *cardo* and *decumanus maximus*. The presence of Roman monumental architecture in this location was already documented in the 1920s by John Garstang, whose excavations led him to conclude that he had found the apse to Roman Ashkelon's Basilica. Even before launching its own excavations of the building, the current Expedition to Ashkelon was able to preliminarily assess the reliability of Garstang's work by comparing his records and maps to some of the massive stone foundations still visible in an open-air museum. While this process led to the conclusion that Garstang's work was in fact quite reliable, in 2008 the Leon Levy Expedition opened a 10x10m square (47.54) to the East of Garstang's museum with the twofold intent of digging through Garstang's backfill to expose further architectural remains indicated on his maps, and of excavating archaeological deposits left intact in the 1920s in order to clarify the dating and sequencing of post-Roman phases in the area, which Garstang either did not encounter or failed to report altogether. The 2008 season was only partially successful in accomplishing these goals. As we had hoped, undisturbed post-Roman phases were excavated over a large area, and a massive structure directly above the earlier, Roman building was reached by the end of the season. In turn, covering this structure were fragmentary remains from the Abbasid and Fatamid/Crusader periods. Less encouraging was the fact that Garstang's map proved to be quite inaccurate with regards to the extent of his excavations, and as a result our square 47.54 almost entirely missed Garstang's backfill.

Because of these mixed results, the same three major research goals behind the 2008 season also guided the 2009 excavations in Grid 47: First, to assess the accuracy of Garstang's documentation in the rest of the area he excavated; second, to expand our knowledge of the classical city's forum by clarifying the nature and function of Garstang's Basilica and the structure above it; and third, to continue to catalog the use and re-use of the area in the post-Roman periods. In addition to these research goals, the excavation of the monumental Roman architecture is also being carried out with the intent of providing a larger, more complete glimpse of the Roman Forum to visitors of the Ashkelon National Park.

The 2009 excavations in Grid 47 remained under the experienced direction of Dr. Rachel Bar-Nathan. Several new staff members familiar with classical archaeology, Sean Burrus and Robyn Le Blanc, were hired this season in order to facilitate the expansion of the excavation area in Grid 47. Philip Johnston and Larry Largent Jr., returning staff from Grid 38 whose previous experience was mostly in the first and second millennia BC, were brought in to ensure the smooth operation of the excavations thanks to their experience with OCHRE and Ashkelon's registration conventions. A volunteer from the 2008 season in Grid 47, Alter Reiss, also joined the 2009 staff, providing our team with a second member with valuable first-hand experience in this area. This season's volunteers were a truly outstanding crew, and it was thanks to their tireless efforts that we were able to meet our season's objectives. Finally, and as always, our progress here at Ashkelon is due in great measure to the faithful assistance of workmen hired from the local Ethiopian community.

In order to meet the three objectives listed earlier, in 2009 we expanded the scope of our inquiry beyond square 47.54 by opening two more 10x10 meter squares in Grid 47. The first square, 47.44, is directly North of 47.54. With it we intended to catch the majority of Garstang's excavated area and thereby address the only major research question that we failed to resolve in 2008. The area of square 47.53, due West of 47.54, lies mostly within the limits of the open air museum, and work in 47.53 for the 2009 season was focused exclusively in a triangular area running from the middle of it's southern balk to the square's northeastern corner with 47.44 and 47.54. This area, marking the eastern limit of the open-air museum, was left standing after the western half of 47.54 was excavated in 2008, and we dug through it this season in order to connect the foundations visible in the open-air museum to the

architecture exposed during the 2008 season in 47.54. The eastern half of the square in 47.54 itself, which was for the most-part untouched in 2008, was excavated down to the level of what we now believe to be a Roman odeion of the 2nd century AD.

This expansion of the excavation area allowed us to easily meet our research goals: In addition to enhancing our understanding of both the Roman basilica and odeion, and to acquiring some new data regarding post-Roman activity in Grid 47, we have now located with great precision the majority of the southern and eastern borders of Garstang's excavations.

In the following pages we will outline the initial interpretation of the seven phases of occupation which were encountered during the 2008-2009 excavation of Grid 47. Our understanding of the later phases remains fragmentary due to the nature of the remains we have encountered thus far, and the dating of the monumental buildings of the Roman forum is likewise problematic due to the sparse nature of sealed and/or occupational deposits. However, since these two seasons of excavation have been primarily devoted to clarifying the extent and nature of Garstang's work in this part of the site - a goal we have now met - we are quite satisfied with what fresh archaeological data we have been able to collect in the process. The 2008-2009 seasons have cleared the way for the formulation of a clear research agenda with which outstanding questions in Grid 47 may be confidently addressed. At present, we are able to differentiate the following occupational phases in the table below. This report will provide an overview of these major phases, with an emphasis on the discoveries of the 2009 excavation deemed most relevant to a coherent reconstruction of Grid 47's occupational history. What follows is by no means a comprehensive account of this season's work, however, which may be found in the individual square reports and excavation records in OCHRE.

Phase 7	Hellenistic	Extremely fragmentary remains pre-dating the Roman basilica
Phase 6	1 c. AD	The basilica originally identified by Garstang
Phase 5	2nd-3rd c. AD/Severan	A Roman odeion
Phase 4	post-4th c. AD	Possible renovations to the odeion
Phase 3	Abbasid	Robbing and resettlement in the Abbasid period
Phase 2	Fatamid/Crusader	Ephemeral activities such as pitting and robbing
Phase 1	1920-Present	Garstang's excavations and subsequent modern activity

METHODOLOGY

Due to the focus of the 2009 season on the clarification of Garstang's work and of the remains visible in the open air museum, excavations in Grid 47 were carried out in exceptional conditions: In 2009 as in 2008, the squares in Grid 47 were not aligned to the Ashkelon Grid proper, but rather re-oriented so as to permit a more efficient exposure of the monumental Roman architecture visible in the open air museum. The details of this re-projection may be found in OCHRE, in the notes appended to each of the squares in the grid (47.43, 47.44, 47.53, and 47.54).

As noted earlier, only a small triangular section of square 47.53 - between 47.54 and the open air museum - was excavated this season. The restricted size of the excavation area, especially near its northern limits, resulted in a heavy reliance upon the results of the 2008 season in 47.54 for both excavation (using the latter square's West Section as a guide) and interpretation/phasing. Furthermore, by the end of the season it was clear that except for a small area against the eastern edge of the square (roughly 2.5 meters in the South and only a half meter or less in the North), most of the excavated area had been disturbed by Garstang's excavations. As a result it is probable that the majority of the material excavated here has been contaminated, since the description of stratigraphic units did not

consistently distinguish between areas we now know were contaminated, and genuinely undisturbed ones.

In square 47.54 work was limited to the eastern half of the square, with the objective of bringing it down to the same level as the western half, which was itself excavated down to the Phase 5 odeion in 2008. This two-part excavation had the advantage of providing a subsidiary section running N-S through the center of the square, which we were able to use as a guide this season, excavating the two halves of the square separately generally slowed our efforts to arrive at a unified interpretation of the square's archaeological deposits. This is particularly true for the integration of material from several probes in 2008 which were excavated by workmen with only rudimentary knowledge of Hebrew. The removal of Garstang's backfill in square 47.44 was partially carried out with a backhoe. This took place for three days in early June, preceding the beginning of the season on June 7th. The operation of the heavy machinery was supervised by Drs. Master and Bar-Nathan, using a geo-rectified version of Garstang's excavation plan as a guide. After two weeks of excavation, however, it became clear that the northern two thirds of 47.44 were still covered by a 2 meter thick cobble fill (**44.14**), deposited well after Garstang's work in the area, as attested by the discovery in this fill of a British Mandate coin dating to 1943 (MC#59695). As a result, at the outset of our third week of excavations, this fill also was removed by backhoe to 20.6 meters asl, as determined by a probe against the East balk of the square (*cf.* 47.44 Top Plan #08, DwgID13918). This second mechanized excavation was overseen by Dr. Bar-Nathan and Mr. Largent.

Finally, we note that while square 47.43 was not officially excavated this season, some cleaning was carried out there by workmen under the supervision of Dr. Bar-Nathan after the mechanized removal of Garstang's backfill and of later fill **44.14** - both of which extended into square 47.43 by 1-2 meters. With these methodological considerations out of the way, we move to the description of Grid 47's seven phases.

A Glimpse of Hellenistic Ashkelon

Phase 7

This phase consists of only two wall fragments in the open air museum to the West of the excavated area of 47.53 (**53.36** and **53.41**). These were originally uncovered by John Garstang, who suggested a Hellenistic date for these walls. As best we could tell this season without excavating them, these walls do appear to have been cut by the external apsidal wall of the Phase 6 Basilica (**53.31=54.67**), making a Hellenistic date most likely for these features (that the area was occupied in the Hellenistic period at all seems likely based on the substantial amount of Hellenistic pottery found in Garstang's backfills). Because of the need to preserve the monumental architecture from the Roman period for the exhibition to the public, however, it is probable that we will not be able to explore the pre-Roman phase any further in Grid 47.

Public Buildings of the Roman Forum

Phase 6: The 'Basilica'

In 2008, excavations in 47.54 failed to yield any incontrovertible remains of the basilica's apse, of which the western half is so clearly visible in the open air museum left by John Garstang. This changed during our 2009 season, in which we managed to expose the outermost apsidal wall of the basilica throughout our two southernmost squares (**54.67=53.31**), and to connect this wall to the one visible in the open air museum. Vestiges of a smaller, inner apse following the same curve as **54.76=53.31** were also discovered in all three active excavation areas. These include a Phase 5 robber trench following the course of the inner apse (**54.99=53.35**), in addition to a single dressed stone (**44.32**) that was found directly under the later odeion wall **44.5**, and which for now constitutes the only extant part of the inner apse's foundation. Directly abutting the southern side of the robber trench's fill in square 47.54 is a calcified deposit of clean sand (**54.100** - 21.23 meters asl), which was probably laid

against the inner apse before it was robbed out. Since this layer was plastered in the subsequent phase, it is possible that we have in **54.100** an original sub-floor fill of the basilica, reused to the same end in the odeion.

Phase 5: The Odeion

From our excavations thus far, the Ashkelon odeion appears to have measure about 40 meters across. It is built around an *orchestra* measuring 12.5 meters across, in the middle of which sits the so-called Well of Peace (itself with a diameter of roughly 3.5 meters). The distance from the odeion's stage (of which we have not yet confirmed the location, taking the location from John Garstang's plans) and the first supporting wall for the *cavea* is about 10 meters, with 7 meters separating that wall from the next.

This second wall, wall B (**54.15=53.9**), is constructed of large cut stone blocks and cement. It is just over a meter thick on average, and is variably preserved to at least 2 meters in height (at 19.92 meters asl it is not yet floating), although robbing from the Abbasid (**54.81=54.26=54.27**) and Fatamid/Crusader (**54.7, 53.21**) periods has taken its toll. The first, slightly thinner wall A (**44.5=54.35=53.34**) is constructed similarly to wall B, but is much less well preserved. After apparently escaping any robbing activity until the 20th century, the innermost of its two rows appears to have been taken out during Garstang's excavations, such that the wall appeared quite thin until we found it's better preserved lower courses at the end of this season. A third wall, wall C (**54.92**) was found while cleaning the southwestern corner of the square's balk, and appears to correspond to a wall included in Garstang's plan which was reused as the lowest part of the southwestern retaining wall of the open air museum. Because of its location in the section, little is known about this wall, although a probable robber trench of unknown date (**54.93**) can be seen above it.

As has already been noted, the construction of the odeion was preceded by, or was simultaneous to, the partial removal of at least one wall of the basilica. Considering the overlapping designs of the two buildings, it seems clear that the removal of the phase 6 inner apse **44.32** was carried out in order to facilitate the construction of phase 5 wall **44.5=54.35=53.34**. At the same time as the removal of the inner apse, the outer apsidal wall of the basilica (**54.67=53.31**) seems to have been leveled to the height at which it currently stands (roughly 20.9 meters asl) and then used as the subfloor in a curving passage underneath what would have been the odeion's *cavea*. This 2.5 meter-wide passage is bounded by wall B to the South, and to the North by what appears to be a low platform. This platform consists of a short wall (**54.57**) ending in a 2x1.5m concrete slab (**54.65**), both of which are covered by a thick layer of rubbly plaster (**54.66=53.32**) which runs all the way to Wall A. The section visible from the open-air museum shows that the plaster rubble completely fills the area between wall **54.57** and Wall A, sometimes to a depth of 1 meter. This platform must have somehow served as the substructure to the front-most section of the odeion's amphitheater seating. The nature of the superstructure for the *cavea* remains unclear, but a wooden scaffolding is not out of the question, based on the discovery of small niches placed regularly along the inside surface of Wall B, as visible in the section provided by the deep Crusader pit **54.90**. A plaster subfloor (**45.96**) is found above the full extent of the reused basilica wall **45.67=53.31**, and continues to the North in square 47.54 where it is found above the same sandy fill **54.100** which we have already suggested to be an original subfloor for the basilica. In fact, **45.96** continues all the way into square 47.44 where it is equivalent to **44.16** that runs up to the odeion's Wall B (above the extension of robber trench **54.99**). As the easternmost 2 meters of 47.44 were cleaned following the second intervention of the backhoe, it was evident that we had cut too far in several places, and **44.16** was broken through in several places, allowing earlier fills such as **44.17** and **44.23** to appear. Despite being only preserved in patches as they move away from 47.44's southern balk, it is clear that both the plaster subsurface **44.16=45.96** and Wall A originally extended further North, where the passage under the *cavea* probably opened onto the odeion's *orchestra*. The *orchestra* itself was heavily disturbed by Garstang's excavations, during which the upper courses of the so-called Well of

Peace (44.28=44.31) seem to have been dismantled, such that it is now preserved only a meter below the level of the tiled *orchestra* floor, of which we were fortunate enough to find a tiny fragment still intact, complete with a piece of an *opus sectila*, and the negative of several others (44.24).



In addition to informing us of the original level of the *orchestra* floor, the fragment of 44.24 provides valuable insight concerning the finishing techniques used in the odeion's construction. Every element of the floor is preserved, including the tiles and their mortar base, cobbles beneath that mortar which are themselves set into a 10 cm layer of soft clay, and beneath that a bricky fill. Between 44.24 and a robbed out portion of Wall A (44.27) there is a thin (30cm) channel (the eastern extent of 44.35) which points to the original presence of a decorative facing of some sort against the orchestra wall (and, indeed, a single 15cm-thick fragment of marble was found standing *in situ* in 44.35). Further, the presence of vertical tiles on the eastern edge of the preserved portion of 44.24, suggests that a thin channel (or drain?) may have existed in 44.35 between the facing of 44.27 and the floor of the *orchestra*. From the supporting walls to the finishing touches, then, the 2009 season has substantially added to what is growing into a surprisingly rich snapshot of the Roman odeion.

Phase 4

At some point after the initial construction of the odeion, the building appears to have been the object of renovations, although it is currently hard to tell just how extensive these renovations were, and what their implications were for the structure's use. In 2008 already, an addition to the inner (North) face of U15 was noticed (54.33=53.10), and in 2009 this addition was exposed in its entirety from the edge of the open air museum, through square 47.54, until it disappeared about two meters from the East balk, probably due to phase 3 robbing (54.81=54.26=54.27) - the reasons for this disappearance are not entirely clear, however, due to the interruption of pit 54.90/54.91. Regardless of its later history, however, the wall was originally constructed of poured concrete, and ashlar masonry. It is roughly 0.5 meters thick and sits about 30cm above the level of the odeion's passageway (54.96 on 54.67=53.31), upon a constructional fill (54.52=54.94=54.95) which extended over 54.96. Several uncertainties remain concerning the dating and actual extent of this fill. First, it is not entirely clear whether 54.52=54.94=54.95 belongs to phase 5 or phase 4 - that is to say, it is not clear whether the original (phase 5) passageway under the *cavea* had its floor directly atop 54.67=53.31 or if 54.52=54.94=54.95 already had been laid as a subfloor fill in this passageway when the odeion was first constructed. If the latter was the case, then the niches described earlier in the northern face of 54.15 may have been used to support a wooden flooring above 54.52=54.94=54.95. If this fill was laid in preparation for the construction of 54.33=53.10 at the beginning of phase 4, however, then we are faced with the question of whether phase 4 was merely a renovation to the phase 5 building, or whether it featured broader changes to the building plan. The possibility of a phase 4 change the building plan arises from the fact that 54.52=54.94=54.95 may have covered part of the *cavea*'s substructural platform, namely, 54.65 and plaster 54.66 above it. However, we are not sure about this relationship

because during the excavation, **54.52=54.94=54.95** was virtually indistinguishable from an Abbasid fill (**54.6**) directly above it. Even in the 47.54 East section we were only able to distinguish the two fills thanks to a thin line of mortar (presumably a remnant of **54.33**) which runs between them. We only realized that we had failed to distinguish these two units after Dr. Bar-Nathan noticed an sharp increase in earlier pottery coming from material we had been excavating as a lower phase of **54.6**. Returning to the phase 4 renovations to the odeion, then, it is unclear whether it is in fact the upper part of **54.52=54.94=54.95** which covers the platform (which would suggest that phase 4 marked a serious modification of the structure's layout, and also of its use), or whether it is the lowest part of **54.6** which covers the *cavea*'s substructure, in which case the odeion may have continued to function as such for any amount of time between its construction and the Abbasid period. The examination of the pottery from each day of work in **54.6** failed to find a clean cutoff elevation between this layer and the earlier fill, suggesting that they may have been churned together as **54.6** was laid, further complicating the issue.

Thus, it is unclear how long, and in what manner, Ashkelon's odeion was in use. The absence of sealed deposits from phases 4, 5 and 6 has made it impossible to date them archaeologically, and the resolution of the problems surrounding the fill **54.52=54.94=54.95** would be most fortunate in this regard, since it would allow the early Roman pottery found in that layer to be used as a rough chronological marker for either phase 5 or phase 4. For now, however, no such resolution is in sight.

Remains from the Early Islamic Period

Phase 3

The nature of the occupation in this area changed substantially with the transition to the Early Islamic period. It should be noted at the outset that while we will refer to the phase 3 as 'Abbasid,' the confirmation of this date will need to await a more thorough assessment of the ceramic material recovered to date.

The very earliest activity in this phase is the robbing (phase 3A) of most of the odeion walls: **54.15** and the addition **54.33** were cut by robbing trenches **54.81=54.26=54.27**, and although it remains unexcavated, it seems likely that **54.92** was robbed by **54.93** at the same time. It seems likely that the northeastern extent of **44.5** was also robbed at this time, although the robber trench itself (**44.25**) has yet to be excavated. The robbing was not universal, however, and the central section of the odeion's Wall A was clearly preserved and probably added to in this period, as indicated by the bonding of **54.35**'s upper courses to wall **54.24** of this period, and by fact that the Abbasid plaster surface **44.15=45.78** was found to lip up to **44.5=54.35**. Likewise parts of **54.15=53.9** and **54.33=53.10** were left standing in the western half of 47.54, and appear to have been reused as subflooring for the Abbasid building of phase 3B. While this suggestion is tentative, it is supported by the presence of a flat cement feature (**54.68=43.11**) bonded to the North face of **54.33** and which at 22.66 meters asl lies only 26 cm above the elevation of the other floors of the building, further North (usually about 22.4 meters asl). Moreover, the parts of **45.15** and **45.13** which remained unrobbed were clearly leveled to the same elevation. Following the robbing of the odeion walls, it seems as if much of the odeion's remaining superstructure was also looted, as indicated by the frequent presence of rubble yielding Abbasid pottery lying above the phase 5 remains (**54.46**, **54.45=53.26**, **54.97**, **54.64**).

Subsequent to these successive robberies, the entire area was prepared for the construction of a building of unknown extent and function (phase 3B). This began with the deposition of a fill over the remnants of the odeion. This fill (**53.25=54.98/8= 54.42=54.18= 54.36=54.63= 54.31=54.30= 54.53=54.55= 54.39=54.48**) contains great quantities of Late Byzantine pottery but also a frequent minority of pieces dating to the Abbasid period, suggesting that the builders of phase 3B took the material for their fills from a Byzantine dump somewhere else on the site. Usually, the upper 20-30 cm of these fills contained much less pottery than their lower extents, and during their excavation in 2008 the two phases were sometimes differentiated by the creation of separate unit numbers (as with **54.17**,

54.53 and **54.56**), but sometimes not (as with **53.31** which may be seen in the North section drawing to contain two distinct phases). Following the deposition of these foundational fills the floors of the building were laid (**54.29**, **54.13=54.23**, **54.78=44.15**, **53.16** and possibly **54.68=53.11** as noted above). Sadly, apart from the floors, fragmentary walls (**54.24**, and the reused **54.35=44.5**) and a few rather enigmatic features (**54.54**, **54.37**, **53.14**), little else is known regarding the nature or function of the phase 3 structure.

Phase 2

At some point the building of the Early Islamic period went out of use - it was probably abandoned - and its walls at least partially collapsed, as attested by the debris (**54.11**) found above the floors in square 47.54. Following the collapse, the remains of the building were gradually robbed and cleared away, and the few traces that were left were buried under shallow fills (**54.72**, **44.11**). Once the Abbasid building had been cleared, the area appears to have remained generally unoccupied until the modern period (phase 1). Throughout squares 47.54, 47.53 and the southern part of 47.44, we have found evidence (dating ceramically to the Fatamid/Crusader periods) that in the meantime, pitting (**53.7/6**, **54.80/77**, **54.90/91**, **54.73/74**, **54.10**, etc.) and continued robbing of the buildings beneath the surface (**54.7**, **54.12**, **53.21**) occurred.

Garstang and subsequent Modern activity

Phase 1

The excavations of John Garstang left a strong mark on the areas excavated this season, as we might expect. The most noticeable (and regrettable) side effect of Garstang's discovery of the basilica was the unrecorded obliteration of all archaeological remains above the foundation levels of that structure in both the area of the current open air museum, and in most of square 47.44. The only exceptions are the vestiges of the Phase 5 wall **54.15=53.9** in the open air museum which one may presume were judged too massive to be worth removing. Following his excavations, Garstang appears to have backfilled the area in 47.44 in two successive stages, with a first fill (**44.20**) deposited in the northern half of the square, covering the odeion's well, and a second fill (**44.6**) that leveled the area between **44.20** and wall **44.5=54.35=53.34**. The tip line between these two fills is easily visible in the section of the trench along 47.44's West balk. The mixed remains yielded by the excavation of a deep trench (**54.5**) in the northeastern corner of square 47.54 have led us to conclude that this may be the location of a probe in Garstang's plan which may be seen to extend towards the South-East from his main cut in square 47.44. In square 47.53, one of the retaining walls for the open air museum (**54.8**) was gradually dismantled over the course of the season.

The eastern part of Garstang's excavation area appears to have been restored to the surrounding ground level only at some point following 1943 (the date of MC#59695) with the deposition of cobble fill **44.14**. Above this fill we found some evidence of occupation (plaster subfloor and floor **44.13**, **44.10**) which may be related to the arab village which occupied part of the site in the mid-20th century.

CONCLUSIONS

The 2009 season was successful in almost completely exposing the extent of John Garstang's excavations. This will allow future seasons of work in Grid 47 to knowingly connect to or avoid the areas which were already excavated in the early 20th century, facilitating the continued exposure of the structures in phases 5 and 6. While we have answered many questions concerning the nature of these Roman buildings through our research this season, many new questions have appeared. What was the full extent of either building? Where should we place the floor levels of the basilica and odeion in our reconstructions? What was the nature of the odeion's superstructure? And, most importantly, what are the exact dates for the construction, use, and abandonment (or dismantling) of these buildings? All of these questions justify the continued excavation of Grid 47 in future seasons. This should primarily

Ashkelon 35/09

Grid 47

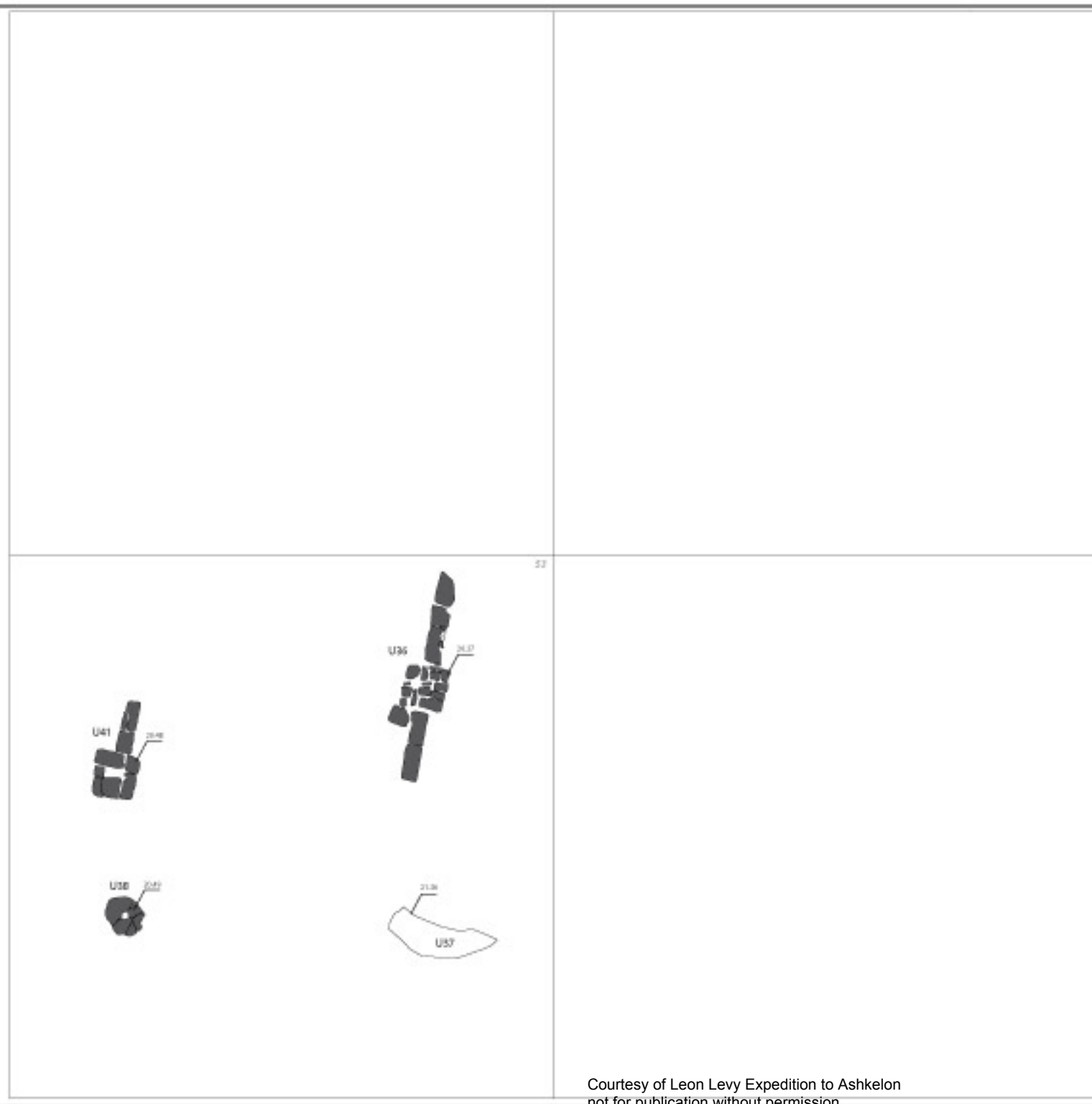
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Supervisors: PAJ/RBN

July 22, 2009

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Ashkelon 35/09

Grid 47

Phase: 6

Supervisors: PAJ/RBN

July 22, 2009

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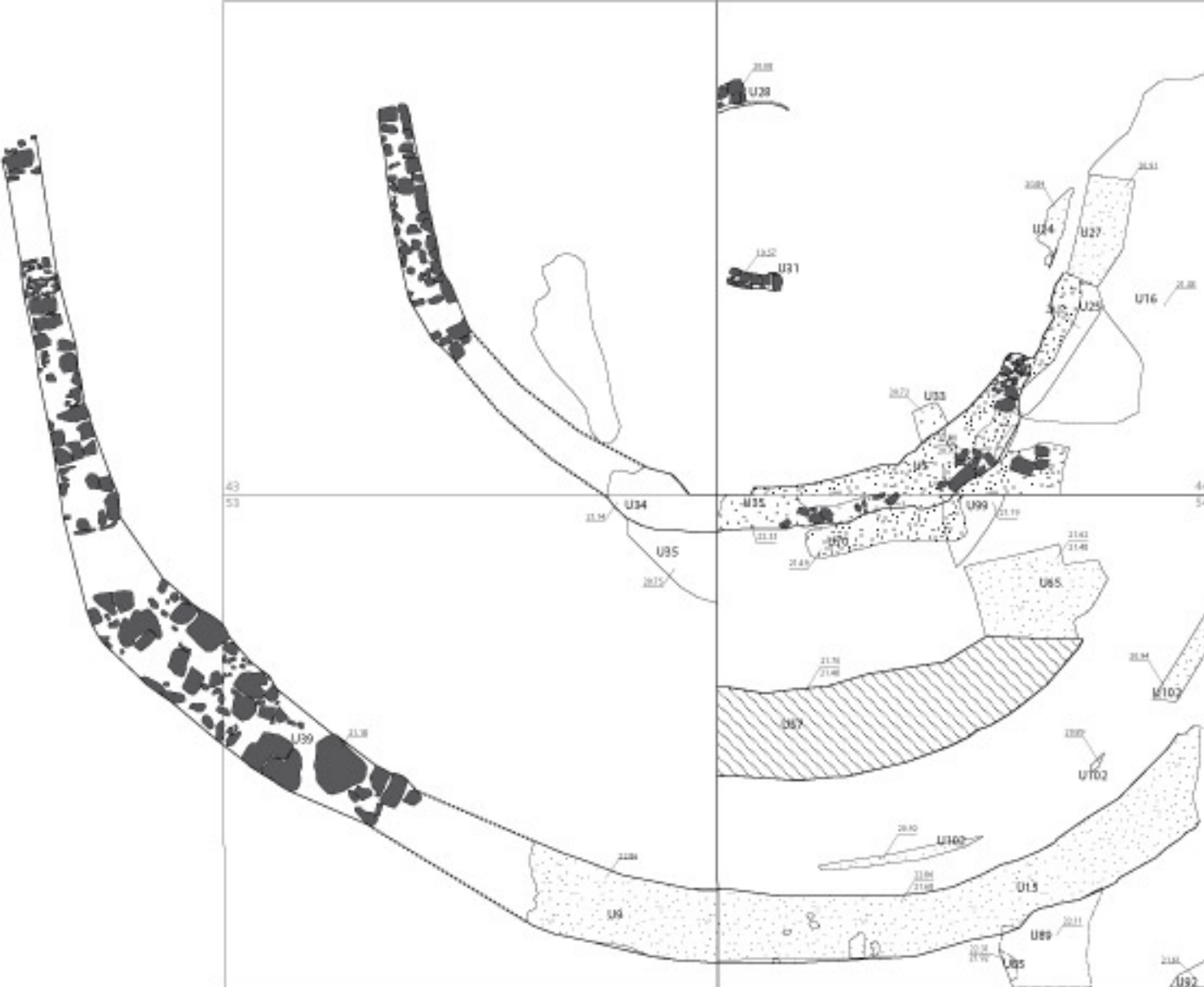
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Phase: 5

July 22, 2009

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Ashkelon 35/09

Grid 47

Phase: 4

Supervisors: PAJ/RBN

July 19, 2009

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DwgID: 14323



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consist of the opening of new squares to the North, East and South of the areas currently exposed in order to expand our understanding of the Roman buildings' layout. Also important, however, will be the selective use of probes to clarify the extent of the buildings' foundations, and to expose the sealed contexts that have so far evaded us, but which are badly needed since we have few chronological anchors in our stratigraphic sequence. This second task may need to be negotiated with the National Parks Authority, since the Expedition to Ashkelon is responsible for the preservation and exhibition of the architecture we have uncovered, but it remains an essential element in the comprehensive exploration of these buildings.

Ashkelon 35/09

Grid 47

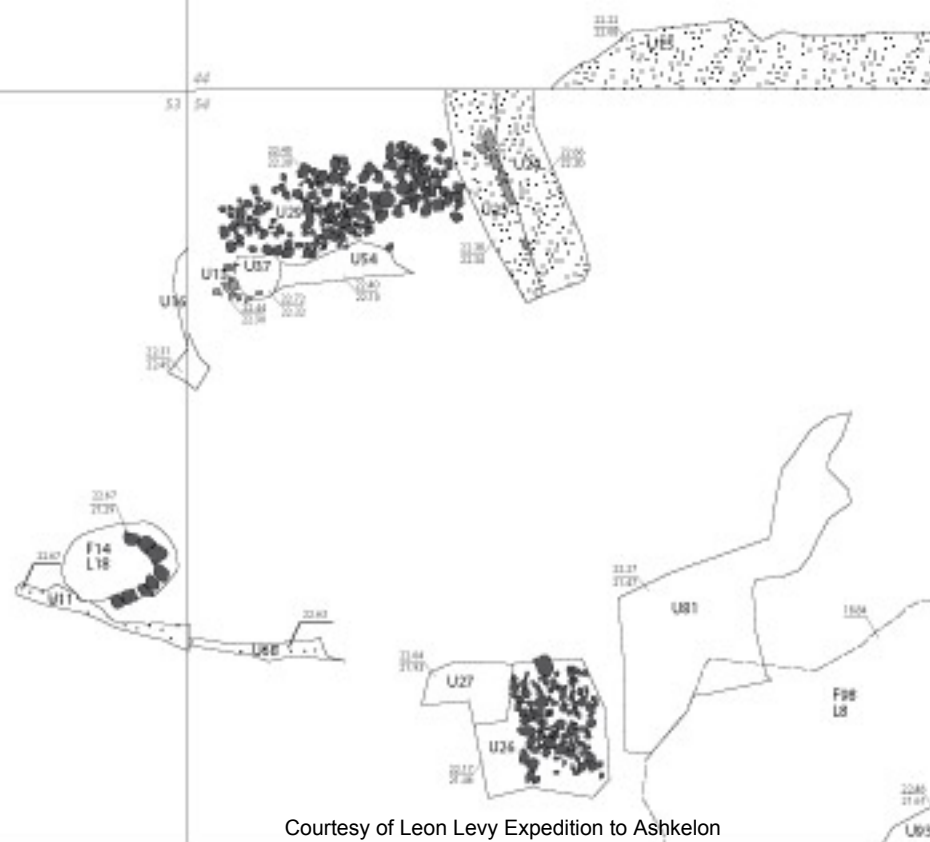
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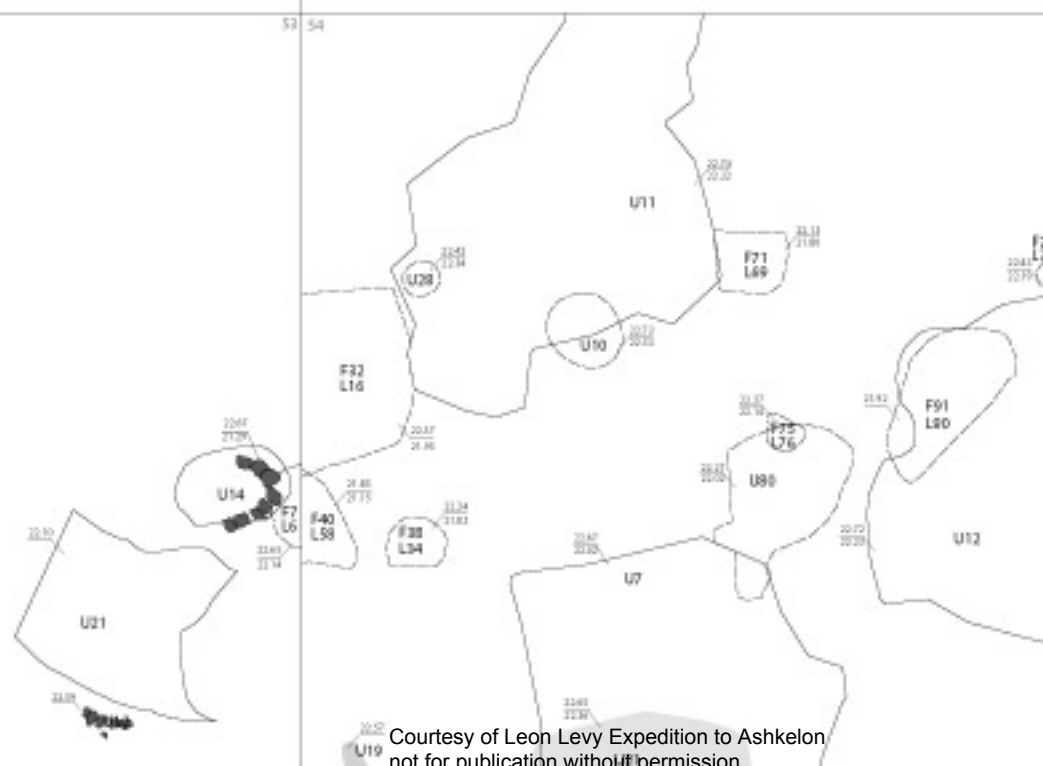
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Ashkelon 35/09

Grid 47

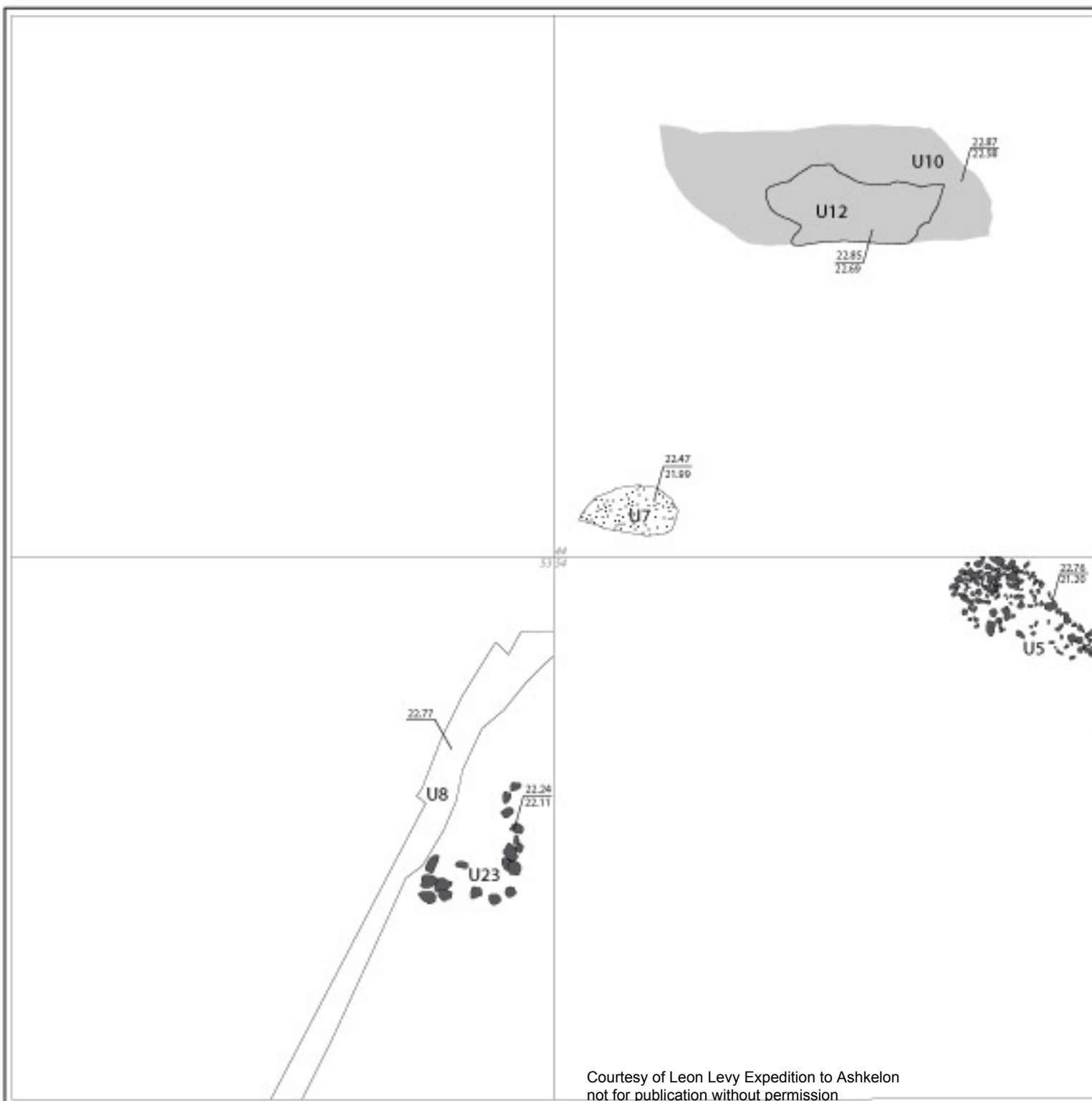
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July 22, 2009

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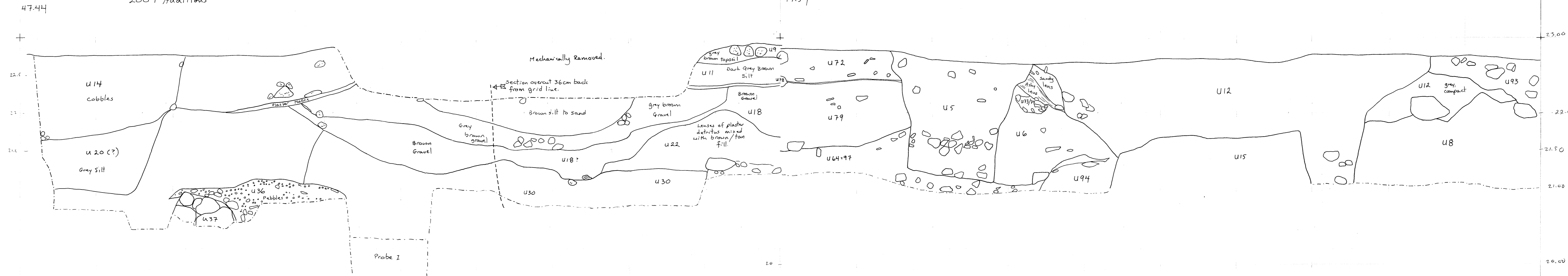


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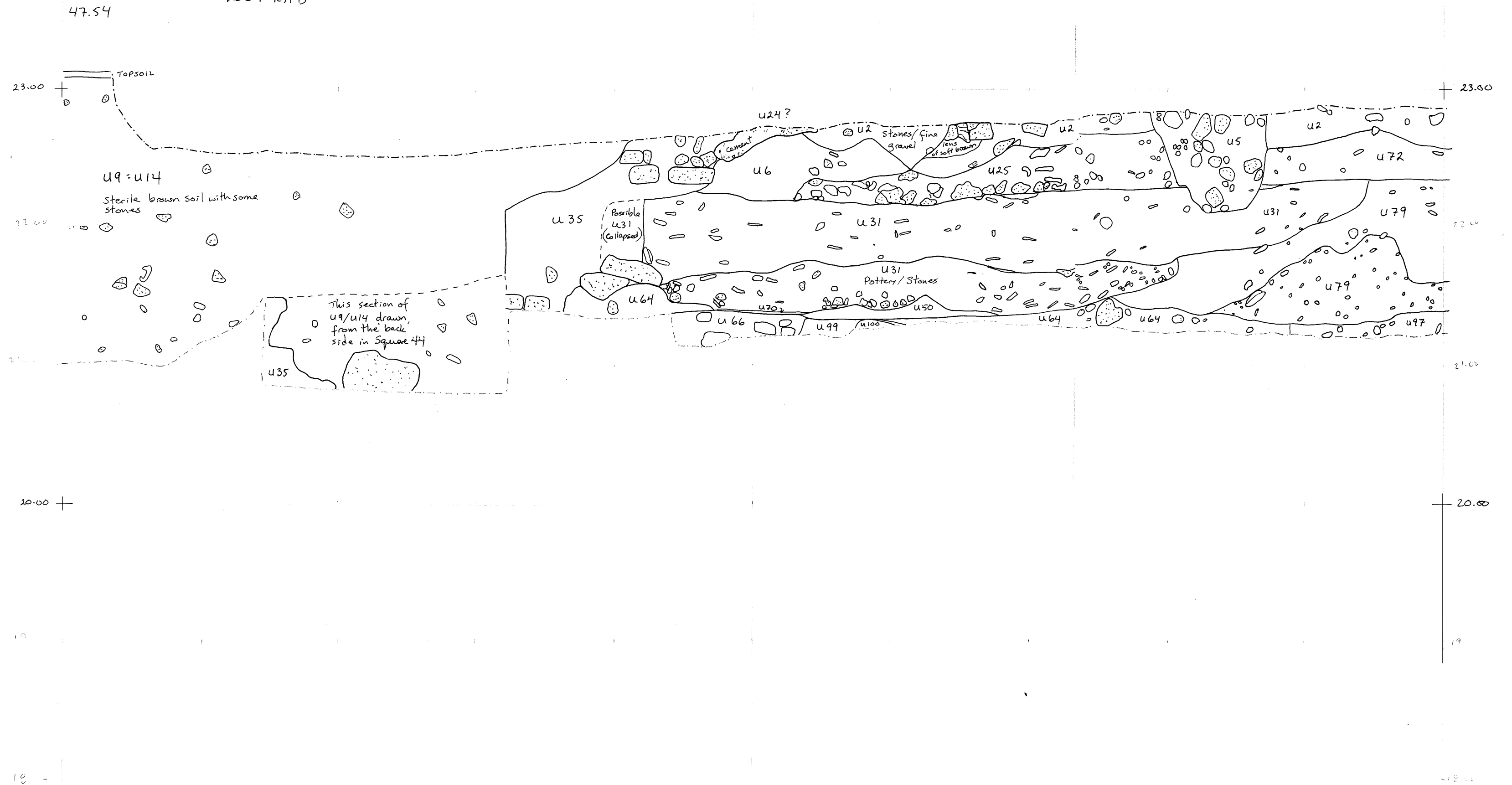
TEL ASHKELON
Grid 47
Squares 44, 54
EAST SECTION
1:25

2009 Additions

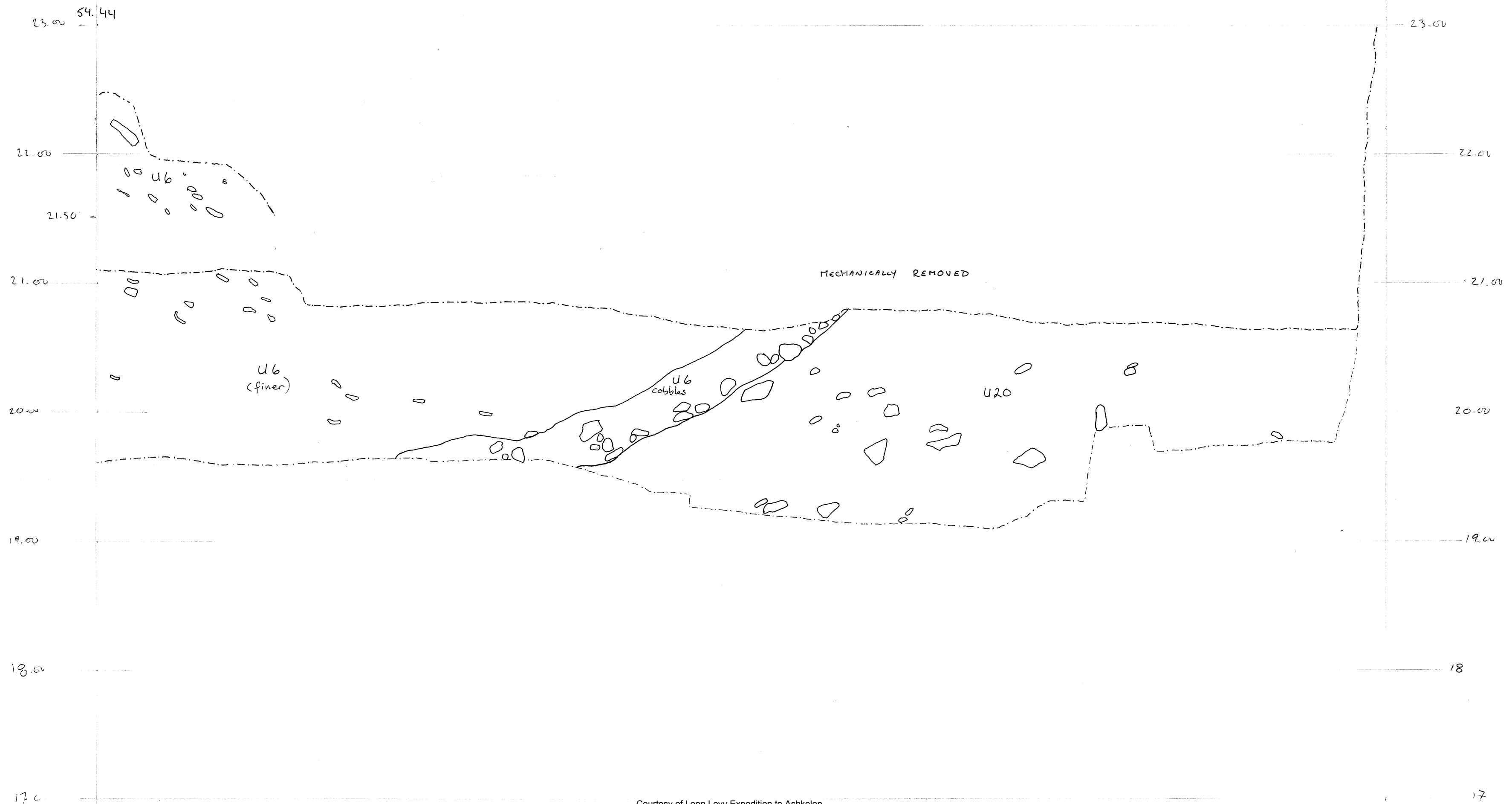


TEL ASHKELON
 Grid 47
 Square 54
 NORTH SECTION (Subsidiary Section?)
 1:25

2009 RAB



TEL ASHKELON
 Grid 47
 Square 44
 WEST SECTION
 1:25



Dwg ID 13, 241

TEL ASHKELON

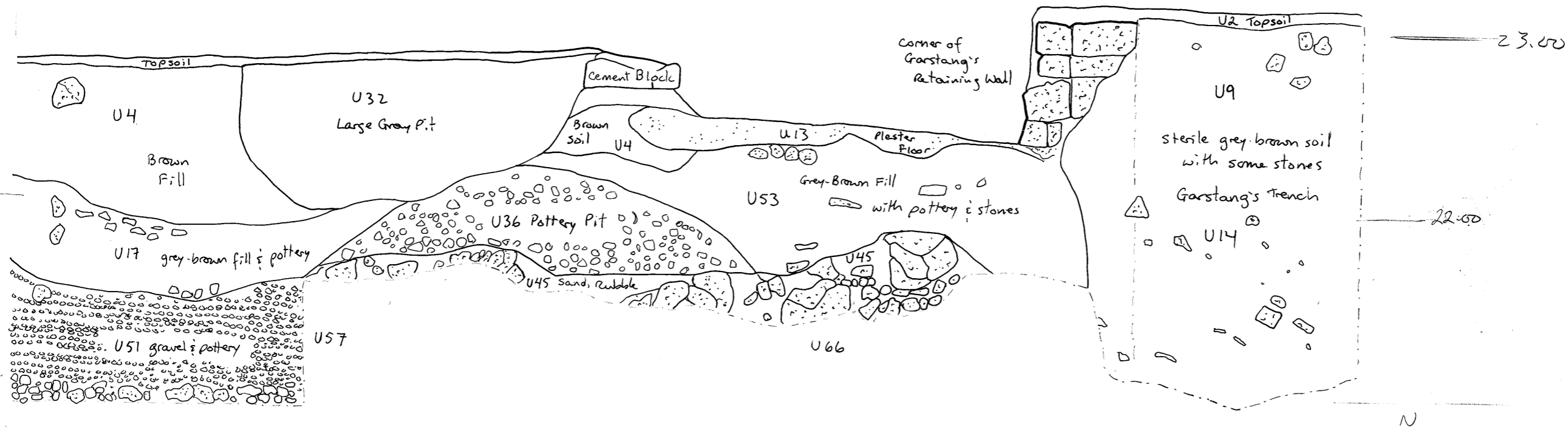
47.54

WEST SECTION

RAB

1:25

2009 additions



Dwg ID 13, 241

TEL ASHKELON

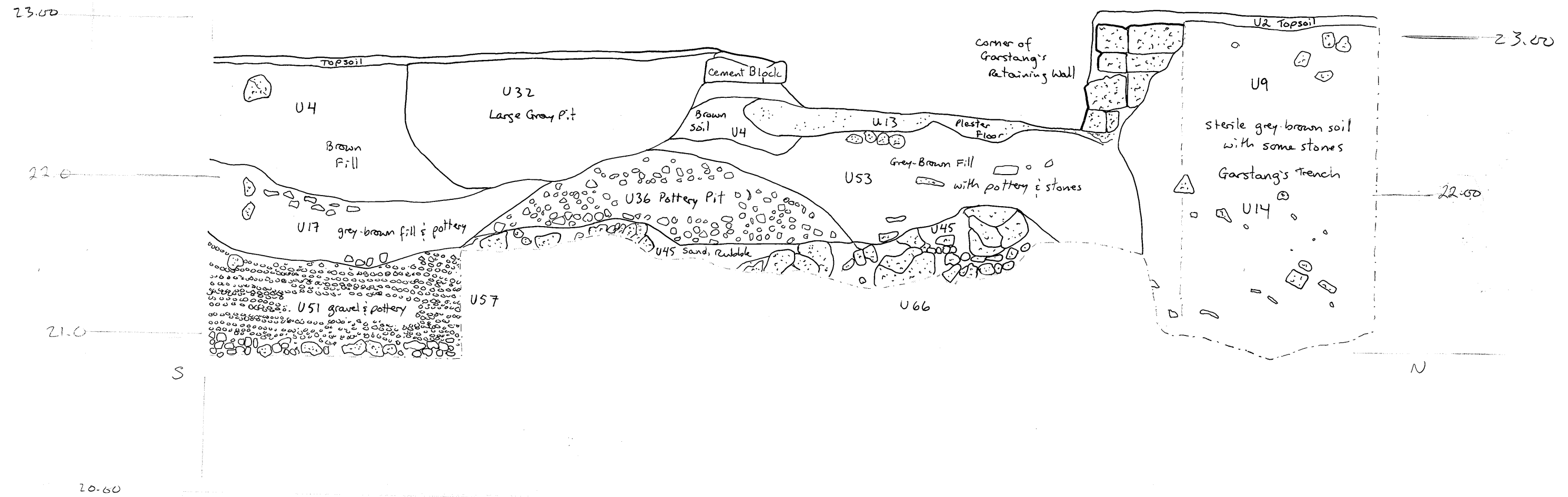
47.54

WEST SECTION

RAB

1:25

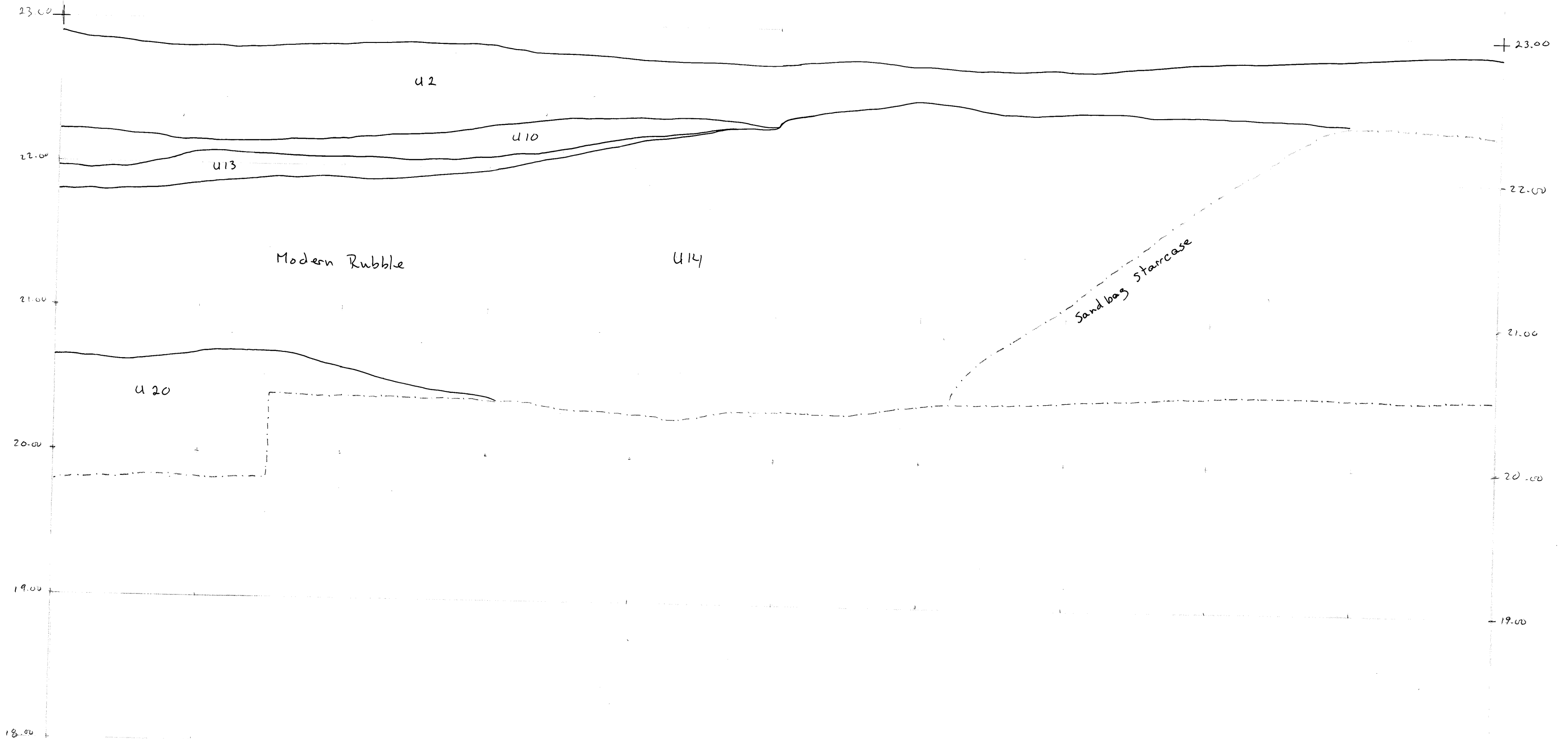
2009 Additions



TEL ASHKELON
 Grid 47
 Square 44
 NORTH SECTION
 1:25

2009 PAS, LL

47.44



TEL ASHKELON

GRID 23

Square 25

EAST SECTION

1:25

2009 KMH

21.60
m

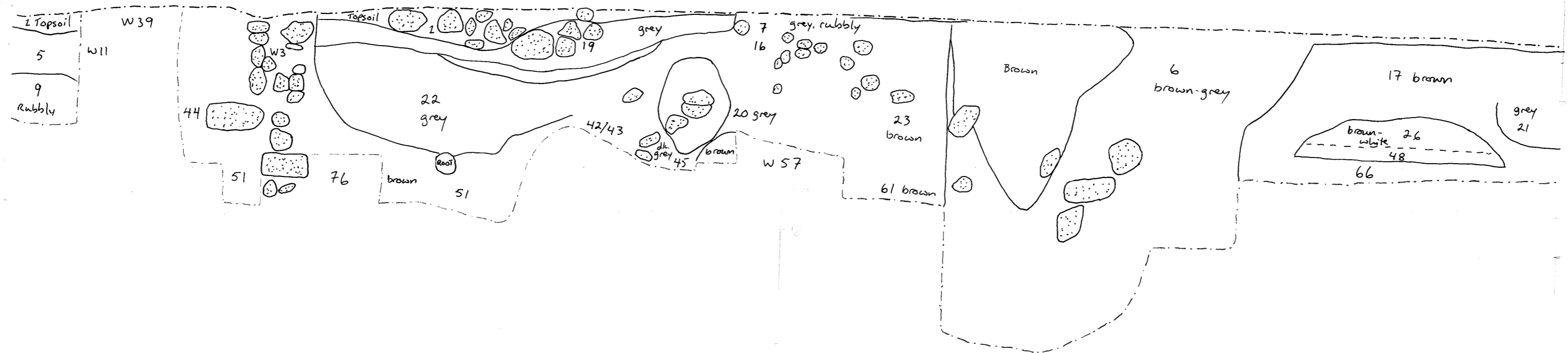
21

20

19

18

17



16.80m

SUMMARY OF GEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION AT ASHKELON, SUMMER 2009

Stephen O. Moshier
Wheaton College

Background: During the summer of 2008 (June 25-July 13, 2008), we tested hypotheses about the subsurface of Tel Ashkelon, Israel, that were generated from the surveys of previous expeditions. Geological cross-sections in the south portion of the tel projecting landward of the remaining Crusader seawall had been constructed from shallow drilling during the 1985-1987 seasons. The sediment descriptions from this data set were difficult to interpret, as they lacked consistent or appropriate terminology for sediment color, texture and composition. The data, as displayed in the cross sections, indicated the possibility of a buried depression below sea level containing pottery that might have been an embayment that connected with the sea (such as in a natural harbor). After drilling several holes along a similar transect, we rejected this hypothesis by finding all evidence of culture disappearing in strata above sea level. After becoming familiar with the site, it is my opinion that any embayment would have been located seaward of the present shoreline, considering that sea level was 1-2 meters below the present level during the Bronze Age.

It became apparent that continued drilling and careful documentation of sediment and artifacts with depth along transects in the tel should lead us to a better understanding of site formation at Ashkelon. Furthermore, mapping the depth to kurkar "bedrock" in the Tell as a whole would lead to a better understanding of pre-cultural topography and groundwater hydrology. To that end we began to survey bedrock levels along the cliff face at the beach and in the Tell where exposed or recently excavated. During the 2009 season we plan to drill additional sediment probes to further define the subsurface geology of the tel.

Results: In the three weeks prior to the 2009 season, student Ben Felker was employed through a Wheaton College Summer Researcher Grant to determine the textural composition of sediments collected during the 2008 season using the hydrometer method (work completed at Wheaton College). This was done to calibrate our field designations. For example, in the field we underestimated the amount of sand in many recovered samples. Ben's analysis allowed us to correct the probe descriptions and draft final logs for each of the probes from the 2008 season.

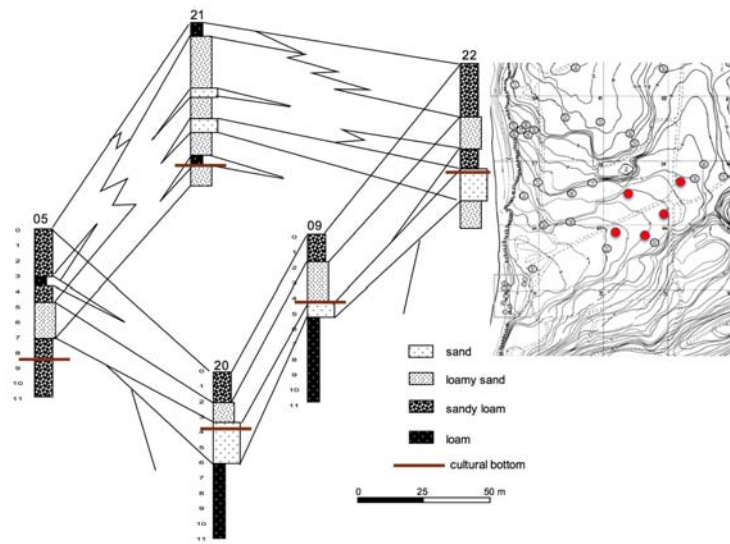
Between June 22 and July 12, 2009 we spent four days with the bucket auger drill rig, completing 18 probes. Sixteen of the probes reached total depth in kurkar sand or other Pleistocene deposits between 6.5 and 10.9 m below the surface. Only two of the probes failed to reach beyond 4 m depth due to stone obstructions.

Kurkar is brownish yellow sand that correlates with the sandstone forming the beach cliff. Kurkar sand and sandstone features excellent cross-bedding and lacks evidence of culture at the time of deposition. It is interpreted as an isolated windblown dune complex that formed some 10,000 to 20,000 years ago (terminal Pleistocene Epoch). Beyond the sandstone cliff, the kurkar sand is unconsolidated or poorly consolidated, containing scattered cm-thick cemented layers or irregularly shaped, cm-diameter nodules. In our cores, the brownish yellow sand is generally

devoid of cultural artifacts; rare recovered pottery sherds are either cavings from higher strata in the probe or inclusions due to settling or reworking of sediment by burrowing animals. In one cluster of probes (including probes from the 2008 season), located in grids 60-69-66, we recovered sandy clay loam that we interpret at a Pleistocene paleosol (referred to in other coastal locations as “hamra” or locally as “café au lait”).

General Information Obtained from Probes during 2009 Season

Probe #	Grid	Total Depth m	Top Kurkar (m ab. sl.)	Comments (location, artifact culture, distinctive sediments)
15	11	3.4	na	Location: along entry drive, abandoned due to stone obstructions.
16	18	10.9	18.64	Location: along entry drive, no artifacts recovered.
17	18/25	10.8	14.55	Location: along entry drive, mix of Islamic, Roman/Byzantine.
18A/B	24	2.85/3.3	na	Location: suspected “Roberts” structure location, Roman/Byzantine, abandoned due to stone obstructions.
19	24	10.8	11.74	Location: north east end of parking lot, Islamic-Byzantine-Roman with depth.
20	66	10.95	10.39	Location: picnic area north of south rampart (soccer fields), Byzantine-Hellenistic-Persian with depth, bottom in Pleistocene sandy clay loam.
21	59	10.75	3.42	Location: picnic area north of south rampart (soccer fields), Roman to Iron II with depth, bottom in Pleistocene sandy clay loam
22	60	10.8	8.89	Location: south end of developed picnic area near Roman theater entrance, Byzantine to LB II with depth, bottom in Pleistocene sandy clay loam
23	13	10.9	19.13	Location: east of Islamic/Crusader rampart, Roman/Byzantine
24	10	10.6	23.49	Location: north tell, mix of Islamic, Roman/Byzantine, LB II (rare), Iron I (rare)
25A/B	38	5.8/6.5	14.03/13.55	Location: next to excavation entry gate, Roman/Byzantine, sand caving prevented penetration of probe beyond 6.5 m.
26	23	3.5	13.82	Location: lower terrace south of excavation, sand caving prevented penetration of probe beyond 3.5 m.
27	30	9.6	1.71	Location: far west end of parking lot between north and south tells, Byzantine/Roman to Persian with depth.
28	30	10.6	7.62	Location: middle of parking lot between north and south tells, sparse Islamic, Byzantine/Roman, coarse sand horizon 7-8 m depth (marine?).
29	31	10.7	11.74	Location: east end of parking lot between north and south tells, Byzantine/Roman.
30	71	8.8	10.08	Location: terrace against south rampart at cliff, all poorly to un-consolidated Kurkar below 2.3 m.
31	71	10.4	9.59	Location: terrace against south rampart at cliff about 30 m further inland than Probe#30, Islamic to Byzantine above Kurkar top.
32	15	10.7	20.14	Location: north tell about 20 m inland from cliff, virtually void of pottery, poorly to un-consolidated Kurkar below 2.4 m.



Correlation of sediment units in five probes that revealed Pleistocene paleosol or "hamra."

Based upon the results of the drilling program, a subsurface contour map of the pre-cultural surface, represented by the top of "kurkar" sand was drawn. This map represents the topography of the tel before human settlement.